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# HealthyLife® Letter

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Promoting Health. Enhancing Life. Reducing Costs.

## THE DANGERS OF Distracted Driving

Though driving a car may seem like a simple task, it requires quick reflexes, concentration and reasoning. When a driver is distracted, some — or all — of these important skills can be lost.

Distracted driving means the driver is doing something other than focusing on the road ahead. It can be anything that takes the driver's mind off of driving, hands off the wheel or eyes off the road. In the age of smartphones, tablets and other electronic devices, it's easy to get distracted when driving — even for just a second.

Though it seems harmless, a quick glance at a phone to read a text can be dangerous or even deadly. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) says sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. That's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed if you're going 55 miles per hour. In that amount of time, a driver can hit a pedestrian, run a red light or stop sign, or crash into another vehicle.



The NHTSA says nearly 3,500 people died and almost 400,000 were injured in 2015 due to distracted driving crashes. Here's what we can do to help stop distracted driving:

- Never use a phone while driving. Put it in the back seat or out of reach to reduce the urge to look at it “just for a second.”
- Talk with your teens about distracted driving and tell them that the texts can wait. Lead by example.
- Sign a pledge to not drive distracted and stick to it. Ask family members and friends to sign it too. The “It Can Wait” pledge is available at [itcanwait.usaa.com](http://itcanwait.usaa.com).

### Did you know?

There are laws that prohibit distracted driving. Talking on a hand-held cellphone while driving is banned in 15 states and the District of Columbia. Text messaging is banned for all drivers in 47 states and the District of Columbia.

To learn about your state laws, go to [www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/laws/cellphonelaws](http://www.iihs.org/iihs/topics/laws/cellphonelaws).

# Don't let the bed bugs bite

Bed bugs have become more common in the U.S. in recent years. Common pesticides used to kill bed bugs may not work as well as they once did. The bugs may be getting “resistant,” which means they can survive pesticides used on them. This resistance, along with increased travel by people and lack of knowledge about how to get rid of them, are likely to blame for the rise in these pests.

Bed bugs feed on blood so they are attracted to people and animals. They also come out at night, so the bed is the best place for them to find their meal.

## Check for bed bugs

If you want to keep bed bugs out, you'll need to check your home, as well as hotels while traveling. Look for small, reddish brown bugs about the size of an apple seed. Use a flashlight to get a good look. Check:

- Under and all around the mattress, box spring and bed frame
- Seams and small crevices where they like to hide — bed bugs can get into cracks as thin as a credit card
- Nightstands and other furniture near beds

## Do I have bed bugs?

Even if you don't see any bugs, watch for signs that they are hiding in your home and biting people. The most common signs of bed bugs include:

- Small, reddish spots on bed sheets or mattresses
- Small round, dark spots on the bed (may look like ink spots)
- Tiny eggs, egg shells or light yellow skins



## How to prevent them

Bed bugs have been found in clean homes that are well cared for. They can be hard to keep out. These tips can help you keep them away:

- Check for bed bugs when you travel and don't put your suitcase on the bed.
- When you get home from a trip, immediately wash your travel clothes in hot water.
- Keep luggage outside when you get home and vacuum it thoroughly. Empty the vacuum contents into a plastic bag, seal it and throw it in the garbage outside.

If you find a bug that might be a bed bug, tape it to a piece of paper so you can show it to a pest control expert. Call a pest control company right away. If you live in an apartment or rental home, contact your landlord about what to do.

The Environmental Protection Agency has information about getting rid of them on their website. Visit [www.epa.gov/bedbugs](http://www.epa.gov/bedbugs).

**WHAT TO KNOW:**

# Breast cancer and rashes

When you spot a rash on your skin, you probably don't worry too much about it. After all, most rashes are simply due to minor problems like a mosquito bite, chafing, or an irritating skin care product. Though most rashes are not dangerous, it's important to pay attention to your skin. A rare, dangerous form of breast cancer known as inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) often starts with a rash or skin changes on the breast. IBC doesn't cause a telltale "lump" that many people expect from breast cancer. It may not show up on a mammogram either.



## The many types of breast cancer

There are several different kinds of breast cancer. Some start in the milk ducts, glands or other tissue, such as muscle or fat.

The most common type of cancer is invasive (or infiltrating) ductal carcinoma. This type of cancer makes up about 80 percent of all breast cancer cases. It starts in a milk duct and spreads into the fatty tissue in the breast.

