

# health matters

Mercy Care  
Plan

Winter 2009

## Things to Know

### A healthy new year

It's a new year—a time for new beginnings.

Often, we use this time to set goals for our health. Then, before long, we forget about them.

This year can be different. Instead of setting goals that are hard to reach, think small. Just two or three little changes could make you healthier. Here are some ideas:

**Eat better.** Switch from whole milk to 2 percent. Or serve an extra veggie with every dinner. Try to eat fast food less often.

**Exercise more.** Be active with your family at least weekly. Take a walk, perhaps, or ride bikes. Even getting off the bus one stop sooner and walking farther can help.

**If you smoke, pick a quit date.** Then get rid of ashtrays and matches. Ask your doctor about medicines that may help you stop smoking.

## Help your teen kick the habit

**T**eens don't always make good choices. And if your teen has made the choice to smoke, it's time to step in.

**Point out the reality.** If warning about cancer and lung disease doesn't work, the idea of bad breath, yellow teeth and wrinkled skin may get your teen's attention. And if your teen is into sports, point out that smoking can make him or her less fit.

**Be a role model.** One of the most important things you can do is set a good example. If you smoke, quit. If you smoked in the past, tell your teen why it was a bad choice.

**Get expert help.** Sometimes teens listen better when the advice comes from someone other than a



parent. Take your teen to his or her doctor.

Mercy Care Plan covers drugs that will help you stop smoking. Talk to your doctor about these drugs. Also, the Arizona Smokers' Helpline has stop-smoking services at no cost for Arizonans.

■ **Arizona Smokers' Helpline, (800) 55-66-222**

■ [www.ashline.org](http://www.ashline.org)

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

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# emergencies



## Is it an emergency?

**F**rom time to time, we all get hurt or sick.

But which conditions are routine and which ones require a trip to the hospital?

It's best to call 911 if you think someone's life is in danger.

Experts say signs of serious trouble include: » Uncontrolled

bleeding » Trouble breathing  
» Chest pain or pressure  
» Fainting » Changes in vision  
» Confusion » Sudden, severe or strange pains  
» Severe vomiting  
» Vomiting blood » Coughing up blood  
» Ongoing diarrhea  
» Thoughts of suicide » Trouble speaking

Take special care with children. Kids may not be able to explain how they feel. If you think a child is having a major health problem, see the doctor right away.

Remember that urgent care can be an option when you need treatment but it isn't an emergency.

If your doctor's office is closed, you might visit an urgent care center for: » Insect stings or animal bites » Minor cuts that need stitches » Fever » Flu » Earaches

Mercy Care Plan (MCP) has many urgent care centers for you to go to. Urgent care centers are listed in your MCP Provider Directory or on our Web site at [www.MercyCarePlan.com](http://www.MercyCarePlan.com). Please call MCP Member Services at **(602) 263-3000** or **(800) 624-3879**.

Source: American College of Emergency Physicians

## A medical emergency: Are you ready?



A trip to the ER is bound to be stressful. But if you know what to expect, things can go smoother.

### Plan to wait

People with the most severe problems are helped first. A nurse usually decides who goes first. This process may involve checking a patient's temperature, heart rate and blood pressure.

If you're asked to wait and

your condition gets worse, tell the staff right away.

There also may be a wait after you've seen a doctor. He or she may need to see lab results or talk with a specialist before treating you. All of this can take time.

Here's a tip: If you're bringing children with you, pack some books or toys. It'll help keep kids busy during the wait.

### Be prepared

You'll be asked about your

overall health and what medicines you take. There will be some forms to fill out. You'll need to provide your name, address and insurance card.

Patients who are very ill may need to stay at the hospital for more care. Others will be able to go home after treatment.

Mercy Care Plan has designed a medical notes page for you to document important information. Go to our Web site at [www.MercyCarePlan.com](http://www.MercyCarePlan.com).

Source: American College of Emergency Physicians

FUN WITH FOOD

### Food for thought

» Here are close-up drawings of foods from five healthy food groups. See if you can guess what the foods are. There's a clue with each to help you.

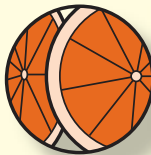
**Food group:** Milk.  
**Clue:** Its calcium helps build strong teeth and bones.



**Food group:** Meat and beans.  
**Clue:** It provides B vitamins that keep your brain working and help you grow and develop.



