



## SoonerCare Members Get Your Annual Flu Shot

**W**ith the fall season upon us, so is the flu season. It usually lasts from October to May. Influenza, (flu) is a serious disease of the nose, throat and lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia and other severe respiratory infections. The flu shot is your best chance to avoid the flu. **The flu shot cannot cause the flu. Serious problems from the flu shot are very rare.**

The flu shot can be given before or during the flu season. The best time to get your shot is October or November, before flu season starts, but you can get it in December or later. Adults and children with conditions like asthma,

diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease have a great need to get a flu shot. Doctors also recommend children six months and older get a flu shot every year until their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Pregnant women should always get a flu shot-it not only protects them but also their unborn child.

SoonerCare covers the flu shot for both children and adults. This can be done at your Medical Home. Drugstores, senior centers, and workplaces often offer flu shots, too. If you have questions about getting a flu shot, contact your Medical Home.



By Sylvia Lopez, M.D.,  
FAAP and OHCA  
Chief Medical Officer

## Importance of the Flu Shot

### Debunking the Myth about the Flu Shot

The influenza virus is extremely contagious and very easily spread, especially in cramped working conditions such as schools and tight offices. The importance of prevention cannot be overstated. When you receive the flu vaccine, you not only ensure that you are protected but you also passively protect your family members and co-workers. This is especially critical when one is in close contact with the very young, such as infants, and the very old, such as elderly parents and grandparents, and those who are immunocompromised, such as those who are pregnant. The flu is not the common cold. It is much, much worse. **Receiving the flu vaccine does not cause the flu or the common cold. The most common complaint is mild discomfort at the injection site.**



*The flu is airborne.*

# TeLLuS YOUR STORY

The agency has launched a campaign, Tell Us Your Story, asking SoonerCare members to share their experiences with the

program to help create awareness of the program and its benefits.

Below is a story from a current SoonerCare member about the positive impact that access to quality health care has had in her family's lives. We hope you too will share your stories! Whether a life-saving medical treatment or the opportunity to receive routine medical care for your child, we want to hear how SoonerCare made a difference in your life.

A couple of years ago, the Santiago household income was just barely above the cut-off to qualify for SoonerCare.

"Each time my kids got sick I thought: do we really need to take you to the doctor? Each illness could easily cost me anywhere from \$75 and up," said Dania Santiago. "I often caught myself self-diagnosing and treating with over-the-counter remedies - something risky for little kids."

Santiago added that although today her financial circumstances are a bit more difficult, she is so blessed to be receiving SoonerCare



benefits knowing that her children's health needs are taken care of.

"A couple weeks ago my 10-year-old had difficulty breathing and chest pain. I didn't think twice before taking him to the nearest Urgent Care, where he was fully examined and X-rayed to find out that he had pneumonia," said Santiago.

SoonerCare was able to cover the inhaler, breathing therapies, antibiotics, and even the Urgent Care visit that Santiago's son needed.

"I didn't need to worry about a single penny. It's funny, because I had this very conversation with the pharmacy clerk as I checked out after that very long night. Her words were: 'Above all, just thank God that we live in a country that still takes care of the needy during trying times'," said Santiago.

To tell us your story or read more stories like Santiago's, go to [www.okhca.org/tellus](http://www.okhca.org/tellus).



## Mid-September-October is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

Mid-September through October marked National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, a time to encourage America's children to develop healthy habits- OHCA too wants to encourage their members to tackle the high obesity rates in Oklahoma by eating healthy and adding physical activity to their lives.

Oklahoma is the sixth-worst state for obesity rates, with nearly one in three residents qualifying as obese, according to data released in August of this year by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Nearly 30 percent of Oklahoma children are either overweight or obese, which can lead to high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, breathing problems, having trouble sleeping and other health complications. Oklahoma's adult obesity rate is

31.4 percent and carries the same health risks.

Overweight children and teens also suffer psychologically as targets of bullying and social discrimination. The bullying often leads to low self-esteem and depression which effects how well they perform in school and in social situations. These problems can last through adulthood. All kids deserve to experience the positive health benefits of daily physical activity and healthy eating and have those opportunities available to them. OHCA encourages adults to get a yearly physical and children to get their well-child check-up.

Check out the next page for additional resources and tips to get you and your family living a healthy lifestyle!

