



HEALTH MATTERS

Spring/Summer 2023

Managing asthma

About 25 million Americans have asthma. Among them, more than 10 million asthma attacks occur each year.

Asthma is a chronic lung condition. It causes wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness and coughing. If unmanaged, these symptoms can lead to difficulty breathing and asthma attacks and emergency room (ER) visits.

The best way to manage asthma is to have medication on hand and to avoid triggers. Some asthma triggers can be smoke, mold, pests and insects, pet hair and dander, dust mites and air pollution.

People with asthma may have difficulties when doing physical activities. Talk to your doctor about using the correct medications so you can do activities you enjoy. Colds, flu, bronchitis and pneumonia can make asthma symptoms worse and may require urgent care or emergency treatment.

If you notice the child in your care has difficulty breathing while exercising, during cold weather or with other situations, check with their primary care provider (PCP). They can check the child's lungs, perform breathing tests and evaluate whether they have asthma.

Treatments

Quick-acting medications like inhalers and preventive medications are available. Ask the child's PCP about options.

Check your home for issues that may trigger symptoms and remove them. You can also check weather apps for poor outdoor air quality alerts and have the child stay in or wear a mask on those days.

Sources: www.cdc.gov/asthma/pdfs/asthma_brochure.pdf; www.aafa.org/asthma-facts



Benefits of a healthy diet

Eating a healthy diet is important at every stage of life. For infants and children, healthy foods are needed for them to grow properly and learn good eating routines. For adults, eating healthy helps them prevent conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, obesity and certain cancers.

Eating healthy food also helps one think better and feel good and gives one energy.

What is in a healthy diet?

A healthy diet is made up of lean meats and proteins, healthy fats, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables of all colors. Watch this short video at youtu.be/eUR3x0PDFX0 to find out more about what's in a healthy diet.

The child in your care can also see a certified nutritionist, at no cost, to find the best options for them. Contact Mercy Care DCS CHP to find a nutritionist. Or find a doctor on our website at www.MercyCareAZ.org/find-a-provider.

Food resources in Arizona

In the greater Phoenix area, 1 out of 3 people doesn't have regular access to healthy foods. If you or someone you know needs food assistance, help is available.

Arizona Food Bank Network is a group of food banks, food pantries and agencies that offer food assistance and no-cost meals. Call **602-528-3434** for help or visit www.azfoodbanks.org/get-food.

Farm Express is a mobile produce market that provides affordable fruits and vegetables to people with little or no access to healthy food. Visit the website for a schedule and locations at mercyar.es/farmexpress.

Taking medication the right way

Mercy Care DCS CHP wants the child in your care to be as healthy as possible so they can enjoy life. One of the most important ways you can help them stay healthy is to make sure they take their medication as their doctor prescribed and take it on time.

The term used to describe if patients are taking their medication the right way is "medication adherence." Consistent medication adherence is important to your child's health. There are many diseases and health conditions that do not show their bad effects every day. These can include diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and

asthma. Since some people do not "feel" the effects of these diseases all of the time, it can be hard to remember to take their medications.

Here are some tips to help:

- Keep the child's medications in a place that you remember to visit every day.
- Unless their doctor tells you a specific time, make sure they take their medications when it is easy for you both to remember. Make taking their medications part of their daily routine.
- Use a pill box and write on the pill box the time they are to take their medications.

- Use an alarm clock or an electronic device (tablet, smartphone) to remind you that it is time for the child in your care to take their medications.

All medications (including yours) should be stored safely, so that children do not take medication not meant for them. If you have any questions about the medications the child in your care takes, ask their doctor or pharmacist.

Contact the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center at **1-800-222-1222** if medication was ingested improperly or causes a bad reaction.

Child dental health: Don't skip brushing — or checkups

Regular dental visits are important for people of all ages. Plaque forms from food and bacteria and causes dental decay (cavities). On average, Arizona children have five teeth affected by cavities. That's about 1 out of every 4 teeth in a child's mouth. Brushing and flossing doesn't get rid of all of the plaque that causes cavities.

That is why it is important to have the child's teeth cleaned by a dental professional. A teeth cleaning will remove what's left behind. Routine dental services are covered for members.

Their dentist can also catch problems early, when they're easier to treat. For example, cavities are easier to fill when they're small. And gum disease can be reversed if caught early.

