It’s natural for children to crave connection with family and friends. Being stuck inside, changes in daily routines, and not being able to see loved ones is a lot to handle.

But, social distancing doesn’t mean your children need to cut out all human contact. In fact, keeping in touch with others can help reduce stress, anxiety, and fear. Here are a few ways your children can stay connected while staying safe at home.

Make Connection Part of Your Child’s Routine
Making a schedule can help things feel a little more normal. Write a list of your child’s friends and family members. Then, try to contact one person each day. Call them on the phone, check in with a text, send an email, write a letter, or video chat. Even spending time with a pet, like taking a daily dog walk, may help your child feel better.

Enjoy Social Media Time
Child-friendly social media apps, like Kids Messenger on Facebook, are great ways for children to keep in touch with friends and family. Keep an eye on how much time your children spend on social media, though.

Create Special Moments
Boost your child’s mood and give them something to look forward to by planning special events. Take the fun outside — play catch or tag, take a walk, or build a snowman. Just remember to stay 6 feet away from others. You can also use video chat apps to:
- Set up a virtual playdate with your child’s friends
- Host a talent show
- Watch a TV show or movie with loved ones
- Play a game or do a craft

Sources: American Psychological Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Mental Health America; The Lancet

Independence Blue Cross offers products through its subsidiaries Independence Hospital Indemnity Plan, Keystone Health Plan East and QCC Insurance Company, and with Highmark Blue Shield – independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.
Coronavirus Facts for Children

There's been a lot of talk about the coronavirus on TV, social media, and just about everywhere else. If your children are asking questions, stay calm and reassuring when answering them. Children pick up cues from what you say and how you say it.

Here are basic facts you can use to share information with your children (without scaring them):

- There are many types of coronaviruses. Many have mild symptoms, which means they're not that scary. For example, the common cold is caused by a coronavirus.
- The new coronavirus you have been hearing about is called COVID-19.
- People in many parts of the world — including the U.S. — have COVID-19.
- Most people with COVID-19 don’t get really sick. But even if you feel fine, you can still give it to other people.
- If someone is exposed to the virus, it can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show up. Symptoms may include:
  - Fever or chills
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or having trouble breathing
  - Feeling really tired
  - Muscle or body aches
  - Headache
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- COVID-19 is very contagious. That's why it's so important to stay at least 6 feet away from people when you go out in public. This is called social distancing. And it's the reason most crowded places have been closed.
- Wash your hands with soap and water — a lot! Not only can this keep you healthy and protect you from COVID-19, but this also protects you from catching a cold or the flu. Be sure to scrub for at least 20 seconds (that’s like singing the “Happy Birthday” song twice).
- You should avoid touching your mouth, nose, and eyes. These are places where germs can get into your body.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says to wear a cloth face mask with at least two fabric layers in public where it's hard to stay 6 feet away from other people (like grocery stores). Masks can be made from a T-shirt, bandanna, or other cotton fabric at home. Make sure your mask covers your mouth and nose.

Parents: Check out information you can trust at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; World Health Organization
Could Your Child Have Autism?

It can be hard to spot the signs of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in your child. Telling the difference between a child who is a late bloomer and one who has ASD can be difficult sometimes.

So, what exactly is ASD? What symptoms should you look for? And if your child has autism, what are the best ways to help them?

Understanding ASD
Autism can cause your child to behave, interact, and learn differently than other children. This can make daily life challenging.

Infants with ASD may not show an interest in people’s smiles, voices, and gestures. Other ASD symptoms begin before age 3 and may include:

- Lining up toys or always playing with toys the same way
- Being slow to start talking
- Not responding to their name by 12 months of age
- Not pointing out interesting objects by 14 months of age
- Doing repetitive movements, such as spinning, flapping their hands, or rocking their body

Supporting Children with Special Needs During COVID-19

Does your child have a chronic health condition? Or an emotional or developmental disability? If so, you may find that they are having a strong reaction to the extra stress the COVID-19 pandemic brings.

Paying attention to behavior can help you understand how well your child is coping. Follow these four steps to help support your child:

1. **Make decisions based on your child’s developmental level.** This includes choosing what basic facts and language to use when talking about COVID-19.
2. **Keep to your child’s prior routine as much as you can.** Adapt it for home. Include things like times for getting dressed, taking medicine, exercising, and other key tasks.
3. **Comfort your child often.** Think about what works best for them, such as more or less physical contact. Talk about their feelings, too.
4. **Help your child feel more in control.** Explain how good habits, like washing hands a lot to kill germs, can keep everyone safe.

Talk with your child’s doctor if you have questions or need extra help.

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

Helping Your Child Thrive

It’s important to get the diagnosis early. Start by talking with your child’s pediatrician about your concerns and asking for a screening for ASD. If the doctor doesn’t agree that your child could have autism, don’t stop there. Ask for a referral to a specialist, such as a child psychologist or developmental pediatrician. You can also ask about early intervention programs in your area.

Sources: Autism Research; National Institutes of Health; American Academy of Pediatrics; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Getting Ready for a Doctor’s Visit

Some health care visits, like well-child checkups or treatments for a chronic condition, need to be done in person. Remember that doctors’ offices are taking steps to protect you and your children from COVID-19. Here is what you and your children can do to get ready for a doctor’s visit:

• Wear a mask or cloth face covering inside the doctor’s office. It should cover your mouth and nose.
• Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizer when you can’t wash them.
• Try not to touch things that are touched often by a lot of people.
• Stay at least 6 feet away from other people in the waiting room.
• Don’t touch your face, nose, eyes, or mouth.

When you get home, take off your mask carefully using the ear straps/string only. Fold the mask, corner to corner, and place it in the laundry. Do not re-wear a dirty mask. Wash your hands again as soon as you get home and after taking off a mask.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Don’t Skip Well-Child Visits

Here’s something you don’t want your child to miss: well-child visits. Children who skip these visits can fall behind on vaccines they need to stay healthy. As a result, they may face an increased risk for emergency room visits.

Well-child appointments are the time for vaccinations, important health screenings, and checks of your child’s development. They’re also a chance for you to ask questions and voice concerns. Follow the tips below to help make the process easier.

Know when to go. Well-child visits are recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for babies and toddlers at 3 to 5 days old, then at months 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24, and 30. Starting at 3 years old, children and teens need one visit every year through age 21.

Make scheduling easy. Take advantage of phone, text, or email appointment reminders. Schedule well-child visits at the same time each year to help you remember.

Understand the big wellness benefits. Every well-child visit covers a wide range of health needs. Depending on your child’s age, these might include:

• Vaccines
• A physical exam
• Vision, hearing, cholesterol, and blood pressure checks
• Lead assessments and blood lead testing
• Screenings for developmental delays and autism spectrum disorder
• An assessment of your child’s emotional health
• For teenagers, time for confidential conversations about issues such as drinking, smoking, drugs, sexual activity, and depression

Keep up with your growing child. Children’s minds and bodies grow fast. Well visits help you keep up with what they need now. Most of these appointments last 11 to 20 minutes. That gives you time to talk about topics like:

• Healthy eating
• Sleeping
• Physical activity
• How your child is doing in school, at home, and in extracurricular activities

Strengthen your relationship with your child’s doctor. Chat away! Conversations with the pediatrician are a great way to build a relationship with them. And by speaking freely, you’re adding more details to your child’s health history. This helps the doctor better understand what your child needs.

Sources: American Journal of Preventive Medicine; Pediatrics; American Academy of Pediatrics; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Keep Children Healthy with Vaccines

Why Vaccinate?

VACCINES CAN HELP YOUR CHILDREN GROW UP HEALTHY. THEY HELP PROTECT AGAINST SERIOUS DISEASES.

Vaccines have reduced or even gotten rid of many diseases in the U.S. — like polio.

