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HEALTHNET NEWS

A newsletter for public librarians and others interested in consumer health information services

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Fall 2013

NETNEWS

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE NEW AFFORDABLE CARE ACT?

The long anticipated Affordable Care Act is now reality.

Enrollment for the Affordable Care Act began October 1. Coverage may begin as soon as January 1, 2014.

Do you know how the Affordable Care Act will affect you?

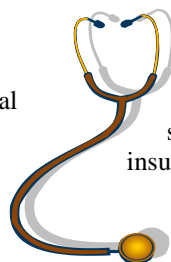
Are library users asking you lots of questions about the new federal health care law?

Are you prepared to help them?

SOURCES OF INFORMATION...

Connecticut's Health Insurance Marketplace...

The **Access Health CT** website is the state's new "Official Connecticut's "health insurance exchange." This website about the new Affordable Care Act, comparing health



Health Insurance Marketplace." It is serves as a source for gathering information insurance plans, and applying for coverage.

Specific questions (and answers) about the Affordable Connecticut" website.

Care Act appear on the "access health

The website's **Enrollment Site** helps website users can determine an estimate for insurance cost savings they may be eligible for and determine if they are eligible for "tax credits that could reduce [their] monthly premiums."

The **toll-free Call Center** may be contacted at 1-855-805-HEALTH (4325) Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. and Saturday, 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

UConn
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The Federal Government's website....

The federal government's website provides details about determining if you qualify for lower costs when you enroll in the **Health Insurance Marketplace**.

The federal Health Insurance Marketplace website will also help you learn if you qualify for free or reduced-cost coverage available through **Medicaid** or the **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)** (known as the Husky Health Program in Connecticut).

A **Spanish language version** appears on the website.

The federal government also offers a 24 hour toll-free phone number for those seeking information at **1-800-318-2596**. This Call Center offers help in English, Spanish, and 150 additional languages, provided through a translation service.

Materials in additional languages, including Portuguese, Arabic, and Polish, are available online.

Access for hearing-impaired callers is via TTY/TDD service at 1-855-889-4325.

There is an online 24-hour **chat service**, in English and Spanish, accessible on the website.

Additional resources...

Healthnet's Subject Guide about "**Navigating the Health Care System**" has added a section about the **Affordable Care Act** with links to comprehensive resources.

"Obamacare and you: An explainer," was published by the *CTMirror website*.

This web page includes calculators to help determine if you are eligible for discount rates for purchasing insurance through Connecticut's Health Insurance Exchange.

It answers questions such as, "What happens to people who get insurance through their jobs?" and "What if I don't want to buy health insurance?" "What will these plans cost (in Connecticut)?"

The *Connecticut Office of the Healthcare Advocate* clearly explains the provisions of the new healthcare law regarding pre-existing conditions, mental health parity, essential health benefits that must be covered, the individual mandate, and related topics in an **online chart**.

The "**Health Insurance**" **Health Topic page**, part of the National Library of Medicine's *MedlinePlus* consumer health website, includes links to online information about the Affordable Healthcare Act.

The *MedlinePlus* list of resources includes a [website from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) with information about America's New Health Insurance Marketplace. In addition to a one-page overview of the new Affordable Care Act, the CDC website has an infographic ("How the Marketplace Works") illustrating the four steps involved in enrolling for coverage under the new Act.

A comprehensive, clearly-written explanation ("[The New Health Care Law and You](#)") from the *Institute of Medicine* answers four basic questions about health insurance under the new law: What are my choices for health insurance? How do I get it? How do I use it? What will it cost me?

WHERE CAN I GET A FLU SHOT?



Where are flu shots available in Connecticut?

The [HealthMap Vaccine Finder](#) website allows you to search quickly for pharmacy clinics, health care providers, and other resources that offer flu shots in your town.

You can type your town's name and "Connecticut" or another U.S. state in the location search box to retrieve a detailed list of vaccination clinic locations.

You can select a perimeter of miles from your selected location.

Selecting the link to the question, "What Vaccines Do I Need?" leads to an online questionnaire about your age and about specific health conditions you may have, and any previous adverse reactions to vaccinations. Depending on your responses, certain types of vaccinations are recommended or you may be advised to consult your physician before having the vaccination.

