



## HEAL Prevents Unnecessary ED Visits

New website helps families manage common minor childhood illnesses and injuries without visiting emergency

by Naminder Sandhu, PEM physician, HEAL Coordinator

Last fall saw the launch of an exciting and novel educational pediatric resource, [HEAL](#).

Developed by a team of emergency physicians and clinicians from Alberta Children's Hospital and Stollery Children's Hospital, the HEAL (Health Education and Learning) website aims to empower families and caregivers to manage common minor childhood illnesses and injuries at home through easily accessible, reliable information.



The launch of the website ([www.ahs.ca/heal](http://www.ahs.ca/heal)) was a highly anticipated event for the program developers who have been working on the project for several years. It all began five years ago during the H1N1 epidemic. Staff at the Alberta Children's Hospital emergency department (ED) noticed that common illnesses and injuries – those that could be managed at home - kept appearing in the ED during the epidemic, which was a high pressure time on acute care centers. These ED visits were from worried families whose children had minor illnesses and just needed counseling and reassurance.

From that point in time, presentation of such patients to EDs increased steadily. There was a clear need for a trusted and user friendly resource that would address the main questions and concerns parents have about the most common minor illnesses children experience, and that would allow for the confident home management of these patients.

The HEAL website aims to provide parents and caregivers with credible information regarding common childhood illnesses and injuries seen in pediatric EDs, as well as practical advice to care for their child with confidence, or help articulate their concerns to a health care provider. Information available includes a detailed description of the illness or injury, symptoms, treatment, and when to seek immediate medical attention.

The HEAL website also hosts videos to help families understand what

### HEAL TOPICS

CROUP  
COUGH  
COMMON COLD  
DIARRHEA  
EAR PAIN  
FEBRILE SEIZURES  
FEVER  
HEAD INJURIES  
NOSEBLEEDS  
RASHES  
VOMITING

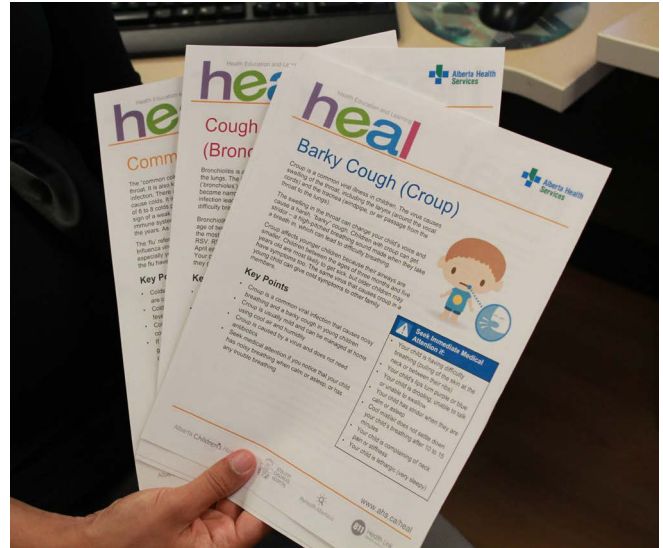
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# HEAL Online Resource

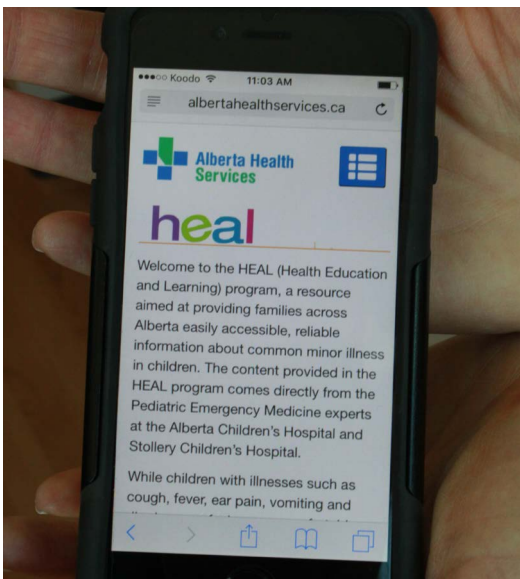
to expect when coming to the hospital, making both patients and parents more comfortable with their hospital experience. If patients reach a health care provider, PDF versions of the information on each topic can be printed and shared with families at the time of discharge.

All content has been designed by provincial experts and nursing staff in pediatric emergency medicine and the website has been reviewed by staff and families to ensure it is user-friendly, understandable, and easy to navigate. Information is also available in a mobile-friendly format so parents and families can access it from any device.

The new website is connected with the [AHS Know Your Options](#) campaign, which helps educate Albertans about the various health care options in their communities and provides accurate information on how to get the right care, in the right place for every family.



HEAL hosts informational videos and printable articles on a variety of common minor childhood illnesses and injuries



The website is mobile-friendly and accessible on any device.

The HEAL website is the foundation for a larger plan to develop a multi-media approach to providing a consistent educational message to the general community as well as health care providers across the province (and beyond!) on illness and injury management from pediatric emergency medicine experts.

There are plans for continued growth of the website to include other medical topics, including influenza (to be published shortly), but also to branch into other acute medical issues such as mental health crises and injury prevention. Future steps also include translations to common non-English languages to allow broader accessibility.

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## HEAL Online Resource

To promote awareness through educational sessions with parents and caregivers, numerous connections have been made with community stakeholders, including boards of education, medical and nursing schools, and public health clinics to begin work on developing a solid interactive community outreach program.



All physicians are encouraged to explore the website to enhance knowledge of common pediatric emergency presentations and to promote the resource to their patients as an empowerment tool. The organizing committee is also developing downloadable promotional material including bookmarks and postcards. Spread the word!

For further information, questions, or ideas/feedback, please contact [heal@ahs.ca](mailto:heal@ahs.ca).