When to see the dentist

Follow their dentist's lead on how often to take the child. Here's what experts usually recommend:

- **Babies.** Take the baby to the dentist after the first tooth sprouts. The American Dental Association says babies should see a dentist by 6 months old or sooner.
- **Children.** Kids should see the dentist every six months.

During your visit

Tell the dentist if the child's health has changed. Also, let the dentist know the medications the child is on, as some medications can affect the child's teeth. Medical conditions may affect teeth, especially if the child in your care has:

- Tooth sensitivity
- Puffy or bleeding gums
- Persistent bad breath
- Pain or swelling in the mouth
- Dry mouth
- Diabetes, heart disease, an eating disorder or HIV
- A family history of tooth decay or gum disease

Sources: American Dental Association; Arizona Department of Health Services: Division of Public Health Services, Public Health Prevention Services, Office of Oral Health: Arizona School Dental Survey, 1999-2003; U.S. National Library of Medicine



Peer and family supports lend a helping hand

Peer support and family support specialists are specially trained behavioral health providers delivering supportive services to AHCCCS members, family members and caregivers.

Peer support for youth and young adults

Youth and young adults who have aged out of foster care may access peer support services if they are enrolled with AHCCCS and experiencing behavioral health challenges.

Peer support services help people:

- Connect to resources in the community
- Develop tools to use in times of crisis
- Create treatment and wellness plans
- Build advocacy skills when working with their treatment team

The Recovery Empowerment Network's H.E.R.O Discovery Center provides peer support and other services to people ages 18 to 25. They also host Teen Connections Night to support youth ages 14 to 17. Visit their website at www.renaz.org for information or call **602-248-0368**. The youth or young adult's insurance provider may also have information on other peer support groups available.

Family support

Family support specialists educate and guide people through the behavioral health system. A family support specialist is an advocate who can help parents and caregivers find housing, food, employment, respite services and parenting classes. They may also provide services for children, such as help with school and life skills training. Visit the Family



Involvement Center website at www.familyinvolvementcenter.org for more information on family support services.

Children in foster care

Peer support services are available to children in foster care to address their behavioral health needs. Parents and caregivers should ask their behavioral health provider about peer support services for children. MIKID (www.mikid.org) and Reach Family Services (www.reachfs.org) offer peer support services and mentoring for youth. Support will also come to them from members of the Child and Family Team (CFT). The CFT includes the child, their caregiver, DCS specialist, a behavioral health representative and any key person in the child's life who is invited to participate.

If a child in foster care is going through a behavioral health crisis, call the Crisis Response Network Foster Care Line at **602-633-0763**.

Caregiver support

Who is caring for people who care for others? Caregivers, such as

biological, foster and kinship parents, may need a caring person to help them deal with difficult emotions and stressors. Caregivers may contact their behavioral health provider and ask about mental health supports. Mental Health America also has tools and resources to help caregivers at www.mhanational.org/mental-health-resources-caregivers.

Peers and families play an important role in helping members be as healthy as possible. That is why Mercy Care DCS CHP works with the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition, an organization of peer and family member advocates. The coalition makes sure individuals and families have a say in behavioral health policy decisions that affect their community.

To learn more about how to get involved or about peer and family support resources, email the Office of Individual and Family Affairs at OIFATeam@mercycaarez.org.

For a behavioral health crisis

Mercy Care DCS CHP members can call the **Arizona Behavioral Health Crisis Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- **1-844-534-4673 (1-844-534-HOPE)**
- Or text **HOPE** to **4HOPE (44673)**

Tribal Crisis Lines

- San Carlos Apache Reservation: **1-866-495-6735**
- Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: **1-800-259-3449**
- Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: **1-855-331-6432**
- Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation: **480-461-8888**
- San Lucy District of the Tohono O'odham Nation: **480-461-8888**
- Tohono O'odham Nation: **1-844-423-8759**
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe: Tucson, **520-591-7206**; Guadalupe, **480-736-4943**
- White Mountain Apache Tribe: **928-338-4811**
- Navajo Nation: **928-551-0508**

Veterans Crisis Line: **988**, press **1**

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **988**

National crisis text line: Text **HOME** to **741741**, about any type of crisis, or go to **www.crisistextline.org/text-us**.

