



# Delaware health aware

Fall 2007

## Things to know Diabetes and your eyes

It's wise to take care of your eyes when you have diabetes.

Having diabetes makes you more likely to have eye problems. High blood sugar levels can lead to vision loss and blindness.

The longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to have eye problems.

But there are steps you can take to protect your eyes.

First, you should see an eye doctor at least once a year. Finding early signs of eye disease and getting treatment can help you avoid more serious problems later on.

To take good care of your eyes:

- Keep your blood sugar under control.
- Bring down high blood pressure.
- Don't smoke.
- See your doctor right away if you have blurred vision or eye pain.

If you do have eye problems, there are good treatments available. Talk to your doctor about the best treatment plan for you.



Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institutes of Health

## Lower your risk for HIV



You probably know that AIDS can be a deadly disease. But do you know how to lower your risk for getting HIV—the virus that causes AIDS?

You can get HIV if you have unprotected sex with an infected partner. You can also get it from blood or needles that are infected. You can't get HIV from a toilet seat, touching an infected person or drinking water from a water fountain.

To protect yourself from HIV:

- Do not have any type of sex with someone who has AIDS or HIV.
- Always use a condom during sex.
- Have only one sex partner.
- Never share needles to inject drugs or vitamins, or for tattooing or body piercing.

If you are pregnant or think you might be, get tested for HIV.

A mother with the disease can pass it on to her baby.

It's possible to have HIV and feel perfectly healthy. The only way to know for sure if you are infected is to be tested.

Symptoms may include:

- Swollen lymph nodes.
- Fever, chills and night sweats.
- Diarrhea.
- Weight loss.
- Fatigue.
- Blurred vision.
- Headaches.

If you think you might be infected, get tested right away. HIV is a serious disease, but it can be treated.

Sources: American Medical Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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## Protect yourself from colds and flu

It can be hard to avoid all those cold and flu germs when everyone around you is coughing and sneezing.

But there are at least two ways to protect yourself:

1. Get a flu shot.
2. Wash your hands.

The yearly vaccine is the best defense against the flu. It's a particularly good idea for people 65 and older.

Sadly, there's no vaccine to protect against a cold. Instead, the best way to avoid cold germs is to wash your hands often.



For more on staying healthy, go to the American Academy of Family Physicians website, <http://familydoctor.org>.

Use soap and water and rub your hands for 15 to 20 seconds, or about the same time that it would take you to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.

Here are some other ways to avoid cold and flu germs:

- Stay away from sick people when you can.
- Don't touch your nose, eyes or mouth.

- Use disinfectant to clean surfaces touched by sick people.

If you have a cold or the flu, don't spread it. When you sneeze or cough, use a tissue, and then throw it away. Teach this to your kids.

If you don't have a tissue, cover your nose or mouth with your hand or arm. Then wash up.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

### Advance Directives

#### Make your wishes known

What if you get sick or injured and can't speak for yourself? Would you want to be kept on life support?

An advance directive is a way to deal with these questions.

And it's a way to make sure your wishes are followed.

Types of directives include a:

**Living will.** This lets you detail which treatments you want and don't want if you can't speak for yourself.

**Durable power of attorney for health care.** This lets you appoint a friend or relative to make medical decisions for you if you can't do that yourself.

#### Do-not-resuscitate order.

This lets caregivers know you don't want to receive CPR if your heart stops beating.

Writing a directive isn't hard. A doctor can provide forms you

can fill out. You may also visit our website, [www.DelawarePhysiciansCare.com](http://www.DelawarePhysiciansCare.com).



Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Hospital Association



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## Teens and sex: **Am I ready?**

As a teen, you may be under a lot of pressure.

Pressure to do well in school, for example, is tough. But peer pressure can be really hard to deal with. Especially when it comes to sex.

If you're thinking about having sex, be sure that you are ready. Don't have sex just because:

- It seems like everyone else is doing it.
- You're talked into it.
- You think the other person will break up with you if you don't.
- You think having sex will make you a "real" woman or man.

You should also think about the risks of having sex. These risks include getting pregnant or catching a sexually transmitted disease (STD).

Just remember that it's OK if you decide to wait. It may seem as if everyone you know is having sex. But just as many teens choose to wait.

### Protect yourself

If you're already having sex, it's important to be safe.

To help protect yourself and your partner from an unplanned pregnancy or an STD, use a latex condom every time you have sex. And also make sure to always use a birth control cream, jelly or foam. These contain a chemical that may help protect against some STDs.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

## Feel good about yourself

Some days it's easy to like who you see in the mirror.

But other days, it can be hard to feel good about yourself.

The good news is, you can learn to like yourself all the time, not just when things are going great. That can help you make good choices, take on challenges and build new friendships.

