The Role A Primary Care Provider (PCP) Plays in Your Child’s Health

A PCP is a primary care physician or a primary care provider. Your child’s PCP is the main doctor who can help with most of your child’s health care issues. If a child has a health issue that needs more specialized care, the PCP will refer you to a specialist.

You should use in-network providers. STAR Kids members do not need an authorization or referral to see an in-network specialist. If you prefer to see a doctor who is not part of our network, you will need to work with a service coordinator to get an authorization to see your out-of-network provider.

What do PCPs do?

Your child's PCP's office is the place to get treatment for a non-emergency problem, like a cold or minor injury. Children should also visit their PCP each year for a physical or Texas Health Steps checkup to see if their health has changed, or if they have any risk factors for having health problems in the future.

Pediatricians can watch children’s chronic health problems like asthma, high blood sugar, or mental health issues. Your child’s PCP will also arrange care with specialists for chronic health problems or if your child goes to the hospital. This means the specialist or hospital shares the child’s health information and any treatments prescribed with the PCP.

Planning care is one of the most vital tasks of a PCP. When health information is in one place, PCPs can make sure that other providers and specialists are not ordering more tests, procedures or prescriptions than your child needs.

Get the most out of your child’s visit with the pediatrician.

- Write down questions before your visit.
- Tell the doctor about any new symptoms, prescriptions, supplements or allergies your child has.
- Ask for fact sheets about your child’s health problems or diagnosis, and a list of treatment options.
- Let your child’s PCP know if you have ideas about any treatment options you have not talked about.
- Save your child’s PCP’s contact information in your phone or on your refrigerator, so you can find it quickly. Give the information to family, day care and schools.
- Do not forget to plan a visit with your child’s PCP after going to an urgent care facility or ER.

If your child has not had a checkup this year, make an appointment today. When you schedule this visit, write down the date and time to remind you.

COVID-19: At Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX), the health, safety and well-being of our members is our top priority. We want to help you stay informed about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and get the care you need. For more information about the coronavirus, visit www.bcbstx.com/medicaid/coronavirus.
Planning Summer Activities for Children with Special Needs

It can be hard to keep children busy during the summer, and it can be even harder when you have a child with special needs. There are many things to think about, like your child’s needs, skills and interests. Before you decide on a summer program or activity, answer the questions below.

• What services does your child need to keep developing their skills while school is out?
• Does your child lose verbal or physical skills when they are not doing therapy or activities?
• What activities does your child like that can also help them reach their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals?
• How many therapy hours does your child need each week to maintain or improve their skills?
• Have you talked to your child’s doctor or service coordinator about what summer activities or alternative therapies they think might help your child?
• How many hours a day can your child handle a summer activity?

When possible, try to put your child in an activity group based on their skill level instead of their age. If your child is doing outside activities and does not do well in the heat, check the schedule to make sure they will be given enough breaks. Be sure to talk to your child’s PCP before signing them up for any physical activities.

You can plan outings in your area, like picnics or visits to the museum or library. Check with local groups that have programs, activities or education for families of children with special needs.

Does your child need to have a yearly checkup with their PCP or a checkup with the dentist, audiologist or eye doctor? Summer break is a great time to get caught up on doctor visits and schedule medical tests that may be hard to plan during the school year.

If you have planned activities for your child, make sure your child will have enough rest before or after the activity or medical appointment to keep stress levels low for you and your child.
The Seven Risk Factors for Asthma

According to the American Lung Association, if you or your child develop asthma, it is likely due to one or more of these common risk factors:

• **Family history.** People who have a parent with asthma are three to six times more likely to get asthma.

• **Respiratory infections.** People who have had respiratory problems as a baby or child can develop asthma.

• **Allergies.** If you have allergies such as hay fever or eczema, you have a higher chance of having asthma.

• **Workday exposures.** If there are chemicals such as fumes, smoke, vapors or dust at your job, it can cause you to develop asthma.

• **Smoking.** Smokers, people around secondhand smoke and people whose mothers smoked during pregnancy are all more likely to become asthmatics.

• **Air pollution.** Those around smog, which is often found in urban cities, may have a higher chance of having asthma.

• **Obesity.** Overweight children have a higher chance for having asthma and sleep apnea, which is a disease that interrupts sleep by stopping and starting your breathing.

Some of these risk factors are sure to happen. For the ones that are avoidable, limit your exposure to help protect your lungs. If you think you or your child might have asthma, plan a doctor visit for testing.

If your child is diagnosed with asthma, you should make an Asthma Action Plan with your child's doctor. An Asthma Action Plan is a written, individualized worksheet that shows you the steps to take to keep asthma from getting worse. It also gives guidance on when to call doctor or when to go to the ER. You should give the plan to your child’s school or day care and to anybody who cares for your child while you are not there.

