

health sense

Things to Know

High cholesterol

Our veins and arteries are like a highway for blood. But sometimes there's a traffic jam.

This can happen if we have too much cholesterol.

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance in the blood. If there's too much, it can build up inside your arteries. This makes it hard for blood to pass through and could cause a heart attack.

To control or prevent high cholesterol:

Watch what you eat. Limit foods high in cholesterol and fat. These include meat, egg yolks, dairy products and baked goods. Choose lean meat and low-fat or nonfat milk and cheese.

Keep an eye on your weight. Being too heavy raises your cholesterol level.

Stay fit. Get 30 minutes of brisk exercise, such as walking, 5 days a week. Also do

strength exercise, such as lifting weights, twice a week.

Get tested. Ask your doctor about checking your cholesterol.

Sources: American Heart Association; National Cholesterol Education Program



Are those jingle bells giving you a headache?

You're not alone: Too much holiday stress is no fun.

There can be a lot of pressure this time of year. There are meals to cook, presents to wrap, company on the way and a house to clean—quick!

So how can you cope?

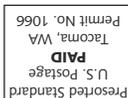
Get real. There are only so many hours in the day. If your house isn't decorated or you need to skip a holiday event, it's OK.

Control spending. Buying gifts you can't afford will stress you out long after the holidays are over. Plan a budget before shopping, or consider making your gifts.

Make connections. Keep the focus on friends and family and having fun.

Take care of yourself. If you're feeling too much stress, take a break. Try a nap or a brisk walk around the block. It can help you feel better.

Source: American Psychological Association





Blood pressure matters in kids

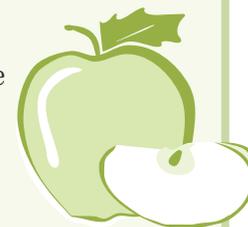
Obesity is a growing problem for many kids. And that extra weight can bring another health problem into your child's life: high blood pressure.

Kids with high blood pressure are at risk for other serious health problems. As adults, they are more likely to have heart disease or stroke.

Your child should have yearly blood pressure checks, starting at 3 years old. Talk to your child's provider about whether your child's blood pressure is in a healthy range.

To help your child get a heart-healthy start in life, encourage:

- Lots of physical activity. Exercise helps control blood pressure. And it can help an overweight child lose weight.
- A good diet. Limit salt and high-fat foods. Provide fruits, veggies and whole grains.



Source: American Heart Association

You may say that you hope never to have a heart attack. But you can do a lot more than hope. You can take action.

Healthy habits help prevent heart disease and heart attack. Start with these important steps:

Avoid tobacco. Smoking is a huge risk factor for heart disease. All forms of tobacco smoke can hurt your heart, including:
 » Cigarettes. » Cigars. » Pipes.
 » Secondhand smoke.

If you smoke, talk to your provider for help in quitting.

Be more active. Exercise helps keep the heart and blood vessels healthy. It also helps control other problems that can affect heart health, like high blood pressure and

high cholesterol.

To do your heart the most good, try to exercise for 30 minutes on 5 or more days of the week.

Even a little exercise is good for you. If you aren't active now, try 5 minutes of exercise to start. Gradually add more until you are doing 10 minutes, then 15 and so on.

If you find it hard to fit in a longer workout, even 10-minute chunks of activity can add up in favor of your heart.

Talk to your provider before getting started if you haven't exercised in a while or have other health issues.

Choose good nutrition.

Poor eating habits can lead to problems that harm the heart. You might gain too much weight or develop high blood pressure or diabetes.

Go for heart-smart foods, such as:

- Fruits and veggies.

- Whole-grain and high-fiber foods.
- Fish and lean protein.
- Low-fat or nonfat dairy products.

Know the signs

You can save a life by knowing heart attack signs and getting help right away. Call 911 for:

- Chest discomfort that lasts more than a few minutes or comes and goes. This may feel like pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain in the middle of the chest.
- Discomfort in other parts of the upper body, such as one or both arms or the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. This may happen before or along with chest discomfort.

Other signs can include cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness.

Remember, it is never too early—or too late—to get on track to a healthy heart.

Source: American Heart Association

» action

take Want to quit smoking? Call the California Smokers' Helpline at 800-NO-BUTTS (800-662-8887).

Free programs and services

At Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP), we want to help you be healthier. That's why we offer these free programs and services for your family.

