

HEALTHNET NEWS

A newsletter for public librarians and others interested in consumer health information services

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NETNEWS

LOOKING FOR MEDICAL INFORMATION IN PLAIN LANGUAGE?

Have you... and your library users... been overwhelmed by the prospect of searching for medical information?

Has your research retrieved only lengthy documents in technical language?

Individuals may be well-educated and literate in many fields but lack an understanding of the specialized language of medicine.



If the medical documents you find online are not comprehensible to readers without a medical school education, they cannot help you or library users understand the latest research reports about juvenile diabetes, the medical tests used to diagnose asthma, or the recommended treatments for an arthritic knee.

The website of the University of Connecticut Health Center Library offers a Resource Guide to help you find understandable, authoritative medical information.

A new online Subject Guide, **Medical Information in Plain Language: A Health Literacy Resource Guide**, is available on the University of Connecticut Health Center Library's website at <http://uchc.libguides.com/content.php?pid=207708>

The "Plain Language" Subject Guide includes links to easy-to-read online information about medical conditions, children's health, senior health, dental care, health research news, nutrition, medical terms, and communicating effectively with your doctor.

The Guide links to health information in understandable language from federal government agencies and professional health-related associations such as the American Academy of Family Physicians, the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Medical Library Association, and the National Institute on Aging.

Lack of "health literacy" is anationwide public health challenge. (Healthy People 2010) "More than 75 million English-speaking adults in the United States have limited health literacy." <http://www.ahrq.gov/news/press/pr2011/lowhlitpr.htm>

Clear health information is needed to help consumers "obtain, process, and understand basic health information...." <http://www.health.gov/communication/literacy/quickguide/factsliteracy.htm>



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<http://library.uchc.edu/departm/hnet>

The “Plain Language” Subject Guide is a publication of the University of Connecticut Health Center Library’s consumer health program: **Healthnet: Connecticut Consumer Health Information Network**. Additional health information for librarians and health consumers is available on the Healthnet website at <http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet/>

Librarians at Connecticut public libraries may call the UCONN Health Center Library at **860/679-4055** for help in researching a consumer health question.

Medical librarians at the Library’s consumer health program will guide librarians to detailed medical information in technical terms or to health information in “plain language,” depending on the librarian’s request.

UCONN Health Center librarians will also research the question using the Health Center Library’s print and online resources as a service for librarians at Connecticut public libraries.

Connecticut health consumers may contact Healthnet directly with their personal medical questions. A free packet of information focused on the individual’s request will be sent to their home.

CHOOSE MY PLATE! A NEW GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING



No more pyramid! Instead, the federal government’s new guide to healthy food choices is pictured by the place where your meal rests...your dinner plate.

The new, simpler symbol, a divided plate displayed as a colorful graphic, is based on the government’s 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, derived from “evidence-based nutritional” research “to promote health.”

(<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm>) The plate’s four sections represent fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins. A cup of “dairy” is placed at the side of the divided plate.

The Choose My Plate health initiative webpage at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/> encourages Americans to eat more fruits and vegetables...Have half of each meal consist of fruits and vegetables and be sure that half of the grains we consume are whole grains. The guidelines also recommend that we eat less and skip oversized portions. In addition, we are advised to reduce our sodium intake and choose water as our beverage instead of drinks containing sugar. When drinking milk, we should choose fat-free or low-fat (1%).

Each section of the online graphic links to a colorful webpage about that food group with a description of the food category and examples of foods in that category.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides a link to an online form (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate/index.aspx>) that allows each of us to create a personalized daily eating plan that includes the advice of the new Dietary Guidelines.

GETTING HEALTHY.... A NEW GUIDE FOR ALL OF US

Looking ahead to 2020...

Many of us set new personal health goals each January. Exercising more frequently and eating more fruits and vegetables are worthwhile New Year’s resolutions.



When the federal government is setting goals for improving the health of our entire nation, it realistically sets target dates of more than one year. “Healthy People 2020” goals at <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/default.aspx>, issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, are designed to encourage all of us to achieve healthier lifestyle objectives for 40 health-related categories by 2020.

Targeted “Healthy People” national health goals have been issued over the past 30 years.

Many topics in the new “Healthy People 2020” document focus on potentially preventable, chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. These diseases cause seventy per cent of U.S. deaths annually. They consume the majority of U.S. health care spending.

Public health experts, organization representatives, and members of the U.S. public submitted more than 8,000 comments about the proposed “Healthy People 2020” goals to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services before the new “Healthy People 2020” document was issued.

