

health matters

Keeping Blood Pressure in Check

Millions of Americans have high blood pressure. You could be one of them.

You might not even know it. High blood pressure usually doesn't have warning signs.

It affects the whole body. Risks of heart failure, a heart attack, stroke, kidney disease and other serious health problems go up if you have high blood pressure.

The good news: It can be controlled.

You may have to take medicine, maybe for life.

And you'll probably have to make some life changes, such as:

- Quit smoking if you smoke.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Exercise on most (or all) days of the week.
- Eat low-fat foods that include fruits, vegetables and low-fat or nonfat dairy products.
- Limit salt in your diet.
- Pay attention to food labels to limit salt, cholesterol and fat.

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Breathe Free— Quit Smoking for Good

You need more than good intentions to quit smoking.

Quitting takes guts and patience. Quitting takes a plan of action and lots of support. But quitting is one of the best things you can do for your health.

People who stop smoking lower their risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke and early death, says the American Medical Association.

Get ready to quit

To quit smoking for good:

- Talk to your doctor about quitting.
- Pick a date to quit. Try to cut back on smoking before that date.
- Tell your family and friends, so they can offer support.
- Remove cigarettes and ashtrays from your home, car and work.

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Got Questions?

Ask Dr. G

Dear Dr. G, my mother has heart disease that has caused early heart failure. Her ankles are swollen, and she has trouble catching her breath walking up small hills. As you can imagine, my whole family is quite worried. What is heart failure? What should we do next?

Signed, Jane

Dear Jane,

It is always a concern when our loved ones have a serious condition. Unfortunately, heart failure is common among older adults. It is generally due to years of high blood pressure that strain the heart.

Heart failure occurs when your heart becomes weak and cannot pump blood to meet your body's needs. When this happens, blood does not move through your body well, and this forces fluids to build up. This fluid may back up in your legs, feet, liver (causing it to swell) and lungs (causing shortness of breath with activity).

What can your mother do?

If your mother has high blood pressure, she needs to keep it in a normal range. She can do this by following her doctor's advice.

There are medicines your mother may already be taking to improve

heart failure. These medicines lower blood pressure, reduce fluid buildup and help the heart pump better. This will help reduce the swelling in her ankles and improve her breathing. Ask your mother's doctor about these medicines.

Your mother can make healthy behavior changes, like exercising and eating healthy. A no-salt or low-salt diet is key for patients with heart failure. See page 1 for more tips.



Do You Think You Are Pregnant?

If you think you are pregnant, **it is important to see a doctor within three months.** Pregnant women who get early care (in the first trimester) have healthier babies.

Health Plan of San Mateo will cover any medical services you need during your pregnancy. You will receive **gifts** when you sign up for our special program for pregnant members. Call **650-616-2173** to sign up. Remember, **go before you show.**

Following the doctor's advice and taking the prescribed medicines are very important. Your mom, her doctor and the family are a team working together for her health.

It's also time for you and the rest of the family to make healthy behavior changes. Eating a healthy diet and being more physically active now can help prevent the development of heart failure in the future. All the best!

If you have general health questions, you can:

- Call me at **650-616-2165**.
- E-mail askdrg@hpsm.org.
- Send a note to me at:
701 Gateway Blvd., Suite 400
South San Francisco, CA 94080 ■

Stay Healthy with Free Classes and Brochures

Learn how to stay healthy by going to health education classes. We have free classes and brochures on diabetes, asthma, prenatal care, nutrition, quitting smoking and more. Call our Health Education Line at **650-616-2165** for more information.

Keeping Blood Pressure in Check

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It won't be easy. But you can do it!

It is quick and easy to have your blood pressure tested. Adults should have it done at least every two years—and more often if they have high blood pressure.

Ask your doctor to explain what the two blood pressure numbers mean. Both are important. They measure the force of the blood pumped into your arteries.

If you have high blood pressure:

- Take your medicine just as prescribed.
- Schedule regular checkups.
- Follow your doctor's advice.

When your blood pressure numbers get better, be proud. You've made big changes.

To receive a brochure about managing high blood pressure, call **650-616-2165**. ■

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



Tips for Working with Your Doctor

Take charge of your health and visit your doctor regularly. It gives your doctor a chance to check for changes in your health and make adjustments to your treatment plan.

It also gives you a chance to ask questions. Make a list of questions to bring with you to your doctor. Here are three simple questions you could ask:

- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do?
- Why is it important to do this?

It is also important to visit your doctor if you have questions or concerns about your medicines. If you are low on refills, get a new prescription from your doctor before you run out. We want you to stay healthy! ■

Source: Partnership for Clear Health Communication

Healthy Snacks Can Keep You on Track

With diabetes, healthy snacks should be part of your meal plan.

Snacks can help keep your blood sugar from getting too low.

It's best to avoid snacks high in fats, salt and sugar—such as cookies, doughnuts or potato chips.

Instead, enjoy:

- Raw vegetables
- Fresh fruit
- Peanut butter on whole-grain crackers

- Low-fat cheese sticks
- Unsalted nuts or seeds
- Air-popped or low-fat popcorn
- Yogurt smoothies
- Applesauce
- Sliced turkey on whole-wheat tortillas.

Ask your doctor how often you should snack, how much you should eat and which snacks are best for you. ■

Sources: American Diabetes Association; American Medical Association



HEALTH MATTERS is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of HEALTH PLAN OF SAN MATEO, 701 Gateway Blvd., Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080, telephone 800-750-4776, website www.hpsm.org. Information in HEALTH MATTERS comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider. Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

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Executive Director
Medical Director
Health Educators

Maya Altman
Mary D. Giammona
Chaya Gordon
Daisy Liu
Liliana Ramirez



What's on the Food Label?

