

health sense



Fall/Winter 2014

Your flu shot could save a life

The flu shot is the best defense against the flu. That's true for you and the people near you.

Why is it so vital to get your flu shot?

■ **You'll spend less time sick.** Some people may still catch the flu. But they will likely be less sick than if they didn't get a shot—and get better faster.

■ **You may avoid getting even sicker.** The shot can help you avoid illnesses that often come after the flu. One of these is pneumonia. It can be deadly.

■ **You can help others stay well.** You might think, "I never get the flu, so I don't need the shot." In fact, lots of people with the flu don't feel very sick. They may not even know they have it. But they can still spread the flu. So getting the flu shot helps protect others.

■ **It can save lives.** About 36,000 people die every year from the flu and the illnesses it can cause. Getting a shot gives you a shot at saving lives.

Is it safe? Some people think the vaccine causes the flu. It can't.

Who needs it? Everyone 6 months and older should get a

shot every year. You should get the shot when it comes to your area. That's often in the fall. If you forget, a winter shot is OK too. Flu season lasts for months. Get the shot before people around you get sick with the flu.

Sources: American Lung Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



When your child has a fever

Fever is a sign that the body is fighting an illness. Fever usually goes away on its own in about 3 days.

To help your child feel better:

- Make sure your child rests.
- Keep the child cool.
- Offer liquids to drink.

You may need to give your child medicine if a fever:

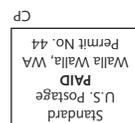
- Causes aches and pains.
- Makes it hard to sleep or eat.

Your provider can tell you what to give, how much and when.

Never give children aspirin. It may cause a serious illness called Reye's syndrome.

Any time a fever concerns you, call your child's provider. Call right away if your child:

- Has a fever over 103 degrees.
- Has a fever for more than 3 days.
- Looks very sick or very sleepy.
- Has other symptoms, like a rash, sore throat, stiff neck or diarrhea.
- Has had a seizure.
- Has been in a very hot place.





We can help you quit smoking

LEARN MORE TODAY!

Do you want to quit smoking? Would you like to quit other types of tobacco? It just got easier for Medi-Cal members age 18 and older!

You can now get extra help to quit. That's thanks to the Medi-Cal Incentives to Quit Smoking (MIQS) Project. Just call the California Smokers' Helpline at **800-NO BUTTS (800-662-8887)**. Ask to enroll in Helpline counseling.

Free nicotine patches and a \$20 gift card will be mailed right to your home. Read more about the nicotine patch and gift cards at www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/QuitSmoking.aspx.

Timely access

The California Department of Managed Health Care has set up target wait times for appointments. The wait time goals for Contra Costa Health Plan are in the chart at right.

Telephone wait times. You have access to our Advice Nurse Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call anytime you are worried about your health and do not know what to do. Your call will generally be answered in less than 60 seconds. Call **877-661-6230 (press 1)**.

You can also speak to Member Services within 10 minutes during normal business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Call Member Services at

2 Call us at **877-661-6230**

Type of medical appointment	Appointment wait times
Routine/follow-up	10 business days
Ancillary services, such as x-rays, lab tests and physical therapy	15 business days
Mental health	10 business days
Specialist	15 business days
Urgent care for services that do not require prior authorization	48 hours of request
Urgent care for services that do require prior authorization	96 hours of request
Emergency	Immediate

877-661-6230 (press 2).

NOTE: Health care providers can be flexible in making appointments if a longer wait

time will not harm the member's health. It must be noted in the member's record that a longer wait time will not harm him or her.



Do you need an interpreter who speaks your language?

When you're sick, it's easier to talk to a doctor who speaks your language. Our Member Services can help you choose one who does. We have a lot of doctors who speak more than one language. But their location may not always work for you.

A second option is interpreter services. We have trained interpreters who can help you by phone and sometimes in person. They speak many languages, including sign language.

Interpreters make sure that you and your doctor know what each other is saying. With their help, you can get all your questions answered.

This service is free and easy to use. If you think you need an interpreter at your next doctor visit, ask for one.

If you have any problems getting an interpreter, call Member Services at **877-661-6230**.



DRIVING WITH DIABETES Take this quiz

How much do you know about driving when you have diabetes? Try to pass this test before you pull into traffic.

- 1.** Diabetes can affect your ability to drive.
 - A. True.
 - B. False.
 - C. Maybe.
- 2.** You should check your blood sugar level before driving.
 - A. Always.
 - B. Sometimes.
- 3.** You need to pull over as soon as you can if you have signs of low blood sugar when driving.
 - A. True.
 - B. False.

Answers:

1: C. Most people with diabetes can safely drive. But if you have long-term problems caused by the disease, they may affect your ability to drive safely. Examples include vision problems or nerve problems that cause a lack of feeling in your feet.

The same is true if within the past year you've had bouts of low blood sugar that:

- Came on without warning.
- Caused you to lose consciousness.

■ Required help from someone else to treat.

Talk to your doctor if you have any of these problems. He or she can help you better manage your blood sugar to avoid severe problems with low levels.

