

## Flu Complications

Most people who get influenza (flu) will recover in a few days or within two weeks. Some people will develop complications as a result of the flu. The flu can make chronic health problems such as asthma and COPD worse. For example, people with asthma may experience asthma attacks while they have the flu.

Examples of flu complications include:

- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Sinus and ear infections

### Who is at risk?

Anyone can get the flu, even healthy people. Serious problems from the flu can also happen at any age. Some people are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications. These include:

- People 65 years and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as:
  - Asthma
  - COPD
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
- Pregnant women
- Young children

### How do I reduce my risk?

The flu is unpredictable and how severe it is can vary widely from one season to the next. Take the necessary steps to prevent getting the flu.

**Start by getting the flu shot.** The flu shot can reduce your risk of getting the flu. People you live with should get a flu shot too. Then they won't increase your chance of getting the flu.

Here are other tips that can help you stay healthy this flu season:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home and rest

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## Need Help Quitting Smoking?

If you need help quitting, call the Free and Clear<sup>®</sup> program at (800) 784-8669 for one-on-one help.

You are receiving this newsletter as part of a Disease Management Program.

If you do not want to receive this newsletter or participate in any Disease Management Program please call us at **(866) 891-2320**.

All material in this newsletter is for information only. This does not replace your provider's advice.

If you need this material in another language or format please call Member Services at (800) 869-7165.

## Important Tests to Keep in Mind

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a broad term that describes diseases of the heart and blood vessels. Blood tests can check the state of your CVD.

It can also tell how well your treatment plan is working. Some of the blood tests are listed below. Knowing a little bit about these tests is a good way to take part in managing your CVD. Your provider can tell you which test you need and why. The more you know about your condition the more you can do to stay healthy.

1. C-reactive protein (CRP) is one test. CRP is made by your liver when there is inflammation in your body. Inflammation plays a part in atherosclerosis. This is when fatty deposits clog your arteries. High levels of CRP are linked to a higher risk of heart attack and stroke.
2. A lipid panel (also known as a cholesterol test) tests the amount of fat in your blood. It has three (3) parts.
  - a. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) carries cholesterol from your liver to the rest of your body. Too much LDL means fatty deposits end up in your arteries. This can lead to plaque and reduce blood flow.
  - b. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) carries cholesterol back to your liver so your body can get rid of it. A high HDL level is a good thing.
  - c. Triglycerides are another type of fat in the blood. High levels raise your risk of heart disease. Total cholesterol means a sum of your blood's cholesterol.
3. Brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) is made by your heart and blood vessels. It acts as a messenger to your kidneys. It tells your kidneys that it is okay to get rid of sodium. Your body will secrete high levels of BNP into your blood when your heart is damaged. BNP levels can tell the progress of heart failure treatment.



## Holiday Eating Strategies

During the holiday season it can be hard to resist tempting sugary treats. Just how do you avoid gaining a few extra pounds AND keeping your diabetes under control? It is not easy but it can be done.

Here are a few tips for treating yourself without getting out of control:

- Plan ahead and save your calories for celebrations
- If you are going to a party, bring a low calorie appetizer or dish to share
- Don't forget to exercise. It will help burn off those extra calories and lower your blood sugar.
- Check your blood sugar more often. This will help make sure that you are staying in your target range.
- Do not go to a party on an empty stomach. Have some yogurt or another low fat snack. Drink a large glass of water with it.
- Do not make it harder for yourself by keeping tempting foods around the house
- Follow your diabetes nutrition meal plan

- Use less sugar when making baked goods. No one will know the difference!
- Socialize away from the food table
- Use a smaller plate at parties to ensure that you eat smaller portions
- Do some extra walking to help make up for extra calories

Remember, you have ultimate control over what you eat. You don't have to eat what is handed or offered to you. With these suggestions you can indulge and have fun while managing your diabetes.



## Diabetes and CVD

If you have diabetes, you are at risk of having cardiovascular disease (CVD). This means your chances of having a heart attack or stroke are higher. In addition, many people with type 2 diabetes also have high blood pressure, high cholesterol and are obese. These add to the risk of CVD. If you have diabetes and you smoke, it doubles your risk of CVD.

The good news is you can lower your risk for heart disease. The first step is to know what your risk factors are. These include cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and high blood sugar. Other risk factors include obesity or being overweight, physical inactivity and a family history of CVD. The next step is to reduce your risk. Some factors you cannot help, like your age and family history. But others you can do something about.

