



HEALTH *Partners* TALK

Published for members of Health Partners



Do you have asthma?

If you or your children have asthma, Health Partners recommends that you see your doctor at least once a year. Make sure to talk to your doctor about the following:

- The things that cause your or your child's symptoms and how to avoid them.
- Getting the right vaccinations. Your doctor may recommend the following vaccines depending on your age and how well your asthma is controlled:
 - Influenza (once every year)
 - Pneumococcal (one time)
- Medicines. Most people with asthma take medicines to control it. There are two types: control and quick-relief. Your doctor can

explain how medicine helps you and the best medicine to take to control your asthma.

Control medicines. They prevent an asthma attack. Take your control medicines each day to help keep your asthma under control and reduce the chances of having a flare-up. Control medicines can help to reduce airway swelling and relax the muscles that tighten around the airways.

Quick-relief medicines. Take your quick-relief medicine to help stop an asthma attack once it has started. It works quickly to relieve the attack and open your airways. Sometimes the doctor may want you to take quick-relief medicine before you do any exercises. Your doctor can decide if quick-relief medicine will help you. If your doctor orders quick-relief medicine:

- Always keep your quick-relief medicine with you.
 - Call your doctor if you have to use this medicine more than two times a week.
- Smoking. Smoking makes asthma and other lung problems worse. If you smoke at home, your child has a greater chance of developing asthma.

Health Partners offers a Quit Smoking program if you smoke and would like to quit. If you are interested, call (215) 991-4250.

For more information, call (215) 991-4250 or visit our website at www.healthpartners.com.
TTY/TDD: 1-877-454-8477 or (215) 849-1579

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Get to the 'heart' of heart failure

When your heart doesn't pump well, your blood flow slows down and causes blood returning to your heart to back up in your veins. It also causes the kidneys to have problems getting rid of sodium (salt) and water. This increases the amount of fluid your body has to handle. That's why you may hear this disorder called heart failure.

Heart failure may be mild and develop slowly. It may progress and cause the following symptoms. You should call your doctor if you have:

- Shortness of breath during activity and at rest or while lying flat and when waking up
- Weakness and fatigue
- Weight gain or swollen ankles and feet (fluid buildup)
- Pounding or irregular heartbeat
- A chronic cough
- Upper abdominal discomfort or abdominal swelling

You should call your doctor right away if:

- Your symptoms get worse.
- You feel like you can't breathe.
- You cough up pink, frothy sputum.

How is heart failure treated?

Your doctor will recommend the

best treatment for you and may prescribe the following to help your heart pump better:

■ **Medicine.** There are different kinds of medicines to treat heart failure, and each does something different to help your heart work better. Your doctor will recommend the best medicine for your condition and health history.

ACE inhibitors work to widen or relax your blood vessels so that the heart can pump blood without much work.

Beta-blockers block the body's responses to some things that can damage the heart.

Diuretics (water pills) help kidneys get rid of excess fluid so the heart can pump blood better.

Digoxin increases the strength of each heartbeat, slows down the heart and makes it beat more regularly.

■ **Diet.** Your food should be low in salt (sodium). Talk to your doctor about what foods are best for you and what foods to stay away from.

■ **Weight control.** Watch for any fluid collection in your body by weighing yourself every morning before breakfast. Call your doctor

if you gain more than 3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in one week. Your doctor can tell you what your weight should be.

If you are being treated for heart failure, make sure to listen to your doctor and follow his advice.

Health Partners has a Disease Management program for people with heart failure. If you would like to contact us about this program, please call Health Partners' Member Relations department at (215) 849-9600 or 1-800-553-0784.



Men's health: Be sure to get the tests you need!

It is important for men to see their doctor on a regular basis. These are some tests that men need:

■ Prostate-specific antigen (PSA).

This test is done to check for prostate cancer. Ask your doctor when you should have this test done.

■ **Digital rectal exam.** This is also done to check for prostate cancer. As part of your plan to make sure

you are healthy, you should have this test done every year, starting at age 40.

Other important tests you should have are:

■ **Cholesterol level.** To check for your risk for heart disease, your cholesterol level should be checked every five years.