Teen Lifeline phone or text: **602-248-TEEN (602-248-8336)**

Crisis Line staff can help:

- Provide crisis support over the phone
- Dispatch a crisis mobile team to support you in the community
- Arrange for transportation to take you somewhere safe
- Help you arrange counseling or connection to your outpatient provider
- Provide options for dealing with other urgent situations

*Always call **911** in life-threatening situations.*

If you need someone to talk to: Call the Warm Line, **602-347-1100**. It's a support line operated by credentialed peer support specialists. It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Community resources

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Several organizations statewide work for the betterment of children in child welfare and their caregivers. Find additional resources at www.MercyCareAZ.org/members/chp-members/resources.

- **AHCCCS:** resources for foster/kinship/adoptive families — www.azahcccs.gov/Members/AlreadyCovered/MemberResources/Foster
- **Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation:** grant awards for children who have been adjudicated dependent wards of the court in Arizona — www.affcf.org/awards
- **A Mighty Change of Heart:** personalized duffle bags for children in Arizona entering child welfare — www.amchaz.org
- **Arizona Helping Hands:** essential needs for children in child welfare — www.azhelpinghands.org
- **Helen’s Hope Chest:** essential needs for children in child welfare — www.helenshopechest.org
- **Jose’s Closet:** essential needs for children in child welfare — www.josescloset.org
- **Strong Families AZ:** a network of free home visiting programs — www.strongfamiliesaz.com

- **Raising Special Kids:** to improve the lives of children with disabilities — www.raisingpecialkids.org
- **Family Involvement Center:** support for securing emotional, physical and behavioral health care in Arizona — www.familyinvolvementcenter.org
- **Safe to Sleep:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ public education on infant sleep safety — www.nichd.nih.gov/sts
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** health information for children, teens and pregnant women — www.cdc.gov/parents
- **Milestone Tracker app:** to track your child’s developmental milestones and share them with your pediatrician; available in English and Spanish — www.cdc.gov/milestonetracker
- **First Things First:** committed to the healthy development and learning of young children from birth to age 5 — www.firstthingsfirst.org
- **Safe Kids Worldwide:** working to help families and communities keep kids safe from injuries — www.safekids.org
- **Sesame Street in Communities:** activities and tips for the challenges and joys of ensuring a child’s healthy development — www.sesamestreetincommunities.org



Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevention

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are common and on the rise in Arizona. According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, almost 56,000 cases were reported in 2020, and cases have tripled since 2000. Young adults ages 15 to 24 are most at risk of getting an STI.

Talk openly with the child in your care about safe sex. A few moments of unsafe sexual practices can result in long-lasting effects on their lives.

STIs are spread by having oral, anal or vaginal sex with an infected person. STIs do not always show symptoms. For anyone who is sexually active, the best way to know if they have an STI is to get tested regularly.

Chlamydia is one of the most common STIs. Some symptoms that may occur are abnormal discharge from the vagina or penis and a burning sensation when urinating. Men and women can also get chlamydia in their rectum from having anal sex. The symptoms may include rectal pain, discharge and bleeding. In women, untreated chlamydia can make it difficult to get pregnant or cause problems during pregnancy. It can also be passed to their baby upon delivery.

Chlamydia can be treated and cured with antibiotics, but repeat infections are common.

Syphilis can cause serious health problems if left untreated. Untreated syphilis can spread to the brain and nervous system. There is currently an outbreak of syphilis in Arizona. Symptoms of syphilis are sores on the penis, vagina or anus. Sores can also be in the rectum or on the lips and in the mouth. Rashes



on the hands and feet may appear as well. In women, syphilis can also be passed on to their baby during pregnancy.

Syphilis can be treated and cured with specific antibiotics. It can also cause permanent damage to nerves, vision and/or hearing at any stage.

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is the virus that causes AIDS. There is no cure for HIV, but treatments can keep it controlled. If someone gets HIV disease, they must live with it for the rest of their lives.

Getting any STI puts a person at greater risk of contracting HIV. The reason is because sores or breaks in the skin may be present from other STIs, allowing the HIV virus to enter the body. Also, the risky activities that can lead to other STIs are the same for HIV infection. HIV attacks the immune system and, if left untreated, can be fatal.

STIs and pregnancy

It is recommended to get tested for HIV and other STIs at the first prenatal visit. STIs can put a pregnant woman and her baby at serious risk if left untreated.

