

HEALTHNET NEWS

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

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NETNEWS

ARE YOU PLANNING TO GET A FLU SHOT?

If you've already had a flu shot this past fall or this winter, you have followed the influenza vaccination guidelines of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at <http://www.flu.gov/#>



According to the Flu.gov website, "Everyone 6 months of age and older should get the flu vaccine."

Children and infants, pregnant women, older adults, some people with disabilities, and individuals with chronic health conditions are at heightened risk of contracting the seasonal flu and suffering flu-related complications. (<http://www.flu.gov/at-risk/index.html#>)

The seasonal flu vaccine is reformulated each year to target the most prevalent influenza viruses.

There are two methods of vaccination (<http://www.flu.gov/prevention-vaccination/vaccination/index.html#>): by injection with vaccine "made with inactivated (killed) flu virus" or by nasal spray "made with weakened live flu virus." The appropriate method is determined by age and health condition. The **Flu.gov** website assures readers that the flu vaccine cannot transmit the flu virus to the person receiving the injection or nasal spray.

The vaccine is effective for the entire flu season, after a period of about two weeks in which antibodies to flu viruses form in the body.

Resources for individuals who cannot afford the cost of the flu vaccine are described on the **Vaccines.gov** website at <http://www.vaccines.gov/getting/pay/index.html> .



Healthnet: Connecticut Consumer Health Information Network
Lyman Maynard Stowe Library ♦ University of Connecticut Health Center
PO Box 4003 ♦ Farmington CT 06034-4003
Telephone: 860/679-4055 ♦ email : richetelle@nso.uhc.edu
<http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet>

Links to additional, detailed information on the flu appear on the website of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/Flu/Pages/fluLinks.aspx>

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control provides an overview, “Key Facts about Influenza (Flu) and Flu Vaccine” at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>

There is a chart to help you distinguish the flu from a cold at <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/flu/documents/sick.pdf> Symptoms, prevention, treatment, and complications for each are described.

An online Flu Vaccine Finder at <http://www.flu.gov/prevention-vaccination/vaccination/index.html#> allows you to search for places, in addition to your doctor’s office, that offer flu vaccines by typing your local zip code. Descriptions of each locale include type(s) of vaccine at that location, hours, and dates the vaccine will be available.

Interesting in learning about the location of flu outbreaks in the country? View a “Weekly US Map: Influenza Summary Update,” showing the prevalence of flu cases by state, at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/usmap.htm>

PURCHASING MEDICINE FROM AN ONLINE PHARMACY.....HOW TO BE SAFE



What risks do you face when you buy medicine from an online pharmacy? How can you determine if an online pharmacy is safe? What organizations provide information on safe online pharmacies? How can you be certain that personal information you reveal is not shared by the pharmacy website?

According to the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) at <http://www.nabp.net/programs/consumer-protection/buying-medicine-online/> 97% of online pharmacies fail to comply with U.S. pharmacy laws. The Association reminds health consumers that “buying prescription drugs from the Internet is easy, but finding a safe source for those medicines is not.”

A survey by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration discovered that almost “1 in 4 Internet consumers has purchased prescription medicine online. “
(<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm321470.htm>)

The American Academy of Family Physicians offers valuable tips for safe online pharmacy purchases on its website at <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/drugs-procedures-devices/prescription-medicines/online-pharmacies.html>

These recommendations will help you avoid medications that contain dangerous ingredients, that lack an appropriate dosage of an active ingredient, that may have already expired, or that may not be approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In October 2012, the FDA took legal action against more than 4,000 illegal online pharmacies.

The American Academy of Family Physicians advises you to use an online pharmacy that is located and licensed in the United States, has a licensed pharmacist available to respond to your questions, and requires that your own doctor provide a prescription for the medicine you are purchasing.

The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) at <http://www.nabp.net/boards-of-pharmacy> provides links to the websites of state boards of pharmacy to help you determine if an online pharmacy is licensed in the state in which it is located . The Connecticut website for verifying that a pharmacy is licensed is online at <https://www.elicense.ct.gov/Lookup/LicenseLookup.aspx>

The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) issues a special designation to online pharmacies that “comply with the licensing and inspection requirements of their state and each state to which they dispense pharmaceuticals.” Pharmacies awarded the VIPPS label as a Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Site (VIPPS) must also comply with National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) standards regarding “patient rights to privacy, authentication and security of prescription orders, adherence to a recognized quality assurance policy, and provision of meaningful consultation between patients and pharmacists. “

There is a webpage on the organization’s website listing online pharmacies which are “Recommended Sites” at <http://www.nabp.net/programs/consumer-protection/buying-medicine-online/recommended-sites>

Their list of “Not Recommended Sites” online pharmacies at <http://www.nabp.net/programs/consumer-protection/buying-medicine-online/not-recommended-sites> is much more extensive.

