

family health



Spring 2005

questions & answers

Q. My 15-year-old daughter has never had chickenpox. Does she still need to be vaccinated?

A. Yes. People who are 13 years and older who have not had chickenpox should get two shots to guard against the disease. The shots are given four to eight weeks apart.

Chickenpox tends to be a mild illness. But some people have severe problems, such as brain swelling. That's why it's important to get the shots.

Q. Is it safe to take medicines when you are pregnant?

A. That depends on which medicines you take. Some are OK for growing babies and others are not.

Some medicines can cause birth defects. The risk is highest during the first few weeks of pregnancy. That's when a

baby's major organs are forming.

So if you are pregnant, be on the safe side.

Check with your doctor before you take *any* medicines.



Kids on the move



It's tempting to tell kids to stay still and be quiet.

But here's the truth: Kids need to move. Exercise helps build strong muscles and bones. It also helps kids stay at a healthy weight.

So encourage your child to get up and move around. Here are a few tips:

- Set a good example for your child. Let him or her see you doing active things.
- Make fitness a family priority. Take hikes, bike rides or walks together, for example.
- Choose toys and gifts that encourage activity. How about a new jump rope or a pair of sneakers?
- Add something enjoyable to chores. Here's an idea: Play music and march along while making the bed or sweeping the floor.

Remember to make exercise fun!

Sources: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Si necesita esta información en español, llame al 1-800-391-2000.

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Exercise

It's good for your heart

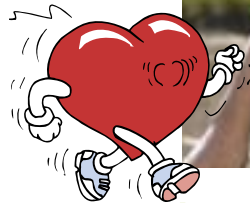
You don't have to run for miles to help your heart. Any type of regular exercise can cut your risk of heart disease.

Swimming, riding a bike, jogging and walking are all good for your heart.

You'll get the most benefit if you exercise most days of the week. Start slowly, but aim for 30 to 60 minutes each day you exercise.

Follow these tips to help make exercise work for you and your heart:

- Plan to exercise at the same time each day. Take a walk in the morning. Or maybe an afternoon bike ride works best for you.



- Ask a friend to exercise with you.
- Walk or ride your bike instead of driving.
- Choose activities you enjoy.

- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

Remember to check with your doctor before starting to exercise regularly.

The 2005 dietary guidelines

What you need to know

A healthy U.S.A.—that's the goal of new dietary advice from the federal government.

New guidelines can help you and your family be healthier. And they can help reduce your risk for getting diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

For most people, this means eating less and exercising more.

The guidelines advise that you:

Stay at a healthy weight.

You can do this by making sure you don't eat or drink more

calories than you burn.

Keep active. Regular exercise is good for your health. It can help you look and feel better. And it helps you stay at a healthy weight.

At the minimum you should exercise 30 minutes most days of the week. This will help lower your risk of disease. If you want to stay at a healthy weight and not gain weight, increase that to 60 minutes and work out a little harder. And if you've lost weight and you don't want to gain it back, you'll need to exercise 60 to 90 minutes a day.

Talk to a doctor before you start an exercise program if you:

- Aren't used to exercising.
- Are overweight.
- Have a high risk of heart trouble.
- Have a chronic health condition.

Make healthy food choices.

Eat a variety of foods from the basic food groups without getting too many calories. Try these tips from the guidelines:

- Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Include fat-free or low-fat milk products in your diet.
- When choosing meat, select lean cuts.
- Limit foods and drinks that are high in sugar, such as soft drinks and candy.
- Avoid fatty foods.
- Cut back on salt.



To learn more, please call us at 1-800-391-2000 and ask for the Health Education Department.

things to know

About antibiotics

Antibiotics save many lives. And they make a lot of people feel better.

But they can't help you every time you get sick. They only fight illnesses caused by bacteria. Colds and most coughs and sore throats are caused by viruses. Antibiotics won't work on them.

In fact, bacteria can get stronger if you take antibiotics for those types of illnesses. The next time you need the medicine, it might not work.

These tips can help you make sure antibiotics work when you need them:

- Let your doctor be the one to decide if you need them.
- Never take other people's medicine.
- When your doctor gives you antibiotics, take them the way he or she tells you to. And be sure to finish taking all of the pills.



We speak your language

When you're sick, it often helps to see a doctor. And the easier the doctor is to talk to, the better.

But talking with a doctor can be hard if he or she doesn't speak the language you know best.

When that's the case, we can help.

We have staff members who know many languages, including sign language. And when we don't have someone who speaks your language, we'll find someone who does.

These people can go to your

doctor with you or help you over the phone.

They'll make sure the doctor knows what you're saying and you know what the doctor is saying. With their help, you can get answers to all of your questions.

This service is free and easy to use. Just call Member Services at **1-800-391-2000**. Someone will be there to speak with you Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Two screenings just for women

Take care of yourself

When it comes to cancer, finding it early is better than later. That's when it's easier to treat.

For women, two important screenings can find cancer early—the Pap test and the mammogram.

Pap test

This test checks for cancer of the cervix. The cervix is the opening to the womb (uterus).

Cervical cancer often has no symptoms. So the Pap test can find the first sign that something is wrong. A Pap test can find cancer early, when it's still easy to treat.

Most women should have a Pap test every year. You need the test once you turn 21 or three years

after you start having sex.

Mammogram

A mammogram checks for breast cancer. It can find lumps that are too small to be felt.

A mammogram can find breast cancer early. And like cervical cancer, breast cancer is easier to treat when found early.

Talk to your doctor about how often you should have a mammogram.

Your benefits have changed

Please note this important benefit change that took effect on Jan. 1, 2005. This change affects our Medi-Cal and Healthy Families Program members.

Look on page 6 of your 2004–2005 *Member Handbook* (Combined Evidence of Coverage and Disclosure Form). Under “Accessing Care/Choice of Physicians and Providers,” the change affects the section called “Continuity of Care.”

The language below will be **added** between paragraphs 2 and 3.



Paragraph 2—“In order to continue....”

New paragraph—“Starting Jan. 1, 2005, you will not be allowed to continue getting treatment from your previous provider if you are a new member to Kern Family Health Care and you had an option to remain with your previous health plan (in other words, you chose to leave your previous health plan to join Kern Family Health Care).”

Paragraph 3—“If you would like KFHC to review....”

If you have any questions regarding this important change to your KFHC benefits, please call our Member Services Department at **1-800-391-2000**. We are more than happy to explain this to you.

Thank you for choosing Kern Family Health Care as your health plan. We look forward to continuing to serve your health care needs.

We want to help you solve problems

If you have a service or quality complaint against Kern Family Health Care or a provider, call us first at **1-800-391-2000**.

You may call the Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) for help if:

- Your grievance is an emergency.
- You are not happy with Kern Family Health Care's decision.
- Your complaint has not been resolved in 30 days.



DMHC's toll-free number is 1-888-HMO-2219 (466-2219). Their TDD line is 1-877-688-9891 for people with hearing and speech impairments.

Keep your medical records complete

New members, have you picked a new primary care provider (PCP)? Or are you a member wanting to change your PCP? If so, then make sure to get copies of your medical records from your old doctor(s).

Your medical record is a history of the care you have received. It tells your new PCP about your past treatment plans, prescribed drugs, medical procedures, x-rays and lab results.

Having this information means that you do not have to start all over with your new PCP. It can save you time and help your new

PCP make the best choices for your treatment.

To get copies from your old doctor, just call his or her office and ask for copies to be made.

If you need help, you can call the Member Services Department at **1-800-391-2000**. We are here to help!

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