



## Please, don't clean your plate! When it comes to portions, size matters

“Clean your plate.” You may have grown up hearing those words from your parents and even repeated them to your child. Since food portions have grown, however, cleaning your plate may not always be a good idea.

Overweight and obesity are an epidemic among seniors. More than 77 percent of men between ages 65 and 74 are overweight or obese, the highest rate of any age group. The highest prevalence among women is from ages 65 to 74; more than 71 percent of women in this age range are overweight or obese.\*

Part of the reason is the larger portions we eat at home and in restaurants. “Americans have steadily increased their daily calorie consumption over the last 20 years, and calories add up to pounds,” says Charles Fazio, MD, Chief Medical Officer at Medica. “One issue in weight control is what we eat, but maybe a more important one is how much of anything we eat.”

### When eating in:

- ▶ Eat slowly and savor your food.
- ▶ Read nutrition information to determine correct portion amounts.
- ▶ When you want a second helping, make it fruits or vegetables.

### When eating out:

- ▶ Put down your fork, spoon or sandwich after every bite.
- ▶ Share your entrée with a friend. Or put half in a take-home box before you start eating.
- ▶ Stop eating when you feel full.

**Remember:** You are *what* you eat and *how much* you eat.

\*Source: *American Obesity Association*



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## YOUR STOMACH ISN'T 16 ANYMORE

As you age, your metabolism slows down. You also may not be as active as you once were. All this probably means you don't need as many calories as when you were a teen or young adult.

Choose nutrient-rich foods. Key ingredients may include:

- > Fruits and vegetables
- > Fluids
- > Fiber
- > Protein

## WHAT DOES YOUR GUT TELL YOU?

Having a “tummy” or “beer belly” may indicate more than a weight problem. It could be a sign that you are at increased risk for heart disease.

**Fact:** Men with the largest bellies are 42 percent more likely to have heart disease, while the largest-bellied women have a 44 percent higher risk of heart disease, according to study results published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*.

Other studies have also noted the danger of abdominal fat. A woman whose waist is larger than 35 inches and a man whose waist is more than 40 inches may be more likely than other obese people to develop weight-related health problems, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disorders.

## FOR MCHA MEMBERS ONLY

### Federal grant awarded

As a member of the Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association (MCHA), you will be excited to learn that the plan has won a federal grant that allows us to offer you the opportunity to receive a premium subsidy.

Grant funds are limited and will be offered to MCHA members who meet certain income guidelines. Watch for more information and a subsidy application packet to arrive in your mailbox in May.

### MCHA premium rates

Keep in mind that Minnesota law requires MCHA premium rates to be set between 101 percent and 125 percent of the average premium of comparable individual policies sold in the state's private market. Glenn Wilson, Minnesota Commerce Commissioner, is authorized to accept, reject or modify the MCHA Board of Director's proposed premium rates. He will announce his decision by the middle of May 2007, and approved rates will take effect July 1.

Thanks to everyone who sent comments or attended meetings about this issue.

Lynn R. Gruber  
President, MCHA

## When you're in pain, nothing else matters

*"Will it ever stop?"*

*"How can I get relief?"*

*"It's always there. Always."*

For an estimated 50 million Americans,\* chronic pain is an unpleasant reality of life. Pain affects many older adults, who are more likely to suffer from painful conditions, such as arthritis and cancer. Pain can also result from certain medical treatments, or from an accident or injury.

No matter what the cause, chronic pain is a complex problem that may lead to depression and anger. It can also interfere with a person's ability to perform everyday activities or live independently.

If you experience chronic pain, don't suffer in silence. Your doctor may be able to help you find relief. For example, medications or therapies can often reduce the severity or frequency of pain.