Be aware of these other breast cancer signs and call your doctor if you notice them:

- A lump or mass in the breast
- Nipple discharge (not breast milk for nursing mothers)
- Pain or swelling in the breast or nipple
- Any unusual changes to the breast or nipple, including new moles

Seeing your doctor for regular visits and getting mammograms as recommended is the best way to detect breast cancer early.



Source: American Cancer Society

### What rashes should be checked?

Many things can cause rashes on the breast, but some signs should be checked by a doctor. Call your doctor if you notice any of these changes on the breast:

- Pain, tenderness or itching on the breast
- Skin that looks or feels thicker
- An area that feels hard
- Skin that has pits or ridges or looks like an orange peel
- A nipple that turns inward or changes shape
- Swelling that makes one breast look larger than the other
- Skin that is swollen
- A breast that feels warm or heavy

### Don't panic – but get checked

It's important to know that IBC is very rare. It makes up about 1 to 3 percent of all breast cancer cases.

Some less serious problems like mastitis (an infection of the milk ducts) can have some of the same symptoms as IBC. If you notice any changes in your breasts, be sure to contact your health care provider.





## SWEET OR SPOOKY: Halloween candy control



Despite all your work to help your kids eat healthy, holidays like Halloween can quickly throw your efforts off track. Candy in the stores and at school, and, of course, while trick-or-treating means your kids have plenty of access to junk food. It might be downright scary.

While a little candy isn't harmful, it can be easy to overdo it when junk food seems to be everywhere. And the health problems associated with sugary snacks and unhealthy foods are real:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 1 in 5 school-aged children has obesity. While candy alone isn't to blame, experts know that eating too many foods high in calories and low in nutrition (such as candy and sugary treats) are part of the problem.
- Sugary treats can cause cavities. The American Dental Association says some of the worst offenders are sticky treats that cling to teeth and those that sit in the mouth for a long time like hard candies and suckers. But, any high-sugar snack can spell trouble for someone's dental health.

*The good news is, even health-conscious families can enjoy the fun of Halloween (and a few treats) if they have a plan in place before the spooky day arrives:*



**Don't leave candy out where it can be grabbed any time.** Kids (and adults) tend to reach for whatever is available, and may mindlessly eat whatever is sitting out. Put candy and other goodies in a hard-to-reach cupboard instead. This requires more effort to get to it, so it is "out of sight, out of mind."



**Teach kids moderation.** If you make candy and sweets off-limits, kids may want the forbidden food even more. Instead, allow them a small treat after they've eaten a healthy dinner.



**Lead by example.** If you have a hard time avoiding sweet treats, now is a great time to make healthy eating a family effort. Reserve your candy and other treats for after dinner. Make it a small amount, such as one fun-sized candy bar.



**Buy what you don't like.** If you like to grab a piece here and there while the trick-or-treaters visit your house, buy candy you won't be tempted to eat.



**Donate your candy!** Teach kids to do good by giving their candy to soldiers and charitable causes, such as for kids who are in the hospital. A variety of organizations accept candy, but check first. Try your local food bank, Operation Gratitude, the Halloween Candy Buy Back and Ronald McDonald House.





# Fall in love with fall vegetables

Perhaps the days of watermelon and cucumbers are behind us for now, but fall has plenty of delicious in-season veggies and fruits to offer.

Eating what's "in season" often means you can get food that's fresher, more nutritious, and costs less. Check out the grocery store or farmer's market for some of these delicious fall favorites:

- Pumpkins
- Carrots
- Winter squash, such as acorn, butternut and buttercup
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Sweet potatoes
- Mushrooms
- Spinach
- Grapes

Of course, some produce is available year-round when it can be shipped from far away. But, check out where the food was grown to ensure you're getting something fresh. The USDA requires that fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, along with some meats and fish, have a label on them stating the "country of origin." In general, the farther it's had to travel, the less fresh it will be when it gets to your grocery store.

Remember many of your favorites can be found in the frozen food section if it's not available fresh at certain times of year.



## FEATURED RECIPE! Butternut squash with black beans



### Ingredients

- 2-3/4 cups butternut squash, cubed
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 onion (small, chopped)
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 cans black beans (16 ounces each, rinsed and drained)
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano

### Directions

1. Heat the squash in the microwave on high heat for 1-2 minutes. This will soften the skin.
2. Carefully peel the squash with a vegetable peeler or small knife. Cut the squash into 1/2 inch cubes.
3. Peel and chop the onion.
4. In a large pan, heat the oil. Add the onion, garlic powder and squash. Cook for 5 minutes on medium heat.
5. Add vinegar and water. Cook on low heat until the squash is tender, about 10 minutes.
6. Add the beans and oregano. Cook until the beans are heated through.

