

family health

Get the most from your medicine

A **spacer** is a plastic tube that is placed on the mouthpiece of your asthma inhaler. It can be used by adults and children. When used, a spacer creates space between your mouth and the medicine. This space helps the medicine break into smaller droplets. The smaller droplets can move more freely and deeper into your lungs when you breathe in your medicine.

In order for inhaled asthma medicines to work well, they need to reach your lungs. If you attach a spacer to your inhaler, you can:

- Help the medicine move past your mouth and throat and get deep into your lungs where it can do its work.
- Decrease the risk of thrush—a yeast infection in your mouth or throat.
- Avoid problems trying to spray and breathe at the same time.
- Prevent breathing in the inhaled medicine too fast.
- Make it easier to take your medicine when you are having asthma symptoms.

To obtain an asthma spacer, ask your doctor to write a prescription for an asthma spacer. Then you can take the prescription to a local pharmacy to have it filled.

Source: American Lung Association

ASTHMA MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

We have a winner!

Congratulations to Lorena for winning the iPod nano in a raffle for the Community Asthma Management Class Series.

Lorena signed up for the program and attended the class series at the Lamont School District Parent Center this past October. This free class features topics on how to manage asthma. Lorena said the class helped her manage her daughter's asthma. After the class, Lorena showed her daughter how to correctly use an inhaler. She learned about asthma triggers and how to deal with them at home. The use of nontoxic cleaning ingredients has also helped Lorena control her



daughter's asthma. Lorena now uses vinegar and baking soda when cleaning at home. She avoids harmful chemicals, such as bleach and ammonia.

Want to learn more about this program? Call **661-632-1590** (Bakersfield) or **800-391-2000** (outside Bakersfield) and ask for the Health Education Department.

Si necesita esta información en español, llame al 800-391-2000.

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Women: 5 ways to fight stroke risk

It may not be fair, but it's true. Being a woman means you have a higher risk of stroke than the average man has. In fact, stroke is the third leading cause of death in women.

That's why health experts urge women to take steps to lower their risk of stroke. You can start with these five actions:

- 1. Control high blood pressure.** Starting at age 20, have your blood pressure checked at least every two years. Also have it checked before starting birth control pills. The pill raises your risk of stroke.
- 2. Don't smoke.** Smoking raises stroke risk for men too. It's especially dangerous for women who take birth control pills or who have migraines with aura.
- 3. Keep the beat.** If you're over 75, be screened for atrial fibrillation. That's a heart rhythm problem that's a risk factor for stroke.
- 4. Stay fit.** Exercise and a healthy diet are key for preventing strokes.
- 5. Work with your health care provider.** Regular visits with your provider can help you know your risks and what to do about them.

Sources: American Heart Association; American Stroke Association

Quit smoking for life!

Are you ready to quit smoking? You can sign up for a new program called Freedom From Smoking. Once enrolled, you will learn how to create a personalized plan to quit smoking so that you can enjoy better health. Here are some highlights of this program:

- Meetings are held in a small group setting.
- It is a fun, interactive learning environment.
- You will receive a workbook and other helpful materials.

Topics include:

- Medications to help you quit.
- Lifestyle changes to help you quit.
- How to prepare for quit day.
- Ways to manage your stress.

- How to reach a healthy weight.
- Ways to build a new lifestyle.
- Tips to help you stay tobacco-free.

Quitting is hard. That's why we are here to help!

Kern Family Health Care (KFHC) offers free individual, group and telephone counseling to all members who need help quitting smoking. By taking advantage of this benefit, you can learn how to deal with smoking triggers and the benefits of living a smoke-free life. KFHC also covers tobacco cessation aids without a doctor's approval.

To sign up, call us at **661-632-1590** (Bakersfield) or **800-391-2000** (outside Bakersfield) and ask for the Health Education Department.



