

health matters

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things to know
Your satisfaction
matters

Satisfied members are very important to Mercy Care Plan.

Every year we survey our members to see how we are doing. In 2004 members felt that doctors showed respect for what they had to say. Parents felt that they were getting care quickly for their children. And most members were satisfied with the customer service they received. Areas we are working on improving are:

- How well doctors communicate.
- Getting care quickly.

Thanks for doing the survey.

Update about RBHA pharmacies

In November 2004 Mercy Care Plan changed the way behavioral health medicines ordered by RBHA doctors are paid.

Now members in Maricopa, Pima and Yuma counties who get RBHA medicines will get them from an RBHA pharmacy. Sometimes the RBHA and Mercy Care pharmacies are the same. When they are, members need to tell the pharmacist that the RBHA pays for the RBHA drugs. Members were told which pharmacies to use.

Sneezing? It's the season

Sneezing. Itchy eyes. A runny nose. For some people, these are the first signs of spring.

If this is true for you, you may have seasonal allergies or hay fever. Grass, trees, flowers and weeds often cause hay fever. These plants bloom mostly in the spring and summer. But some plants that cause hay fever bloom in the fall too.

If you or your child has hay fever, you can take steps to avoid the plants that cause you to wheeze, sneeze and itch:

- As much as possible, stay inside during the spring and summer with the air conditioner on.
- Keep windows and doors closed.
- Shower and change clothes after being outside.

If you or your child has hay fever, talk to a doctor. There are medicines you can take to help.



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Should I get a mammogram?

If you are 40 or older, getting a mammogram every year is an important step in staying healthy. This simple test can help your doctor find any changes in your breasts that you and your doctor cannot feel.

Why do I need a mammogram?

It could save your life. One out of nine women will get breast cancer during her life.

Mammograms show tiny changes in breast tissue that may be harmless or may be cancerous, even when the growths are too small to be felt.

When cancer is there, a mammogram can help make the diagnosis early. This is important because finding a cancer early may allow a surgeon to remove the cancer while it is small, and has not spread to other parts of the body.

Common myths about breast cancer

Myth: I don't need a mammogram if I don't have any symptoms.

Fact: Mammograms can find breast cancer up to two years before you or your doctor can feel a lump.

Myth: No one in my family has had breast cancer, so I don't need to worry about getting it.

Fact: Eight out of 10 women who get breast cancer have no family history of the disease.

Myth: I had one normal mammogram so I don't need another.

Fact: One is not enough. Women should have a mammogram every year after age 40.

Myth: A mammogram every year is too much radiation.

Fact: The radiation from mammogram equipment is very small. It is much more dangerous to let breast cancer go undetected.

Myth: Mammograms are painful.

Fact: A mammogram is just an x-ray of your breasts. The person taking the x-ray is trained to do the test quickly. It may be uncomfortable for a few seconds, but it should not hurt. The technologist will take two or more x-rays of each breast. This gives the doctor as much information as possible to see if you are cancer-free or need more tests.



Make the most of your doctor visit

When you go to the doctor, it's good to prepare and to know what to expect. It will help you make the most of your visit.

Sometimes it's hard to remember everything you want to tell or ask your doctor. So before you arrive, write down your symptoms. Be as specific as you can. The more your doctor knows about you, the easier it will be to help you. Writing out any questions you have is a good idea too.

The doctor might have questions for you as well. He or

she may ask about medicines you take, for example, or about whether you smoke or drink. Be honest. Hiding things makes it harder to get good care.

Writing out any questions you have is a good idea.

Ask the doctor to clear up things that confuse you. Some people find it helpful to take notes. Bring a paper and pen so you can write down what the doctor says.

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. Someone will be there to speak with you Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.



How we protect your privacy

Details about your health are personal. That's why we do all we can to protect your privacy.

We make sure your health records and information about you are kept safe. Only staff members who need to see your files to help you can get them.

And even then, our staff sign statements promising not to share information about you. Our doctors and the rest of our providers follow these rules too.

If other people ask us for your records, you must say it's OK first. In fact, you have to give permission in writing. The only time we don't check with you first is when someone has a need

and a right to see the files. That's determined by law.

We often review the way we keep your files safe. And we'll continue to do so. We want you to have good care and peace of mind.

If you have questions about our policies, call Member Services.



The importance of fathers

If you're a dad, this may be the best advice you'll ever get: Don't sit on the sidelines of your child's life.

Play a part—a big part.

Children with involved dads do better at school. They're less likely to get into trouble with alcohol, drugs or the law.

They're also less likely to become aggressive or violent.

So the next time your baby cries or your toddler scrapes a knee, tell your partner, "Honey, I can take care of this."

