



healthy kids **NOW**

Sniffle or sneeze? No antibiotics, please!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has news for parents this cold and flu season: Antibiotics don't work for a cold or the flu.

Antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses. And colds, flu, and most sore throats are caused by viruses. Antibiotics don't touch viruses — never have, never will. And it's not really news. It's a long-documented medical fact. Research shows that many Americans have either missed the message about appropriate antibiotic use or they simply don't believe it. It's a case of mistaken popular belief winning out over fact. According to public opinion research, there is a perception that "antibiotics cure everything."

When antibiotics are incorrectly used to treat children with viral infections, such as colds and flu, they



aren't getting the best care for their condition. A course of antibiotics won't fight the virus, make the child feel better, yield a quicker recovery, or keep others from getting sick.

Risk of antibiotic resistance

The problem is, taking antibiotics when they are not needed can do more harm than good. Widespread inappropriate use of antibiotics is fueling an increase in drug-resistant bacteria. And sick individuals aren't the only people who can suffer the consequences. Families and entire communities feel the impact when

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disease-causing germs become resistant to antibiotics.

Antibiotic overuse gives a boost to drug-resistant, disease-causing bacteria. Almost every type of bacteria has become stronger and less responsive to antibiotic treatment when it really is needed. These antibiotic-resistant bacteria can quickly spread to family members, school-mates, and neighbors, threatening the community with a new strain of infectious disease that is more difficult to cure and more expensive to treat.

According to the CDC, antibiotic resistance is one of the world's most pressing public health problems. Americans of all ages can lower this risk by talking with their doctors and using antibiotics appropriately during this cold and flu season.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

WHAT TO DO FOR COLDS AND FLU

- Children with viral infections recover when the illness has run its course. Colds caused by viruses may last for two weeks or longer.
- Measures that can help your child with a cold or flu feel better:
 - Increase fluid intake.
 - Use a cool mist vaporizer or saline nasal spray to relieve congestion.
- Soothe your child's throat with ice chips, sore throat spray, or lozenges (for older children).
- Viral infections may sometimes lead to bacterial infections. Parents should keep their child's doctor informed if the illness gets worse or lasts a long time. Any time your child has a sore throat that persists

(one that doesn't go away after your child's first drink of juice in the morning), whether or not it is accompanied by fever, headache, stomachache, or extreme fatigue, you should call your child's primary care physician.

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

Keeping your child healthy

You made a smart choice when you decided to get CHIP health insurance for your child. But now that your child is covered, are you using that insurance? Or, do you have the insurance “just in case”?

Many parents don't realize how important regular medical care is in keeping kids healthy and preventing manageable conditions from becoming emergencies that require immediate attention. For example, by regularly taking your child to the doctor for routine care, you and your child can stay on top of conditions such as asthma, obesity, or diabetes.

Routine “well visits” to your child's health care provider are also important. During these visits, your child's doctor can give any necessary immunizations, check your child's height, weight, and development, and perform other health screenings, such as vision, hearing, and blood pressure. Your child might have blood work done to check for diabetes, anemia, lead poisoning, and cholesterol levels. Your child's doctor

also can monitor any chronic condition your child might have, such as asthma, diabetes, or sickle cell disease, to make sure your child is receiving the right treatment and medications.

The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that children should see their doctor for well visits a few days after birth, two to four weeks after birth, then at 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24, and 30 months of age. From 3 to 18 years of age, children should have a physical every year. Remember, these visits are in addition to any visit your child might have with a specialist or for an illness or injury.

For a copy of the *Member Wellness Guidelines*, please call Customer Service at **1-800-464-5437**. The *Wellness Guidelines* are a list of nationally recommended tests and screenings for all ages. For more information about important immunizations for your child, visit the Gen Y Health Club® website of Independence Blue Cross at www.ibx.com/gen-y2 or the *Vaccines & Immunizations* page of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.

