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## Join In the Fun

Schedule family time for exercise. Take a walk after dinner or shoot hoops in the park. Find something you all like to do and make it a habit. You and your kids will reap the benefits of exercise in no time!



Spring 2019



## Stress Solution for Kids: Work It Out

Let's face it: Being a kid isn't easy. Feeling pressure to get good grades, managing parent expectations and navigating social situations can take a toll. In fact, some experts believe children today have higher levels of stress than ever before. How can we help kids better manage stress? One way is to encourage exercise.

### Power of Movement

Studies show that exercising not only improves physical health but boosts mental health as well. By evaluating cortisol levels—a hormone released in response to stress—researchers found that children who exercised more had lower levels of stress. In a different study of adolescents who were being bullied, those who exercised four or more days a week reported significantly less sadness and suicidal thoughts than those who were less active.

### How Much Is Enough?

Although there is a clear link between exercise and improved mental health, scientists can't explain why. And there is no specific dose or type of activity guaranteed to help. But U.S. guidelines recommend that kids get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise every day. This can include fun activities like playing tag, biking, swimming, or playing basketball.

If your child is inactive, encourage him or her to start slowly and work up. Even a little activity has benefits. Scientists report that just five minutes of exercise can have some antianxiety effects.

**Bottom line? Don't take stress sitting down. Help your kids manage life's pressures by moving more.**



# Bike Safety for the Whole Family

**W**hen warm weather hits, a bicycle ride can be a great way to exercise with your family. Proper bike safety is important for everyone—even if you're only going for a quick ride. Whether you're cycling on a trail or just in front of the house, follow these six bike safety tips:

## Protect your head.

The majority of bicycle accidents happen close to home, such as on neighborhood sidewalks or driveways. Wear a helmet on every ride, no matter how experienced you are or how short the trip.

## Wear the correct size.

Don't purchase helmets that your child has to grow into—make sure the helmet fits now. It should fit snugly atop the head and not slide

from side to side, from front to back, or around the head. If any part of the chin strap breaks, replace it immediately.

## Pick the right bike.

A bike that is too big can be dangerous and difficult for youngsters to control. Both hands should reach the handlebars, and the balls of both feet should touch the ground when your child sits on the seat.

## Wait to ride with little ones.

Hold off on riding with your baby in a bike seat until he or she is 12 months old. Younger babies' neck muscles cannot support the weight of a helmet. Never carry an infant in a front pack or backpack.

## Stay to the right.

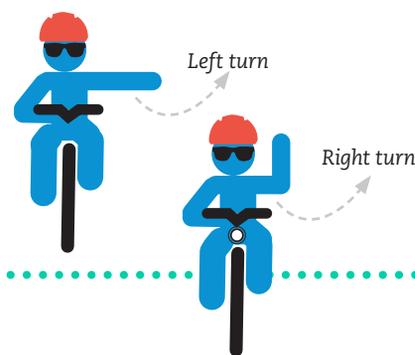
Always ride to the right, with traffic. If you're in a group, stay in a single-file line.

## Ride with the sun.

Do not ride after dark or at dusk with young children. Whatever the time of day, wear brightly colored clothing so drivers will notice you.

Cyclists should always follow the rules of the road. Stop at stop signs, and do not talk on the phone or text while riding a bike. Take special care when crossing the road: Get off the bike and walk across. Just like driving a car, you should also signal on a bike and teach your children to do the same.

To learn or review these important hand signals, visit [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov) and search for "hand signals."



# Walk This Way

**W**alking is the ideal workout for many people. It's easy, accessible, inexpensive, and virtually injury-free.

Besides helping you lose or maintain weight, a regular walking program can help lower your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and osteoporosis. You should see a health care provider before you begin walking if you have a chronic condition or if you're older than 40 years old and have been inactive. But you're ready to start once you've taken that precaution.

## Get Equipped

All you need for walking is a good, supportive pair of shoes. Walking shoes should be lightweight and breathable, with a well-cushioned heel (where you land as you walk). When selecting a shoe, test its flexibility by trying to bend it with

your hands—bendable shoes help your foot easily roll forward and push off with the toes. Also look for good arch support and nonskid soles. But the most important thing is that you wear a shoe that fits.

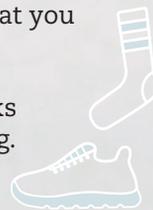
**Tip:** Try on shoes with the socks you plan to wear while walking.

## Start Easy

Always do less than you think you can when you begin; your muscles and heart need to get used to the movement.

Initially, try to start out walking 15 minutes a day. If that's more than you can do right now, do what you can. Focus on sitting less and moving more—even a few minutes of physical activity is beneficial.

Don't worry if you last 1 mile or less. It takes time to build strength and endurance.



*March Is National Pulmonary Month*

## What Is Pulmonary Rehabilitation?

**P**ulmonary rehabilitation, also known as respiratory rehabilitation, is an important part of the management of chronic respiratory disease for people who remain symptomatic or continue to have decreased function despite standard medical treatment.

