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GOOD HEALTH

A JOURNAL DEDICATED TO YOUR GOOD HEALTH

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Q&A

Frequently asked questions from our Medicare members.

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MOM AND BABY SAFETY



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KNOW YOUR numbers

Maybe you've memorized

the stats of your favorite baseball player or know how many times Elvis hit the Top 10.

Well, here are some other important numbers to learn.

Blood pressure levels

Normal: Less than 120/80 mm Hg.

Prehypertension: 120/80 mm Hg to 139/89 mm Hg.

High: 140/90 mm Hg or higher.

High blood pressure can cause arteries to harden. This puts you at risk for heart disease and stroke.

You can reduce levels through exercise and a low-fat diet. A doctor also may prescribe medications to help.

Cholesterol levels

Desirable: Less than 200 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) total cholesterol.

Borderline high: 200 to 239 mg/dL.

High: 240 mg/dL or more.

Cholesterol is a fatty substance in the blood. There are both good and bad types.

Too much of the bad can cause deposits in your arteries. This poses a risk for heart attack.

Everyone 20 or older should have their cholesterol levels measured at least once every five years.

You can improve levels by eating a low-fat diet, exercising, and losing weight if you're too heavy. A doctor also may prescribe medications to help.

Weight measurements

BMI: "Normal" is 18.5 to 24.9.

Waist circumference: Men—less than 40 inches. Women—less than 35 inches.

BMI (body mass index) is a measure of body fat based on height and weight. Waist circumference is a measure of abdominal fat. These measurements help a doctor determine whether losing weight will benefit your health.

Note: BMI isn't a useful measure in people who are highly muscular or who have edema (swelling of the body's tissues).

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

TAKE charge OF YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Of all the pressures we face every day, at least one deserves extra attention: blood pressure.

Blood pressure is a measure of the force against artery walls as blood is pumped from the heart throughout the body.

At healthy levels, blood pressure is a good—even necessary—thing.

But if blood pressure consistently exceeds a healthy level, it can cause a host of serious, even life-threatening, health problems. Among them:

- ▶ Stroke.
- ▶ Heart attack.
- ▶ Congestive heart failure.
- ▶ Kidney damage.
- ▶ Impaired vision or blindness.

By the numbers Blood pressure is read as two numbers, such as 120/80.

The top number (systolic) reflects the pressure of the blood against artery walls as the heart beats. The bottom number (diastolic) reflects the pressure of the blood as the heart rests.

In general, high blood pressure (hypertension) in adults is defined as pressure that is consistently greater than or equal to 140/90. Prehypertension is defined as 120 to 139/80 to 89.

Taking charge High blood pressure usually causes no symptoms, so you can't wait for physical sensations to warn you of danger.

You can take charge, though, by asking your doctor:

- ▶ What your blood pressure reading is.
- ▶ How to prevent high blood pressure.
- ▶ How to lower your blood pressure if it's high.
- ▶ How often to have your blood pressure checked.

Source: National Women's Health Information Center

SEE OUR new LOOK ON-LINE!


We have redesigned our website, www.rmhp.org, to give you more information, helpful on-line tools, and other new features to make it easy and interesting to visit our site.

You'll see that we have added easy-access pull-down menus and a list of tools and information on the first page of each section.

Now you can quickly find out about our plans and what we've been doing that's made the news. As before, our member newsletters, a current version of the provider directory, and ways to contact us are just a click away.

We hope you like the changes and our updated look.



CLICK  You can determine your BMI with an on-line calculator at <http://nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bmicalc.htm>.



AVOIDING falls

Falls are a common problem

for older adults, often resulting in pain and disability. Each year about one-third of people 65 or older will fall, and some will be disabled by bone fractures.

These injuries can often result in compromised physical function and loss of independence.

Who is at risk? You are at risk to fall in or around your home if you:

- ▶ Use certain medications.
- ▶ Have slow reflexes.
- ▶ Have poor eyesight.
- ▶ Have balance problems.
- ▶ Have slippery floors.
- ▶ Have poor lighting.
- ▶ Have clutter in or around your house.