Help with homework. Take your child to a checkup.

Don't worry that you might do something wrong. The more you do, the more confident you'll be.

Being a good parent takes practice—for both moms and dads.

Source: Men's Health Network

Raising a reader

There are so many things you will teach your child: how to say "please," how to throw a ball, how to tie a shoe.

But few skills matter more than learning how to read.

Reading, after all, is the key to success at school.

But you don't need to wait for your child to start school to help your child start to read.

Learning to read is a gradual process. Even babies can begin to enjoy books.

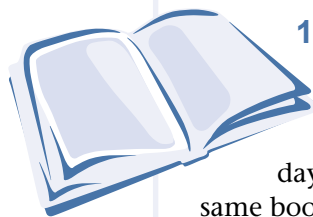
So, with this in mind, the following tips can help you raise a reader.

Birth to 1 year

- Snuggle with your baby and read aloud. Your child may not follow the story completely. But he or she will love the sound of your voice.

- Talk, sing and repeat rhymes to your baby. Do finger games. You're helping your baby learn to speak, a first step toward reading.

- Look at picture books with your baby and name the objects.



1 to 3 years

- Let your child pick a book for you to read aloud every day, even if it's always the same book.

- Encourage your child to "read" to you by making up stories.

- Plan library trips.

3 to 5 years

- Help your child recognize whole words, such as "stop" in a stop sign.

- Ask friends and family members to write to your child. Children love getting—and reading—mail.

- Read alphabet books with your

child, pointing out the letters.

Even after your child can read, keep reading to your child. Children can often listen to stories at a higher grade level than they can read on their own.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics



To learn more, call the National Association for the Education of Young Children at 1-800-424-2460.

Kids and nutrition

Healthy eating at school

Do you know if your kids are eating healthy school meals? The only real way to be sure is to get involved. Show you care. Show the school that what your kids eat matters a lot. Because it does. Here's a checklist of what you can do to get results:

Do lunch with the kids

Eat breakfast or lunch at school with your kids. See what the meals are like. Notice the atmosphere. If you don't like what you see, do something.

Serve your kids food for thought

Make sure kids appreciate how healthy breakfasts and lunches serve their minds as well as their bodies.

Talk out of school

Make your opinions heard. Talk to other parents. Work with your PTA and school board to support healthy school meals.

Discuss your principles

Go to the principal. Discuss the importance of good nutrition and physical activity. Suggest programs. Ask for cooperation. Follow through.

Team up with food service staff

Visit the school cafeteria. Get to know the staff. Let them know you value their services...and appreciate good daily nutrition for your child.

Know what's for lunch

Get a weekly menu of school meals. Ask for the nutrition facts so you can be sure the menu meets the U.S. Government Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Keep it magnetized to your refrigerator. Discuss all the healthy choices with your kids.

Set up a group

Get involved. Form a parent advisory committee for school meals. Recruit enthusiastic "can-do" people to work with you.

Throw a tasting party

Volunteer to organize a classroom tasting party to

introduce and encourage nutritious new foods the kids may never have tried.

Plant a seed

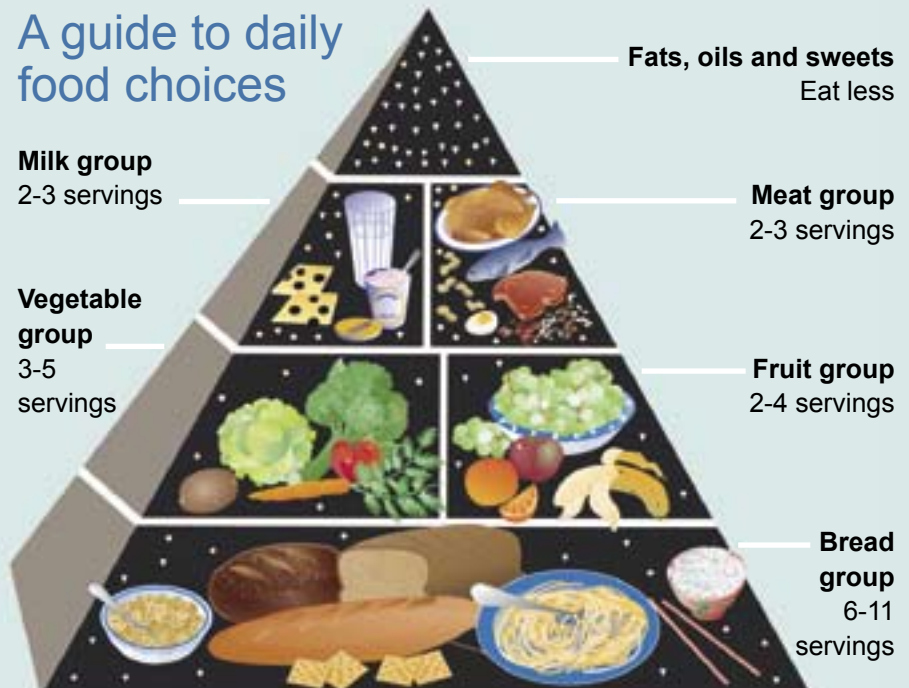
Show your kids and their friends where healthy food comes from. Help your school start an edible landscape with a garden of goodies like fruits, vegetables and herbs.

