



## Cold weather family activities

Cold weather offers many ways to have some family fun! Take time to play together—and, when you move more, you will all feel better! Adults need at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days, and children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity (preferably) every day of the week. Ways for you and your family to get moving outside over the next few months include:

**Bundle up for snow play.** Create angels. Make a snow family. Go sledding. Climb a snow mountain. Make paths through the snow. Take your dog for a walk.

**Take a nature hike.** Look for animal tracks or colorful fall leaves left over from the fall in the snow, and wildflowers and buds in early spring.

**Walk in a nearby zoo.** See how animals look with their winter coats on. Talk about how they live in the cold weather. No zoo? Look for squirrels and birds in a park.

**Take a neighborhood walk.** Discuss how it looks different in cold weather.

**Decorate an outdoor tree for the birds.** Hang apples, pine cones rolled in peanut butter or popcorn strings.

Remember to stay safe in the cold:

- Protect your child's skin with sunscreen—even in cold weather.
- Check the safety and conditions of sleds and other play equipment.
- Cover heads with hats and dress in layers for warmth.
- Bring water if your family is outside longer than an hour. When you are physically active, you sweat—even in winter.

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## A passion for making lives better

Javon R. Bea, Mercyhealth President and CEO

Earlier this year, we merged Rockford Health System and Mercy Health System and, more recently, announced our new name— Mercyhealth. The combination of our services provides additional choices across a much larger geographic region through our four core services divisions.

We now encompass 5 hospitals, 80+ primary and specialty care locations, home health/hospice/durable medical equipment/ pharmacies, and our wholly owned insurance company, MercyCare, in 15-counties throughout southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

Mercyhealth symbolizes our unified commitment to providing exceptional health care services to you and strengthens our future as an Accountable Care Organization. You and your family deserve our quality, caring commitment. Every day, we strive to provide an exceptional experience to every patient we come in contact with ... every life we touch.

It's this passion that drives us to continually expand our services to meet your needs. Thank you for allowing us to care for you and your family. We look forward to serving every MercyCare member with a passion for making lives better.



## A farewell message

Philip Bedrossian, MD, MercyCare Health Plans Medical Director

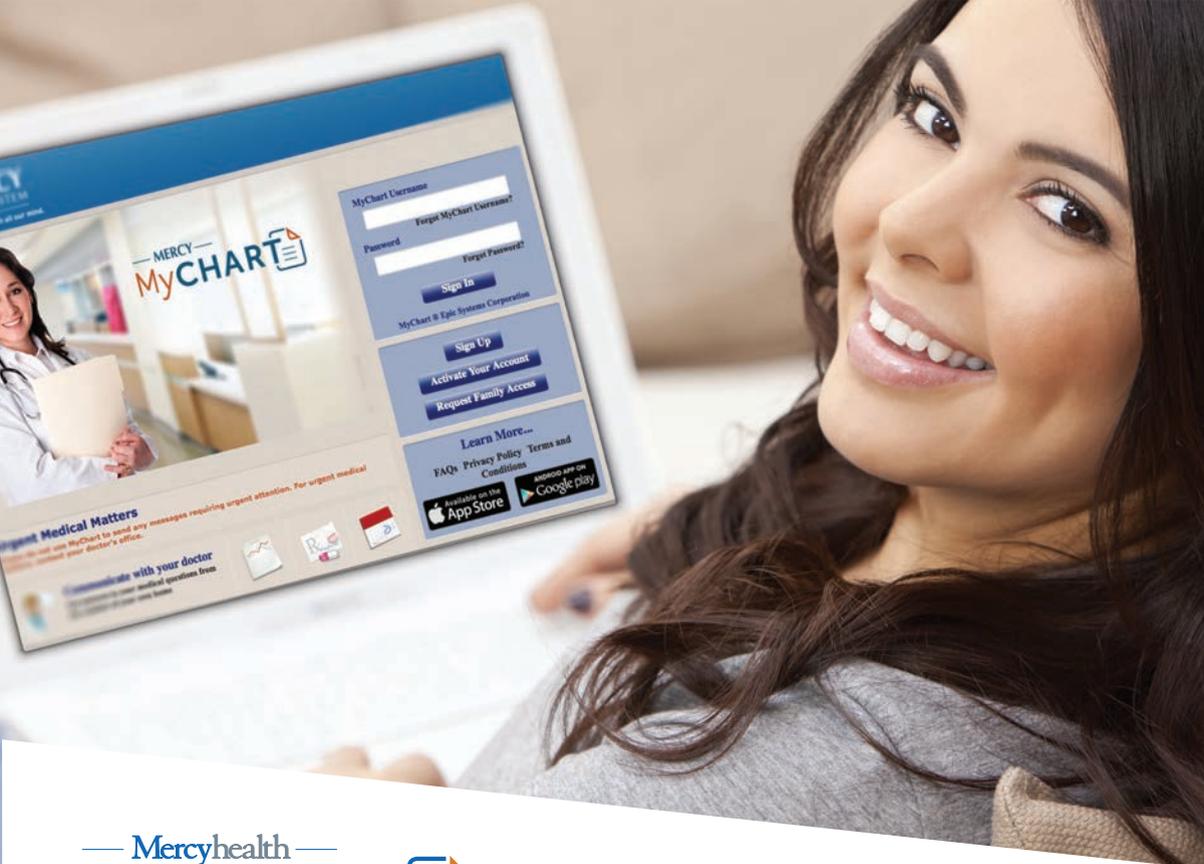
I will be retiring at the end of this year and, as I look back at my tenure with MercyCare Health Plans, I am proud of our employees and physicians, the accomplishments we've made, and the benefits we've been able to offer you.

