

COMPANION HealthWord

A Publication for Companion HealthCare Members

We Help You Manage Your Asthma



Asthma is the sixth most common chronic disease among Americans — and we have a program designed just for our members with asthma!

Asthma affects more than 200,000 South Carolinians. It occurs when the airways become irritated, causing the surrounding muscles to tighten and make it difficult to breathe. Symptoms include coughing, chest tightness, wheezing and shortness of breath.

Although treatments are now available to control asthma, there are still many asthma sufferers who don't know how to manage the disease. To educate our members who may need help managing their asthma, Companion HealthCare began its Great Expectations® *for healthy lungs* program in 1995.

Great Expectations *for healthy lungs* provides important information about asthma, the medications used to treat it and the precautions that people with the disease should take. You'll receive an initial information packet followed by newsletters in the spring and fall. What's more, the program is staffed by

registered respiratory therapists, so you can count on getting helpful and accurate education and advice.

In addition to printed materials, phone counseling is available if you're considered high risk. A staff member will answer any questions you have about asthma or your benefits related to it. Qualified members also can request a home visit by a respiratory therapist for one-on-one instruction.

Jakki Rawlinson, asthma management coordinator, says Great Expectations *for healthy lungs* has been a great success. "We get letters from people all the time, expressing their appreciation for our help," Jakki says. "Our members tell us they've never had a health plan that cares so much about keeping them healthy."

Members between the ages of 2 and 50 who have been diagnosed with asthma are enrolled automatically in the program. For more information, call Jakki Rawlinson, MA, RRT, RCP, asthma management coordinator, at 1-800-327-3183 ext. 25295 or e-mail her at Great.Expectations@companiongroup.com. You also can visit our Web site at www.CompanionHealthCare.com. From the Members page, click on Value Added Services and then on Great Expectations® *for health*.

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Summer 2002

Companion HealthCare Among Fastest Claims Processors Nationwide



99.2%

**of all claims
processed
in 30 days
of receipt**

99.1%

**of claims
processed
accurately**

98%

**of claims
completed
in 7 days**

Do you ever wonder how long it takes your doctor to receive payment from Companion HealthCare after your appointment? A recent study shows that it doesn't take long at all!

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association has named BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina and Companion HealthCare as one of the fastest Blue Cross claims processors in the nation during the second half of 2001.

BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, our parent company, processed 99.2 percent of all claims within 30 days of receipt. The other 43 Blue Cross plans across the country averaged 97.8 percent. Companion HealthCare's performance was combined with BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina data in the report.

"The speed with which we pay claims affects doctors, hospitals and other medical professionals across the state. Paying claims fast is good for the entire medical community in this state, and we're pleased to be rated so highly in this report," said Thomas G. Faulds, president and chief operating officer of the BlueCross BlueShield division of the company.

The study also shows we process 99.1 percent of our claims accurately and we complete 98 percent of our claims in seven days. Our accuracy rate on completed inquiries is 99.1 percent. All our scores were higher than the average of other Blue Cross plans.

The Association produces the measurement reports twice a year and uses the data to determine if Blue plans and their subsidiaries are in compliance with its standards. The study also helps identify best practices among the plans.

CPR is an Important Skill

CPR, or cardiopulmonary resuscitation, is a procedure that keeps blood and oxygen flowing to the heart and brain in the event that the heart stops. By giving mouth-to-mouth breathing and chest compressions, someone trained in CPR can help save the life of a person who has suffered a heart attack, drowning, electrocution or other trauma.

Because older men are typically the victims of cardiac arrest, CPR could be especially important for women to

know. According to the American Heart Association, nearly 80 percent of these emergencies happen at home.

To find CPR classes in your area, call the American Heart Association at (877) AHA-4CPR (242-4277) or visit its Web site at www.cpr-ecc.org. Your local chapter of the American Red Cross also offers CPR classes.

Information provided by Tufts University.

HEART ATTACK WARNING SIGNS

A heart attack occurs when the heart's arteries become blocked, reducing or cutting off blood flow to the heart. This lack of blood and oxygen can cause serious, irreversible damage to the heart muscle if it is not treated quickly. In many cases, people mistake a heart attack for severe indigestion and delay getting help. For this reason, it is important to be familiar with the warning signs of a heart attack.