**Shape Your Future!** Recently, Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET), Oklahoma State Department of Health, and many other health partners created a campaign called “Shape your future” to help improve the health of Oklahomans. Here are some healthy tips provided by SYF.

### Encourage healthy eating habits.

There’s no great secret to healthy eating. To help your children and family develop healthy eating habits:



- Provide plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products.
- Include low-fat or non-fat milk or dairy products.
- Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, lentils, and beans for protein.
- Serve reasonably-sized portions.
- Encourage your family to drink lots of water.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Limit consumption of sugar and saturated fat.

Remember that small changes every day can lead to a recipe for success! For more information about nutrition, visit [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov).

### Look for ways to make favorite dishes healthier.

The recipes that you may prepare regularly, and that your family enjoys, with just a few changes can be healthier and just as satisfying. For new ideas about how to add more fruits and vegetables to your daily diet check out the recipe database from the [FruitsandVeggiesMatter.gov](http://FruitsandVeggiesMatter.gov).

### Remove calorie-rich temptations!

Although everything can be enjoyed in moderation, reducing the calorie-rich temptations of high-fat and high-sugar, or salty snacks can also help your children develop healthy eating habits. Instead only allow your children to eat them sometimes, so that they truly will be treats! Here are examples of easy-to-prepare, low-fat and low-sugar treats that are 100 calories or less:

- A medium-size apple
- A medium-size banana

- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup grapes
- 1 cup carrots, broccoli, or bell peppers with 2 tbsp. hummus

### Help kids stay active.

Children and teens should participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity most days of the week, preferably daily. Adults need to get a total of 150 minutes of physical activity throughout their week. By finding ways to get at least 30 minutes of moderate activity five days a week you can make a big difference in your health. Remember that children imitate adults. Start adding physical activity to your own daily routine and encourage your child to join you.

Some examples of moderate intensity physical activity include:

- Brisk walking
- Playing tag
- Jumping rope
- Playing soccer
- Swimming
- Dancing



### Reduce sedentary time.

In addition to encouraging physical activity, help children avoid too much sedentary time. Although quiet time for reading and homework is fine, limit the time your children watch television, play video games, or surf the Web to no more than 2 hours per day. Additionally, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend television viewing for children age 2 or younger. Instead, encourage your children to find fun activities to do with family members or on their own that simply involve more activity.

## Think Pink

OHCA urges SoonerCare members to not be a statistic and get breast cancer screenings.

American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates for 2012 include 226,870 new cases of invasive breast cancer being diagnosed in women in the U.S. An estimated 39,920 women in the US will die from the disease in 2012.

October was National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and OHCA held many in-house fundraisers to raise money for the Susan B. Komen "Race for the Cure" because of the important role that organization plays in honoring those lives lost to the disease and for those who have breast cancer.

While progress has clearly been made, breast cancer is still the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women in the U.S. and the second leading cause of cancer death in women. The Susan B. Komen Foundation research and ACS's research program have played a role in many of the advances that save lives from breast cancer today, and are relentlessly pursuing the answers that will save even more lives in the future.

SoonerCare benefits cover annual screening and diagnostic mammograms for SoonerCare Traditional or SoonerCare Choice members. There are no age restrictions. Contact your Medical Home, and schedule your mammogram today!

## Susan G. Komen for the Cure®

### 1. Get screened

- Ask your health care provider which screening tests are right for you if you are at higher risk
- Have a mammogram every year starting at age 40 if you are at average risk
- Have a clinical breast exam at least every 3 years starting at age 20, and every year starting at age 40

### 2. Know what is normal for you and see your health care provider if you notice any of these breast changes:

- Lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area
- Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast
- Change in the size or shape of the breast
- Dimpling or puckering of the skin
- Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
- Pulling in of your nipple or other parts of the breast
- Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
- New pain in one spot that doesn't go away

### 3. Make healthy lifestyle choices

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Add exercise into your routine
- Limit alcohol intake
- Limit postmenopausal hormone use
- Breastfeed, if you can

## OBN "Take Back" Drug Disposal Boxes

The Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics (OBN) has established a "Take Back" program for Oklahomans to dispose of their old, unwanted pharmaceutical drugs. More than 118 disposal drop boxes

are located in police and sheriff department lobbies across Oklahoma.

