

# health matters

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things to know

## Quitting tobacco

Are you thinking about quitting tobacco? If so, there is free help for you.

The Arizona Department of Health Services has a program called Tobacco Education and Prevention. It offers classes and phone counseling to help you quit.

If you join one of these programs, you may also get help in the form of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). NRT options include:

- Patches
- Gum
- Lozenges
- Some products that need a prescription from your doctor

If you want more information or are ready to take the first step toward quitting:

- Call the Arizona Smokers' Helpline at **(800) 55-66-222**.
- Visit its Web site, [www.ashline.org](http://www.ashline.org).
- Talk to your doctor.



## Be a quitter!

### You can stop smoking

If you put that cigarette out **RIGHT NOW**, both your blood pressure and heart rate will go down within 20 minutes. This means your heart won't have to work as hard.

Stay smoke-free for eight hours and the level of carbon monoxide (a gas found in car fumes and cigarette smoke) in your blood will drop.

If you can keep it up for just 24 hours, you'll have less chance of a heart attack.

### Other benefits

Hang in there. Your risk of heart disease can be cut in half if you go a year without smoking. The risk of stroke goes down within five years of quitting. And about 10 years after you quit, your chances of dying from lung cancer are much less than for those who continue to smoke.

Giving up cigarettes is hard. But look at the rewards, not to mention the extra money you'll have to spend on other things.

If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor.

Source: American Lung Association

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## We've moved!

Beginning Nov. 1, Mercy Care Plan's new address is 4350 E. Cotton Center Blvd., Building D, Phoenix, AZ 85040. Our telephone numbers are the same: **(602) 263-3000** and **(800) 624-3879**.

## Food for healthy teeth

When it comes to healthy teeth, a balanced diet is important.

Eat foods from lots of healthy sources, such as:

- Breads, cereals and other grains
- Fruits
- Veggies
- Meat, poultry and fish
- Milk, cheese and yogurt, which are good sources of calcium for healthy teeth



But even healthy foods have sugars and starches that promote tooth decay. So it also matters *when* you eat.

Try to limit snacks, especially sugary, starchy munchies and sugary drinks. And remember not to put your baby to bed with sugary drinks or juices.

Source: American Dental Association

## Ready, set, brush!

### Caring for your child's new teeth



When your baby smiles, so do you.

But for a healthy smile, your baby needs healthy teeth.

So watch for your baby's first tooth. When it appears, clean it with a damp cloth every day. When more teeth arrive, switch to a small, soft toothbrush.

You don't need toothpaste to keep your baby's teeth clean. Until age 2, you can brush your baby's teeth with just a little water.

For kids older than 2, you can use toothpaste with fluoride. But only use a small amount of toothpaste—about the size of a pea. Fluoride helps fight cavities.

By your child's second birthday, you should also be brushing his or her teeth at least twice a day. Your child likely won't be able to brush his or her teeth without your help until age 6 or 7.

But even before then, you can set a good example. Make sure your child sees you brushing your teeth. Children like to copy whatever their parents do.

Most important, try to make brushing fun—so that it becomes a lifelong habit for your child.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## How tobacco harms teeth

Chances are you know that tobacco can hurt your lungs.

But here's a surprise: It can hurt your teeth and mouth too.

Take smokeless tobacco, also called spit, chew or snuff.

It can permanently stain your teeth and make them a yellowish-brown color.

Smokeless tobacco can also:

- Cause cavities and bleeding gums
- Give you bad breath
- Make your gums pull away from your teeth so they become loose and fall out

- Cause painful mouth sores that never heal. These sores may become cancer.

Smoking can cause problems with teeth too. If you smoke, your family can breathe in the smoke. And children who breathe in other people's cigarette smoke may be more likely to get cavities.

All of this means that if you use spit tobacco or smoke cigarettes, it's important to stop.

So talk to your doctor and ask for help quitting.

And ask about using nicotine gum or a similar product. It may make quitting easier.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

 To learn more, go to the American Dental Association Web site at [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org).



## A few words on the rules of the road

Here are some important rules of the road to keep in mind when riding a bike. But each rule has something missing. Can you help the sentences make sense by putting one of the three-letter words you see here into each space?

**Word list:** way, hen, our, urn, top, ear, own

1. Don't ride your bike after the sun goes d\_ \_ \_.

2. W\_ \_ \_ you ride on bike paths, watch out for people.

3. Al\_ \_ \_s ride in the same direction that traffic is going.

4. Always w\_ \_ \_ a helmet.

5. Always stop at s\_ \_ \_ signs and the curb.

6. When t\_ \_ \_ing or stopping, use hand signals.

7. Look to y\_ \_ \_ left and your right at street corners and driveways.

Answers: 1. own 2. hen 3. way 4. ear 5. top 6. urn 7. our

## See what you know about bike safety

Answer these questions by circling the correct picture.

1. Who is wearing the bike helmet the right way?

2. A bike that isn't the right size can be dangerous. Which bike is the right size?

3. Which child is being safe?



Answers: (Correct picture identified by the color of rider's helmet.)  
1. green  
2. yellow  
3. purple

## Screening tests

# Providing early cancer warning

Finding 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

## Pregnant? Get needed care

Pregnant women need special care.

If you are pregnant, please call us to choose a pregnancy doctor as soon as possible. We will also send you a pregnancy book with a lot of information just for you.

At your first visit, you will have a complete checkup. The doctor or nurse will do a urine test and a blood test to check for anemia (low iron), tuberculosis (TB) and high blood sugar (diabetes).

They will also check for infections and sexually transmitted diseases. Voluntary, confidential HIV/AIDS testing services are available, as well as counseling for members who test positive.

## Ask 3 questions for better health

Getting better health care can be as easy as 1, 2, 3.

At your doctor visit, ask:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

Asking these questions can help you understand what you need to know.

If you still don't understand something, be sure to ask more questions. Don't be shy about speaking up. Your doctor wants you to understand.

Source: Partnership for Clear Health Communication

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**matters**

HEALTH MATTERS is published as a community service for the members of MERCY CARE PLAN, 4350 E. Cotton Center Blvd., Building D, Phoenix, AZ 85040.

Information in HEALTH MATTERS 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.

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[www.MercyCarePlan.com](http://www.MercyCarePlan.com)