### To learn more:

- ▶ [www.theacpa.org](http://www.theacpa.org) (American Chronic Pain Association)
- ▶ [www.healthinaging.org](http://www.healthinaging.org) (American Geriatrics Society Foundation for Health in Aging)
- ▶ [www.nationalpainfoundation.org](http://www.nationalpainfoundation.org) (National Pain Foundation)
- ▶ <http://painconsortium.nih.gov> (National Institutes of Health Pain Consortium)

**Hint:** No computer? Take this list to a public library. A librarian can help you find the information you need.

*\*Source: American Academy of Pain Management*

## Facts you should know about Parkinson's disease

### 1. There are four main symptoms:

- ▶ Trembling tremor in the hands, forearms — and sometimes face and/or mouth
- ▶ Stiffness of the arms, legs or trunk
- ▶ Slower movement and a "hard to get started" feeling
- ▶ Difficulty with balance and coordination

Report any of these symptoms to your doctor.

### 2. It is chronic and progressive

Researchers have not developed a cure for Parkinson's disease. Symptoms get worse over time; how quickly symptoms get worse varies from person to person.

### 3. It can often be treated

Medications may provide significant relief of symptoms. Surgical options may also be considered if medications do not help.

### 4. You can inform yourself. Start with your doctor or try these resources:

American Parkinson Disease Association **1-800-223-2732** ([www.apdaparkinson.org](http://www.apdaparkinson.org))  
National Parkinson Foundation **1-800-327-4545** ([www.parkinson.org](http://www.parkinson.org))  
Parkinson's Disease Foundation **1-800-457-6676** ([www.pdf.org](http://www.pdf.org))



## 'SilverSneakers changed my life'

Emily Nesheim has been active most of her life. But she was never a fan of aerobics classes. "I'm not the cute young gal in the little workout suit. I'm just me," she says. "That's why I love SilverSneakers. We have fun while we work out, I go at my own pace and there's no attitude."

Nesheim started Medica's SilverSneakers® program in April 2006. It wasn't long before she was hooked. Now, she likens the program to "a miracle" and even calls her instructors "my SilverSneakers angels."

SilverSneakers provides no-cost membership at designated health clubs, with group exercise classes designed just for older adults. It is available to Medica Prime Solution,<sup>SM</sup> Medica Advantage Solution<sup>SM</sup> and Medica DUAL Solution® members (who live independently).

Although a recent rib injury sidelined Nesheim for a while, it did not cool her enthusiasm for SilverSneakers. In fact, she has arranged her schedule at work so she can go to class three days a week.

*"My strength is much better, my balance has improved and I always leave the YMCA with a smile on my face," Nesheim says. "SilverSneakers changed my life. I feel it in my body and I feel it in my heart."*

Call Customer Service at **952-992-2300** to learn more about SilverSneakers.



## GIVE ME STRENGTH!

Say the words "strength training" and most people think of someone like Arnold Schwarzenegger. Very few of us will ever have those kinds of muscles. But as part of your exercise routine, even light strength training can have great benefits.

Strength training builds muscles and encourages bone health. It can also promote mobility and improve your overall fitness.

**Fact:** In 2005, the Medica Foundation funded a pilot program involving residents of a nursing home in Alexandria, Minn. Ultimately, 140 residents signed up. Most participants improved their wellness in areas such as:\*

- ▶ Strength (77 percent)
- ▶ Balance (73 percent)
- ▶ Flexibility (68 percent)
- ▶ Cardiovascular endurance (23 percent)

Participating in a group exercise class, such as SilverSneakers, can improve your strength. However, everyday activities such as gardening, household chores and raking the yard may help, too.

Talk with your doctor before starting an exercise program, especially if you take medicine or have a chronic condition, such as diabetes or heart disease.

*\*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number*

## IT'S NOT CHEAP BEING GREEN

From fruits to soups, organic options are now offered in every aisle of the supermarket. You may have wondered what all the hype is about.

Organic foods are produced, processed and handled differently than "conventional" foods. For example, organic farmers use techniques that encourage environmental protection and conservation. They avoid chemical fertilizers, pesticides and weed killer. Growing food under these restrictions is usually more expensive.

Organic foods are not proven to be safer or more nutritious than conventional foods. However, many people are willing to pay more because they find organic foods tastier and they wish to support organic farming methods.

### Tips for going organic:

- > Products promoted as "hormone-free," "free-range" or "all natural" are not necessarily organic.
- > Only products that meet strict federal standards may carry the "USDA organic" label.
- > Even if you buy organic fruits and vegetables, you still need to wash them before eating or cooking them.