Symptoms

If you're having a heart attack, you may have some or all of the following symptoms:

- Angina (chest pain): pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes. Heart discomfort is rarely sharp or stabbing.
- Pain or discomfort in other areas of the upper body, including the arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Other common symptoms, such as light-headedness, shortness of breath, breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, vomiting, paleness or irregular heart rate.

It is important to note that there are differences in how women and men respond to heart attacks. Women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms noted above, particularly shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting and back or jaw pain. And, women are less likely than men to believe they are having a heart attack and more likely to delay seeking emergency treatment. Unfortunately, studies have shown that women are twice as likely as men to die from their first heart attack.

If you experience any of the above symptoms, don't delay. Don't wait more than a few minutes to call 911.

Heart disease is the number-one killer not only of men, but also women. So, take care of your heart. You only have one.



Lifestyle Changes

Heart attacks usually are caused by the build-up of cholesterol in your arteries. To protect yourself against this and all other types of heart disease, there are a number of lifestyle changes you can make.

- Don't smoke, especially if you are a woman using birth control pills.
- Treat high blood pressure.
- Eat a diet that is low in fat, cholesterol and salt.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes four to five times a week.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Avoid excessive alcohol use.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- See your doctor for regular checkups.

Help Your Kids Make Healthy Food Choices *This Summer*

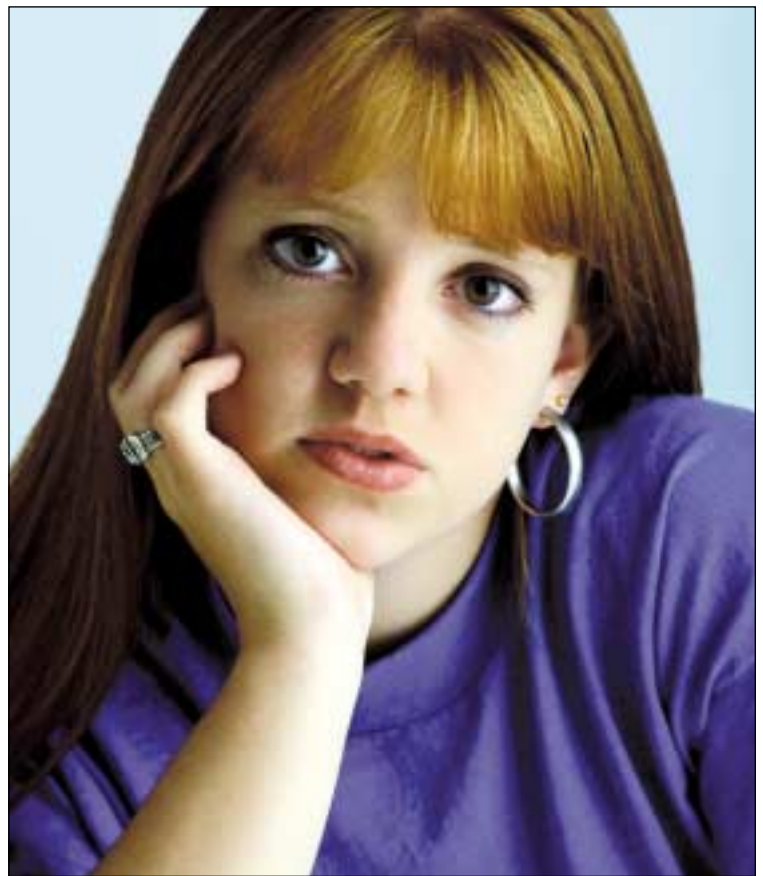
Summer's here ... and if you have kids, you know what that means! The school cafeteria closes down and your kitchen at home turns into a 24-hour restaurant!

Growing kids always are looking for a tasty snack. Unfortunately, many of their favorite foods won't give them the nutrients they need to develop healthy bodies. To help you choose nutritious foods for your kids this summer, here is a list of the 10 best and worst foods for kids.

