



CountyCare Connection Spring 2017

Keeping Kids Healthy

An important part of keeping kids healthy is a well-child visit. Schedule yours today.

Why Are Well-Child Visits Important?

Every child needs regular checkups. At a well-child visit, your health care team gets to know you and your child. Working together with you, they check on your child's growth, recommend ways to develop in healthy ways, and find and treat any problems before they become serious.

Well-child visits are important at any age, but are especially important for babies and toddlers. These visits are a great time to talk about how best to care for your little one. After all, parents hear a lot of different advice these days. Each well-child visit with a CountyCare provider is a private and personal time you can talk with an expert who knows you and your child.

What Happens at a Well-Child Visit?

During the visit, the doctor, nurse, and other team members:

- Answer your questions.
- Do a physical exam.
- Give any needed shots.
- Measure how your child is growing and developing.
- Perform any required tests and screenings.
- Provide health education and guidance.

A well-child visit is the perfect time for you to get questions answered about your child's growth and development. You can get help with sleeping and eating habits, breastfeeding, potty training, home safety, and behavior. It's a good idea to bring a list of questions. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has printable pre-visit questionnaires and a Child Health Tracker app available to make managing your child's health easier. Visit www.healthychildren.org to find many useful tools.

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How Often to Schedule a Well-Child Visit?

Well-child visits should start right after birth. CountyCare encourages parents to follow the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommended schedule:



It is a lot of trips to your doctor's office, especially for babies. But there are specific things to do at each of these visits. Planning ahead can help. Many providers schedule back-to-back appointments for two or three kids in a family, or schedule new moms and babies together.

Yearly well-child visits should continue through the teen years. Physical exams also may be needed to join sports teams or go to school or day care. Bring any sports or school-required forms to your appointment so your healthcare provider can complete them.

To make an appointment for your son's or daughter's next well-child visit call your PCP's office. The phone number is on your CountyCare ID card. Or you can call member services at 312-864-8200 / 855-444-1661 (toll-free) / 711 (TDD/TTY).



Making Every Visit Count

Every visit your child makes to the doctor is important, whether it is for a well-child exam or a sick visit. To help you get the most out of every appointment, try these simple tips.

Before the Visit

1

Make an appointment.

Tell the office what you are coming in for. Let them know if you have any concerns that might require more time with the provider. The more specific you are when making the appointment, the better.

2

Time it right.

If you think you will need extra attention, ask when the office is least busy. Schedule the visit at that time if you can. Avoid making the appointment during your child's regular nap or meal time if possible. Also, try to arrive ten minutes early to fill out forms.

3

Go in with a plan.

Make a folder with your child's medical records if you have them. Include any school or sports forms that need to be signed. Write down a list of questions you want to ask and add it to the folder.

4

Prepare your child.

Tell your child you're going ahead of time. Kids watch and follow their parents, so talk about the visit with a smile and positive words. Describe what will happen during the visit, including getting undressed or if shots are needed. Reading a book or playing a game about going to the doctor can help them feel more confident. Have your child help pack a favorite toy or book and a snack to take along.

5

Dress for ease.

Choose loose, comfortable clothes without a lot of snaps or buttons and shoes that are easy to slip on and off.

During the Visit

- **Act relaxed.** Some children are afraid of going to the doctor. Your child will feel less anxious if you are happy and calm. Smile at everyone in the office and let your child know they are friends.
- **Ask right away.** Ask all your questions at the beginning of the visit. That way the doctor is prepared while doing the exam. Don't be afraid to ask about anything. There are no silly questions when it comes to your child's health!
- **Be specific.** Instead of saying "My baby is cranky," tell the doctor or nurse that "Julia has been crying for three hours every evening for the last two weeks."
- **Be honest.** If your child isn't sleeping, is having tantrums, or is eating too much junk food, let your provider know. The doctors and nurses hear these things from parents every day. They want to help you raise a healthy child. To do that, they need to know the facts.
- **Speak up for your child.** If your child is afraid of the scale, ask the nurse to wait to weigh him or her until the end of the visit. If your child hates to be undressed, see if the doctor can do most of the exam with the child's clothes on. Most doctors, nurses, and physician's assistants will let you hold a crying child in your arms during the exam.
- **Listen carefully.** Sometimes medical advice can be confusing. Ask questions if you need more help. It's a good idea to bring paper and a pen so you can write down what you're told. Ask to take home written information. Be sure you know what to do after you leave the office.
- **Go phone-free.** Be in the moment. Try to limit use of your cell phone so you can focus on what the doctor says about your child.
- **Think about next steps.** Find out if you need to make another appointment and when. Ask if you need to call for results, or if the clinic will call you. Be sure you know the number to call for advice any time day or night. Make your next appointment before you leave the office.