For each pharmacy or clinic on the list, there is an address, phone number, hours of operation, directions, link to the clinic website, and names of vaccines offered.

The [HealthMap Vaccine Finder](#) website will be available from September 2013 through February 2014.

Brief, additional details about "[Vaccination and Vaccine Safety](#)" are available on the federal government's [FLU.GOV](#) website.

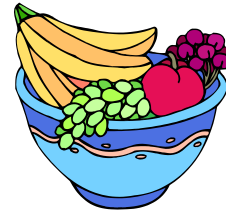
Since there is a two week gap from the time you receive your flu shot until antibodies that protect you against the flu develop in your body, this may be a good time to search for a convenient location where flu shots are available.

A NEW ONLINE NUTRITION GUIDE....

What foods should I eat to stay healthy?

What can I do to be sure my family's food is safe?

Are there low-cost ways to obtain healthy food?



These are among the questions answered by a new online **Resource Guide about Healthy Eating** that was written especially for health consumers.

Created by the Healthnet librarian staff, the Guide is a new addition to the website of **Healthnet: Connecticut Consumer Health Information Network** at the UCONN Health Center.

Entitled **Healthy Eating: A Nutrition Guide**, the Resource Guide includes book descriptions and links to websites about children's nutrition, food safety, resources for obtaining healthy food in Connecticut and other states. It incorporates explanations about how to decipher food labels, information about food allergies and food sensitivities, low cost ideas for obtaining and preparing food, news about nutrition, and suggestions for preventing obesity.

The Nutrition Guide organizes sources of nutrition information by categories such as Obtaining Healthy Food, Food Safety, Food Allergies, Children's Nutrition, Preventing Obesity, and Nutrition News.

Among the resources in the Healthy Eating: Nutrition Guide

"Eating Healthy on a Budget," part of the federal *Let's Move* campaign to encourage healthy eating and increased exercise, includes a sample 7 day menu.

The Harvard School of Public Health has published an online resource about informed reading of nutrition news entitled "Deciphering Media Stories on Diet."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a "Super Tracker" on its website that allows you to track the foods you eat each day and to monitor your daily exercise activities.

A book for parents, **Allergies and Asthma. What Every Parent Needs to Know**, was published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, national professional association of pediatricians.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers authoritative answers to questions about food safety.

The Connecticut Association for Human Services has a comprehensive, clearly written, online Guide, "How to Get Food in Connecticut."

The Mayo Clinic website includes information on types of Vegetarian Diets and ways to ensure "adequate nutrition" while following a vegetarian diet.

*When you or your library users have additional, specific questions about nutrition, you may contact Healthnet at **860/679-4055** for a free, customized information search.*

IS THAT FOOD GLUTEN-FREE?

Is that cookie gluten-free? How can you tell?

Determining if a food is actually gluten-free is especially important for those with celiac disease.

For people with celiac disease, a genetic immune system condition, foods with gluten can be harmful. If affected people eat foods containing gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley, rye and sometimes oats, these foods can damage the lining of their small intestine.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "as many as 3 million people in the United States have celiac disease."

Although there is no cure for celiac disease, individuals may manage their disease by following a gluten-free diet.

Foods labeled "gluten-free" are found increasingly in food markets. Many people without celiac disease have chosen to eat "gluten-free," adding to the demand for "gluten-free" foods.

There has not been a definitive way to know what the term "gluten-free" actually means and if a food is really "gluten-free" when it bears a gluten-free label.



A ruling on the "gluten-free" label...

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently ruled on the content of a food that may be labeled "gluten-free." The ruling specifies that these foods must have a gluten content of less than 20 ppm (parts per million).

The ruling applies only to foods under the jurisdiction of the FDA. It does not apply to food regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, such as meats, poultry, eggs, or drinks regulated by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. Among these beverages are alcohol, wine, and beer.

The new FDA rule also applies to manufacturers who label their products: "without gluten," "free of gluten," and "no gluten."

The ruling includes imported foods and dietary supplements as well as all FDA-regulated foods.

