



KidsFirst

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A PUBLICATION FOR TEXAS CHILDREN'S HEALTH PLAN CHIP AND STAR MEMBERS AGES 13-18 AND THEIR PARENTS

The flu shot is a covered benefit for Texas Children's Health Plan members!

You can get the flu shot from your primary care provider (PCP). Texas Children's Health Plan members age 7 and older can also get a flu shot at their local pharmacy.

Protect your child with the flu shot today by visiting your local pharmacy or visit texaschildrenshealthplan.org/flu to find a provider near you.



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Vaping can cause serious health problems – but it's not too late to quit

You may have seen or read news reports of severe lung disease and even death from the use of e-cigarettes or vaping devices. We know that almost all of the ingredients in e-cigarettes or vaping devices can harm the lungs. The flavoring chemicals can cause coughing, wheezing, and sometimes severe lung damage. Other chemical ingredients, like propylene glycol and glycerin, can damage lung cells and cause a type of pneumonia called lipoid pneumonia. The battery can blow up, causing burns, face injury, broken jaws, and eye injury. Even the inhaled nicotine can be harmful. **There is no evidence that e-cigarettes or other vaping devices are safer than traditional cigarettes.**

The e-cigarette and vape industry markets to young people by creating flavored products that kids like. It also advertises e-cigarettes and vaping devices on television, in magazines, in convenience stores, and on social media. The industry has created e-cigarette products that are easier for kids to hide from parents or teachers. For example, the JUUL is designed to look like a USB drive for a computer. E-cigarettes and vaping devices often do not look like a traditional cigarette at all, which makes many young people think it is safer to use them.

What can a parent do?

- Talk to your kids about e-cigarettes and vaping devices. Let them know how addictive and dangerous these products are. Let them know how the industry targets them to encourage them to buy more of these products.
- Know what e-cigarettes and other vaping devices look like, so you can recognize it if your child has one.
- Be a role model for your child. Do not smoke or use e-cigarettes.

What if I am using e-cigarettes or vaping devices?

- The best thing you can do is to stop right away. There is nothing healthy or safe about these products.
- Do not modify the devices, do not use flavors, and do not increase the voltage. This makes these already harmful products even more dangerous.
- Seek medical attention if you develop breathing problems such as cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, nausea, or vomiting. Let your doctor know that you use e-cigarettes or vaping devices, how much you use, what kind of device you use, and any other substances used in the device. If you can, bring your doctor a sample of what you are using to vape so that it can be tested.

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It's not too late to quit smoking or vaping. For help stopping smoking or using e-cigarettes and other vaping devices:

- Free telephone counseling:
1-800-QUIT-NOW or **1-800-YES-QUIT**
- Online help from the National Cancer Institute:
SmokeFree.gov
- Talk to your doctor about FDA approved medications that can help you to stop smoking.
- Pharmacists at Texas Children's Health Plan – The Center for Children and Women can help you with counseling and nicotine replacement medication (nicotine patch and/or nicotine gum) if you are or your child is a Texas Children's Health Plan member.



Why your family should get the flu shot

Flu season starts in October and continues through March. For most people, the flu causes a fever, body aches, and other cold-like symptoms that will get better in a week. Some people, though, might have to go to the hospital because they become seriously ill after getting the flu. The flu is especially dangerous for kids who have serious medical conditions like asthma. Getting a flu shot is the single best way to protect your child and your family from getting sick with the flu.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a flu shot for everyone 6 months of age and older. But it's especially important for those who are at greater risk of developing health problems from the flu, including:

- all kids 6 months through 4 years old (babies younger than 6 months are also considered high risk, but they cannot receive the flu vaccine)
- all women who are pregnant, are considering pregnancy, have recently given birth, or are breastfeeding during flu season

- anyone whose immune system is weakened from medications or illnesses
- anyone (adults, teens, and kids) with a chronic medical condition, such as asthma
- kids or teens who take aspirin regularly and are at risk for developing Reye syndrome if they get the flu
- caregivers or household contacts of anyone in a high-risk group (like children younger than 5 years old, especially those younger than 6 months, and those with high-risk conditions)

Certain things might prevent a person from getting the flu shot. Talk to your doctor about the flu shot if your child:

- has ever had a severe reaction to a flu vaccination
- has had Guillain-Barré syndrome

Great news! Texas Children's Health Plan members age 7 and older can now get a flu shot at their local pharmacy. Get your flu shot today by visiting your local pharmacy or visit texaschildrenshealthplan.org/flu to find a provider near you.