Some of the treated conditions include:

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis)
- Interstitial lung disease
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Muscular dystrophy or any muscle-wasting disease that affects the muscles used for breathing
- Lung cancer after lung surgery

The pulmonary rehabilitation team consists of:

- Respiratory therapists
- Physical and/or occupational therapists
- Dietitians or nutritionists
- Social workers
- Nurses
- Doctors

Pulmonary rehab provides counseling and education about lung disease and how to manage it with energy-conserving techniques, breathing strategies, nutrition, psychological counseling, and/or group support. It can improve your ability to breathe and function at your highest level possible and also can improve your quality of life.

# Could You Have an Alcohol Problem?

It's not always easy to identify someone who struggles with alcohol use—even when that person is the one in the mirror. Drinking too much places you in danger of consequences ranging from accidents to chronic diseases to losing jobs and relationships. Admitting you have a problem marks the first step toward improving your health and your life.

## Take This Self-Test

Moderate drinkers consume an average of one drink per day for women and two for men. Their weekly totals reach no more than seven beverages if they're female and 14 among males.

Ask yourself whether you regularly exceed these limits, or whether you have:

- Experienced problems at home, school, or work due to drinking
- Ended up drinking more than you planned or tried unsuccessfully to cut back
- Needed to drink much more than you used to in order to feel the same effects
- Felt withdrawal symptoms when the effects of alcohol start wearing off, such as restlessness, sweating, shakiness, or nausea
- Felt anxious or depressed because of your drinking

If you answer “yes” to one or more of these questions, your relationship with alcohol seems to interfere with the rest of your life. Consider taking steps to quit or cut back.

## Create Your Support Team

Only you can decide you're ready to change your relationship with alcohol. But talking with a doctor or other health care professional can help you assess your drinking habits and decide on a course of action.

Coming to grips with an alcohol problem often takes time. Even after you decide to make a change, you may have mixed emotions. In fact, many people have to choose quitting more than once.

Family members and friends can support you when you've made your decision. Explain your goals and request help in specific ways. For instance, ask them to refrain from using alcohol around you to give you encouragement rather than criticism.

## Help and Information

The level of care a person needs depends on many factors, including the person's age, substance abuse history, physical health, and mental health. Speaking with a doctor, mental health professional, or social worker may be a good place to start.

You can also find information at these websites:

### Alcoholics Anonymous

([www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org))

Site visitors can find information about AA, meetings in their community, and online meetings.

### Narcotics Anonymous

([www.na.org](http://www.na.org))

Local meeting times and places, recovery literature, and general information are on this site.

## Call Us

Call the Fund with any questions and for names and numbers of in-network providers. Dial 800-228-7484, prompt #4.



# Show Your **LIVER** Some **Love**

*Our liver is our largest internal organ, about the size of a football. It weighs about 3 pounds. It sits on the upper right side of the abdomen behind the rib cage.*

## **An Important Organ**

The liver has the ability to regenerate its own tissue very quickly. It is responsible for a lot of our bodily functions. The liver plays a role in digestion, bile production and excretion, and metabolism of fats, proteins, and carbohydrates. It also produces clotting factors and detoxifies substances that are harmful to the body, such as alcohol, drugs, pesticides, and even heavy metals, just to name a few.

## **Damage to the Liver**

But chronic hepatitis C or B, heavy alcohol use, and other things can lead to serious liver damage. As the liver is damaged, normal liver tissue becomes fibrous (scarred), fatty, and extensively scarred (cirrhosis). When the liver becomes too heavily damaged, it can no longer carry out its normal functions. This affects almost all body systems.

Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is a primary malignancy of the liver and occurs mostly in patients with underlying liver disease and cirrhosis. HCC is now the third leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide. More than 90 percent of HCC cases in the U.S. are diagnosed in patients with cirrhosis, which tends to be the end result from chronic liver disease. Types of chronic liver disease include hepatitis C, hepatitis B, alcohol-related disease, and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.

## **Be Kind to Your Liver**

Below is a list of things you can do to help maintain your liver health:

- If you have hepatitis C, get it treated or cured.
- If you have a liver disease, avoid alcohol or reduce your consumption.
- Don't use recreational drugs.
- Don't mix over-the-counter medications, prescription drugs, herbs, street drugs, and alcohol.
- Stick to the recommended dose of medications.
- Take no more than the amount of acetaminophen (Tylenol) recommended by your medical provider and never mix it with alcohol.
- Avoid exposure to toxic liquids and fumes, including solvents, paint thinners, and pesticides. If exposure is necessary, always work in a well-ventilated area, cover your skin, and wear gloves and protective facial wear.
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet that follows general guidelines for good nutrition.
- Keep away from raw or undercooked shellfish, which can contain bacteria or viruses.
- Get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B if you are not already immune.
- Avoid as much stress as you can. Stress is not good for the body or the liver.

