

## HNE EXPANDS ITS NETWORK

HNE has added Sisters of Providence Health System (SPHS) for HNE members. This is an expansion of HNE's existing agreement with the SPHS. Prior to this, only members in selected HNE products could use SPHS services. SPHS includes Mercy Medical Center and Weldon Rehabilitation Hospital in Springfield, Providence Behavioral Health Hospital in Holyoke, and Brightside for Families and Children in West Springfield. Among the 15 facility sites in Western Massachusetts are the Family Life Center on the Springfield campus of Mercy Medical Center and the Providence Prenatal Center of Holyoke. The system also includes Life Laboratories, a regional diagnostic laboratory, and Mercy Home Care. For more information, contact HNE's Member Services Department: 413.787.4004, or visit our Web site at [www.hne.com](http://www.hne.com). For information about services at SPHS, call 413.748.9704 or visit their Web site: [www.mercycares.com](http://www.mercycares.com). \*

# MEMBERMATTERS

PROVIDING HEALTH RELATED NEWS FOR HNE MEMBERS

## Introducing HNE's New Look

Recently, we sent you an exciting announcement in the mail—the birth of our new corporate logo and tagline! Over the next few months, you will be seeing more of our new logo (pictured here) and tagline—*How can we help?*—as we replace our old logo, the cross and pinecone. Not to worry, your current membership materials—ID cards, pharmacy cards, and so forth—are still valid. As always, we will tell you in advance of any changes in how you access your benefits.

Our new look reflects HNE's growth over the past 20 years. Often, businesses undertake such "corporate makeovers" as a way to change their image. Not so for us, says Peter Straley, HNE's President and CEO. "It was more a question of updating our logo to reflect how we've grown." Pointing to market research, Straley said, "We talked to our customers, and they told us consistently that we have a lot to be proud of. Our customers know that they can talk to us—we're easy to reach, and they know that we're here to help."

We are proud of the reputation we've developed over the past 20 years. We are a responsive company that is willing to adapt to our customers' changing needs, and the changing health care environment. We know how hard it is to offer broad medical benefits that are affordable in the face of rising health care costs. We work closely with local employers to find ways to meet this challenge—such as developing new insurance products that reflect a company's specific needs.

HNE also is known locally as a generous supporter of community events and organizations. Through sponsorships, corporate

appearances, and the individual volunteerism of our employees, we maintain a strong presence in Western Massachusetts.

Juan Campbell, HNE's Sales Director, works closely with members of the local business community. In reference to HNE's new image, Juan had this to say: "Our customers know us as HNE, and that's how we think of ourselves. Moving from the Health New England logo to the new HNE one is a way to focus our image. 'New England' is a big place—and as a logo, it doesn't really represent our roots in this community. We're a strong presence locally, right here in Western Mass."

HNE also has received high marks from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), a national accreditation organization. NCQA ranked HNE one of the "Top Ten" health plans in the nation and "Top Five" in the northeast for clinical care (State of Health Care Quality: 2004). NCQA also awarded Best of Class designations to HNE for six HEDIS® (Healthcare Employer Data Information Set) 2004 quality measures, reflecting rankings in the top 10 percent of all plans nationwide (Quality Compass™: 2004).

So with all this praise and recognition, why change now? Again, Peter Straley: "It was time for a change. We wanted our trademark signature to better reflect our core values. Our new color scheme, purple and green, reflects our dynamic blend of strength and compassion, while the abstract image is about caring and accessibility. That combined with our new tagline 'How can we help?' really sums up what we're all about." \*



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## Spring Fever

featuring Mike Gauvin, HNE's Health Programs Coordinator

When the sun is shining, who wants to stay indoors, especially when it comes to exercise? Spring is the perfect time of year to shake up your exercise program. Taking your exercise routine outside can help to eliminate boredom, which often challenges a regular exerciser's adherence. Now that the cold winter is in our rear view mirror, we all have a great opportunity to get out and add excitement to our stale winter routines.

Changing your winter program may be just what you need to overcome your fitness plateaus. Outdoor activities such as walking, running, jogging, or a combination of all three, are excellent cardiovascular exercises, as long as you play it safe.

