

## Do you know the signs of infection?

Everyone gets sick from time to time. Often, this is due to an infection from germs or a virus. The common cold and the flu are examples of infection. Even though infections are common, you should still take them seriously.



Why? Because many people with long-term illness have a weakened immune system. This means your body may not be able to fight off infection well. Some medicines you take for your chronic illness might also weaken your immune system. Common symptoms of infection are fever and chills. You may also have a cough, runny nose, sore throat, or feel very tired.

If you notice any signs of infection, tell your doctor right away. If not treated, infections can lead to serious illness and even hospital stays. Do not treat an infection yourself. Many things you can buy off the shelf only treat symptoms. They do not kill the infection germs. Your doctor can prescribe you medicine to fight infection the right way.

Infections can be prevented. Follow these steps to lower your risk of getting sick:

- Get your vaccines. Talk to your doctor about what shots you need and when.
- Wash your hands with soap and water often throughout the day.
- If you cannot wash your hands, use hand sanitizer.
- Social distance—don't get near others who may be sick.
- Take care of yourself. Eat well, exercise, and get good sleep.

## Sharing your health information in an emergency

You never know when or where you may need health care. When you have a chronic illness, it is best to stay prepared. In an emergency, you may not be able to provide details about yourself and your health. One good way to stay prepared is by wearing some type of a medical alert identification (ID).

Medical IDs come in many forms. These include wallet cards, bracelets, armbands, necklaces, or dog tags. Medical IDs also come as USB devices that are worn like jewelry. These come in many styles. A USB medical ID can be plugged into a computer by a care provider. This gives providers access to your important health information. Some people may choose a more permanent ID option such as a tattoo.

So, what sorts of details should you include on any type of medical ID you choose? In short, as much as you can fit. The more details a health care provider knows about you in a crisis, the better.

- Your name and date of birth
- Your condition
- An emergency contact number
- Allergies or medicines you SHOULD NOT take
- Basic health information
- Medicines you take
- Exercise or activity you should avoid

You can also check out the Health app for iPhone. It includes a Medical ID option. This app makes health details available via the lock screen on your phone in an emergency. Medical ID can display your conditions, allergies, medicines, blood type and contacts. You can also use it to show if you are signed up to be an organ donor. Similar apps are available for other smartphones. Make sure any apps you use are secure so that your health details remain private. It's wise to research all apps before you add them to your phone and enter any details.

Talk to your doctor or program nurse about what else might be good to put on a medical alert ID. Your program nurse can help you find ways to order your own ID. There are lots of options to choose from. Talk with your care team to find the best choice for you.

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## Track your treatment

Do you keep track of your treatments? Do you keep a list of all your medicines? Do you use a calendar to track when you take them? Do you track side effects or other issues?

If you answered “No” or “I’m not sure” to any of the questions above, you may want to check your treatment plan. Keeping a record of this information helps you and your care team better manage your care. This will give you more control over your own health.

Need help getting started? First, ask your doctor for a record of your medicines. You can also ask your pharmacist. Keeping this record up to date is important. It is also a good idea to fill as many of your prescriptions as you can at one pharmacy. Once you have a working list, share it with everyone on your care team. This includes your doctors, program nurse, and family and friends involved in your care.

## Start your Medicine List

Write down all your prescription and over-the-counter medicines, herbal remedies, vitamins, and food supplements. Keep this list with you at all times. Update your list when you start, stop, or change a medicine. You can also take a picture of your medicine labels to keep on your smart phone.

<b>Name and dose of medicine</b>	<b>How much to take each time</b>	<b>Number of times a day and when to take it</b>	<b>Health problem or reason I take this medicine</b>	<b>Side effects or other issues?</b>
Example: Amoxicillin, 500 mg	1 pill	1 pill each with breakfast and lunch and dinner	Infection in right knee	None

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This newsletter does not replace the advice of your doctor. Talk to your doctor before you make any change to your care. All feedback can be sent by email to [editor@newsletter.com](mailto:editor@newsletter.com). No longer want to be sent this newsletter? Reach out to your program nurse. Or email [editor@newsletter.com](mailto:editor@newsletter.com). ©2024 CVS Health and/or one of its affiliates. All rights reserved.

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