BREASTFEEDING

Family matters

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” The same might be said of breastfeeding. It may not really take a village to breastfeed a baby, but it does take a village to support a mother’s choice to breastfeed. In fact, a common reason women decide not to breastfeed or to stop breastfeeding is a lack of family and social support.

Where is this lack of support coming from? Infants have been formula-fed for many years. That affects the way that a family approaches breastfeeding. From birth, we look to our mothers for advice and guidance. Many of the new parents today have mothers and grandmothers who have never breastfed. They grew up in a time where formula was thought to be as good as, if not better than, breastmilk. If a family knows little about breastfeeding and has no direct experience, a mother may decide not to breastfeed.

What can families and friends do to help a breastfeeding mother? If a family has little to no experience with breastfeeding, they can still help a breastfeeding mother in a variety of ways.

1. Be informed. Family members can attend local breastfeeding classes to gain knowledge on breastfeeding. This will allow them to assist the new mother if a problem arises.

2. Affirm and encourage the new mother. Breastfeeding can



August is National Breastfeeding Month.

be tough, especially for a new mother. So build her confidence. Breastfeeding women who are more confident and committed to making it work are more likely to have success with breastfeeding. Families and friends should avoid telling the mother to give the baby formula to resolve breastfeeding challenges. They should encourage the new mom. If challenges persist, point her to the lactation support resources in the community.

3. Tackle the to-do list. Partners and family members can help a breastfeeding mother with daily tasks that can be overwhelming while nursing, such as housework

or helping with her other children. **4. Plan ahead.** For those family members who provide child care once the mother goes back to work, encourage her to pump her milk so that the baby can still receive all the health benefits of breast milk.

Although mothers today know more about breastfeeding, lack of family and social support is still a big barrier to success. Family members can work together to ensure that they provide support to mothers with newborns!

Source: Office of the Surgeon General

VACCINES

Peace of mind for parents

Worrying is a normal part of being a parent. But here's one thing parents don't have to worry about: vaccines.

That's because:

They are safe. Vaccines are carefully tested before they are given to children. And they must meet the highest safety standards.

They work. Before there were vaccines, kids got very sick and even died from diseases like:

- Polio.
- Measles.
- Whooping cough.

Today, shots keep kids healthy. And most shots work 90 to 100 percent of the time.



August is National Immunization Awareness Month.

What about side effects?

Vaccines rarely cause serious side effects. But they can cause mild reactions, such as:

- A slight fever.
- A rash.
- Soreness.
- Swelling.

What should I do?

Watch your child for a few days after he or she gets a shot. Call

your provider if your child has a reaction that concerns you.

To help ease soreness and swelling, hold a cool, wet cloth on the shot site. To help with a fever, ask your provider about giving your child a nonaspirin pain reliever.

Shots might hurt for a little while. But they protect kids from serious diseases. And that means less worry for you.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Transitioning from CCS to KFHC

California Children's Services (CCS) is a state program for children with certain diseases or health problems. Through this program, children up to 21 years old can get the special health care and services they need. If your child has been enrolled in CCS, your child will transition to adult health care services covered by Kern Family Health Care (KFHC) at the age of 21. We will connect you with trained health care providers who know how to care for adults with special health care needs. Your child will still be a

KFHC member. But your child will no longer be enrolled in CCS.

We can help make the transition smooth. If your child is transitioning to KFHC, share these tips with him or her.

- You can request to keep a CCS health care provider who is not in our provider network.
- You will have access to our network of primary and specialty care providers. Many CCS providers are part of our network. At any time, you may change to a new provider in our network.

- We will work with your health care team and your parents to keep the same health care and avoid gaps in care.

- We will help remove barriers to your health care. We can help you schedule doctor's visits. We offer interpreting and translation services. We can even assist with finding a ride to your doctor. Your child will also have access to our 24-hour Advice Nurse Line and our Health Information Library.

To learn more, call us at **800-391-2000**.