Try these tips to help boost your self-esteem:

- Think good thoughts about who you are and the things you can do.
- Try not to compare yourself to other people.
- Accept that it's OK not to be the best at everything. We all have things that we are good at and things that we could be better at.
- Help other people. Pitch in on chores at home, for instance. Try volunteer work.
- Realize that you might feel down about yourself and others now and then. That's OK. No one is perfect!

## When a friend talks about suicide

Do you have a friend who talks about suicide? If so, listen. People who commit suicide often talk about it first.


Here's how you can help:

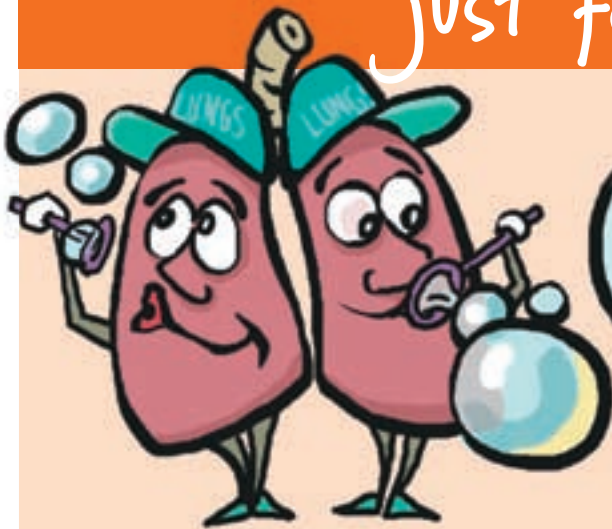
- Ask your friend if he or she is thinking about suicide.
- Listen carefully.
- Tell the person that you and others care and want to help.

- Keep medicines and weapons away from your friend.
- Tell an adult you trust that your friend may be thinking about suicide.

Your friend may be thinking about suicide if he or she:

- Seems to be down.
- Stays away from friends.
- Talks about death.

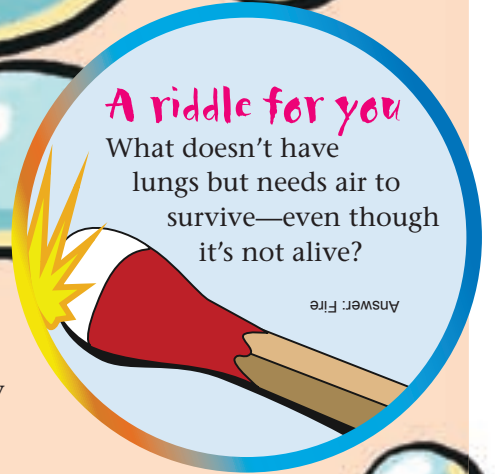
For help, call the Child Mental Health Crisis Line,  
 **1-800-969-4357.**



## A riddle for you

What doesn't have lungs but needs air to survive—even though it's not alive?

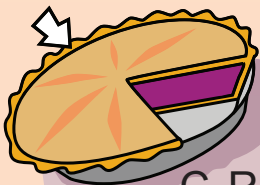
Answer: Fire



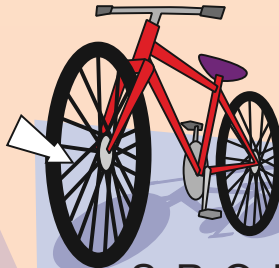
## What makes you cough and wheeze?

When you have asthma, it's important to know what triggers your asthma. These are things that can cause asthma to get worse. It's usually best to avoid them.

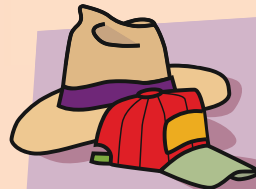
Look at these pictures. Each picture rhymes with something that may be an asthma trigger. Can you think of what that word would be?



CRUST  
DUST

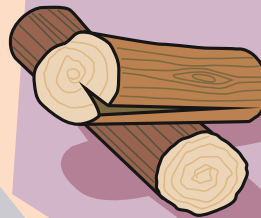


SPOKE



HATS

and



LOGS



GOLD



DRESS

Answers: crust/dust; spoke/  
smoke; gold/mold; dress/stress;  
hats and logs/cats and dogs

## What's it like to have asthma?

If you don't have asthma, it's hard to know what kids who have the disease go through. Try this:

Put a straw in your mouth and suck air in. Now blow it out through the straw. That's what breathing is like for someone with asthma. It's tough!

If you have friends with asthma, don't let other kids tease them. And tell your friends it's OK for them to use their medicines or inhalers when they need to.

Whatever you do, don't worry. You can't catch asthma from someone else.