Since prescription drug abuse is an ever-growing issue in Oklahoma, SoonerCare encourages members to participate in the "Take Back"

program as necessary.

Members can find more information on the "Take Back" program and a complete list of disposal boxes at [www.ok.gov/obndd](http://www.ok.gov/obndd).

This newsletter is for SoonerCare Choice members. It will tell you about any changes or updates to your SoonerCare benefits. It will also give you other useful news to help keep you healthy. However, if you have specific questions about your health, please talk to your doctor. Disclaimer: Clinical, legal and other comments are offered for general information only. Please talk to your doctor about specific health concerns.

**SoonerCare Helpline**  
800-987-7767 or 711(TDD)

**SoonerRide**  
877-404-4500 or 711(TDD)

**SoonerCare provider list**  
800-987-7767

Si usted quiere leer este artículo en español, visite la pagina web del OHCA al <http://www.okhca.org/sooner-care-companion>.

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## Brush up on Dental Health



### Fluoride Varnish for Your Child

Did you know that fluoride varnish is now covered by SoonerCare for children under the age of 42 months?

Fluoride varnish may be provided by your child's Medical Home provider during a well-baby checkup. What is fluoride varnish? Fluoride varnish is painted on your child's teeth with a small brush. It makes your child's teeth stronger plus prevents and reduces cavities. It is quick, easy and does not hurt your child. Ask about it at your next well-baby checkup!

### Need Allergy Help?



As the fall allergy season is upon us, many SoonerCare members are prescribed nebulizers and nebulizer medication by their physicians. A nebulizer (inhaler) is a device used to change liquid medication to mist form to assist persons with respiratory issues such as asthma and severe allergies.

Since adult nebulizers were removed from coverage in 2010 by SoonerCare, the Oklahoma Durable Medical Equipment Reuse Program (OKDMERP) is a source for adults to receive nebulizers. The OKDMERP can be reached at 405.523.4810 to make application for the nebulizer for adults. There are no income requirements for the equipment – only a completed application and RX for a nebulizer from a physician. Many times the OKDMERP has new nebulizers that can be delivered or shipped to citizens of Oklahoma that provide the RX.

Children ages 0-20 are covered by SoonerCare and can obtain a nebulizer (inhaler) with medical documentation from more than 1,200 DME suppliers in the state of Oklahoma.



### How to Get the Most Out of Your Dental or Medical Treatment

- 1. Keep the appointment!** If you are unable to keep your appointment, call at least 24 hours in advance to cancel or reschedule.
- 2. Be at least 15 minutes early!** The office may have paperwork for you to fill out.
- 3. Take your SoonerCare card and a photo ID with you.** This protects both you and your doctor or dentist.
- 4. Treat all with courtesy; remember respect works both ways.** Treat others the way you would like to be treated.
- 5. Ask questions if you don't understand or have concerns!** Take an active role in your child's or your treatment.
- 6. Turn your cell phone off while in the doctor's office.** It is the polite thing to do.

### Some Medications Can Be Filled for 90-Day Supply

Did you know that many medications that are taken once daily can be filled for a 90-day supply? SoonerCare covers up to six prescriptions per month for adult members. Filling once-daily medications for 90 day supplies can help people who take more than six prescriptions. They can rotate filling different prescriptions on different months. If you take more than six medications, ask your doctor or pharmacy if any of them can be filled for a 90-day supply.

# What Are Some of the Other Ways I Can Protect My Child Against the Flu?



In addition to getting the flu shot from your PCP, you take – and encourage your child to take – everyday steps that can help prevent the spread of germs.



This includes:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Stay away from people who are sick. If someone in the household is sick, try to keep the sick person in a separate room from others in the household, if possible.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. These are the most sensitive areas for germs to spread and infect your body.
- Keep surfaces like bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys for children clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label. Make sure the label says the product has an “anti-bacterial” agent in it.
- Throw tissues and other disposable items used by sick persons in your household in the trash then empty in your outside dumpster at the end of every day.



These everyday steps are a good way to reduce your chances of getting sick.



## What should I use for hand washing?

Washing hands with soap and warm water (for as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice) will help protect against many germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

## What can I do if my child gets sick? Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child’s illness.

If your child is 5 years and older and does not have other health problems and gets flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed and make sure your

child gets plenty of rest and drinks lots of fluids.

