

Mindful Living

A publication on heart health and diabetes from BlueHealth Advantage

WINTER 2012



HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE May Harm Your Brain

We know that high blood pressure is bad for the heart, but experts are learning that it may also harm another key organ: the brain. This makes it even more important to keep close tabs on your blood pressure.

A study published in the journal *Neurology*¹ examined nearly 20,000 people around the country. Those with higher diastolic blood pressure—the number on the bottom—were more likely to have problems with thinking, learning and memory.

How could hypertension affect the mind? It reduces the amount of blood, nutrients and oxygen that reach the brain, causing damage over time. Brain tangles and plaques, found in people with Alzheimer's, also seem to form more often in people with hypertension.

If your blood pressure is high, controlling it may reduce your risk for cognitive problems, heart attack, stroke and other conditions. Talk with your doctor about making lifestyle changes such as the following:

- Losing weight if you're overweight
- Eating a healthy diet that's low in fat and sodium
- Exercising regularly
- Quitting smoking, if you smoke

Also ask your doctor whether you need blood pressure medications. If you do, take them as directed even after your high blood pressure is controlled.

¹*Neurology*, vol. 73, Aug. 2009

free Alzheimer's seminar

Join BlueHealth Advantage and the Alzheimer's Association for an overview of the disease, including the facts, myths, possible causes and caregiving. The course, called *The Basics of Alzheimer's Disease*, lasts about an hour and takes place several times throughout the year. Call **877-348-4329** for upcoming dates and locations.



Share Your Medicine Schedule

From shopping to decorating to traveling, the holiday season is hectic. It's easy to forget to take your daily medicines. To help you remember, why not share your medicine schedule with a close friend or family member? It's a great way to stay on track—not just during the holidays, but every day.

To keep up with your medicines, follow these tips from the American Academy of Family Physicians:

- **Create a written schedule.** You can ask your doctor to help you. For each medicine, list the name, the dose, how often you take it and the time of day. Also write down why you take it, such as for “blood pressure,” “breathing” or “cholesterol.” Include any over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbal medicines you take regularly and medication you take as needed.
- **Share your schedule with a family member or close friend.** He or she can help you remember to take your medicines on a daily basis or while traveling. And making sure someone else has your schedule is important in case a health emergency leaves you unable to communicate.
- **Post it.** Keep your schedule on the refrigerator or another place where you'll see it every day.
- **Keep it current.** Whenever your medicines change, update the list on your schedule and replace all outdated lists.
- **Give a copy to each doctor you see.** Your doctors need to know about all your medicines to make sure they can be safely taken together.
- **If you are admitted to the hospital or need to call 911, bring a copy with you.** When you're ready to go home, have a nurse or pharmacist review your schedule and add any new medicines.

For your convenience, we've included a blank chart below to get you started.

Diabetes and the A1c Test

Ever since you were diagnosed with diabetes, you test your blood sugar daily. So why do you need an A1c test every few months?

The tests you do yourself tell you what your blood sugar is at that moment. The results can help you learn how food, exercise and stress affect your blood sugar. If you use insulin, daily tests help you adjust your dosage.

The A1c test measures your blood sugar control over the past two to three months. It can help your doctor:

- Confirm that your treatment plan is working
- See if your medication schedule needs to be adjusted
- Suggest healthy choices to keep your diabetes in check

Doctors usually set an A1c target of 7 percent or lower. However, your doctor's advice may vary.

Your A1c should be tested two to four times a year. How often you need the test depends on how well your blood sugar is managed and whether you've recently changed diabetes medications.

pharm facts

Join BlueHealth Advantage to talk about pharmaceuticals: Why they're prescribed, how to make the most of your treatment and tips for taking medications correctly. Importance of Taking Your Medications is a free, one-time, 45-minute class. Call **877-348-4329** for dates, times and locations.

MY MEDICATION SCHEDULE: *Cut out, complete & post!*

DATE BEGAN	NAME OF MEDICINE	HOW MUCH DO I TAKE & WHEN?	WHY DO I TAKE IT?	SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS*

*For example, should it be taken on an empty stomach or with food?