The specific criteria that the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) uses to determine if an online pharmacy should be recommended, such as state licensure, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) registration, and legal compliance with federal and state laws, are described on their website at <http://www.nabp.net/programs/consumer-protection/buying-medicine-online/criteria>

The State of Connecticut’s Prescription Monitoring Program offers consumer recommendations in an online brochure at http://www.ct.gov/dcp/lib/dcp/drug_control/pmp/pdf/prescriptiononline.pdf The brochure recommends that your doctor perform a physical exam before prescribing a medication to you. The Prescription Monitoring Program advises you to allow your physician to determine if a medication or other treatment is safe for you. A pharmacy’s online questionnaire about your symptoms is not an adequate substitute for your doctor’s physical exam.

BeSafeRX: Know Your Online Pharmacy at <http://tinyurl.com/8tqkd8t> is a national campaign created by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration “to raise awareness of the dangers of buying prescription medicines from fake online pharmacies.” A YouTube video with information about how to “Know Your Online Pharmacy Before You Buy” appears on the website.

According to Pharmacist Ilisa Bernstein, of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, there is a danger that the “pharmacy [you are] buying from might not actually be a pharmacy at all.” (<http://blogs.fda.gov/fdavoic/?s=BeSafeRX>)

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS...

The BeSafeRX: Know Your Online Pharmacy campaign advises you to **beware** of online pharmacies that.....

Offer very cheap prices that seem “too good to be true”

Solicit your purchase with unrequested emails

Do not request a medication prescription from your doctor

Are not licensed in the United States

The website reminds consumers that even “slight differences in your medicine can make a big difference” and there is danger of receiving “counterfeit or substandard drugs.”

In addition to receiving “counterfeit or substandard drugs,” you may risk having the personal and financial information you have submitted online sold by a dishonest online pharmacy and having your computer tainted by viruses.

CONNECTICUT'S HIGHER ASTHMA RATE

1.

If you or a family member experience coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness, and difficulty breathing that is severe enough to prevent you from attending school or work, or from enjoying time with friends, you are not alone in Connecticut.

If your symptoms have led to a diagnosis of asthma, you are among the 9.2 per cent of the adult population in Connecticut with this illness. This percentage is included in a new State of Connecticut Department of Public Health report, "The Burden of Asthma in Connecticut," online at <http://tinyurl.com/a8yw3xt>

According to the Report, 54% of those diagnosed individuals limited their daily plans because of asthma symptoms and 66% had poorly controlled asthma symptoms. In 2009, there were 50 "preventable deaths" among asthma patients in Connecticut.

The Report states that 11.3 % of children in the state have asthma.

Above the national average

Both the percentage of adults with asthma and the percentage of children with asthma in Connecticut exceed the national averages of 8.2 per cent for adults and 9.4 per cent for children.



A one page Fast Facts about Asthma in Connecticut at <http://tinyurl.com/avrnlq9> reveals that "65.7% of [Connecticut] people with asthma have never been given an Asthma Action Plan," describing their individualized recommended treatment. In addition, "10.2% of adults with asthma smoked" and "22.3% of children with asthma lived in a household with at least one adult who smoked," when surveyed between 2007 and 2009.

Resources about asthma

"Learning More About Asthma," a feature of the American Lung Association website at <http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/learning-more-about-asthma/> , explains that asthma is a "life long, disease that can be serious—even life threatening." Although there is no cure for asthma, it "can be managed so.. [that a patient] can live a normal, healthy life." The webpage describes symptoms, diagnostic methods, and treatments including bronchodilators, anti-inflammatory medications, combination medicines, and antibiotics.

Who is likely to develop asthma? What can trigger or worsen asthma symptoms? How is asthma diagnosed? What medications are prescribed for asthma patients? How can you manage asthma symptoms? The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute offers answers to these and additional asthma-related questions on its website at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/asthma/> The information is online in Spanish as well as English.

The website features a video about "Living With and Managing Asthma" that is narrated by a physician from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

A related article about How the Lungs Work at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/ipf/lungworks.html> includes a narrated animation of the breathing process.

