

health sense

Questions & Answers

Q. How do I throw out old medicine?

A. Prescription and over-the-counter drugs are meant to help you. But they can also be unsafe.

So be sure to get rid of any that are unused or expired.

Read the information that came with the drug. If it gives directions for how to throw it out, follow them.

Before putting drugs in the trash:

- Take them out of the bottle.
- Mix them with kitty litter or coffee grounds.
- Put them in a bag or can so they don't leak.

That way, kids and pets won't want them. And thieves won't know what they are.

If you want to know about a specific drug, visit www.fda.gov

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration



Cut back on screen time

Kids are spending more time than ever in front of a screen. In fact, kids can spend up to 7 hours a day: » Watching TV. » Using computers. » Using phones and other electronics.

That's not good for their brains or their bodies.

Kids who watch too much TV or play too many video games may see a lot of violence. Then they might spend less time:

- Being active and creative.
- Asking questions and solving problems.
- Getting together with friends.

Think about how you can be a good role model. Try to limit your TV and computer time too.

Then, use your family time to:

- Play board games.



- Go for a walk or bike ride.
- Read a book together.
- Eat dinner together. Keep the TV turned off.

It's still OK to watch TV sometimes. When you do, plan ahead. Don't channel surf. Choose 1 or 2 age-appropriate programs. Then turn it off.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Coping with the loss of a loved one

When someone you love dies, it's normal to feel sad.

It's normal to feel angry. It's normal to feel guilty. It's even normal to feel numb—like you have no feelings at all.

There isn't one right way to feel when a loved one dies.

Grief is a personal emotion. How you react can depend on a number of things, such as:

- Who the person was.
- How close you were to him or her.
- How the person died.

There is no right or wrong way to mourn, experts say. What is important, however, is to let yourself do it. Your emotions may be so intense today that you want to bottle them in. But you can put a lid on them for only so long. By the time they do come out, they

may have grown even more painful.

So talk about how you feel. Seek out others who knew and loved the person. Ask them to bring photos and share stories over dinner.

Need help? Call us at 888-678-7277.

Or ask your provider about a grief support group. Some groups focus on a specific loss. It may be helpful to talk to others whose spouse, parent or child died.

Grief can be hard on your health, so take care of yourself. Try to get plenty of exercise and rest. Eat healthy meals, and avoid using alcohol to try to feel better.

Let your provider know if you



think you need help. He or she might suggest medication or counseling.

Sources: American Medical Association; National Institutes of Health

Helping your child deal with grief

Like adults, kids need to be able to grieve.

But kids don't grieve like adults do. Very young children may ask when the person is coming back. They might not understand that death is final.

Older kids who realize the person is gone forever may

become scared. They may start worrying about other people dying. They may ask questions or say things that wouldn't occur to an adult.



Let your child know that it's OK to ask anything. It may be hard on you if you're grieving too. But it can be good for your child to

» action

take Go to www.aacap.org. Choose "Facts for Families." Type "children and grief" in the search box.

see that you are also sad.

Being sad together may help both of you through it.

Sources: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; American Academy of Pediatrics

New law: No shots, no school

This school year (2011–2012), all students entering 7th through 12th grades must show proof of their Tdap booster vaccine. Tdap is a shot that helps protect kids from these diseases:

- Tetanus.
 - Diphtheria.
 - Pertussis (whooping cough).
- Call your family doctor first. Ask

about getting your child's Tdap shot. Your doctor will know if your child needs it or not.

As of April 15, kids 11 years or older may also get their Tdap shot at:

- Any Walgreens or Rite Aid pharmacy in Contra Costa County.

Here's how to do it:

- At the pharmacy, an adult must be present with the child needing the Tdap shot.
- To avoid a long wait, call the pharmacy first to find a good time for your Tdap shot.

■ Bring your CCHP card. Do not pay out of pocket. We will not be able to pay you back.

■ CCHP will not pay for any shots other than Tdap at these pharmacies.

Remember, get a record of the shot.

Remember, get a record of the shot. Keep it in a safe place. You will need it for school.

Public Health Immunization Clinics will also offer Tdap shots. Check www.cchealth.org for times and locations. You may also call the Tdap clinic hotline at **925-313-6469**.



Shots are important for your child's health



Parents want what is best for their child. But myths about shots can create a lot of worry. These myths cause some parents to worry that a shot may lead to serious health problems, like autism.

We also want what is best for your child. We want you to know that shots do not cause autism.

Many studies have shown that the link is not there. In fact, the doctor who first said shots caused autism is said to have lied. Researchers say he made up data to lie about this link.

Getting a shot is safe. Getting a disease is not safe for your child or the community.

Source: California Department of Public Health

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If you have trouble getting a Tdap shot, please call 877-661-6230 (option 1) for the Advice Nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



When a loved one has special needs

It's not easy caring for a loved one who has special needs. Illness, disability and other health problems can present a lot of challenges for both of you.

Keeping your loved one safe and as healthy as you can will likely be your main goal. But you need to take care of yourself too. Here are some tips:

Learn about your loved one's health problem. Knowing about the condition and the effects it might have is helpful. It can also help prepare you for what may lie ahead.