- ❖ Make certain your surroundings are safe and that you are wearing proper shoes and gear to support your choice of outdoor activity.

- ❖ Make yourself visible at dawn, dusk, and during evening hours. Wear white or light-colored clothing. Wearing reflective material is even better—and not just on your shoes; a reflective vest is your best choice.
- ❖ Don't progress too quickly. Even though the weather is beautiful, make sure you don't overdo it. Drastically increasing intensity or duration is a leading cause of exercise burnout.
- ❖ Face the traffic. Runners and walkers need to see the traffic coming their way. If you can see the vehicles you will have time to react to their actions.
- ❖ Leave your portable music player behind. We all enjoy listening to music while we're exercising, but headphones may hide the sound of approaching cars, or footsteps, coming up behind you. Music is also distracting—you might trip on that huge crack in the sidewalk, or fall



over that exposed tree root in the park.

- ❖ Know your route. Are there stores or businesses open along the way? Where are the pay phones? Are there deserted streets—areas with few or no people?
- ❖ Change your route frequently. This will help spice up your routine and keep you interested in continuing your program.
- ❖ Exercise with a friend. Exercise is more fun with a friend and it will help keep you safe.

Following these outdoor exercise tips will help you enjoy the warm weather and introduce some excitement to your spring exercise routine. ✨

### Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds 2005

Each year, HNE offers several events as part of a year-long health series aimed at helping our members achieve an optimum level of health. Events are open to HNE members as well as the general public. Please join HNE this year as we focus on nurturing Healthy Bodies and Healthy Minds.

#### HNE'S WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT HEALTH FAIR

Back by popular demand

Thursday, October 20, 2005, from 5:00–9:00 PM

Best Western Sovereign Hotel and Conference Center  
1080 Riverdale Street (Route 5)  
West Springfield, MA 01089

This year's program will include: health screenings, health and fitness vendors, hobby vendors, new workshops, door prizes, and raffles!

For more information and to register, please call 413.233.3032

### Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds 2005

#### Seminar Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone (daytime): \_\_\_\_\_

Women's Night Out, Thursday, October 20, 5:00–9:00 p.m.

Cost: \$10 per member, \$15 per nonmember

Total amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

HNE charges a small, nonrefundable fee to cover costs of speakers and conference space. HNE does not profit from this program.

Please mail this form with your payment to: Health New England  
One Monarch Place, Ste.1500  
Springfield, MA 01144-1500  
Attn: Health Programs Dept.

# Health Education Classes Provider Updates

**H**NE wants to keep you healthy! Find what interests you and take advantage of our educational and self-help programs. Pre-registration is required for most classes. For more information, visit [www.hne.com](http://www.hne.com) and click on “Healthy Directions.”

**Adult Asthma Education.** HNE offers this class to adult members who have been diagnosed with asthma. Learn how to manage your asthma, measure peak flow, and develop an asthma action plan. For more information, class times and dates or to register, call 413.787.4000 or 800.842.4464, ext. 3553. Classes are held at the Best Western Sovereign Hotel, West Springfield.

**NEW!! COMING SOON!! HNE's Virtual Asthma Class.** HNE is pleased to present an informative virtual asthma class to teach you how to manage your asthma, measure peak flow, and develop an asthma action plan. The more you know, the better you will be able to control your asthma and take charge of your health. We created this virtual tour because we are committed to helping you live a healthy life. For more information or to order a copy, call 413.787.4000 or 800.842.4464, ext. 3391. Please specify your choice of either CD-ROM, DVD, or VHS format.

**Diabetes Education and Meal Planning.** A nurse/diabetes educator and a dietician/nutritionist teach this exciting new workshop for HNE members who have been diagnosed with diabetes. Learn about daily diabetes management, preventing complications such as high and low blood sugar, and important tests for people with diabetes. Learn ways to make better food choices, and still enjoy your meal plan. Free to HNE members who have been diagnosed with diabetes—you may bring a guest. To register, call HNE at 413.787.4000 or 800.842.4464 ext. 3391 or 3381. Classes are held from 6:00–8:30 p.m. at the Best Western Sovereign Hotel, West Springfield.

