

SOONERCARE

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This newsletter is just for SoonerCare members. It will tell you about any changes or updates to your SoonerCare benefits. It will also give you other useful news to help keep you healthy. However, if you have specific questions about your health, please talk to your doctor.

Your SoonerCare Companion will arrive in your mailbox about every four months from the Oklahoma Health Care Authority. If you have questions about SoonerCare, please call the SoonerCare Helpline at 1-800-987-7767.

**Spring
2009**



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COMPANION

**What to do when you
feel there's too much
to do ... and not
enough YOU to do it**

Stress is a normal part of life. Too much of it can have negative side effects. It can cause a nervous stomach, difficulty sleeping, worrying or overeating. Here are some simple steps to de-stress our lives:



Deep breathing

1. *Here's how to do it:* Take a slow, deep, relaxing breath. Let your belly expand outward, rather than raising your shoulders. Then, breathe out slowly through your mouth. Let the air come out like a whisper. This is a more relaxed and natural way to breathe. It helps your lungs fill up with fresh air, releasing "old" air. This helps relieve tension. This type of breathing is often used in yoga.
1. *Make deep breathing a daily practice:* Simply take a few deep abdominal breaths throughout the day. Focusing on making this type of breathing a habit is easy. It helps promote wellness over time.

Decide what's important

1. *Organization helps:* Keep a day planner or calendar handy. Post important events or appointments, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses in an easy-to-see place.
2. *Set priorities:* Make a daily "to do" list. Keep it simple – just one to four items per day. Make a plan to finish one of the items on the list by the end of each day. Breaking tasks into small steps makes them easier to do and less overwhelming. Remember, you do not have to finish everything on your list.
3. *Focus time:* At the end of your day, take 30 minutes to jot down the next day's "to do" list. This can help you to rest better. This may mean rolling over unfinished tasks. Once this is done, tell yourself to let go of it until tomorrow. It is now your time to relax!
4. *Ask for help:* Sometimes just talking to someone gives new ideas and hope.

Visit <http://stress.about.com/> for more ideas on better managing stress.

Here's a quick guide to help you decide: PCP or ER?

Someone needs to see a doctor, but where should you go? It can be difficult to decide whether you should see your PCP for urgent care or whether you need to head straight for the nearest Emergency Room.

Lots of times, your PCP's office will be the best choice. Your PCP knows your medical history and current health status, and you're less likely to spend hours waiting to see the doctor.

But other situations call for immediate treatment at an emergency facility. In a true emergency, you could die if you don't get help right away. You also could be hurt permanently (disabled).

If you have any of these problems or symptoms, DO go to the ER. Call 911 if you need to go to the ER by ambulance, and call your doctor after the emergency to let him or her know what happened.

- **Decreased consciousness or not able to respond to questions.**
- **Broken bones.**
- **High fever in babies under 2 months old.**
- **Extreme bleeding.**
- **Breathing tube blockage.**
- **Pain and tightness in the chest.**
- **A hard time breathing, extreme shortness of breath and choking.**
- **Miscarriage.**
- **Rape.**
- **Chest, head or eye injuries.**
- **Drug overdoses.**
- **Burns with blisters.**

If you are not sure you have an emergency, call your PCP.

You also may call the Patient Advice Line at 1-800-530-3002 from 5 p.m.-8 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours a day on weekends and holidays. Hearing impaired can call Relay Oklahoma at 711 or 1-800-722-0353.

You and your PCP: Partners in a 'Medical Home'

On Jan. 1, 2009, SoonerCare Choice began using a new health care model, the "Patient-Centered Medical Home." While most of the changes affect your health care provider (PCP), some also affect you. The winter SoonerCare Companion went out before these changes were approved. Now that they have been, we would like to tell you about them.

