



# Wellness Connection

## Take a Ministroke Seriously



Sometimes called a ministroke, a transient ischemic attack (TIA) usually occurs when blood flow to the brain is blocked, just like a stroke. A ministroke is also a major warning sign: About one-third of people who have a TIA go on to have a stroke within a year.

### MINISTROKE VS. STROKE

A TIA comes and goes quickly, often lasting just a few minutes and leaving no permanent damage.

Strokes, on the other hand, cause long-term brain damage. After a stroke, a person may have difficulty speaking, swallowing, or moving an arm or leg. Many people eventually recover, but sometimes the damage is permanent.

### SHARED SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a TIA and stroke are the same. According to the American Stroke Association, they come on suddenly and can include:

- Weakness or numbness on one side of the body
- Trouble speaking or understanding others
- Loss of vision
- Confusion
- Severe headache with no known cause
- Dizziness or loss of balance

### BOTH ARE EMERGENCIES

If you think you are having a TIA or stroke, call 911 or your local emergency number right away. If it is a stroke, quick treatment can prevent brain damage. If it's a TIA, the right medicines can prevent a future stroke. ■

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### Smoking Increases Your Stroke Risk

Take steps to quit today. Stay motivated by thinking about what you can do with the money you'll save by not buying cigarettes. Get the exact amount with our online Cost of Smoking Calculator at [www.bluehealthadvantageNE.com](http://www.bluehealthadvantageNE.com).

## Is Barefoot Running Better?

Humans ran shoeless for millions of years, but today's runners have typically preferred lots of rubber between their feet and the road. That may be changing.

Cushioned shoes may actually cause runners to hit the ground harder, landing heel first. As a result, feet and ankles take a beating. Barefooted runners tend to land on the ball of the foot, or flat-footed. This causes the ankle to flex, reducing the force on feet and legs, and it may offer more protection against injury.

If you're curious but don't want to completely bare your sole, many companies now offer thinner, more flexible shoes that mimic barefoot running. One version even comes with separate toe compartments.

### Attention, Runners and Walkers!

Save the date for one of our sponsored runs or walks this fall. They're a fun way to exercise while supporting a good cause. See the back cover of this issue for upcoming events.

## Fibromyalgia: When Pain Takes Over

From paper cuts to stubbed toes, pain is an occasional part of life. But for about 5 million Americans, most of them women, aching and soreness loom large every day.

These individuals have fibromyalgia, a condition marked by chronic pain, fatigue, and trouble sleeping. Other symptoms include headaches, stiffness in the morning, memory problems, and tingling hands and feet.

Scientists aren't sure what causes fibromyalgia. It may occur when the brain and spinal cord don't process pain properly. Some people get fibromyalgia after trauma or injury, but others develop it spontaneously.

### SEEKING AN ANSWER

Fibromyalgia is difficult to identify. Some doctors may conclude the pain isn't real or that it can't be treated. For help, find a doctor with experience treating fibromyalgia. Consider a family physician, general internist, or rheumatologist who specializes in arthritis and other joint conditions.

There's no lab test or scan for fibromyalgia. You'll be diagnosed if you have:

- Symptoms for at least three months
- Pain all over your body—on the left and right, and above and below the waist
- 11 or more tender points that hurt when pressed



### TREATMENT BRINGS RELIEF

Lifestyle changes, medications, or a combination of the two can improve symptoms. Your doctor may prescribe:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy, a specific type of psychological treatment that teaches coping skills to reduce feelings of hopelessness
  - Painkillers, antidepressants, muscle relaxers, or anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen or aspirin
- To ease pain and fatigue:

- **Exercise.** Try gentle activities such as swimming, walking, biking, or tai chi.
- **Seek alternatives.** Therapies outside mainstream medicine, such as acupuncture or massage, may help. Talk with your doctor first.
- **Set a sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at the same times every day, even on weekends. Make sure your bedroom is dark and quiet. ■

## Check Out Our New Website!

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska launched a newly designed website in April, [www.nebraskablue.com](http://www.nebraskablue.com). The new site offers a relevant, engaging, and personal online experience. It features a fresh look, easy navigation, access to online member services, and health care reform information. Visit it today!

And remember, you can reach us with questions about billing, benefits, or claims by calling Member Services, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Central time), at 888-592-8960 (toll-free). You can also write us at P.O. Box 3248, Omaha, NE 68180-0001. For information about our products and services, call 877-881-2583 (toll-free).