Preventing falls is important at any age, but it is especially important for those who live alone or have other medical problems such as osteoporosis or diabetes.

Always talk to your primary care physician about the effects of your medications and any concerns you may have about dizziness or poor balance. Your physician may recommend a physical or occupational therapy evaluation.

Preventing falls Fortunately you can take measures to minimize the risk of falling and becoming injured. In many

cases you can prevent a fall by making a few small, but important, changes in your home and daily activities.

Here are some fall prevention tips that can significantly decrease your chances of falling:

- ▶ Have a lamp or light switch that you can reach easily when getting out of bed.
- ▶ Use night-lights in the bedroom, bathroom, and hallways.
- ▶ Install handrails on both sides of the stairs.
- ▶ Add grab bars in the shower and toilet areas.
- ▶ Use bathmats with suction cups.
- ▶ Consider using a shower bench.
- ▶ Consider using a toilet seat riser.
- ▶ Wear no-slip, low-heeled shoes. Don't walk around in stocking feet. That can be slippery!
- ▶ Remove all clutter from the house. Have a friend or family member help with this.
- ▶ Keep cords out of walking pathways.
- ▶ Make sure carpets are securely attached to floors and stairs.
- ▶ Use helping devices, such as canes, walkers, and reachers.
- ▶ Have your hearing and eyesight tested.
- ▶ Exercise regularly.
- ▶ If you feel dizzy, sit down until the feeling passes.
- ▶ Stand up slowly.

YOU CAN TAKE STEPS TO DECREASE YOUR RISK OF FALLS.

Q&A: choosing A PLAN

We've been serving Medicare beneficiaries for 27 years. During that time, we have seen other plans come and go, but we have been stable and here for you. Our membership has consistently increased.

Not all Medicare plans are created equal, and price is not always an indicator of quality. Be sure to ask the right questions to help make your decision:

Q Can I choose to see any doctor I want, even if I leave the service area, and still have my health care covered?

A With RMHP you get maximum choice because we have one of the largest lists of doctors in Colorado. You can get covered health care services through any of the doctors on our list. And our plans give you even more flexibility. You can also choose to see a Medicare doctor who is not on our list, and Original Medicare will cover the service. In that case, you will pay any Original Medicare deductibles or coinsurance.

Q Do I need to get a referral from my primary care physician (PCP) before I can go see another doctor or specialist?

A With RMHP you never need a referral to see a plan doctor or specialist. You have the freedom to choose the doctor you want.

Q Will I be able to get the medication I need?

A RMHP has a broad list of covered prescription drugs, both brand-name and lower-cost generics, and a choice of plans with different benefit levels. It's likely that the drugs you need are on our list. Not all health plans may have as large a list, so be sure you check carefully.

- ▶ RMHP has one of the largest lists of doctors and other providers in Colorado. All of our members may see any of the doctors on our list.
- ▶ RMHP offers Medicare members all their Original Medicare benefits and much more. Instead of a "one size fits all" plan, we offer you a choice of plans with varying premiums and benefits to fit your personal circumstances and needs. No matter what plan you choose, you will get great coverage at a fair price.
- ▶ RMHP is a not-for-profit organization. It's our mission and our tradition to focus on serving our Colorado members, not shareholders in a distant city.
- ▶ We've remained independent and committed to Colorado in an industry where buyouts, mergers, and health plan withdrawals are common.
- ▶ Unlike other health plans, RMHP has never pulled out of a service area and left Medicare beneficiaries without reliable coverage or doctor care.



NO MORE excuses: IT'S TIME TO QUIT SMOKING


The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently decided to cover limited tobacco cessation counseling for Medicare beneficiaries with Part B coverage. Effective March 22, 2005, RMHP Medicare members are covered for up to eight tobacco cessation counseling sessions per year, provided by RMHP participating providers.

The benefit is available for members:

- ▶ Who have a disease or adverse health effect that has been found by the U.S. surgeon general to be linked to tobacco use.
- ▶ Whose tobacco use is adversely affecting their medication.

