

FALL 2008

My *Health* MATTERS

Providing Health Related Tips For Living Well

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Health New England How Can We Help?®

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My Health Matters is also available online at the HNE website, hne.com.

REMINDER: IT'S TIME FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

Last week I received a postcard from my auto dealer. It was time to bring my car in for service. I get similar reminders from my dentist.

So, why did it surprise me when I got a reminder from my doctor that it was time to come in for a check-up?

How can my physician keep track of when I need to make an appointment? The answer, technology! Many offices have computer systems that make it easier to track patient information. These systems allow offices to notify patients of the need to make an appointment, to identify patients who fail to obtain scheduled preventive services or follow-up visits, and to remind patients of their scheduled appointments.

My point of view: I love appointment reminders, it's one less thing I have to keep track of!



STRALEY HONORED BY NEW ENGLAND BLACK CHAMBER

Recently Peter Straley, President/CEO of Health New England, was presented with the "Collaboration for Economic Development Award" by the New England Black Chamber of Commerce. Pictured, Peter Straley receives the award from Aimee Griffin Munnings, Esq., Executive Director, New England Black Chamber. At the ceremony, Ms. Munnings said, "Peter Straley is a man who lives a life of building dreams by investing in people."



Disclaimers:

All information contained in this publication is for general information purposes only and should not be considered medical advice. Individual circumstances and health care needs may vary. For specific information or advice relating to your medical needs, please consult your Primary Care Physician.

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SIMPLE PRESCRIPTION FOR MEDICATION SAFETY - A LIST



Shopping lists and to-do lists help to organize our lives. But what if there was a list that could help you and your doctor improve your health? Well, that's what keeping a list of every prescription medication and over-the-counter treatment you are taking can do for you.

Your medication list should include all prescriptions, non-prescription medicines, herbal remedies and vitamins. Share your list with a loved one who may be called on during an emergency when you may not be able to speak on your own behalf.

It's also important that you keep a list for any of your children taking medications and remind adult members of your family to have one. If you are caring for elderly parents, work with them on their lists.

Medication errors do happen, but most can be avoided if both doctors and patients take a few simple steps to make sure they are communicating clearly with each other.

AT YOUR DOCTOR'S OFFICE OR CLINIC

- Talk with your doctor or nurse about each medication. Learn the dosage (how much you take), directions (how and when to take it) and what to do if you forget to take your medication. Also, ask about any side effects and what to do if they occur.
- Share your medication list with your doctor or tell your doctor about all the medications you take. Remember to include prescription drugs, vitamins, and natural remedies such as herbal products.

AT THE PHARMACY

- Give your pharmacist your insurance card, your phone number, and your medication list.
- Make sure you receive **your** medication. Check the name on the label.

- Make sure you get the correct medication. Read the label on the pill bottle to make sure that the instructions and dosage are the same as your doctor ordered.
- Ask for written information about each medication.

AT HOME

- Take your medication only as prescribed. This means not taking more or less than the doctor ordered. Never take someone else's medication.
- Be aware of any side effects or bad reactions (such as dizziness or nausea). Call your doctor or pharmacy if you do not feel well.
- Keep all medication in the original pill bottle or package. Store in a cool, dry space and not in a bathroom.
- Be sure to keep all medication out of the reach of children.
- Pay attention to expiration (use by) dates on the pill bottle. Do not wait until the last minute to refill your prescription.
- Throw out medications that are past their expiration date.
- At least once each year, look through your medications. Toss out outdated medication and medications that are no longer in their original containers.

GETTING STARTED ON YOUR LIST

To find out more about medication safety and about getting started on your medication list, visit the Partnership for Healthcare Excellence at partnershipforhealthcare.org. There you will find a link to a form for creating your own medication list.

Remember, the more active and involved you are as a patient, the better your health care and your health will be.



ANSWERS TO MEMBERS' MOST COMMON QUESTIONS

Why does Member Services ask for my name, address and date of birth every time I call?