A four page online report at http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/TopicsObjectives2020/pdfs/HP2020_brochure.pdf summarizes the forty health topic areas and the overall goals and objectives of the “Healthy People 2020” initiative. Among them are “Diabetes,” “Food Safety,” “Injury and Violence Prevention,” “Mental Health,” “Nutrition and Weight Status”, and “Older Adults.”

One “overarching goal” is to improve the health of all population groups, and to eliminate health status disparities among different ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, gender groups, and geographical areas of the population.

New topic areas, including Adolescent Health, Genomics, Sleep Health, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health, and Dementia have been incorporated into the ten year goals.

Connecticut’s focus, in support of Healthy People 2020, will be on “Genetic Counseling and Testing for Hereditary Cancers.” <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3130&Q=478922&PM=1>

COMPARING DOCTORS AND HOSPITALS...A ONE STOP SOURCE

Looking for information comparing your physician to others in Connecticut?

Trying to find information about the quality of care at your local hospital?

A new website gathers directories of physicians and hospitals in one online source to make searching for evaluative health provider information in Connecticut and other U.S. states quicker and easier.



The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has created a national guide to state health quality databases. “Comparing Health Care Quality: A National Directory” is available online at <http://www.rwjf.org/qualityequality/product.jsp?id=71857>

By clicking on Connecticut or any U.S. state on the website’s online map, the user is directed to a list of links to databases that evaluate physicians and hospitals in that state.

A link to National Reports of quality health providers appears as well. Among the databases included is the federal government’s new website: <http://www.healthcare.gov/compare/> implemented under the Affordable Care Act of 2010.

The “Comparing Health Care Quality..” website includes only databases that incorporate “objective quality measurements” and are available at no charge.

Connecticut is among the states included in this national online directory. Alabama, Alaska, Hawaii and Idaho are excluded since there are “no state-level quality reports” for those states .

For Connecticut, there are links to two online evaluative reports about hospitals. These are from the Connecticut Hospital Association and the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

Additional online resources about hospitals and health care providers appear on the University of Connecticut Health Center Library’s “Navigating the Health Care System” Resource Guide at <http://uchc.libguides.com/content.php?pid=45726> Among these are Connecticut Physician Profiles, published online by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, and Hospital Compare, a tool of the federal government’s Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

IS YOUR DISHWASHER DETERGENT ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY?



Look for the label!

Whether you are trying to eliminate mold and other asthma triggers from your home or want to prepare your house for an increased chance of drop-in guests during warm weather, you may find yourself vigorously launching into summer cleaning.

You certainly want the cleaning products you use to be safe, especially if there are children in your home. You may also be concerned about the environment and may prefer to use cleaning products that help to preserve the environment.

Finding Environmentally Friendly Products

“Design for the Environment” (DfE) at <http://www.epa.gov/dfe/> is a United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program that helps consumers and businesses find cleaning products that are “safer for the environment” as well as effective.

Manufacturers are allowed to post the “Design for the Environment (DfE)” label on products that the EPA has screened and has designated as protective of the environment and safe for human use.

More than 2000 products have been granted this designation by the EPA. These products include carpet cleaners, hand soaps, floor care products, laundry detergents, metal polishes, tub cleansers, barbecue grill cleaners, and others. The products are available at large and small retail stores.

The ingredients in individual DfE products are ones that the EPA considers safe. The EPA also watches for the presence of “potentially dangerous chemical combinations.”

The product listing at <http://www.epa.gov/dfe/pubs/projects/formulat/formpart.htm#43> is available in English and Spanish.

HAZARDS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT

Are you concerned about the potential hazards that you and your children encounter in our environment? Are pediatricians concerned as well? What recommendations do they offer? Where can you find information on protecting children from environmental hazards?

In a recent policy paper in the May 2011 issue of *Pediatrics*, the American Academy of Pediatrics, national professional association of pediatricians, has expressed its concern about inadequate protection of children and pregnant women from dangerous chemicals in products that they may come in contact with. Children are particularly vulnerable as they develop and grow. The Academy urges stricter pre-marketing and post-marketing regulation of potentially hazardous chemicals.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control offers details about health effects of the environment at <http://ephtracking.cdc.gov/showHealthEffects.action>. This website discusses asthma, birth defects, cancer, carbon monoxide poisoning, childhood lead poisoning, heart attacks, and birth outcome problems such as low birth weight and premature births. There is information about exposure to specific environmental hazards, their possible risks, and prevention of these effects.

The Centers for Disease Control also publishes ToxFAQs at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp> with informative, clearly written summaries about toxic substances and their effects, in both English and Spanish. The summaries answer questions about each substance such as, “What happens when [a substance] enters the environment? How might I be exposed to [this substance]? How can [this substance] affect my health?”