**Food group:** Fruit.  
**Clue:** Loaded with vitamin C, it may help cuts heal and help you fight off illness.



**Food group:** Grains.  
**Clue:** It gives you energy and is a good source of fiber.



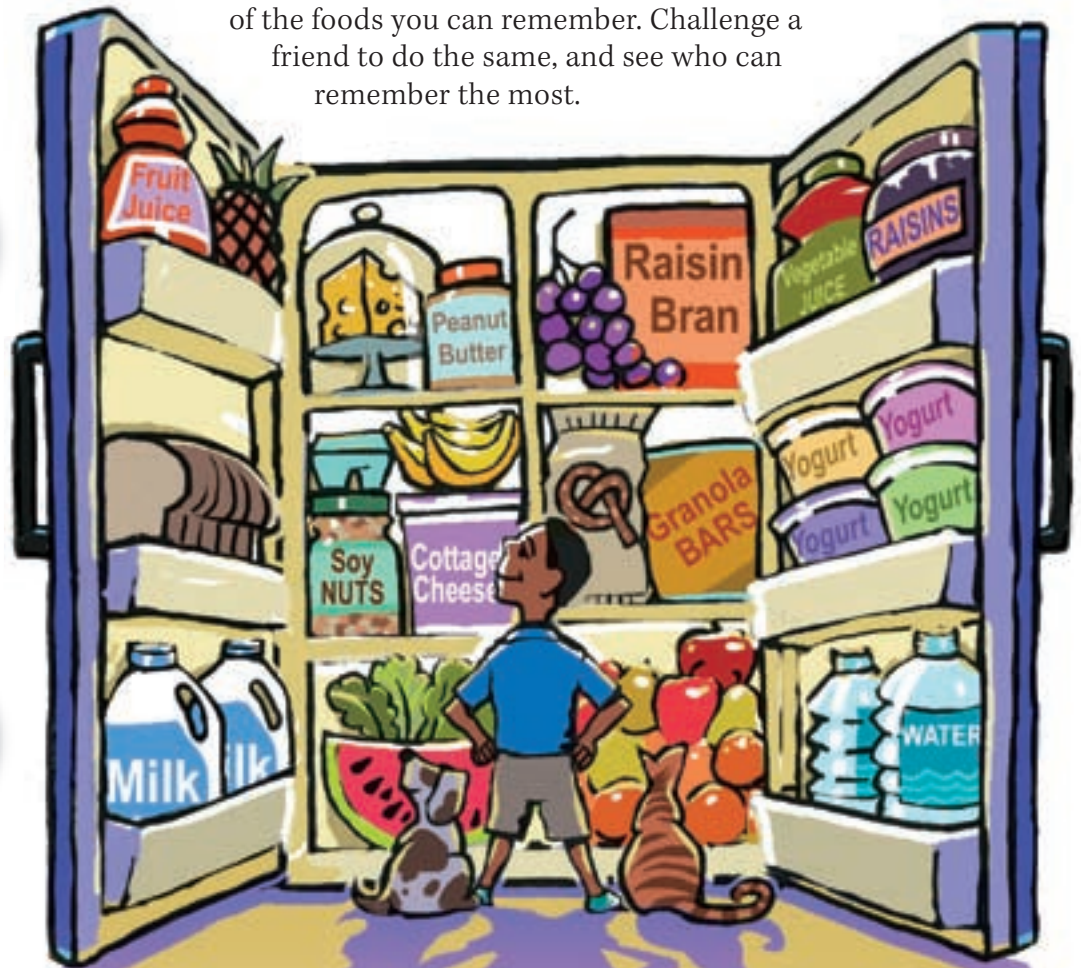
**Food group:** Vegetable.  
**Clue:** It helps keep your skin and eyes healthy.



ANSWERS:

## Remember the munchies!

» This fridge is loaded with healthy snacks. Study it for one minute. Then turn the page and see how many of the foods you can remember. Challenge a friend to do the same, and see who can remember the most.



### A food funny

**Q:** Why did the students eat their homework?

**A:** Their teacher told them it was a piece of cake!



# Rid your home of allergy triggers

**N**o one likes to sneeze and wheeze, especially in their own home.

So if you have allergies, it makes sense to clean your house of as many allergy triggers as you can.

Many things can trigger allergy symptoms. Here are some of the common ones and ways to deal with them.

**Dust.** Vacuum and dust regularly. Wash your bedding at least once a week in hot water. Use allergyproof cases on your pillows, mattress and box springs. Also, get rid of wall-to-wall carpets if you can. Use throw rugs instead. Wash them regularly.

**Mold.** Dry off surfaces in damp areas, such as bathrooms and kitchens. Clean damp or moldy areas with a solution that is 10 parts water to 1 part bleach. Pay special attention to the corners of the shower and under sinks. Use a dehumidifier to remove moisture in damp areas of the home. Clean the dehumidifier weekly.

**Smoke.** Don't let anyone smoke in your house.

**Pets.** Bathe your pet weekly.

Don't let your pet in your bedroom. Wash your hands after touching animals.

**Cockroaches.** Put food away in sealed containers. Sweep up crumbs as soon as you are done cooking and eating. Wash dishes and empty the garbage right away too. Use roach traps. Or call an exterminator, if needed.

Controlling triggers is very important. But it is just one part of your allergy control plan. Be sure to work with your doctor and take your medicine as directed.

Source: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology



## How you can skip a trip to the hospital

You can't prevent every asthma flare-up. But there are things you can do to help keep asthma under control. Better control can mean fewer flare-ups. And that can help keep you out of the hospital.

So take these steps:

### Follow your asthma plan.

Do you need to take medicine regularly? Are you checking your breathing with a

peak-flow meter? Stick to the plan you and your doctor made. And let your doctor know if your asthma is getting worse.

**Take your asthma medicines as directed.** Don't change doses on your own. Talk to your doctor if you think you need more or less medicine.

**Know your triggers.** Many things can cause an asthma flare-up, including tobacco smoke, pollen, pet dander and perfume. Once you know your triggers, take steps to avoid them.

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians



### » action

take

Visit the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology Web site at [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org).