To protect your privacy, HNE asks for three points of verification to ensure your identity and to prevent the inappropriate disclosure of personal information.

Why can't I get information on my spouse and dependents over the age of eighteen?

Federal law requires that HNE protect the personal health information (PHI) of all its members. For members over 18, HNE cannot disclose PHI without the member's consent. A member can authorize another person to discuss his/her PHI. To do this, the member must complete an Authorization of Personal Representative form and submit it to HNE. You may find this form at hne.com, or you may call Member Services at 800-310-2835 or 787-4004 to request a form.

GET THE MOST FROM YOUR VISIT TO THE DOCTOR

When it comes to understanding how well a doctor's office can meet your needs and expectations as a patient, there's one place to look – mhqp.org. Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP), an independent organization dedicated to improving the quality of health care, offers easy Web tools to help you compare the performance of doctors' offices and medical groups across the state.

At mhqp.org, you can see how primary care medical practices across Massachusetts (with three or more physicians) stack up in crucial aspects of patient care.

Patient Experiences in Primary Care shows how adult patients and parents of pediatric patients assessed their relationships with their doctors in key areas like communication, advice on prevention, coordination with specialists, and waiting times for appointments.

More than 400 primary care adult and pediatric practices with three or more physicians and 3,500 physicians are included.



That is almost all of the primary care physicians in Massachusetts.

Clinical Quality in Primary Care shows how well medical groups do in providing preventive care services such as cancer screening and well-child. It also shows how well they manage patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma. The website also includes tips on what you and your doctor can do to improve the quality of your care and your health.

(Continued on next page)

My Member News

GET THE MOST FROM YOUR VISIT TO THE DOCTOR *(continued)*

Your “Patient Experience” is everything that happens at your doctor’s office. It also includes phone calls or other contacts you have with the doctor’s office. At mhqp.org you can see below how different medical practices perform in the eyes of their patients. Use the “Working With Your Doctor” checklist below to improve your health care through better communication.

CHECKLIST: WORKING WITH YOUR DOCTOR TO IMPROVE YOUR CARE

You can build a healthier relationship with your doctor and get the most from every visit by using these simple tips.

- Give complete and accurate information.** Answer all of the doctor’s questions about your health. Your doctor will want to know about all of your symptoms, including when they started, what they feel like, and how long they last. It helps if you think about these questions ahead of time.
- Ask all of your questions and make sure you understand the answers.** Before your appointment, make a list of all the questions you want to ask. During the appointment, take notes of what the doctor says. You might also want to bring someone with you to help ask questions, listen, and remember. Let your doctor know if you are confused or do not understand.
- Talk about what is important to you—even if the doctor does not ask.** This includes religious beliefs or other ideas you have about treatments and care.
- Talk with your doctor about lifestyle choices that affect your health.** These include foods you eat, how much exercise you get, and whether you smoke, drink, or use recreational drugs. It is important to talk with your doctor about these choices even if it is awkward or embarrassing to do so.
- Let your doctor know about other doctors or health providers you see.** This includes specialists, chiropractors, therapists, and others providers such as healers and herbalists.
- Discuss benefits and risks before you make a treatment choice.** Talk with your doctor and learn as much as you want to know about the benefits (how treatments may help) and risks (possible problems or side-effects) of each treatment choice.
- Find out when you will hear about test results.** Call your doctor’s office if you do not get test results when expected.
- Make and keep all appointments, even when you are feeling well.**
- Know that there may be times when your own doctor cannot see you.**

For more ideas on how you can work with your doctor to improve your care experience, and for additional resources and information about health care quality, please visit mhqp.org.

Massachusetts Health Quality Partners is an independent organization that collects and publicly reports statewide results for patients’ experiences with their primary care providers. By bringing together physicians, consumers, researchers, policy makers and other health care leaders, MHQP provides information to help physicians improve the quality of care they provide for their patients and help consumers take an active role in making informed decisions about their health care.

SCHOOL BACKPACKS: TIPS TO PREVENT A WEIGHTY PROBLEM



For most children, back to school time means wearing a backpack. When overloaded, a backpack can be a weighty problem.

