



# A Legacy *of Good Health*

FALL 2015

## Stay-well TIPS for families



**IT'S** a fact that families share more than just quality time together—they share some unwelcome germs too.

A cold or flu in one family member often means that sickness will soon make the rounds at home. However, these tips can help your family stay well.

### Practice prevention

The best way to prevent the flu is for everyone, starting at age 6 months, to get an annual flu vaccine.

Also, some people—including those with chronic health problems or people 65 and older—may need a vaccination against bacterial pneumonia.

While there isn't a cold vaccine yet, you can remind everyone to practice these healthy habits:

- ▶ Keep your distance from sick people.
- ▶ Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow.
- ▶ Wash your hands often with warm

water and soap. Scrub them well for about 20 seconds (about the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice). Use paper towels to dry your hands.

### When sickness strikes

To ease cold and flu symptoms:

- ▶ Get lots of rest, especially while a fever is present.
- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids, such as water and clear soups.
- ▶ Gargle with warm salt water to relieve a sore throat, or use sprays or lozenges.

You also can try over-the-counter medicines for a headache, stuffy nose, cough and other symptoms.

However, kids and teens should not take aspirin—it may increase their risk for a serious disease called Reye's syndrome. And nonprescription cold medicines may not be safe for younger children.

Also, you can ask your doctor about

antiviral medicines to help you recover more quickly from the flu.

Most people recover from colds or the flu within two weeks.

Seek a doctor's advice for symptoms such as a high fever, illness that lasts for 10 days or longer, or any breathing problems.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Lung Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Need urgent care for your child under 18? **The PEDI Center** is open seven days a week, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. (holiday hours vary), at 9900 Stockdale Highway, Suite 105. See a complete urgent care listing in the Kern Legacy Provider Directory at [www.kernlegacyhp.com](http://www.kernlegacyhp.com), or call 661-868-3280, options 1 and 5.



It's that time of year again

2



Sadness—when it's serious

4



How to form healthy habits

6



## IMMUNIZATIONS

# Start the school year off the right way

**BACK** to school, back to day care, back to after school activities and back to the season of colds and flu. It is important to make sure your kids are protected, and when you protect your kids, you are also lending a helping hand in protecting others.

The best ways to protect your child are:  
**► Make sure he or she is up-to-date on immunizations.** See the recommended immunization schedule below, or talk to

your pediatrician.

**► Opt to get the flu shot.** You and your family can get a flu shot from your primary care physician, the Public Health Department or at flu shot clinics offered by Kern Legacy Health Plan (notifications will be sent upon availability).

**► Educate your children on germs.** Teach them to wash their hands often.

Taking the right preventive steps lowers your family's risk.



To help your family stay healthy, contact your primary care physician to make an appointment today. If you need help finding a primary care physician, contact Member Services at **661-868-3280** or **1-855-308-KLHP (5547)**.

## RECOMMENDED IMMUNIZATION SCHEDULE

### Routine vaccines children need

These are general recommendations. Talk with your doctor about what is right for your child.

**DTaP** = diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough)  
**Flu** = influenza  
**HepA** = hepatitis A  
**HepB** = hepatitis B

**Hib** = *Haemophilus influenzae* type b  
**HPV** = human papillomavirus  
**IPV** = polio  
**MCV4** = meningococcal  
**MMR** = measles, mumps, rubella

**PCV13** = pneumococcal  
**PPSV23** = pneumococcal  
**RV** = rotavirus  
**Tdap** = tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis  
**VAR** = varicella (chickenpox)

Range of routinely recommended ages    Range for certain high-risk groups    Range for catch-up immunizations    \*Needed in some cases

BIRTH	MONTHS									YEARS							
	0	1	2	4	6	9	12	15	18	19-23	2-3	4-6	7-10	11-12	13-18		
HepB	HepB	HepB	HepB	HepB									HepB series				
		RV	RV	RV*											HPV series		
		DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	DTaP	Tdap	Tdap	Tdap	Tdap		
		Hib	Hib	Hib*	Hib	Hib*			Hib								
		PCV13	PCV13	PCV13	PCV13	PCV13	PCV13	PCV13	PCV13	PCV13				PCV13			
														PPSV23			
		IPV	IPV		IPV	IPV	IPV	IPV	IPV	IPV	IPV	IPV	IPV	IPV series			
					Flu, yearly (2 doses*)									Flu, yearly			
					MMR	MMR	MMR	MMR	MMR	MMR	MMR	MMR	MMR	MMR series			
						VAR	VAR	VAR	VAR	VAR	VAR	VAR	VAR	VAR series			
					HepA series					HepA series							
					MCV4 series					MCV4		MCV4 series					

Updated 2015, with information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## SIGNS OF

# 3 DISEASES YOU SHOULDN'T IGNORE



1

## Cancer

Symptoms of cancer can depend on many things, including where in the body the disease is, how big a tumor might be and whether the cancer has spread.