For example, you may find out

Take care of your loved one, but take care of yourself too.

that your family member will need a wheelchair. This might mean you'll have to change your home to make it easier for a wheelchair to get around.

Or you may learn that your loved one will need care you don't know how to provide. As a result, you might need to have professional caregivers come into your home.

Look into sources of help. Many different groups may provide helpful services. These can make life easier. Sometimes government agencies can help too. A social worker can tell you more about your options. He or she may also help you figure out how to pay for the services you need.

Seek support. You don't have to go through this alone. Family and friends are often willing to help. Think about things they could do for you—both large and small. Then ask for their help. Support groups can be good too.

Take care of yourself. To care for someone else, you have to be healthy and rested. Make time for yourself and the things you enjoy. Even a short break for a walk or warm bath can be helpful.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Member services: Turn to us first

If you have special health care needs, we're here to help.

We want to help you get the care you need. And we have a team that can make it happen.

Case managers help decide

which services you need the most. Then they watch over your care.

Providers, such as doctors and nurses, will provide your care. Often they have special training in helping people who have certain health needs. They work closely with your case manager. And they're chosen with care so they'll be

a good fit for you.

Educators help you learn about your health problem. They also help make sure you have the support you need.

You may qualify for benefits you don't know about. To learn more, call Member Services at **877-661-6230 (option 2)**.



Why you need a postpartum checkup

After delivery, your attention shifts to caring for your new baby—but your health counts too. Your doctor will want to see you 4 to 6 weeks after giving birth to your baby.

You may need to see your doctor before this visit. For example, if you had a c-section, the doctor will need to check your incision sooner.

Your doctor will want to:

- Check if you are bleeding, healing or have any type of pain.
- Check if you have any pain when you go to the bathroom.
- Ask about problems with breastfeeding.
- Ask if you are feeling depressed, stressed, anxious or sad.
- Talk to you about birth control options.
- Talk about any complications you had during pregnancy and birth.

For a quick recovery, ask your doctor questions about how you



feel postpartum. Chances are, what you're feeling is normal. Your doctor can advise you on how to adjust to life with a newborn.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Breastfeeding—good for moms and babies

Breastfeeding is good for your baby. And it's good for you too. Nursing:

- Gives needed vitamins and other nutrients to help your baby grow.
- Helps keep your baby healthy. Babies who get breast milk don't get sick as often as babies who drink formula.
- Helps you lose pregnancy weight faster.
- Lowers your risk for breast cancer and other cancers.

Plus, you don't have to buy formula. And there are no bottles to warm. You can feed your baby right away when he or she is hungry.

Of course, not everyone chooses to breastfeed. And some women may not be able to nurse because of health problems.

Source: National Women's Health Information Center

Make school a safe place

Kids can be stressed from school. One big reason may not be hard classes, but the stress of bullies.

There are different ways to get bullied. Kids are now being bullied on the Internet as well as at school.

Here is how to find out if your child is being bullied. Ask your child questions such as:

- Who sits with you at lunchtime?
- Do you ever see kids picking on each other? What happens?
- Have you ever gotten a mean email, text or Facebook message?
- Who could you ask for help if someone is being bullied at your school?

Offer this advice if your child is getting bullied or sees someone getting bullied:



- Always tell a trusted adult. Bring a friend if you are afraid to do it alone.
- Stay in a group. Join clubs or activities to meet new friends.
- Try not to let the bully see you are upset. Tell him or her to stop in a calm voice, or just walk away.
- Never reply to cyberbullies. Block them from your sites, if you can. Always save the messages, and tell an adult.

Source: www.stopbullying.gov

Women and heart attacks

Know the signs and act fast

You might think that when a heart attack occurs, you'd know it. And sometimes the signs are so clear that there's no question.

But many times, heart attacks are sneakier. They start slowly, with just mild pain. Often people don't know what's causing the trouble.

Women in particular are less likely than men to believe they're having a heart attack. Because of that, women may wait too long to get help.

For both men and women, the most common sign is chest pain or pressure. The feeling may go away, then come back.

Other warning signs include:

- Pain in the arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Trouble breathing.
- A cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness.

Women may be slightly more likely than men to have trouble breathing, nausea, and back or jaw pain.

If you're having signs of a heart attack, don't wait more than 5 minutes to get emergency help.

To help avoid a heart attack, work with your provider. Learn your risks and how to lower them.

Source: American Heart Association



Shake the salt habit

A dash of salt can help make food taste good. But too much can ruin a meal.

Salt contains sodium. Too much can make you sick. The more sodium you eat, the higher your blood pressure goes. High blood pressure is linked to heart disease and stroke.

So how much is too much? Everyone should limit sodium intake to less than 1,500 milligrams a day. That's a little more than half a teaspoon of salt.

There are many ways to cut back. One easy way to start? Take the saltshaker off the table.

That will help, but most of the sodium we eat isn't added at meals. It's hidden in the processed foods we eat.

Foods that can be high in sodium include:

- Soups.
- Sauces.
- Condiments, such as ketchup and salad dressing.
- Canned foods.