Maintaining proper posture is critical to long-term health. The spine is composed of 33 bones called vertebrae. Discs between the vertebrae act as shock absorbers.

Carrying around extra pounds

puts unneeded pressure on the spine. This can cause students to unnecessarily arch their backs and bend at the hips.

To prevent long-term problems, keep these useful tips in mind.

- The weight of the loaded backpack should not exceed 15% of the person's body weight. Multiply weight of the wearer by 0.15.
- If the backpack causes the wearer to hunch or alter their posture to carry, it's packed too heavy.
- Always wear both straps of the backpack snugly, but not too tight. Wear the waist strap if available. This will help to ensure even distribution of weight.
- Don't carry items in your backpack that aren't necessary.
- Use all compartments to distribute the weight. Place heaviest items closest to your back.
- Place the backpack two inches above your waist.

Following these tips will help ensure proper back safety throughout the school year.

FALL FITNESS AUTUMN IS ALMOST HERE

Once the kids are back in school, take advantage of any free time you can find. Your fitness program doesn't have to take up your entire day. Thirty minutes of walking around your neighborhood will help develop stamina and increase energy. Making time to take care of yourself is one of the best things you can do for your family.

ENJOY AUTUMN IN NEW ENGLAND: Autumn in New England is a wonderful season. Enjoy it by bicycling, walking, hiking, jogging, and playing golf and tennis. Explore local parks and reservoirs in your area, locate

new bike paths or take a walk on wooded trails or around a lake. Your time spent out in nature will do as much good for your mind as for your body.

GET BACK TO THE FITNESS CENTER: Summer is always a difficult time to be indoors. Now that fall is almost here, think about returning to the fitness center.

A well-rounded fitness program is essential.



(continued on back cover)

UNDERSTANDING ADHD (PART 3)

This is part three of the HNE Behavioral Health Department's three-part series on ADHD. The full series is available in a brochure, at hne.com or by calling HNE Member Services.

TREATMENT FOR ADHD

If the doctor confirms the diagnosis of ADHD, he or she will recommend a course of treatment. There is no cure for ADHD, but it can be treated successfully. Many treatment options are available.

The treatment the doctor recommends will be tailored to your child's needs. The treatment will include:

- Education about ADHD for you and your child.
- Monitoring of behavior in different situations.
- Medication.
- Individual and family therapy.
- Parent education/training.
- Long-term behavior management planning.

MEDICATION

Many parents are concerned about having their child on medication. This is understandable. However, stimulant medications are proven as a safe and effective way to treat ADHD symptoms. They can help your child to focus better and ignore distractions. As a result, your child will be more likely to succeed in school and at other activities.

Different types of stimulants are available. There are short-acting, intermediate-acting, and long-acting forms. Your child's pediatrician will determine the most appropriate type of stimulant to meet your child's particular needs. Be sure you talk with the doctor about any concerns you may have. Remember, it may take a while to find the right medication and the right dosage for your child.

As your child grows, the dosage will be adjusted. When your child takes the medication each day may change over time, too.

HELPING YOUR CHILD COPE WITH ADHD

It's not easy having ADHD. Here are some things you can do to help your child.

- **Daily Schedule:** Be sure to have a consistent daily routine for your child. Have similar times each day for waking up, eating meals, going to sleep, etc.
- **Reduce distractions:** Loud music, electronic games, and television can be distracting. Reduce the amount of time your child is exposed to these. Also, limit the time he or she spends at places that are very stimulating – like malls, arcades, and theme parks.
- **Reduce clutter:** Keep your house as organized as possible. Help your child do the same with his or her room. Have sensible places for toys, books, and clothes.
- **Reward positive behavior:** Give your child a hug, a “high five,” or other small rewards when he or she shows positive behavior.
- **Use calm and firm discipline:** Use simple consequences, such as “time-out” or removing the child from the situation. In some cases, if you ignore the behavior, it is likely to go away. Loud yelling and physical punishment are not helpful.

