



# HEALTH Partners TALK

PUBLISHED FOR MEMBERS OF HEALTH PARTNERS

## Important asthma tips

**1. Take your medicine.** People with asthma have swollen airways that can become worse after contact with things that can cause asthma symptoms. Asthma medicine can reduce this swelling.

**2. See your PCP at least once a year:**

- Talk to your PCP about things that bring on your or your child's asthma symptoms and how to avoid them.

- Talk to your PCP about the medicines you or your child takes.

- If you or someone in your house smokes, tell your PCP.

- Ask your PCP about the following vaccinations (shots) for you and your child:

- Influenza—every year
- Pneumococcal—one time

**3. Eat a healthy, balanced diet and exercise.** When you are fit, you breathe easier and have fewer asthma symptoms.

Smoking and lack of exercise can make asthma worse. Health Partners' smoking cessation and fitness programs are a covered benefit for all Health Partners members. If you would like to know more, please call us at **(215) 991-4252**.

## What is asthma?

Asthma is a disease in which air flowing in and out of the lungs may be blocked when the tubes (called bronchi, pronounced *BRONK-eye*) leading to the lungs swell and squeeze shut, or when mucus builds up in the lungs or bronchi and air can't get through.

Asthma makes it hard for a person to breathe. The worst symptom (sign) of asthma is an asthma attack, when it becomes even harder to breathe. Asthma is a chronic disease, which means it is a disease where symptoms can keep coming back.

If you or your child has asthma, it's important that you work with your PCP (primary care provider) and follow your treatment plan so that you or your child can have fewer asthma symptoms.

Asthma symptoms can be caused by several things, including:

- Pollen, dust or mold
- Cigarette smoke or harmful fumes



- Animal hair, dander or feather pillows
- Cold, dry air
- Food additives, such as sulfites
- Drugs, such as aspirin
- Colds, flu or other respiratory infections
- Chemicals, such as yellow food dye
- Emotional stress, exercise or fatigue



## Take your medicine: It's important!

If your PCP or specialist has prescribed medicine for you, it's important that you take the medicine as prescribed, even if you start to feel better. Taking your medicine as prescribed is an important part of controlling your illness.

Even when you have a chronic disease such as asthma, most of the time you feel fine. This does not mean that you should stop taking your medicine. If your PCP or specialist has prescribed medicine for you to take every day, you should do so.

● **Asthma** is a chronic disease in which airflow in and out of the lungs may be blocked. If you stop taking your asthma medicine, it is hard for air to flow to your lungs. This can cause a serious asthma attack.

● **Congestive heart failure (CHF)** means that your heart is not pumping as well as it should. Your blood flow slows down, and the blood that is returning to your heart backs up in your veins. If you stop taking your

CHF medicine, your heart does not pump properly and fluid builds up in your feet, legs and other body parts, including your lungs. This can cause your feet and legs to swell or can cause shortness of breath.

● **Diabetes** affects your body's ability to make a hormone called insulin. Food is broken down in the stomach into a sugar called glucose. Insulin helps glucose become energy for your body.

When you stop taking your medicine, your body can't make enough insulin and can't burn glucose as energy. The glucose builds up in your blood and makes you feel tired, thirsty and sick. You can also go into a diabetic coma.

*Remember to take your medicine as prescribed—it's important!*

● **Hypertension (high blood pressure):** When blood flows through arteries (the pipes that carry blood through your body), the blood presses against the walls of the arteries. The flow of blood pressing against the artery walls is called "blood pressure."

When you have high blood pressure, the blood presses too hard against the artery

walls. High blood pressure can also force your heart to work harder. The medicine for high blood pressure helps keep your heart strong. If you stop taking your medicine for high blood pressure, your heart has to work harder, which can cause it to become enlarged and weak. You also increase your risk of heart disease or stroke.

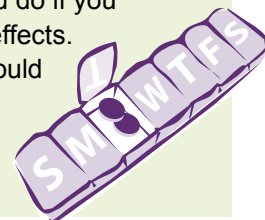
● **High cholesterol** is a condition in which the level of cholesterol in the blood is higher than normal. High cholesterol has no symptoms. But over time, cholesterol may stick to the inside of blood vessels, resulting in clogged arteries.

Not taking prescribed medicine for high cholesterol can cause buildup in your blood vessels. This prevents blood from flowing easily in your veins and arteries and increases your risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

## Talk to your PCP

Your PCP or specialist will answer any questions you have about medicine prescribed for you. Here are some things you should talk to your PCP or specialist about:

- Why the medicine is important for you to take.
- The names of all the medicines that you take.
- The amount of medicine that you should take.
- If there are any side effects to the medicine and what you should do if you have any side effects.
- What you should do in the case of a medical emergency.



## Notes for members

### We respect your privacy!

In April 2003, we mailed to all Health Partners members a brochure entitled “Notice of Privacy Practice.” This brochure described how medical information about you may be used and disclosed, and how you can get access to this information.

If you would like another copy of this brochure, or have any questions about how we use or disclose your health information, please call Health Partners’ Member Relations department at **(215) 849-9600** or **1-800-553-0784**.

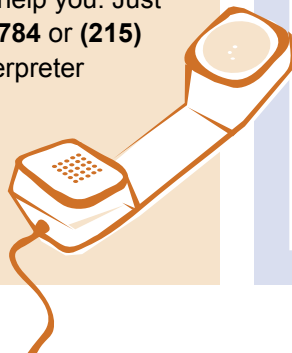
Or you can obtain an electronic copy of the “Notice of Privacy Practice” by visiting our Website at [www.healthpart.com](http://www.healthpart.com) and clicking on “Notice of Privacy Practices” at the bottom of our home page.

