

**BlueCross BlueShield of Texas: Real-Life Fright: Tricks to Avoid H1N1**[BlueCross BlueShield of Texas's Notes](#)**Real-Life Fright: Tricks to Avoid H1N1**

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Today at 1:40pm



Guess you don't have to be scared of one thing this Halloween – catching the flu from handing out candy. Despite the prevalence of H1N1 and President Obama's recent declaration of a national emergency, trying on a rubber mask worn by someone else is an unlikely source of transferring the virus that causes the flu, according to a physician quoted in this [ABC News](#) article.

Still, if you're concerned about catching the virus, here are a few tips for staying well this Halloween:

- Hand out candy yourself; don't let trick-or-treaters reach in the bowl.
- The American Red Cross does *recommend* wearing a facemask if you have been (or are being exposed) to someone with the flu. You can always say that your costume this year is "Spooky Surgeon."
- Turn out the lights, stay home and watch scary movies if anyone in your house has had a fever in the last 24 to 48 hours before Halloween.



BlueCross BlueShield of Texas: New, Updated Resource for Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Coverage

BlueCross BlueShield of Texas's Notes

New, Updated Resource for Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Coverage

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Friday, October 9, 2009 at 4:58pm

In this note

No one.

If you're entitled to Medicare benefits (Part A) or enrolled in Medicare Part B — or if you're a caregiver for someone who is — check out BCBSTX's updated Web site for our Blue MedicareRx prescription drug plan, which is Medicare-approved Part D prescription drug coverage.

You can even enter specific prescription drugs in the Plan Selector Tool, which will then determine your annual costs without Part D coverage and compare the cost savings you could achieve with the three available plans.

Check it out today at Medicare Resources.





BlueCross BlueShield of Texas: Handling Seasonal Allergies

BlueCross BlueShield of Texas's Notes

Handling Seasonal Allergies

Monday, September 28, 2009 at 2:18pm

While most people think of seasonal allergies in the spring, allergies are a reality for many of us throughout the year. Fall is a great season for pesky allergens to hit the airways. Here are some tips on dealing with seasonal allergies:

To best combat seasonal allergies, start by protecting your environment:

- Keep your home clean, dry and dust-free.
- In both your car and home, set your air conditioner to recirculate air.
- Consider adding an air purifier, dehumidifier or high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter for your home's ventilation system.
- Cover mattresses and pillows with allergen barrier slipcovers.

If your symptoms are sporadic:

- Try over-the-counter antihistamines, but only if you won't be using them daily, since daily use could make symptoms worse. Antihistamines can also make you drowsy, so avoid taking them before driving or doing activities that require you to be alert.
- Consider the benefits of also using nasal sprays and eye drops meant to block allergens. There are some over-the-counter versions you can try.

If your symptoms are severe, frequent or constant:

- Schedule an appointment with your physician, who can prescribe stronger prescription medications to combat current symptoms and prevent future flare ups.
- Take steps to reduce the allergens in your environment, such as replacing carpeting with hardwood floors, and drapes with window shades.

Keep in mind that both over-the-counter antihistamines and prescription allergy medications can potentially interact with other medications you may be taking. Side effects could put you at risk if you have underlying medical conditions or other physical considerations due to your age. A good rule of thumb is to check with your doctor first if you have any concerns.

Untreated, allergies can lead to sinus infections, chronic sinusitis, asthma, ear infections, and nighttime breathing and sleep problems. This can happen quickly – plan ahead so allergies don't get you before you're prepared to fight back.

**BlueCross BlueShield of Texas: September is National Ovarian Cancer Month**

BlueCross BlueShield of Texas's Notes

September is National Ovarian Cancer Month

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Tuesday, September 15, 2009 at 5:54pm

In this note

No one.

Excluding skin cancer, ovarian cancer is the ninth most common cancer among women. Unfortunately, ovarian cancer does not show symptoms in its early stages, so it's smart to be aware of the risk factors: being older than 55; having a mother, daughter or sister with ovarian cancer; having had breast, uterus, colon or rectal cancer yourself; being obese; never having been pregnant; or taking estrogen without progesterone for 10 or more years. See your physician if you have such symptoms as:

- Abdominal swelling or bloating
- Excessive, extreme and constant fatigue
- Pain or pressure in the pelvis, abdomen, back or legs
- Nausea, indigestion or gas
- Changes in bowel movements such as constipation or diarrhea
- Shortness of breath
- Frequent urination
- Lack of appetite and weight loss
- Heavy periods or bleeding after menopause

The National Cancer Institute's [ovarian cancer home page](#) has more information about the causes of and available treatments for ovarian cancer, and if you're a Blue Cross and Blue Shield member, you can find more information about ovarian cancer on Blue Access® for Members .