You can download the American Lung Association’s Asthma Action plan for children here: https://www.lung.org/assets/documents/asthma/asthma-action-plan-for-home.pdf.

If your child is diagnosed with asthma or any other life-long health issue, BCBSTX offers Disease Management (DM) services that can help. If you want to learn more about BCBSTX's DM services, call your service coordinator or call **1-877-301-4394** from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday. You can also call Customer Service at **1-877-688-1811** (TTY 7-1-1).

*Source: American Lung Association*
Diabetes Spotlight: Tips for Feeling Your Best

If you or your child has diabetes (high blood sugar), you likely know that food plays a vital role in maintaining blood sugar levels. If blood sugar levels get too high or too low, it can be unsafe, even life-threatening.

To make sure blood sugar levels stay balanced so you or your child can feel your best, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) offers these tips when it comes to eating:

1. **Learn about carbohydrates.**
   Carbohydrates give your body the energy it needs, but too many of them can cause your blood sugar levels to spike. There are three types of carbohydrates: starches, sugar and fiber.
   - Foods high in starches are potatoes, rice and corn.
   - Foods high in sugar are fruits, which have natural sugars in them, and items such as candy, cookies and muffins.
   - High-fiber foods are beans, whole wheat pasta and veggies, such as carrots and broccoli.

You should try to limit the amount of starches and sugars you eat and aim for a high-fiber diet. Fiber helps you feel full for a longer period of time, lowers blood sugar levels and lowers your chance of getting heart disease. Talk to your doctor about how much fiber you or your child should be eating each day to help manage high blood sugar.

2. **Learn how to read food labels.**
   You may pick up a bag of low-calorie crackers and see the food label shows it only has 140 calories. That is great news, right? Well, not exactly. A closer look shows the whole bag has 9 servings. So, if you ate the whole bag you would eat 1,260 calories, which is way too many calories for a meal, let alone a snack.

Knowing the total carbohydrate count of a food is also vital for someone with high blood sugar. This number is made up of the number of starches, sugars and fiber in a food. If you read food labels, you will have a much simpler time finding the right foods to best suit your diet.

3. **Plan healthy meals ahead of time.**
   It can be hard to eat the right foods when life gets busy. By doing a little planning, you can be sure to skip the fast food drive-thru next time and enjoy a healthy, quick meal right at home. It will save you money too!

Some easy breakfast items you can make ahead of time are hardboiled eggs, oatmeal made from steel cut oats and a fruit smoothie using frozen fruit.

Lunch and dinner can also be tasty and no fuss when you plan ahead. Grill or bake chicken breasts over the weekend and use them in sandwiches, salads, quesadillas and more throughout the week.

You could also make meatballs ahead of time using the turkey meatball recipe below and serve them with whole wheat pasta or spaghetti squash and marinara sauce.

You can make one more meal with the meatballs by putting them in a whole wheat roll with cheese on top for a meatball hoagie.
Turkey Meatballs

**Ingredients:**
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 1/4 lbs. lean ground turkey
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tsp dried minced onion
- 2 tbsp. Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1/2 cup oatmeal

**Directions:**
- Preheat the oven to 375°F. Coat a baking sheet with cooking spray.
- Mix the turkey, garlic, oregano, parsley, dried onion, parmesan cheese, egg, and oatmeal in a bowl and mix well.
- Scoop the meat mixture into 12 meatballs and lay them on the baking sheet.
- Bake the meatballs for 25-30 minutes or until cooked through and they reach a temperature of 165°F.

High blood sugar does not have to control your life. By planning ahead and learning how to read food labels, you can learn to handle your blood sugar and still enjoy the foods you love.

If your child is diagnosed with diabetes or any other life-long health issue, BCBSTX offers Disease Management (DM) services that can help. If you have questions about BCBSTX’s DM services, call your service coordinator or call 1-877-301-4394 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday. You can also call Customer Service at 1-877-688-1811 (TTY 7-1-1).

*Source: American Diabetes Association*
The Value of Good Mental Health for Parents of Children with Special Needs

Being the parent of a child with special needs can be very rewarding and fulfilling, but it can also be very stressful. Your day may be filled with worries about your child’s health. This worry can take a toll on you and your own health.

A study by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) found parents of children with special needs had poorer mental health and more signs of depression than parents of children without special needs. The study also showed that poor mental health caused a decline in physical health in later years.

So, what can you do to make sure you are in your best health each day? Navigate Life Texas offers these self-care tips:

• **Eat well, drink lots of water and get enough sleep each night**. This may seem like common sense, but doing these things each day will go a long way in helping you feel your best.

• **Add a workout into your daily routine**. Even taking a 10-minute walk can help boost your mood and your energy level. Have only a minute? Do some jumping jacks or push-ups to get your heart rate up.

