

Rocky
Mountain

health

Summer 2014

40 years of serving you

In 1974, physicians and community leaders in Grand Junction dedicated themselves to the notion that all Coloradans deserve access to high-quality health care. They founded Rocky Mountain HMO in order to pursue this belief. Soon, Rocky Mountain HMO (now Rocky Mountain Health Plans, or RMHP) had its first Members. In the ensuing years, we expanded throughout the state, never forgetting our roots on the Western Slope. We grew with a

straightforward, strong foundation: Broad access to high-quality care can create healthier communities and lower costs.

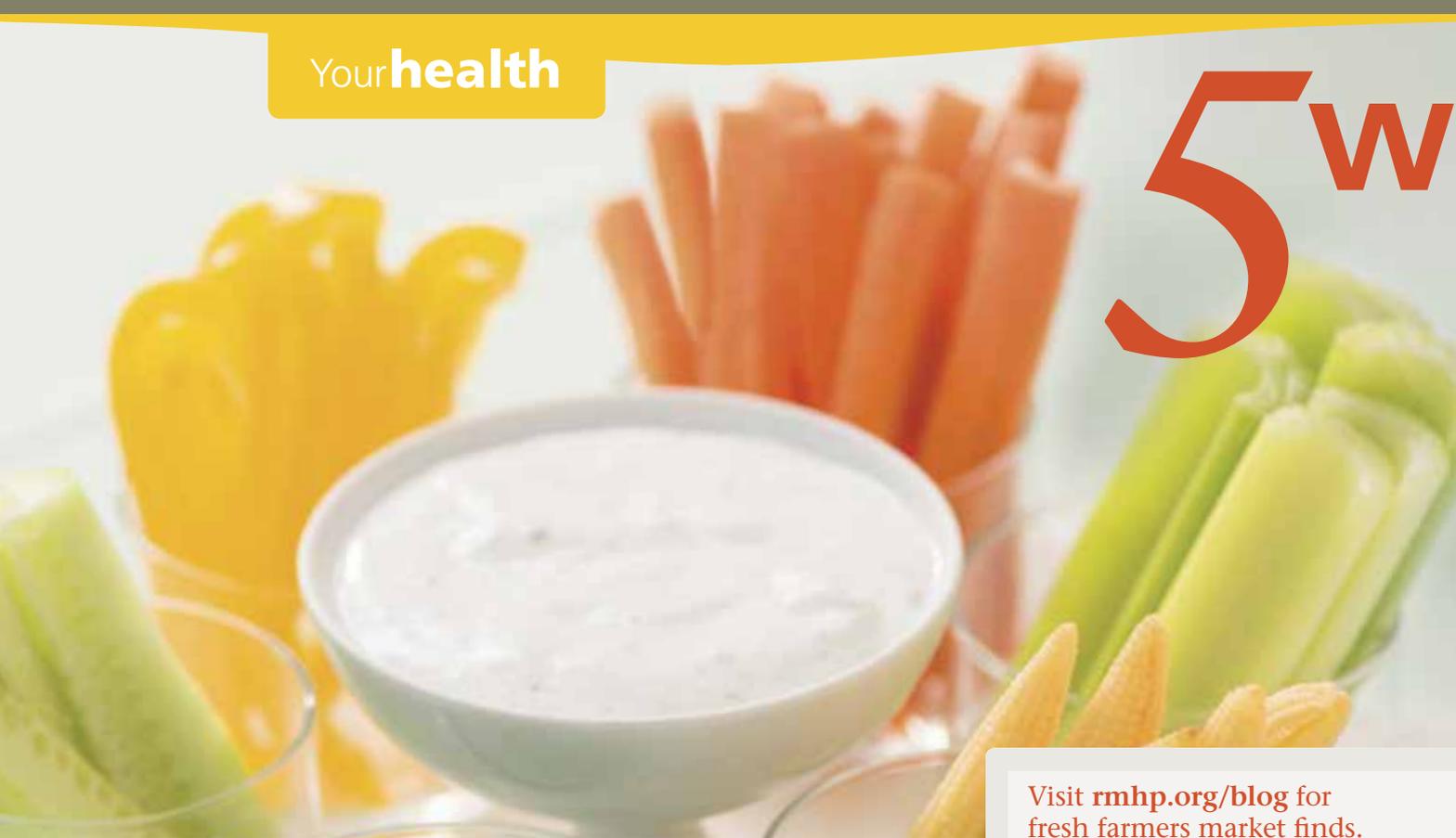
Fast forward to 2014, and RMHP is celebrating its 40th anniversary! These days, our country faces many challenges to attain affordable, high-quality health care. The key to the RMHP system—validated by Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom, PBS, *The New Yorker*, and others—is an unrelenting focus on our Members. It's why some employer groups have been with us since the 1970s, and why others—like the Denver Broncos—have

chosen us more recently as their health insurance provider. Through it all, our Members have remained our foremost concern. “We understand Colorado. We understand you.” is not just a marketing slogan. It's a mission. We consider it an honor to serve you, and we thank you for trusting us to be a partner in your health care.