Listen

If you listen to what your kids are learning at school about good nutrition, you can help them all put their knowledge to work at home too.

Adapted from a flyer from the Food and Nutrition Service of the United States Department of Agriculture

A guide to daily food choices



Teaching kids how to eat right

Good nutrition begins at home. It should continue at school. The Food Guide Pyramid is based on the official U.S. Government guidelines for healthy eating. It's designed so kids and adults can

learn and remember how to eat right every day. ● So study it. ● Practice it. ● Show it to your kids. ● Tack it up. ● Talk it up. ● Give examples. ● Make it fun. ● Your kids will eat it up.

And they'll grow up knowing how to choose foods that promise healthier, happier lives.

Kids and activity



Make physical activity easy

Children can have fun and improve their health by being physically active every day. Children should aim to get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days. Parents can help:

Create safe places. Watch over children's activities.

Set a good example. Be active with your children.

Promote physical activity. Encourage children to be physically active at home, at school and with friends.

Limit sitting-around time. Alternate time spent sitting with time spent moving.

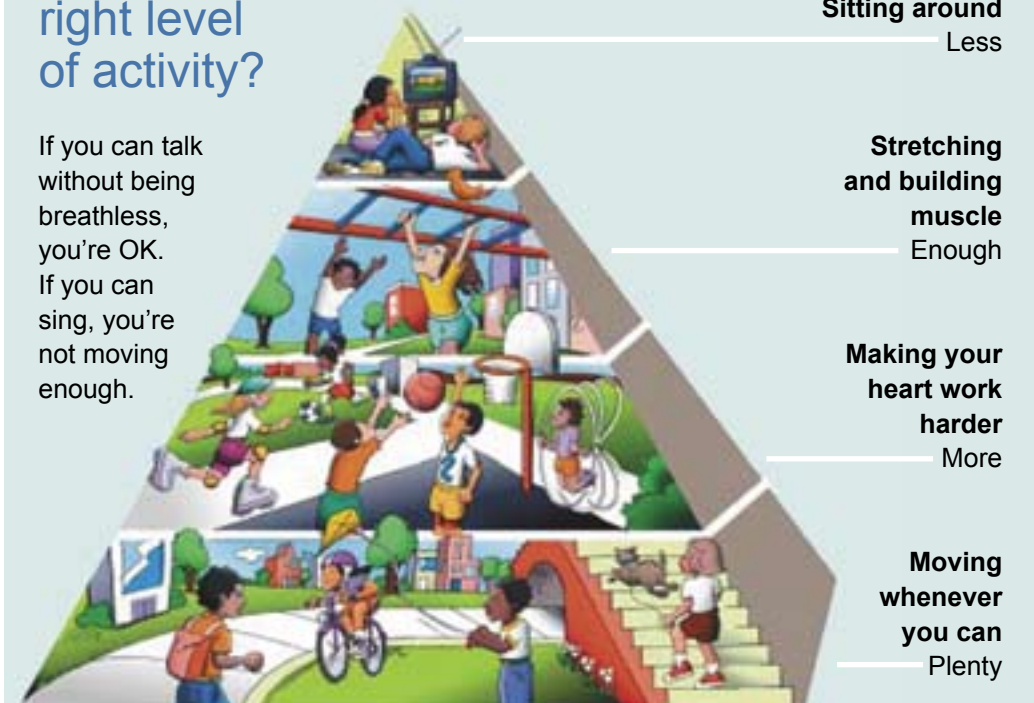
Establish a routine. Set aside time each day as activity time.

Coach a team. Encourage children to participate in neighborhood sports.

Set up a home gym. Get children involved in creating a gym using household items. Canned foods make good weights.

What is the right level of activity?

If you can talk without being breathless, you're OK. If you can sing, you're not moving enough.



Sitting around
Less

Stretching and building muscle
Enough

Making your heart work harder
More

Moving whenever you can
Plenty

Try aerobic activities. Check children's heart rates before, during and after activities to see how hard they are working.

Throw an activity party. Make your child's birthday party activity-centered.

Work with your school. Be sure your school offers physical activity time for all students.