# The Truth About Springtime Sniffles

Steps to treat  
—and detect—  
seasonal allergies  
in your child



**Y**our child is sneezing, sniffing, and feeling downright yucky. Is it a cold or seasonal allergies? Knowing the difference can guide you to the right quick-relief steps, help prevent future symptoms, and even head off complications like ear infections, sinus infections, and worsening asthma. One in 11 kids and teens has a pollen allergy, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Here's how to spot spring allergies and help treat them.

## Allergies vs. the Common Cold

Seasonal allergies can crop up at any time during childhood. Many spring allergies are triggered by pollen. In early spring, most comes from blooming trees. Later in the season, pollen from grasses can provoke symptoms.

Airborne pollen particles prompt immune cells in the nose and airways to overact, releasing chemicals such as histamine. This leads to classic allergy symptoms like:

- Sneezing
- Clear discharge from the nose
- Red, itchy, watery eyes (sometimes with dark circles underneath)
- Itchiness in tough-to-scratch places like the roof of the mouth or inside the nose or ears

Colds, on the other hand, are caused by a host of viruses. Symptoms may include congestion, a runny nose, sore throat, and a cough—but not itching. Your child may also have a headache, muscle aches, fatigue, or a low fever. The typical cold lasts for two weeks or less.

## Does Your Child Need a Diagnosis?

If you suspect your child has a spring allergy but want to be certain, an allergist can make a diagnosis through allergy testing to identify his or her specific triggers. That way you can take steps to control or prevent your child's symptoms with confidence. This can be especially helpful for severe spring allergies that don't respond to prescription or over-the-counter medicines or lead to frequent health complications.

## Strategies for Allergy Relief

The first step toward relief is reducing your child's exposure to pollen. Monitor the pollen count in your area. Keep doors and windows in your home and car closed on high-pollen days and run the air conditioner to filter the air (change the filters in units every month,



## Orange-Walnut Salad

Sweet oranges contrast with the bitter of arugula and earthy chopped walnuts. A little bit of blue cheese adds creamy saltiness.

- 2 cups coarsely chopped romaine lettuce (about six leaves)
- 1 cup arugula
- 1 cucumber, peeled, quartered lengthwise, seeds removed, and chopped
- ¼ cup thinly sliced red onion
- 2 navel oranges, peeled and chopped
- 2 tbsp. chopped walnuts
- 1 tbsp. walnut oil
- 1 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 oz. blue cheese

Layer first six ingredients in a large salad bowl. Just before serving, sprinkle with walnut oil and vinegar and crumble blue cheese on top. Toss lightly just before serving.

*Makes four servings. Each serving contains about 152 calories, 10 g fat, 203 mg sodium, 12 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, and 6 g protein.*

too). Having your child play indoors when pollen counts are high may also help.

If symptoms persist, ask your child's pediatrician about the best over-the-counter allergy medicine for your child. Ask about side effects, too—some antihistamines can cause drowsiness, and using decongestants longer than recommended may worsen congestion. Your doctor can recommend prescription versions of these medicines if needed.

If over-the-counter medicine isn't enough, research shows that weekly to monthly allergy shots are effective for kids. The shots can build up immunity to troublesome allergens.

A newer, kid-friendly alternative to shots that may be worth asking your child's doctor about is sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT). A tablet containing the allergen is placed under the tongue (where it melts) every day before and during allergy season, building up immunity. Research shows that SLIT reduces symptoms and the need for other allergy medications. So far, SLIT is available for a variety of grass pollen allergies.



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## Are we in touch?

If you are aware of any coworkers who are not receiving the *in touch* newsletter on a quarterly basis, please advise them to call the Health and Welfare Fund office at **800-228-7484, ext. 2504**.

The Fund distributes the *in touch* newsletter to present reliable, up-to-date health information, including updates about programs and benefits available to eligible participants. Call the Fund office to obtain the status of your eligibility and verify your current address.

Your ideas are important! Let us know if there is a particular topic that you would like included in your *in touch* newsletter.

# ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

by Frank Vaccaro  
Contract Administrator

## Understanding Your Health Insurance

A new survey finds that just 4 percent of Americans understand how their health insurance works and how much they would personally have to pay for medical services and drugs they receive under their health insurance plans.

In the last year, 57 percent of Americans were hit with unexpectedly high medical bills. In order to avoid these bills, it's important that you understand how your insurance works. Be especially aware of the following:

- 1 Know your deductible.
- 2 Understand your copay or coinsurance fees.
- 3 Be aware if your plan has any out-of-network benefits.
- 4 Always confirm that the provider you are using is participating in your network.
- 5 If you receive a surprise bill, call your provider and your insurance company to confirm it was processed correctly.



Remember, if you have questions about preauthorization or if a service is covered by your insurance, call the Fund Office before proceeding to avoid unexpected medical bills.

Eligibility for specific benefits varies among our participants. Call the Health and Welfare Fund office to inquire about your eligibility for any of the benefits described in this newsletter. Call **800-228-7484, prompt #2**.