For instance, a tumor pressing on an organ can cause pain. Cancer can also sap the body's energy, resulting in fatigue. And the disease can weaken the immune system, leading to recurrent infections.

The American Cancer Society and other experts list the following common signs and symptoms of cancer. Some are general to cancer as a whole; others are specific to certain types:

- ▶ Unexplained weight loss of 10 pounds or more.
- ▶ Fatigue that doesn't improve with rest.
- ▶ Pain.
- ▶ Change in bowel or bladder habits.
- ▶ Sores that don't heal.
- ▶ Change in the appearance of skin.
- ▶ Unusual bleeding or discharge.
- ▶ Thickening or a lump in a breast, testicle or other area of the body.
- ▶ Hoarseness, nagging cough or trouble swallowing.

## Be sure to see your doctor

Keep in mind that having one or more of any of these signs or symptoms doesn't mean you have a serious disease. But it's a good idea to let your doctor give you that reassuring news.

2

## Heart disease

*Heart disease* is a broad term for several different diseases that affect the heart, including coronary artery disease (CAD).

With CAD, plaque builds up in the arteries that supply the heart with blood. This can cause the arteries to narrow, reducing or even blocking blood flow to the heart, reports the American Heart Association.

The most common symptom of CAD is angina—a type of chest pain or discomfort that tends to get worse with activity and go away with rest. Angina pain may also be felt in the shoulders, arms, neck, jaw or back.

Another common symptom of CAD is shortness of breath, which happens when CAD triggers heart failure. With heart failure, the heart doesn't pump blood as well as it should.

3

## Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of the disease, and it mainly affects adults.

There is no cure for diabetes, but treating it early can help prevent or reduce the risk of serious complications—like damage to the eyes, nerves, heart and kidneys, according to the American Diabetes Association.

Signs and symptoms of diabetes include:

- ▶ Frequent urination.
- ▶ Extreme thirst or hunger.
- ▶ Unusual weight loss.
- ▶ Extreme fatigue and irritability.
- ▶ Frequent infections, especially of the gums, skin or bladder.
- ▶ Blurred vision.
- ▶ Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet.
- ▶ Sores that are slow to heal.

## DEPRESSION

# A guide to feeling better

**NO ONE** is a stranger to sadness. We all experience it—after a loss, a setback or some other difficulty. This emotion is as normal as it is unavoidable. And usually, it's short-lived.

But there is another kind of sadness—one that lingers and can become so overwhelming it becomes difficult to think clearly or even function normally.

This potentially disabling mood is what doctors call depression. Should you—or someone you care about—ever struggle with depression, here are two essential facts to keep in mind:

- ▶ Depression is a common medical illness. It is not the result of a character flaw—any more than, say, heart disease is. Scientists suspect that certain brain chemicals, such as serotonin, are out of balance in people with depression.
- ▶ Willpower alone isn't enough to make depression go away. Most people with depression need treatment to get better, the National Institute of Mental Health reports.

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### Treatment works

The encouraging news about depression is that it's highly treatable, even when it's severe. Typically that treatment is either talk therapy (which can help someone who is depressed replace negative thoughts with more positive ones) or talk therapy coupled with antidepressants.

In either case, the sooner treatment starts, the more likely it is to be effective.

According to Mental Health America, anyone who has five or more of these signs and symptoms for at least two weeks may have depression and needs

to be seen by a doctor or mental health professional:

- ▶ A persistent sad, anxious or empty mood.
- ▶ Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or hopelessness.
- ▶ Irritability or restlessness.
- ▶ The tendency to sleep too much or too little.
- ▶ Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed.

## Get help now

Kern Legacy offers counseling and other outpatient mental health services without a referral from your doctor.

If you are feeling depressed or need help with substance abuse, call any of our network providers. To see a list of our network providers, visit [www.kernlegacyhp.com](http://www.kernlegacyhp.com) or contact a Member Services Representative today at 661-868-3280 or 1-855-308-5547, options 1 and 5.

- ▶ Fatigue or decreased energy.
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating, remembering details or making decisions.
- ▶ Changed appetite with weight loss or weight gain.
- ▶ Chronic pain, digestive problems or other physical symptoms that don't respond to treatment.
- ▶ Thoughts of suicide or death.

### A better tomorrow

If you're depressed, it may be hard to imagine feeling normal.

But again—most people with depression can recover as long as a doctor or therapist is aware of their illness.

## Watch for signs of suicide

If you think someone may be suicidal, don't leave him or her alone. Get the person to seek immediate help from a doctor or the nearest emergency department. You can also call 911.