■ **Blood sugar (glucose).** To make sure you don't have diabetes or low

blood sugar (hypoglycemia), you should have your blood sugar checked every three years, starting at age 45.

■ **Screening for colon or rectal cancer (colorectal screening).** You should have a test for rectal bleeding (fecal occult blood) every year, starting at age 50, and a sigmoidoscopy every three to five years, starting at age 50.



Every Parent Should Do This

Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT)

Help prevent problems and keep your child healthy with EPSDT services! EPSDT services also help find problems that could be serious. These tests include:

- Shots protect your child from deadly illnesses.
- Physical exams show if your child is growing well and if he or she is healthy.
- Dental exams show if your child's teeth are healthy.
- Lead tests show if your child's body has too much lead.
- Hearing tests show if your child has a hearing problem.
- Eye tests show if your child can see well.

Expanded services are available for members under the age of 21 with special needs. You or your doctor can call Health Partners' Special Needs Unit at **(215) 991-4370** to ask for these services.

If you have any questions about EPSDT services, ask your doctor or call Health Partners' Member Relations at **(215) 849-9600** or **1-800-553-0784**.

Was your mom taking DES?

The Pennsylvania Department of Health wants consumers to be aware of the following information about the drug DES (diethylstilbestrol).

From 1938 to 1971, DES was given to millions of women who had problems during their pregnancies. It was thought to prevent miscarriages and ensure a healthy pregnancy, but it was later found that DES may cause the following health problems:

- Daughters of women who took DES have a higher risk for cancer of the cervix, infertility and problems during pregnancy.
- Sons of women who took DES have a higher risk for genital problems and lowered sperm count.
- Women who took DES have a somewhat higher risk for breast cancer.

Find out if you were exposed to DES by asking your mother or other relatives. If you or your mom were exposed to DES, *talk to your doctor*. For more information about DES or tracking down medical records, call DES Action USA at **1-800-DES-9288 (337-9288)**.



Things to know about flu shots

A flu shot can help you stay well. The flu shot can help keep almost anyone from getting the flu.

Some people especially need it, including:

- People 50 or older.
- People, including children, who have chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes,

sickle cell disease and heart disease.

- Health care workers or others who may give the flu to someone who is elderly or has a chronic medical condition.

Ask your doctor if a flu shot is right for you.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Just a phone call away

Helpful information about your pharmacy benefits and medications

The following information is available to Health Partners members:

- An explanation of your pharmacy and medication benefits.
- A list of specific drugs Health Partners approves for use, also known as the formulary.
- What your doctor needs to do if the medicine the doctor wants to use is not on the formulary.
- How Health Partners decides to include new drugs in the formulary.
- A description of the procedure for deciding whether drugs are considered experimental.

To request any of the above information, please call Member Relations at **1-800-553-0784** or **(215) 849-9600**. We're available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help you.

Important dental reminder



It is important that you and your family members see the dentist for a regular checkup at least once every year. Members under the age of 21 can receive complete dental services. All adult members are eligible for two dental visits a year for a thorough exam and cleaning.

You do not need a referral to see a dentist. You can go to any of the general dentists listed in the Provider Directory. Choose a dentist on the list and call the office to make an appointment.

Did you receive your new member handbook?

New member handbooks were sent to all Health Partners members earlier this summer. These handbooks contain important information on your Health Partners benefits.

We've changed the look of your handbook and made it easier to find the information you need. If you did not receive one, please call Member Relations at **(215) 849-9600** or **1-800-553-0784**.



Editor Melissa Solomon Rosten

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Information in HEALTH PARTNERS TALK comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider.

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We speak your language!

If you speak a language other than English, and would like Health Partners information translated or sent to you in the language that you speak, just call Health Partners' Member Relations department at **(215) 849-9600** or **1-800-553-0784**.

Health Partners information is also available in Braille and on audiotape for those who request it.

Help if you need an interpreter or TTY/TDD services

If you need an interpreter or TTY/TDD services, Health Partners' Member Relations department can help you. Just call **1-800-553-0784** or **(215) 849-9600** for interpreter services, or dial **1-877-454-8477** or **(215) 849-1579** for TTY/TDD.