Your doctor can also refer you to a driving specialist. This person can figure out if diabetes affects your driving. He or she may also offer training to improve your driving skills.

2: A. You need to measure your blood sugar level each time you drive, before you get behind the wheel. You also need to measure it at regular intervals if you drive for an hour or more. If your blood sugar goes too high or too low, you may get sleepy, dizzy or confused. Your vision might blur. You may have a seizure or lose consciousness.

3: A. You need to get off the road quickly and get your blood sugar stable. Always keep a quick-acting type of glucose, such as hard candy or glucose tablets, in your car. Don't drive again until your blood sugar is back in balance.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Alternative approaches which may help you

You get the flu shot. You wash your hands often. What else can you do to avoid colds and the flu?

Below are some proven tips that can help:

Eat locally grown greens and vegetables each day. Mixing different greens can give you much-needed nutrients. Try spinach, cabbage and romaine lettuce.

You can add shredded carrots, tomatoes, avocado, onions, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds. Olive oil and fresh lemon juice make a great dressing.

Eat pumpkin seeds. They have zinc, which has been shown to reduce the length of a cold.

Eat blueberries and raspberries. They are filled with antioxidants and phytochemicals. These compounds fight free radicals, which damage our cells.

Eat reishi, shiitake and maitake mushrooms. They have been shown to trigger the immune system.

Eat foods with healthy bacteria. Try plain yogurt, kefir and cottage cheese. You can add fresh fruit or honey.

Use immune system boosters. Try propolis, green tea and garlic.

Try spices and herbs. The best ones to help build a strong



immune system are:

- Cinnamon—powerful antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory
- Cloves—useful for toothaches and sore throats, good anti-inflammatory
- Honeysuckle—good antiviral
- Oregano—strong antioxidant
- Turmeric—strong antioxidant and anticancer

Try these soothing teas. When trying to fight a cold, you can make a tea by mixing the following:

- Elderflower tea
- Yarrow tea
- Linden tea
- Peppermint tea
- Ginger tea

Add a package of each to a tea pot. Drink throughout the day.

Live with vitality

Stress and anxiety can show up in sneaky ways!

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Having trouble falling asleep
- Feeling worried
- Feeling irritated
- Having a short fuse

EASE YOUR ANXIETY.

Tip 1: Eat snacks with protein. The brain needs healthy protein to stay balanced. Almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, a slice of turkey, a hard-boiled egg and plain yogurt are great options. These foods have amino acids, which reduce anxiety and promote better sleep.

Tip 2: Cut out coffee and other drinks with caffeine. Coffee has some benefits. But people who get anxious feel great after they drink coffee—and later feel very nervous. Replace it with calming teas like chamomile, gotu kola or fennel.

Tip 3: Time management. Do you say yes to too many events? Do you feel guilty saying no? Give yourself more time and say yes only to things that you enjoy. If you have a hard time saying no, say “Let me think about it.”

Tip 4: Deep belly breathing. Deep breathing calms your brain and nervous system. It can make you feel relaxed fast.

Step 1. Place 1 hand above your belly button and 1 hand below.

Step 2. Breathe in through your

nose slowly to a count of 5. Let the belly expand out.

Step 3. Pause and hold your breath to a count of 5.

Step 4. Exhale slowly, through your nose or mouth, to a count of 5.

Step 5. Repeat steps 1 to 4 for up to 5 minutes.

Tip 5: Make a plan for your life. Having clear goals and direction toward a happier life can help a lot with anxiety. Think about what you want in your life. Say yes to the things that will get you there.

MORE IDEAS. The latest research shows that the following may help reduce anxiety:

■ Foods high in magnesium. These include spinach and green leafy vegetables, avocados, bananas, brown rice, apricots, and nuts.

■ Fermented foods. They include olives, sauerkraut, fermented vegetables and kefir. Fermented foods have probiotics. These are strains of good bacteria that your intestines need to stay healthy.

■ Foods with B vitamins. Foods high in B vitamins are beans, eggs, liver, peanuts, asparagus, broccoli, plums, dried prunes and peas.

Exercise has also been associated with reduced anxiety and increased calmness.

Need to improve your sleep? Stop using electronics 2 hours before bedtime. Make the room you sleep in dark.

If you have severe anxiety or panic attacks, talk to your doctor. You may need medicine.



Increase your vitality with fresh juicing

Juicing is a popular way to get more nutrients in your body quickly. Here is a great, refreshing juice recipe that even your young kids will love.

INGREDIENTS

- 5 carrots
- 5 celery sticks
- 1 red beet
- 1 lemon
- 1 apple
- 1 sweet potato

Wash and peel fruits and vegetables before juicing. For best results:

■ Drink fresh juice within 30 minutes of juicing.

■ Keep in the refrigerator no longer than 24 hours.

Juicing 3 to 5 times a week is a great way to boost your vitality and keep your body healthy. Make your juices mostly from vegetables. Add only 1 or 2 low-sugar fruits. Always include a lemon to improve the taste.