## LEAVE THREE LEAVES ALONE!



After you kill a poison ivy plant, how long should you wait before you touch it?

- A) One month
- B) One year
- C) More than a year

If you guessed “C,” congratulations! The plant’s oil can cause a rash up to *five years* after the plant has died.

Poison ivy — as well as its evil sibling, poison oak — are common in our area. So stay alert and avoid these three-leafed plants. If you may have been exposed to them, wash the affected skin with soap and cold water as soon as possible.

**Tip:** Never burn poison ivy. The smoke can carry the oil into your nose, mouth, lungs and eyes.

## Is hormone therapy right for me?

*To start or not? To continue or stop? Will it help me? Could it harm me?*

Women have been asking these questions since 2002, when the National Institutes of Health halted a large study of hormone replacement therapy (HRT). It was determined that HRT may increase some women’s risk for stroke, heart disease and breast cancer.

For many women, however, HRT can provide much-needed relief during the transition into and through menopause. Menopause symptoms for some women go beyond hot flashes to include sleep disturbance, irritability, depression and decreased cognition. HRT also reduces the risk of osteoporosis.

You and your doctor should carefully consider HRT’s potential risks and benefits **for you**. For example, HRT may be appropriate if you suffer from severe symptoms of menopause or have high risk for osteoporosis. But it may not be appropriate if you have had breast cancer.

## Ask your doctor

- ▶ What are the potential risks and benefits of HRT for me?
- ▶ If I decide to start HRT, when should I begin?
- ▶ How long should I continue HRT?
- ▶ Which type of HRT would you recommend?
- ▶ What side effects could I experience?
- ▶ What else should I know before making a decision?
- ▶ How will I be monitored while taking these medications?

## Explore other resources

- ▶ [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov): National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health
- ▶ [www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org): American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- ▶ [www.menopause.org](http://www.menopause.org): North American Menopause Society



## NEWS TO MAKE YOUR BODY HAPPY



## Eye exams:

According to a new study in the *Archives of Ophthalmology*, genetics may interact with obesity and smoking to multiply a person’s risk of macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness after age 65. But a healthy lifestyle, along with regular eye exams, may help you minimize macular degeneration risk.



## Praying online:

Praying with an online support group may help breast cancer patients cope better with their illness. A report in *Psycho-Oncology* found that language reflecting religious faith may help patients experience benefits, such as reduced negativity and enhanced confidence, so that they can face the fight against cancer.



## Red and green:

Tomatoes and broccoli — two foods known to fight cancer — may be more effective against prostate cancer if eaten together. As reported in *Cancer Research*, an animal study found that the foods may be especially helpful for men who have been diagnosed with slow-growing prostate cancer and have chosen “watchful waiting” over chemotherapy.

## Think before you drink

Ads on TV portray drinking beer as fun and sipping wine as sophisticated. The reality is often much different, especially for older adults.

Alcohol may seem like an easy way to cope with stress, illness, loneliness, boredom, depression or the death of a loved one. But it also poses major health risks.

It can aggravate conditions ranging from high blood pressure to diabetes to sleep problems. It increases the risk of injury due to falls or other accidents. It is especially dangerous when mixed with medicine.

### Some signs you may overuse alcohol

- ▶ You drink to calm down or take your mind off your problems.
- ▶ You lose interest in eating.
- ▶ You lie about or hide your drinking.
- ▶ You find yourself drinking alone more and more.
- ▶ You have hurt yourself or another person as a result of drinking.
- ▶ You have health, financial or other problems due to alcohol.



### Where to get help

- ▶ Your doctor
- ▶ Your spiritual leader
- ▶ Your local health department or social services agency
- ▶ Alcoholics Anonymous

For referral to local treatment resources, call **1-800-622-2255** (National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence).

**Fact:** Up to 15 percent of people age 65+ overuse alcohol, or face other risks due to alcohol use with medications or chronic disease.

*Source: American Geriatric Society*

## BUZZWORDS



**Health care provider:** Anyone who gives you care. This could be a doctor, nurse, therapist or other medical professional.