Signs of suicide include:

- ▶ Talking about suicide or death.
- ▶ Withdrawing from friends and activities.
- ▶ Giving away prized possessions.
- ▶ Writing notes or poems about death.
- ▶ Changing eating or sleeping habits.

Sources: American College of Emergency Physicians; Mental Health America



# What's happening at KMC?

**KERN** Legacy Health Plan went live in July of 2013. This is the first County of Kern Employee and Retiree Health Plan centered around Kern Medical Center (KMC). Some members have been with KMC for years, but many choosing this plan are experiencing KMC for the first time.

Whether you are new to KMC or not, you can walk through those doors and see the transformations taking place right before your eyes. From the cosmetic look, to the expansion of services, to the overall morale and attitude of the staff, the transformation is truly amazing to see.

## New at KMC

► **REACH Clinic.** A patient-centered medical home to provide comprehensive

care for those with chronic illnesses. A pharmacist, a nutritionist, a physician, a registered nurse and a social worker collaborate to provide intensive care and counseling geared toward managing these conditions and ultimately improving the quality of life.

► **Expanding services.** KMC has recently acquired access to additional services with the opening of a Wound Clinic and a Hand Specialty Clinic.

► **New Ambulatory Surgical Center and physician offices coming soon.** KMC has leased space—which is currently undergoing renovation—located on Stockdale Highway. Several KMC physicians will be treating patients at this location and providing outpatient surgical procedures. More information to come.

► **New radiology equipment.** New doesn't stop at the paint on the walls. The Emergency Department has acquired a new x-ray room and equipment. Additionally, Radiology has a new green CT machine and has upgraded to a digital mammography unit.

► **Private rooms.** The pediatric unit has given up some extra space to provide moms and their new babies with private postpartum rooms. These rooms are located on the fourth floor next to Labor and Delivery.

► **Cosmetic remodeling.** KMC is undergoing renovation in many parts of the hospital. From new flooring, to paint, to

Kern Medical Center—doing our best to make KMC the place you choose for your health care needs.

the pictures on the walls, it is a welcoming and much-needed transformation. These renovations can be seen in the first floor lobby of the A wing, the second floor operating room lobby, the Emergency Department as well as the cafeteria. The hospital is creating a brighter new environment and there is still much more to come.

► **Pet therapy.** The Auxiliary launched a pet therapy program that aims to improve patient satisfaction. Not only are there therapeutic benefits to the contact between humans and animals, but there are also emotional benefits that can uplift patients and their families during the healing processes.



## KMC is an extraordinary hospital doing amazing things every day!

Here are just a couple:

► **Trauma center.** The Level II trauma center consists of a specialized team ready to treat serious, life-threatening injuries 24/7. The role KMC plays in the community for trauma patients is vital as it is the only operating trauma center between Fresno and Los Angeles.

► **Neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).** The Level II NICU provides the highest level of care locally. KMC offers the NICU in combination with comprehensive labor and delivery services, and the community's only high-risk hospital-based pregnancy program. Access to all these services under one roof allows for newborns with critical needs to stay close to their families and home.



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Information in A LEGACY OF GOOD HEALTH comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider.

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# So healthy together

## Habits can be contagious

**YOU** share dinner with your kids, TV time with your spouse and lunches out with co-workers. And without realizing it, you may be sharing your health habits (or lack thereof) with those close to you.

Research suggests that the habits—whether healthy or unhealthy—of those around us can influence our own habits. And our choices, including the foods we eat and the way we spend our leisure time, are likely to have a subconscious but significant impact on our friends and loved ones as well.

So, in the spirit of spreading good health, why not make sure the habits you're sharing will benefit everyone in your circle of health? Try these ideas from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



### Make exercise a team effort.

Let's face it—we're all much less likely to blow off a workout if someone is waiting for us. So make exercise dates with a friend, your spouse or your kids. You'll be able to enjoy each other's company and improve your health at the same time. If a little healthy competition is what motivates you to stay active, set up a video game fitness tournament.



### Create a healthy food contest.

For family meals and friendly gatherings, make it a challenge to plan a menu that is both healthy and satisfying. Share meal and recipe ideas with friends.

### Band together to shed unwanted pounds.

You might arrange a friendly weight-loss competition at work. Or you and a friend may decide to keep food journals. Sharing that information can help you both stay accountable for your food choices.



### Kick the habit collectively.

 It can be extremely difficult to quit smoking if those around you are still lighting up. Recruit your smoking buddies to set a group quit date. You can visit each other's homes to be sure all lighters, ashtrays and cigarettes are tossed out. Your fellow quitters will be an invaluable source of support.