Juicers are now very affordable. Walmart and Target sell some good juicers in the \$30 to \$100 range.

For more juice and smoothie recipes, go to our website, www.cchealth.org/healthplan/health-ed-nutrition.php and select the new section under “Drinks” called “Fresh Juicing and Smoothies.”

Is your baby getting enough breast milk?

Breast milk does a baby good. But how do you know if your baby is getting enough milk?

A well-fed baby will:

1. Nurse 8 to 12 times every 24 hours.
2. Seem happy and content after a feeding.
3. Have short periods of sleep and then alert, awake periods.
4. Have about 6 wet diapers a day. The urine should be clear or pale yellow. It should not be dark yellow or orange.
5. Have about 3 dirty diapers a day.
6. Steadily gain weight after the first week. Most babies gain about an ounce a day in their first 3 months.

Are you worried that your baby is not eating well? Call your health care provider.

Give vitamin D too. Your baby will need more vitamin D than breast milk can supply. Ask your baby's health care provider about vitamin D drops.

Other than that, breast milk is all a baby needs for the first 6 months of life.

A word of caution. Alcohol and illegal drugs can pass to your baby through breast milk. They can hurt your baby. Be sure to avoid them.

Source: Office on Women's Health



» TAKE ACTION. Be sure your baby is healthy. Take him or her to all well-baby checkups.



TV talk: Time to pull the plug?

How much time do your kids spend in front of a screen? Screen time includes computers, smartphones, tablets, TV, and video games. Working on homework on a computer does not count.

If it's more than an hour or 2 a day, it's too much.

Kids who sit and stare at screens aren't exercising. They aren't playing ball or jumping rope.

They are just sitting. And they're in danger of being overweight.

That's why it's best to take TVs and computers out of kids' bedrooms. Also, have a place where laptops, smartphones and tablets are stored when it's time to put them away.

The kids may not be happy at first. But they may be healthier in the long run.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Make the connection

CHANGING HOW YOU THINK MAY
CHANGE HOW YOU FEEL

Can your mental state affect your physical health?

For centuries, doctors thought there was a strong tie between mind and body. Modern studies prove them right.

Researchers now know that stress, depression and anxiety can cause problems with your:

- Hormones
- Immune system
- Heart health
- Blood pressure

Is your emotional health off balance? These are a few of the physical signs that can appear:

- Back pain
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Extreme fatigue
- Diarrhea

- A stiff neck
- A racing heart

Taking care of your emotional health can improve your quality of life. It also may help your body fight and recover from illness. It may even help prevent chronic disease.

What can you do to help your mind-body balance? Thankfully, research has answered that question too. These top the list:

1. Get a move on. Exercise changes how the body responds to stress. It improves mood too.

2. Find healthy ways to relax. To lower stress, some people use:

- Music
- Art
- Prayer
- Woodworking
- Reading
- 10-minute walks

3. Express yourself. Bottled up feelings and fears may appear as aches and pains. To focus on the good things in your life and work through challenges:

- Talk to a trusted friend, partner or faith leader.
- Write in a journal about what makes you feel grateful.
- Write down your goals and what you accomplish.

If you feel stuck or overwhelmed, talk to a trained counselor.

Finally, remember: Be honest with your doctor about your stresses and challenges. Ask for help if you think you're depressed. Your doctor can suggest ways to improve your health and wellness—both mental and physical.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Psychological Association; National Institutes of Health

Spiced toasted almonds

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon dried thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon kosher or sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon red (cayenne) pepper, or to taste
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 2 cups whole, unblanched almonds

Canola oil spray

Directions

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
- In a large, shallow bowl, combine thyme, salt, pepper and oil. Set aside.
- Place nuts in a medium bowl. While tossing with fork, lightly spray with canola oil so all surfaces are coated.
- Lightly coat baking sheet with canola oil spray.
- Turn nuts onto sheet and spread evenly across surface.

■ Place baking sheet in center of the oven. Toast until nuts are lightly browned and fragrant, about 8 minutes. Occasionally, shake pan to shift nuts and prevent scorching. (Be careful not to let nuts get too dark, or they'll taste burned.)

■ Remove from oven, and immediately add hot nuts to spice mixture. Stir for a few minutes to coat the nuts thoroughly. Taste and adjust the seasonings.

■ Serve warm or at room temperature.

Nuts can be sealed and stored for up to 2 weeks. Reheat in a hot oven.

Nutrition information

Amount per serving: 223 calories, 19g total fat (1g saturated fat), 7g carbohydrates, 7g protein, 4g dietary fiber, 235mg sodium.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research



Eat nuts for health

Nuts are a snack that's both tasty and good for you. Walnuts, almonds and other tree nuts are packed with:

- Healthy fats
- Fiber
- Nutrients that help prevent cancer and type 2 diabetes

Watch your portions, though. Nuts may be healthy, but they still have calories. Just a palmful of tree nuts each day is enough for your health.

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; The New England Journal of Medicine, Vol. 369, No. 21