



# healthy kids **NOW**

## Cyberbullying: Keeping kids safe online

While the bullies of the past did their dirty work on the playground, bullies now often go unseen and unknown. Today's bullies walk the virtual streets of cyberspace.

### What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying, also called electronic aggression, occurs when someone uses electronic media — the Internet, a cell phone, or another device — to send or post messages or images in order to emotionally hurt or embarrass another person. For example, a teen might pretend to be someone else online to trick a classmate into giving personal information. Or someone might post sensitive information about another person, or send a teasing or threatening instant message.

Cyberbullying is not harmless. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that victims of cyberbullying often experience emotional distress and behavior problems in school.

According to a study reported in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, nearly 20 percent of sixth to eighth graders have some experience with cyberbullying. And many researchers believe electronic aggression is on the rise. For example, another study reported in the same journal found a 50 percent increase in the percentage of teens who were victims of online harassment from 2000 to 2005.

### Steps to help protect your child

There are measures adults can take to help teens stay safe and act responsibly as they use today's technology:

- Keep the computer in a "public" space, such as the family room or kitchen. Monitoring children's online activities may reduce the risk of them becoming victims or perpetrators of electronic aggression.
- Talk with your children about what they are doing online.
- Explain that cyberbullying is harmful behavior that you will not tolerate. Review your expectations for online behavior, and make it clear that there will be consequences for unacceptable behavior.
- Tell your children that you may review their online communications if you think there is reason for concern.

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- Consider installing parental control filtering software or tracking programs.

*Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Journal of Adolescent Health; National Crime Prevention Council*

## TIPS FOR TEENS FROM TEENS

Working with the National Crime Prevention Council, American teenagers have developed the following tips to stay safe online:

- Don't write, keep, or forward cyberbullying messages.
- Tell friends who are cyberbullying to stop.
- Block communication with cyberbullies.
- Report cyberbullying to a trusted adult.
- Remember: If you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online.

*Source: American Academy of Pediatrics*



# Encourage your kids to make healthy choices

Some kids are natural athletes. Others are happier picking dandelions in the outfield than getting in the game. And almost all children will run to the ice cream truck before they'll hit the veggie stand. Eating right and exercising are important for all young ones. Here's how to set yours down the path to a healthy life.

To control weight and fight disease, children and teens need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day of the week. Their diets should contain a variety of foods with healthy nutrients. And they should spend no more than one or two hours daily in front of the TV or computer. That's daunting enough for adults. How do you get your child to comply? These parenting strategies may help.

## Be a role model

Children learn from what you do more than what you say. Eat

plenty of healthy foods, like fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, and whole grains.

Ask kids to help plan and cook nutritious meals, and eat them together. Start a new family game — reading food labels at the grocery store and making the healthiest pick.

Avoid rewarding children with food. And set concrete goals and limits so kids know what to expect. For instance, allow two desserts — other than fruit — per week.



Set similar, hard-and-fast rules about screen time. Go through the TV listings together and pick shows you can watch together. When they're over, turn off the tube.

## Get kids moving

Make exercise a family affair, too. Plan active events together, like hiking or roller skating.

Don't force exercise or use it as a punishment. Instead, try balancing it with a less desired task. For instance, tell your children that they can put off homework for 30 minutes while they ride their bikes.

Tailor activities to your children's ages, abilities, and interests. Buy active toys, like balls, for little ones. As children grow, help them find activities they enjoy. These could include sports, yoga, dance, skateboarding, or walking. A love of fitness in youth leads to a healthy lifestyle for years to come.

*Sources: American Heart Association; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases*

# Find relief from spring allergies

The first hints of spring can be unwelcome for children who have allergies. Pollen that fills the air can keep your child from enjoying the outdoors. To get the most out of the season, you'll need to plan ahead. This checklist can help your family get ready:

- **Keep pollen at bay.** Run your air conditioner to keep pollen out of your home as much as possible, or purchase a portable air filter. Remember to change the filter according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- **Freshen up.** Change your child's clothes and have him or her take a shower after being outside to further cut pollen exposure.
- **Watch the clock.** Plan outdoor

activities before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m., when pollen counts are usually lower.

- **Use your dryer.** Clothes, sheets, and towels dried on a clothesline may smell nice, but they can trap pollen.
- **Plan wisely.** Watch the forecast, and plan outdoor activities for days when humidity is lower and winds are light to help reduce your child's pollen exposure.

*Source: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*



For more information on how you can take charge of your child's health and keep allergies under control, contact a Connections<sup>SM</sup> Health Coach at **1-800-ASK BLUE**. Health Coaches are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year at no charge to you to answer any health-related question.



