

Mindful Living

A publication on heart health and diabetes from BlueHealth Advantage

FALL 2011

Menu Planning? Try These 5 Heart-Smart Substitutions

The foods we eat play a big role in keeping our hearts healthy. Here's how to put heart-smart ideas into practice at your dining table:

1. Replace red meat with a few ounces of fatty fish, such as salmon. The oil in fish may steady the heart's rhythm and lower triglycerides—a blood fat linked to heart disease.

2. Season food with herbs and spices, rather than salt. Pay attention to sodium levels in the foods you choose, and aim to eat less than 1,500 mg of sodium each day. To put that in perspective, a half teaspoon of salt contains 1,200 mg.

3. Packing a lunch? Steer clear of processed foods, which are often high in sodium. Instead, include plenty of fruits and vegetables. For your heart's sake, you might want to choose potassium-rich ones, such as leafy greens, grapes and carrots. While sodium can raise blood pressure, potassium helps lower it.

4. Cook with olive oil instead of butter. Also avoid polyunsaturated vegetable oils, such as corn oil. Olive oil can lower LDL, or "bad," cholesterol and boost HDL, or "good," cholesterol.

5. Snack on walnuts, almonds and other unsalted nuts instead of chips or other refined carbohydrates, which can increase triglycerides. Nuts are high in alpha-linolenic acid, a substance that helps regulate heart rhythm.



pumpkin pie
makeover!

The recipe on page 3 gives traditional pumpkin pie a healthy update. Bake one for your next fall celebration!

You May Have Diabetes, But It Doesn't Have You

The perks of managing diabetes abound. You'll have more energy, feel less tired and thirsty, prevent infections and sores, and protect your heart, nerves, kidneys and other organs.

You can't make your diabetes disappear. But you don't have to be defined by your disease. Start with small steps, and view taking care of your health as part of your job.

Take charge by:

LEARNING ABOUT YOUR DISEASE.

Knowledge is power. Ask your doctor to recommend a class or a diabetes educator. Visit online resources like diabetes.org or yourdiabetesinfo.org.

CHARTING YOUR COURSE.

Good health is like any other goal. Get there by plotting steps along the way. Your diabetes care team will help you set targets and a plan of action.

STICKING WITH IT.

The day-to-day of diabetes care is in your hands. Follow your meal plan, take your medications and get moving for at least 30 to 60 minutes a day. Consult a friend, support group or counselor when you need a boost.

LEARN MORE ABOUT MEDS

Come to our free Diabetes Medication Education class, a 45-minute course that will discuss the drugs available to treat diabetes and how they help lower blood sugar. You'll leave feeling empowered to manage your condition, clinically and financially. Call **877-348-4329** for upcoming dates and times.



Answers on Exercising Safely with a Heart Problem

Whether you've had a heart attack or been diagnosed with coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure or another heart problem, it's more than likely exercise should play a role in your life. Physical activity is part of the standard treatment for most people with heart problems.

You probably have a lot of questions about how to exercise safely with heart disease. Here are answers to some commonly asked ones.

Q. Are some exercises better than others?

A. Aerobic activities that involve your whole body work best. Examples include walking, bicycling, jogging, cross-country skiing and swimming. Your doctor may suggest specific activities to increase your strength and flexibility.

Q. Are there general guidelines I should follow?

A. Keep the following in mind, as well as anything your doctor suggests:

- If you've recently had a heart attack or heart surgery, get your doctor's approval before you increase your activity level.
- Always carefully monitor your exercise intensity. Stay within your recommended heart-rate zone.
- Tell your doctor if you have any unusual symptoms before, during or after exercise.
- Exercise three to four times a week. Even as little as five to 10 minutes of exercise two or three times a day can provide benefits.
- Always warm up and cool down before and

after exercising. Walk slowly for five to 10 minutes, and do some gentle stretching.

- Carry nitroglycerin with you if you have a prescription for it.
- Don't push yourself too hard. If exercise causes discomfort, slow down—never work out to the point of chest pain or angina.

Q. Are there warning signs I should heed while exercising?

A. If you notice any of the following symptoms during or after exercising, call your doctor immediately. If they last longer than five minutes, call for emergency medical assistance:

- Squeezing, pressure, heaviness or tightness in your chest
- Light-headedness, confusion or dizziness
- Extreme exhaustion
- Shortness of breath
- Uneven or rapid heartbeat

Remember to always get your doctor's OK before starting a new exercise routine. He or she can recommend the best workouts and intensity levels for you.

free exercise seminar!

Join BlueHealth Advantage for Physical Activity and Your Heart, a free course that will help you understand the impact of exercise on your heart. You'll receive tips on how to get started and stay motivated, too. Call **877-348-4329** for upcoming dates and times.

Making Sense of Medication Messages in the News

Bad news tends to make for bigger headlines, feeding the public's thirst for drama. But when those headlines warn about a medication vital to you or a loved one, the news gets personal.

Suppose you hear a disturbing report about a heart or diabetes drug you take to maintain your health? How can you learn more?

When a drug has clearly been deemed hazardous, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) works with the drug company to inform the public of why the warning or recall has been issued. The FDA also advises people on what they should or shouldn't do about taking the drug.

