

health sense



Fall/Winter 2007

Colds and the flu **Stay well this winter**

You can't catch a cold or the flu by standing in the rain. And you can't cure either one with chicken soup. But there are ways to stay well this winter that are nearly that simple.

Steer clear of germs

Colds and the flu are caused by viruses. They are spread by touch or by a sneeze or cough. You can help keep yourself and others well with these tips:

- Wash your hands often, especially if you've been around someone who is sick. Use a disinfectant to clean surfaces, such as phones or toys, touched by sick people.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then throw the tissue away.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes.
- Get a flu shot.

If you do get sick

You might have the flu if your symptoms come on quickly and include a fever higher than 101 degrees, chills and muscle aches.

If you think you have the flu,

call your doctor. There are medicines that can help. You should also see your doctor if you have chest pain or trouble breathing.

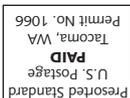
Rest is one of the best things you can do if you get the flu or have a bad cold. These tips may also help:

- Relieve symptoms with over-the-counter medicines. They can help with aches, fever, stuffiness and swollen sinuses. Make sure to read labels to find out what each drug is for. Ask your doctor if you have questions.

- Drink lots of fluids and eat well.
- Don't drink alcohol or smoke.

It's important to stay home when you're sick. You'll feel better, and you'll avoid spreading germs to others.

Sources: American Lung Association; National Institutes of Health





Need-to-know info

Helping you easily obtain your medicine

CCHP Pharmacy Services answers your questions about getting medications.

Q. What is PA?

A. PA stands for prior authorization. CCHP uses a preferred drug list (PDL) that shows which drugs require PA and which do not. If a provider prescribes a drug that requires PA, the Health Plan needs to evaluate this request for medical necessity.

Q. What do I do when the pharmacy says the prescription needs PA?

A. Ask the pharmacy staff to contact the provider to tell him or her that PA is needed. If the pharmacy will not contact the provider, you will need to ask your provider to submit the PA to PerformRx/CCHP. The provider's office should have the CCHP PA form. It is also available online at www.contracostahealthplan.org.

Q. How long does it take for a PA to be processed?

A. This can vary. Urgently needed drugs get a faster review than standard requests. If you don't hear back from your

pharmacy about your PA, call the pharmacy and check the status.

Q. What if the pharmacy says the provider has been notified that a drug requires PA and the pharmacy has no other information?

A. Call CCHP Pharmacy Services at **877-661-6230 (press 3)** to see if the doctor has submitted the PA. If not, you may contact your provider's office.

Q. What do I do if my provider says he or she has submitted a PA?

A. When a PA is submitted, sometimes additional information is needed, and that can delay a decision. Call **877-661-6230 (press 3)** to track the status of a submitted PA.

Q. How will I know when a decision is made?

A. If you aren't contacted by the pharmacy or the provider's office, you can call CCHP Pharmacy Services to find out the status. If a PA is denied or approved, a letter will be mailed to the address we have for you.

Q. What do I do when my provider wants me to

take more of a drug than originally prescribed?

A. Whenever your provider increases your dose of a medication, we recommend that you get a new prescription and bring it to your pharmacy to fill. If you continue to use a higher amount of drug without getting a new prescription, you will run out early. When you attempt to refill your medication, our pharmacy system won't recognize the dose increase and will block the prescription as a "refill too soon."

Q. What can I do to avoid a long wait for a refill?

A. The number of refills you have left is printed on the prescription bottle. At least a week before you are out of medication, ask the pharmacy to request a refill from your provider, or ask your provider for refills. Don't wait until the last pill!

Q. How do I transfer a prescription from one pharmacy to another?

A. You can call the new pharmacy and ask that they call your old/current pharmacy. You can also go to the new pharmacy and give them the empty prescription bottles that you want transferred. Have the following information available:

- Name and phone number of the pharmacy you want your prescriptions transferred out of.
- Prescription numbers for the pharmacy you are transferring out of.
- A list of medications you want transferred.



If you have other questions, please call CCHP Pharmacy Services at 877-661-6230 (press 3).

How our Advice Nurses can help



The 24-hour, 365-days-a-year Advice Nurse service for Contra Costa Health Plan members is your friendly, anytime connection to CCHP—someone with the medical information you need, when you need it, just a toll-free phone call away at **877-661-6230 (press 1)**.