By reading food labels, though, you may find options with little or no sodium.



Instead of adding salt, look for ways to boost flavor using herbs and spices.

Other ways to shake the habit and protect your heart:

Have salt-free snacks. Raw fruits and vegetables are good options. So are unsalted nuts or seeds.

Spice things up. Dig into your spice rack. Look for new ways to boost flavor with herbs and spices.

Use a salt stand-in. Table salt substitutes add a big dose of flavor without too much sodium.

Source: American Heart Association

Limit meat for better health

Cutting back on meat can be good for your health. Try to eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains and less meat. This can give you all the nutrients you need.

And eating less meat can reduce your risk for many health problems, including: » Many types of cancer. » Heart disease. » Diabetes. » Stroke. » High blood pressure.

Eating more plant-based foods can also help you stay at a healthy weight.



Cooking with less meat

You can cut back on meat and still enjoy a tasty meal.

A few tips:

- Eat fish, such as salmon, instead of red meat.
- Put less meat on your plate. Dish up more vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans.

- Use kidney, pinto or other beans instead of meat in casseroles and stews.
- Replace half of the ground beef in meatballs and meatloaf with whole-grain bread. Or try brown rice or grated zucchini, onions and carrots.
- Roast and grill peaches, apples, onions and peppers instead of meat.
- Cook mushrooms in beef broth. You don't have to stop eating meat all the time. But try eating a few meatless meals each week.

Lower your grocery bill

Your health isn't the only thing that can benefit when you eat less meat. You can also save money.

Meat can make eating more expensive. Instead of buying pricey steak or chicken, buy beans or tofu for protein. And eat more foods like carrots, sweet potatoes, cabbage, onions and bananas.

Sources: American Dietetic Association; American Institute for Cancer Research

Watermelon blueberry banana split

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Number of servings: 4

Cups of fruits and vegetables per person: 3

Ingredients

- 2 large bananas
- 8 watermelon "scoops"—a watermelon ball created with an ice cream scoop
- 2 cups fresh blueberries
- ½ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
- ¼ cup low-fat granola

Directions

- » Peel bananas and cut in half

crosswise, then cut each piece in half lengthwise. » For each serving, lay 2 banana pieces against the sides of a shallow dish. » Place a watermelon "scoop" at each end of the dish. » Fill the center space with blueberries. » Stir yogurt until smooth, spoon over watermelon "scoops." » Sprinkle with granola.

Nutrition information

Serving size: ¼ of recipe; calories: 160; calories from fat: 10; total fat: 1g; saturated fat: 0g; trans fat: 0g; cholesterol: 0mg; sodium: 40mg; total carbohydrate: 38g; dietary



fiber: 4g; sugars: 23g; protein: 4g; vitamin A: 6%*; vitamin C: 25%; calcium: 6%; iron: 4%.

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Diabetic exchange**

Fruit: 2; vegetables: 0; meat: 0; milk: 0; fat: 0; carbs: 1; other: 0.

** Diabetic exchanges are calculated based on the American Diabetes Association Exchange System. This site rounds exchanges up or down to equal whole numbers. Therefore, partial exchanges are not included.

Source: Produce for Better Health



Are you getting enough sleep?

No, you're not imagining it. It really may be a bit harder to fall asleep now that you're older. It may also be harder to stay asleep.

You may sleep more lightly than you once did. But one thing doesn't change: your need for a good night's rest.

No matter how old you are,

getting enough sleep helps you stay healthy. Over time, too little sleep can raise your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and other medical problems.

So how

much sleep do you need? If you're like most adults, you need 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night.

For better sleep

Try these tips to get more rest:

- Stick to a schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same times every day. Try to keep the same sleep schedule on weekends too.

- Ease into sleep with a bedtime routine. Doing the same thing (such as taking a warm bath) about 30 minutes before bed every night will tell your body it's time for sleep.

- Avoid caffeine and don't nap in the late afternoon.

- Ask your doctor if any medicines you take might be making it hard for you to sleep.

Get help

If these steps don't help, let your doctor know.

Also tell your doctor if you seem to be getting enough sleep but still feel very tired during the day.

You may have what's known as a sleep disorder, a medical problem that can—and should—be treated.

Sources: National Institutes of Health; National Sleep Foundation

Check it out: The skin you're in

Is it ever a good idea to look for trouble?

Yes—if the trouble you're looking for is skin cancer.

Checking your skin regularly for suspicious moles could save your life. Skin cancer has a high cure rate if it's caught early.

So how do you do a skin exam?

First, look over your entire body. Skin cancer can occur on any part of your body—not just in areas that get sun. This means you have to examine your scalp

and underarms and the spaces between your toes, as well as the rest of your body. What you're looking for is any change in a mark on your skin. This includes any mole that is:

- Changing in size, shape or color.
- Different from the others.
- Itching or bleeding.

Also look for a:

- Brown or black streak under your nails.
- Sore that doesn't heal.
- Scar that feels waxy.



Tell your provider right away if you find any of these things.

Source: American Academy of Dermatology