### Need an interpreter or TTY/TDD services?

If you speak a language other than English, and need help to understand Health Partners’ information, just call Health Partners’ Member Relations department at **(215) 849-9600** or **1-800-553-0784**.

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

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.



## Dental care for people with special needs

At Health Partners, we care about you and your family’s health. Health Partners provides assistance to our members with Special Needs. If you or your child needs a Special Needs dentist, Health Partners will help you to schedule an appointment with a participating dentist.

Strong, healthy teeth are an important part of good dental hygiene. Proper nutrition and brushing should start at an early age. Starting at age 3, your child should go to the dentist two times a year for a checkup and cleaning. This is a good way to get your



child used to seeing the dentist and will make sure that the young teeth and gums are staying healthy.

For more information about your dental plan, benefits, and how to find a participating dentist or for help making a dental appointment, please call Member Relations at **1-800-553-0784** or **(215) 849-9600**.

### Dental tips

- Brush and floss after each meal when possible (or at least in the morning and before bed).
- Reach to brush molars that are in the back of the mouth.
- Use a pea-size amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Spit out toothpaste and rinse with water.
- Limit the number of sweets.
- Replace junk food with fruits, cheese, yogurt and dark, leafy vegetables (calcium is important for strong teeth).

### Health Partners rated ‘Excellent’!

For the second straight year, Health Partners has maintained the highest rating—“Excellent”—from the National Committee on Quality Assurance (NCQA). NCQA is the nation’s leading review organization for health plans.

At Health Partners, we are committed to providing you with the highest level of service and care possible. We will continue to maintain this high level of quality in care and in customer service.



## News you can use

As you may know, the Medical College of Pennsylvania (MCP) officially became the Women's Medical Hospital on Sept. 1. The Women's Medical Hospital decided to become a part of the Health Partners network of participating hospitals.

If you are a Health Partners member, you can go to the Women's Medical Hospital for care and they will accept your Health Partners membership card. For more information, call our Member Relations department at **1-800-553-0784** or **(215) 849-9600**.

## Chlamydia

### Have you been tested?

Chlamydia (pronounced *kluh-MID-ee-uh*) is the most common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the United States. It is caused by a germ called *Chlamydia trachomatis*. Anyone who has unprotected sex (sex without using a condom) is at risk for contracting an STD such as chlamydia.

You can have chlamydia for a long time without knowing it. Many people who have chlamydia do not have any warning signs. Warning signs may include mucus or pus coming from the vagina or penis, pain while urinating, or the feeling of itching and/or burning

around the vagina or penis.

The good news is that chlamydia can be cured. It is important to treat chlamydia early. This STD can cause serious health problems if not treated and can even affect an unborn baby. For example, both men and women who have chlamydia and do not get treated may become infertile and be unable to have children.

The only way to know if you have chlamydia is to get tested. If you have it, your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic (pills) to treat chlamydia.

Practicing abstinence (not having sex) and wearing latex condoms during sex are two ways to prevent chlamydia. If you have questions about chlamydia or think you might have it, contact your Health Partners network provider.

## Calling all moms

**If you have a child from 2 months to 15 months of age**, ask your PCP if your child should receive the vaccine Prevnar. The vaccine protects against seven types of streptococcus pneumonia bacteria, as well as meningitis.

**If you're pregnant, don't smoke!** If you smoke while you are pregnant, you're harming yourself and your baby. Smoking during pregnancy can cause your baby to have

low birth weight or to be born premature, and can increase your chance of having a miscarriage.

If you smoke after your baby is born, you and/or your baby can develop allergies or asthma. Babies who live around cigarette smokers also have more ear infections.

We want to help you quit smoking. Health Partners has a quit-smoking benefit that offers counseling and nicotine replacement to help you stop smoking. Health Partners also has a Fitness benefit to assist you in

living a healthy lifestyle. For more information, contact our Disease Management Unit at **(215) 991-4252**.

**Having a baby? We're here to help!** At Health Partners, we care about you and your baby. Our healthy pregnancy program, called Baby Partners, is here to help you. We work with your doctor to make sure you have all the support you need during your pregnancy.

For more information about Baby Partners, call **(215) 991-4252**.



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HEALTH PARTNERS TALK is published for the members of HEALTH PARTNERS, 833 Chestnut St., Suite 900, Philadelphia, PA 19107, telephone 1-800-553-0784, www.healthpart.com.

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) 849-9600.

Si necesita ayuda para leer esta información por favor llame a la línea del Departamento de Servicios para los Miembros de Health Partners, disponible las 24 horas, al 1-800-553-0784 ó al (215) 849-9600.

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Nếu quý vị cần giúp đỡ đọc phần thông tin này, xin vui lòng gọi đường dây Liên Hệ Hội Viên Health Partners 24 tiếng tại số 1-800-553-0784 hoặc (215) 849-9600.

Если Вам нужна помощь в прочтении данной информации, позвоните, пожалуйста, в круглосуточную Справочную Службу для членов страхового полиса по телефону 1-800-553-0784 или (215) 849-9600.

您如果看不懂此通知, 请联系 Health Partners Member Relations, 电话号码: 1-800-553-0784, (215) 849-9600.

TTY/TDD: 1-877-454-8477 or (215) 849-1579