The biggest change for members is improved access to health care. Medical Home stresses a closer partnership between you and your PCP. PCPs are being encouraged to keep their offices open either before or after the usual 8 a.m.-5 p.m. schedule. When you are sick or need advice, call your PCP's office first, even if it's after 5 p.m. or on weekends or holidays. A number of PCP offices now make on-call medical staff available to talk to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

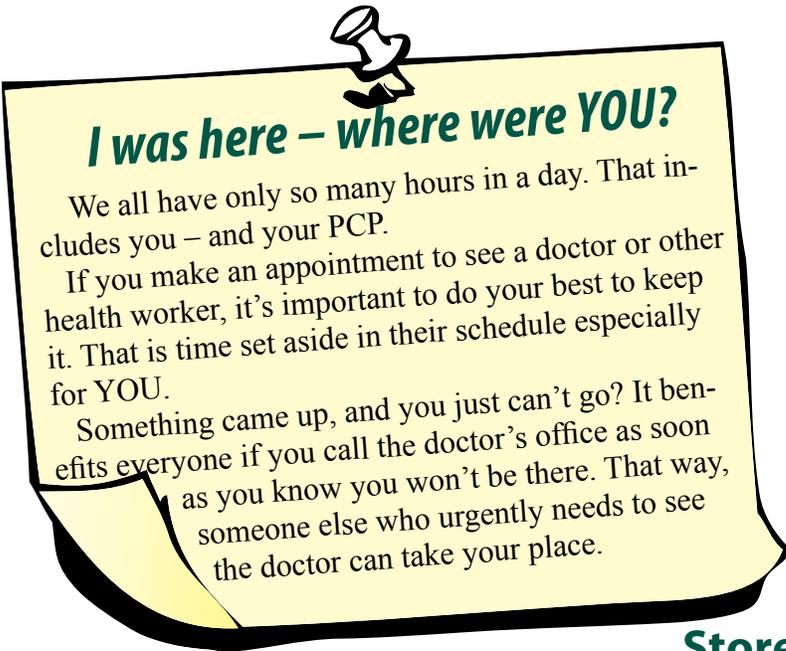
You, too, must be willing to take an active part in your own care. If you have not chosen or have never seen your PCP, you need to make an appointment to get started. It is important for your PCP to know your history and health status before you become ill or injured. This is especially true if you should need after-hours or specialty care. It may take three weeks before you can get in for your first appointment. That's because your PCP has time set aside each day to care for people who are sick now.

Please be sure to keep your appointments so you don't bump someone else who really needs care. Be on time. If you must cancel, please call as soon as you know so that someone else can get in.

To be truly helpful, the Medical Home requires a partnership between you and your PCP. PCPs provide better, safer and more efficient care when they know their patients and their medical history ahead of time! It is so important for members and their PCPs to work together. At your next visit, be sure to ask for and read the Medical Home Agreement that your PCP will have on hand.

SoonerCare no longer picks a PCP for new members. All new members should call the SoonerCare Helpline (1-800-987-7767) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday to choose their PCP. It no longer takes days or weeks to change your PCP. Now you can change the same day. However, you should only change for a good reason. You should be sure you are changing to a provider you can be more compatible with over the long term. If you haven't chosen your PCP and we can help you, please call the SoonerCare Helpline today.





I was here – where were YOU?

We all have only so many hours in a day. That includes you – and your PCP.

If you make an appointment to see a doctor or other health worker, it's important to do your best to keep it. That is time set aside in their schedule especially for YOU.

Something came up, and you just can't go? It benefits everyone if you call the doctor's office as soon as you know you won't be there. That way, someone else who urgently needs to see the doctor can take your place.

What counts as a medicine?

Question: True or false? You need to tell your health care team (including your doctors, nurses, pharmacist and dentist) when you are taking any vitamins, herbs or over-the-counter medicines.

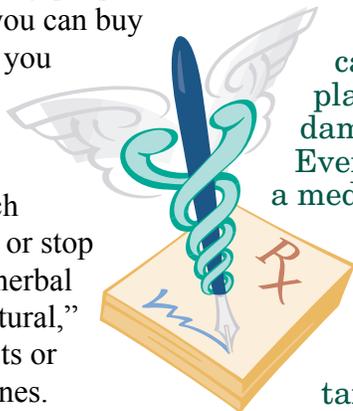
Answer: TRUE!

There are many over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbal remedies. Many people think that they are safe because you can buy them without a prescription. Did you know that many of these products don't work safely with your prescription drugs?