Manufacturers who label their products "gluten-free" have until August 5, 2014 to comply with this ruling.

However, manufacturers of "gluten-free" products are not required to label their products as "gluten-free." This designation is voluntary for manufacturers.

Additional information.....

The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** provides links to brochures and other educational resources, especially for celiac disease patients.

Reports on research about celiac disease and ongoing clinical trials for treatment across the U.S. may be found on the website of the [National Institutes of Health](#).

More resources about celiac disease and gluten-free foods appear on the [MedlinePlus website](#). This Health Topic page links to information about diagnosis, clinical trials, nutrition, disease management, organizations, and genetics.

A brief guide to “[Gluten-Free Meals on a Budget](#)” is published online by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The Patient Information feature of the Up-to-Date database has basic information about a [gluten-free diet](#). The article incorporates charts with “Foods that Contain Gluten” and “Gluten-free Foods.”

MOBILE APP RULINGS FROM THE FDA...



Having you been hearing about a multitude of new mobile apps?

Many of these new apps are focused on your health.

In a recent decision, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that it will not regulate all mobile medical apps. Its recent ruling specifies which types of newly developed medical apps it will monitor.

Among the mobile medical apps the FDA will regulate are those that function as diagnostic tools, assisting physicians in making diagnostic decisions. The FDA will also monitor mobile medical apps that perform the same function as (nonmobile) medical devices the FDA has already approved or are “used as an accessory to a medical device regulated by the FDA.”

The FDA is especially concerned about medical mobile apps that could cause harm to a patient, by miscalculating appropriate therapeutic radiation levels, for example, or by misreading a blood pressure level or an ultrasound result.

To date, the FDA has approved almost one hundred mobile medical apps.

So, whether the medical device is mobile or not, the FDA’s focus, in deciding whether the device requires FDA regulation, is its role in assisting health professionals in caring for your health. The mobile medical apps that the FDA evaluates “will be assessed using the same regulatory standards and risk-based approach that the agency applies to other medical devices.”

However, those medical apps that you, as a health consumer, use to keep track of how many calories you consume each day or to monitor your daily blood pressure readings, will not be regulated by the FDA, according to the newly announced ruling.

As the use of mobile medical apps by patients has increased dramatically, the [list on the FDA website](#), of types of medical apps that “will not be subject to regulatory requirements at this time” is expansive.

CONNECTICUT'S NEW LONG TERM CARE WEBSITE

Connecticut is encouraging older adults and individuals with disabilities to consider continuing to live in their community even when they need others to help them with daily needs.

The state would like to help both older and younger adults look beyond nursing homes when they need long-term care.

The state's comprehensive, clearly designed new website: **MyPlaceCT** is designed to be the "one source for everything about care and support in ...[each person's] community" within Connecticut.

MyPlaceCT encourages individuals making long-term plans to consider the personal, financial, health, and end-of-life aspects of these plans.



First, what are your needs?

Before presenting long-term care choices, the website begins with a section to help in "determining your [current and future] needs."

By asking questions to help describe an individual's current situation, the website guides users to options for care.

It discusses the need for an assessment of an individual's needs and then links to public and private agencies that can help with this process. These assessment agencies include licensed home health agencies, public and private case management agencies, and geriatric private care managers.

What resources are available?

The new website describes the federal demonstration program, Money Follows the Person, that can enable Medicaid-eligible individuals, now living in long-term care facilities, to move back to a community setting.

The website also helps individuals learn about the financial and legal issues associated with long-term care, such as advanced directives, power of attorney, and living wills.

It links to legal assistance programs such as the Connecticut Network for Legal Aid and the Consumer Law Project for Elders.

The new website offers information on a variety of programs and services, including in-home care, adult day care, meals and groceries delivery, SNAP (formerly "Food Stamps"), and congregate meals.

"Live where you want, how you want." is a section of the website that provides direction in seeking housing and transportation for older adults and persons with disabilities.

Other resources.....

LongTermCare.gov is a website, created by the federal government's Administration on Aging, that provides basic, introductory information for those considering long-term care.