Prevention

- The only way to guarantee avoiding STIs is not to have sex (practice abstinence).
- Using condoms, the correct way, can protect a person and their partner during sex.
- Limiting the number of sexual partners and asking them to get tested for STIs prior to sex can help prevent STIs.
- Practicing safe sex can also prevent unintended pregnancy.

Mercy Care DCS CHP covers testing and treatment for STIs. Make an appointment with the child's primary care provider.

Sources: www.cdc.gov/std/default.htm; www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/disease-integration-services/std-control/index.php



Dangers of lead exposure

Lead in a person's blood can cause serious health problems. Lead poisoning is caused by breathing in or swallowing lead.

Lead can be found in:

- Paint and dust in older homes, especially dust from renovation or repairs
- Candy, makeup, toys, jewelry, glazed pots and traditional medicines made in other countries
- Work like auto refinishing, construction and plumbing
- Soil and tap water
- Spices, herbal remedies and ceremonial powders

Lead exposure during pregnancy

If you are pregnant, it's especially important to avoid exposure to lead. Lead can pass from a mother to her unborn baby. Too much lead in the body can:

- Put you at risk of miscarriage
- Cause a baby to be born too early or too small
- Hurt a baby's brain, kidneys and nervous system
- Cause a child to have learning or behavior problems

Dangers to children

Lead exposure in children can cause:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Slowed growth and development
- Learning and behavior problems
- Hearing and speech problems

It's hard to tell if a child has been exposed to lead because no symptoms may be present. The best way to check for lead poisoning is by giving the child a blood lead test. Check with the child's primary care provider about testing.

Lead poisoning can be prevented. The key is to keep children from coming in contact with lead. If children are poisoned by lead, they must be treated. Learn how to prevent exposure to lead.

To find more information about lead poisoning, you can visit www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/default.htm.

Risks of vaping and tobacco use in youth

Vaping is a form of smoking that provides nicotine, marijuana or other chemicals through inhaling “vapor,” a cloudy mist. Vaping is popular with teens and young adults for several reasons. Vaping devices are often easy to hide because they look like USB drives, pens or other everyday items. (Some look like cigarettes or pipes.) Young people enjoy the taste of the flavorings added to vaping devices, known as “e-juice” or “e-liquid.” Many people also view vaping as safer than tobacco cigarettes. Vaping has risks of its own, though.

Nicotine and addiction

Many vaping devices, such as JUUL, a popular brand, contain high levels of nicotine. Nicotine is a highly addictive chemical, and it has negative effects.

According to **DrugAbuse.gov**, young people who vape are more likely to start smoking tobacco cigarettes later. Smoking cigarettes can cause cancer and other health problems.

Vaping has several other risks, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Some young people do not know that vaping products contain nicotine.
- Nicotine can harm how young people’s still-growing brains develop.
- Nicotine fuels the pleasure and reward parts of the brain, which can lead to addiction.
- Using nicotine may also lead to future addiction to other drugs.

Vaping lung disease

In 2019, thousands of people got very sick and a few dozen died from a vaping-related lung disease. Many of the affected people used vaping products from family, friends or online sources that contained THC and vitamin E acetate. These chemicals were linked to the vaping lung disease.

Getting help to quit

Programs are available to help teens and young adults quit vaping and/or tobacco products.

The N-O-T: Not On Tobacco program was created by the American Lung Association. It’s designed to help people ages 14 to 19 quit smoking tobacco products and/or vaping. Visit the website for details: www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/not-on-tobacco.



Prevention

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has banned the sale of e-cigarettes to anyone under 21 in stores or online. It has also launched “The Real Cost” campaign to bring tobacco and vaping use prevention and education for youth to the public. Visit the website for details: www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/public-health-education/real-cost-campaign.

Sources: www.cdc.gov/tobacco/infographics/youth/pdfs/e-cigarettes-usb-flash-508.pdf; www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/vaping-devices-electronic-cigarettes; www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/health-risks-of-tobacco/health-risks-of-e-cigarettes.html; www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html

At-home care services

“The doctor will see you now” — in the comfort of your own home.

In-home and telehealth options are available to the child in your care if they don't feel well enough to leave the house or if a busy schedule prevents you from taking them to their doctor's office.

