



Simply, the right choice.
COMMUNITY HEALTH PLAN

My CHP Connection

A quarterly health publication for Community Health Plan members

Spring 2006

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FREE RECIPE BOOK | for your feedback

Your opinion matters to us! After all, this publication is for you.

We've developed a simple survey to get your feedback on the health and plan information in this publication.

Simply complete the survey in the center of this issue, tear it at the perforated edge and drop it in the mail to us (no postage required).

By taking this quick survey, you will receive a free Community Health Plan

Wellness Recipe Book. Along with the tasty recipes, the Wellness Recipe Book will give you nutritional information for many of the recipes.

We feature a wellness recipe in each newsletter. For this issue, it's Classic Layered Salad!

All surveys must be returned by July 30, at which time we will mail out your Wellness Recipe Book.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE | and your teen

If you notice an unexplained change in your teen's normal behavior or activities, it may be a sign of substance abuse. Be sure to notice changes in your teen's appearance, friends and peer group, school performance and overall behavior. When you notice that your teen refuses to do chores, misses curfew regularly, creates a hostile or chaotic home environment and fre-

quently appears depressed, agitated or sleepy, you need to investigate further. Remember to maintain clear communication and set boundaries and rules.

In the side panel, we've included signs of addiction and behavioral signs to look for in your teen. If you have questions about substance abuse, Community Health Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week ... it's a free,

www.mychp.com

continued on Back Cover ...

ASTHMA MEDICINE | is it working?

If you have asthma, you know what an attack feels like. It isn't something you want to keep experiencing. Fortunately, with the right treatment plan, you should be able to stay free from symptoms — and free to live your life. The key is working with your health care provider to find the treatment plan that's most effective for you.

What does it mean to have your asthma under control? The goals are universal: little or no wheezing, coughing,

What if your medications aren't working? First, you should make sure that you're using them the right way and at the right time. Your "rescuer" medication should only be used if you feel an asthma attack coming on, and then you should take it at the earliest sign. If you're using your rescuer drug frequently, it may mean that your daily control medicine needs to be changed or the dosage increased, or you need to be more diligent about taking it.

If your medications aren't meeting your goals, see your health care provider. He or she will want to know how you're controlling triggers such as dust or pets, and to make sure you're using the right technique with an inhaler. Then, he or she

may prescribe a different medication. Make sure you know exactly how and when to use it, and be sure to tell your doctor about any side effects. Since your treatment plan is unique to you, it may take some time to find what works best. Be patient, be honest, and be willing to ask questions.

See your health care provider regularly — not just when you have problems — to make sure your medications are doing their jobs. Symptoms, triggers, side effects, and circumstances can change over time, so your treatment needs to keep up.

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Work with your doctor to create a written asthma management plan that includes the name, dosage, and purpose of each of your medications.

shortness of breath, or chest tightness; being able to sleep through the night without symptoms; not missing work or school because of asthma; being able to exercise or play sports without symptoms; no emergency room visits; and few or no side effects from your medications. Achieving these goals is within reach for almost anyone with asthma.

Medication Matters

The medications you take are a critical part of your treatment plan. Many asthma sufferers don't understand what their medications are for, or how to use them most effectively. To be in control of your life, start by knowing the facts.

There are two main types of asthma medications: rescuers and controllers. Rescuers are fast-acting "bronchodilators" that relax and open your airways to quickly relieve asthma symptoms. They're meant to be taken at the onset of an attack. Controllers are anti-inflammatory drugs that prevent symptoms, reduce inflammation in the lungs, and keep swelling in your airways down. Inhaled corticosteroids are the most common of these drugs. They prevent asthma attacks before they start, so they must be taken every day, even when you're feeling fine.



ALLERGIES | over-the-counter options

Sneezes, sniffles, watery eyes and general misery ... those are the signs of seasonal allergies. And that means a trip to the pharmacy. But are you picking the right medicines for your allergies?