It's also not easy being the parent of a child with ADHD. Be sure to take care of yourself. Learn stress management techniques. This can help you respond calmly to your child, even in the most difficult situations. If necessary, seek therapy for support. Your pediatrician can help you find parent support, education groups, or other community resources.

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

National Institute of Mental Health - nimh.nih.gov

National Attention Deficit Disorder Association - add.org

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) - chadd.org

DISEASE MANAGEMENT A SUCCESS STORY

By Tarsha Johnson, HNE Member



I was diagnosed with hypertension in the fall of 2000. I was working two jobs and eating a lot of the wrong foods. It was now time for me to lose some weight along with lowering my stress level. First of all, I

quit my part-time job. Secondly, I began to cut back on a lot of the fatty and high sodium foods I liked to eat, began to exercise, and joined a gym. I knew I was in control of the blood pressure and it was not going to control me anymore.

As weeks and months passed the weight started dropping off. I kept a journal of my progress and it inspired me to keep going. I worked at a healthcare facility myself and was able to monitor my blood pressure with the help of my co-workers. I was on a low dosage water pill (HCTZ) and my pressure was doing well. With the careful eating plan and exercising, forty pounds vanished away!

In the spring of 2007, I went to see my primary care doctor. Because I was doing so well, I was able to stop taking my blood pressure medicine. But I keep monitoring my blood pressure at work. I am happy to say that to this day, I have not had any rise in my blood pressure. Nothing comes easy, but when you put your mind to it, you can do anything.

I am thankful I was able to accomplish this big goal in my life.

PARENTS: BACK TO SCHOOL ASTHMA PRECAUTIONS

Here's a short but important checklist to follow to help prevent asthma problems for your child while at school:

- Give a copy of your child's Asthma Action Plan to the school nurse and teacher.
- Find out the school policy for carrying and using rescue inhalers.
- Ask if the school nurse is present all day, everyday.
- If children are not allowed to carry inhalers, ask how they get access to medicine.
- Inform teachers about your child's asthma, and where he or she keeps the rescue inhaler.
- Ask if the school has an emergency plan for taking care of a child with a severe asthma episode. Be involved in the plan. Make sure your child's teacher and classmates are aware of the plan.



HOME SAFE HOME



Ask Americans where they feel safest and most will say their own home. However, unintentional injuries in the home result in nearly 21 million medical visits on average each year. Here are a few simple steps recommended by the Home Safety Council that will make homes safe.

PREVENT FALLS

- Have grab bars in the tub and shower.
- Have bright lights over stairs and steps and on landings.
- Have handrails on both sides of the stairs and steps.
- Use a ladder instead of a stool or furniture for climbing.
- Use baby gates at the top and bottom of the stairs if babies or toddlers live in or visit your home.

PREVENT POISONINGS

- Lock poisons, cleaners, medications and all dangerous items in a place where children can't reach them.
- Keep all cleaners in their original containers. Do not mix them together.
- Use medications carefully. Follow the directions. Use child resistant lids.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors near sleeping areas.
- **Call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222** if someone takes poison. This number will connect you to emergency help in your area.

PREVENT FIRES & BURNS

- Have working smoke alarms and hold fire drills. If you build a new home, install fire sprinklers.
- Stay by the stove when cooking, especially when you are frying food.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from

anything that can burn. Turn them off when you leave the room or go to sleep.

- If you smoke, smoke outside. Use deep ashtrays and put water in them before you empty them. Lock matches and lighters in a place where children can't reach them.
- Only light candles when an adult is in the room. Blow the candle out when you leave the room or go to sleep.

PREVENT CHOKING AND SUFFOCATION

- Things that can fit through a toilet paper tube can cause a young child to choke. Keep coins, latex balloons and hard, round foods, such as peanuts and hard candy, out of children's reach.
- Place children in bed on their backs. Don't put pillows, comforters or toys in the crib.
- Clip the loops in window cords and place them up high where children can't get them.
- Read the labels on all toys, especially if they have small parts. Be sure that your child is old enough to play with them.
- Tell children to sit down when they eat and to take small bites.