**NEW!! COMING SOON!! HNE's Virtual Diabetes Class.** HNE is pleased to present an informative virtual diabetes class, brought to you in the comfort of your own home. HNE's Virtual Diabetes Class will teach you about daily diabetes management, preventing diabetes complications such as high and low blood sugar, and important tests for people with diabetes. You will learn ways to make better food choices and still enjoy your meal plan. The more you know, the better you will be able to control your diabetes and take charge of your health. We created this virtual tour because we are committed to helping you live a healthy life. For more information or to order a copy, call 413.787.4000 or 800.842.4464, ext. 3391. Please specify your choice of either CD-ROM, DVD, or VHS format.

**Living Well Grocery Store Tours.** HNE offers this exciting program to HNE members who have diabetes, high cholesterol, or coronary heart disease. Walk through the grocery store with a registered dietician and learn how to read food labels, count carbohydrates, determine portion sizes, fat and cholesterol content, and much more! Space is limited! For more information or to register, call 413.787.4000 or 800.842.4464, ext. 3031.

**HNE's Virtual Grocery Store Tour.** HNE is delighted to present the Virtual Grocery Store Tour, an informative guide to help you to read food labels, count carbohydrates, determine portion sizes, fat, sodium, cholesterol content, and much more! We created this virtual tour because we are committed to helping you live a healthy life. The more you know, the better you will be able to make smart choices and take charge of your health. For more information or to order a copy, call 413.787.4000 or 800.842.4464, ext. 3031. Please specify your choice of either CD-ROM (for your computer), DVD, or VHS format.

**Smoking Cessation.** HNE provides reimbursement of up to \$50 to attend a smoking cessation program for HNE members who have asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and/or who are pregnant. For more information, call 413.787.4000 or 800.842.4464, ext. 3553. \*

## Primary Care Providers (PCPs) Joining HNE:

### FAMILY PRACTICE

Julia M. De Almeida, M.D.  
Northampton Family Practice Associates  
76 Carlon Drive  
Northampton, MA 01060  
413.584.2178

Flora F. Sadri, D.O.  
Community Health Center of Franklin County  
338 Montague City Road  
Turners Falls, MA 01376  
413.772.3748

Luis A. Santiago-Cruz, M.D.  
Brightwood Health Center  
380 Plainfield Street  
Springfield, MA 01199  
413.794.8423

### INTERNAL MEDICINE

Donna-Marie E. Christie, M.D.  
Mason Square Neighborhood Health Center  
11 Wilbraham Road  
Springfield, MA 01199  
413.794.3710

Michael Grey, M.D.  
140 High Street  
Springfield, MA 01199  
413.794.2511

### PEDIATRICS

Laura W. Kraus, M.D.  
Ludlow Pediatrics  
77 Winsor Street  
Ludlow, MA 01056  
413.589.9494

## PCPs leaving HNE:

Ibijoke A. Alade, M.D.  
Thomas J. Guggina, M.D.  
Claudia M. Molina, M.D.  
Virginia H. Rittner, M.D.  
William D. Selim, M.D.  
C. Frazer Shipman, M.D.  
Nicholas Tzakas, M.D.

## Address changes:

Ari S. Berman, M.D.  
Hampden County Physician Associates  
77 Boylston Street  
Springfield, MA 01104  
413.734.8254

Jeanne D. Johnson, M.D.  
Hampden County Physician Associates  
900 Memorial Drive  
West Springfield, MA 01089  
413.739.9001

## Telephone number changes:

Katherine J. Atkinson, M.D.  
413.549.8400

## No longer practicing as a PCP:

Thomas J. Keenan, M.D.  
Annabelle I. Quizon, M.D.

**For additional changes to provider addresses, phone numbers, and other changes, please see the Provider Directory on our Web site, [www.hne.com](http://www.hne.com)**

**A**rea hospitals also offer instruction, education, and support groups on a wide range of topics. For more information, please contact the individual hospitals directly.