Medicare will cover two cessation attempts per year. Each attempt may include a maximum of four counseling sessions. A 20-percent member coinsurance will apply to each session.

Remember that all Colorado residents have access to free smoking cessation counseling through the Colorado Quitline, which is available seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. at 800-639-7848.

CLICK  For more help to quit smoking, visit www.co.quitnet.com. Colorado Quitnet, a free Internet-based service, offers peer support and expert advice on quitting strategies and helpful medications.

STUDENTS GET BOOST FROM exercise

A big, fluffy couch and a television remote—when kids don't feel like doing much, these things might sound pretty good.

But would-be couch potatoes may want to consider this: Doing too much of nothing can leave you even more sluggish, according to the Children's Nutrition Research Center (CNRC).

There's a better choice for tired kids and teens—exercise.

Physical activity can help us feel more energetic. It can also help us sleep better, feel better, and even beat boredom. What's more, kids who exercise learn a healthy habit early.

So how can your busy student fit activity into the day? For one thing, experts suggest spending less time watching television and playing video games. From play to planned exercise, there are many ways to be more active.

Consider this advice from experts, including the CNRC:

- ▶ Go for a walk and bring your kids along. Kids might also enjoy walking with friends.
- ▶ Take your kids skating, or play a game of driveway basketball. Just make exercise fun; it's good for the whole family.
- ▶ Encourage your children to ride a bike, go skateboarding, take a hike, or work out to an exercise video.

Experts say small changes in a child's routine can get healthy rewards.



PROTECT YOUR family

From birth to old age, it's hard to avoid being exposed to some very serious diseases. You're more likely to avoid illness if you live a healthy life. But a vaccination can give your immune system a big boost.

Vaccines are usually very safe. They have only minor side effects, if any.

You can help protect yourself and your family by getting the following vaccinations.

Infants and young children. By 18 months, a child should have shots for hepatitis B, diphtheria,

tetanus, whooping cough, polio, pneumonia, measles, mumps, rubella, and chickenpox. PCV (pneumococcal conjugate vaccine) is a "must have" to head off serious bacterial infections that affect the ears and bloodstream.

The same vaccine that is given each year to protect adults against the flu is advised for children 6 to 23 months old.

Your child's doctor can tell you when shots are needed.

Older kids and adolescents. Children 11 to 12 years old should be

vaccinated for meningitis.

Those 11 to 19 years old may also need to update their shots. For example, college students can be exposed to "kid" diseases such as chickenpox and measles. These diseases can be very serious in young adults.

Students should also talk to their doctors about protection against meningitis, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and the flu.

Adults. Adults have a much greater risk of dying from vaccine-preventable diseases than do children. Flu and pneumonia are

among the greatest threats.

Those 50 or older and adults with chronic health conditions such as heart disease or diabetes need a flu shot each year. A vaccination against pneumonia is recommended at 65.

A booster shot for tetanus is needed every 10 years.

Be sure to keep a written record of vaccinations for all family members.

To learn more about vaccines, visit the National Immunization Program at www.cdc.gov/nip/.

Sources: American College of Physicians; Immunization Action Coalition



FOLLOW THESE TIPS FOR A healthy PREGNANCY

- ▶ If traveling long distances by car is in your plans, remember to wear your seat belt. Also, get out and walk around every two hours.
- ▶ Drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day to prevent dehydration.
- ▶ Exercise is important, so work some into your busy schedule. Walking and swimming are both good.

If you would like to be contacted by your prenatal care coordinator at Rocky Mountain Health Plans, please call Janice Ferguson, RNC, at 800-842-0719, ext. 7890, or 970-244-7890.

GAINING weight DURING PREGNANCY

Many women worry about gaining too much weight during their pregnancy or not being able to lose it after delivery. While gaining too much weight can be a problem, gaining too little is not healthy either.

Women who do not gain enough weight are more likely to have a low-birth-weight baby, weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces. Low-birth-weight babies tend to have more serious health problems.