Text for a healthier baby

Get free text messages each week on your cell phone to help you through your pregnancy and your baby's first year. The messages talk about shots your baby needs, healthy eating, flu, prenatal care, emotional well-being, breastfeeding, preventing birth defects, oral health, car seat safety, exercise and fitness, safe sleep, family violence, and more.

How it works. Signing up is easy and can be done from your cell phone:

- For English, text **BABY** to **511411**.

- For Spanish, text **BEBE** to **511411**.

- To stop getting texts, text **STOP** to **511411**.

To register online, go to <http://text4baby.org>.

When you sign up, you will be



asked to enter your baby's due date or birthday and your ZIP code.

Free Healthy Living supplies

CCHP offers health education through the Healthy Living Program. We give away supplies like books and tapes to help you live well. We have:

- Diabetes and asthma booklets and video tapes.
- Healthy cookbooks.
- Exercise DVDs.
- Cleaning supplies to rid your

home of asthma triggers (limited supply).

A nurse can talk with you about the many ways to live healthy. Our Healthy Living Program is here to help you meet your health care needs. Please call **925-313-6917** today and ask about these free supplies.

Free book for parents

CCHP offers a free book, *What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick*, to parents of young children. There are many things you can do at home for your child. This is an easy-to-read, easy-to-use book. This book tells you:

- When to call a doctor.
- How to take your child's temperature.
- What to do when your child has the flu.
- What to feed your child when he or she is sick.
- What to do in a real emergency.

To request a copy of this free book, call CCHP at **925-313-6917**.

Know the truth about energy drinks

Do your kids turn to energy drinks for a quick pick-me-up?

Those drinks claim to do a lot. For example, some claim to help you concentrate and stay alert.

But energy drinks may have at least as much caffeine as coffee and much more than a soda.

Energy drinks can boost energy, but they may also:

- Make the heart beat faster.
- Raise blood pressure.
- Keep you from getting the sleep you need.

Having an energy drink once in a while probably isn't a problem. But it's best to offer your child other choices without caffeine.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Source: National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB)

Learning to live with diabetes

If your provider just told you that you have diabetes, you might feel overwhelmed. But try not to worry. You'll learn how to manage it.

First, you'll want to know how to control diabetes so you'll feel better. You'll also lower your risk for other serious conditions. These include heart and eye diseases and stroke.

You'll probably have a lot of questions. What can I eat? Will I need to take shots? What makes my blood sugar get too high or too low?

Be sure to ask your health care team any questions you have.

Learn all you can about diabetes, and take charge of your health.

Here are some steps to get started.

If you have diabetes, you'll want to learn how to control the disease so you'll feel better.

Eat well. Your provider or a dietitian can help you plan healthy meals. They will include a good balance of lean meats, vegetables, fruits and whole grains.

Keep active. Walking, swimming and other kinds of exercise can help you control diabetes. Along with eating well, exercising can help you lose weight if you are overweight.

Take your medicine. If your provider says you

need pills or insulin shots, follow your provider's directions.

Check and record your blood sugar. Your provider can tell you when and how often to do this. When you track your blood sugar, you can see how well you are controlling your diabetes.

There are other things you can do to stay healthy: » Control stress. » Brush and floss your teeth every day. » Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots and swelling. » Don't smoke.

Ask your health care team how to keep your blood pressure and cholesterol levels under control. Find out how often you need checkups. Learn what kinds of problems your provider needs to know about right away.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institutes of Health



You can choose a healthy diet

If you have diabetes, you don't have to eat special, sugar-free foods. But you do need to follow a healthy diet.

Eating the right foods can help you control your blood sugar. It can also help you manage your weight.