Is it a cold or the flu?

Your child has a sore throat, cough, and high fever. Could it be the flu? Or just a cold?

The flu usually makes kids feel worse than if they have a cold. But it's not always easy to tell the difference between the two. Here are tips on what to look for — and what to do.

Cold or Flu Symptoms Guide

Answer these questions to see if your child has the flu or a cold:

Question	Flu	Cold
Did the illness come on suddenly?	Yes	No
Does your child have a high fever?	Yes	No
Is your child's energy level very low?	Yes	No
Is your child's head achy?	Yes	No
Is your child's appetite less than normal?	Yes	No
Are your child's muscles achy?	Yes	No
Does your child have chills?	Yes	No

When should I call the doctor?

If you have any doubts, it's best to call the doctor. An illness that seems like a cold can turn out to be the flu. And other illnesses, like strep throat or pneumonia, can seem like the flu. Even doctors sometimes need to do a test to know for sure if a child has the flu or a cold.

It's important to get medical care right away if your child:

- seems to be getting worse
- has trouble breathing
- has a high fever
- has a bad headache
- has a sore throat
- seems confused

How is the flu treated?

Most of the time, you can care for your child at home with plenty of liquids, rest, and comfort. Even healthy children can struggle with the flu. But some kids — like those younger than 5 or kids with asthma — are more likely to have problems if they get the flu. In some cases, a doctor might prescribe an antiviral medicine to lessen flu symptoms.

What can parents do?

- Prevention is the best medicine. Make sure that everyone in your family gets a flu vaccine every year.
- Teach your kids good hand washing habits to help stop the spread of flu.
- If your child has asthma or another illness, call your doctor right away if your child shows signs of the flu. The doctor might need to give your child antiviral medicines, which only work when children start taking them within 48 hours of when flu symptoms start.

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Cough medicine does not work as well as you think

The cough is one of the best defenses the lungs have. Mucus traps bacteria. Coughing gets rid of the mucus and the bacteria goes with it. Without a good, productive cough, children can much more easily get pneumonia (lung infection) and lung damage.

Research studies show that cough medicine does not work to reduce cough from a cold. That means that giving cough medicine is no better than giving no medicine at all. It also puts the child at risk for side effects from the medicine. Studies comparing honey to cough medicine found that honey helped the cough, while cough medicine did not help.

When I speak to pediatricians, most of them know that cough medicine does not work, but they prescribe it anyway. When I ask why, they say the parents expect it. If a child has a cold with a cough and the doctor does not prescribe cough medicine the parent thinks that the doctor has not done his or her job. Most doctors are relieved when a parent says that they do not want cough medicine for their child. So the next time your child has a cough with a cold, remember that you don't have to give her cough medicine to make it go away. Talk with your doctor about other options for helping your child's cough and follow these helpful tips.

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4 tips to help your child's cough and cold

- Stay well hydrated. Chicken soup is great!
- If a child is over the age of 1, a teaspoon of honey can help relieve a cough. Don't give honey to an infant under the age of 1. This increases the risk for infant botulism.
- Remember, the cough protects the lungs. The cold should get better in a few days.
- See a doctor right away if there is high fever, difficulty breathing, fast breathing, or tightness in the chest.

Honey Elixir Recipe

Don't let cold and flu season get you down! Here is a home remedy that can help relieve common cold and flu symptoms.

Ingredients:

- A large mug
- Boiling water
- 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon dried ginger or 1 inch fresh ginger grated
- 1 tablespoon honey

Directions:

1. Boil water.
2. Squeeze the juice of lemon into your hands to catch the seeds and let juice go into glass or mug.
3. Add dried ginger. If using fresh ginger, cut the peel of an inch of ginger and grate it into cup.
4. Add honey.
5. Add water and stir. Sip until done. Be careful, it's hot!



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