5 Tips to Head Off Holiday Weight Gain

Do you have a weakness for your sister's cherry cheesecake, Aunt Jenny's casserole or cousin Beth's cookies? The holiday season is filled with tasty obstacles that can trip up your weight-loss goals. These five tips from the American Heart Association can help you get through the holiday season without gaining weight.

- 1. Be realistic.** It's no fun to be stressed out about losing weight during the holidays. Instead, aim to hold the line at your current weight.
- 2. Shop smart.** Celebrate the season with festive and healthy items. Look for fat-free eggnog, apple cider, unsalted nuts, whole-grain crackers, fresh vegetable and fruit platters and low-fat dips.
- 3. Keep hunger in check.** Have a light snack before going to a party so that you won't be famished and overdo it.
- 4. Enjoy yourself.** Eat your favorite foods, but in small portions. Go easy on high-calorie beverages and be choosy at the buffet table—you don't have to sample everything.

- 5. Make time for exercise.** It's a great way to burn calories and lower stress. Get up a half hour early so that you can fit it in. Walk a lap around the mall before gift shopping. Reconnect with family by making a holiday hike or other activity a new tradition.

These same tactics can help you cope with birthday parties and other special occasions during the year. If you do overindulge, don't dwell on it. Just get back to your exercise and eating plan the next day. With a little care, you can enjoy that cheesecake without having to loosen your belt a notch.

eat & greet

The No. 1 question asked by people with diabetes: Which foods are OK for me to eat? **Get key tips—and a free breakfast—at our special event focused on healthy eating and diabetes.** Call BlueHealth Advantage at **877-348-4329** for the date, time and location. Space is limited, so don't delay!

a new holiday classic! Winter Crisp

Only 1 tablespoon of margarine is used to make the crumb topping of this tart and tangy fruit dessert that is cholesterol free and low in sodium.

Filling

- ½ cup sugar
- 3 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. grated lemon peel
- ¾ tsp. lemon juice
- 5 cups unpeeled, sliced apples
- 1 cup cranberries

Topping

- ⅔ cup rolled oats
- ⅓ cup brown sugar, packed
- ¼ cup whole wheat flour
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tbsp. soft margarine, melted

Directions

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Prepare filling by combining sugar, flour and lemon peel in a medium bowl. Add lemon juice, apples and cranberries; stir to mix. Spoon into a 6-cup baking dish.
- To prepare topping, combine oats, brown sugar, flour and cinnamon in a small bowl. Add melted margarine; stir to mix.
- Sprinkle topping over filling. Bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until filling is bubbly and top is brown. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Serves six; serving size is 1¾-by-2-inch piece. Each serving provides: Calories 284, Total fat 6 g (Saturated fat 1 g), Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 56 mg.





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** How Blood Pressure Affects the Brain
- 3** Try Our Healthy Recipe for Cran-Apple Crisp!
- 3** Winter Weight Gain? Not This Year!



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Got a Minute? Make It Healthy

Many simple but important steps take just minutes while having a huge impact on your health. For example, in less than five minutes, you can:

- **Wash your hands.** Doing so can reduce your risk of spreading germs or getting sick. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based antibacterial gel.
- **Fasten your seat belt.** Buckling up will lower your chances of dying in a motor vehicle accident.
- **Read food labels.** Finding out how much fat, cholesterol and sodium are in the foods you eat can help you make healthier choices.
- **Fight off the urge to smoke.** When you want to light up, take deep breaths, drink a glass of water or suck on a hard candy.
- **Keep foods safe.** To steer clear of food-borne illnesses, stick leftovers in the fridge within two hours, wash fruits and vegetables before you eat them and cook meat and eggs thoroughly.
- **Get essential vitamins.** It takes just minutes to eat an apple or snack on celery. When you do, you're getting nutrients that may help prevent diseases.
- **Check the batteries in your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.** This simple step could save your life.
- **Prepare for doctor visits.** Make a list of all the medicines and supplements you take. Write down a list of questions to ask, too. Later, take a few minutes to follow up. Call your doctor if you don't hear about the results of lab or other tests.



ready for more? Take our monthly health challenge! Choose "Tools and Programs" at BlueHealthAdvantageNE.com to find this season's topics.