Hospital	Web site	Phone Number
Baystate Medical Center	<a href="http://baystatehealth.com">baystatehealth.com</a>	800.377.HEALTH (4325)
Berkshire Medical Center	<a href="http://berkshirehealthsystems.com">berkshirehealthsystems.com</a>	413.447.2000
Cooley Dickinson Hospital	<a href="http://cooley-dickinson.org">cooley-dickinson.org</a>	413.582.2400
Fairview Hospital	<a href="http://berkshirehealthsystems.com">berkshirehealthsystems.com</a>	413.528.0790
Franklin Medical Center	<a href="http://baystatehealth.com/fmc">baystatehealth.com/fmc</a>	800.377.HEALTH (4325)
Holyoke Medical Center	<a href="http://holyokehealth.com">holyokehealth.com</a>	413.534.2500
Mary Lane Hospital	<a href="http://baystatehealth.com/mlh">baystatehealth.com/mlh</a>	800.377.HEALTH (4325)
Mercy Medical Center	<a href="http://mercycares.com">mercycares.com</a>	413.748.9000
Noble Hospital	<a href="http://noblehospital.org">noblehospital.org</a>	413.568.2811
North Adams Regional Hospital	<a href="http://nbhealth.org">nbhealth.org</a>	413.663.3701

## Coverage Reminder: Coverage exclusion

HNE does not cover blood or blood products, including the cost of donating blood for use during surgery or other medical procedures, in either an inpatient or outpatient setting. In most cases, the cost of blood or blood products is included in the payment that HNE makes to a facility or provider for a covered service. HNE and the provider usually agree to the payment amount in advance. Additional services (such as donating and storing one's own blood for use during surgery) may not be part of this pre-arranged payment amount. Because HNE does not cover these services, the provider may bill the member for them. If your provider has suggested additional blood storage services, and you have a question about coverage, please contact HNE's Members Services Department. \*



## Wellness Coach

George Pfeiffer, MSE

George J. Pfeiffer is a former collegiate distance runner. He competed in 28 marathons, won 5, and placed as high as 25th in the Boston Marathon.

## Survival Tips for the Weekend Athlete

Proper conditioning and preparation are key to enjoying your active pursuits without feeling the painful aftereffects a few days later. Here are some tips for protecting your muscles and joints while you're having fun:

- ✓ **Get a check up.** If you are over age 40, inactive, overweight, or have other health risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, or joint problems, it makes sense to see your doctor before you jump into any activity.
- ✓ **Get in shape.** Building up your aerobic conditioning, strength, and flexibility will improve your overall performance, enhance your enjoyment, and reduce your chances of injury.
- ✓ **Reduce your load.** Try to lose excess weight. Extra weight not only places additional stress on your heart and lungs, but places undue stress on your joints (e.g., knees and lower back).
- ✓ **Limber up.** Regardless of your activity, it is important to warm up properly beforehand. Brisk walking or slow jogging for 5 to 10 minutes, followed by slow stretching (e.g., shoulders/arm, back, hamstrings/thighs, and calf muscles) will increase your range of motion and help avoid pulled muscles. If you are involved in tennis, softball, and golf, practicing easy strokes or swings will warm up your muscles.
- ✓ **Cool down.** After your activity, cool down by walking for 5 minutes and finish with some stretches. This helps minimize muscle soreness and stiffness, and speeds recovery.
- ✓ **Pace your race.** For fun runs or road racing, start out slowly. Increase your pace gradually, rather than sprinting out to lead the pack.

Whatever of your choice of activity, you'll have more stamina and less soreness if you follow these simple guidelines. Best of all, you'll enjoy yourself and the companionship of your competitors and teammates! \*



## Monday Morning Aches

Are you planning lots of yard work on your day off? Is the gang getting together this weekend to play volleyball? Whether you do too many situps on Saturday morning, or spend hours pruning the trees in your yard on Sunday afternoon, you could have sore, aching muscles by Monday.

When you use muscles that are not accustomed to being stressed—even walking a mile or two, if you're not used to it—you run the risk of experiencing muscle soreness for up to 7 days afterwards. This is a condition known as delayed-onset muscle soreness (DOMS), caused by what is thought to be microscopic tearing in the muscle fibers that leads to swelling in and around the muscle. By trying to compress a week's worth of activity into a 2-day weekend, you may be setting yourself up for DOMS, or an overuse injury, such as tendinitis or a stress fracture.