MercyCare's individual health plans are backed by a company that's been helping people like you stay healthy for over 20 years. We provide quality, affordable health insurance for businesses, seniors, individuals and families with health care services close to home. And, we provide over 40,000 members with an open access network, meaning no referrals are needed for in-plan services.

Moving forward, we are actively recruiting a replacement for the medical director position, and we will continue to insure you live well by offering a variety of plans to suit your needs as well as access to more than 750 medical professionals and over 80 specialty and subspecialty services—including neurosurgery, heart and vascular care, cancer care, plastic and reconstructive surgery and more.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you these last 15 years. I wish you all the best of health. Remember, healthy isn't a goal. It's a way of living.

# HELPING INDIVIDUALS STAY HEALTHY.



## — Mercyhealth — MyCHART

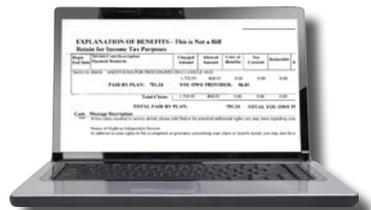
You don't have Mercyhealth MyChart yet?  
Why wait? Sign up today!

MercyCare members love the convenience of Mercyhealth MyChart because they can:

- Manage their health information online
- Review their health histories and test results
- Schedule and cancel appointments
- Request prescription refills
- Send a message to their health care provider
- Pay bills

Do it all securely online at home or on your smart phone with the Mercyhealth MyChart app.

Sign up today at any Mercyhealth clinic or visit [MyChart.MercyHealthSystem.org](http://MyChart.MercyHealthSystem.org).



Don't miss out on important information from MercyCare about your benefits!

Starting July 2017, your Explanation of Benefits will be available online only.

For more information, call MercyCare Health Plans at (800) 895-2421.

## MercyCare My Plan

Manage your health insurance online.

With MercyCare My Plan, you can view your benefits, claims and eligibility, request additional ID cards, change your primary care provider, ask questions and so much more. Visit [MercyCareMyPlan.com](http://MercyCareMyPlan.com) to log in and get started today.



Suicide is the  
10th leading  
cause of  
death for all  
Americans

## Don't let depression spoil your holidays

The holidays can amplify feelings of loneliness or anxiety. Realistic expectations and coping strategies can help you deal with depression during the holidays.

The good news is that the holiday blues are usually temporary. Consider these ideas to help make this year's holidays more enjoyable and less stressful:

- **Be realistic.** Don't expect the holiday season to solve all your problems. The forced cheerfulness of the holiday season cannot erase sadness or loneliness.
- **Stay connected.** You may want to withdraw and stay by yourself. Make an effort to spend time with friends. Write or call those you care about and recall good times you've shared in the past. Many churches and community centers offer activities to help people cope with the holiday blues.
- **Drink less alcohol.** Even though drinking alcohol gives you a temporary feeling of well-being, it is a depressant and cannot make anything better.
- **Give yourself permission not to feel cheerful.** Accept how you are feeling. If you have recently experienced a loss, you cannot expect to put on a happy face. Tell others how you are feeling and what you need.
- **Have a spending limit and stick to it.** Look for holiday activities that are free, such as looking at holiday decorations, window shopping or attending school concerts.
- **Give yourself special care.** Schedule times to relax and pamper yourself. Take a warm bath, get a massage or spend an evening with a good book.
- **Set limits and priorities.** Be realistic about what you will be able to accomplish. Prepare a to-do list to help arrange your priorities. Find those things that are important to you and do them.
- **Volunteer your time.** If you are troubled because you won't be seeing your family, volunteer to work at a hospital or food bank. Volunteering can help raise your morale by turning your focus to people who are less fortunate.
- **Get some exercise.** Exercise has a positive impact on depression because it boosts serotonin levels. Try to get some type of exercise at least twice each week.

Clinical depression is more than just feeling sad for a few weeks. Symptoms can include changes in appetite and sleep patterns, difficulty concentrating and a general feeling of hopelessness. If you are concerned that a friend or relative may be suffering from more than just holiday blues, seek the help of a qualified mental health professional.



## Managing your diabetes during the holidays

Temptations are all around during the holidays. Eating healthy and staying active can help you manage your diabetes and still enjoy the season.

‘Tis the season for family, festivity and food—lots of food. Temptations are all around, and parties and travel can disrupt daily routines. It’s also the season when eating healthy, staying active and taking medication on schedule is harder to do. Try these tips to ring in the new year and stay on track:

**Stick to your plan.** Managing your diabetes during the holidays should be the same as managing it every day, with a few exceptions. You won’t always be able to control what food you’re served, and you’re bound to see other people indulging. Prepare for the extra challenges and you’ll handle them well:

- Eat, be physically active and take medication close to the usual times.
- Invited to a party? Offer to bring a healthy dish.
- If you have a sweet treat, cut back on other carbohydrates during the meal.
- Don’t skip meals to save up for a feast. It will be harder to keep your blood sugar in control and you’ll be more likely to overeat.
- If you slip up, get right back to healthy eating at your next meal.

**Stay in control.** When you face a spread of delicious holiday food, you’ll find healthy choices easier to make if you:

- Have a small plate of the foods you like best and leave the buffet table.
- Slow down and savor. It takes time for

your brain to realize you’re full.

- Avoid or limit alcohol. If you do have an alcoholic drink, have it with food. Alcohol can affect blood sugar and interact with diabetes medicines.
- Stay in control of your blood sugar. Check it more often during the holidays and adjust medication if needed.

**Fit in favorites.** You can have some of your favorite foods as long as you limit how big the portion is and how often you have it. Choose foods you really love and can’t get any other time of year, like Aunt Jean’s pecan pie. Indulge in a small serving, and make sure to count it in your meal plan.

**Stay active.** Get moving with friends and family—take a walk after a holiday dinner. Being active can help make up for eating more than usual, and it reduces stress during one of the most stressful times of the year.

**Get enough sleep.** Sleep loss can make it harder to control your blood sugar. And when you’re sleep deprived, you’ll tend to eat more, and prefer high-fat, high-sugar food. Aim for 7-8 hours per night to guard against mindless eating.

Most of all, remember what the season is about—celebrating and connecting with the people you care about. When you focus more on the fun, you won’t focus as much on the food.

## Did you know?

Eating right on game day is a secret weapon for a top-notch performance, no matter what your school sport!

While training and skill are important, your body's fuel matters too! That's why you need a nutrition game plan. Try these tips to get started:

**Eat a good breakfast.** Start the day with carbs like whole-grain bread or cereal and protein, such as eggs, yogurt or milk. Oatmeal (made with milk), last night's leftovers, an egg sandwich or a smoothie are all great breakfast choices.

**Don't skip lunch.** Eat as many food groups as possible. You might think opting for a light lunch, such as a salad, will leave you light on your feet, but instead, it may leave your tank empty at game time.

**Focus on carbs for energy.** Choose whole-grain bread, crackers, cereal and pasta for lasting energy. Save the sport drinks for an energy boost during endurance sports or training sessions lasting more than an hour.

**Spread out proteins.** Muscles love protein. It helps them stay strong, recover from intense exercise and build more muscle over time. Eat proteins at each meal and with most snacks—try deli meat at lunch or an egg with breakfast.