Choosing Your Child's Doctor

At CountyCare, we know how important it is to build a good relationship with your child's healthcare providers.

Our doctors, nurses, and physician's assistants are committed to providing great care at every age, so your child can start well and stay well. To find a nearby family doctor or pediatrician for your child, call CountyCare at 312-864-8200, or visit us online at www.countycare.com/find-a-provider.



A Shot of Prevention

One of the best ways to keep kids healthy is to keep them from getting sick in the first place. Make sure they get the shots they need during their well-child visits.

Why are Immunizations Important?

Immunizations and vaccines are two words that mean the same thing. These are the shots that protect children from serious diseases, including measles, polio, and whooping cough. They prepare your child's body to fight illness so that they do not get that specific disease. That's called "immunity." Right now, many diseases are at their lowest levels ever because of vaccines.

When Should Vaccines be Scheduled?

Vaccines work best when they are given at the right time. CountyCare recommends the schedule set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The vaccines are carefully timed to get the best response from your child's immune system. Ask your healthcare provider for a list of recommended shots.

Make sure your child has the right shots before going to school or enrolling in any child-care program (including preschool, daycare, or Head Start). In Illinois, children are legally required to show proof of immunity for:

- Diphtheria
- Whooping Cough
- Tetanus
- Polio
- Measles
- Chickenpox
- Rubella
- Mumps
- Flu
- Hepatitis B

Are Vaccines Safe?

Vaccines are definitely safe for children and save lives. The United States has a very strong vaccine safety program. Studies from the CDC show that vaccines help keep all children healthy. No link has ever been found between vaccines and autism or other neurological disorders.

Staying on Track

It's a good idea to keep track of your child's shots.



A vaccination record can help you and your doctor keep your child's shots on schedule. It's also important information to have if you move to a new clinic or your child enrolls in a new school. Ask your child's provider for a listing at every visit to keep in your files.

Moms Need Vaccines Too

Certain vaccines are important for pregnant women and new moms.

Who is it for?

- You
- Your baby
- Other people in your family and community

Newborn babies can get whooping cough and the flu. But they are too young to be vaccinated. If you and your baby's other adult caregivers have not been vaccinated, do it now. It is safe for you to be immunized even if you are breastfeeding. Breastfeeding also helps keep babies healthy, but it protects against different illnesses than vaccines do. So breastfeeding moms and babies should both stay up to date on their shots.



Before and After Baby Comes

Healthy children begin with healthy mothers. Schedule a visit with your CountyCare women's health provider as soon as you think you are pregnant – or even better, when you are thinking about becoming pregnant.

What to Expect

"Pregnancy is a potentially life changing experience," says Andrea McGlynn, CNM, APN. "Find a prenatal provider you connect with and make the most of prenatal visits." CountyCare offers a variety of prenatal providers: family doctors and obstetricians, nurse-midwives and nurse practitioners. Pregnant women can go to any in-network providers, even a different primary care provider, for prenatal care. During the first visit, the doctor or nurse will ask you lots of questions about yourself, including:

- Your last period and possible due date;
- Past pregnancies;
- Medical conditions;
- Your medications;
- Tobacco and alcohol use.

Your provider will do a complete physical exam and order lab tests of blood and urine. You will talk about the estimated due date for birth. This date helps everyone count the weeks of pregnancy with the due date being up to 40 weeks. But this date may not be when your baby is born. Fully grown babies may arrive a couple of weeks before or after the due date.