Advice Nurse services include:

Advice for at-home care.

The Advice Nurse can tell you how to care for your illness or injury at home. The Advice Nurse will also help you decide if you need emergency or urgent medical care.

Emergency visits.

The Advice Nurses will tell you what to do before you go to the emergency room and what to tell the emergency staff members.

Community resources.

Advice Nurses can refer you to organizations in the county to give you special help. Referral

services can include emergency shelters, public transportation and other resources.

Parenting advice. You can get information on childhood and adolescent development, health and behavior, including:

- How to know when your baby’s crying means something serious.
- What to do if your child has a fever.
- Nutrition, sleep time and potty training tips for parents of young children.
- What immunizations are necessary to protect your child’s health.
- What to do for common childhood illnesses.
- How to deal with behavioral problems, such as the “terrible 2s” or teenage conflict.

Test results. When you are calling for routine lab results and you have no medical symptoms,

we ask that you leave a message for the Advice Nurse. Your message should give your full name (including the spelling), medical record number and telephone number, as well as the best time to call you back.

An Advice Nurse will return your call within 24 hours. The Advice Nurse can give

you the results for the following tests if the tests were done at a County Health Center:

- Complete blood count (CBC).
- Lead.
- Cholesterol and blood sugar.
- Liver panel and hepatitis.
- Most other blood tests.
- X-rays.
- Pap smear and mammogram results 4 weeks after your test.

The Advice Nurses cannot interpret the results. You must see your provider to know how the results apply to you.

The Advice Nurses do not give out test results for pregnancy or HIV.

For pregnancy test results, call Healthy Start in:

- Martinez—**925-370-5495**.
- Pittsburg—**925-431-2345**.
- Richmond—**510-231-1340**.

For HIV test results, you must make a return appointment with your primary care provider (PCP).

If you have a Community Provider as your PCP, we encourage you to call your doctor first.

The best time to call

Our Advice Nurses answer calls 24/7, but some times are busier than others. In order to reduce the time you spend waiting on the phone, follow these guidelines:

- If you are in a life-threatening situation, call 911 directly.
- If you are sick or injured or thinking of going to the emergency room, call the Advice Nurses right away, anytime.
- For nonurgent calls, like general health advice, minor illnesses or test results, avoid calling from 7 to 10 a.m. or from 3 to 7 p.m. These times are very busy.



Advice Nurse:
877-661-6230 (press 1)

Family meals matter



There's nothing quite like a home-cooked meal. It can be even more special when shared with family.

But these days, busy schedules may leave little time for family meals. Still, it's important to try to make time when you can.

Everyone benefits from family meals, especially kids. Family meals can:

- Strengthen your family bond. Everyone gets a chance to talk and listen to each other.
- Help kids learn good nutrition. Kids who eat with family tend to eat healthier than kids who don't eat with their families. They also eat a wider variety of foods, more fruits and vegetables, and less junk food.

Mealtimes help strengthen family bonds by giving everyone a chance to talk and listen.

- Help keep kids out of trouble. Teens who eat with their families several times a week are less likely to smoke, drink or use drugs.

Making fast food better for you

Fast food is a quick and easy way to eat on the run. But it's not always good for you.

Your best bet? Enjoy fast food once in a while as a special treat.

When you do eat out, try these easy ways to make fast food healthier:

- Pass on "value-size" portions. Order a regular or kid-size portion instead.
- Avoid extra meat. This adds more calories and fat.
- Try a grilled chicken sandwich instead of a burger.
- Add tomato, peppers or other veggies to burgers and sandwiches.
- Ask for no mayo, and pass on other dressings or sauces. These are usually loaded with fat and calories.
- Have a side salad instead of fries. Or split an order of fries with a friend.
- Order tacos or burritos with salsa, and skip the cheese.
- Drink water, diet soda or low-fat milk instead of regular soda.

Source: American Heart Association



Making time

Finding time for family meals can be tricky when everyone has a busy schedule. The key is to plan ahead. These tips can help:

Pick a date. Pencil in family dinners on a calendar. Choose days when everyone can be home. It may not always be possible to eat together every night. But even one or two nights a week is a great start.