• **Have “me” time**. Join a support group for parents of children with special needs, set up a coffee date with a friend or have a date night with your spouse. Doing things you enjoy will help your mood and outlook.

• **Take time each day to calm your mind**. Write in a journal, start deep breathing, do yoga, read or anything that helps clear your head.

• **Use BCBSTX’s Respite Care Value-Added Service (VAS)**. If your child is in the Medically Dependent Children’s Program (MDCP) and a BCBSTX STAR Kids member, BCBSTX offers an extra eight hours a month of respite care in addition to the STAR Kids benefit of respite services. Respite care gives you a break each month to do the things you enjoy, run errands or just sleep! To learn more about this VAS, talk to your service coordinator or call Service Coordination at 1-877-301-4394 (TTY 7-1-1).

• **Get help if you need it**. You can find a list of resources for parents of special needs children who are dealing with stress at NavigateLifeTexas.org. Go to ‘Find Services, Groups and Events’. You do not have to face stress or mental health issues on your own. If you are a danger to yourself or someone else, call 9-1-1 right away.

Source: National Center for Biotechnology Information; NavigateLifeTexas.org
Spring into Fun! Warm Weather Ideas for All Ages

As the weather warms and the flowers start to bloom, now is a great time to get the whole family outdoors for some fun. Here are fun and low-cost ideas you can do close to home:

• **Go on a picnic.** Pack a picnic basket with a healthy lunch or dinner, grab a blanket and dine at your nearest park, or even in your own backyard. Some healthy picnic food items are peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cheese and crackers, pasta salad and hardboiled eggs.

• **Make a bird feeder.** Kids and adults both love to watch the pretty birds flying around during the springtime. To make a homemade bird feeder, find a pine cone and spread peanut butter all over it. Then roll the pine cone in birdseed and hang it up outside with a piece of string or rope.

• **Go exploring.** Taking a walk is easy and does not cost any money. Find a new park or part of town you have never been to and start walking! You will be surprised at all of the things you notice while on foot. You will also get a great workout at the same time.

• **Play with bubbles.** You can pick up bubble solution at your local discount store. This is a simple and fun way to play with your child outdoors.

Do not forget sunscreen and pack plenty of water for this hot Texas weather. There is no limit to the fun you can have this spring!
**Get STAR Kids Updates Sent Directly to Your Phone!**

STAR Kids members can get text messages with plan benefit updates, notices about STAR Kids meetings, events in your area and health care tips.

You can opt in to get text messages directly to your phone by texting **STARKIDS** to **33633**. Once you join the program, you may get up to four text messages per month.*

If you want to cancel your STAR Kids text messages, text **STOP** to **33633**.

To learn more about our texting program, call Member Outreach at **1-855-497-0857** if you are in the Central service area or **1-877-375-9097** if you are in the Travis service area.

---

**Language Assistance**

Did you know that BCBSTX provides free language services to members who speak English as a second language?

**We have interpreters who can:**

- Help you explain your question or issue to the BCBSTX Customer Service representative
- Interpret for you when you speak to your case manager or service coordinator over the phone
- Interpret for you in person if you need an interpreter for a medical appointment

**We also provide:**

- Free communication aids and services to people with disabilities
- Information in large print, audio, and electronic formats
- Member documents and forms translated into other languages

Call BCBSTX Customer Service toll-free at **1-877-688-1811** (TTY **7-1-1**), 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday, to ask for assistance.
Tell Us What You Think!

Member Advisory Group (MAG)
Every three months, we invite STAR Kids members, parents or legally authorized representatives (LARs) to join our MAG meeting. MAG members are asked to give us feedback on our member education materials, Value-Added Services and get health plan program updates. Members, parents or LARs who join MAG are asked to commit to four quarterly meetings and will get a $25 gift card for attending.

You can visit [www.bcbstx.com/starkids](http://www.bcbstx.com/starkids) to find a schedule of MAG meetings or call a BCBSTX Member Advocate in the Central service area at 1-855-497-0857 (TTY 7-1-1). For a Member Advocate in the Travis service area, call 1-877-375-9097 to get details. If you need a ride, a Member Advocate can set one up for you.

Member and Community Events
You can find other STAR Kids member and community events on the STAR Kids member website at [www.bcbstx.com/starkids](http://www.bcbstx.com/starkids). Or you can call a STAR Kids Member Advocate in your area. For the Travis County service area call toll-free at 1-877-375-9097, or in the Central service area call 1-855-497-0857 (TTY 7-1-1).

Raising Wheels Foundation Raises Awareness and Support for Kids on Wheels
BCBSTX is an event sponsor of the Raising Wheels Foundation, a Central Texas nonprofit organization focused on helping families who are raising differently-abled children to become empowered and enabled through better access to their homes, their community and the world.