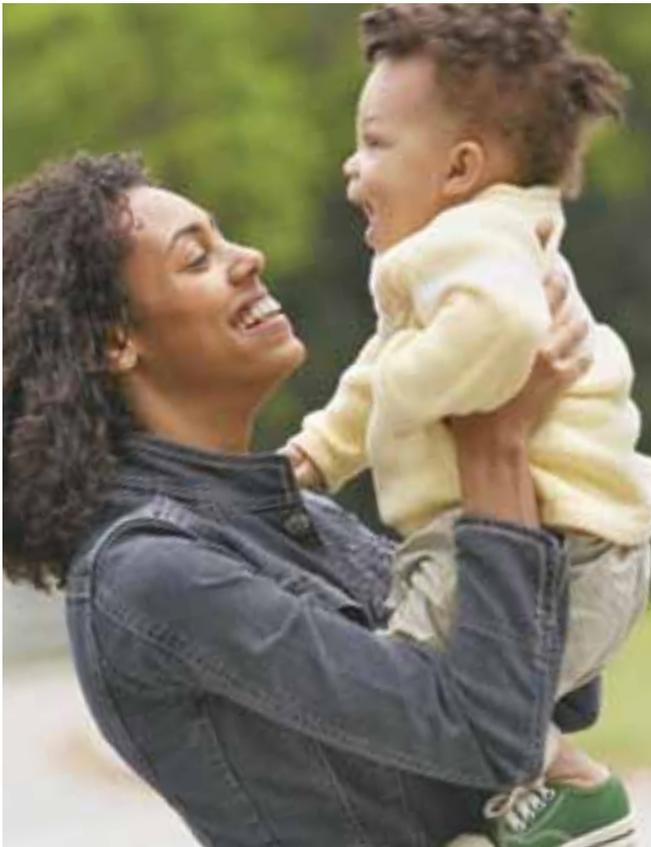
The best thing to do is to work with your health care team to make a healthy eating plan. You can still eat your favorite foods as part of the plan.

When you follow your plan, you will:

- Balance what you eat with how much you exercise.
- Choose whole-grain foods, such as whole-wheat bread.
- Watch the amount you eat.
- Eat plenty of fruits and veggies.
- Choose non-starchy vegetables—like lettuce, carrots and green beans.
- Eat lean meats, chicken without skin and fish.



Source: American Diabetes Association



Is your child overweight?

There are good tools to measure body fat in children. Because children are growing, their weight changes all the time. Body mass index (BMI) percentiles can tell you if your child is in a healthy weight range. Your child's BMI percentile shows how he or she compares to other children of the same age. For example, if your child is in the 85th percentile, that means he or she is heavier than what is considered healthy for kids the same age, height and sex. Your doctor can help you determine your child's BMI percentile. Ask the doctor for your child's BMI percentile next time you are in for a well-child exam.



What BMI percentile is my child?

Weight status	Percentile range
Underweight	1st through 4th percentile
Healthy weight	5th through 84th percentile
Overweight	85th through 94th percentile
Obese	95th through 100th percentile

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics

Pertussis alert

Whooping cough (pertussis) is on the rise in California. It can cause coughing fits so bad that it makes it hard to breathe. It can be a very serious disease. Babies are most at risk, and some have died from it. Newborn babies are too young to get the pertussis shot. To protect your newborn, make sure you and the people around your baby get the pertussis shot. Those who need to get up-to-date with their shots are:

- Anyone who lives with your baby.
- Anyone who takes care of your baby.
- Anyone who is around your baby.
- You as a new mom to protect your baby.

Talk to your doctor about when babies and kids should get the pertussis shot. Usually a series of shots are given to babies at 2, 4 and 6 months of age. The next shot is given at 15 to 18 months of age. Another shot is given when a child enters school, at 4 to 6 years old.

Source: California Department of Public Health, Immunization Branch

Autism screening

At your baby's next checkup, the doctor may screen your child for a disorder called autism.

All kids between 18 and 24 months old should be checked, even if there is no sign of a problem.

Signs of autism usually start before a child is 3 years old. A child with autism may not:

- Turn to look when you point at something.
- Turn when you say his or her name.
- Point at objects.
- Babble or talk.
- Make eye contact.

A child with autism also may not want to be held or cuddled. Or a child may flap his or her arms or rock side to side.

Talk to your child's doctor if you have concerns.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics



Seniors: Staying connected

One of the best ways to live well is to keep connected to people.

There are many ways to do that, and you can find the ways that work best for you.

Maybe you would like to have your grandchildren over for a game night. You could join a walking club. Or you might visit the senior center for a meal now and then.

These are all ways to keep involved. And that's good for your health.

Why it's important

Relationships have lots of benefits.

They may help you: » Stay sharp. » Live longer. » Be healthier.

» Stay more active. » Have less pain.

Get involved

There are many ways to stay connected to others.

You might:

- Volunteer at a local school or your place of worship.
- Attend religious and other community events.
- Start a game-playing night.
- Join a club, such as for knitting or bird-watching.
- Check with your local senior center for programs or services.