When medicines react with each other, they can cause side effects or stop each other from working. Some herbal products say that they are "all natural," but they can still cause side effects or problems with your other medicines.

That is why it is very important to tell all members of your health care team if you are taking any over-the-counter products. Sharing this information can help prevent side effects and other problems. It's a good idea to keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your doctor each time you visit.

Your pharmacist can help you find the right over-the-counter medicine for some problems. It's important to remember that these medicines don't always help. Always tell your doctor if you take an over-the-counter medicine and the problem doesn't get better.



Stick with one pharmacy

Your pharmacist is a very important part of your health care team. **Your pharmacist can:**

- **Tell you how your medicine works.**
- **Tell you the best way and right time to take your medicine.**
- **Warn you about side effects.**
- **Check to make sure that all your medicines work together safely.**

Mixing the wrong medicines can be very dangerous. If you take your prescriptions to different pharmacies, the pharmacist will not be able to make sure all your medicines work together safely.

Allow the pharmacy and pharmacist to work for you. Stick with one pharmacy!

Store, toss drugs the right way

It is very important to store medicines the right way. Keeping medicines in the right place helps make sure that they work, and keeps children safe.

The three most important things to remember about storing medicines are:

- **Keep them away from children.**
- **Keep them in a cool, dry place.**
- **Keep them away from sunlight.**

Some people keep their drugs in a medicine cabinet in the bathroom. This is not the best place, because bathrooms can get very warm and damp. Other people keep drugs in the refrigerator. Even though this is a cool place, it is not very dry. If a medicine needs to stay in the refrigerator, it will say so on the package. If it doesn't, the best place to keep it is in a kitchen cabinet. The cabinet should be higher than your child can reach and away from bright light from windows.

Throwing drugs away correctly is also important. **When you no longer need a medicine or it gets too old, throw it away.** Over-the-counter medicines that you can buy without a prescription will have an expiration date on the package. Always throw away old medicines that are past the expiration date. Also throw away prescription medicines that haven't been used after one year.

The best way to throw medicines away is to take them out of the original bottle or package, mix them with coffee grounds or kitty litter, and throw them in the trash. Doing this makes sure other people are not likely to take them out of the trash. It is also important to scratch off any private information that may be on the bottle.

Ask your pharmacist if you ever have questions about the right way to store or throw away medicines.

Need a lift?



Is no one available to take you to your SoonerCare doctor's appointment?

No worries! SoonerCare members can use SoonerRide, a non-emergency transportation service. If you have a valid SoonerCare ID number and live in Oklahoma, you can get SoonerRide to give you a lift to medically necessary appointments.

If you would like to use this service, this is what you need to do:

1. Call the SoonerRide number at 1-877-404-4500 between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday.
2. Call at least three business days before the date of your appointment.

For more information about SoonerRide, call the SoonerCare Helpline at **1-800-987-7767**.

Even babies need some space!

Taking care of your body and seeing your doctor soon after you know you are pregnant is very important for the health of your baby. But did you know that studies show it's better for baby if you put off your next pregnancy for 18-23 months?

The studies show infants conceived 18-23 months after their mother had a previous baby had the lowest risk of low birthweight and being born too early. They also were the healthiest size at birth.

If you have children and want to wait before having another, or if you want to wait to start a family but don't have a way to pay for birth control, you may qualify for SoonerPlan.

SoonerPlan is Oklahoma's family planning program for uninsured women and men who don't qualify for regular SoonerCare services. It covers birth control, office visits and physical exams related to family planning.



Please call **1-800-987-7767** or visit the Web site at **www.okhca.org/soonerplan**.

HPV vaccine available for young women

SoonerCare offers coverage of Gardasil for women ages 19 to 26.

Gardasil is the only vaccine that helps protect against four types of human papillomavirus (HPV). These viruses can cause cervical cancer and genital warts.

Gardasil is given in three shots over a six-month period.

Consult your physician or medical provider at your local county health department to see if Gardasil is right for you.

For more information, check out the following Web site: www.Gardasil.com.

Recommended Gardasil Administration Schedule

Dose 1	Chosen date
Dose 2	2 months later
Dose 3	4 months later

Some women may need to take the vaccine in a shorter period of time. They take the second dose four weeks after the first dose. They get their third dose 12 weeks after the second.