Information for parents about protecting children from environmental health hazards appears on the website of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at <http://yosemite.epa.gov/ochp/ochpweb.nsf/content/homepage.htm> More than twenty-five chemicals, including radon, asbestos, pesticides, plastics, and other hazards are described.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health and the Connecticut Association of Realtors have jointly published an online booklet, "Environmental Hazards in the Home," especially for "homeowners, homebuyers, landlords, and tenants" at http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/environmental_health/eoha/pdf/realtorguide2011.pdf There are detailed, practical recommendations about "What you need to know before you buy a house" (regarding radon, septic systems, formaldehyde foam insulation, etc.) and "What you need to know after the home is occupied" (regarding allergens, carbon monoxide, pesticides in wood, etc.).

When in immediate danger from a toxic substance, get help and call the Poison Control Center toll-free for free "emergency poison information" at any time at **1-800-222-1222**.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

The following titles are recommended to public libraries and other libraries providing consumer health information services. They are not part of the UCONN Health Center Library collection.

Looking for books for your Health Literacy Collection? Do you need some very easy-to-understand titles to include in your health collection?

These seven titles, part of the Institute for Healthcare Advancement's "What To Do for Health" book series, are written at a 3rd to 5th grade reading level. They are designed for adults with "Below Basic or Basic health literacy skills" who find the intricacies of navigating the health care system especially challenging.

The Institute for Healthcare Advancement at <http://www.iha4health.org/default.aspx> is a not-for-profit foundation that focuses its efforts on health literacy and outreach health services.

The books were written by nurses, physicians, a dentist, and a health writer.

All books are available in both English and Spanish. They include illustrations. The books are published in paperback editions.

What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick. Easy to Read. Easy to Use. Gloria Mayer and Ann Kuklierus. La Habra, California, Institute for Healthcare Advancement. 2004. 180 p. (ISBN 0-9701245-0-3 paperback).

Written in clear language especially for parents with low literacy skills, this guide offers basic healthcare information about children's medical conditions such as fever, earache, pinkeye, nosebleed, vomiting, choking, toothache, cold and flu, hernia, chicken pox, head lice, poison ivy, and sunburn.

Each medical condition, its description, and home-based first aid, is discussed in brief, easy-to-understand text, in large type, separated by a great deal of white space.

Each explanation is introduced by a question ("What is it?" "What do I see?" "What can I do at home?" "When do I call the doctor or the nurse?" "What else should I know about [this medical problem]?")

The book begins with a section of Safety Tips. e.g. “What can I do to prevent burns?”...”Never hold your child while drinking a hot liquid like coffee.”....”Never hold your child while cooking by the stove.”.. and other specific recommendations.

The book includes a first aid section, entitled, “What to Do When Your Child Gets Hurt.” The Table of Contents (“What’s in This Book”) is supplemented by a two pictorial tables of contents, sketches of a child and a baby, that highlight medical conditions by body area and indicate the page numbers they are found on. The book also includes a glossary (“Word List”), and an index (“What’s in this Book from A to Z”).

In addition to English and Spanish editions, this book is available in Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese versions.

What To Do When Your Child Is Heavy. Easy to Read. Easy to Use. Gloria Mayer and Michael Villaire. La Habra, California, Institute for Healthcare Advancement. 2011. 186 p. (ISBN 978-0-9720148-4-7 paperback).

This recently published book for parents gives specifics about how to encourage healthy eating and increasing exercise in children, without embarrassing an obese child.

It also offers encouragement to parents, [“It’s never too late for anyone to make changes in their life.” “Everyone in the family should eat healthy and exercise. Not just the heavy child. Love and support are very important.” “A healthy lifestyle is for all your family.” “Losing weight should not be the main [focus] in a family even when a child is heavy.”

This book emphasizes the importance of treating a heavy child kindly and not allowing teasing in the family. It recommends “changing bad eating habits into good [ones]” rather than focusing on dieting. It advises parents to teach children about healthy foods and model healthy eating. It offers food shopping advice, specifics on portion size, reading a nutrition facts label, and making healthy substitutions at fast food restaurants. It encourages parents to have frequent “family meals” together.

What To Do For Teen Health. Easy to Read. Easy to Use. Gloria Mayer and Ann Kuklierus. La Habra, California, Institute for Healthcare Advancement. 2010. 161 p. (ISBN 978-0-9701245-2-4 paperback).