Friendships aren't limited to the people in your life, either.

Pets can bring great joy, love and



meaning. Visit the local animal shelter if you'd like to give an animal a good home. You'll get a good friend in return.

Source: AARP



Timely access to care

Beginning Jan. 17, 2011, Contra Costa Health Plan will adopt new standards for timely access.

Appointment wait times will be set for our primary care physicians (PCPs), specialists and other health professionals.

Telephone wait times

You have access to our Advice Nurse Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If a call back is needed, it must be within 30 minutes. You can call the Advice Nurse Unit at **877-661-6230 (press 1)**.

Speak to Member Services at **877-661-6230 (press 2)** within 10 minutes during normal business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

Type of medical appointment	Appointment wait times
Routine/follow-up	10 business days
Ancillary services such as x-rays, prescriptions, lab tests, physical therapy	15 business days
Mental health	10 business days
Specialist	15 business days
Urgent care for services that do not require prior approval	48 hours of request
Urgent care for services that do require prior approval	96 hours of the request
Emergency	Immediate

NOTE: Health care providers can be flexible in making appointments if a longer waiting time is not harmful to the member's health. It must be noted in the member's record that a longer waiting time will not be harmful to the member.

Relief from common bugs

A minor illness can be a major pain. Even a simple cold can have a long list of symptoms.

You might get a stuffy nose and sore throat. You may have a headache all day.

Unfortunately, there's no fast cure for many common bugs. That's because most result from viruses.

Antibiotics can't make a cold virus go away. You just have to wait it out. Usually that means you'll be sick for 1 or 2 weeks.

But you can take steps to feel better. Here's how:

- Make sure you get lots of sleep.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Stay away from cigarette smoke and other air pollution.

If you have a stuffy nose, try:

- Petroleum jelly to soothe the raw area under your nose.
- Saline nasal spray for congestion.

To cut down on coughing:

- Run a humidifier.



You can take steps to feel better as your body heals.

- Inhale steam from a hot shower.

To soothe a sore throat:

- Suck on lozenges. (Don't give these to young kids.) Ice chips can help too.
- Gargle with ½ cup of warm water mixed with ¼ teaspoon of salt.

To ease an earache:

- Cover the sore ear with a warm, damp cloth.
- Try pain-relieving eardrops.

For babies 3 months and younger, call your child's provider at the first sign of illness. For an older child with a cold, see your child's provider if symptoms don't get better.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Using antibiotics the right way

When you're sick, you want to feel better fast. Knowing what drugs can work may help.

Antibiotics aren't always best. They treat illnesses caused by bacteria. These include: » Strep throat. » Staph.

These drugs won't help if you have a virus. Viruses cause bugs such as: » Colds. » Flu. » Sore throats (except strep).

What happens if you do take an antibiotic for a virus? First,

you'll still be sick.

Then when you really need these drugs, they might not work.

So if you have a virus:

- Don't ask for antibiotics.
- Don't take ones that are for someone else.

Your provider will know if you need antibiotics. If you do need them, be sure to take them the way your provider asks you to.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



The way to wash

Looking for an easy way to keep everyone in your family healthy?

Remind them to wash their hands. You can help stop the spread of germs by keeping your hands clean.

So scrub up several times a day. Do it before cooking and eating. And wash after using the bathroom, coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Cauliflower-potato bake

Ingredients

- 1 medium yellow or white potato, peeled and cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 medium red pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 cups cauliflower florets, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon garlic granules or powder
- ¼ teaspoon onion granules or powder
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons skim or reduced-fat (2%) milk
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh Italian parsley for garnish

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Spray a 9-inch baking dish with canola or olive oil cooking spray and set aside.
- In medium bowl, toss potato, red pepper and cauliflower with oil and garlic and onion granules. Add salt and pepper to taste.
- Transfer vegetables to prepared baking dish. Drizzle milk evenly over top. Sprinkle with cheese.
- Cover tightly with foil and bake for 30 to 40 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
- If desired, brown cheese by placing dish under broiler for 30 seconds, watching carefully. Garnish with parsley and serve hot as side dish.

Nutrition information

Makes 6 servings. Per serving: 66 calories, 3g total fat, <1g saturated fat, 8g carbohydrates, 3g protein, 2g dietary fiber, 64mg sodium

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research