

Have High Blood Pressure?

7 Steps to Protect Your Health

High blood pressure affects over 75 million Americans. It makes your heart work much harder than it has to. It can cause heart and kidney problems. You may not experience any symptoms with high blood pressure. That is why it is important to get your blood pressure checked often.

For most adults, a healthy blood pressure reading is 120/80.

High blood pressure is 140/90.

If you have high blood pressure, there are things you can do to control it.

Here's how:

1. Move toward a heart-healthy diet. Your plate needs plenty of fruits and veggies, whole grains, and beans. Aim to eat fish that contains omega-3 fatty acids

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Get a Flu Shot

We recommend getting a flu shot during the fall, starting in October. The flu can cause serious problems in some people. It is important to get a flu shot every year because the flu virus changes every year. The flu vaccine is safe and effective, and it cannot cause the flu.

Who should get the flu shot?

Everyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting sick from the flu should get a flu shot.

There are certain groups of people who have a higher chance of becoming very sick from the flu. Getting the flu shot should be a high priority for them. These groups include:

- Adults 50 years of age or older

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High Blood Pressure

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at least two times a week. Good options are salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, sardines, and canned or fresh albacore tuna.

You will also want to eat less

salt and sugar, red meat, and saturated and trans fats.

2. Exercise more. Choose activities you enjoy that your health care provider is OK with. Then do them for at least 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.
3. Reach a healthy weight. Eating healthier and exercising will help!

4. Manage your stress. Exercising more is one way to do it. Aim to enjoy all that you do. Find the humor in stressful moments. And take time to relax.

5. Avoid tobacco smoke. If you smoke, quitting can be hard, but there is help. See below.

6. Take your blood pressure medicine. For your health and safety, take it exactly as directed.

7. Limit alcohol. If that is hard for you, let your provider know. ■

Sources: American Heart Association, National Institutes of Health



Help for Quitting Smoking

For help to quit smoking, call one of the following numbers below. You can also get free nicotine patches and gum through your pharmacy by getting a prescription from your doctor.

- Breathe California, **650-994-5868**
- California Smokers' Helpline, **800-662-8887***

**Medi-Cal members: Ask for free nicotine patches and a \$20 gift card when you call and create a plan to quit.*

24/7 Nurse Advice Line

When you cannot reach your doctor's office for help, call Health Plan of San Mateo's 24-hour Nurse Advice Line at **866-535-6977**.

Here are examples of when you should call:

- You think you need to go to the

emergency room but cannot decide.

- You have a severe cough, chest pain, back pain or difficulty breathing.
- You feel dizzy or have a headache that does not go away.
- You have an urgent question

about your medicine.

Nurses are available to help you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you have any questions about your health, call our Nurse Advice Line at **866-535-6977**.

Add this number to your cellphone, or keep it on your refrigerator or near your phone. ■

Taking Medicine the Right Way

Taking medicine every day may not be one of your favorite things to do.

But if you have an ongoing health problem—like diabetes or high blood pressure—it is one of the most important things you can do.

Many drugs will not work if you do not take them the way your provider says you should. There are lots of reasons why people may not take their medicines the right way, including:

- The cost
- Refusing to believe they are needed or working
- Not keeping up with taking more than one drug
- Not knowing how and when to take them
- Forgetting to take them

Taking medicine the right way can help you feel better. Some tips:

- Take it at the same time every day.
- Use daily pillboxes.
- Ask your provider about generic medicines that may cost less.
- See if you qualify for financial aid.
- Keep a medicine calendar.
- Post reminder notes in your bathroom.
- Ask others to remind you.

If you have any questions about what you are taking, talk to your provider. Be sure you know how much to take and when.

You also need to know which drugs you can take together and which ones you should not.



It is important to tell your provider if you have any problems. Some drugs may cause side effects—especially if you take others at the same time. ■

Sources: American Heart Association; U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Men and Women Ages 50+

Colon cancer (also known as colorectal cancer) is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States for both men and women. The chance of getting colon cancer increases as you get older. That is why the American Cancer Society recommends that both men and women

over 50 get screened every year.

This is a cancer that can be prevented! Some people can have colon cancer and not have symptoms. But if it is found early through a screening test, it can be cured.

If you would like a free home screening kit, call **650-616-2165** today.

Pregnant?

If you think you may be pregnant, it is important to see a doctor within your first 3 months. Go before you show! When you see the doctor for timely prenatal and postpartum care, you can get rewarded with gift cards. Call Health Plan of San Mateo at **650-616-2165** to sign up.

4 Ways to Eat Better on a Budget

Next time you go grocery shopping, add these two items to your list:

- Save money.
- Eat healthier.

Yes—you can do both. Some ideas that can help:

1. Plan ahead. Check newspaper inserts and online for coupons and specials—but only for foods on your shopping list. Then, plan a few meals around items that are on sale.

2. Buy in season. Look for fresh, seasonal produce. It usually tastes the best and is the most affordable. Check out your local farmers market too.

3. Buy in bulk. Bulk bins can be an affordable place to find:

- Dried beans and lentils. Add these to salads or pastas for a great nonmeat source of protein

and fiber. As a bonus, dried beans do not have the salt often added to the canned kind. Soak beans for a few hours to reduce cooking time.