**Use caution with fatty foods.** They slow digestion, are filling and may leave you tired and sluggish. Skip fries or pizza before competition, and keep the fat content on the light side.

**Flow with fluids.** Dehydration will lead to a poor athletic performance. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water during the day leading up to a game, especially in the two to three hours before game time.



## Keeping your young driver safe

If you and your new driver agree to these rules of the road, safety will become a priority. Help your teen follow these tips to encourage responsible driving:

- Always wear a seat belt and make all passengers buckle up
- Obey all traffic lights, stop signs, other street signs and road markings
- Stay within the speed limit and drive safely
- Never use the car to race or impress others
- Never give rides to hitchhikers
- Stay focused on driving
- Absolutely no texting (writing, reading or sending messages) while driving
- Never talk on a cell phone, including a handsfree device or speaker phone, while driving
- Drive with both hands on the wheel
- Never eat or drink while driving
- Drive only when alert and in emotional control
- Call for a ride home if you or your driver are impaired in any way that interferes with the ability to drive safely
- Never use headphones or earbuds to listen to music while you drive
- Drive only when you're alcohol- and drug-free
- Never allow any alcohol or illegal drugs in the car
- Ride only with drivers who are alcohol- and drug-free



1 in 8 US women will develop invasive breast cancer in her lifetime.

## Lower your risk of breast cancer

A woman's risk of breast cancer doubles if she has a first-degree relative (mother, sister, daughter) diagnosed with breast cancer. Less than 15% of women who get breast cancer have a family member diagnosed with it.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual campaign to increase awareness of the disease.

According to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, most people are aware of breast cancer, but many forget to have a plan to detect the disease in its early stages and encourage others to do the same.

Every person should know the symptoms and signs of breast cancer, and any time an abnormality is discovered, it should be investigated by a health care professional.

By performing monthly breast self-exams, you will be able to more easily identify any changes in your breasts. Be sure to talk to your health care professional if you notice anything unusual.

### Know your risk factors

Many factors over the course of a lifetime can influence your breast cancer risk. You can't change some factors, such as getting older or your family history, but you can help lower your risk of breast cancer by taking care of your health in the following ways—

- Keep a healthy weight.
- Exercise regularly (at least four hours a week).
- Research shows that lack of nighttime sleep can be a risk factor.
- Don't drink alcohol, or limit alcoholic

drinks to no more than one per day.

- Avoid exposure to chemicals that can cause cancer (carcinogens) and chemicals that interfere with the normal function of the body.
- If you are taking, or have been told to take, hormone replacement therapy or oral contraceptives (birth control pills), ask your doctor about the risks and find out if it is right for you.
- Breastfeed any children you may have, if possible.

If you have a family history of breast cancer or inherited changes in your BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, you may be at high risk for getting breast cancer. Talk to your doctor about more ways to lower your risk. BRCA testing is covered at 100% for MercyCare members.

The American Cancer Society recommends women start mammograms (breast x-rays) at age 45. Women age 45-54 should get mammograms yearly and women 55 and older can switch to every two years or continue yearly screening. Annual mammograms are covered at 100% for MercyCare members.

Staying healthy throughout your life will lower your risk of developing cancer, and improve your chances of surviving cancer if it occurs. For more information, visit the health library at [MercyHealthSystem.org](http://MercyHealthSystem.org).

## Broiled Tilapia

Makes 4 servings.

Canola oil cooking spray  
1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil  
4 (6-oz.) Tilapia fillets  
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
1/4 cup 2% Greek-style yogurt  
1 tsp. Dijon mustard  
1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice  
2 Tbsp. fresh chives, chopped

Turn on broiler. Spray baking dish. Drizzle olive oil on both sides of fillets. Gently brush to coat well. Season with salt and pepper. Arrange fillets in baking dish. Do not overlap. Broil until fish flakes easily, about 8 minutes. Set aside. In small bowl combine yogurt, mustard, lemon juice and chives. Whisk to combine well. Transfer fillets to serving dish. Drizzle with sauce and serve.

Per serving: 200 calories,  
6 g total fat (2 g saturated fat),  
2 g carbohydrate,  
34 g protein,  
169 mg sodium.  
Source: American Institute  
for Cancer Research

## Recommended immunizations for seniors

### The difference between vaccines, vaccinations and immunizations

A **vaccine** is a product that produces immunity from a disease and can be administered through needle injections, by mouth or by aerosol.