Source: IBC Health & Wellness Department

Does your child get enough vitamin D? The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is doubling the amount of vitamin D it recommends for infants, children, and adolescents. Now, the AAP recommends all children receive 400 IU a day of vitamin D beginning right after birth. Vitamin D is important in helping the body absorb calcium

and helping it form and maintain strong bones. Not enough vitamin D can lead to rickets, which can lead to bone deformities. All infants receiving breast milk need a vitamin D supplement. Talk with your child's doctor to make sure your infant, child, or adolescent is getting enough vitamin D.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Give your child a shot at good health

Please talk with your child's doctor about the following immunizations (shots):

- influenza (flu)
- pneumococcal
- rotavirus
- measles-mumps-rubella — MMR
- haemophilus influenzae — Hib
- inactivated poliovirus
- diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (whooping cough) — Tdap or DTaP
- varicella (chickenpox)
- hepatitis A and B
- meningococcal
- human papillomavirus — HPV

Depending on your child's age and any other health conditions, your child's doctor may recommend more or different vaccinations.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Teen depression warning signs

All too often, depression is left untreated because people fail to recognize the symptoms and believe that it is just normal sadness, a phase that a teen is going through, or a sign of weakness. This can be a terrible mistake. It is important to know the symptoms so that you can distinguish depression from occasional normal sadness or moodiness.

Common symptoms of depression include:

- sad or irritable mood
- loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- large changes in appetite or weight
- difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- slow or agitated movement
- loss of energy
- feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- difficulty concentrating
- frequent thoughts of death or suicide

Most teens experience some of these symptoms occasionally, but if a teen has a number of these symptoms for more than a few weeks, he or she is likely to have major depression and may need professional help. Teenagers often show depression in other ways as well.

Some other signs to watch for include:

- frequent headaches, muscle aches, stomach aches or tiredness, without a medical cause;
- frequent absences from school or poor performance in school;
- talk of or efforts to run away from home;
- being bored, sulking;
- lack of interest in spending time with friends or family;
- alcohol or substance abuse;
- social isolation, poor communication;
- fear of death;



- extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure;
- increased irritability, anger, hostility, or crying;
- reckless behavior;
- neglect of clothes and appearance;
- difficulty with relationships;
- changes in mood.

It is important to establish a dialogue with your teen. Be sure to listen and talk with him or her when you are concerned. Let your child know that you care and will help him or her get help.

If your child displays these warning signs, contact our behavioral health organization at **1-800-294-0800**. They will assist you in finding an appropriate provider.

Source: National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

You have the right to appeal

Appeals about your child's CHIP benefits for medical, dental, vision, behavioral health, or prescription drug services should be directed to Keystone Health Plan East. These appeals are called:

- **Complaints** when you question limits or exclusions from the "CHIP Benefits Handbook," a provider's services or network status, or certain other issues;
- **Grievances** when you disagree with a request denied as experimental, cosmetic, or not medically necessary or for other reasons that mainly raise medical or clinical issues

These appeals must be sent to:

Keystone Health Plan East
Member Appeals Department
P.O. Box 41820
Philadelphia, PA 19101-1820
Phone: 1-888-671-5276
Fax: 1-888-671-5274

If you have any questions about your appeal rights, or if you need assistance in filing an appeal, you may contact Customer Service at **1-800-464-5437**, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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 Foundation as soon as possible.

You have two choices:

- Go to 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.



Turn down, seal off, save up

Temperatures are dropping, but home heating costs are climbing — which may make it difficult to stay warm through the winter. Pennsylvania is doing everything possible to provide financial help and grants to pay home heating bills and weatherization expenses. Making sure you have the resources to outlast winter, however, starts with you. With a little planning and knowledge, you can protect yourself and your family from the cold, and your heat can last all winter. When you act, you save — as much as \$740 per year. For tips, financial aid, and resources on staying warm and saving up, visit www.TurnSealSave.org, or call **1-866-550-4355**.

Source: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



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TRUE OR FALSE ?

It is not too late for your child to get the flu shot.

This statement is true.

The flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May, but people can continue to get vaccinated throughout the winter months. Though it is still possible for your child to get the flu, it will likely be a milder case than if he or she did not get the flu shot. So, play it safe — make sure your child receives a flu shot this season.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Most meningococcal
diseases can be prevented with vaccinations.**

This statement is true.

Meningococcal diseases are serious illnesses caused by bacteria that infect the spinal canal and the brain. Though it cannot prevent all types of the disease, the meningococcal vaccine is highly recommended for all children ages 11 to 12, unvaccinated adolescents entering high school, other adolescents who wish to decrease their risk, and all college freshmen living in dormitories. Please talk with your child's primary care physician about making sure your child is up to date for this and all other vaccinations.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention