

# healthy kids now

WINTER 2018



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Yes, I want to be contacted by automated text message. Message and data rates may apply. Not required for the purchase of goods and services from Independence Blue Cross.

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## Sign Up for Screening Reminders!

Get health screening reminders, plan notifications and cost-savings alerts with email and IBX Wire text messages. Sign up today at [www.ibx.com/CHIPconnect](http://www.ibx.com/CHIPconnect).

## Flu Shots Save Lives

**Y**ou may have heard that last season's flu vaccine wasn't very effective at stopping the flu. But that doesn't mean you or your child should skip it this year.

Some years, flu vaccines don't work as well as they could. But even so, they still save many lives.

### A Large Impact

In a recent study, researchers estimated the impact of lots of people getting the flu vaccine, even when it wasn't very effective.

They found that if 43 percent of Americans got the flu shot, it would still stop about:

- 21 million people from getting sick
- 130,000 hospital stays
- 62,000 deaths

### Important for Kids and Young Adults

The flu shot is the number one way to protect against the flu. That's why it's important to get a flu shot each year. The vaccine changes every year. It changes based on which viruses scientists believe will be common in that year's flu season.

Everyone 6 months and older should get the flu shot. And it's very crucial for school-age children and young adults ages 30 to 39. The flu is most likely to spread among this group.

By getting the shot, you'll protect yourself and your family. You can also protect older adults who have a high risk for flu-related problems.

*Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*

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# Talk with Your Child's Doctor About Antibiotics

**F**ever. Fussiness. Tugging at the ears. Many parents can easily spot the signs that their child has an ear infection. All you have to do is call the pediatrician for an antibiotic, right? Not exactly.

Sinus and ear infections or bronchitis often get better without

treatment. But research shows that many parents don't want to wait to give an antibiotic.

Talking openly with your primary care provider about antibiotics can help you learn when they're necessary and when they're not. Here are three important questions that can help guide your talk.

## 2. What can I do in the meantime to help my child feel better?

Your child may not need an antibiotic. But there are things you can do to help your child feel better. Ask your doctor which over-the-counter pain reliever may work best. Find out what dose to give your child and how often to give it.

If your child has an ear infection, holding a warm, damp cloth over the painful ear may help. If your child has bronchitis, using a humidifier may help. So can breathing in steam from a hot shower.

## 3. How will I know if my child needs an antibiotic?

An antibiotic may be needed if your child's symptoms don't get better (or worsen) after two to three days. Ask your doctor what to watch for and how to know when to call.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Journal of Applied Communication Research

### Don't Forget Checkups!

Annual well-child visits are a great time to ask your child's doctor questions just like this. At these visits, you can also make sure your child is up-to-date on screenings. With our online tool, you can stay on track in 2019 by checking which screenings your child needs. To access the tool, visit Preventive Care Guidelines at [www.ibx.com/CHIPpreventivecare](http://www.ibx.com/CHIPpreventivecare).

Select your child's gender and age, then click on "View your guidelines."

## 1. Why should I wait to give an antibiotic?

Many infections get better on their own. Waiting two to three days after your child's doctor diagnoses an infection gives you time to see if this will happen. If it gets better, you'll avoid giving your child unneeded antibiotics. This is a good thing. Antibiotics can be helpful when they're needed, but there are risks to taking them. These include:

- Allergic reactions
- Severe diarrhea
- Higher chance for antibiotic-resistant infection

# Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease: What You Need to Know

**O**h, dear! Your child is grumpy, has a fever, and isn't eating well — again. Before you assume it's just another cold or flu, watch for other symptoms. Your young one may have hand, foot, and mouth disease.

## Symptoms

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is common in children younger than age 5. At first, your child will most likely have a fever, reduced appetite, and a sore throat. A day or two later, he or she may develop painful mouth sores that start as small red spots in the back of the mouth. Or he or she may develop a rash of blistering red spots on the hands, soles of feet, knees, elbows, genitals, or buttocks. No wonder your youngster is cranky!

## How It Spreads

Viruses cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. It spreads through contact with nose, throat, or blister fluids, or bowel movements. For example, it can be spread if you change a diaper and touch your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands. It can also spread by touching infected surfaces or breathing air after a sick child coughs or sneezes. Your child will be the most contagious during the first week of illness.

## How to Help Your Sick Child

Keep your child at home until he or she is well. There is no specific treatment, but you can help your little one feel more comfortable with:

- Over-the-counter pain relief medications to reduce pain and fever
- Numbing mouthwashes or sprays
- Lots of liquids to prevent dehydration

Older children and adults can sometimes catch it, too. There is no vaccine available yet. Reduce the risk for infection in your family by:

- Making sure everyone washes hands often
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoiding kissing, hugging, and sharing cups and utensils with people who are sick
- Disinfecting frequently touched surfaces in your home, like toys and doorknobs

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is usually mild and resolves within 7 to 10 days. Keep in mind that it is one of many infections that cause mouth sores and rashes. Your doctor will diagnose your child by looking at his or her symptoms.

As a parent, you can help your children avoid getting sick in the first place by encouraging lots of handwashing.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*





# Get Involved! Why After-School Activities Are a Great Idea for Students

**W**ant your kids to get better test scores and have lower chances of dropping out of school? Have them join an extracurricular activity.

Being involved in a club teaches kids responsibility and helps them practice leadership skills that will come in handy as they get older. It also fosters a sense of belonging and strong bonds with fellow students.

Whether your child loves swimming, singing, or helping others, there's an activity for any interest. Here are the benefits of a few popular choices.

## Sports

Sports are one of the most common hobbies. First of all, they help kids have fun and get daily exercise. But sports also help them learn about teamwork and fairness. Young athletes:

- Develop stronger bones and muscles
- Watch less TV
- Have more self-esteem

- Are more likely to stay active as they get older

Plus, students who play sports feel more supported by adults. They're also more likely to attend college — and eat their fruits and veggies!

## Music

Listening to a child blowing away on the tuba can be hard on your ears. Still, music lessons are worth it. Playing an instrument helps advance kids' hearing skills. It may improve their language abilities as well. Kids will also learn:

- Discipline
- Dedication
- Reasoning skills
- Fine motor movements

Plus, research shows that actively making music develops their spatial-temporal reasoning — an ability

considered to be a high-level mathematical skill.

## Volunteering

While the holidays are a common time for giving back, helping out is a great thing to do all year. Just one hour a week can make an impact. Plus, kids who volunteer are less likely to smoke or drink alcohol. They'll learn:

- Respect for others
- Patience
- How to relate to people who aren't like them

Need ideas? These are all good ways to give back:

- Walking dogs at an animal shelter
- Serving meals at a soup kitchen
- Joining a charity walk or run

Sources: National Center for Homeless Education, Frontiers in Neuroscience, The Educational and Developmental Psychologist, Corporation for National and Community Service, Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, National Council of Youth Sports

# Let It Snow! Keep Kids Safe in Winter Weather

**W**inter can be a wonderful time of year. But with that chilly weather comes a few safety concerns. Here's how to keep your kids happy and healthy during the colder months.

## Bundle Them Up Right

Several thin layers will keep kids warm and dry. Plus it's easier to quickly adjust if the temperature changes.

Start with an inner layer that holds heat, not moisture. Look for fabrics advertised as moisture-wicking. These will pull any wetness away from the skin. Next, top with an insulating layer like fleece. Then add an outer layer that's resistant to water and wind. When dressing young children, put on one extra layer of clothing than an adult would need. Finally, add mittens, waterproof boots (with two pairs of socks), a hat, plus a scarf or knit mask.

No matter what, do not layer with cotton. It traps moisture and will make your kids feel colder and heavier.

## Know When It's Too Cold

There are some cold-related injuries that you should be aware of. The first is hypothermia. Kids can get too cold faster than adults, especially if their clothes get wet. If you see a child shivering and acting clumsy, call **911**. They may also slur their speech and become sluggish. While you're waiting for help to arrive, take the child inside. Swap any cold, wet clothes with warm, dry ones. And wrap him or her in blankets.

You should also know the signs of frostbite. This is when the skin on fingers, toes, and noses becomes so cold that it freezes. The first sign is redness and tingling. You can prevent this by not letting kids play in weather that's too frigid and keeping them dry and bundled up.

If frostbite occurs, bring kids inside right away. Place the frostbitten parts of the body in warm water. Be careful not to use water that's too hot. A frostbitten nose can be warmed with body heat — the crook of the elbow, for instance. Do not rub the area, and do contact your doctor right away.

## Stay Safe While Having Fun

While sledding, kids should sit with feet first on a hill that isn't too crowded. It also shouldn't be too steep, covered in ice, or blocked by trees.

When ice skating, tell your kids to always skate in the same direction as everyone else. This helps them avoid crashing into others. And to prevent choking, never let them chew gum or any food while on the ice. Make sure their skiing or snowboarding gear fits properly. Helmets and goggles are a must for both activities. Kids grow fast, so don't assume the gear that fit last year will still fit properly.



## Need Help with Your Heating Bill?

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low-income families pay their heating bills. It is a grant — you do not have to repay it. To receive help:

- You do not have to be on public assistance
- You do not need to have an unpaid heating bill
- You can either rent or own your home

## How Do I Apply?

Apply online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us).

You can request an application by calling the local Philadelphia LIHEAP hotline at **215-560-1583** or toll-free at **1-866-857-7095**. Applications are also available at your local county assistance office. To learn more about heating assistance, visit [www.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.dhs.pa.gov), hover over the "Citizens" tab and click "Heating Assistance / LIHEAP"



# Little Bookworms: Reading to Your Kids Early Has Benefits that Last a Lifetime

If you've ever begged for just one more bedtime story, you know how wonderful a book can be. And when it comes to reading to your kids, it's never too early to start.

While reading to an infant, you might wonder how much they can understand. They may not know exactly what you're saying yet, but this is the time when their brains are quickly developing. The first few years set the stage for the rest of their lives — and reading is an important part of that.

Why? It strengthens their language skills, even when they're little. It also helps with the following:

- Introducing new and more complex vocabulary
- Visualizing images
- Understanding stories

## Kids and Parents Win

As babies grow into toddlers and beyond, reading is a window into another world. Through books, they can learn about what it's like in other places. Down the road, an early foundation of reading leads to greater success in school.

But the benefits don't stop there. A recent study in *Pediatrics* found that reading books to kids when they're young can improve their social and behavioral skills. That means greater emotional well-being and a higher quality of life.

There's even more good news: Reading to kids is helpful for parents, too. It strengthens the bond between a parent and child. It can even help reduce a parent's stress and depression.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics and Pediatrics

## What to Read When

Wondering what books will work best for your kids? Here are some ideas based on your child's age:



### Up to 12 months

Thick cardboard books are good for babies, who like to put things in their mouths. Look for a size they can hold.



### 1 to 2 years

Now is a great time to read books with sounds in them. You can also ask your child simple questions about what's happening in the stories.



### 2 to 3 years

This can be a good time to start a bedtime reading routine. Reading familiar books can help them ease into sleep.



### 5 years and older

Keep reading aloud to your kids, even after they can read for themselves. Try different types of books, like nursery rhymes, fairy tales, mysteries, and poetry. Keep it fun so that children don't think of reading as a chore. That might mean reading the same book over and over again if that's what your child picks!



## Making the Leap from Pediatric to Adult Care

**T**here comes a time when your child will need to switch from pediatric to adult care.

Pediatricians usually treat patients until the age of 21. But your child may not want to be seen in the pediatrician's office until age 21. And they may not know when or how they can switch to a new provider. As a parent, you can help by answering their questions and giving them information.