With gratitude,
Steve



Steve ErkenBrack,
President and CEO



Visit rmhp.org/blog for fresh farmers market finds.

Soft drinks

Why you may want to ditch the fizz

If you've heard about the health risks from drinking too much soda, you may have thought, "I'll switch to diet." Unfortunately, research shows that diet soda may not be a healthy alternative.

In fact, one study showed that people who drank one or more sodas daily—regular or diet—had an increased risk of developing metabolic syndrome.

According to the American Heart Association, this syndrome can raise your chances of getting heart disease or diabetes and comprises

three or more of the following conditions:

- A large waistline (35 inches or more for women or 40 inches or more for men).
- High fasting blood sugar (100 mg/dL or more).
- High blood pressure (130/85 mm Hg or higher).
- High triglyceride levels (150 mg/dL or higher).
- HDL cholesterol levels of less than 50 mg/dL in women or less than 40 mg/dL in men.

Regular soda has also been linked to diabetes and obesity in children and adolescents.

Are vaccines safe?

You may have read things on the Internet that made you think twice about getting vaccines or having your children get them.

For example, some parents still worry that vaccines cause autism, even though many scientific studies show there is no link.

Here's the thing: Skipping a needed vaccine can leave you and your family at risk of a serious disease. And outbreaks do occur. Even illnesses such as measles can sometimes kill.

Your doctor can help answer questions about vaccines and when they're needed. You can also check reliable sources online, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at cdc.gov/vaccines. What follows—with information from CDC and other experts—may also help:

Strict rules. Vaccines undergo rigorous testing to make sure they are safe and that they work. It can take a decade or longer before they're approved. Even then, scientists continue to monitor the vaccine for any problems. And there are regular inspections of manufacturing plants.

Are there risks? Vaccines are like all medicines in that they can have side effects. But if they occur, they are almost always minor, such as a fever or soreness at the injection site. If you do have a reaction, let your doctor know. Or go to the hospital if the reaction seems severe (though this is very rare).

Some people shouldn't get certain vaccines. Or they may need to wait. This may include children with weak immune systems and anyone who's had a past severe reaction to a vaccine. Your doctor can help decide what's right for you.

Additional sources: National Network for Communication Information; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



ays to make veggies more appealing to your kids

Do your picky eaters turn up their noses at everything from A (apricots) to Z (zucchini)? If so, here are some homespun strategies for transforming young fruit and veggie haters into more adventurous (and healthier) food lovers.

1. Plant seeds for change.

Picky eaters may be more enthusiastic about food they've grown themselves. Start them off with tomatoes or green peppers in pots. Clipping herbs from their own window garden might help change your yuck brigade into garnishing gourmets.

2. Organize a field trip. Visit a farmers market, where the farmers themselves can help kids choose the best cantaloupe or the

tenderest butter lettuce.

Next stop: an ethnic grocery store. Savor the aromas, and have kids name the shapes and colors of the exotic fruits and veggies.

3. Raise the bar. Kids are more apt to eat something they've created themselves. So set up a family meal bar—a countertop buffet with bowls of sautéed or fresh veggies and all the other fixings for nutritious, build-your-own burritos, stuffed potatoes, salads, or sandwiches.

4. Hide in plain view. Slip kale into smoothies, puree peaches to make a sauce for baked chicken, or layer spinach into lasagna.

5. Name that food. Try boosting menu appeal through rebranding.

Anyone up for snowballs (cauliflower), Jack's giant raisins (prunes), or spare spears (asparagus)?

Whip up a new veggie dish with your child's help, and name it after your young chef. The next thing you know, you may get regular requests for Josh's Posh Squash, Avery's Savory Yams, or Eileen's Silly Beans.

In the end, the more involved kids are—choosing recipes, shopping, peeling vegetables, stirring pots—the more likely they are to try new foods. And cooking together might help create habits for a lifetime of healthy eating.