Is it a cold or an allergy?

www.niaid.nih.gov

Symptoms	Cold	Airborne allergy
Cough	Common	Sometimes
General aches, pains	Slight	Never
Fatigue, weakness	Sometimes	Sometimes
Itchy eyes	Rare or never	Common
Sneezing	Usual	Usual
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Runny nose	Common	Common
Stuffy nose	Common	Common
Fever	Rare	Never
Duration	Three to 14 days	Weeks (for example, six weeks for ragweed or grass pollen seasons)
Treatment	Antihistamines, decongestants, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines	Antihistamines, nasal steroids, decongestants
Prevention	Wash your hands often with soap. Avoid contact with anyone with a cold.	Avoid those things that you are allergic to such as pollen, dust, mold, pet dander, cockroaches
Complications	Sinus infection, middle ear infection, asthma	Sinus infection, asthma

Act fast if you see these signs of stroke

Seek emergency medical services or get to a hospital immediately if you feel you may be having a stroke. **DON'T WAIT!**

The American Heart Association lists the following warning signs someone may be having a stroke:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

The key is being prepared, because when a stroke happens, time is crucial.

For more information, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE or visit www.stroke.org/SAM.

Act **F.A.S.T.** to increase recognition of and response to stroke symptoms!

Want to help reduce the impact of stroke? Spread awareness about stroke symptoms so everyone recognizes symptoms and immediately calls 911. Use the F.A.S.T. method for recognizing symptoms.

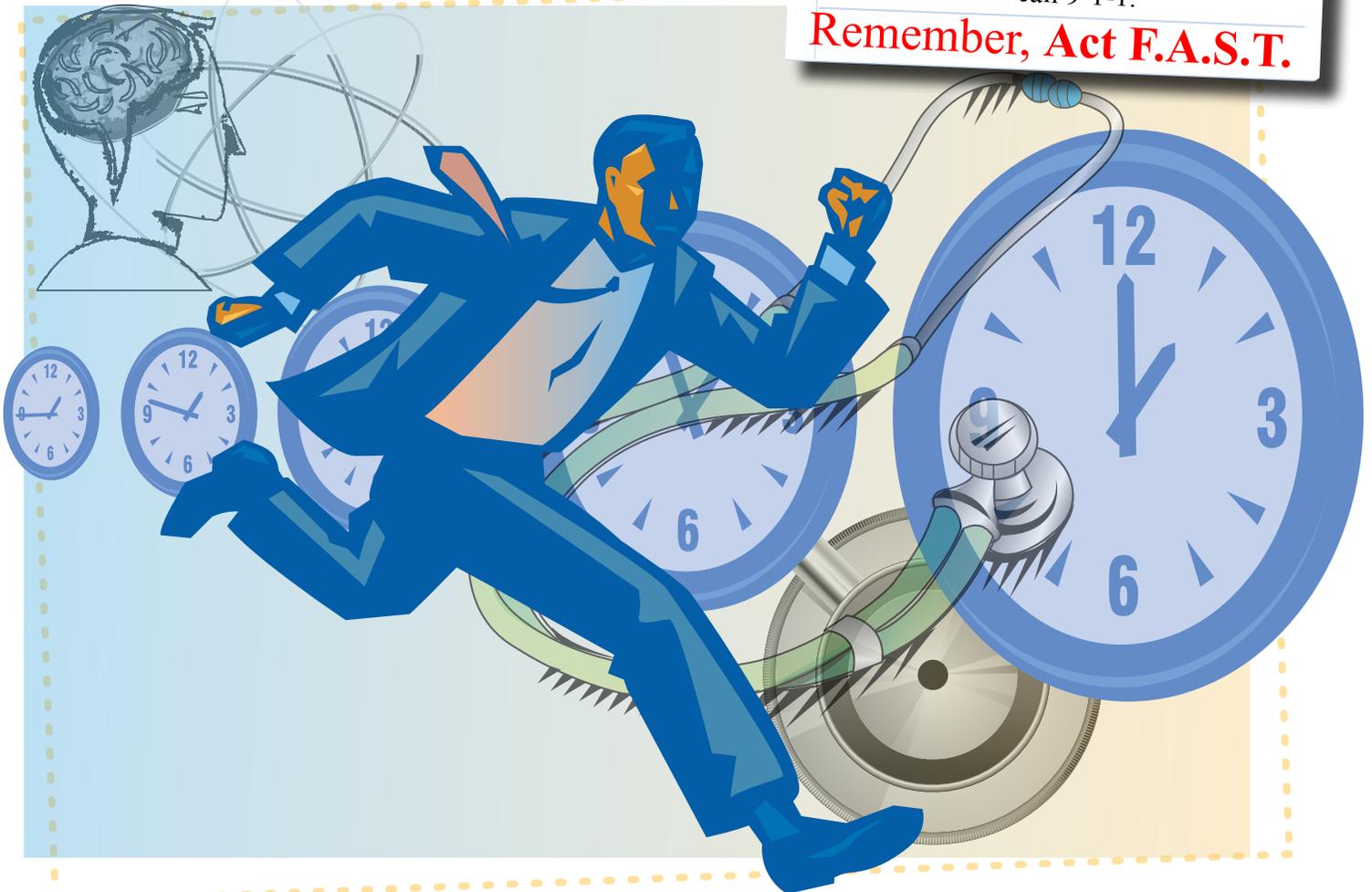
F = FACE Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