Written in brief chapters for parents of pre-teens and teens, ages 8 to 15 years old, this practical guide discusses the emotional and physical changes that adolescents and pre-adolescents experience and gives advice about “how parents can help teens.”

Each topic is organized around concise answers to four questions: “What is it? Did you know? What can I do? When should I get help?”

The book addresses “teen issues” such as friends, school, anger, depression, and eating disorders. There is a section on “dating and sex” that gives advice to parents about communicating with teens about dating, sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy, incest, birth control, HIV/AIDS, and related topics.

The book concludes with a section about teen safety that discusses driving, smoking, drugs, alcohol, body piercing, tattoos, and gangs. There are suggestions to help parents initiate conversations about these topics with teens.

What To Do When You’re Having a Baby. Easy to Read. Easy to Use. Gloria Mayer and Ann Kuklierus. La Habra, California, Institute for Healthcare Advancement. 2011. 187 p. (ISBN 978-0-9701245-6-2 paperback).

This book was designed as a “month by month guide topregnancy.” It describes the baby’s development, body changes an expectant mother experiences, and the exams that are part of a doctor’s visit each month.



It begins with advice for healthy nutrition and a healthy lifestyle to follow “before you get pregnant.”

The chapter titles reflect the uncomplicated style of writing: “Getting Ready to Have a Baby,” “Things You Can Do to Have a Healthy Baby,” “Expecting a Baby Month by Month,” “Some Discomforts You May Have,” “Birth of Your Baby,” “After the Baby Is Born.”

The first part of the book is a list of warning signs for complications of pregnancy (“When to Get Help Right Away.”) The advice that is offered on dealing with pregnancy complications, circumstances that warrant a call to the doctor, and caring for a newborn, are practical and clearly expressed.

What To Do For Senior Health. Easy to Read. Easy to Use. Albert Barnett, Nancy Rushton, Lynne Mumaw. La Habra, California, Institute for Healthcare Advancement. 2001. 208 p. (ISBN 0-9701245-4-6 paperback).

This book is available in Vietnamese as well as English and Spanish.

Designed for seniors 62 and older, this comprehensive book is meant to be read gradually or to be used as a reference book. Its focus is on health problems that are more prevalent in seniors.

It was written jointly by a physician and two nurses with experience working with seniors in medical settings in doctors’ offices and hospitals and in seniors’ homes.

The book addresses the process of obtaining health care and health insurance including Medicare, selecting a doctor, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, changes that accompany aging, communicating with [your] doctor, sex and sexuality, and taking medication safely.

Each topic focuses on helping seniors answer four basic questions about a medical condition: “What is it? What do I need to know? What can I do for myself? When should I call the doctor or nurse?”

It begins with warning signs of an emergency condition, e.g. “You have bleeding that can’t be stopped.” “One side of your body feels numb.” “All of a sudden you can’t talk.”

The book includes safety tips at home, safe driving recommendations, and warnings about elder abuse that “may harm the body, mind or spirit of seniors.”

The chapter entitled “Taking charge of your medicines” advises seniors to “know why you are taking [each medication], know how to take them” and “Make a list of all the medicines you are taking.”

A chapter with advice about choosing a doctor asks, “Do you understand what the doctor tells you? Does he or she use big medical words or simple words that you understand?”

What To Do For Healthy Teeth. Easy to Read. Easy to Use. Sadie S. Mestman and Ariella D. Herman. La Habra, California, Institute for Healthcare Advancement. 2009. 196 p. (ISBN 978-0-9720148-0-9 paperback).



Authored jointly by a dentist and a health educator, **What To Do For Healthy Teeth** presents dental information in brief, very easy-to-understand language, with large type. There are numerous uncomplicated illustrations.

It includes brushing and flossing instructions, and information about tooth and gum disorders such as gingivitis, gum disease, dental plaque, and dental tartar.

The book offers recommendations for healthy food, advice about eating disorders, and descriptions of children’s tooth development.

Each chapter is one to three pages. Each topic conveys information by focusing on responses to questions such as, “What is it? What do I see? What can I do at home? When should I call the dentist? What else should I know?”

What To Do When Your Child Has Asthma. Easy to Read. Easy to Use Stanley Galant. La Habra, California, Institute for Healthcare Advancement. . 2011. (ISBN: 978-0-9720148-6-1 (English) 978-0-9720148-7-8 (Spanish) paperback.)

Especially for parents whose child has been diagnosed with asthma, this easy-to-read book is the newest in the Institute for Healthcare Advancement’s “What to Do” series.



*Healthnet News is written by Judith Kronick and Alberta Richetelle
If you have questions about anything in the newsletter or about Healthnet services for Connecticut public libraries,
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