

# family health



Summer • 2009

## Things to Know

### Eat healthy with WIC

The California Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC), a nutrition and education program for women, infants and children, will offer some different foods starting in October. You will learn about the new WIC healthy foods in the coming months.

WIC is making the following changes:

- More incentives for breastfeeding moms.
- Include baby food fruits and vegetables.
- Less formula for babies 6 to 12 months.
- Include fruits and vegetables.
- Less juice.
- Less fat in milk and cheese.
- More whole grains.

In October your new WIC coupons will include these healthy foods.

Talk to your local WIC agency or call 888-

**WIC-WORKS**  
(888-942-9675).



## Healthy teeth for happy smiles



**T**ooth decay is a common disease in kids. It can cause pain, infection, trouble eating and a delay in growth. Kids as young as 12 to 18 months can have tooth decay.

The good news is it can be prevented! Fluoride varnish is the best way to prevent and stop tooth decay. It is painted on children's teeth by a doctor or dentist. It can help stop cavities that have already started as well as prevent new ones.

Fluoride varnish is safe for babies and young kids. It is fast and easy to apply, and only a small amount is used. There is no pain, and it doesn't have a bad taste. Your child's teeth may change color after the fluoride varnish is painted on, but the color will come off when you brush your child's teeth the next day.

Start protecting your child's teeth early for a happy, long-lasting smile. Talk to your child's doctor or dentist about fluoride varnish for your child.

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

Presorted Standard  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Tacoma, WA  
Permit No. 1066

## Provider visits: Questions to ask

To make the most of your provider visits, it's important to ask questions. This helps your provider make sure you get the care you need.

Cut out this list of questions and take it to your next appointment. You might ask:

- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do?
- Why is it important for me to do this?

### If you need medicine:

- What is the medicine for?
- Can I take a generic version?
- How and when do I take it?
- Are there side effects?

### If you need tests:

- What are the tests for?
- How are the tests done?
- What are the risks of having the tests?

### To learn more about treatment:

- What are my treatment choices?
- How will treatment help?
- Are there side effects to treatment?

For more examples of questions for your provider, visit the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality website at [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).

# When a hernia happens

It can be a painful problem. But hernias happen. And they can happen to anyone. Here's what you need to know in case a hernia happens to you.

## On the inside

A hernia can form when muscles in the belly area get weak. They may bulge or tear. Fatty tissue or part of the intestine can push through. And a lump forms under the skin.

Most hernias happen in the lower belly or groin area. But they can occur in other parts of the body too.

They often form when weak muscles are put under strain. Heavy lifting is one cause. Weighing too much is another risk factor.

## What to watch for

Symptoms of a hernia can include:

- A bulge in the belly or pelvic area or a man's scrotum.
- Pain that gets worse when you lift something heavy.
- Pain that gets worse when you go to the bathroom.

## Treatment options

Talk to your doctor if you think you might have a hernia. It is important to have it treated.

Without treatment, a hernia can cause bigger problems. It may



become strangulated. This happens when part of the intestine gets trapped or twisted.

Symptoms of this problem include:

- Severe pain.
- Pain that gets worse very quickly.
- Fever.
- Vomiting.

Most abdominal hernias need surgery. During surgery, your doctor may:

- Make a small cut to reach the hernia.
- Push the tissue that sticks out back where it belongs.
- Fix the muscle wall.
- Put a piece of plastic mesh in place to help strengthen the area.

Many people go home the same day they have the surgery.

## Don't wait

Again, talk to your doctor if you have symptoms that might mean a hernia.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases





## How to choose a blood glucose meter

If you have diabetes, your provider will want you to test your blood sugar level at home. You do this with a blood glucose meter.

This meter is a small device that uses a drop of your blood to check your blood sugar level. Depending on the type of meter, you take the blood either from a finger or from

your arm. This doesn't hurt very much and doesn't bother most people.