**Primary care provider:** The regular doctor you choose to coordinate all of your care. Your regular doctor should provide routine checkups and non-emergency care. He or she will also refer you to a specialist as needed.

**Specialist:** A doctor who practices in a specialized field of medicine. Surgeons, cardiologists and urologists are a few kinds of specialists. Be sure you know if you need a referral from your regular doctor before you see a specialist.

## COST-SAVING TIP



### Check the network

Your doctor should refer you to a network provider when you need specialty care. Still, it won't hurt to make sure the specialist is in Medica's network so you receive the highest benefit level. For a list of network providers, check [www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com) under Find A Doctor or call Medica Customer Service.

## SENIOR ADVISORY COUNCIL SEEKS NEW MEMBERS

The Center for Healthy Aging Senior Advisory Council is recruiting new members. Do you have experience and insight to share? Council members serve as a "brain trust," partnering with the Center for Healthy Aging to provide input and feedback on educational materials, programs, publications and more.

Past board experience is helpful, but not required. If you are interested in applying for a position on the Senior Advisory Council, please contact MaryBeth King at **952-992-2601**.

## THE HARD FACTS ABOUT SMOKING



Smokers are more than twice as likely as nonsmokers to develop Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia.

*Source: American Lung Association*

Smoking only one to four cigarettes each day can increase your risk of heart disease and premature death.

*Source: American Cancer Society*

Cigarette smoke contains at least 60 substances that cause cancer.

*Source: The Patient Education Institute*

Adults who smoke die an average of 14 years earlier than adults who do not smoke.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Your risk of lung cancer does not decrease if you smoke "light" or low-tar cigarettes.

*Source: American Cancer Society*

## Where there's smoke, there's Medica to help you quit

Pills and patches and gums ... oh, my! Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) can greatly boost your chances of quitting smoking at any age. Now, all Medica members have expanded NRT benefits. The pharmacy program now includes NRT inhaler, nasal spray and the new FDA-approved NRT called Chantix (pill).

### Why NRT?

Using tobacco causes your body to crave the nicotine that's in tobacco. Your body then becomes addicted to the nicotine, and dependent upon tobacco to calm the craving for nicotine. NRT eases your cravings and other withdrawal symptoms. Using NRT products, along with quit-tobacco counseling, can increase the likelihood of success even more.



### Which option is right for me?

Your experience of kicking the tobacco habit will be as unique as you are. Your doctor can help find the best course of NRT for you. Free & Clear,<sup>®</sup> Medica's quit-tobacco program, will help you work with your doctor to find the right NRT for you.

Call Medica Customer Service to learn about your NRT benefits and other ways we can help you quit smoking. Or for more information about Free & Clear, call **1-866-QUIT-4-LIFE (1-866-784-8454)**. As a benefit from Medica, Free & Clear is offered at no cost to you.

**Quitting tobacco will be the best decision you ever make. Do it for you; do it for your loved ones.**

**Fact:** Nicotine replacement therapy plus quit-tobacco counseling may increase your chance of success sixfold. *Source: Archives of Internal Medicine, 2003*

## No, it is not fun. Yes, it's still necessary

**Question:** What's worse than having a colorectal cancer screening?

**Answer:** Having colorectal cancer.

Regular colorectal cancer screenings are the best way to lower your risk for colorectal cancer because they can help find precancerous polyps. Screenings can also detect cancer early, when your chance for successful treatment is highest.

More than 112,000 Americans will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer this year, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS). The ACS recommends that most people have regular colorectal cancer screenings from ages 50-79. Smoking, a family history of colorectal cancer or other factors could mean you need to start screenings earlier.

### Questions to ask your doctor about lowering your colorectal cancer risk:

- ▶ When should I start colorectal cancer screenings?
- ▶ What foods can I eat to lower my risk?
- ▶ Is it safe for me to start exercising?
- ▶ How can I quit smoking?

## Take your medicine. Trying to save could cost you more than money

What's your excuse for not taking medicine? Whatever it is, it's not good enough. It is important to take your medicine as your doctor tells you to — especially for conditions such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes and depression.