## CHIP benefits update

Attached is the latest update to your child's CHIP benefits. Please review this information and keep the document with your child's CHIP Benefits Handbook (3/05). If you have questions about this update, call Customer Service at **1-800-464-5437**, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

## Set the table for more family time

Years ago, children would linger around the kitchen and ask, "What's for dinner?" These days, it's unusual to get the entire family, especially the kids, in the same spot at suppertime.

The problem, of course, is time — or lack of it. Families today are less likely to eat dinner together than they were 30 years ago. But don't write off family meals as ancient history. There's evidence that a little home cooking can help nurture your child the same way praise, hugs, and a healthy dose of parental involvement can.

### The benefits of family bonding

Family meals can help ease the stresses of daily living, evidence suggests. They also may help enhance well-being and communication among family members.

They can even affect your youngster's health. Research shows that kids who have frequent family meals:

- eat more fruits and veggies;
- are less likely to be overweight;
- have fewer eating disorders;
- get higher grades;
- are less depressed.

### Try a new family tradition

Want to cook up some family fun? Try these ideas:

- Look at your family's schedule and try to set up at least four family meals each week. Plan ahead and cook meals that can be frozen and reheated, such as soups and casseroles.
- Keep a set mealtime whenever possible. Ideally, your family should eat three meals each day, with one or two snacks.
- Allow kids to plan at least one weekly family meal. If they can help prepare it, that's even better.
- Try to avoid fast food during mealtime. Look at family meals as an opportunity to introduce your kids to new, healthy foods.
- Don't worry about being a "top chef." Keep meals simple — just keep it together as a family. No time to do dishes one evening? Then have a picnic, indoors or out, with paper plates and plastic utensils.

*Sources: Journal of the American Dietetic Association; Journal of Adolescent Health; American Dietetic Association*

## CHIP: remember to renew

The Caring Foundation verifies children's eligibility for CHIP once each year. Your child's renewal form will be mailed to your home every year 90 days prior to the anniversary of his or her enrollment. To avoid your child's coverage being cancelled, it is extremely important that you complete the renewal form and return it to the Caring Foundation as soon as possible.



You have two choices:

- Go to **[www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us)**, and submit your child's renewal information online.
- Complete the form you receive in the mail and return it to the foundation.

In either case, you must sign the signature page and mail it back along with copies of your current income documentation.



All models are used for illustrative purposes only.

## Sexually transmitted diseases hit girls hard

One in four girls 14 to 19 has at least one STD, says a study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The list includes chlamydia, human papillomavirus (HPV), herpes simplex virus, gonorrhea, syphilis, and trichomoniasis. Testing for chlamydia and vaccination for HPV are recommended for all young girls. While some STDs hit girls harder, millions of teen boys also have STDs.

“Talk with your child. Research shows that two-thirds of teens across all socioeconomic classes experience some sexual contact by the time they graduate from high school,” says Margaret J. Blythe, M.D., chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Committee on Adolescence.

Ask your family doctor or pediatrician about STDs during a visit with your teen. Teens who want to talk to the doctor alone should have the right to do so.

The AAP backs age-appropriate sex education for teens, that includes discussions about abstinence and medically sound advice on how to prevent STDs and pregnancy.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Independence Blue Cross & Highmark Blue Shield

Caring Foundation



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## Good oral habits give teens a reason to smile

By age 13, many teens will have 28 permanent teeth. For an image-conscious teen, the idea of teeth stains, missing teeth, and bad breath is ample reason to keep up with their oral care regimen. But their lifestyles can keep dental decay knocking on their door. Why?

- Soft drinks, sports drinks, and juice are all popular for teens, but in large amounts, they can damage teeth. Sipping through straws and rinsing with water afterward can help limit the sugar remaining in the mouth.
- On-the-go lifestyles can mean frequent snacking and less time at home. Chewing sugar-free gum and drinking plenty of water throughout the day can flush out acids that are created by bacteria from sugar in the mouth.
- Convenience is key. A well-stocked bathroom with plenty of floss and toothpastes, and a kitchen full of mouth-healthy snacks like cheeses, fruits, and veggies, will help keep teens smiling bright.

- Sealants, a covered CHIP benefit, also can help keep cavities away. Dental sealants, which are clear plastic materials applied to teeth by a dentist, have proven to be an effective means of preventing plaque buildup in the grooves on the chewing surfaces of molars and premolars. Check with your CHIP participating dentist to discuss sealants.

With proper care and tooth-friendly eating habits, teens' smiles can remain healthy for a lifetime.

Source: United Concordia Companies, Inc.