If you experience soreness after exercising, these approaches may help:

- \* Try aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or naproxen to reduce pain and inflammation.
- \* Apply cold pack or ice massage: 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off, for 2 hours.
- \* Try slow, gentle stretches if the strain is mild and then add general movements (e.g. slow walking, gentle arm circles) to promote circulation.
- \* Talk with your doctor if you have excessive swelling, bruising, or tenderness lasting longer than 48 hours. \*

For more information: American College of Sports Medicine, [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org)

## Good and Bad Foods



*A conversation with  
Laurie Jones, R.D.*

*Laurie Jones is the Director of,  
Employee Health Improvement  
for MaineHealth in Portland.*

**W**e know there are foods we should always include in our diets (e.g., fruits and vegetables, lean meat, low-fat dairy, nuts, and legumes). We also are cautioned about foods to limit because they may be high in saturated fat or calories. However, 77 percent of Americans think there are “good” and “bad” foods. For example, some may think of a chocolate cookie as a “bad” food; whereas, a carrot is a “good” food. Or people tell themselves: “I ate a cookie, so I was bad.” Indeed, many popular diet plans suggest omitting entire groups of food in order to lose weight or improve health.

We asked Laurie Jones about this attitude toward food.

**Laurie Jones:** No individual food is inherently good or bad. For example, you won’t hurt your health or gain weight by eating one piece of chocolate. But when you try to manage your daily eating plan according to your list of “good” and “bad” foods, the minute you perceive you’ve “slipped up,” you think you have failed.

**Editor:** What’s the best approach?

**Laurie Jones:** Healthy eating doesn’t have to be a science project. Try looking at your total diet, rather than focusing on labeling individual “good” and “bad” foods in your head. Emphasize the quality of your overall diet, rather than individual foods. Then, don’t deny yourself something you really want. If you want a piece of chocolate, for example, have it and enjoy it: But enjoy it in the context of your overall healthy diet. \*

## Breezy and Wheezy

### *Exercise Induced Asthma*

**A**sthma is a chronic upper respiratory disease caused by inflammation of the small breathing tubes (bronchioles) of the lungs, which makes it difficult or impossible to breathe. Asthma may be triggered by infections, allergens such as pollens, molds, dust, animal dander, certain foods, cold air, tobacco smoke, air pollution, pesticides, chemical fumes, drugs (e.g., aspirin, acetaminophen, heart medications), and stress or strong emotions.

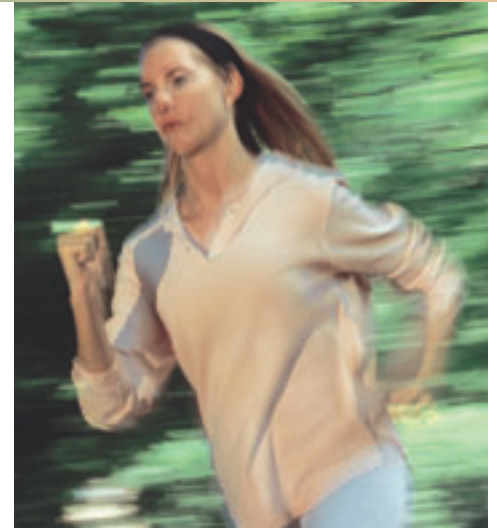
However, when some people exercise, they have asthma symptoms such as tightness in the chest, shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing, fatigue, and difficulty recovering after exercise. This condition is called exercise induced asthma (EIA). Highly aerobic activities (e.g., cycling, long-distance running) and activities performed in cold dry air (e.g., ice hockey, cross-country skiing) are more likely to produce EIA in susceptible people.

Fortunately, having EIA is not a reason to be inactive. In fact, physical activity helps build and maintain lung function. Professional and Olympic athletes with EIA have excelled in their chosen sports under proper medical supervision. Surprisingly, after the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, the US Olympic Committee found that 117 out of 700 athletes (or more than 16 percent) reported suffering from asthma.

