

# Health Briefs

## Introduction

ConnectCare has compiled this collection of health-related news items from *The Harvard Health Letter* and *The University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter*. These briefs are not meant to be a definitive reference, but rather to provide a brief oversight of current healthcare research. We will distribute this newsletter periodically throughout the year. As always, your best resource for health information is your healthcare provider. If you wish to receive additional information about a topic, you may contact us at (989) 839-3370 or via e-mail [peggy.cameron@connectcare.com](mailto:peggy.cameron@connectcare.com) and [nikkolette.garno@connectcare.com](mailto:nikkolette.garno@connectcare.com)

## Fall vaccination roundup

It's time for your flu shot, and that's a good opportunity to check if you need other vaccinations as well. Nobody likes getting shots, but vaccines do a great job at keeping us healthy. Influenza vaccines protect against influenza, or "flu", an illness caused by the influenza virus. Most often, flu causes cough, runny nose, fever, chills, aches and pains, sore throat, and fatigue. Flu spreads in tiny droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or touches something. The best protection: wash your hands before eating or touching your face, and get a flu shot. Flu protection wears off and changes from year to year. This year's flu shot will cover two influenza A viruses and influenza B virus, and the sooner you get it, the better.

Shingles vaccine is a painful condition that comes from the reactivation of varicella-zoster virus in the body. That virus causes chickenpox, and most people acquire it when they are kids. After the chickenpox is long gone, the virus remains dormant in the nerves.

Pneumococcus is a bacterium spread by direct contact with a person's saliva or mucus. It can cause severe pneumonia, bacteremia, sinus infection, ear infection, or bacterial meningitis. There are many different strains of pneumococcus; two vaccines together protect you against three dozen of them.

## September 2017

### Briefer Briefs

To provide a method of obtaining interpreter services for Mid-Michigan Health Network (MHN) customers who are hearing-impaired or speak a language other than English, MHN provides telecommunications (TDD) devices or telephone typewriter (TTY) services for deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired enrollees. A separate phone number (989) 839-1689 option three is available for enrollees to call for either of these services. In the event that interpreter services are needed at MHN's office, a laptop is available to provide sign language via Video Remote Interpreting, V.O.I.C.E may be contacted at (989) 497-7111, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m., to 4:30 p.m., or after 4:30 p.m. at (989) 284-5182 to arrange a face-to-face interpreter, or communication boards may be signed out for use with the enrollee. MHN also provides language assistance services for all enrollees who speak a language other than English. Language Services Associates (LSA) may be contacted at (866) 406-0021 account code 2831 to provide translation services using a dual handset for communication.

## Did You Know? Under the weather?

ConnectCare maintains a website that provides enrollees with access to look up physicians, hospitals and healthcare service providers online. Just go to [www.connectcare.com](http://www.connectcare.com) and on the home page, click on the *Find a Doctor* link for physicians and practitioners, or the *Find A Facility* link to find hospitals, durable medical equipment providers and other services that are in network for your health plan.

It is the intent of ConnectCare to protect the integrity, availability and confidentiality of health information. If you would like information on ConnectCare use and release of health information, rights regarding medical information, change of notices, complaints and uses of other medical information go to [www.connectcare.com](http://www.connectcare.com), click on the members tab, and then "ConnectCare and Your Privacy".



ConnectCare is NCQA Certified in Utilization Management. NCQA Utilization Management Certification focuses on consumer protection and improvement in service to customers. Standards recognize that organizations that apply for certification have open access networks, and can improve service quality and utilize customized structures to meet purchaser needs. NCQA is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to improving health care quality. NCQA accredits and certifies a wide range of health care organizations. It also recognizes clinicians and practices in key areas of performance. NCQA is committed to providing health care quality information for consumers, purchasers, health care providers and researchers.

Many people swear that their aches and pains are influenced by the weather, among them arthritis sufferers who look to their creaky joints as a dependable barometer. Migraine sufferers often blame their headaches on the weather as well. Some people even believe that heart attacks are weather-related.

There may be a link between weather and heart attacks, at least in some people. A large study found that sudden drops in barometric pressure, as before a bad storm, might bring on heart attacks in people at higher risk. Another study found that a serious kind a heart arrhythmia might also be linked to dropping barometric pressure and increasing humidity. Other research points to links between cold weather and increases in blood pressure, blood viscosity, and workload on the heart, each of which can raise the risk of heart attack.

Several studies have attempted to confirm that pain is indeed triggered or exacerbated by cold, damp conditions, as so many people believe. People who get migraines often blame the weather, especially when it changes. Studies were done and those who claimed to be affected by temperature changes had a significant increase in headaches during cold winter weather, unlike those who said they weren't affected by temperature. Another study found that the cluster headaches were more likely to occur during the transition from winter to spring and from spring to summer.

Viruses, not winter weather, are the cause of these infectious illnesses. Still some studies suggest that physical stress from being cold can decrease resistance to viruses. Breathing in cold air or heated air that's not adequately humidified may also increase susceptibility to colds by drying the nasal passages and airways and constricting blood vessels in them. It makes sense to keep warm and dry in cold weather, but if you get wet and chilled, that doesn't mean you're doomed to start sneezing. One thing is clear: You "catch cold" from sick people, not from the weather. And the main reason why colds increase in winter is that people spend more time indoors in close enough proximity to swap germs.

Weather is a powerful force undeniably linked to human health and well-being in many ways. Hot climates can cause heat stroke and encourage the breeding of disease-carrying mosquitoes and the multiplication of harmful microbes. But weather is not usually directly to blame for headaches, joint pain, colds, or even most heart attacks – though evidence is accumulating that it may sometimes play a role.

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