BE SMART AROUND WATER

- Stay within an arm's length of children in and around water. This includes bathtubs, toilets, pools and spas – even buckets of water.
- Put a fence all the way around your pool or spa.
- Empty large buckets and wading pools after using them. Keep them upside down when not in use.
- Make sure your children always swim with a grown-up. No child or adult should swim alone.
- Keep your hot water at or below 120° degrees F to prevent burns.

Visit the Home Safety Resource Center at homesafetycouncil.org to review and download free information, including posters, brochures, safety checklists and additional tips to help safeguard your family.

TAKE CONTROL OF EMOTIONAL EATING

IT JUST MAY SAVE YOUR LIFE

By, Jennifer Giffune, R.D., L.D.N.

You are having a bad day, you feel sad, you are sick and tired of having diabetes, you wish you could throw out your blood glucose monitor, you are angry at yourself or another, you are bored, ...and you feel weak. When dealing with a difficult time in your life, do you turn to food? If you do, this is called "Emotional Eating."

The good news about emotional eating is that you can take control and break the cycle. It will take work, but the results will make you feel wonderful about yourself.

BREAK THE CYCLE

If you have not had a complete physical in the past year, it is time. Ask for blood work to check blood sugar, A1C, cholesterol, LDL, HDL, triglycerides, thyroid, vitamin D, B12 and iron levels. Have your blood pressure checked. Tell your healthcare provider if you are having any sleep issues (not getting a full night of sleep, not being able to fall asleep, etc.). If you have a clean bill of health (or issues you can treat medically) and you continue to turn to food, it is likely that it is emotional eating. Below are some tips to follow before your next bite.

STOP & THINK: Take about 15 minutes and sit down and think about whether you are truly hunger. True hunger comes on slowly. Cravings come on quickly, and pass if not fed in about 15 minutes.

HYDRATE YOURSELF: While you are thinking, have an eight ounce glass of water. If you were thirsty, this will suffice and you will not feel that you need to eat.

LEARN WHAT YOUR TRIGGERS ARE: Keep a food diary of all the food and drinks you have. Include details such as the date, time, and amounts. Add how long it took to eat the meals/snacks and how you were feeling at the time. Then you may be able to see a pattern, and detect when you emotionally eat.

PLAN AHEAD: If you know that making a meal is the last thing you want to do after a long day, make meals on the weekend and freeze them.



FIND NON-FOOD COMFORTS: Take some time when you are having a calm day, and write down a list of non-food comforts. It may be that you have a list of immediate comforts like picking up a phone and calling a friend or throwing on a pair of sneakers and going for a brisk walk.

DON'T GO HUNGRY: Skipping meals is the worst thing for you if you have diabetes, especially if you are on medications. Eat three meals a day and a couple of snacks routinely (fueling yourself every 2 to 3 hours).

MAKE HEALTHY EATING A LIFESTYLE: Choose good carbs (such as whole grains, vegetables, and fruit), lean protein (such as poultry, fish, soy, dry peas & beans, and lean meats), heart healthy fats (such as nuts, seeds, and oils), and adequate calcium (from non-fat and low-fat milk and yogurt). Practice portion control, and slow down when you eat.

GET MOVING! Use exercise and physical activity as a stress reliever and mood elevator. Include all types of exercise (aerobic, strengthening and flexibility), and aim for 4 – 7 days a week.

CALL IN THE CAVALRY: Some emotions may be very deep rooted. There is nothing wrong with seeking the help of a professional (psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker). It may just save your life! Ask your healthcare provider for a recommendation, or call HNE's Member Services line at 800-310-2835 or 787-4000.

Living Well with Chronic Conditions

HEALTH CLASSES OFFERED

INDIVIDUAL DIABETES EDUCATION

Your plan may include a benefit for you to meet individually with a diabetes educator. To find out if this is a covered benefit under your plan, call HNE Member Services at **800-310-2835** or refer to your membership materials.