Patient information articles about asthma, from the Up-to-Date database website, at <http://www.uptodate.com/contents/table-of-contents/patient-information> explain Asthma in Adults and Asthma in Children in “basic,” easy-to-understand language. These articles and many other Up-to-Date articles about asthma are written in Spanish too.

“Asthma treatment: 3 steps to better asthma control” is a feature of the Mayo Clinic Health Information website at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/asthma-treatment/AS00011>. A chart within the article categorizes asthma control into three zones: a “green zone” (well-controlled), a “yellow zone” (poorly controlled), and a “red zone” (very poorly controlled) and describes symptoms of each.

The Kidshealth.org website includes a feature on “Creating an Asthma-Safe Home” at http://kidshealth.org/parent/medical/asthma/asthma_home.html#. It includes information on “Minimizing Mold” in your home, improving indoor air quality, as well as reducing asthma triggers from pets, dust mites, and other insects.

Organizations for information and support

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, an international organization of physicians who are allergists and immunologists, includes information for patients about asthma on its website at <http://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/asthma.aspx>

The American Lung Association offers guidance for parents of children with asthma who want to communicate effectively with their child’s school. (<http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/creating-asthma-friendly-environments/asthma-in-schools/the-basics-for-parents/>)

The Centers for Disease Control features a variety of asthma topics on its website at <http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/>. In addition to “Asthma Basics,” there is information for specific population groups, including parents, children, schools and childcare providers.

NEW WEBSITE FOR CONNECTICUT VETERANS



When Connecticut military veterans are looking for “one-stop access” to Connecticut and federal resources especially for them, where should they start their search?

A new Connecticut state government website at <http://www.veterans.ct.gov/> is a centralized resource for Connecticut military veterans.

The website links to benefits and services offered to military veterans through the federal and Connecticut state governments.

There are descriptions of **health care services** for veterans, including care at the Connecticut Veterans’ Home in Rocky Hill. The Home provides “long term care to veterans with chronic and disabling medical conditions.”

There is an online, interactive questionnaire to help veterans determine if they are eligible for “free or low-cost health care benefits from the US Department of Veterans Affairs.”

Details on the Connecticut Military Support Program, which provides free, confidential counseling to veterans and their families, are included. The Connecticut Military Support Program is among the programs the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services offers to veterans.

(<http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=3833&q=450538>)

There is a link to the Soldiers' Sailors and Marines' Fund (<http://www.ct.gov/ssmf/site/default.asp>) which offers financial assistance for some medical needs to wartime veterans and their families.

Education services include specialized veterans' resources at Connecticut State Colleges and Universities. (<http://www.veterans.ct.gov/veterans/cwp/view.asp?a=4367&q=513780>). Among these are drop-in centers and information centers exclusively for veterans, tuition waivers, and employment training, part of the Community College Workforce Development Programs.

The State Department of Banking provides mortgage assistance as part of **housing resources** offered to veterans. (<http://www.veterans.ct.gov/veterans/cwp/view.asp?a=4367&q=513778>)

There are opportunities for **tax assistance** (<http://www.veterans.ct.gov/veterans/cwp/view.asp?a=4367&q=513682>) and for special veterans' exemptions for **motor vehicle** fees and requirements.

Online Directory for Veterans

An online Resource Directory focused on the needs of veterans in Connecticut is available at <http://www.211ct.org/Documents/vetresources.pdf>

The "2-1-1 Resource Directory for Connecticut Veterans, Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserves" was produced by United Way 2-1-1 in connection with the Connecticut Department of Veteran Affairs. It includes resources on benefits for Connecticut veterans, career counseling, and healthcare. There is contact information for each local agency and a detailed description of each agency's services.

Among the topics for veterans and their families are small business development, smoking cessation, help for families of veterans, mental health issues, suicide prevention, financial assistance, transitional housing, disability compensation, and survivors' insurance.

POPULAR HEALTH TOPICS

Which health topics do library users request help with at your library? Which topics do they search for most frequently?

Of the more than 900 Health Topic pages on the National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus website for health consumers at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/> certain topics stood out as the most popular in 2012.



The mostly frequently accessed MedlinePlus Health Topics in 2012:

1. [High Blood Pressure](#)
2. [Exercise and Physical Fitness](#)
3. [Diabetes](#)
4. [Diabetic Diet](#)
5. [COPD \(Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease\)](#)
6. [Skin Conditions](#)
7. [Autoimmune Diseases](#)
8. [Herpes Simplex](#)
9. [Herniated Disk](#)
10. [Heart Diseases](#)

MedlinePlus includes “information about diseases, conditions, and wellness issues” in consumer-friendly language. It contains “reliable, up-to-date health information” available 24/7 on the MedlinePlus website.