# Berry, Berry Good!

**B**erries are the darling of dietitians, but kids love them, too. That's because they're full of flavor as well as flavonoids, healthy plant chemicals that provide antioxidant benefits to our bodies.

In fact, berries are practically famous for their health-promoting properties. It's a rare list of "superfoods" that doesn't include the mighty blueberry, thanks to its antioxidant power. What's more, berries are low-calorie and virtually fat-free, making them an ideal snack for kids and adults alike.

Favor fresh berries when they're in season; the flavor can't be beat. Refrigerate fresh berries immediately and use them within a few days of bringing them home. Frozen berries

are always in season and always convenient—just be sure you're choosing ones without added sugar.

Now, what to do with all those berries? Use them to top your morning cereal or pancakes, chop them up and toss them with leafy greens and balsamic dressing, or stir them into your yogurt. Be creative with your berry bounty!

Get the kids into the act, too: Take them shopping in the produce aisle or at the farmers market, and ask them to pick a new berry for a meal or snack. Depending on the season, your choices may include blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, boysenberries, loganberries, cranberries, cloudberry, mulberries, and cowberries. ■



## Berry-Banana Smoothie

### Ingredients

1 banana  
1 cup blueberries  
1 cup fat-free vanilla yogurt  
1 cup low-calorie cranberry juice  
1 cup chopped ice

### Directions

Put all ingredients in a blender and give it a whirl. Pour into two 16-ounce glasses.

Serves two; each serving provides: Calories 170, Fat <1 g (Saturated fat 0 g), Trans fat 0 g, Cholesterol 0 g, Sodium 89 mg, Fiber 3 g, Sugars 27 g, and Protein 5 g.

## Try These Recipes, Too!

Cool down a hot summer day with a creamy, low-fat smoothie or yogurt pop.

## Frozen Raspberry Yogurt Pops

### Ingredients

1½ cups fresh raspberries (one 6-oz. container)  
1 cup fat-free light vanilla yogurt

### Directions

Mash berries in a small bowl. Stir in yogurt. Divide into four pops—paper cups work fine—and freeze at least two hours.

Serves four; each serving provides: Calories 52, Fat <1 g (Saturated fat 0 g), Trans fat 0 g, Cholesterol 0 g, Sodium 25 mg, Fiber 3 g, Sugars 6 g, and Protein 2 g.



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## OUR COMMUNITY



### Save the Date: Upcoming Runs and Walks

Summer is the perfect time to begin training for a fall run or walk. Join us for one of these local fund-raising events, proudly sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska:

- **Sunday, September 18:** Omaha's Corporate Cup Run, benefiting the American Lung Association. Choose the 10K run or 2-mile walk. Visit [www.omahacorporatecup.org](http://www.omahacorporatecup.org).
- **Thursday, September 22 (Lincoln's Holmes Lake) or October 6 (Omaha's Heartland of America Park):** Light the Night Walk, a 1.5-mile walk for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Visit [www.lightthenight.org/NE](http://www.lightthenight.org/NE).
- **Sunday, October 2 (Omaha's Qwest Center):** Race for the Cure, a 5K that raises money for the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Visit [www.komennebraska.org](http://www.komennebraska.org).

### Skin Cancer Rates Still Climbing

Rates of nonmelanoma skin cancer—the most common kind—are rising. In the journal *Archives of Dermatology*, researchers estimated that more than 2 million Americans were treated for nonmelanoma cancer in 2006. That's about twice as high as the last estimate from 1994. To protect your skin, avoid excessive sun exposure:

- Try to stay indoors between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., the peak hours of the day.
- Wear a hat with a brim and a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.

### The High Price of Heels

Some women love the look of stilettos, but frequently wearing high-heeled shoes can change your leg's anatomy and lead to foot problems.

A study in the *Journal of Experimental Biology* found that wearing shoes with a 2-inch or higher heel can shorten the calf muscle and create a thicker, stiffer Achilles tendon. That can lead to reduced ankle flexibility and pain.

One solution is to limit the amount of time you spend in heels, alternating them with flats for part of the day.

Keep your feet in good shape with flexibility exercises, such as using your toes to pick up a marble or pull a small towel. Walking barefoot in the sand also conditions feet.