It asks (and answers) important questions such as "How much care will you need?" "Who pays for long-term care?" "Where can you receive care?" It links to websites providing local services.

The website discusses resources and services provided by Medicare and Medicaid.

It suggests ways to let family members know about your long term care decisions.

It also discusses the costs of care and ways to financially meet these needs. The website explains the roles of disability insurance, health insurance, and long term care insurance. There is a chart to determine long term care cost in Connecticut as well as additional charts for other states.

Connecticut resources for financial assistance, housing options, and home care options are available on the [Infoline/211 website](#).

Among the areas on Healthnet's online [Navigating the Health Care System](#) Resource Guide is a section about Long Term Care Options.

PLAYGROUNDS FOR ALL CHILDREN

Although summer has ended, there are still some sunny fall weather days for children to play outdoors.



Local playgrounds are popular outdoor places for children to play and meet neighborhood friends.

But what if your child uses a wheelchair or has muscle weaknesses that make standard swings unsafe to use?

What if your child has severe vision or hearing problems?

Playgrounds in your area may be inaccessible for your child. She may not be able to use the playground equipment nor play together with other children she meets there.

Where can you find an accessible playground in your area that will allow your child to enjoy all of the playground's equipment independently and interact with all of the children at the playground?

National Public Radio has compiled a new, searchable, online guide to accessible playgrounds. The NPR "[Find an Accessible Playground](#)" Guide allows you to search by location for an accessible playground in your area.

The accessible playgrounds retrieved are arranged with the closest to your location first on the list. Each entry has a brief description of the accessible features of that playground, the distance from your starting location, a map of the area, a link to Google Maps to search for specific directions, and links to information about nearby accessible playgrounds.

If you are traveling to Boston, New York, or Washington D.C., or other major metropolitan areas, you can see a list of accessible playgrounds in those areas by using this website. There are links to individual playgrounds in these areas, with additional information about the playground selected, as well as links to nearby playgrounds.

Users of the NPR "[Find an Accessible Playground](#)" Guide are invited to submit information about additional accessible playgrounds they have discovered that are not included in the online Guide.

More opportunities for accessible playgrounds may be created in the future. According to federal law, playgrounds built or modified after March 15, 2012 must have wheelchair-accessible paths and play equipment.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

The following title is recommended to public libraries and other libraries providing consumer health information services.

Hijacked by Your Brain: How to Free Yourself When Stress Takes Over. Naperville, Illinois. sourcebooks, 2013. 222 p. (ISBN 978-1402273285).

We all face stress in our lives...often at unexpected times. A high level of stress may cause us to act --or react--in ways we are reluctant to acknowledge.

These stressful situations may vary from ones that are annoying but not actually serious...a loud TV blaring from the family room, another customer cutting in front of you in the grocery checkout line (Doesn't she know that you are in a hurry?), a very late and noisy party at your neighbor's house, a forgotten purse...to serious triggers such as a car accident, a serious illness, or a battle wound.

Sometimes, however, these less serious triggers cause individuals to feel the physical and emotional effects of stress that are far out of proportion to the reality of the situation.

Is there an effective way to manage stress?

Dr. Julian Ford, clinical psychologist and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Connecticut Health Center, and co-author and leadership coach Jon Wortmann, offer practical suggestions to deal with these challenging times.

Dr. Ford's work has focused on counseling "children, adolescents, and adults of all backgrounds suffering from traumatic stress and PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]." (p.xii) These patients have faced serious circumstances such as "profound violence, abuse, war, and natural disasters."

Since "stress is inevitable" (p.5), everyone needs techniques to deal with it. Dr. Ford's book guides readers, facing less traumatic stresses than war and violence, to cope with the stress they encounter.

In order to prepare readers to deal with their own stress, he explains how "trauma changes how the brain works. (p. x) He guides readers in a process of "resetting the brain" to focus itself in a way that allows clearer thinking at times when any thinking is challenging. This book contains specific suggestions to guide readers in preparing for stressful times before they occur.



*Healthnet News is written by Judith Kronick and Alberta Richetelle
If you have questions about anything in the newsletter or about Healthnet services for Connecticut public libraries,
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