*Serves 6: Per serving: Calories: 209; Total Fat: 2 g; Saturated Fat: 0 g; Sodium: 317 mg; Total Carbohydrate: 39 g; Dietary Fiber: 9 g; Protein: 11 g*

*Source: USDA Mixing Bowl*

# 9 easy ways to manage stress

*Don't let stress take over your day! Try to do one (or a few!) of these things to start feeling better:*



### ***Connect with friends***

Meeting up with other people can help reduce symptoms of stress and increase feelings of happiness.



### ***Meditation***

Meditation, such as mindfulness, is a proven way to help reduce stress.



### ***Deep breathing***

Slow, deep breaths can calm the body's stress response and help you relax.



### ***Playing with pet***

Walking the dog or petting an animal companion may calm you.



### ***Yoga***

Practicing yoga can help the body relax. Try doing yoga videos at home or attending a local class.



### ***Listen to music***

Music helps the body cope with stress. Listen to music that makes you feel happy or relaxed.



### ***Read a book***

Escape to another world and take your mind off the day with a favorite book.



### ***Exercise***

Regular exercise has many benefits, including improving your mental health and stress management.



### ***Massage***

A massage not only feels good, but it can help reduce stress and muscle tension.

# BULLYING: How to take action



October is National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month. Bullying can be hard to address, especially if it's happening to your child. Knowing how to deal with bullying can help you support your child and stay calm about it. This is important because bullying can happen more than once.

Dealing with bullying in the right way can help you (and your child) put a stop to it. If your child is being bullied, take the following steps:

- Talk to your child about what happened. Without interrupting or giving your opinion, let your child openly talk about what was said or done in the bullying situation. Be sure you understand the whole story. Support them as they talk by telling them you want to help, and by keeping your actions as calm as possible.
- Tell the child that bullying is not their fault. No one deserves to be bullied.
- When giving advice, use clear examples. Role playing can be very helpful in teaching a child what to do. Never tell them to fight back or use violence. This doesn't help the situation and can get your child in trouble or hurt.
- Ask your child how you can help them feel safe again. Try not to single him or her out by making changes in their routine, such as switching classes or buses. Instead, try taking other steps, such as changing seating arrangements in school or on the bus.
- Talk with the school or organization. State your concerns and ask them how they feel it can be addressed. Remember that the school staff cannot "discipline" other kids. Even if you want to, avoid talking with the bullying child's parents. School officials can talk with them and be a neutral moderator.
- Consider getting professional support for your child. Sometimes a school counselor or mental health expert can help a child who has been bullied.

Bullying should never be ignored. Kids who are bullied may be at higher risk for health problems like:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Loss of interest in activities

Their grades may also suffer. Kids who are bullied are more likely to miss school or drop out.

# Shopping online safely

Using your computer, tablet or smartphone to shop can be quick and convenient. But, the internet is full of websites that aren't trusted places to shop. To keep your personal information and money safe, follow these steps before you shop online:

- **Use major companies that you know.** Look for a company address, phone number, and email. Read online reviews before buying.
- **Research the return policy.** Can you get a full refund if you aren't satisfied? What does it cost to send it back?
- **Know what shipping will cost.** Be sure you know what the cost will be before you place the order. Shipping costs should be clearly listed on the website.
- **Never use cash.** If you pay by credit card, your purchase is protected by the Fair Credit Billing Act. This means you can dispute charges you didn't make. You may also be protected from having to pay for unauthorized charges if your card number is stolen.
- **Compare your credit card statement and your online receipt.** Be sure the costs match.



- **Don't use email for sending financial information.** Email isn't secure and someone could steal your information this way.

Source: Federal Trade Commission

## Beware of fake online reviews



You see a product online that has hundreds of glowing reviews. It must be great, right? Not necessarily. In fact, some companies have been sued by the FTC for providing fake online reviews. Some companies even pay people to write great reviews for their products, or delete negative reviews on their site.

Take any online reviews with a grain of salt. If they seem too good to be true, they probably are. Almost any product will have some positive, neutral and negative opinions. If it doesn't, this may be a red flag for a scam.