A = ARM Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

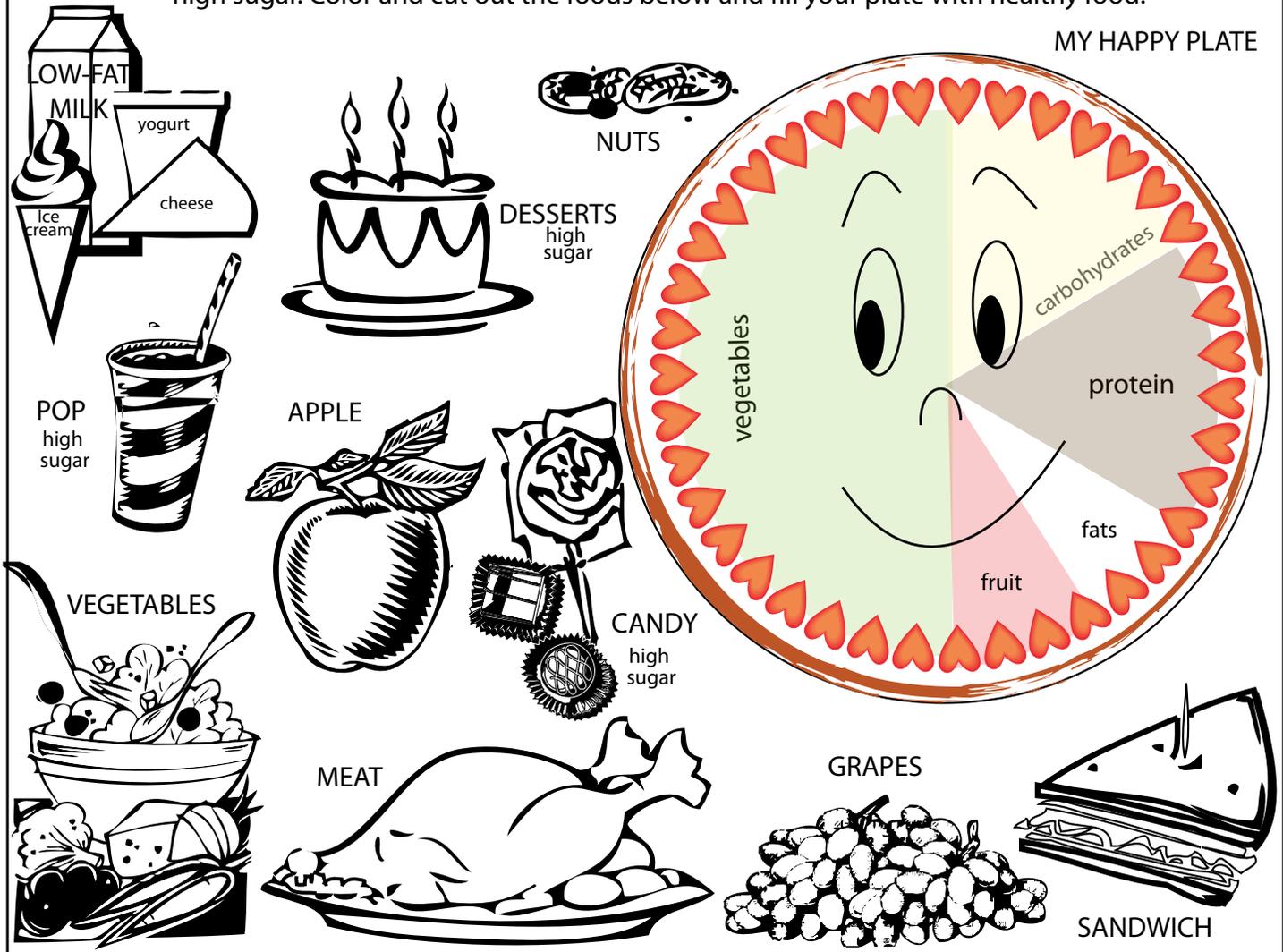
S = SPEECH Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Does the speech sound slurred or strange?

