



## FLU SEASON 2012 IS COMING

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### Here's How to Stay Healthy

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children; pregnant women; people with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart and lung disease; and people ages 65 and older.

There are two types of vaccines:

- The "flu shot," an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm.
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine, a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that is given as a nasal spray.

Your doctor can talk with you about which type of vaccine is most appropriate for you. Be sure to get your flu vaccine as soon as it's available in your area to help ensure immunity before the flu season hits.

Mild reactions such as soreness at the injection site, headache and low-grade fever are common side effects of the flu vaccine.

— Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



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## IS IT GERD?

### Symptoms of This Condition May Look Like Something Else

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is a more serious form of gastroesophageal reflux (GER), which is common. GER occurs when the lower esophageal sphincter opens spontaneously or does not close properly and stomach contents rise up into the esophagus. GER is also called acid reflux or acid regurgitation, because digestive juices — called acids — rise up with the food.

When acid reflux occurs, food or fluid can be tasted in the back of the mouth. When refluxed stomach acid touches the lining of the esophagus it may cause a burning sensation in the chest or throat called heartburn or acid indigestion. Occasional GER is common

and does not necessarily mean one has GERD. Persistent reflux that occurs more than twice a week is considered to be GERD, and it can eventually lead to more serious health problems. People of all ages can have GERD.

Most children under age 12 with GERD, and some adults, have the condition without heartburn. Instead, they may experience a dry cough, asthma symptoms or trouble swallowing. If you or your child are experiencing these symptoms, see your doctor for a diagnosis.

— Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

### Managing Pain *Don't Suffer in Silence*

Pain is a feeling triggered in the nervous system. It may be sharp or dull. It may come and go, or it may be constant. Pain can be helpful in diagnosing a problem. Without pain, you might seriously hurt yourself without knowing it, or you might not realize you have a medical problem that needs treatment. Once you take care of the problem, the pain usually goes away. However, sometimes pain goes on for weeks, months or even years. Sometimes this chronic pain is due to an ongoing cause, such as cancer or arthritis. Sometimes the cause is unknown.

Fortunately, there are many ways to treat pain. Treatment varies depending on the cause. Pain relievers, acupuncture and sometimes surgery are helpful. If you are living with pain, talk with your doctor. There are many treatments available today that can help you live a more comfortable, more active life.

— Source: National Institutes of Health

Want more information on pain management? Visit [www.HealthMart.com](http://www.HealthMart.com).



### Prostate-Health Update *What Exactly Is the PSA Test?*

You've likely heard a lot in the news lately about the pros and cons of men having a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test performed. But what is this test, and how does it work?

Prostate-specific antigen is a protein produced by cells of the prostate gland. The PSA test measures the level of PSA in the blood. The doctor takes a blood sample, and the amount of PSA is measured in a laboratory.

It is normal for men to have a low level of PSA in their blood. However, prostate cancer or benign (not cancerous) conditions can increase a man's PSA level. As men age, both benign prostate condi-

tions and prostate cancer become more common.

A man's PSA level alone does not give doctors enough information to distinguish between benign prostate conditions and cancer. However, the doctor will take the result of the PSA test into account when deciding whether to check further for signs of prostate cancer.

— Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Want more information on prostate health? Visit [www.HealthMart.com](http://www.HealthMart.com).

## WELLNESS UPDATE

### Living Well with Arthritis *Three Ways to Improve Your Daily Life*

Living well with a chronic illness involves more than just following doctor's orders. If you're willing to work at it, these three habits will help you live more successfully with arthritis:

1. **Learn all you can.** Find trusted sources of news and information. Ask lots of questions — of your doctor, your physical therapist and other healthcare providers.
2. **Pay attention to your emotions.** Living with a chronic condition such as arthritis increases your chances of developing depression. To head off depression, develop a network of family and friends who raise your spirits and who can help you keep active.
3. **Take action.** It's natural to be unsettled and upset after being diagnosed with arthritis. But those who live successfully with chronic illness accept that their



diagnosis is here to stay and quickly start thinking about how to adapt their lives. Look at what you can do and what you may need to change (whether it's activities, diet, exercise or stress level). Make a plan with your doctor and write it down.