The current advice for weight gain in pregnancy is

based on how much you weighed before getting pregnant. Most women should gain 25 to 35 pounds. If you were underweight before your pregnancy, you should gain between 28 and 40 pounds. Overweight women should gain 15 to 25 pounds.

This may seem like a lot of weight to gain, but it is healthy. The chart at right will help you see where the weight goes.

Talk to your health care provider about how much weight you should gain.

WHERE THE WEIGHT GOES

Baby	6 to 8 pounds
Placenta	1 to 2 pounds
Uterus	1 to 2 pounds
Amniotic fluid	2 to 3 pounds
Breast changes	1 to 2 pounds
Extra blood	3 to 4 pounds
Extra body fluids	3 to 4 pounds
Protein and fat storage	8 to 10 pounds
Total	25 to 35 pounds

CLICK/CALL



Learn more about weight gain by visiting Colorado's "Worth the Weight" website at www.healthy-baby.org. Or call Janice Ferguson, RNC, your RMHP care coordinator, at 800-843-0719, ext. 7890, or 970-244-7890.

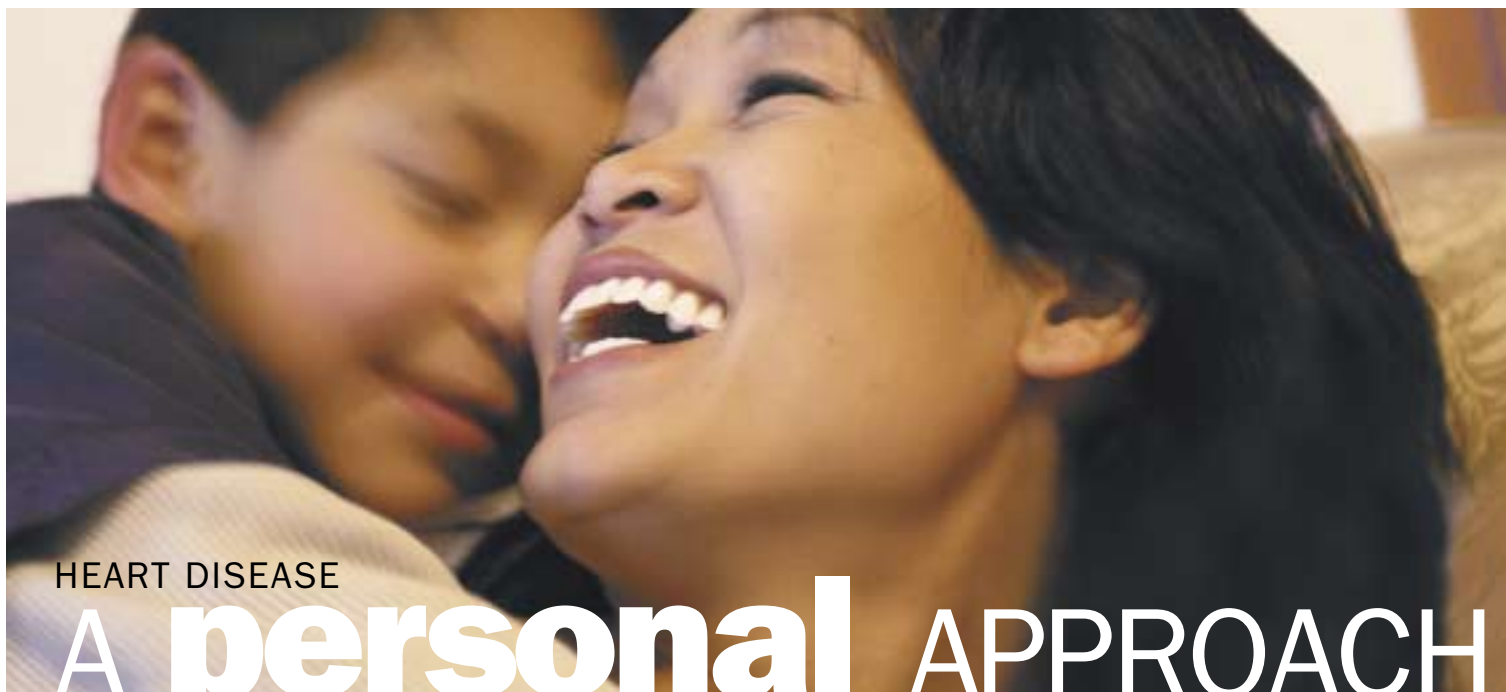
watch THE MAIL FOR NEW ID CARDS

You asked, and RMHP listened. Soon your member ID number will no longer be your Social Security number. You and your covered family members will be assigned new member numbers.

Later this year you'll get a letter and your new ID card. This card will have your new member ID number on it. Just follow the instructions in the letter to begin using your new card.

We are working to make this a smooth change for you. Our contracting doctors, providers, and pharmacies will know about this change.

Be sure to show your new ID card every time you get health care services or go to the pharmacy.



HEART DISEASE

A **personal** APPROACH

Here's some information a woman can take to heart: You can take action now to head off heart disease, the leading cause of death among American women. The key: being aware of your personal risks and understanding your options for treatment, reports the American Heart Association (AHA).

Know the score The risk of getting heart disease is not something you either have or don't have. Everyone has some risk, but the amount varies from woman to woman.


To measure your risk, you and your doctor can use a tool called the Framingham risk assessment calculator. This tool can help determine if you are at high, intermediate, or low risk.

The calculator uses your age, total cholesterol level, HDL ("good") cholesterol level, blood pressure, and smoking history to come up with a score. The score tells you your chances of developing or dying from heart disease over a 10-year period.

Lower your risk No matter what your score, the most important thing you can do to lower your risk is to adopt a healthy lifestyle, the AHA reports. Ways you can do this are to:

- ▶ Stop smoking; if you don't smoke, don't start.
- ▶ Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day.
- ▶ Eat a heart-healthy diet. This includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or nonfat dairy products, fish, poultry, and lean meats.
- ▶ Maintain a healthy weight.
- ▶ Keep your blood pressure and cholesterol levels in a healthy range.
- ▶ If you have diabetes, keep it under tight control.

Drug therapy If your score puts you in the high- or intermediate-risk groups, talk to your doctor about other interventions for preventing heart disease. These might include medications such as beta-blockers, statins, ACE inhibitors, and aspirin.

CLICK  To calculate your risk for heart disease, visit the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at www.nhlbi.nih.gov and type "Framingham risk calculator" in the "search" box.

HOW TO AVOID **diabetes** HEALTH COMPLICATIONS

Diabetes can lead to many health complications. But you may be able to head them off with this advice from the American Diabetes Association.

Ask your doctor about taking aspirin. Your doctor may want you to take an aspirin every day to protect against heart attack and stroke.

Inspect your feet daily.

Poor blood circulation, nerve disease, and infections can be signs of serious problems. If a sore won't heal, see your doctor.

Take care of your mouth. Poorly controlled diabetes can cause severe gum disease. Have your teeth cleaned and checked by a dentist at least every six months. Between visits, brush twice a day and floss daily.

Have your eyes checked. Diabetic retinopathy damages your retina. If not treated, it can cause blindness. Have an eye exam once a year, or more often if you already have eye disease. See the doctor right away if your vision changes. Have a dilated eye exam if you are pregnant or plan to get pregnant.

Protect against flu and

pneumonia. You need a flu shot each year. You'll need protection against pneumonia as well—now and again at age 65 if it has been more than five years since your last vaccination.

Work with a diabetes educator. The more you know about how food, exercise, and medicines affect your diabetes, the better off you will be.



GOOD HEALTH

John Hopkins President and CEO **Bruce Wilson, MD** Medical Director **Nora Foster** Managing Editor

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Customer Service800-346-4643 or 970-243-7050
 Para asistencia en español 800-346-4643
 TTY line for the hearing impaired 800-704-6370
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Our site www.rmhp.org