T = TIME If you observe any of these signs, it's time to call 9-1-1.

Remember, Act F.A.S.T.



Eating healthy helps prevent or control juvenile diabetes. Your body is like a car and needs fuel to keep going. There are three main types of food your body needs: **carbohydrates** (breads, grains and starchy vegetables), **proteins** (meat, milk, nuts, some beans, cheese), **fruits and vegetables** and a small amount of **fats** (butter, oil, meats, eggs, whole milk, chocolate and fried foods). Fill most of your plate with non-starchy **vegetables**. Use a smaller section for **carbohydrates** (grains, pasta, starchy vegetables). Take another small section for **protein** - (meat, eggs, milk, cheese), then add a piece of **fresh or canned fruit** instead of high-sugar desserts and add a glass of low-fat milk or yogurt at dinner. Put an X on food with high sugar. Color and cut out the foods below and fill your plate with healthy food!



Could your child have type 1 diabetes? Watch for these symptoms

Each year, about 15,000 American children and teens find out they have type 1 diabetes. (Type 1 used to be called “juvenile-onset” diabetes.) Knowing the symptoms of this disease may save your teen or child’s life.

The warning signs of type 1 diabetes include:

- Frequent urination.
- Excessive thirst.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- Extreme hunger.

- Sudden vision changes.
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet.
- Feeling very tired much of the time.
- Very dry skin.
- Sores that are slow to heal.
- More infections than usual.

Nausea, vomiting or stomach pains may go along with any of these signs.

If your teen or child is showing one or more of these symptoms, call your SoonerCare doctor right away. As with many other diseases, early diagnosis can prevent your child from developing more serious health problems, even death.

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BABY TALK

It is important to talk to your baby. Even though he may not understand what you are saying, listening to you talk helps him learn to talk.

Here are some ideas for talking to your child:



♪ Sing to him.

♪ Talk about things your baby can see, hear or touch. (Example: “Baby, look! A teddy bear! See how he feels soft and smooth!”)

♪ Repeat the noises he makes.

♪ Read to your child every day.

♪ Praise your child when he tries to talk.

Ready to be ~~tobacco~~ free?

If you’re a SoonerCare member and want to stop smoking or using other forms of tobacco, your benefits can help.

SoonerCare pays for stop-smoking products such as Chantix and Zyban. Nicotine replacement products such as nicotine patches, gum, lozenges and inhalers also are covered. (You need a prescription from your doctor.)

At your next appointment, ask your doctor to explain ways this SoonerCare benefit can help you take the steps toward becoming smoke free.



You also can call the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline for coaching. Call **1-800-784-8669** (English), **1-800-793-1552** (Spanish) or **1-877-777-6534** (TTY).

Si usted quiere leer este artículo en español, visite la pagina web del OHCA al <http://www.okhca.org/sooner-care-companion>

Disclaimer: Clinical, legal and other comments are offered for general information only. Please talk to your doctor about specific health concerns.