

# health TALK

WINTER 2009



## need a doctor?

Do you need to find a doctor who is in our STAR Medicaid network? Just call 800-213-5846 and request a provider directory. You can also visit our Web site at [www.uhctexasstar.com](http://www.uhctexasstar.com) to see our list of providers.



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### ▼ BABY BASICS

## OH baby!



HEALTHY MOMS HAVE HEALTHY BABIES

A healthy pregnancy begins before you conceive. The healthier you are, the healthier your baby will be. If you are planning to have a baby, see your doctor for a pre-pregnancy checkup. Even if you are not planning a pregnancy, take care of yourself if you are sexually active, just in case:

- Take a vitamin with folic acid to prevent birth defects.
- Quit smoking and drinking alcohol.
- Get tested for HIV, hepatitis B and other conditions.

If you do get pregnant, start seeing a doctor or midwife as soon as you find out. Go for checkups every month for the first six months. Go more frequently in the last three months. This way, your provider can catch any problems early. You can also get tests you need on time.

And after you have your baby, make sure you go for your postpartum checkup.



**EXPECTING?** UnitedHealthcare has a program for expecting moms called Healthy First Steps. Join by calling 713-418-6132. You can get support, information and even free gifts!

▼ PREVENTION



# a ONE-TWO punch

POWERFUL PREVENTION FOR CERVICAL CANCER

**More than 11,000 women will find out they have cervical cancer this year.** Hispanic and African American women are more likely to get it. But here's the good news: There are two powerful tools for prevention and early detection.

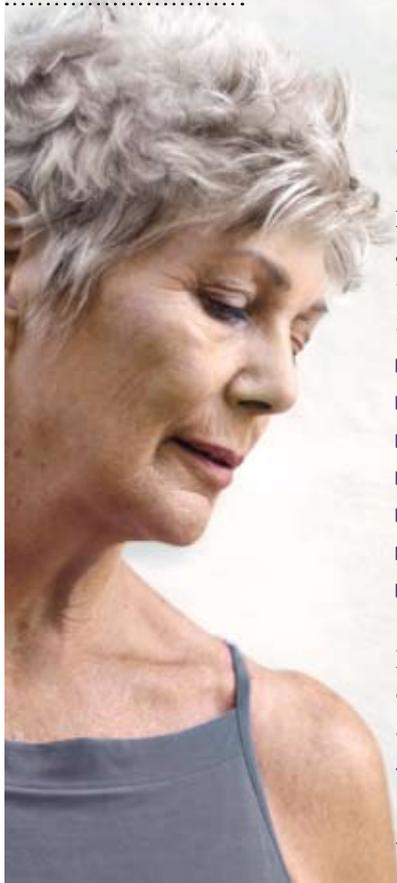
**CHECK IT OUT** Pap tests find cancer early, before there are any symptoms. You should start getting Pap tests at age 21, or three years after you start having sex, whichever comes first. You should get a Pap test at least every three years. If you have had an abnormal Pap test or are at high risk for cervical cancer, talk to your doctor about getting the test more often. Your doctor might also test you for HPV.

**YOUR BEST SHOT** About 70 percent of cervical cancers are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is very common. You get it from unprotected sex. Now, there's a vaccine for HPV. Girls and women aged 9 to 26 should get it. It works best when given to girls well before they become sexually active.



**TAKE CHARGE** Talk to your doctor about getting cancer screenings. For more information about cancer, call the National Cancer Institute at 800-4 CANCEER or visit [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).

▼ MENTAL HEALTH



## FEELING blue?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO

**Depression is more than feeling blue for a few days.** It is a serious illness. More than 15 million Americans have it.

Some signs include:

- a sad mood that doesn't go away
- not wanting to do things you once enjoyed
- eating much more or less than you used to
- trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- lack of energy
- a hard time thinking
- thinking about death or suicide

Depression can be treated. Medication can help. So can therapy. You can also try lifestyle changes. Exercising, getting enough sleep and eating healthy may improve your mood.

**GET HELP** If you have symptoms of depression most of the time for more than a few weeks, talk to your doctor.

▼ CHRONIC CONDITIONS

► MORE THAN 17 MILLION HEALTH CARE VISITS EACH YEAR ARE DUE TO ASTHMA.



## it's a plan

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ASTHMA TREATMENT

**There's no cure for asthma, but proper care can help you live a normal life.** If you have asthma, it's important to follow your doctor's orders.

Asthma care can seem complicated. There might be different pills and inhalers. You might use a peak flow meter to test your breathing. You might keep an asthma diary to help you find out what causes your asthma to get worse.