Is your teenager still being seen by a pediatrician? Discuss whether he or she wants to switch to an adult primary care physician. Ask at what age they'd prefer to make the switch. You can also talk about whether your child prefers to be seen by a female or male physician.

If your child wants to switch, be sure to review all your options. Your own primary care doctor may be able to see your child. Or your child may already have an idea of who he or she wants to see.

### Use Our Provider Finder Tool to Search for a CHIP Provider

**A**re you helping your child switch from pediatric to adult care? Keystone Health Plan East's CHIP program provides helpful information on network providers. Our Provider Finder tool makes it easy to search our broad network for a new primary care doctor.

With Provider Finder, you can search by name, location, or specialty. You can also access valuable information, such as:

- The provider's gender
- Hospital admitting privileges
- Languages spoken at the practice

The tool can also help you compare the qualifications of different network physicians. For girls of childbearing age, Find-a-Doctor can help with finding a gynecologist and/or obstetrician.

Access the tool at [www.ibx.com/individuals/find\\_provider/index.html](http://www.ibx.com/individuals/find_provider/index.html) and follow these instructions:

1. Click on the type of provider you are searching for.
2. Click "All Plans." For medical providers, select "Medical," and then "Keystone HMO CHIP."
3. Select the provider information you are searching for and/or type in the provider name.

## Remember to Renew!

We verify children's eligibility for CHIP once each year.

You will receive a Change Reminder Notice 120 days before the anniversary of enrollment, stating that we will attempt to review your child's eligibility by using data available through federal and state databases. If this data is reasonably similar to the income you reported to us, the renewal will be processed without further documentation required from you.

It is extremely important that you report any changes that may affect your child's eligibility, including:

- Income
- Employment
- Household size
- Marital status
- Address
- Medical insurance coverage

If the electronic data is not reasonably similar to the income that you previously reported, you will be sent a letter and Renewal Form. Please complete the Renewal Form, include all documentation of your income\*, and return these items to Independence Blue Cross as soon as possible. The sooner you respond to the request, the more time there will be to resolve any questions and avoid a potential loss of your child's CHIP coverage.

Be sure to follow the instructions on the Notice and Renewal Form. If you have any questions about this renewal process, call the Member Help Team at **1-800-464-5437**, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

\*Copies of pay stubs and other sources of income are required. If you are self-employed OR report tax deductions, please be sure to include a copy of your most recent federal tax return with all schedules.

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**[www.ibx.com/chip](http://www.ibx.com/chip)**

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## Information to Know About Your Health Plan

Every year, we send you important updates about your health benefits with Independence Blue Cross. These updates are intended to help you get the most from your health plan by alerting you to valuable tools and helping you to understand your rights as a member. Take a few moments to review the information at **[www.ibx.com/CHIPhealtharticles](http://www.ibx.com/CHIPhealtharticles)** to learn more. If you would like this information mailed to you, call the Member Help Team at **1-800-464-5437**.

**A**t **[www.ibx.com/CHIPhealtharticles](http://www.ibx.com/CHIPhealtharticles)**, you can find helpful information about the basic nuts and bolts of your plan, including:

- Finding a network provider
- Your member rights and responsibilities
- Independence standards for doctors
- Making a PCP appointment
- Hospital care procedures
- Evaluating new and emerging technologies
- Using your coverage when traveling
- Reaching multilingual customer service
- How to make an appeal or complaint
- Copayments and other charges
- How to submit a claim for covered services
- Physician review, utilization management, and language services

You can also consider this your handy resource for finding health and wellness info, such as:

- How to plan your doctor visit
- Emergency and urgent care
- Safe prescribing of prescription drugs
- Benefits and services included and excluded from coverage

Independence Blue Cross complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

**ATENCIÓN:** Si habla español, cuenta con servicios de asistencia en idiomas disponibles de forma gratuita para usted. Llame al 1-800-275-2583 TTY 711.

注意：如果您讲中文，您可以得到免费的语言协助服务。请致电1-800-275-2583。

*Si 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.*