The American Cancer Society recognizes Kern Family Health Care for our participation in the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable's campaign to increase rates of colorectal cancer screening to 80 percent by 2018.

Get tested for colon cancer

If you're 50 or older, one of the most important things you can do for your health is to get tested for colon cancer. Colon cancer is the third most common cause of cancer death for men and women, but many of these colon cancer deaths could be prevented with regular testing. You have the power to protect yourself from colon cancer through testing starting at age 50.

Colon cancer is cancer that begins in the colon or rectum. These are the parts of your body that help you digest food and hold waste until it passes out of the body.

Most colon cancers start as polyps—small growths on the lining of the colon. Finding and removing polyps before they

become cancer can stop colon cancer before it starts. Tests can also find cancer early, when it is small and easier to treat.

Most people with colon cancer have no symptoms at all. That's why it's important to get tested even if you're feeling fine. There are many different ways that you can be tested, such as with simple take-home tests.

Take action. If you are 50 or older, talk to your doctor about testing for colon cancer and ask which test is right for you. You can call Kern Family Health Care at **661-632-1590** (Bakersfield) or at **800-391-2000** (outside Bakersfield) with questions and to make an appointment.

Source: American Cancer Society

KFHC mailing address: 9700 Stockdale Highway, Bakersfield, CA 93311



Protect yourself from colon cancer

Here are some steps you can take to reduce your risk of colon cancer:

Maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle:

- Eat five or more servings of vegetables and fruit every day.
- Limit red and processed meats.
- Get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days a week.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Do not smoke.

Get tested for colon cancer starting at age 50. Talk to your doctor about the test that's right for you.

■ Tests can find polyps before they become cancer or find cancers when they are small and easier to treat.

■ If you have a relative that had colon cancer or polyps, you may need to get tested before age 50. Talk to your doctor if you have a family history of colon cancer or polyps.

You have the power to protect yourself from colon cancer. If you're 50 or over, talk to your doctor about getting tested.

Keep your Medi-Cal active

The way Medi-Cal renewals are processed has changed. The Kern County Department of Human Services (DHS) will try to verify your information electronically at your renewal. If they are able to complete your renewal electronically, you will receive a Notice of Action letting you know that your Medi-Cal has been renewed. If they are unable to do so, you may receive paperwork in the mail. Please fill out and return the forms with paper copies of the information that's being requested. There are three ways you can give DHS the renewal information they need:

1. By mail. Please use the postage-paid envelope DHS provides to return the forms to:

Human Services
P.O. Box 511
Bakersfield, CA 93302

2. By phone. You can give DHS this information by phone. Call their Customer Assistance Telecenter (CAT) at **877-410-8812**. If you file taxes, have your most recent



federal tax return on hand when you call.

3. In person. You can give DHS this information at any local office. Or you can visit the main DHS office in Bakersfield:

100 E. California Ave.
Bakersfield, CA 93307

Remember: Changes in your home, including income or mailing

address, need to be reported to DHS within 10 days. You can report a change by mail, by telephone or in person. Also, when filing your taxes, if you were a recipient of Medi-Cal anytime last year, you can self-certify you had health insurance. No proof of Medi-Cal is required to be submitted with your taxes; self-attestation is accepted.

Member rights

If you have a service or quality-of-care complaint against Kern Family Health Care or a provider, call us first at **661-632-1590** (Bakersfield) or **800-391-2000** (outside of Bakersfield) or visit our website at **www.kernfamilyhealthcare.com**.

You may call the Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) for help if:

- Your grievance is an emergency.
- You are not happy with Kern Family Health Care's decision.
- It has not been resolved in 30 days.

The DMHC's toll-free number is **888-HMO-2219 (888-466-2219)**. Its TDD line (for people with hearing and speech impairments) is **877-688-9891**. You may also call the DHCS Office of the Ombudsman toll-free at **888-452-8609**.



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Information in FAMILY 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. Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

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