There are hundreds of allergy-relief products to choose from. To choose wisely, you need to understand what you are allergic to, how each medication works and which symptoms they treat.

For instance, if you are allergic to pollen or mold, these allergens irritate your nasal passages. They become swollen and inflamed, causing sneezing, a runny nose, headache and congestion. If your eyes are irritated, they may water and itch.

So which medicine is right for you?

Antihistamines. An allergen causes your body to release a chemical called histamine. This chemical inflames the tissues in your nose and changes the mucus you produce. Antihistamine medications prevent histamine from affecting the nasal tissues.

Decongestants. As the nose tissues produce more fluid and mucus, you may feel congestion and pressure in your nose and head. You may even have trouble breathing through your nose. Decongestants help reduce the fluids. This relieves pressure and allows more air to flow through your nose.

Pain reliever. Each of these meds may also include a pain reliever for headaches and congestion.

These types of medicines come in many forms: pills, sprays, eye drops and syrups. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to help you pick the right medications. Be sure to ask if it will interact with any other medications you are taking, such as blood pressure meds.

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COMMUNITY health LINE

If you would like more information about allergies or over-the-counter options, contact Community Health Line at (816) 271-4000 or (800) 455-2476.

RESOLVING | your reflux

Everyone has had heartburn. Sometimes the muscle between the esophagus and the stomach doesn't close properly and stomach acids flow back up. But frequent acid reflux is a sign of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

Lifestyle factors have a big impact on GERD. But a new study finds that some of those factors are much more likely than others to cause the problem.

Researchers found that drinking coffee, tea, and alcohol didn't increase the risk of acid reflux. Instead, the most significant factors were things that we're warned

against for other health reasons: smoking and a high-salt diet.

The study found that being a smoker for one to five years boosts the odds of having acid reflux by 20 percent. Smoking for 20 years or more increases the risk to 70 percent. People who eat a high-salt diet also bumped up their risk of GERD by 70 percent.

Meanwhile, frequent exercise and dietary fiber were found to reduce the risk of acid reflux.

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READY | for your screen test?

There's no doubt that living a healthy lifestyle is the best way to stay well and avoid serious illnesses. You're on your way toward that goal if you follow the basic good-health principles — eating right, exercising, not smoking, and keeping your weight under control. But there's one more thing you should do: Stay on top of your preventive screenings.

Getting screened for cancer is worth your time and effort. That's because the earlier doctors detect it, the easier it is to treat — and perhaps even beat. Review these recommendations from the American Cancer Society (ACS), then make an appointment with your doctor to discuss the screening schedule that's best for you.

The Screenings You Need

Colorectal Cancer

WHY: Polyps can often be caught before they become cancerous. There is a 90 percent survival rate if colorectal cancer is treated early, before it has spread from the colon.

WHO: Men and women age 50 and older, and younger people with a family history of colon cancer.

HOW: Several screening methods can be used. These include the fecal occult blood test (FOBT), flexible sigmoidoscopy, X-ray of the colon with barium enema, and colonoscopy.

WHEN: The ACS recommends a FOBT every year or a sigmoidoscopy every five years (having both is preferred), an X-ray every five years, or a colonoscopy every 10 years.

Breast Cancer

WHY: Treatment of breast cancer is most successful

when tumors are small and the cancer has not yet spread outside of the breast.

WHO: All women.

HOW: A clinical breast exam (CBE) is a physical screening in which a physician feels for lumps in the breasts. A more effective screening is the mammogram, an X-ray of the breast that detects tumors that are too small to be felt with a physical exam.

WHEN: Women in their 20s and 30s should have a CBE at least once every three years. Women age 40 and over should have a CBE and a mammogram every year.

Cervical Cancer

WHY: Early detection of cervical cancer greatly improves the success of treatment. Most deaths from cervical cancer could be avoided if women were screened regularly.

WHO: All women.

HOW: The Pap test is the primary method of detection. The physician takes a sample of cells from the cervix, often during a regular gynecological exam.