10 Best Foods for Kids

1. **Oatmeal:** Oatmeal is a great way to start the day! It is full of vitamin B, iron, zinc and calcium.
2. **Eggs:** Eggs are a great source of protein.
3. **Peanut butter:** Peanut butter is also full of the protein that kids need. But be careful – some kids are allergic to peanuts!
4. **Yogurt:** Yogurt gives your kids all the calcium that they get from milk, but it's easier for the body to digest.
5. **Melons:** Melons, like cantaloupe, contain vitamin C, beta-carotene, B vitamins and calcium.
6. **Broccoli:** Broccoli is one of the best vegetables that kids can eat! It has lots of calcium, potassium, beta-carotene and B vitamins.
7. **Sweet potatoes:** Sweet potatoes contain three grams of fiber per serving!
8. **Protein:** Protein helps kids grow. You can find it in legumes, beans, tofu, meat, fish or poultry.
9. **Whole grains:** Try brown rice and whole wheat bread instead of the white versions.
10. **Orange juice:** Orange juice contains vitamin C, vitamin E, potassium, folate and zinc.

Information provided by eDiets.



10 Worst Foods for Kids

1. **Chicken nuggets:** Chicken nuggets have lots of fat and sodium, which can contribute to high blood pressure and heart disease.
2. **Chips:** Potato chips, corn chips and cheese puffs are mostly fat, sodium and empty calories.
3. **Doughnuts:** An average doughnut has 200 to 300 calories!
4. **French fries:** French fries are the most popular vegetable dish in the United States, but they are full of fat!
5. **Fruit leather:** Most fruit leather has very little fruit in it and a whole lot of sugar.
6. **Hot dogs:** Hot dogs have lots of fat and sodium. They also can be a choking hazard for children under 3.
7. **Juice drinks:** Even though they may sound healthy, many juice drinks are only 10 percent juice – the rest is water and sugar. Drinking too much juice also can cause children to have cavities, diarrhea, excessive gas and bloating.
8. **Prepackaged lunches:** Prepackaged lunches can be easy when you don't have a lot of time, but they are not nutritionally balanced because they contain no fruits or vegetables.
9. **Soda:** Soda contains phosphorus, a substance that can block the body from absorbing calcium. Kids need that calcium to build strong bones and muscles while they are young.
10. **Toaster pastries:** Toaster pastries contain lots of fat and not much fruit.

Keeping Kids' Snacks Healthy

When you're preparing snacks for your kids this summer, remember that variety and moderation are key! Think of the snack as a mini-meal. Go for foods that contain more than one food group and make sure the snack provides such nutrients as fiber, vitamins or minerals.

Prepare snacks that are kid friendly. When serving fruits and vegetables such as apples, pears or carrots, offer them in bite-size portions. Try to prepare bite-size snacks in advance. If healthy snacks are readily available, your children will be more likely to choose them when hunger strikes.

You can offer low-fat dips to go with healthy food choices. Kids will eat more fruits and vegetables when they are served with dips such as yogurt and low-fat salad dressings.

Limit caffeine intake. Try choosing juice instead. Read labels and try to get drinks that are 100 percent juice. Avoid soft drinks whenever possible.

Be flexible and offer a variety of healthy snack choices. It is important not to force children to eat snacks if they do not like them. Avoid offering snacks as rewards and taking them away as a form of punishment.

Let your child take part. When children are involved in preparing healthy snacks, they are more likely to eat them.



Need a quick and easy snack idea? We've listed a few of our favorite healthy treats for you to try this summer.

- **Smoothies:** Blend one cup of fresh or frozen fruit with six ounces of nonfat vanilla or plain yogurt.
- **Fruit juice fizz:** This includes a half-and-half mixture of fruit juice and mineral water or club soda.
- **Fruit dip:** Cut fresh fruit and dip it in fruit-flavored nonfat or low-fat yogurt.
- **Cheesy bagels:** Top a mini-bagel with light cream cheese and sprinkle with raisins.
- **Nutty rice cakes:** Spoon peanut butter on unflavored rice cakes. Create a happy face by sprinkling some raisins or dried fruit on the rice cakes.
- **Trail mix:** Combine equal amounts of raisins, unsalted pretzels, dried fruits and a low sugar cereal.
- **Strawberry/banana float:** Combine 3/4 cup of milk, 1/4 cup of strawberry yogurt and 1/4 cup of banana. Whip together in a blender. Use whole milk for kids between the ages of 1 and 2, and low-fat or skim milk for kids older than 2.