At your first visit you and your provider will talk about your life and your pregnancy. These conversations can continue throughout the rest of your prenatal visits. Follow-up prenatal visits will also include checks of your weight, blood pressure, and the growing baby. There will be time to talk about diet, exercise, sleep, how you are feeling and preparing for birth and parenting.

When to See the Doctor

Your personal appointment schedule will be set by your provider. Prenatal visits usually follow this schedule:

4 to 28 weeks:

One visit every four weeks

28 to 36 weeks:

Two visits every two to three weeks

36 weeks to delivery:

One or more visits per week

Don't forget to see your provider AFTER the baby too. Make at least one appointment for yourself when you make your baby's appointments. Schedule this "postpartum visit" 3-7 weeks after you give birth, but don't hesitate to make sooner or later appointments also, if you need them.

Prenatal Care: It's more than medical

Support for emotions is important too. If you are feeling depressed, having trouble with substance abuse, or need support, talk to your prenatal provider for a behavioral health referral, or call CountyCare member services at 312-864-8200/855-444-1661 (toll-free) / 711 (TDD/TTY) and press option 4 for member options, then select 1 for behavioral health. You can also view or download a full list of behavioral health providers at the bottom of this web page www.countycare.com/find-a-provider.

Your care coordinator can connect you with local community resources including: nutrition programs, prenatal classes, breastfeeding and parenting supports. Contact your care coordinator at 312-864-8200, Options 4,8 to help you find programs near you.



Clearing the Air about Kids and Asthma

Did you know that asthma often starts during childhood? In the United States, more than 6 million children have been diagnosed with the disease.¹

What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease that makes your airways swell so breathing becomes difficult. Symptoms can vary from person to person.

Common symptoms include:

Shortness
of breath

Whistling or
wheezing sound
when breathing

Chest pain
or tightness

Dr. James Moy, Chief of Pediatric Allergy/Immunology at Stroger Hospital of Cook County, says "Some asthma symptoms are mild and go away on their own or after minimal treatment, but sometimes they get worse and cause an intense and potentially deadly asthma attack. It is important to see a doctor right away if your child experiences any asthma symptoms."

Allergies and Asthma

Many people only notice their asthma symptoms while active or exercising. Others may have difficulty breathing at all times. This is usually linked to allergies. Allergies can make asthma worse or trigger it. Smoke, pollen and animals are common allergies. And now is the time for spring allergies, so it is important to know about the connection.

Allergic asthma is the most common type of asthma in the United States, including for children. Many of the symptoms are the same, but allergic asthma is triggered by breathing in allergens. If your child has allergic asthma, their airways are probably extra sensitive to certain things. These can include:

- Smoke
- Pollen
- Dust mites
- Mold
- Pets
- Dust
- Air pollution
- Cockroaches
- Perfumes and scented products

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/asthma.htm>

Asthma Treatment

There is no cure for asthma, but your CountyCare provider can help you and your child manage it.

Treating your child's symptoms when you first notice them is important. It can help prevent the symptoms from worsening or turning into a severe asthma attack. Secondhand smoke is especially bad for children with asthma. Exposure to smoke can lead to asthma flare-ups and trips to the Emergency Room. If you need help quitting smoking talk to your provider. Or to learn more take a look at the *Tobacco and Its Effects brochure* in the *Health and Wellness section* at Countycare.com.

Your best defense against allergies and asthma is to:

- 1 Understand the disease.
- 2 Learn your child's triggers.
- 3 Limit exposure.
- 4 Use medication as directed.
- 5 Schedule regular check-ins with your child's doctor.

Breathing Easier at Home

If your child has asthma, make some changes in your home to reduce symptoms:

- ☒ Keep your kitchen and bathroom clean and dry to prevent mold.
- ☒ Insist on a smoke-free home.
- ☒ Keep pets out of children's bedrooms and vacuum pet hair daily.
- ☒ Call the landlord or a pest control company right away if you see cockroaches.

