

health partners talk

PUBLISHED FOR MEMBERS OF HEALTH PARTNERS



Help spot asthma attacks

When asthma attacks, you need to fight back. And your best defense against a flare-up is spotting it early. That way you can treat it right away and get it under control faster.

just before an asthma attack. An attack might be coming on if you:

- Have a lower peak-flow meter reading.
- Cough a lot, especially at night.
- Breathe hard or fast.
- Feel tightness or discomfort

in your chest.

- Get out of breath easily.
- Wheeze.
- Feel tired.
- Have an itchy, scratchy or sore throat.
- Have a headache or stuffy head.
- Sneeze or have a runny nose.
- Have a fever.
- Have dark circles under your eyes.

Act quickly

If you notice symptoms, follow your asthma action plan. This plan—made with your doctor’s help—can tell you what medications to take, when to take them and how much.

If you know what is causing the asthma flare-up, try to get away from that trigger. For example, you may need to leave the room if someone is smoking.

For more help, call the plan’s disease management line at **215-991-4252** (TTY **1-877-454-8477**).

Sources: American Medical Association; American Academy of Family Physicians

Watch for signs

To do this, you need to know what warning signs you often have

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take To learn more, call the American Lung Association at 800-548-8252.

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Keep blood pressure in check

Millions of Americans have high blood pressure. You could be one of them.

You might not even know it. High blood pressure usually doesn't have warning signs.

It affects the whole body. Risks of a heart attack, stroke, kidney disease and other serious health problems go up if you have high blood pressure.

The good news: It can be controlled.

You may have to take medicine, maybe for life.

And you'll probably have to make some changes. You may need to:

- Quit smoking if you smoke.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Exercise on most (or all) days of the week.
- Eat low-fat foods that include fruits, vegetables and low-fat or nonfat dairy products.
- Limit salt in your diet.
- Pay attention to food labels.

It won't be easy. But you can do it.

It is quick and easy to have your blood pressure tested.

Health Partners advises that you get your blood pressure checked yearly—and more often if you have high blood pressure.

Ask your doctor to explain what the two blood pressure numbers



mean. Both are important. They measure the force of the blood against your arteries.

If you have high blood pressure:

- Take your medicine just as prescribed.

- Keep your medical checkups.
- Follow your doctor's advice.

When your blood pressure numbers get better, be proud. You've made big changes.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Screenings: A step toward better health

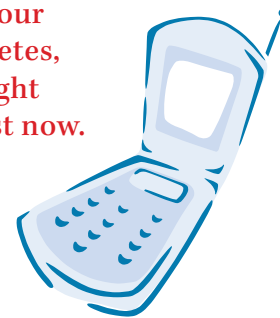
For many men, regular health screenings are low on their to-do lists.

But they should be at the top. Screenings don't take much time—many tests are only needed once every few years. But they can find problems early, when they are easier to treat. Screenings can even save your life.

Your regular checkup is a good place to start. Your doctor can

find any health problems you might have. He or she can also tell you which tests you need. Some tests start at a certain age. Others depend on risk factors, such as your family history. For example, if someone in your family has diabetes, your doctor might suggest that test now.

You can take charge of your own health by making an appointment with your doctor today.



Sources: American Medical Association; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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take For questions or help with your plan benefits, call Member Relations anytime at 1-800-553-0784 (TTY 1-877-454-8477).

Helping your overweight child

These days more and more kids are overweight. And that's something to be concerned about.

When kids weigh too much, they might not feel good about themselves. And being overweight can raise their risk for a number of health problems.

If you think your child is overweight, talk to his or her doctor. It's not good to put a child on a diet unless the doctor tells you to.

If the doctor says your son or daughter does need to lose a few pounds, these tips may help:

Make it a family affair. Don't focus on changing the habits of just your overweight child. Instead, think of this as a time to help the whole family. You all can benefit from eating better and being more active.



Be active with your children.

Go bicycling after dinner, for instance. Kids may look forward to exercise if it's something that's fun for them.

Plan healthy meals. Serve plenty of fruits and vegetables. And try to cut back on portion sizes and foods high in fat. Don't have fast food often.

Eat together. Kids learn about good nutrition by watching what and how you eat.

Limit down time. Don't let your kids spend more than two hours each day watching TV or playing computer games.

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take To learn more about healthy eating, visit www.eatright.org.

Plan benefits can help

Health Partners now covers nutrition and weight management services for members under age 21 when medically necessary. These services include health care visits to find out the child's needs, nutrition counseling and weight management counseling. Individual, group and family weight management counseling is covered. Your PCP can help you find the right services for your child.



Remember, too, that members can get low- or no-cost help from Weight Watchers® (must be 10 or older) and participating fitness centers as a benefit of Health Partners membership. For more information, call us at 1-800-553-0784 (TTY 1-877-454-8477).

Above all else, make it clear that you love your child no matter how much he or she weighs. Your support will mean a lot.

Sources: Institute of Medicine; National Institutes of Health

Help your teen stay healthy

To stay healthy, your teen needs to see a doctor even when nothing is wrong.

That's why well-child visits are

still important. They help prevent problems before they start.

Your teen's doctor can:

- Screen for any signs of disease or injury.
- Check your teen's vision.
- Be sure vaccines are current.

- Make sure your teen is growing properly.
- Answer questions your teen may have about dating, eating right or other topics.

Ask your teen's doctor when to make an appointment.

High-tech danger

The growing appeal of online sites like MySpace and Facebook are raising the fears—and eyebrows—of parents all over, like a couple whose teenage daughter developed a romantic relationship online with a much older man.

When her mother learned about it, she took her computer away. She also didn't let her use the Internet. She hoped the relationship would end. But the daughter continued to speak with him using computers outside of her home.

The "romance" escalated to secret meetings for sex before it finally ended. The teen slipped into depression. She drew further away from friends and family. She then committed suicide.

The danger is real. Below are some tips to help you communicate with your high-tech pre-teen or teen:

- Talk to your children about what types of things they are sharing online. Ask them to make their profile private so only agreed-upon people can see it.
- Remember that most online chatting is harmless. In fact, children



Help your kids practice safe surfing.

can learn important information about building healthy relationships online. Try not to see these sites as evil. You want your children to feel comfortable talking to you.

- Ask what your children would do if they became uneasy while chatting with online friends. Be aware that chats can be used as a way of bullying, tracking or controlling children. Encourage them to report this type of behavior to you, the website or a trusted adult.
- Talk to your children about how much chatting is too much. They should not feel like their partner is watching their every move or constantly checking in on them.
- If you suspect your child is involved in an unhealthy relationship online, talk to him or her about it. One of the best ways to learn about your child's activities is by keeping the lines

of communication open. You can also visit and suggest your child visit www.thesafespace.org for more information.

If you are worried about your children and need help for them or yourself, call:

National Domestic Violence Hotline, **1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)**, **1-800-787-3224** (TTY for the deaf). (www.ndvh.org)

All contact with the hotline is free and confidential. Help is available in English and Spanish and many other languages.

You or your child can also call the National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline at **1-866-331-9474** (TTY **1-866-331-8453**) or visit www.loveisrespect.org. Online chats are also available. All contact with the hotline and chats are free and confidential. Children can also get loveisrespect news and info about healthy relationships by signing up for the blog or adding the teen line as a friend on MySpace or Facebook.

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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.

Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

If you need help reading this information, please call the 24-hour Health Partners Member Relations line at 1-800-553-0784 or (215) 649-9600.

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