**Excuse:** “I feel better, so I don't need my medicine anymore.”

**Think about this:** Your body may not be fully recovered from the illness. Stop taking your medicine and you could get sick again. If the medicine is for a chronic disease, your body may need the medicine to keep feeling well and to prevent symptoms.

**Excuse:** “Medicine is too expensive.”

**Think about this:** Compare the cost of your medicine with the cost (and inconvenience) of another trip to your doctor or the emergency room — or even a hospital stay — because you get sick again.

**Excuse:** “My medicine isn't working.”

**Think about this:** Some medicines take longer to “kick in.” In some cases the proof of a medicine working well is that you feel normal. If you really think your medicine isn't working, call your doctor or pharmacist.

**Excuse:** “I don't like to take pills.”

**Think about this:** If you have a problem swallowing a pill, medicines come in different forms. If you simply don't like taking medicine, remember: We want the end result, which is better health and better function.

**Excuse:** “I forgot to refill my prescription.”

**Think about this:** Ask if your pharmacy has a “refill reminder” program. Or, make a note on your calendar when it's time to refill.

## ASK THE PHARMACIST



### Q: Will Medica pay for allergy medicine I buy at the drugstore?

**A:** Your Medica pharmacy benefits cover certain over-the-counter (OTC) allergy medicines as long as you follow **all three** of these steps:

- 1) Make sure the medicine is on Medica's drug formulary;
- 2) Ask your doctor to write a prescription for the medicine; and
- 3) Have the prescription filled at a Medica network pharmacy.

Loratadine and loratadine/pseudoephedrine are included on Medica's drug formulary. These are popular generic antihistamines used to treat allergy symptoms. They are sold as Alavert,<sup>®</sup> Claritin,<sup>®</sup> Claritin-D<sup>®</sup> 12 Hour and Claritin-D 24 Hour, as well as under many generic and store brand names.

**Hint:** Find an up-to-date drug formulary and network pharmacy listing at [www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com).

WANT MORE  
INFORMATION ABOUT  
SPECIFIC MEDS?  
GO ONLINE!



It's smart to be an informed consumer, especially when it comes to over-the-counter and prescription medications. At [www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com), you can access an A to Z listing of medications by their commercial and generic names to learn:

- What a specific medication is
- What that medication does
- Things to discuss with your doctor
- What happens if you miss a dose or overdose

This site contains information about more than 1,500 health and well-being topics. Go to [www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com) > Member > Online Health Information and click the [HealthForums.com](http://HealthForums.com)<sup>SM</sup> link.

**No computer at home?**

Check out the public library or local senior center.

**Medica CallLink® Nurse Line**

To speak with a nurse or to get a physician referral, call our Medica CallLink nurse line **1-866-715-0915**. Hearing-impaired callers (metro and regional), please call the National Relay Center at **1-800-855-2880** and request Medica CallLink at **1-866-715-0915**.

**Center for Healthy Aging<sup>SM</sup> Customer Service**

Metro **952-992-2300**; Regional **1-800-234-8755**; MCHA Members **952-992-2443** or **1-800-325-3540**. TTY metro **952-992-3650**; TTY regional **1-800-234-8819**. Open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. CST seven days a week. Please note: Access to a representative is limited on weekends/holidays during certain times of the year.

**Medica's Fraud Hotline**

24-hour English/Spanish language fraud hotline **952-992-2237** or **1-866-821-1331**. For the Russian language fraud hotline, call **952-992-3893**. For the Somali language fraud hotline, call **952-992-3214**.

**United Behavioral Health**

To find a mental health or substance abuse provider, please call United Behavioral Health (UBH) at **1-800-848-8327** or TTY **1-800-543-7162**.

Visit us on the Internet at [www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com)



*Attention:*

*If you want free help translating this information, call 1-800-234-8755. This information is available to people with disabilities by calling 952-992-2300 (voice), or 1-800-234-8755 (toll-free), or 952-992-3650, or 1-800-234-8819 (TTY), or 711, or through the Minnesota Relay at 1-800-627-3848 (speech-to-speech relay service).*

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