When choosing a meter, consider:

■ ■ **Ask your provider to recommend a meter that's right for you.**

**Advice.** Ask your provider to recommend a meter that works well and that meets your needs.

**Cost.** Call Member Services to learn more about your benefits. Also find out how much batteries and test strips for the meter will cost. Some meters may cost more to use than others.

**Language.** You can find meters that provide displays in English, Spanish and other languages. It may help to use one that gives a display in the language you use most often.

**Ease of use.** A small meter is easy to carry. But some people have trouble reading numbers on a tiny screen. Choose a meter that is easy for you to read and use.

### Use it safely

Your provider can show you how to use the meter correctly. Follow the directions carefully. Also be sure to clean the meter as directed. And never share your meter with another person. This can put you and others at risk for infections.

Be sure to ask your provider if you have any questions about how to use your meter.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; U.S. Food and Drug Administration

## Healthy snacks can keep you on track

With diabetes, healthy snacks should be part of your meal plan.

Snacks can help keep your blood sugar from getting too low.

It's best to avoid snacks high in fats, salt and sugar—such as cookies, doughnuts or

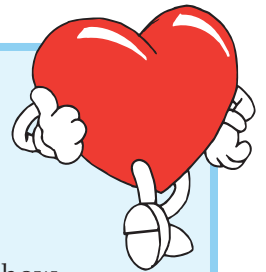
potato chips.

Instead, enjoy: » Raw vegetables. » Fresh fruit. » Low-fat cheese sticks. » Peanut butter on whole-grain crackers. » Unsalted nuts or seeds. » Air-popped or low-fat popcorn. » Yogurt smoothies.

- » Applesauce.
- » Sliced turkey on whole-wheat tortillas.

Ask your doctor how often you should snack, how much you should eat and which snacks are best for you.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; American Medical Association





## Give kids a healthy head start

It's never too early to help your child eat right.

Kids who don't eat well may become overweight. This can raise the risk for serious health problems, including: » High cholesterol. » Heart disease. » Type 2 diabetes.

That's why it's best to start your child eating right at an early age.

Once your child reaches age 2, be sure to help your child:

- Eat fruits and vegetables every day.
- Stick to low-fat milk, cheese and other dairy foods.
- Choose lean meats, poultry and beans.
- Limit sweets.
- Drink water or low-fat milk instead of sugary drinks.
- Get plenty of exercise.
- Limit TV, computer and video game time.

For snacks, give your child pretzels and fruit or vegetable sticks instead of cookies and candy.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



# Keep cholesterol in check

## Make healthy food choices to control cholesterol

**Y**our body needs some cholesterol to be healthy. But too much can lead to major health problems.

Cholesterol is a fatlike substance found in your blood. Your body makes all that you need.

But it is also found in some foods. Eating some kinds of foods can raise cholesterol levels. This can raise your risk for heart disease and stroke.

### Make smart food choices

You can lower your cholesterol levels by staying at a healthy weight and being active on a regular basis.

Your doctor may also suggest medicines to help lower cholesterol levels.

But one of the best things you can do is eat a healthy diet.

These tips can help:

- Avoid foods that are high in fat.
- Eat foods high in fiber.
- Eat lean meats and poultry without skin.
- Have at least two servings of fish every week.
- Cut back on foods such as cookies, cakes and doughnuts.
- Bake, broil or grill foods instead of frying.

- Trim all fat from meat before cooking.

### Read the labels

To select foods that are low in fat and cholesterol, it's important to read labels when shopping.

Claims such as *low cholesterol* and *fat-free* can be made only if a food meets standards set by the government.

One easy way to shop healthy is to spend more time in the fresh foods area. Avoid the aisles where snacks and soft drinks are stored.

Talk to your provider to learn more about keeping your cholesterol at healthy levels.

Source: American Heart Association

### » action

**take** Call Member Services to find out if cholesterol medications are covered.

Screening tests

# Providing early cancer warning

**F**inding cancer early can be the key to surviving it. That's why screening tests are so important. They can spot cancer even before you feel sick.