A **vaccination** is the injection of a killed or weakened organism that produces immunity in the body against that organism.

An **immunization** is the process by which a person or animal becomes protected from a disease. This term is often used interchangeably with vaccination or inoculation.

### How vaccines work

Vaccines contain the same germs that cause disease (e.g., measles vaccine contains measles virus). But, they have been either killed or weakened to the point that they don't make you sick. Some vaccines contain only a part of the disease germ.

A vaccine stimulates your immune system to produce antibodies, exactly like it would if you were exposed to the disease. After getting vaccinated, you develop immunity to that disease without having to get the disease first.

This is what makes vaccines such powerful medicine. Unlike most medicines, which treat or cure diseases, vaccines can prevent them.

### Immunizations adults age 50 and older should consider:

- Get a flu shot every year. Over 60% of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations occur in people 65 years and older.
- Get a shot for tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough. Get a tetanus booster if it has been more than 10 years since your last shot.
- If you are 60 or older, get a shot to help prevent shingles. Even if you have had shingles, you can still get the shingles vaccine to help prevent future occurrences of the disease.
- People 65 years or older need a series of two different vaccines for pneumococcal disease. Talk with your health care professional about how to schedule them. Be sure to let him or her know if you have ever had a pneumococcal vaccine before.

These immunizations are covered at 100% between Medicare and MercyCare.

Talk with your health care team about whether you need other vaccinations. Learn more at [vaccines.gov](http://vaccines.gov).

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## Hypothermia and older adults

Older adults are especially vulnerable because their body's response to cold can be diminished by underlying medical conditions

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Hypothermia is defined as having a core body temperature below 95 degrees.

Underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, some medicines including over-the-counter cold remedies, and aging itself can all put older adults at risk of hypothermia. As a result, hypothermia can develop in older adults after even relatively mild exposure to cold weather or a small drop in temperature.

Someone suffering from hypothermia may show one or more of the following signs: slowed or slurred speech, sleepiness or confusion, shivering or stiffness in the arms and legs, poor control over body movements or slow reactions, or a weak pulse. If you suspect hypothermia, or if you observe these symptoms, call 911.

Here are a few tips to help avoid hypothermia:

- When going outside in the cold, it is important to wear a hat, scarf and gloves or mittens to prevent loss of body heat through your head and hands. A hat is particularly important because a large portion of body heat can be lost through the head. Wear several layers of loose clothing to help trap warm air between the layers.
  - Let someone know you're going outdoors and carry a fully charged cellphone.
  - Check with your doctor to see if any prescription or over-the-counter medications you are taking may increase your risk for hypothermia.
  - Make sure your home is warm enough. Some experts suggest that, for older people, the temperature be set to at least 68 degrees.
  - To stay warm at home, wear long underwear under your clothes, along with socks and slippers. Use a blanket or afghan to keep your legs and shoulders warm and wear a hat or cap indoors if you are feeling chilled.
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## Helpful tips to keep your memory sharp

People with some forgetfulness can use a variety of techniques to help them maintain their memory and mental skills. Give these tips a try:

- Plan tasks, make to-do lists and use memory aids like notes and calendars. Some find they remember things better if they mentally connect them to other meaningful things, such as a familiar name, song, book or television show.
- Engage in physical activity and exercise. Several studies have associated exercise (such as walking) with better brain function.
- Limit alcohol use. Although some studies suggest that moderate alcohol use has health benefits, heavy or binge drinking over time can cause memory loss and permanent brain damage.
- Find activities, such as exercise or a hobby, to relieve feelings of stress, anxiety or depression. If any of these feelings last for a long period of time, consider talking to your health care professional.



Smoke a pack a day? If you quit, you'll gain 12 hours a week or 24 days a year!

## Manage your nicotine cravings at work

When a craving is triggered, it's important to have a plan to beat that urge to smoke. Cravings typically last five to 10 minutes. It might be uncomfortable, but try to wait it out. Make a list of things you can do to get through the craving. Here are a few to try:

**Get support.** Call or text someone. You don't have to do this alone! MercyCare has partnered with the American Lung Association to bring members Freedom from Smoking®—a program designed for adults who want to quit smoking—at no cost. To enroll, call (800) 586-4872 and provide our MercyCare member ID number found on your insurance card.