A written asthma action plan can help you simplify and understand your asthma care. It should tell you what medicines to take and when to take them. It should help you know if you should stop what you are doing if you don't feel well. The plan should tell you when to call your doctor and when you need emergency care.

### THE THREE-ZONE ASTHMA PLAN





# Get the Lead Out

HOW TO KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE FROM LEAD POISONING

Even small amounts of lead can be dangerous to young children. Because babies and toddlers often put their hands and toys in their mouths, they can swallow lead. Each year, about 310,000 kids are found to have high lead levels. The good news is that lead poisoning can be prevented.

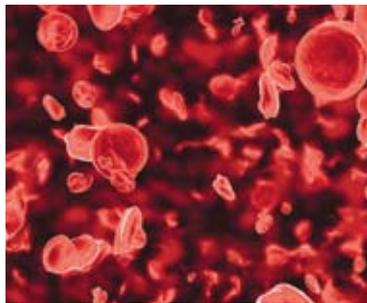


## WHERE DOES LEAD COME FROM?

Most of the lead that children are exposed to comes from paint. When old paint with lead in it flakes or wears away, it is dangerous. The dust or chips can get on children's hands, and then into their mouths. Painted toys, ceramics or other products made outside the U.S. can also have lead.



## WHAT IS LEAD POISONING?



Lead can be swallowed or inhaled. When lead gets into the body, it can end up in the blood, bones or organs. Usually, there are no symptoms of lead poisoning. Over time, lead poisoning can lead to lower intelligence, slow growth, learning disabilities and other problems.

## HOW CAN YOU PREVENT LEAD POISONING?

If you live in a home built before 1970, ask your local health department to test your walls and water for lead. Dust with a wet cloth. Help your child develop good hand-washing habits at an early age. And, most importantly, have your child tested for lead when your doctor recommends—at least twice before the age of 2.



**CHECK IT OUT** The American Academy of Pediatrics says kids should get tested for lead at the ages of 1 and 2 years. Ask your doctor if your child needs to be tested.

 **BREATHE EASY** If you have asthma, talk to your doctor about getting an asthma action plan. If you already have an asthma action plan, make sure it's up-to-date and that you are using it.

Your doctor can give you directions for exactly what each zone means for you.

**RED = STOP** Your symptoms are bad. Get medical help right away.

**YELLOW = CAREFUL** You are having some symptoms. Use your quick-relief medication.

**GREEN = GO** You're feeling OK. Keep using your preventive medication.

▼ ABOUT YOUR PLAN



## you have options

If you are sick, it's important for you to make a smart decision about your treatment. UnitedHealthcare wants your doctor to tell you about all treatment options that are right for you, even if they are not covered benefits. Your doctor cannot withhold information or treatments from you just because UnitedHealthcare does not pay for them. You are allowed to choose the best treatment for you.

**i TAKE CHARGE!** If you have questions about your benefits, call 877-238-8543 for CHIP or 800-213-5846 for STAR Medicaid.

▼ BABY BASICS



## preventing SIDS

**Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is when a baby dies of unknown cause.** It is most common in babies who are 2 to 4 months old. No one knows exactly what causes SIDS. But there are things you can do to reduce the risk of SIDS.

# 5 TIPS

- 1 Place your baby to sleep on his or her back.
- 2 Put your baby to sleep only in a safe crib without blankets, toys, pillows or other soft objects.
- 3 Do not smoke when pregnant or around your baby.
- 4 Dress your baby lightly for sleep and keep the room comfortably cool.
- 5 Tell people who care for your baby to follow these rules, too.

▼ PREVENTION



# tuberculosis

### IT'S MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK

**Tuberculosis (TB) is a chronic bacterial infection.** It is spread through the air. Most of the time, the disease affects the lungs. But it can also affect other parts of the body.

Many people may be infected with TB but not have any symptoms and will not be contagious. This is called latent TB. When people are infected with TB and have symptoms like coughing, the disease is called active TB. Active TB is very contagious.

**HAVE YOU BEEN EXPOSED TO TB?** Talk to your doctor about getting tested. A doctor can perform a skin test and a chest X-ray.

**DO YOU HAVE LATENT TB?** Treatment is still important. Your doctor can give you medicine to prevent it from becoming active TB.

**DO YOU HAVE ACTIVE TB?** Your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic to kill the bacteria. It is important to continue taking the antibiotic for the prescribed length of time. It will be for at least six months. If you don't, you could get sicker.