Experts recommend the following for managing EIA:

- \* Warm up gradually before you exercise.
- \* Maintain optimum overall physical conditioning.
- \* Avoid exercising in cold, dry air.
- \* Cool down after exercising, but don’t stop abruptly.
- \* If you have chronic asthma, exercise only on those days when your asthma is well controlled.
- \* If EIA is worse with sustained activities (e.g., running, cross-country skiing), try activities requiring short bursts of activity (e.g., handball, tennis, volleyball).
- \* Work with your doctor to determine appropriate medications to help control and prevent asthma symptoms. \*

*For more information: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)*



## What if Something Happens? Advance directives make your decisions clear

**Y**ou could be faced with a life-threatening condition or major medical procedure at any time. While it may be unpleasant, it's important to think about what you would want if you were unable to communicate when a decision had to be made. You can specify your preferences in advance through legal documents called *advance directives*. Preparing these documents when you're healthy can spare your relatives and loved ones the burden of trying to make decisions for you in a crisis.

- ⇒ **Living will.** A living will states the kind of life support and heroic measures you want to receive if your condition is listed as terminal and you're not able to make those decisions. A living will also can specify what other medical procedures can be performed. It is a formal document that is signed, dated, and witnessed by two people who are not involved in your health care and are not heirs to your estate. It's not required that a lawyer review your document, although it is recommended.
- ⇒ **Durable power of attorney for health care.** This is a formal document (also called a *health care proxy*) in which you name another person who will make medical decisions for you if you are unable to make decisions on your own. A lawyer is not required to write a durable power of attorney for health care.

Depending on requirements of the state in which you live, one document or both may be recommended. Advance directives often can be combined, specifying not only life support limitations, but also the type of care you want to receive if you're unable to make decisions on your own. \*

For more information: *American Association for Retired Persons, aarp.org*



*This series explores various supplements, methods, and practices commonly used in complementary and alternative medicine.*

### Ginkgo Biloba

**T**he ginkgo tree is thought to be the oldest living tree species in the world. With its attractive, fan-shaped leaves, a ginkgo tree can live as long as 1,000 years. Traditional Chinese medicine has used the leaves of the ginkgo to treat the heart, lungs, and brain, and it is one of the most extensively studied herbs.

Western researchers are interested in ginkgo biloba because they know it widens the blood vessels in the brain, increasing blood flow. It is an antioxidant, and also appears to have blood thinning qualities. However, there is *little or no scientific evidence* to support the use of ginkgo for the following conditions:

- > Stress and anxiety
- > Asthma and bronchitis
- > Heart disease and circulatory problems
- > Raynaud's syndrome
- > Sexual dysfunction
- > Tinnitus

Research suggests that ginkgo may help prevent the progression of dementia or Alzheimer's disease, but does not appear to have this benefit in healthy adults. It also can treat some sudden hearing losses.

Preparations of ginkgo biloba vary widely in the form (e.g., tea, capsule, tincture, powder, or tablet), amount, and content of the active ingredients. As with any supplement, preparations may not have been tested for safety or effectiveness.

Do not take ginkgo biloba if you have a blood clotting disorder, a history of seizures, or take monoamine oxidase inhibitors, warfarin, other blood thinners, antipsychotic medication, insulin, or trazadone.

Always consult your doctor if you are considering taking ginkgo biloba or any dietary supplement. \*

For more information: *National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, www.nccam.nih.gov*

# What can I do for sunburn?

The sun's ultraviolet rays damage skin—causing it to age prematurely—and increase your risk of skin cancer. And anyone who experiences one or more blistering sunburns in a lifetime doubles his or her chances of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer that kills more than 7,000 Americans every year.

The best way to avoid the damaging effects of the sun is to avoid sun exposure whenever possible, which isn't always practical for most active people. The good news is that adequate sunscreen and protective clothing can act as an effective shield to keep skin healthy. Remember, a tan offers little protection against the ill effects of the sun: It's simply another form of damage to delicate tissues and you're better off avoiding it altogether.

## Signs/Symptoms:

- ❖ Skin is reddened and warm to the touch.
- ❖ Minor swelling and itching in affected areas.
- ❖ Blistering in more serious burns.

## Talk to Your Doctor If:

- ❖ You have nausea, fever, chills, or feel lightheaded.
- ❖ Blistering is extensive and severe.
- ❖ You develop a rash or notice patches of purple discoloration.
- ❖ Your sunburn seems to worsen or spread 24 hours after exposure.