Nearly five million children in the United States are considered overweight or obese. Extra pounds put children at risk for a number of medical conditions, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, respiratory problems, bone and joint difficulties, type II diabetes and irregular menstrual periods. Besides the health risks associated with obesity, overweight children also are likely to experience emotional and self-esteem problems.

What's causing so many children to be overweight? One culprit may be poor diet. Nowadays mealtime tends to focus on convenience rather than nutrition. According to Dr. William Dietz, pediatrician and director of the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, convenience usually means higher fat and calorie consumption.

Another factor contributing to weight problems in children is lack of physical activity. Compared to a few years ago, kids spend very little time playing sports and exercising. Instead, they pass the hours after school in front of a television or computer screen. This inactive lifestyle leads to higher levels of body fat.

Statistics show that more than half of overweight children will grow up to be overweight adults. That's why as parents, it is important for us to help our children establish good diet and exercise habits early on. Also, remember that kids usually will follow their parents' example. That means that one way you can help your kids maintain a healthy weight is to pay close attention to your own diet and exercise habits!

If you are concerned that your child is already overweight, check with your pediatrician. He or she should be able to suggest some ways that the entire family can adopt a healthier lifestyle.

For additional information about obesity and its risks for children and adults, visit our Web site at www.CompanionHealthCare.com. From the Members page, click on "Value Added Services." Click on "Natural Blue" and scroll down to the link to www.healthyroads.com. Scroll down to Healthy Perspective – "See if Your Weight is Healthy."



Children and OBESITY

Healthcare Management Tips

Managing your healthcare can be a confusing and expensive process. To make it a little easier, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality offers three tips.

- 1st** Get to know your plan. Make sure you understand your policy benefits, coverage and limits.
- 2nd** Take control of your care. Make sure you thoroughly understand the care you are getting. Ask your doctor about upcoming tests and procedures, the availability of generic prescription drugs and lifestyle choices you should make to prevent disease.
- 3rd** Keep records. Maintaining a clear, up-to-date family history can make diagnosis easier and can help you avoid needless tests. Also, if you are concerned about a particular health issue, you should keep a log of your symptoms.

Information provided by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

Summer Sun Safety

Warm weather can be fun, but when you're outside it is important to protect your skin from the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation (UVR). UV rays can cause damage that leads to premature aging, skin cancer and cataracts. The following conditions may be signs that skin damage already has occurred. If you notice any of these signs, talk to your doctor.