Have you ever read the Nutrition Facts label on a food package and wondered what the serving sizes and Percent Daily Values all mean? Well, you're not alone.

You can use the Nutrition Facts label to help you eat less of some nutrients (fat, cholesterol, sodium and sugar) and eat more of other nutrients (vitamins A and C, calcium, iron, and potassium) that you need more.

Check the serving size and number of servings.

The Nutrition Facts label information is based on one serving, but many packages contain more than that. Pay attention to how many servings you are actually eating.

For example, a label lists 1 serving as 1 cup and 250 calories. If you eat 2 cups, you've eaten 2 servings, which is 500 calories.

Check the calories.

Calories tell you how much energy you get from a serving of food. When you eat too many calories, the energy is stored in your body as fat.

Paying attention to the calories in food is helpful when you are trying to manage your weight.

Remember that a product that is fat-free is not always calorie-free.

Limit these nutrients.

Choose foods that are low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt and added sugar.

Eating too much of them may increase your risk for certain diseases, like heart disease, high blood pressure or some cancers.

Added sugars means that extra sugar was

added to foods and drinks when they were produced. They add extra calories to your diet but not important nutrients. In the ingredients, they are listed as high-fructose corn syrup, fruit juice concentrate, sucrose, glucose and honey.

Choose water over sugary drinks.



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)			
Servings Per Container 2			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110		
	% Daily value*		
Total Fat 12g	18%		
Saturated Fat 3g	15%		
Trans Fat 3g			
Cholesterol 30mg	10%		
Sodium 470mg	20%		
Potassium 700mg	20%		
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%		
Dietary fiber 0g	0%		
Sugars 5g			
Protein 5g			
Vitamin A	4%		
Vitamin C	2%		
Calcium	20%		
Iron	4%		
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.			
	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary fiber		25g	30g

The Percent Daily Value is a key to a balanced diet.
 Each nutrient listed is based on 100 percent of the recommended amounts. For example, 18 percent for total fat means that one serving meets 18 percent of your daily needs for fat.
 The Percent DVs can help you determine if a food is high or low in a nutrient. 5 percent or less is low and 20 percent or more is high.
 You can use the Percent DVs to compare one product to another, similar product. Choose the one with less fat, cholesterol, sodium and sugar. Just make sure the serving sizes are the same for both products.

Get enough of these nutrients.
 Many people often don't get enough dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron in their diets.
 Eat enough of these nutrients from healthy sources, like fruits, vegetables, beans or whole grains. They can improve your health and help reduce your risk for some diseases.
 Other important vitamins that are not listed here are vitamins B, D and E.



What are Daily Values (DV)?
 The DVs listed are for people who eat 2,000 or 2,500 calories each day. The amounts for total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium and fiber are the maximum amounts. That means you should stay below the amounts listed.

In addition to a healthy diet, regular physical activity is also important for your overall health and fitness. It may be hard to make big changes overnight, but small changes can make a big difference in the long run.
 To receive brochures on how to eat healthier, call the Health Education Line at **650-616-2165**.

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Breathe Free

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Plan for challenges

There will be many times when you'll be tempted to light up. Make a plan for what you will do in these situations. For instance, chew gum, take a walk or call a friend.

Quitting isn't easy, but your health will benefit.



Build Healthy Bones for Life

Your bones carry you through a lifetime of work and play. It makes good sense to try to keep your bones strong and healthy for a lifetime too.

Building healthy bones can help you avoid osteoporosis, a disease of

You may feel anxious or edgy. This is your body's way of telling you it's learning to be smoke-free. These feelings will go away with time. Talk to your doctor about medications to help relieve these symptoms.

Think of what you can buy with the money you usually spend on cigarettes. And take time to reward yourself for your hard work. ■

weak bones. Having it increases your risk of breaking a bone.

For strong bones, you should:

Eat well. Bones are made of calcium, so eat calcium-rich foods. Dairy foods such as milk, yogurt and cheese are good options. Leafy green vegetables, like spinach and broccoli, are good sources too.

Vitamin D is also important, since it helps your body use calcium. Milk, salmon and eggs are good choices.

Get moving. Weight-bearing exercises help build stronger bones and prevent bone loss. Some good activities include lifting weights, walking, playing tennis and hiking.

Avoid smoking. Smoking damages your bones. If you smoke, try to quit. Talk to your doctor for help.

Get tested. Ask your doctor if you need a bone density test. This test can tell how strong your bones are. If needed, medications can help prevent or treat weak bones. ■

Source: National Osteoporosis Foundation

Success Is Just a Phone Call Away

Anyone who's tried it knows—quitting smoking isn't easy.

But now extra help is as close as your phone. And it's help that can double your chance of success. Just call the California Smokers' Helpline at **800-NO-BUTTS (800-662-8887)**.

When you call, you can talk to someone who is an expert in how to stop smoking. That person can help you make a plan to quit. These experts can also send you information in the mail. If you start smoking again, they can help you figure out what happened. And they can make it easier for you to get back on track.

To receive free nicotine patches or gum through your pharmacy, you need to:

- Get a prescription from your doctor.
- Complete telephone counseling. You will receive a certificate when you complete the counseling session.
- Bring the prescription and the certificate to your pharmacy.

Another organization, Breathe California, also offers free quit-smoking classes and patches. Call **650-994-5868**. ■

Sources: American Cancer Society; National Cancer Institute