It is updated each day and contains no advertising.

Health consumers can find information about diagnostic tests, current treatment for diseases and medical conditions, details about medications and supplements, health news, definitions of medical terms, videos about surgical procedures, and information about medical research. It was accessed by “millions of users” in 2012.

According to Dr. Donald A. B. Lindberg, the Director of the National Library of Medicine, it is “a goldmine of good health information from the world’s largest medical library, the National Library of Medicine.”
(<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/aboutmedlineplus.html>)

Mobile MedlinePlus <http://m.medlineplus.gov/> offers information tailored to mobile devices.

*If you need assistance researching these popular topics, or other health topics, in 2013 and you are a librarian or health consumer in Connecticut, you are welcome to contact [Healthnet: Connecticut Consumer Health Information Network](#), the University of Connecticut Health Center Library’s free consumer health service
<http://library.uhc.edu/departm/hnet/>*

Call 860/679-4055 or email richetelle@nso.uhc.edu

MEDLINEPLUS EN ESPANOL...AN ANNIVERSARY



The MedlinePlus consumer health website, produced by the National Library of Medicine at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>, has published a Spanish-language website for more than 10 years at <http://medlineplus.gov/espanol>

The Spanish-language website does not provide a word-for-word translation of the English version of MedlinePlus. Instead, it adapts the Spanish translation to the U.S. Hispanic culture. Searches may also be done in Spanish.

The Spanish-language version of MedlinePlus has expanded over the past ten years. There are now more than 900 Health Topic pages. Recently more than 94 million online contacts were made within one year.

A mobile version of the Spanish website is available at <http://m.medlineplus.gov/spanish>

There is a Spanish Twitter account at [@MedlinePlusEsp](#)

The Spanish website follows the same quality criteria <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/criteria.html> as the English version.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

The following title is recommended to public libraries and other libraries providing consumer health information services. It is not part of the UCONN Health Center Library collection.

Down Syndrome Parenting 101. Must-Have Advice for Making Your Life Easier. Natalie Hale. Bethesda, Maryland. Woodbine House, 2011. 240 p. (ISBN 978-1-60613020-9 paperback).

If you are coping with the challenges of parenting a child with Down syndrome and having a particularly difficult time, you may want to read a chapter or two of this book to help you make it through the day.

Author and teacher Natalie Hale has raised a happy, caring, and well-adjusted son with Down syndrome who is now in his twenties. It was not always an easy task. Each day brought new challenges. She often learned her techniques on the job.

In this book, especially for parents of children and adults with Down syndrome, she uses her experience raising her son to guide parents who are in the midst of seeking support services and appropriate educational experiences for their children, encouraging their children to meet their sometimes underestimated potential, and teaching them how to behave appropriately with adults and other children. These are challenges familiar to all parents.

She encourages parents to avoid letting Down syndrome, or any other label, define their child. (The Yellow Raincoat Theory...unbutton the yellow raincoat that represents Down syndrome, roll up the sleeves....because "Down syndrome does not completely cover our children.")

Natalie Hale needed to adapt her parenting of a child with Down syndrome to include skills in guiding a child with her son's additional diagnoses: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

Her style is down-to-earth, realistic, often casual, and very often humorous.

She often observes her son and others with Down syndrome exhibiting compassion and sensitivity toward others that is only expected of individuals well beyond their years. She notices that they often lack subtlety when speaking to others. They come straight to the point. Embarrassing sometimes, yes....

According to Ms. Hale, individuals with Down syndrome have a strong sense of intuition. Often her son has predicted an experience before it happened.

Ms. Hale entwines stories about children with Down syndrome she teaches or knows to illustrate strengths, unique challenges, and learning styles.

The author is an expert in teaching children and adults with Down syndrome how to read, using teaching methods appropriate to their visual style of learning, need for repetition, and for books that focus on their interests. Her website at <http://www.specialreads.com/> includes details on her teaching methods and the books she has published to help her students.

She recommends parents intervene early with support and educational services...teach them to read before they enter kindergarten and amaze their teachers.

She urges parents to resist accepting a plateau of learning that their child has achieved. She is confident that many can continue to attain higher levels of education and reach the level of independence her son has realized.



*Healthnet News is written by Alberta L. Richetelle and Judith Kronick.
If you have questions about anything in the newsletter or about Healthnet services for Connecticut public libraries,
please call 860/679-4055; e-mail address: richetelle@nso.uchc.edu*

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