We encourage you to confirm what screenings are included in your benefit package by calling customer service at the number on the back of your BCBSTX card.



BlueCross BlueShield of Texas: Do you need to get screened? September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

BlueCross BlueShield of Texas's Notes

Do you need to get screened? September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

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Friday, September 11, 2009 at 3:16pm

In this note

No one.

Because prostate cancer doesn't always announce itself with obvious symptoms, the "awareness" part of Prostate Cancer Awareness Month means knowing the most common risk factors and then taking action if any apply to you:

- **Age:** Being over age 65 is an important risk factor for this disease.
- **Family History:** Have your father, grandfather, uncles or brothers had prostate cancer? The risk increases if you have three family members with the disease.
- **Race:** African-American men have a higher risk of developing prostate cancer than Caucasian and Hispanic men. The disease is less common among American Indian and Asian ethnicities.
- **Genetics:** Some research indicates that certain chromosomes may be linked to prostate cancer.

More than anything else, having one or more risk factors can help you and your doctor figure out whether you should be screened for prostate cancer, as recent research has demonstrated that routine screening may not be appropriate for all men. If you're a Blue Cross and Blue Shield member, you can find more information about prostate cancer on Blue Access for Members. The National Cancer Institute's Prostate Cancer home page also has links to treatment options and the latest research. We encourage you to confirm what screenings are included in your benefit package by calling customer service at the number on the back of your BCBSTX card.



BlueCross BlueShield of Texas: Do you know about the new Texas immunization requirements for school-age children?

BlueCross BlueShield of Texas's Notes

Do you know about the new Texas immunization requirements for school-age children?

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Thursday, August 27, 2009 at 2:23pm

In this note

No one.

Even though most Texas schools are already in session, the Texas Department of State Health Services has extended its deadline for complying with new statewide immunization requirements until Oct. 1.

Children entering kindergarten in public and private schools now need:

- Hepatitis A vaccine — 2 doses.
- Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine — 2 doses.
- Varicella vaccine — 2 doses (if the child has not had varicella disease [chickenpox]).

For children entering seventh grade, the new requirements include:

- Varicella vaccine — 2 doses (if the child has not had chickenpox).
- Meningococcal vaccine — 1 dose.
- One dose of the tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis-containing vaccine (Tdap) if it has been five years since their last dose of a tetanus-containing vaccine.

For eighth- through 12th-graders:

- A booster dose of Tdap if it has been 10 years since a previous dose of a tetanus-containing vaccine.

Booster immunizations are recommended throughout a person's lifetime for some diseases. Among adults, the elderly are especially at risk, and immunizations are strongly recommended for those over age 60.

Vaccinations are offered at primary care centers, pediatricians and public health clinics. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas also collaborates with the Caring for Children Foundation to provide free immunizations to uninsured and medically underserved children through our Care Van program. Find out when the Care Van will be in your neighborhood at: [Care Van Schedule](#).

**BlueCross BlueShield of Texas: Back to School Tip: How to Battle Bullies without Fighting**

BlueCross BlueShield of Texas's Notes

Back to School Tip: How to Battle Bullies without Fighting

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Thursday, August 13, 2009 at 4:26pm

In this note

No one.

It's hard to protect your children while they're at school, especially against another child who verbally or physically abuses other kids, excludes them from groups, or forcefully coerces others into dangerous or forbidden actions.

According to the American Medical Association's 2002 report on bullying from the Educational Forum on Adolescent Health, the emotional stress of being bullied can lead to depression, anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem and difficulties with school work — even increased incidences of illness, migraine headaches and suicidal thoughts.

Discussing a bully's motives is a great launching pad for addressing this topic with your kids. Here are some of the reasons why bullies act the way they do:

- Bullies want attention and need to feel important.
- They believe cruelty to others will raise their own low self-opinion.
- They could be having problems at home.
- They don't care about their target's feelings.

To keep from getting picked on, advise your children to:

- Avoid known bullies, either by taking a different route to school or changing their usual spots at lunch and recess.
- Act confident: stand up tall and look brave.
- Stick close to friends.

If your child is confronted by a bully:

- Act as if nothing happened and walk away. Bullies want their targets to react.
- If they must react, keep it simple: tell the bully to stop it and walk away. Don't show any emotion and don't fight back.
- Talk to an adult about the bully. Reassure them that there's no need to be embarrassed. No one deserves or needs to accept bullying.