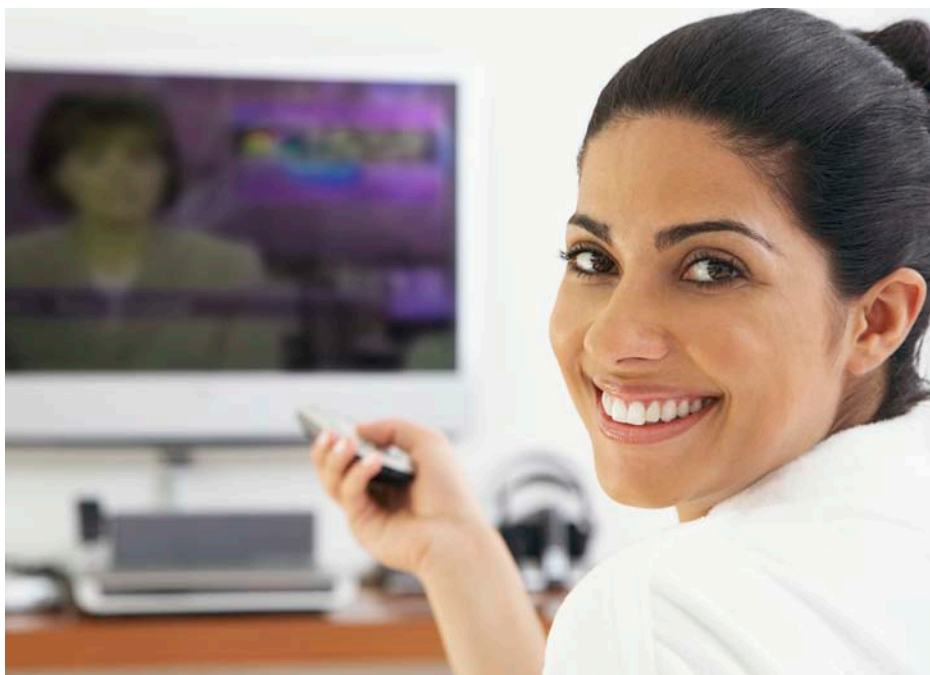
If the reports you're hearing aren't so clear-cut, take these steps:

- Read past the headline and listen past the sound bite. Important information you need will probably be found in the details.
- Don't stop using a prescribed drug unless the news report clearly advises you to do so and your doctor says it's OK.

- Switching over-the-counter painkillers may not be a big deal, but if you suddenly stop taking a medication that prevents blood clots without your doctor's go-ahead, you could put your health at risk.
- Contact your doctor or pharmacist if you're unsure what to do. He or she can offer advice and help you choose an alternative medication, if necessary.
- Visit the FDA website, fda.gov, for details about drug warnings or recalls. Click on "Drugs," then on "Safety Alerts (MedWatch)." You can also call the FDA's toll-free information line, 888-INFO-FDA (463-6332).

RX answers

If you have questions about a medication you take, talk with your doctor or pharmacist. Your health care team is there to answer your questions and make sure you stay healthy and safe.



Crunchy Pumpkin Pie

This pie only uses a small amount of oil in the crust and skim milk in the filling to make it heart-healthy.

For the crust:

- 1 cup quick-cooking oats
- ¼ cup whole wheat flour
- ¼ cup ground almonds
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 3 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 tsp. water

For the filling:

- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 egg, beaten
- 4 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- ⅔ cup evaporated skim milk

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. Mix oats, flour, almonds, sugar and salt together in small mixing bowl.
3. Blend oil and water together in measuring cup with fork or small whisk until emulsified.
4. Add oil mixture to dry ingredients and mix well. If needed, add small amount of water to hold mixture together.
5. Press into a 9-inch pie pan. Bake eight to 10 minutes, or until light brown.
6. Turn oven down to 350 degrees.
7. Mix sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt together in a bowl.
8. Add egg and vanilla. Mix to blend ingredients.
9. Add pumpkin and milk. Stir to combine. Pour into prepared pie shell.
10. Bake for 45 minutes at 350 or until knife inserted near center comes out clean.

Serves nine; each serving provides: Calories 177, Total fat 8 g (Saturated fat 1 g), Cholesterol 24 mg, Sodium 153 mg. Diabetic exchange: Servings from Carbohydrates 2; Servings from Fat 1½.





How to Reach Us

When it comes to managing your health, you're never alone. BlueHealth Advantage is your partner on the path to wellness. Program us into your cellphone, PDA or email contacts, and you can call or write whenever you have questions or need support:

Call: 877-348-4329

Fax: 800-255-2838

Email: wellness@bcbsne.com

Write: 1919 Aksarben Drive, P.O. Box 3248,
Omaha, NE 68180-0001


this issue's highlights:

- 1 5 Tips for Planning Meals and Snacks
- 2 Exercise Ideas and Info on a Free Seminar!
- 3 When a Drug You Use Is in the News



Mindful Living is provided to BlueHealth Advantage members by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. This information is intended to educate readers about subjects pertinent to their health and is not as a substitute for consultation with a personal physician. Your contract may not cover all services referenced in this publication. See your contract for coverage information.

© 2011 Printed in U.S.A.

10175M 



Avoid the Flu This Fall

Everyone knows the misery of having a cold or the flu—the sneezing, coughing, fever and body aches. What can you do to protect yourself? Get a flu shot every fall. This vaccine is recommended for nearly everyone ages 6 months and older.

The next line of defense against viruses? Taking these steps for proper hygiene.

Keep Your Hands Clean

Washing your hands keeps germs from spreading. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends washing them before, during and after you prepare food, as well as after you use the bathroom, change a child's diaper, touch garbage or pet an animal.

Don't be hasty when you wash your hands. Lather up with soap

and water, and scrub for at least 20 seconds—about the time it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song. Remember to include the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.

Soap and water are the best way to clean hands, but an alcohol-based sanitizing hand gel will do in a pinch.

Keep Your Distance

Colds and the flu spread when a sick person sneezes or coughs, so avoid getting too close to someone who is ill. When you are sick, stay home if you can. Otherwise, take care so that people around you don't catch your illness. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, but not with your hand. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.

what's new with the flu?

For a fast and easy way to browse the latest headlines related to the flu, visit livewellnebraska.com. Click on the “Flu & Colds” tab under “Health & Medicine.”