If your child is younger than 5 years (and especially younger than 2 years) or of any age with a long-term health condition (like asthma, a neurological condition, or diabetes) and develops flu-like symptoms, they are at risk for serious complications from the flu. Ask your SoonerCare PCP if your child should be examined.

## What if my child seems very sick?

Even children who have always been healthy before or had the flu before can get very sick from the flu.

Call your Medical Home or take your child to his/her doctor right away if your child of any age has any of the warning or emergency signs below:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids (not going to the bathroom or making as much urine as they normally do)
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes, or asthma) and develops flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough.

## Can my child go to school, day care or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children or caregivers.

## When can my child go back to school after having the flu?

Keep your child home from school, day care or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100°F (37.8°C) or higher.



No  
Germs  
Allowed!



# Ban the Bag and Breastfeed

Twenty-three Oklahoma hospitals are participating in an Oklahoma State Department of Health program called “Ban the Bag” and have agreed to stop the practice of sending new mothers home with commercial formula discharge bags.

Hospital promotion of free infant formula samples has long been known to reduce breastfeeding rates. New mothers who have any problems with breastfeeding are more likely to turn to the “free” formula given to them by their hospital than to call someone for help. The “free” formula becomes very costly when it contributes to Oklahoma’s low breastfeeding duration rates.

Low breastfeeding rates are one of the reasons Oklahoma continues to rank in the top 10 nationwide for obesity, diabetes, and infant mortality. Evidence is overwhelming that breastfeeding improves the health of mothers and babies while formula feeding adds a significant cost to families and our state. Oklahoma hospitals are working hard to encourage breastfeeding and provide quality care to breastfeeding families by joining the Ban the Bag project.  
[www.ok.gov/health](http://www.ok.gov/health)

## Reasons to Breastfeed

### Mothers who breastfeed:

- Are less likely to develop breast and ovarian cancer
- Are less likely to develop Type 2 Diabetes
- Bond with their babies easier
- Have less risk of postpartum depression
- May lose their pregnancy weight faster
- Feel great that they are giving their babies the healthiest start in life

### Breastfed babies have:

- Better immune systems
- Fewer infections, including ear infections
- Fewer allergies
- Less diarrhea
- Less risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Less trips to the hospital for serious illnesses

### Children who were breastfed have:

- Less risk of becoming overweight
- Less risk of some chronic diseases that develop during childhood including:
  - Diabetes (Type 1 and Type 2)
  - Childhood Cancers
  - Asthma
  - Crohn’s disease
- Lower health care costs
- Good jaw development that promotes the growth of straight, healthy teeth



## New Logging Program for Hemophiliacs Made Easier and iPhone Compatible

OHCA wants to announce an easier way for hemophiliacs to track their bleeds and blood transfusions. The American Thrombosis and Hemostasis Network (ATHN) wants to help SoonerCare hemophiliacs have just that. ATHN has released a new and improved version of ATHNadvoy, a web-based electronic bleed and infusion log, and a new application for iPhone users.

If you log your bleeding episodes, infusions and pain

occurrences in ATHNadvoy; your hemophilia treatment center and treatment provider can review those log entries to identify bleeding patterns, evaluate the effectiveness of your treatment and make improvements.

It’s really easy to get started! Simply go to [www.athn.org](http://www.athn.org) and create an account. For those Apple users that have an iPhone, iPad or iPod; ATHN has a mobile app for logging infusions on the go. Simply go to the Apple iTunes App Store on your phone or computer, search

ATHN and download the free app.

OHCA will continue to update all SoonerCare members on improvements or changes to this program including when additional cell phone providers start offering the app. It’s OHCA’s goal to provide members with up-to-date and helpful information as we receive it.

For assistance with ATHNadvoy, please contact ATHNadvoy Support at [athnadvoy@athn.org](mailto:athnadvoy@athn.org) or 1-866-44-ADVOY.

# SoonerCare Companion

Oklahoma Health Care Authority  
2401 NW 23rd St.  
Suite 1-A  
Oklahoma City, OK 73107  
www.okhca.org



Taryn Goodwin, 26 | Smoked 8 years | Smokefree 3 years

**"I save over a hundred dollars a month by not smoking."**



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OKhelpline.com



[www.okhca.org/kids-corner](http://www.okhca.org/kids-corner)

For fun things to do each month, visit the Kids Corner website.



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