Medical Advice 24 Hours a Day

When you need professional medical advice, you should first call your CountyCare provider. Your primary care provider is the best person to help you because they have access to your medical records and can give you personalized advice.

All CountyCare primary care providers are required to be available to you, by telephone, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are health questions that just can't wait like when a small child has a high fever, a pregnant woman has contractions, or anyone has a symptom that the doctor warned them about and said "call me if you have this problem."

What happens if you call your primary care provider when the office is closed? You might have to listen carefully to the message. Most messages will direct you to press a certain number or stay on the line. You will hear a message that says, "if you have an urgent problem and need to speak to an on-call provider," and then there will be instructions on what number to press to reach a live person. If you are not feeling well or worried it can be hard to know what to do. Listen to the options and select the number that

helps to speak to someone. They will ask some questions and usually have a member of your health care team call you back. If you don't hear back in a few minutes you can call again.

If you cannot reach your provider first, CountyCare also offers a 24-Hour Nurse Advice line. The Nurse Advice line can help with health questions including help on deciding where to go for care. To reach the 24-Hour Nurse Advice line call 312-864-8200 / 855-444-1661 (toll-free) / 711 (TDD/TTY). **The Nurse Advice line cannot help with questions about appointments; prescription refills or billing. These issues will need to be handled by your provider during normal business hours.**

If you are experiencing an emergency you should call 911. There are also many general health and wellness resources available on the CountyCare website at www.countycare.com/members/resources.

Quality Improvement

Check out the many activities CountyCare does to improve your care and service.

Our quality process is always transparent, so if you need hard copies for your records, just send a request to our Quality Manager, Justine Morton at jmorton@cookcountyhhs.org.

Please check out the CountyCare website, www.countycare.com, to find information about our quality of care program. There you, will also find annual results of the member satisfaction survey that provides us with your perspective on how well you think we are doing as a health plan, the Health Plans Quality Score Card which shows how CountyCare compares to other health plans in the Chicago area and a summary of our many quality initiatives to help improve access and the quality of care you receive.

How To Reach Us

CountyCare's normal business hours of operation are Monday – Friday 8:30 AM to 8:00 PM and Saturday 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM (Central Time). CountyCare can help you 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Language assistance will also be provided through a translator if needed. Please call us if you have any questions.

Emergency Services	911
Main Number	312-864-8200 855-444-1661 (toll-free) 711 (TDD/TTY)
Member Services Fax	312-548-9940
Provider Services Fax	312-548-9940
24 Hour Nurse Advice Line	312-864-8200
Non-emergency Transportation	630-403-3210
Dental Benefits	855-230-4755
Optical Benefits	844-870-3981
Pharmacy Benefits	877-235-1981
Address	CountyCare Administrative Offices 1900 West Polk Street, #220-C Chicago, Illinois 60612
Website	www.countycare.com

AFTER HOURS & HOLIDAYS

If you need medical advice and can't reach your doctor, you can call CountyCare's nurse advice line. This is our 24-hour, nurse-on-call phone line, which can be reached at 312-864-8200 / 855-444-1661 (toll-free) / 711 (TDD/TTY). It is staffed with nurses who can assist you in any language that you may need.

IMPAIRED MEMBERS

Call Illinois Relay at 711. Ask the operator to connect you to us at: 312-864-8200 or 855-444-1661 (toll-free)

Let your doctor know if you need a sign language interpreter for a medical visit. If the doctor does not have one, call us at least seven days before your visit to make arrangements for an interpreter to be present during your appointment.

Notifications

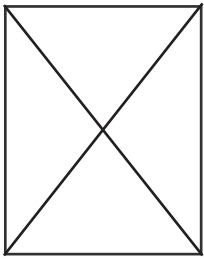
Keep Us Updated!

Moved? Changed your phone number? Have an email address?

Keep your CountyCare profile current so you can receive important updates about your coverage at <https://goo.gl/mkAXye>, or call us at **312-864-8200 / 855-444-1661 (toll-free) / 711 (TTD/TTY)**.



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