If physician referral is not recommended at this time,  
**Try HomeCare™**

### MEDICATION

- Take aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen to reduce swelling and relieve pain.

### CLEAN

- Avoid soap or use only a mild soap to wash burned areas; rinse well.

### HOT/COLD

- Apply cool compresses (use water) several times a day.

### NOTE WELL

- Apply aloe vera gel or moisturizer to burned areas immediately after bathing.
- Never peel areas of skin where blisters have broken or dried.

### PREVENTION

- Apply sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 whenever you're outdoors. Reapply often if you swim or sweat. Replace your sunscreen once a year.
- Use sunscreen on infants less than 6 months of age when adequate clothing and shade are not available.
- Wear loose, light, protective clothing—a hat, long sleeves, and so forth. A wet cotton T-shirt does not provide adequate protection.
- Be aware that certain medications and cosmetics can increase your risk of sunburn. Read labels carefully, and check with your doctor.

*This article is intended to increase awareness of health and medical care issues. None of the information in this text is intended to be a substitute for appropriate physician diagnosis and medical care.*

For more information: American Cancer Society, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)





## Reality Check

*"Reality Check" has interactive tools to help you evaluate your health and well-being. It may be useful to share this information with your health care provider.*

## ABCDs of Skin Cancer

According to the American Cancer Society, more than 1 million new cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed this year in the U.S., and half of all new cancers in this country are skin cancers. Skin cancer is usually caused by severe sunburns and overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation for many years.

If you have any moles or dark spots that have any of these characteristics (remember "ABCD"), consult your doctor at once:

-  **A—Asymmetry:** one half of spot the does not match the other.
-  **B—Border:** edges are irregular or blurred.
-  **C—Color:** variable in different shades or colors.
-  **D—Diameter:** larger than a pencil eraser.

Other warning signs include:

- Color spreads into surrounding skin.
- Redness or swelling extends beyond the mole.
- Pain, tenderness, itching.
- Bleeding, oozing, or scaliness.
- Appearance of a new bump or nodule. \*

# Pharmacy In Your Genes

by Rich Hoeckh, R.Ph., HNE's Clinical Pharmacist

Difference makes the world go around, so the saying goes. But difference is also making news in the world of drug research and development.

A drug's effects on the body can differ from one person to the next, or from one group of people to another. A source for these differences is found in our genes. Our genes determine the time it takes to eliminate drugs from the body and how we respond to a drug. The longer it takes the body to eliminate a drug, the greater the possibility of side effects. On the other hand, getting rid of a drug too fast can reduce its benefits.

Isoniazid, a drug used to treat tuberculosis, is a good example. It has been known for some time that Inuit and other Native Americans break this drug down faster compared to other groups. More recently, the FDA released a public health advisory on Crestor<sup>®</sup>1, a drug for treating cholesterol. In the advisory, the FDA cited studies that suggested Asian-Americans can experience higher levels of this drug in the body.

In November 2004, *The New England Journal of Medicine* published a landmark study related to a drug called BiDil<sup>®</sup>. The study may lead to the first-ever FDA approval of a drug for a specific ethnic group. BiDil<sup>®</sup> is the first heart failure

treatment tested in an all African-American population.

In earlier studies, African-Americans benefited from BiDil<sup>®</sup> more than did other ethnic groups. The development of this drug may signal the beginning of drugs designed with specific patients in mind.

The March 7, 2005 issue of *Time* magazine discussed recent findings that point to subtle genetic differences between men and women. For example, brain imaging has revealed differences in the structure of male and female brains. In particular, men and women have different amounts of white and gray matter. Also, the two genders differ with respect to the amount and location of nerve connections in the brain. Exploring these differences may allow us to understand why men and women react differently to drugs and diseases such as depression, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's.

In the near future, your doctor may provide drug treatments based on your unique genetic make up. The study of drugs and genes will help your doctor find the best treatment for you with the least amount of side effects. ✨

1. [www.fda.gov/cder/drug/advisory/crestor\\_3\\_2005.htm](http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/advisory/crestor_3_2005.htm)



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