Work with your doctor to come up with the best screening plan for you.

Here are some common tests:

**For women**

■ Pap test. This test checks for cervical cancer. All women should have the test starting by age 21 or three years after they start having sex.



■ Mammogram. This test looks for breast cancer. The test should be done every one to two years starting at age 40. If you find any unusual lumps in your breasts, tell your doctor right away.

■ ■ **Your doctor can help you develop a screening plan.**

**For men**

■ Prostate cancer tests. These tests can find prostate cancer. Ask your doctor if the tests are right for you.

■ Testicular exam. Check your testicles for unusual lumps or swelling that may mean cancer. See your doctor if you find any changes.

**For everyone**

Everyone age 50 and older should be screened for colon cancer. There are several options. Some tests need to be done each year. Others only need to be done once every 10 years.

It's also a good idea to check your skin—especially your moles—for signs of skin cancer.

If you see changes in the size, color or surface of your moles, tell your doctor right away.

Source: American Cancer Society

## Steps to take to have fun in the sun

Some days a beach or a pool is the place to be.

But spending time in the sun can also damage skin and lead to skin cancer. So protect your family when you play outdoors.

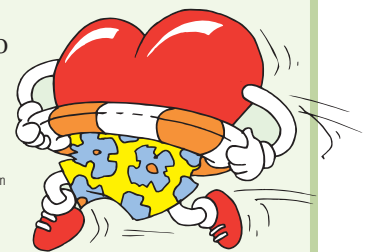
For instance:

- Seek shade when you can.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15 for yourself and kids older than 6 months. Use shade, hats and clothing to protect younger babies.

Also, cover up with:

- A wide hat that shades the face, neck and ears.
- Sunglasses that block at least 99 percent of UV (ultraviolet) sunrays. Check the label.
- Loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts, pants or long skirts.

Finally, when you plan your day, try to avoid the sun when it's strongest—from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Sources: American Academy of Dermatology; American Cancer Society

» **action**

take

**For even more information and tips, call the American Cancer Society at 661-327-2424.**



## Not sure it's an emergency?

**C**all your doctor's office or Kern Family Health Care's nurse advice line at **800-391-2000**. They can give you advice about where to go and what to do if your child has any of the following: » Earache. » Sore throat. » Cough. » Cold. » Flu.

**Why should I take my child to the doctor for regular checkups?** With regular checkups, your doctor will give you advice about when to use the emergency room and when to call the doctor first. Avoid the long waits and crowds in the emergency room. Find help by calling your child's doctor, or call our nurse advice line at **800-391-2000**.

**How can I keep my child from getting a cold or flu?** You can't always keep your child from getting sick, but here are things that can help:

- Make sure your child's shots are up-to-date.
- Get your child a flu shot if the doctor suggests it.
- Teach your child to:
  - Wash hands for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet and before eating.
  - Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth.

- Not share food, drinks or eating utensils.
- Keep away from others who have a cold or cough.

**How can I help my child feel better?** If your child gets a sore throat, cough, cold, or flu, here are things you can do:

- Make sure your child gets lots of rest and sleep and drinks plenty of fluids.
- Use a humidifier or saltwater nose drops to help with a stuffy nose.
- Ask the doctor if your child needs cold or cough medicine.

### Health topics just a phone call away

Did you know that Kern Family Health Care has a Health Information Library? You can access it 24 hours a day. Our library has more than 100 topics. Each topic can be listened to in English and Spanish. You can learn about:

- Fever.
- Common cold and cough.
- Head lice.

- Headache.
- Stroke.

Your call is free and confidential. To access our Health Information Library, call us at **800-391-2000**. You will need to have your "On-Call Assist" booklet with you. If you need one, call us at **800-391-2000**. We would be happy to send you one.

#### Editorial Board