WHEN: Women should begin having Pap tests within three years of their first sexual intercourse, but no later than age 21. Yearly Pap tests are recommended until the age of 30. Then after three normal Pap tests, women may begin getting screened every two to three years. Women at higher risk should continue with yearly Pap tests.

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Screening for prostate cancer is not as universally recommended as the other screenings. The ACS recommends that men age 50 and older be offered yearly screening with a digital-rectal exam (DRE) and a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. However, there may be drawbacks to screening, so be sure to discuss it with your physician.

YOUR ADOLESCENT | and wellness checkups

After years of regular and frequent health care visits with your infant and toddler, you might be inclined to slack off when your children reach adolescence. But it's just as important for preteens and teenagers to receive well-child care. Along with keeping your teenager healthy, regular visits teach adolescents that health care is a priority, and that their health is largely in their hands.

During adolescence, your health care provider will continue to track your child's physical, mental, and social development through yearly checkups. Although your child should have received all necessary childhood immunizations by now, booster shots for tetanus, diphtheria, and other diseases may be needed during adolescence. Blood pressure and cholesterol screenings may be in order too. And vision, hearing, and oral hygiene are on your health care provider's checklist.

Puberty brings on a host of body changes, and new health concerns. Boys may be taught about testicular self-exams. Girls may learn to conduct breast self-exams, and Pap smears may be ordered to look for cervical cancer and chlamydia.

Mental health is high on your health care providers priority list. Suicide is a leading cause of death among adolescents, and your provider will look for the signs that may indicate depression or other emotional problems.

Your provider will also give you guidance about the following:

- Sexual activities that may result in unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and herpes.
- Emotional, physical and sexual abuse.
- Use of alcohol and other substances, including anabolic steroids and weight-loss drugs.
- Use of tobacco products, including cigarettes and smokeless tobacco.
- Use of alcohol while driving.

- Use of cell phones while driving.
- Use of bicycle helmets, seat belts and protective sports gear.
- Resolving conflicts without violence.
- Learning problems or difficulties at school.
- Appropriate warm-ups before exercise and the importance of regular physical activity.

Off to College?

Is your child heading off to college? That brings a few special concerns all its own:

- Make sure to discuss drinking and its consequences.
- Make sure your student is up to date with his/her meningitis immunization.
- Teach the student when a health problem is serious enough to seek immediate help at the campus health center:
 - Fever of 102.5 degrees or higher.
 - A headache accompanied by a stiff neck.
 - Pain with urination.
 - An unusual discharge from the penis or vagina.
 - A change in the menstrual cycle.
 - Pain in the abdomen that will not go away.
 - A persistent cough, chest pain, or trouble breathing.
 - Pain, a rash or any other symptoms that seem unusual or last longer than they should.

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WELLNESS RECIPE | brought to you by Wellness Connections

Classic Layered Salad

- 1/2 cup light mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 large ripe tomato, cut into 8 wedges
- 4 cups torn iceberg lettuce
- 2 cups small cauliflower florets
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced red onion
- 1 tablespoon bottled real bacon bits

This salad wouldn't be the same without iceberg lettuce, which contrasts perfectly with the creamy mix of ingredients. Combine first 5 ingredients; stir well with a whisk. Arrange tomato wedges in bottom of a 2-quart serving bowl. Top with lettuce and cauliflower. Spread the mayonnaise mixture over cauliflower. Top with onion and bacon bits. Cover with plastic wrap, and chill 8 hours or overnight. Toss gently before serving.

Nutritional facts

Serves: 7
Calories: 65
Total fat: 2.4 g
Saturated fat: 0.8 g
Cholesterol: 2 mg
Sodium: 261 mg
Carbohydrates: 9.5 g
Fiber: 1.3 g
Protein: 2.1 g

NOW ONLINE!

Plan information now online!