Plan meals ahead. Once a week, write down meals for next week. This can help save you time at the grocery store and in the kitchen. If you're in a hurry, try creating a buffet of leftovers.

Tune out distraction.

To help make dinnertime conversation time:

- Turn off the TV.
- Let the answering machine pick up phone calls.

Source: American Dietetic Association

Grandma's chicken soup

Here's the chicken soup recipe that University of Nebraska Medical Center researchers used in their study of colds. The study found that this chicken soup did help to relieve cold symptoms.

So Grandma was right.

Your own simpler version of the soup might work as well.

Ingredients

- 1 stewing hen or baking chicken (5 to 6 pounds)
- 1 small package of chicken wings
- 3 large onions, peeled and cut up
- 1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut up
- 3 parsnips, peeled and cut up
- 2 turnips, peeled and cut up
- 11 to 12 large carrots, peeled and cut up
- 1 bunch of parsley, stems cut off
- 5 to 6 celery stems, cut up
- 1 package matzoh meal (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

- Clean chicken, put it in a large pot (canner size), and cover with cold water. Bring water to a boil. Add chicken wings, onions, sweet potato, parsnips, turnips and carrots. Boil about 1½ hours. Remove fat from the surface as it accumulates.
- Add parsley and celery. Cook mixture about 45 minutes longer. Remove chicken and save for another use. (The meat makes fine chicken parmigiana.)
- Put vegetables in a food processor until chopped fine, or pass through a strainer. Salt and pepper to taste. (Note: This soup freezes well.)
- If you wish to add matzoh balls, follow the recipe on the box of matzoh meal.



Wholesome pumpkin bread

This bread is heavier than most quick breads because of its wholesome, low-fat ingredients. Try crowning each square with a dollop of light whipped topping and a sprinkle of nutmeg for a tasty, low-fat dessert. Allow 15 minutes for preparation.

Ingredients

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 cup unbleached flour
- ¾ cup whole-wheat flour
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup oat bran
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt (optional)
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- ½ cup egg substitute (equal to 2 eggs)
- ½ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray an 8x8-inch pan with nonstick cooking spray.
- In a medium bowl, combine unbleached flour, whole-wheat flour, sugar, oat bran, baking soda, salt, baking powder, allspice, cinnamon and ground cloves.
- In a larger bowl, mix pumpkin with egg substitute, unsweetened applesauce and vanilla extract until well-blended.
- Stir flour mixture into pumpkin mixture just until flour is moistened. Pour into pan.
- Bake for 50 to 60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Nutrition facts

Nutrition facts		% Daily Value*	
Serving size 1 piece		Total fat 1g	2%
Makes 9 servings		Saturated fat trace	0%
		Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Amount per serving		Sodium 186mg	8%
Calories 187		Carbohydrate 40g	13%
Calories from fat 9		Protein 5g	

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

Source: Brenda J. Ponichtera, RD, *Quick & Healthy Volume II* (ScaleDown Publishing, Inc.), available at www.quickandhealthy.net. Reprinted with permission.

Source: *Chest*, Vol. 118, No. 4



How to add a dependent to your Contra Costa health plan

Contra Costa Health Plan offers several options to meet the needs of members in many different situations. The chart below shows if your plan offers dependent coverage and what to

do to add a dependent to your plan.

A dependent can be added to your plan during Open Enrollment or during a Qualifying Event. You will be

notified if Open Enrollment applies to you. A Qualifying Event can include marriage, birth or legal adoption of a minor child. It is important that you contact the appropriate

office within 30 days (for most plans) after the marriage, birth or adoption, or you may lose the chance to add your dependent right away.