- Whole grains like brown rice, oatmeal, whole-wheat pasta and barley.

These staples add fiber to your diet and stretch meals such as soups, stews and casseroles further.

4. Go big when it makes sense—and small when it does not. With both frozen and fresh produce, buy whole food items in larger bags. Then repackage them in smaller bags at home.

Also, consider asking a friend to split the cost of bulk or large-sized items that you will not use up.

Otherwise, buy only the amount your family will eat. And, when



you try new things, buy them in small amounts at first so foods will not go to waste. ■

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; U.S. Department of Agriculture

Sweet Potatoes

Sweet potatoes have an earthy, sweet flavor, and their interior bright orange color is simply gorgeous. They are packed with nutrients. In one medium sweet potato, you will find:

- More than a day's worth of vitamin A, which is good for the eyes
- About 35 percent of



the daily recommended amount of vitamin C, which helps fight infection and cell damage

- Carotenoids, known to guard against certain cancers
- A big boost of potassium, which helps regulate blood pressure—the typical American diet has too little potassium
- Fiber, no fat and

only about 105 calories

How to use them: Use sweet potatoes just as you would white potatoes. Bake them whole with skins on; cut, season and bake them as french fries; or mash and serve them as a side dish.

Or be creative: Grate, cube, puree or smash them into soups, casseroles, pastas, burritos, stews—even baked goods and desserts.

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; U.S. Department of Agriculture

Flu Shot

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- Young children
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic heart or lung disease, kidney disease, asthma, diabetes, cancer, or HIV/AIDS

Where do I get a flu shot?

We will pay for your flu shot if you get it from your Health Plan of San Mateo (HPSM) provider or pharmacy. If you go somewhere else for a flu shot, HPSM will not pay for the service.

How can I protect myself and others from the flu?

- Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your coughs and

sneezes with a sleeve or tissue.

- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Call the San Mateo County flu hotline at **650-573-3927**. ■



Give the Gift of Life

What You Need to Know about Organ and Tissue Donation

If you save one person's life, you are a hero. But can you imagine saving up to 50 lives?

That is possible if you decide to become an organ and tissue donor.

Whom does it help?

Organ and tissue transplants can save or improve the lives of a wide range of people, including those who have organ failure, are blind, or have severe burns or serious diseases.

How many people need transplants?

At any time, about 97,000 Americans are on a waiting list for a transplant, the American Medical Association reports.

What organs and tissues can be donated?

Many different types of organs can be donated after death, such as the heart, kidneys, pancreas, liver and intestines. Tissues that can be donated include corneas, connective tissues, blood vessels, skin, heart valves and bones.

And while living, people can donate one of their kidneys or lungs, bone marrow, stem cells, and even portions of their livers. This is generally done for a family member or friend, but

some people have decided to help even strangers.

How do I become a donor?

You can print a donor card to fill out by visiting **www.organdonor.gov**. You can also declare yourself a donor on your driver's license.

Be sure to tell your family, doctor, lawyer or other key representative that you are a donor. This can help prevent confusion about your wishes if you are unable to speak for yourself due to illness or injury.

Where can I learn more?

Go to **www.ctdn.org** or call the California Transplant Donor Network at **888-570-9400**. ■

Bullying

How to Help Your Child Cope

Some kids use their fists to bully other children. Others tease, make threats or spread rumors online.

Bullying takes many forms—and it is always wrong. A child who is bullied may:

- Be afraid to go to school
- Lose confidence
- Become depressed

This is why you will want to take steps to protect your child from bullying. Here are four steps you can take:

1. Talk with your child about bullying. Even if you do not think your child is a target, ask about it. You might start by

asking, “How are things going at school?” or, “What do you think of the other kids in your class?”

It is good to ask questions like this. Kids sometimes do not want to admit that they are being picked on.

2. Teach your child how to respond. Your child should look a bully in the eye and stay calm. Your child might say, in a firm voice, “I do not like what you are doing. Stop it now.” Then your child should walk away.

3. Urge your child to get help. Tell your child to ask for help from an adult if he or she is bullied. Your child should also

speak up if he or she sees another child being attacked.

4. Help your child make friends. Encourage your child to get to know other kids. Children who are not social are more likely to be bullied than those with friends. ■

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics



Soothe a Sore Throat

When you or your child has a sore throat, it's likely to go away on its own. But to feel better now, you can:

- Gargle with warm salt water.
- Suck on throat lozenges or hard candy. Do not give these to small children, though. They are a choking hazard.
- Take a pain reliever. (But do not give children aspirin.) Do not take more than the label advises. And if you take acetaminophen,

make sure it is not in more than one of your medicines. You can get too much.

Also, do not take an antibiotic unless your provider says to. Taking antibiotics when you do not need them can make them not work as well when you do need them.

When you need help

A sore throat should feel better in a few days. If not, call your

provider. Also, get help if you or your child has:

- Trouble breathing or swallowing.
- A fever above 100.4 degrees.
- A rash.
- Pus in the back of the throat.
- Dehydration. Signs are dry mouth, sunken eyes and tiredness. In babies and young kids, also watch for no tears when crying and no urine for 4 to 6 hours. In older kids, watch for no urine for 6 to 8 hours. ■

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institutes of Health; UpToDate