Vaccines protect children from complications — like hearing loss or paralysis — that come with diseases.

Vaccines can help children grow up healthy. They help protect against serious diseases.

Vaccines protect the people around you, like those with weak immune systems and babies too young to get shots. When more people are vaccinated, it’s harder for diseases to spread.

Research shows that vaccines do not cause autism or sudden infant death syndrome.

Measles Is on the Rise in the U.S.

The number of measles infections is going up. Most likely because of a drop in vaccination rates.

Measles spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

About 1 in 5 people in the U.S. who get measles will need to go to the hospital.

Measles is really contagious. If one person has it, up to 90% of the people around them will become infected if they are not protected.

Getting the vaccine is your best defense.

By age 2, your child should receive vaccines for 14 diseases.

Visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules to view the immunization schedule for children.
6 Ways to Boost Your Child’s Gut Health

Every apple slice, chicken nugget, and spoonful of peanut butter that your child eats goes through their digestive system. This is where it gets broken down into fuel and nutrients. A healthy gastrointestinal (GI) tract helps your child thrive. But sometimes, this amazing system needs a little TLC.

Whether you’re worried about constipation, diarrhea, tummy aches, or just want to bolster your child’s digestive health, these strategies can help:

1. **Feed the good bacteria.** Fiber in grains, fruits, and veggies helps keep gut bacteria healthy — especially fiber types found in whole grains (like whole wheat bread and brown rice), bananas, and berries. Getting plenty of fiber from food can also help with constipation. Children need about 14 to 31 grams of fiber daily.

2. **Add more probiotics to the mix.** These live cultures can add good bacteria to your child’s GI tract. Yogurt, kefir, and aged cheese are all good choices. Or, choose foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, and nondairy yogurt.

3. **Cut back on processed foods.** A diet packed with chips, fast food, packaged cookies, and processed meat can hurt the gut. Artificial sweeteners can also mess with good bacteria.

4. **Play with pets.** Being around furry pets early in life is good for babies. Why? Because it can promote a healthy mix of bacteria in their digestive systems. This good bacteria bonus may even help protect children against asthma and some allergies.

5. **Say ‘no thanks’ to some antibiotics.** Antibiotics can knock out bad infections and cure strep throat. But they can kill off helpful gut bacteria at the same time. Use these drugs only when needed. Don’t use them unless your child’s doctor says they are needed.

6. **Know when to see the doctor.** Make an appointment if your child has constipation for more than two weeks, or if they have any ongoing symptoms that concern you, such as:
   - Stomach pain
   - Vomiting
   - Diarrhea
   - Bloating
   - Bloody stool

The doctor may send your child to a pediatric gastroenterologist, an expert who can treat GI health concerns in children and teens.

Sources: Yonsei Medical Journal; Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology; Gut Microbes; American Academy of Family Physicians; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Harvard Health Publishing; National Institutes of Health; Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; American Academy of Pediatrics
Snow Day Tips to Beat Winter Cabin Fever

When it’s cold outside and your children are stuck inside, what do you do? It’s easy to run out of ways to keep them occupied. But you can squelch cabin fever with these ideas.

Fun Resources
Point your children to safe, educational, and fun resources on the internet. Visit www.brainpop.com, a group of interactive websites for students in grades K-12. It offers hundreds of short animated movies, learning games, quizzes, and more for free — other parts of the website have a cost. Other kid-friendly resources you can trust include:
• pbskids.org
• kids.nationalgeographic.com
• usmint.gov/learn/kids
• ready.gov/kids

Get Moving
Just because your children are stuck inside doesn’t mean they have to be couch potatoes. Suggest these ideas to get them moving:
• Choreograph a dance to their favorite songs.
• Get out the hula hoop and count how many times you can spin it around before it falls.
• Bat a balloon back and forth and try not to let it hit the ground.
• Pretend to be different types of animals and imitate how they walk, slink, or scurry.
• Build a fort in the living room — it’ll take several trips to the bedroom to retrieve the blankets and pillows you need!