Telehealth

Call the doctor and ask if they offer telehealth visits. During a telehealth visit, the doctor can video call, voice call or chat via text with you and the child to help treat their medical issue. Telehealth options are best suited for medical issues that don't require a physical exam. These are issues such as colds, flus, COVID-19, skin rashes, prescription refills, and therapy or counseling.

Full-service care options

These are some providers who will offer care in your home. They can send a mobile team to take vital signs and examine the child for the doctor to evaluate. Their services range from primary care to complex care, as well as behavioral health.

SPG Virtual Care, 480-268-2670:

- Complex chronic care
- Routine medical care
- Urgent care
- Acute care
- COVID-19 testing and treatment
- COVID-19 monoclonal antibody treatment
- Post-discharge follow-up
- Children with special needs
- Remote patient monitoring

Spectrum Healthcare, 1-844-943-7387:

- Primary care
- Psychiatry
- Counseling
- Pain management
- Crisis
- Care management
- Hospital discharge follow-up

DispatchHealth, 480-295-4490:

- Urgent care services
- Infections

- Flu
- Pneumonia
- Migraines
- Dehydration
- UTIs
- COPD
- COVID-19

For a list of providers, visit www.MercyCareAZ.org and select “Find a Provider” at the top of the page to search the directory.





Regular well visits can help keep children healthy

It's important for everyone to have regular well visits with their doctor. For Mercy Care DCS CHP members, Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment, or EPSDT, is a complete health program.

What is the EPSDT program?

EPSDT, also known as a well-child visit, is important to ensuring that children and youth receive all required physical and behavioral health services.

What does an EPSDT (well visit) include?

Their doctor will:

- Examine them (they'll wear underwear or a gown to protect their modesty)
- Check to make sure they are up to date on their immunizations (shots)
- Check their height, weight and body mass index, or BMI (to measure body fat)
- Check their hearing, vision, gums and teeth
- Ask about any personal or family history of health problems
- Assess their nutrition and talk about healthy eating
- Check how well they are growing and developing compared to most kids their age
- Perform a behavioral health screening

- Discuss topics like tobacco, alcohol and drug use
- Check their blood pressure
- Order blood tests for anemia and other screenings
- Send them to the lab for additional tests, if needed

Why are they important?

- **It is important to their health.** Well-child visits allow doctors and nurses to have regular contact with the child and keep track of — or *monitor* — their overall health and development through various screenings.
- **It's the law.** Children in foster care need a well-child medical examination within 30 days of entry into foster care. Rapid Response will assess the physical and mental health needs of the child within the first 72 hours of entry into foster care, per Jacob's Law. Most children in foster care will be enrolled with a mental health service provider.

You can make an appointment now for the child's yearly checkup. This is important, even if they don't feel sick.

You can call Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services at **602-212-4983** or **1-833-711-0776 (TTY 711)**. We can help you schedule an appointment and help you get rides to the child's or youth's medical appointments. For all emergencies, dial **911**.

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This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

Mercy Care is administered by Aetna Medicaid Administrators, LLC, an Aetna company.

Call Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, or call for the 24-hour nurse line. Language assistance services, including TTY services, are available to members to ask specifically about utilization management issues. For example, if you have a question about the status of a prior authorization, call Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services.

• Call **602-212-4983** or **1-833-711-0776 (TTY 711)**.

www.MercyCareAZ.org

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Nondiscrimination Notice

Mercy Care DCS CHP complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. Mercy Care DCS CHP does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Mercy Care DCS CHP:

- Provides no-cost aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
 - o Qualified sign language interpreters
 - o Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides no-cost language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
 - o Qualified interpreters
 - o Information written in other languages

If you need a qualified interpreter, written information in other formats, translation or other services, call the number on the member's ID card or **1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**.

If you believe that Mercy Care DCS CHP has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex, you can file a grievance with our Civil Rights Coordinator at:

Address: Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator
4500 East Cotton Center Boulevard
Phoenix, AZ 85040
Telephone: **1-888-234-7358 (TTY 711)**
Email: MedicaidCRCoordinator@mercycaresaz.org

You can file a grievance in person or by mail or email. If you need help filing a grievance, our Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, SW Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, D.C. 20201, 1-800-368-1019, 1-800-537-7697 (TDD).

Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.
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