You can now view plan information online. Just visit www.mychp.com, click on Member Newsletter on the left side of the home page and select Missouri DOI Plan Information to view the following topics:

Quality Improvement: focus on high quality services

For HMO Members: selecting your primary care provider

Women's Health Rights Act: of 1998

Emergency Care: coverage any time, any where

Appeals Process: your satisfaction

Care Management: review process

If you have primary health insurance other than Community Health Plan (CHP) ...

and you are receiving health care services from a provider that is non-participating with CHP, please contact us to see if these services meet criteria for prior authorization. We would like to extend our ability to coordinate with primary health insurance carriers for out-of-network services, when these services are medically necessary. If approved, we will coordinate benefits with the primary insurance carrier to assist in reducing your out-of-pocket expense with the non-participating provider.

5 WAYS | to save your back

As many people know all too well, suffering from back pain is a miserable experience. Back problems affect millions of Americans. Most are caused by simple mistakes in how we go about our daily lives. So a few basic reminders now might help you avoid a backache later.

The lower back is particularly vulnerable to injury. The daily strains of sitting, bending and lifting stress the spongy discs that cushion the vertebrae in that area. Much back pain can be avoided by following a few simple rules.

1. **Lift properly.** It's easy to throw out your back lifting a heavy box or even a fast-growing child.

So get in the habit of lifting properly, using your legs rather than your back:

- Bend at the knees and keep your back upright.
- Tighten your stomach muscles.
- Use both hands to grasp the object and hold it close to your body.
- Lift steadily with your legs. Don't jerk or twist.

2. **Exercise.** Lower-back and abdominal muscles work together to maintain the position of the back. Regular aerobic activity like walking or swimming is important. So is stretching to strengthen the muscles that support the spine, including those in the abdomen. Try this move:

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet on the floor close to your rear end.
- Bring one knee to your chest. Keep the other foot flat on the floor or straighten it, whichever feels best. Hold for five to 10 seconds. Return to the original position.
- Repeat with the other leg.

3. **Practice good posture.** Slouching takes the back out of its natural arch, which puts more stress on the vertebrae. Try using a lumbar support.

4. **Change positions frequently.** Avoid sitting in front of the television for prolonged periods of time. Even a

two-minute stretching and exercise break will improve flexibility and relieve pressure on your back.

5. **Watch how you work.** Many people are spending more time than ever sitting behind a desk. If you aren't careful, your back and neck can start bothering you. Follow these guidelines:

- If you work on a computer, make sure the top of the screen is level with your eyes.
- Sit back and support your upper body against the backrest.
- Keep your upper arms relaxed and by your side as you type.
- Don't forget to pause from time to time, shrug your shoulders and stretch.

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE | and your teen

... continued from Front Cover

confidential service. Just call
(816) 271-4000 or (800) 455-2476.

On the Web

For more information about alcohol and how to help keep your kids safe, check out the Mothers Against Drunk Driving Web site, www.madd.org. It's an excellent resource for parents and teens who want to be responsible about alcohol. There are links to related sites and plenty of advice for keeping family and friends safe.

Signs of addiction:
Hidden stashes of alcohol
Alcohol missing from your supply
Hangovers
Sick more often
Money missing
Valuables missing
Child "disappears" for long periods
Running Away
Makes phone calls to beepers
Secretive phone calls
Unusual containers, wrappers
Reports of intoxication at school
Desperation/withdrawal
Other drug-seeking behavior
Prescription medicine missing

Behavioral signs to look for:
Change in sleeping patterns
Bloodshot eyes
Slurred or agitated speech
Changes in grades
Complaints from teachers
Missing school
Furtive or secretive behavior
Locked doors
Change in friends or peer group
Change in clothing, appearance
Unusual smell on clothing or breath
Emotional instability
Hyperactive or hyper-aggressive
Depressed

This publication contains health information that is meant to complement your health care provider's advice, not to replace it. Before making changes in your medications, diet or exercise, talk to your doctor.

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