Still confused? Feel free to contact CCHP Marketing, and we will help you enroll new members of your family. Call **800-211-8040**, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Your plan	Are dependents covered?	What to do
Value Basic, Value Plus and Family Plans	Yes	Call CCHP at 800-211-8040 .
Employer Group Coverage	Depends on the employer	Contact your Human Resources Benefits Administrator.
IHSS (In-Home Support Services)	No	Your children may be eligible for Healthy Families or an individual plan. Call CCHP at 800-211-8040 .
County Employees Plan A and Plan B	Yes	Call the county's Benefits Department at 925-335-1740 .
County Superior Court	Yes	Contact your Human Resources Benefits Administrator.
County A2 plan for Temp or Permanent Intermittent or ARC Employees	Yes	Call CCHP at 800-211-8040 .
AIM (Access for Infants and Mothers)	Yes	Call Healthy Families at 800-880-5305 .
MRMIP (Major Risk Medical Insurance Program)	Yes	You can add children to MRMIP, but there are other options for you to consider. Call CCHP at 800-211-8040 .
Healthy Families	No	Children born to Healthy Families members may be eligible for Medi-Cal. Call 800-880-5305 .
Medi-Cal	Yes	Call the Medi-Cal Service Center at 866-663-3225 .
Senior Health	No	Your child(ren) may be eligible for other coverage. Call CCHP at 800-211-8040 .
SelectCare	No	Your child(ren) may be eligible for other coverage. Call CCHP at 800-211-8040 .

We're here to serve you

Contra Costa Health Plan's Member Services Department consists of well-trained, experienced, knowledgeable and friendly representatives who are here to answer your questions, address your concerns and help you navigate and understand our health care delivery system better.

Here are some helpful hints from our representatives:

- Always have your CCHP ID card or that of your spouse or child when calling Member Services.
- Always have pen and paper handy when calling Member Services.
- Avoid calling during peak times such as Mondays and mornings from 8 to 10 a.m.
- Ask for assistance in your language—we have interpreters, and we're always happy to answer your questions!
- Don't wait until you are on your last pill. Request a refill at least a week in advance.
- Call our Advice Nurse for advice with nonemergency conditions.
- Keep all of your appointments. If you can't make it to your appointment, call and cancel it as soon as possible. The fewer you miss, the better your future appointment options will be!
- Always carry your CCHP ID card to all appointments and



present it at the pharmacy. If you have regular Medicare coverage also, present your Medicare card along with your CCHP ID card.

- When visiting your doctor, have a list of all the medications you are taking, how much and how often. This information is extremely helpful.

- Complete all paperwork that you receive from the state if you are on a state-sponsored program, such as AIM, MRMIP,

Healthy Families or Medi-Cal.

- Refer to your Evidence of Coverage for more information regarding your plan, such as plan benefits and limitations and how the plan works.

By observing these suggestions, you will help us serve you better! As always, if you have questions, please call our Member Services Department at **877-661-6230 (press 2)**. We are here to help you!



Don't let stress harm your health

Everyone has to deal with some stress. But too much stress is not good for your health.

Too much stress can cause you to feel depressed. It can also weaken your body's ability to fight illnesses and increase your chances of getting sick.

Having too much stress in your life may make you feel anxious and tired and cause you to have trouble sleeping. Stress can also cause back pain, headaches, an upset stomach and high blood pressure.

You can't get rid of all the stress in your life. But you can take steps to reduce your stress levels and help yourself feel better. You can:

Make time for yourself. Do your best to get organized. Try to set a routine and follow it. And

don't forget to set aside time for fun and relaxing activities.

Take care of yourself. Eat healthy foods and exercise often. Be sure to get plenty of sleep.

Stay positive. Think about good things. Try not to worry about things you can't control—like the weather.

You can take steps to reduce stress and feel better.

Reach out to others.

Work to resolve conflicts. Talk to family and friends about your problems.

If you think stress is making you sick or feel you can no longer cope, talk to your doctor right away.

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians

Moving? Let us know!

As a reminder, it's very important to keep your address current with CCHP. We frequently mail important member materials that could affect your coverage. If you are unsure if we have your latest address, or if you have recently moved, call us at **877-661-6230 (press 2)**.

Check out our website

CCHP is proud to unveil its newly redesigned website! Now you can go online and:

- Get answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- Read important health facts and wellness tips.
- Find benefit information.
- See provider listings for your area.
- Even e-mail CCHP.
- And more!

Check out our new look at www.contracostahealthplan.org.

**Contra Costa Health Plan
A Culture of Caring**



health
sense

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HEALTH SENSE may also contain general information about plan benefits. Plan benefits vary, and for information about your particular benefit plan, please see your Evidence of Coverage booklet or call Member Services at 877-661-6230.

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