— Source: *The Arthritis Foundation*

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Protect Yourself from Falls

Falls and fires are two leading causes of unintentional injuries and deaths among adults age 65 and older. About two-thirds of all hospital emergency-room visits by older people involve falls. To help prevent falls:

- When using stairs, always grip the handrails. Keep stairs well lit.
- Keep floors cleared and slip-resistant. Remove loose carpets, cords and other items you could trip over. Be sure all rugs, mats and other surfaces are non-skid.
- Install grab bars and slip-resistant surfaces in your bathroom.
- Use only stable step stools with a top handrail. Don't climb alone. Have someone nearby to help you.

- Stand up slowly from a sitting or lying-down position.

Be sure your telephones and emergency numbers are easily accessible so you can get help if you fall.

— Source: *U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission*



## INFANT CARE 101

### *Your Baby's Teeth*

Taking care of your baby's gums and teeth isn't difficult. Just follow these tips from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD).

Use only water in your baby's bedtime bottle to prevent bottle decay, which occurs when milk or other liquids stay in contact with the teeth for long periods. After every feeding, wipe your baby's gums with a damp washcloth or gauze pad to remove plaque. Start brushing, with a soft infant toothbrush, after the first tooth erupts.

If your baby is teething and uncomfortable, try rubbing her gums with a clean finger, a wet gauze pad or a teething ring. If the discomfort persists, call your pediatrician or dentist.

Contrary to common belief, fever is not normal for a teething baby, says the AAPD. If your infant has a fever while teething, call your pediatrician.

Schedule your child's first dental visit by her first birthday.

— Source: *American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry*

Want more information on your child's teeth? Visit [www.HealthMart.com](http://www.HealthMart.com).



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**FALL ALLERGY UPDATE**

**What You Need to Know about Allergy Medications**

Weeds are most often the cause of fall hay-fever symptoms. While avoiding the allergens that trigger symptoms is the best way to control hay fever, your allergist may prescribe an antihistamine (along with other medications) to manage your symptoms.

Antihistamines are the most widely used medications to relieve or prevent allergy symptoms. These medications prevent the effects of histamine during an allergic reaction. Antihistamines are available as a liquid, tablet or nasal spray. Some require a prescription, while others are available over the counter (OTC).

Older, "first-generation" antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine and chlorpheniramine, can cause dry mouth, constipation or drowsiness. These first-generation medications can further aggravate the fatigue already felt by allergy sufferers,

and may be appropriate for nighttime use. Newer antihistamines prescribed by your allergist are less likely to have side effects. However, if they're not working as well as they used to, you may need a different type of treatment.

Oral decongestants, such as pseudoephedrine, reduce nasal congestion but often produce insomnia, nervousness, heart palpitations or increased blood pressure. Leukotriene antagonists may also be prescribed to treat allergies. Many times, nasal steroids are better alternatives for seasonal allergies. Prescription nasal sprays can be topical steroids or antihistamines. OTC nasal sprays contain decongestants, but should be limited to just a couple of days' use, or worse congestion (called the "rebound effect") can result.

Want more information on treating allergies? Visit [www.HealthMart.com](http://www.HealthMart.com)

**HEALTH TIP**



**Back to School with Healthy Eyes**

Eighty percent of the learning a child does occurs through his eyes, and approximately one in four school-age children have some type of vision impairment, says Mark Borchert, M.D., a pediatric ophthalmologist and the director of The Vision Center at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. School eye exams, while valuable, are necessarily brief and may miss many treatable problems, he says.

"Every child should have a complete eye exam by age three," notes Borchert. "Some serious eye diseases such as amblyopia (lazy eye) or strabismus (crossed eyes) are correctable with eye patches or surgery if caught early. Once a child is seven or eight years old, the opportunity to correct the problem may be lost, resulting in permanent vision problems."

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