Break Out
If the weather is nice, why not go outside with your children for a while? For example, you could:
• Bundle up and embark on a nature hike.
• Do a winter scavenger hunt.
• Go ice-skating.
• Use food coloring to paint snow.
• Blow bubbles and see if they freeze.
• Help a neighbor shovel.
• Enjoy a night of stargazing.

Let’s Make Leaf Paintings!
Take a walk and see how many kinds of leaves you can collect. Bring them home to make leaf art. It is a fun and colorful way to learn about the amazing types of trees in your neighborhood!

DIRECTIONS:
• Place a leaf on a piece of paper.
• Dip an old toothbrush in paint. Use as many colors as you want!
• Use your thumb or the edge of a Popsicle/craft stick to pull the bristles of the toothbrush toward you. Pointing the spraying paint away from you, spray it at the paper and around the edges of the leaf.
• Remove the leaf to see its shape — and your work of art!

If it’s snowing, warm up by starting a game of tag, building an igloo, making snow angels, having a snowball fight, or going sledding.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Remember to Renew!

We hope you love Keystone HMO CHIP (Keystone) coverage as much as we love having your child as a member!

When it comes to your child’s health, it’s important to ensure your membership is updated and renewed. Once a year, we verify your child’s eligibility for Keystone coverage. You will receive a Change Reminder Notice 120 days before the anniversary of enrollment. If we are unable to systematically renew your child’s Keystone coverage, you’ll also receive an additional renewal notice 90 days, and then 60 days, before the enrollment anniversary. These Change Reminder Notices state that we will attempt to review your child’s eligibility by using data available through federal and state databases. This includes your:

- Income
- Employment
- Household size
- Marital status
- Address and medical insurance coverage

If there are no changes to this information (i.e., current income is similar to the income you previously reported to us), then you’re all set. The renewal will be processed automatically, and we won’t need any further documentation from you.

If there are changes to this information, we’ll send you a letter and Renewal Form. Please complete the Renewal Form, include all income documentation and send it back to us at Keystone Health Plan East as soon as possible. The sooner you respond to the request, the more time there will be to resolve any questions and ensure your child’s Keystone coverage remains active.

Be sure to follow the instructions on the Notice and Renewal Form. If you have questions about this renewal process, you can call the Keystone Member Help Team at 1-800-464-5437 (TTY/TDD: 711).

Information to Know About Your Health Plan

Every year, we send you important updates about your health benefits with Keystone HMO CHIP. If you would like this information mailed to you or have any questions, call the Keystone HMO CHIP Member Help Team at 1-800-464-5437.

At www.ibx.com/CHIPhealtharticles, you can find helpful information about:

- Member rights and responsibilities
- Physician review, utilization management, and language services
- Finding a network provider
- How to plan for your doctor visit
- Independence standards for doctors, appointments, wait times, hours, and access
- Working with your PCP
- Hospital care procedures
- Differences between emergency care and urgent care
- Evaluating new and emerging technologies
- Quality Management Program
- Transitioning from pediatric to adult care
- Using coverage when traveling
- Reaching multilingual Customer Service
- Registered Nurse Health Coach support
- Submitting a claim
- Making an appeal or a complaint

Learn more about your Keystone HMO CHIP benefits, copayments, and pharmaceutical management procedures by visiting www.ibx.com/CHIP and go to “Member Resources” to access the following information about the Keystone HMO CHIP program:

- Benefits at a Glance
- Benefits Handbook
- Select Drug Program® Formulary

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ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Líame al 1-800-275-2583 (TTY/TDD: 711).

注意: 如果您使用繁体中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-800-275-2583 (TTY/TDD: 711).

Sí necesita ayuda para traducir esta información, por favor comuníquese con el departamento de servicios a miembros de Independence Blue Cross al 1-800-464-5437. Estos servicios están disponibles de lunes a viernes, de 8 a.m. a 6 p.m. Usuarios del sistema TTY deberán llamar al 711.