

family health



Winter • 2009

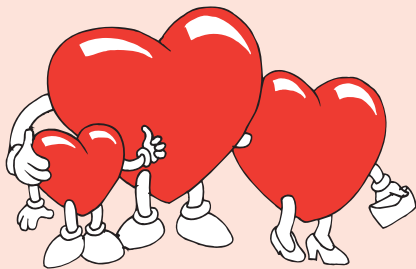
Things to Know

Raising a child with autism

Children do not outgrow autism. It affects all members of the family. The good news is that there is help—autism can also be treated! The best way parents can help is to teach friends and family members about autism. This will help build a support network in and outside the home.

There is no single known cause or cure. With the right services and support, children with autism can live full and healthy lives. To learn more, call:

- Kern Autism Network at **661-588-4235**.
- National Autism Society of America at **800-328-8476**.



Kern Regional Center Special services

Kern Regional Center provides services to people with special needs, such as:

- Counseling.
- Help with family support.
- Autism screening.

The Kern Early Start program is also offered through this agency. It serves children from birth until age 3 years who have special needs. These include:

- Problems due to premature birth.
- Major learning or muscle tone problems.
- Down syndrome.
- Cerebral palsy.

Kern Early Start also helps



children who:

- Have been seriously ill.
- Have a developmental delay in areas such as walking or talking.
- Have parents needing help due to their own special needs.

Kern Early Start will work with you and your child. The goal is to increase the child's skills and development. There is no cost to take part.

To learn more, call **800-479-9899**.

Si necesita esta información en español, llame al 800-391-2000.

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Take care of your health this season

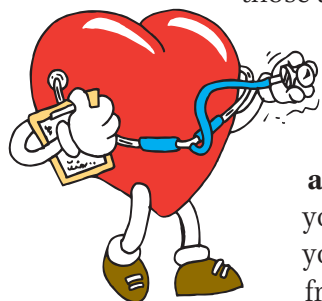
We want to give you the best care and keep you in great health. To do this, we would like to share some key tips with you. Keep these in mind during flu season.

Get a flu shot. There is no quick way to fight the flu. Be sure to get your flu shot as soon as you can.

Cover your cough or sneeze. This is one of the best ways to keep those around you from getting sick.

Try to stay away from those who are sick.

When you are sick, keep your distance from others. This



way you can protect each other from getting sick.

Wash your hands often with soap and water. If you are not near soap and water, use a hand sanitizer.

Drink fluids and rest. The best treatment for the flu is to drink lots of water and get lots of rest. If your symptoms bother you, talk to your doctor. Your doctor might give you medicine to help with your symptoms.

Be patient. Our bodies can kill the flu on their own. But it takes time. Most of us can even get over the flu without medicines. The flu, the common cold and sore throats

are all caused by a virus. See your doctor if you feel very tired or have a high fever, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, or muscle aches.

Antibiotics don't work on viruses. Sometimes they can cause more harm than good. They are strong drugs that can only work on infections caused by bacteria, some fungi and some parasites. These are small bugs that can live in our bodies.

There's no quick way to fight the flu, but following these tips can help.

Taking antibiotics when you don't need them can cause antibiotic resistance. This means that the bacteria can't be killed by an antibiotic. When this happens, the infection will not go away. It could even be deadly. Only take antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor. Be sure to follow your doctor's orders.

Take steps to prevent pre-diabetes

Before you get diabetes, you usually have a condition called pre-diabetes.

Pre-diabetes is serious. It means your blood sugar level is higher than normal but not yet high enough to be called diabetes.

Having pre-diabetes means you could get type 2 diabetes. You are also at high risk for a heart attack or stroke.

You are at risk for pre-diabetes if you:

- Are overweight.
- Are over 45 years old.
- Have a family history of diabetes.
- Have high blood pressure.
- Have unhealthy cholesterol levels.
- Do not get much exercise.

Your doctor can test for pre-diabetes. Treatment can help. You may be able to return your blood sugar level to a normal range.

There are some medications that can help. But a healthy diet and regular exercise are best.

These tips can help prevent and treat pre-diabetes:

- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables. Whole-grain foods, such as brown rice and whole-wheat pasta, are good too.
- Limit high-fat meats and snacks.



- Eat fish a few times a week.
- Drink water instead of soda.
- Trim down portion sizes.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Go for a walk or bike ride. Use the stairs instead of an elevator. Or park at the far end of the parking lot.

Talk to your doctor for more ways to eat healthy and stay active.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institutes of Health

Eye care: Stay focused on good vision

If you have diabetes, you need to look out for your eyes.

Diabetes can cause several eye problems that can lead to blindness.

You should see an eye doctor at least once a year or anytime you have any kind of eye problem.

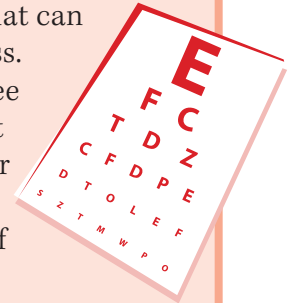
Eye problems can include:

- Blurry or double vision.
- Trouble reading.
- Pain in one or both eyes.
- Seeing rings around lights, dark spots or flashing lights.
- Red eyes.

To protect your eyes:

- Control your blood sugar.
- Keep your blood pressure at a healthy level.
- Don't smoke.

Source: American Diabetes Association



Free diabetes classes

for you.

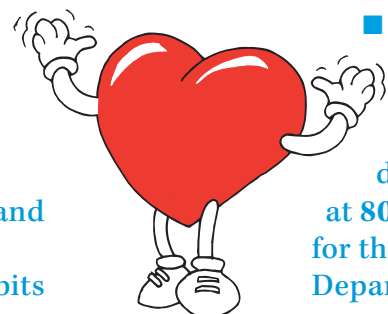
Want to learn more about diabetes? We can help. In our diabetes class, you will learn about:

- Your blood sugar level and how to keep it in a healthy range.
- Healthy shopping and cooking.
- The best eating habits

■ Simple ways to be more active in your daily life.

- How to care for your feet.
- When you need to see your doctor.

If you are ready to take control of your diabetes, please call us at **800-391-2000** and ask for the Health Education Department.



» action

take To learn more about pre-diabetes, talk to your doctor.

Coping with depression

Most of us feel a little down once in a while. Sometimes those “downs” can be life-changing events that make us sad or discouraged.

If you feel sad most of the time, you could have an illness called depression.

What causes depression?

Depression can happen to anyone. Stressful events can bring on depression. They may include:

- Natural disasters.
- Divorce.
- Money problems.
- Death of a loved one.

Even the holidays can bring on depression. The holidays can be a happy time for many people. But some may feel down due to stress, feeling tired or being away from family.

Signs of depression

With depression, you might feel sad, anxious or “empty” most of the time. Other signs may include:

- Feeling like there’s no hope.
- Feeling guilty, worthless or helpless.
- Not enjoying favorite activities anymore.
- Feeling restless, tired or “slowed down.”
- Finding it hard to concentrate or make decisions.
- Getting annoyed easily.
- Having trouble falling asleep. Or sleeping a lot more than usual.

- Losing your appetite. Or eating a lot more.
- Thinking about death or suicide.

Kids and depression

Depression doesn’t just strike adults. Kids can get depressed too. Children can get depressed for the same reasons as adults. They can have the same depression symptoms as well. Kids may also:

- Say their head, stomach or muscles hurt.
- Complain that they are very tired.
- Do poorly in school or miss school often.
- Talk about running away from home.
- Cry for no reason.

Getting help

The first step in getting over depression is to talk to a doctor. A doctor can help find out what you need to do to feel better.

Counseling and medication can help treat depression in both adults and kids. Sometimes only counseling may be necessary. A counselor can help you understand and deal with problems.

In some cases, both medicine and therapy are needed. If you take medicine, it may be a few weeks



before you start to feel better. These tips can also help you cope:

- Try to be around other people. Pick a close friend or family member to talk to.
- Do things that make you feel good. You might go to a movie or a ballgame. Exercise can also help.
- Try not to make any big decisions until you feel better.

Remember that you may not feel better right away. But you’ll most likely feel better over time.

Source: American Psychiatric Association; National Institute of Mental Health

Prepare for a healthy pregnancy

Being ready to have a baby is more than setting up a nursery or picking out a name. It also means being in the best health possible to get your baby off to a great start.

So, are you ready? You might be if you have completed all of these steps.

See your doctor. A quick checkup can make sure you are as healthy as possible. During this visit, you can:

- Get caught up on your immunizations. Some diseases, like rubella, can cause serious problems for an unborn baby. Ask your doctor if you need any shots. Some of them need to be given at least three months before you get pregnant.

- Make sure health problems are under control. If you have diabetes, high blood pressure or other health concerns, talk to your doctor about how to handle them now that you want to get pregnant.



- Bring up any questions or concerns you may want to discuss with your doctor.

■ ■ **A doctor's quick checkup can help make sure you are as healthy as possible.**

Avoid alcohol. Drinking can make it harder for you to get pregnant. It can also seriously harm your baby once you get

pregnant. It can cause:

- Low birth weight.
- Problems with brain development.
- Heart defects.

Remember, no amount of alcohol is safe when you are pregnant.

Stop smoking. If you smoke, you might have a hard time getting pregnant. It can harm your baby's health too. Talk to your doctor for help with quitting. Try to stay away from secondhand smoke too.

Up your folic acid intake. Folic acid helps prevent some birth defects. Make sure you get 400 micrograms a day. Take a vitamin that contains folic acid, and eat foods such as beans, leafy greens, and fortified cereal and bread.

Go healthy. Exercise regularly. And aim for a healthy diet. Avoid food with a lot of fat or sugar. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Time for your postpartum exam?

Now that your baby is here, you will have lots of changes in your body and life. That is why you need to see your doctor four to six weeks after you have your baby. This is called a postpartum exam. During the exam your doctor will:

- Check your weight.
- Test for anemia.
- Do a breast exam.
- Do a pelvic exam.
- Check your blood pressure.



This is also a good time to talk about your health, weight, exercise, diet, work and feelings about your baby. And don't forget to talk about family planning and birth control methods.



Smoking
**Quit
for
good**

You need more than good intentions to quit smoking. Quitting takes guts and patience. Quitting takes a plan of action and lots of support. But quitting is one of the best things you can do for your health.

Quitting isn't easy, but your health will thank you for it.

People who stop smoking lower their risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke and early death, says the American Medical Association.

Get ready to quit

- To snuff out a smoking habit:
- Talk to your doctor about quitting.
- Pick a date to quit. Try to cut back on smoking before that date.
- Tell your family and friends, so they can offer support.

- Remove cigarettes and ashtrays from your home, car and work.

Plan for challenges

There will be many times when you'll be tempted to light up. You may feel anxious or edgy. This is your body's way of telling you it's learning to be smoke-free. These feelings will go away with time.

Talk to your doctor about nicotine replacement products or medications to help relieve these symptoms.

Learn to enjoy the benefits of your smoke-free life. Have your dentist clean your teeth. Buy yourself some flowers. Enjoy their scent as your sense of smell improves.

Think of what you could buy with the money you usually spend on cigarettes. And take time to reward yourself for your hard work.

All types of tobacco are dangerous

There's no such thing as a safe form of tobacco.

Some types of tobacco aren't smoked. Even so, these ways of using tobacco still carry health risks:

- Spit. Also called snuff or chew, this can cause cancers of the mouth and throat.
- Cigars. They can cause mouth, throat and lung cancer. One large cigar can have five to 17 times the amount of tobacco as one cigarette.
- Clove or flavored cigarettes. Both deliver more nicotine and tar than regular cigarettes.
- Water pipes or hookahs. These burn tobacco mixed with other flavors. Hookah smoke is high in poisons such as tar and heavy metals. Also, when water pipes are shared between people, diseases can be spread.



Source: American Cancer Society

take action
For help with quitting, ask for the Health Education Department at 800-391-2000.