



NEWS

From the Consumer Health Action Network
September 2006

Prepare Now For Flu Season

Why should you get a flu shot?

- Influenza (“the flu”) is a serious illness that can lead to pneumonia. It is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States.
- The flu can be very dangerous for older people. It is also important for those with chronic illness and for those who spend a lot of time around sick or elderly people.
- A flu shot is safe and helps you protect others.
- Even if you don’t develop serious problems the flu can make you feel bad for days – fever, chills, headache, cough and sore muscles.

Who should get a flu shot?

- People 50 years of age and older
- People with chronic illness, HIV, those being treated with drugs such as long-term steroids, or those receiving treatment for cancer with radiation or drugs
- Children and teenagers 6 mos – 18 years on long-term aspirin treatment
- Women who will be 6 or more months pregnant or who will have just delivered during the flu season
- Health care workers in contact with people in high risk groups
- People, including children, who live with someone who is at high-risk for flu

The flu is most common from December to April. You need a flu shot every year and it is best to get it from October through mid November as the vaccine takes one to two weeks to protect you.

If you are enrolled in Medicare Part B your flu shot is free from a participating provider. Medicaid and HUSKY members can also receive free vaccines. If you are uninsured check with your local health department – many have clinics providing the vaccine at a reduced cost. Other organizations offer clinics in supermarkets and community centers. Watch for one in your area. **Protect yourself and others!**



Your Family Deserves a Healthy Start

Pregnancy should be an exciting and joyous time for your family, without worrying about whether you'll have adequate health coverage or searching for prenatal care. Since 1989, the Healthy Start program has been dedicated to the health of pregnant women and young children. Healthy Start covers Connecticut with eighteen sites, including hospitals, community health centers, and social services offices. Each Healthy Start site offers a unique array of resources, but all sites provide HUSKY application assistance for eligible families with pregnant women and/or children under age three. HUSKY applications often are approved more quickly when processed through Healthy Start, as they appreciate the critical importance of immediate, quality prenatal and pediatric care. Furthermore, your new baby will be eligible for HUSKY even if you are not currently eligible, and Healthy Start can help you secure healthcare for your children. Many sites also offer help coordinating all your care, childbirth and breastfeeding classes, home visits, and additional support services. Healthy Start sites often collaborate with other family-oriented organizations, and they can find valuable resources within the community. Although a few sites accept walk-ins, appointments are strongly preferred; you should call beforehand to make an appointment. There are Spanish-speaking workers at nearly all locations, but they may not work everyday and you should ask when they are available.

If you are pregnant or have children under age three, and you would like to learn more about the Healthy Start program and which site is nearest you, please call us at 203-772-2817 or (toll-free) 1-888-873-4585. Also, if you have a pregnant friend, please ask her if she has heard of Healthy Start and tell her to call us for more information.

More Tips for Moms-To-Be

- ★ If you are pregnant and now have private insurance, check to see that pregnancy-related services are covered under your plan.
- ★ In order to be eligible for HUSKY, your monthly household income limit for a family of two (a pregnant woman counts as two people) is \$2,035; for a family of three the limit is \$2,560.40; and for a family of four the limit is \$3,083.95. However, even if you are slightly over-income you may still be eligible; give us a call to discuss the options.
- ★ Even if your family is not currently eligible for HUSKY, there are other resources within the community, such as community health centers and free bed funds, that can help you throughout and after your pregnancy. Please call us for more information.



Did you know? You can have HUSKY Part A **and** private insurance at the same time

Too many people believe that once they enroll in health insurance at work or through a family member, that they have to drop out of HUSKY. It's not true. Your private insurance pays for most of your health care, use it just like you would if you didn't have HUSKY. But if your insurance won't pay for something you or your family member needs, HUSKY may pay for it.

One Consumer Health Action Network member never got around to dropping HUSKY Part A after her husband became eligible for insurance at his job and signed the whole family up. A few months later her son became ill, was admitted to the hospital, and their private insurance wouldn't pay the bill. Luckily, they still had HUSKY and the bill was paid in full.

This is only true for HUSKY Part A. If your child is on HUSKY Part B and they become covered by private insurance, you have to drop HUSKY.

If you have any questions, call us toll free at 1-888-873-4585.

One in nine CT residents lacked health coverage last year

A new study by the US Census found that 394,000 Connecticut residents did not have health insurance coverage in 2005.

That is more than the combined populations of New Haven plus Hartford plus Waterbury plus Norwich.

The number of uninsured in CT is more than the combined total number of accountants, auditors, computer programmers, architects, engineers, economists, social workers, clergy, lawyers, judges, librarians, writers and authors, photographers, dentists, doctors, pharmacists, nurses, veterinarians, dental hygienists, fire fighters, security guards, crossing guards, chefs and cooks, waiters and waitresses, dishwashers, janitors and maids, tree trimmers and pruners, barbers, hairdressers, child care workers, cashiers, insurance sales agents, travel agents, telemarketers, file clerks, mail carriers, electricians, painters, bakers, butchers, machinists, tool and die makers, commercial pilots, air traffic controllers, bus drivers, parking lot plus service station attendants.

For more on the uninsured in CT and what we can do about it, visit our website at

www.cthealthpolicy.org

Open House

Join us to celebrate the merger of SHOUT/ASHA and the CT Health Policy Project
and to celebrate our 7th Anniversary

**Learn about our helpline and outreach services for anyone having
trouble getting health care in CT**

Tuesday, October 17 4:00 to 6:00 pm

703 Whitney Ave., New Haven

For more information or if you
need help with transportation,
call us toll-free at 1-888-873-4585