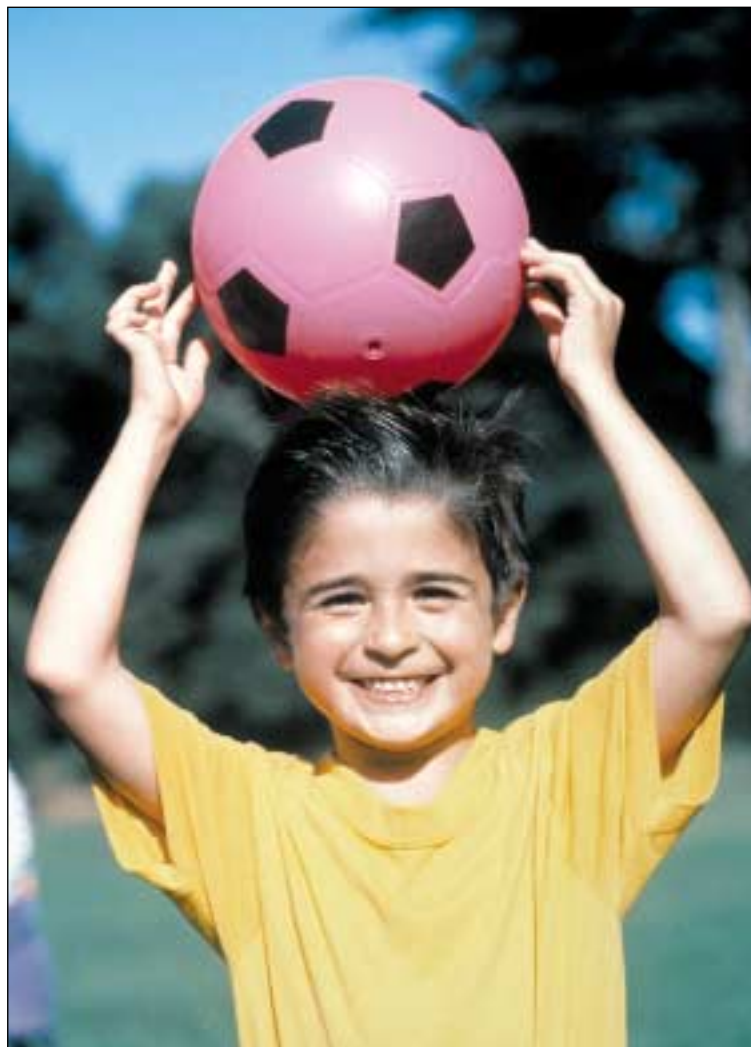
- **Change in size, shape, color or thickness of pre-existing moles**
- **Roughness or dryness**
- **Blotching or irregular pigmentation**
- **Fine and deep wrinkling**
- **Sagging or looseness of skin**
- **Yellowing**
- **Enlarged capillaries, especially on the cheeks, nose and ears**

Your risk for sun damage depends on several things. Some factors include your age, the medications you take and the amount of time you normally spend in the sun. Your risk also depends on your skin type. In general, people with fair skin have a higher risk than people with dark skin.

So what should you do to prevent sun damage? The American Academy of Dermatology says that people of all skin types should wear sunscreen with an SPF, or sun protection factor, of at least 15. You should apply the sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before going outside, even on cloudy days. Remember to reapply sunscreen every two to three hours if you are swimming or perspiring heavily.

In addition to wearing sunscreen, you should wear protective clothing and wide-brimmed hats. You also should try to limit the amount of time you spend outdoors, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are most dangerous.

Information provided by the American Cancer Society and the American Academy of Dermatology.



To find out how long it is safe to stay in the sun, here is a simple equation. Multiply the SPF number of your sunscreen by the number of minutes it would take for your bare skin to burn. For example, if you use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15, and it takes 10 minutes of sun exposure for your skin to burn, you safely can spend 150 minutes (or 2 ½ hours) in the sun.

$$15 \times 10 = 150 \text{ minutes (2 ½ hours)}$$

Sun safety is especially important for children. Research shows that just one severe sunburn before age 15 can double the risk of skin cancer. So make sure that your kids follow all of the same skin protection rules that you do while enjoying the summer weather this year.

COMPANION HEALTHCARE

South Carolina's Health Plansm



BlueCross BlueShield
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Companion HealthWord is a newsletter for Companion HealthCare members. It provides information only, and does not replace the advice of your doctor. You always should see your doctor for personal medical advice.

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Graphic Designer

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Do you have questions about your Companion HealthCare coverage? Try our Web site at www.CompanionHealthCare.com. We're open 24 hours a day here!

Member Services Phone Numbers:

(803) 786-8476 or 1-800-868-2528
8:30 a.m. to midnight, Monday - Friday

E-mail: companion.healthcare@companiongroup.com



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Take Two and Call Me in the Morning

The first known use of aspirin was by Greek physician Hippocrates, who used powder extracted from the bark of a willow tree to treat pain and reduce fever. The bark contained salicin, a component of acetylsalicylic acid, or aspirin. Salicin was successfully isolated from willow bark in 1829.

Unfortunately, aspirin irritated the stomach. In 1897, chemist Felix Hoffman, working for Bayer, concocted a less acidic formula. In 1899, Hoffman received a patent for the new, improved aspirin.