DIABETES EDUCATION AND MEAL PLANNING WORKSHOP

Learn how to manage diabetes and prevent complications. Find out about important tests for people with diabetes. You also will learn ways to make better food choices and still enjoy your meals. Classes are free. For information about the following, call **413-787-4000** or **800-842-4464, ext. 3451**.

VIRTUAL DIABETES CLASS

An informative video about managing diabetes, preventing complications, and daily blood sugar monitoring. Make better food choices and still enjoy your meals. This DVD is free to HNE members.

DISEASE MANAGEMENT GROCERY STORE TOUR

A grocery store tour for people managing diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease and high blood pressure. In small groups, walk with a nutritionist through each food section and learn how to count carbohydrates, and identify sodium, fat and cholesterol content of food. Learn how to make better food choices that are affordable.

VIRTUAL GROCERY STORE TOUR

An informative video about reading food labels, determining portion sizes, and determining the amount of carbohydrates, sodium, fat and cholesterol in foods. VHS video and CD-ROM formats are available and free to HNE members.

SMOKING CESSATION

For members who have asthma, diabetes, heart disease and/or who are pregnant, HNE will reimburse you up to \$50 for the cost of a smoking cessation program. For more information, call **413-787-4000** or **800-842-4464, ext. 3553**.

VIRTUAL ASTHMA CLASS

An informative video about managing asthma, preventing flare-ups and using inhalers correctly. This DVD is free to HNE members.

ASTHMA EDUCATION CLASS

You will learn how to use inhalers correctly, prevent asthma flare-ups, control asthma triggers and develop an asthma action plan. Classes are free.

LIVING WELL GROCERY STORE TOUR

In small groups, walk with a Registered Dietician and learn how to count carbohydrates and identify sodium, fat and cholesterol content in various food items. For more information, call **413-787-4000** or **800-842-4464, ext. 3031**.

CHICKEN & SPANISH RICE

1 C onions, chopped	1-1/4 tsp garlic, minced
1/4 C green peppers	5 C cooked rice (in unsalted water)
2 tsp vegetable oil	3-1/2 C chicken breast, cooked, skin and bone removed, diced
1 can (8 oz) tomato sauce*	
1 tsp parsley, chopped	
1/2 tsp black pepper	

1. In large skillet, sauté onions and green peppers in oil for 5 minutes on medium heat.
2. Add tomato sauce and spices. Heat through.
3. Add cooked rice and chicken, and heat through.

*Reduce sodium by using one 4-oz can of no salt added tomato sauce and one 4-oz can of regular tomato sauce. New sodium content for each serving is 226 mg.

Yield: 5 servings - Servings size: 1-1/2 cup

Calories: 406	Total Fat: 6 g	Saturated Fat: 2 g	Carbohydrates: 52 g
Protein: 33 g	Cholesterol: 75 mg	Sodium: 367 mg	Total fiber: 2 g



One Monarch Place, Suite 1500
 Springfield, MA 01144-1500
 hne.com

PRESORT STANDARD
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FALL FITNESS *continued*

While aerobic activity such as running or bicycling is great for your heart, resistance training is also a critical component of a balanced program.

FIND A WORKOUT BUDDY: Find a friend with a similar fitness level and goals. A partner helps you stay motivated. You can use your exercise time to socialize, which will help time pass faster. Preventing boredom will help keep you on the right path.

Did you know that raking your lawn burns just as many calories per hour as taking a brisk walk? It's true! The average person burns between 288-336 calories per hour while raking the leaves or walking. The chart below provides other examples on burning calories.

Moderate Physical Activity	Approx. Calories/Hr for a 154 lb Person
Hiking	370
Light gardening/yard work	330
Walking (3.5 mph)	280
Vigorous Physical Activity	Approx. Calories/Hr for a 154 lb Person
Running/jogging (5 mph)	590
Walking (4.5 mph)	460
Heavy yard work (chopping wood)	440

Adapted from Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005