The National Diabetes Education Program encourages people with diabetes to control their ABCs:

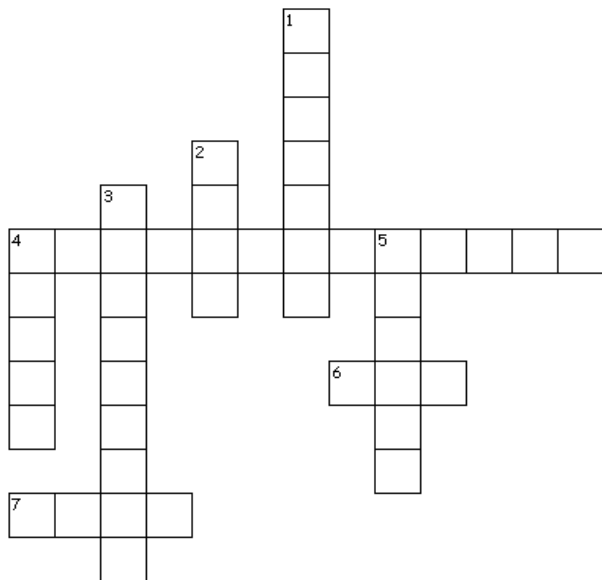
**A** is for A1c. Aim to keep your A1c (average blood glucose) test less than 7%.

**B** is for blood pressure. Aim to keep yours less than 130/80 mmHg.

**C** is for cholesterol. Aim for an LDL less than 100 mg/dl.

Just how do you do all that? Try to add some physical activity to your day. Do your best to make healthy food choices. Choose low fat dairy, lean meats and whole grains. Stop smoking. Take your medications as prescribed. Make sure to talk to your provider before making any changes in your treatment plan and to set goals that are right for you. Your efforts will make a difference!

## What Do I Know About the Flu?



Test your knowledge of the flu by completing the puzzle on the left. Here are your clues:

### Across

4. If you can't wash your hands, you can also use alcohol-based \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Another name for influenza is the \_\_\_\_.
7. Use warm water and \_\_\_\_ when washing your hands.

### Down

1. Another name for the flu vaccination is the flu \_\_\_\_.
2. Another way to prevent the flu is to \_\_\_\_ your hands often.
3. If you get the flu, your doctor may prescribe you \_\_\_\_\_ drugs.
4. Clean your \_\_\_\_ often.
5. You should wash your hands for \_\_\_\_ seconds.

### Answers:

Across: 4. HANDSANTIZER, 6. FLU, 7. SOAP Down: 1. VACCINE, 2. WASH, 3. ANTIVIRAL, 4. HANDS, 5. TWELVE

## Tips to Remember to Take Your Medicine

Do you forget to take your medicines? You are not alone. Here are some tips to help you remember to take your medicine.

**Put your pills where you will see them.** If you take a pill with breakfast, put your pills on the breakfast table.

**Put a reminder note where you will see it.** Put a note on your coffee cup or the bathroom mirror if you take the medicine in the morning.

**Get a pill organizer.** They come in many sizes and shapes. Your pharmacist can help you choose one.

**Set an alarm.** Use an alarm clock or set the alarm on your phone, watch or computer.

**Ask for help.** Ask family or friends to remind you, especially when you first start taking the medicine.

**Mark your medicine bottles with different colors.** For example, blue for morning, green for midday and red for evening.

**Make sure to keep a list of all your current medicines.** At least once a year, be sure to review all your medicines with your provider. This helps make sure that you:

- Take all the medicines you need
- Stop taking the ones you no longer need
- Take medicines that are safe to take together

Medicines are an important part of your treatment plan. Not taking them can affect how well your condition is managed.

## Sneak in Some Exercise

During the holiday season you might be extra busy. There is shopping to do, parties and school plays to attend and holiday decorations to put up. On top of all that, you have to manage your diabetes. It is easy to put yourself last.

Exercise is a great way to relieve stress. Exercise has many benefits. Some of these include:

- Keeping your heart strong
- Lowering your blood sugar
- Relieving arthritis pain
- Controlling your weight
- Improving your mood

Getting some exercise doesn't mean that you have to give up hours of your day or become an athlete. Here are some tips on how to sneak exercise into your day:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Even walking down the stairs is better than using the elevator.
- Do not wait for the parking spot up front. Park farther away and walk. You'll get there quicker!
- Do some gentle stretches

- Take the dog for a walk or catch up with a friend over a walk around the block
- Do some squats or leg lifts while you wait for the microwave
- Do some arm lifts while you watch your favorite TV show. Use cans of soups or bottles of water for weights.
- Exercise as a family. It's a great way to spend quality time together and be a good role model.

Being active is anything that gets you up and moving. Find out what it is that you enjoy. The goal is to get moving. A good way to keep you motivated is to track how much exercise you've added to your daily routine.

Keep track of:

- What you do
- When you do it
- How long you do it

Make sure to ask your provider which activities are ok for you. Remember, a little bit here and there really adds up.



_____ 's Exercise Log				
Date	Minutes	Activity	Who Joined Me	How I Felt After



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## Questions About Your Health?

*Call Our Nurse Advice Line!*

English: (888) 275-8750

Spanish: (866) 648-3537

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Your family's health is our priority!

For the hearing impaired, please call

TTY (English): (866) 735-2929

TTY (Spanish): (866) 833-4703

or 711