**Think about your reasons for quitting.** Quitting will make you feel better and improve your health. Your chances of having cancer, heart attacks, heart disease, stroke, cataracts and other diseases will go down. You'll be less likely to catch colds or the flu, and will be able to recover quicker if you do get sick. You will breathe easier and cough less. Your blood pressure will go down. Your skin will look healthier and you'll appear more youthful. Your teeth and fingernails will not be as stained. These can be powerful motivators to keep you smoke-free.

Also, remember that cigarettes are expensive! Add up the money you'll

save and decide what to do with it. This is a great way to stay motivated and kill time while you let a craving pass.

**Stay busy.** Try to keep your mind off smoking with these helpful suggestions:

- Keep your mouth busy. Chew gum instead of picking up a cigarette. Keep hard candy nearby. Drink more water.
- Do something else. When a craving hits, stop what you're doing immediately and switch to something different. Changing your routine can help you shake off a craving.
- Go for a quick walk or go up and down the stairs a few times. Physical activity, even in short bursts, can help boost your energy and beat a craving.
- Take slow, deep breaths. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Repeat this 10 times or until you're feeling more relaxed.

**Try nicotine replacement therapy (NRT).**

Even if you use NRT, you might have a craving that's difficult to deal with. Try a short-acting NRT, such as a lozenge or gum, plus a long-acting NRT, such as the patch, to get past the craving.

**Don't give up.** Do whatever it takes to beat the urge to smoke. Keep trying different things until you find what works for you. Just don't smoke. Not even one puff!



## Cold season is upon us

Did you know that antibiotics are not needed to treat a cold or runny nose, which almost always gets better on its own? Rest, over-the-counter (OTC) medicine and other self-care methods can help you feel better. Talk to your health care professional and/or your pharmacist about OTC medication. The following tips can help you fight several common cold symptoms this winter:

### How to feel better

For upper respiratory infections, such as sore throats, ear infections, sinus infections, colds and bronchitis, try:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Use a clean humidifier or cool-mist vaporizer
- Avoid smoking, secondhand smoke or other airborne chemicals or irritants
- Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen to relieve pain or fever
- Use saline nasal spray or drops

### Sore throat

Try these tips to soothe a sore throat:

- Get relief from ice chips, sore-throat spray, popsicles or lozenges
- Use a clean humidifier or cool-mist vaporizer
- Gargle with salt water
- Drink warm beverages
- Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen to relieve pain or fever

### Ear pain

Ease the pain of earaches with these suggestions:

- Put a warm, moist cloth over the ear that hurts
- Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen to relieve pain or fever

### Runny nose

Stop a runny nose in its tracks with these tips:

- Get plenty of rest
- Increase fluid intake
- Use a decongestant or saline nasal spray to help relieve nasal symptoms

### Sinus pain or pressure

Try these options to help with sinus pain and pressure:

- Put a warm compress over the nose and forehead to help relieve sinus pressure
- Use a decongestant or saline nasal spray
- Breathe in steam from a bowl of hot water or a warm shower
- Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen to relieve pain or fever

### Cough

These tips can help with coughing:

- Use a clean humidifier or cool-mist vaporizer
- Breathe in steam from a bowl of hot water or a warm shower
- Use non-medicated lozenges (do not give lozenges to young children)
- Use honey (do not give to your child if he or she is under a year old)

### OTC medicine

For children and adults, OTC pain relievers, decongestants and saline nasal sprays may help relieve some symptoms, such as runny nose, congestion, fever and aches, but they do not shorten the length of time you or your child are sick. Use OTC products as directed and note that not all products are recommended for children.

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MercyCare Health Plans  
PO Box 550 Janesville  
(608) 895-2421  
MercyCareHealthPlans.com



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### Emergency vehicle kit

In case you are stranded, keep these emergency items in your vehicle:

- Jumper cables, flares and reflective triangles
- Flashlights with extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Non-perishable food and protein-rich foods like nuts and energy bars
- Water: one gallon per person a day for three days
- Basic toolkit: pliers, wrench and screwdriver
- Radio (battery or hand cranked)
- Cat litter or sand for better tire traction
- Shovel and ice scraper
- Warm clothes, gloves, hats, sturdy boots, jackets
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Cell phone and charger with adapter



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