The Raising Wheels Foundation gives resources to families with differently-abled children ages 3-18 and works to raise awareness of the need for accessibility.

“When a child’s movement is only on wheels, it is vital that we get children the access they deserve and remove as many road blocks to living life as we can,” says Founder and Exec. Director Melissa Copp, who is the parent of two boys on wheels.

In 2019, BCBSTX was a sponsor of the organization’s first Wash-n-Roll event. At this free community event, the wheelchairs of the children in Central Texas get washed and cleaned, parents get pampered, and kids get to roll out in style. BCBSTX employees also went to the event.

“We were able to give out many grants this year to families in Central Texas,” says Melissa Copp. “This is something we are most proud of. We want to help families that are raising differently-abled children get items in their home that would improve access for their child or give better access to their daily care.”

“The lift assist table from the Raising Wheels Foundation is an instant relief for our family! It is a feeling I never thought we’d go through. It is true that the right tools make life simpler. Thank you! This is life changing for us!” –Terri, 2019 grant recipient

To read the full article on the BCBSTX Connect website, visit [https://connect.bcbstx.com/in-the-community/blog/weblog/posts/support-kids-on-wheels](https://connect.bcbstx.com/in-the-community/blog/weblog/posts/support-kids-on-wheels).
To get auxiliary aids and services, or to get written or oral interpretation to understand the information given to you, including materials in alternative formats such as large print, braille or other languages, please call BCBSTX STAR Kids Customer Service at 1-877-688-1811 (TTY/TDD 7-1-1).

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas:
- Provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
  - Qualified sign language interpreters
  - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
  - Qualified interpreters
  - Information written in other languages

If you need these services, contact Civil Rights Coordinator.

If you believe that Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with: Civil Rights Coordinator, Office of Civil Rights Coordinator, 300 E. Randolph St., 35th floor, Chicago, Illinois 60601, 1-855-664-7270, TTY/TDD: 1-855-661-6965, Fax: 1-855-661-6960, Civilrightscoordinator@hcsc.net.
You can file a grievance in person or by mail, fax, or email. If you need help filing a grievance, Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf, or by mail or phone at:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201

1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD)

ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).


注意:如果您使用繁體中文,您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711)。


ATTENTION : Si vous parlez français, des services d'aide linguistique vous sont proposés gratuitement. Appelez le 1-855-710-6984 (ATS: 711).

ध्यान दें: यदि आप हिंदी बोलते हैं तो आपके लिए मुफ्त में भाषा सहायता सेवाएं उपलब्ध हैं। 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) पर कॉल करें।


सुझाव: जैसे भाषा के पुस्तकांदार जो भाषा सदासंघ भाषा समाज के अध्यक्ष हैं, तो भाषा सदासंघ भाषा संस्थानों नमूने भाषा उपयोगकर्ता वर्ग (रू) तौर पर 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).

ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните 1-855-710-6984 (телетайп: 711).

注意事項：日本語を話される場合、無料の言語支援をご利用いただけます。1-855-710-6984（TTY: 711）まで、お電話にてご連絡ください。

โปรดทราบ: ถ้าคุณพูดภาษาจีน ขอแนะนำบริการภาษาฟรี 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) โปรดติดต่อ.
LifeTimes is published for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas STAR Kids members. It brings you news about your health plan and staying healthy. Each issue has important phone numbers for you to cut out and keep. If you have questions or need help, call Customer Service.

Articles in LifeTimes are meant to educate. They are not meant as medical advice. Please check with your doctor for any advice about your health.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Phone Numbers</th>
<th>Toll-free Number</th>
<th>TTY Line (hearing/speech loss)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCBSTX STAR Kids Customer Service</td>
<td>1-877-688-1811</td>
<td>7-1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Coordination</td>
<td>1-877-301-4394</td>
<td>7-1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Health Services Hotline</td>
<td>1-800-424-0324</td>
<td>1-800-635-2883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCBSTX Member Advocate in the Central service area</td>
<td>1-855-497-0857</td>
<td>7-1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCBSTX Member Advocate in the Travis service area</td>
<td>1-877-375-9097</td>
<td>7-1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Hour Nurse Advice Line</td>
<td>1-855-802-4614</td>
<td>7-1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid Managed Care Helpline</td>
<td>1-866-566-8989</td>
<td>7-1-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Value-Added Services may have restrictions and limitations.

**Message and data rates may apply. Terms and conditions and privacy policy at www.bcbstx.com/mobile/text-messaging.

Texas Health Steps is health care for children offered by Texas Health and Human Services. Texas Health and Human Services is solely responsible for its operations and for those of its contracted providers. BCBSTX makes no endorsement, representations or warranties regarding this service.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas, a Division of Health Care Service Corporation, a Mutual Legal Reserve Company, an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association