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

Do you have a family doctor?

We want to help you be healthy. One of the best ways to start is to have a family doctor.

A family doctor can care for you and your whole family—male and female, young and old. These physicians specialize in treating the whole person, with a focus on preventing health problems. They provide a wide range of care, including:

- Managing chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease.
- Minor surgical procedures.
- Well-woman care.
- Mental and behavioral care.
- Routine health screenings.

Find your family doctor today. First, ask friends and family whom they recommend. Then give us a call to make sure the doctor you select is part of our extensive provider network. Finally, meet with your chosen doctor to be sure the two of you will make a good team.

New dental benefits

In the past, Medicaid has not covered dental services for adults. However, the State of Colorado has created a NEW limited dental benefit for all adults with Medicaid. The benefit will provide Medicaid-enrolled adults, age 21 and over, an annual dental benefit of up to \$1,000 in dental services per year. These benefits are not covered by RMHP but are covered by State Medicaid.

What is covered?

The new dental benefit will be implemented in two phases.

April 1, 2014—basic adult dental preventive, diagnostic and minor restorative dental services (such as x-rays and minor fillings) and treatment planning will be available.

July 1, 2014—more comprehensive adult services, such as root canals, crowns, partial dentures, periodontal scaling and root planing.

How to find a dentist

Search for dental providers in your area by visiting colorado.gov/hcpf/findaprovider.

Save the date

RMHP in the community Summer is in full swing, and we are out enjoying the sun in your communities.

July 12: Team RMHP bike race in Longmont.

July 25: Colorado Rapids game in Commerce City.

July 26: Hike MS in Keystone.

Aug. 2: Colorado Rapids game in Commerce City.

PBS FunFest in Grand Junction.

BigDogBrag Mud Obstacle in Colorado Springs.

Aug. 23 to 29: Senior Games in Grand Junction.

Aug. 29 to 31: Grand Junction Off-Road in Grand Junction.

Sept. 6: Amazing Aging Expo in Denver

Are you ready for some football?

RMHP is excited to announce we are once again the proud health insurance provider of the Denver Broncos.



Steve ErkenBrack President and CEO
Kevin R. Fitzgerald, MD Chief Medical Officer
Leanne Hart Managing Editor

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HEALTH is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of ROCKY MOUNTAIN HEALTH PLANS, PO Box 10600, Grand Junction, CO 81502-5600, telephone 800-843-0719, www.rmhp.org. Information in ROCKY MOUNTAIN HEALTH 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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Melanoma

Guard against skin cancer

As the largest organ of your body, your skin is a lot more complex than it looks. It's made up of multiple layers with specialized cells for all the different jobs your skin does—like keeping out germs, protecting internal organs, and controlling body temperature.

Melanoma is a cancer that's related to one kind of these specialized cells—the melanocytes. These cells produce melanin, a pigment that gives skin its color. Melanocytes are found in the outer layer of the skin. Their normal function is to release melanin when your skin is exposed to the sun, making skin tan or brown to protect deeper layers of skin from sun damage.

For reasons that aren't clear, sometimes melanocytes become cancerous and begin to grow uncontrollably, taking over other cells nearby. This is known as melanoma.



Learn more about skin protection by visiting our recent articles on the blog: rmhp.org/blog.

Signs to look for

Although anyone can develop melanoma, certain factors can increase your risk, reports the American Academy of Dermatology. These include:

- Tanning or any skin exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light. UV rays come from the sun or tanning lamps or beds.
- Fair skin, red or blond hair, or blue or green eyes.
- More than 50 moles.
- Unusual or irregular-looking moles.
- A close relative with melanoma.

Melanoma can vary in color. Talk to your doctor if you have a mole where there wasn't one before or if you have a mole that seems to grow or change shape or color.

Early detection is essential

When melanoma is recognized and treated early, it can almost always be cured, reports the American Cancer Society. But if allowed to go untreated, it can grow deeper into the skin and into blood vessels and lymph nodes.

From there, it can spread throughout the body, causing life-threatening illness. That's why it's important to detect melanoma when it's still on the skin's surface and easily treated.

If your doctor suspects melanoma, he or she will biopsy the area to test for it. If the disease is found in its early stages, it will be surgically removed, which usually completely cures the cancer. Deeper melanoma, however, may require treatments such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

Skin protection may help reduce your risk of developing melanoma. When headed outdoors, apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Wear a wide-brimmed hat and clothing to help block the sun's rays. And take care to avoid the sun during the brightest time of day—from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.