

## Here's the lowdown on low-fat food

Low-fat and fat-free foods are often promoted as better choices for people who want to lose weight or enjoy a healthier diet.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving size: 1/2 Cup (130g)	
Servings per container: About 3.5	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b> 110	Calories from Fat 5
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 3g	
Saturated Fat 0.5g	
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	0%
<b>Sodium</b> 20mg	19%
<b>Potassium</b>	2%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 19g	6%
Dietary Fiber 6g	
Sugars 14g	
<b>Protein</b> 5g	10%
Vitamin A 2%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 4%	Iron 8%

← **Calories**

← **Fat**

← **Sodium**

← **Sugar**

With certain types of food, this strategy can work. For example, low-fat dairy products have all the nutrients of whole-milk counterparts with less fat and fewer calories.

### How can 'low-fat' be bad?

Not all low-fat and fat-free foods are the healthiest choice you can make. Processed low-fat foods can still be loaded with sodium, sugar and calories.

Some low-fat foods have more calories than the full-fat versions.

**Key point:** Reading the Nutrition Facts label on food packages can help you make healthier choices.

## TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR PICKY CHILD TO EAT

Tired of preparing healthy meals only to have your child ask for pizza? These strategies may encourage your child to try new foods:

### ■ Beware of snacking.

Watch what your child eats before meals. A child who snacks a lot in the afternoon may not be hungry at mealtime.

### ■ Work together.

You and your partner must work together toward your goal. Away from the table, figure out the best approach.

### ■ Talk about it.

Explain to your child why eating a variety of foods is important. Involve your child in planning and making meals.

Still no luck? Be patient. With time, your child will probably stop being so picky.

## WHAT'S HIDING IN YOUR FOOD?

Soup is a staple on chilly autumn days. If you serve canned soup, however, beware. One serving may contain half the total amount of salt you should eat in a day.

**Fact:** Most adults should limit daily salt consumption to 2,400 milligrams from all sources. If you have high blood pressure,\* your doctor may recommend that you limit salt intake to 1,500 milligrams or less.

*Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute*

### Salt-saving shopping tips

- ◆ Stay informed by reading the "Nutrition Facts" box on packaged food. Salt (sodium) content is among the nutrients listed.
- ◆ Look for labels that say "low sodium," "reduced salt" or "no salt added."
- ◆ Avoid canned, processed or preserved meats.
- ◆ Be careful when purchasing types of food that are typically high in salt, such as TV dinners, canned soup and salad dressing.
- ◆ Choose fresh fruit, vegetables and meats, and season them with herbs and spices rather than salt.

*\*If you have kidney problems or take heart medications, check with your doctor before switching to a salt substitute, which is likely to be very high in potassium.*

**Tip:** Sugar is another ingredient often "hidden" in foods. Check the package for ingredients such as high fructose corn syrup, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, glucose or syrup. These are just different kinds of sugar and they may be worse than sugar itself.

*Source: American Dietetic Association*

## FIVE WINNING WEIGHT-LOSS TIPS

Dieting has become a way of life for people wanting to lose excess weight. Unfortunately, most diets don't work. Here are some pointers to keep in mind:

- ❶ Allow yourself occasional small treats. Giving up favorite foods will only make you feel deprived and resentful.
- ❷ Think about what you eat and why you make poor choices. If you overeat due to stress, work on resolving the stress.
- ❸ Enthusiasm is great, but start small. Doing too much too fast may lead to burnout or boredom.
- ❹ Focus on smaller portions, but move there gradually. Use a smaller plate and serving spoon.
- ❺ Be happy. Weight loss should enhance your life. If you feel mad, unhappy or frustrated, you need a new plan.

## Why you should be a good health care consumer

*By Theodore Loftness, MD, vice president of Regional Health Services at Medica and medical director of LaborCare*



When you visit the doctor for a checkup, have a surgical procedure or take medicine, you probably don't think of yourself as "consuming" a health care service. Yet, that is exactly what you do. You purchase your medical care by paying your health plan's premiums, deductibles and copays, and then you consume the services you need to maintain the best possible health.

You play a crucial role in making sure that you get the best quality at the best price for your medical services. In order to do that, you must know how much your care *really* costs. For example:\*

- ❖ MRI of the knee: Costs could range from \$650 to \$2,800, depending on your provider.
- ❖ Caesarian section delivery: Costs could range from \$3,772 to \$12,816, depending on your provider.
- ❖ Colonoscopy: Costs could range from \$600 to \$5,000, depending on your provider.

Thanks to your health plan, you do not have to pay these amounts out of pocket. You probably are responsible only for relatively inexpensive copays or coinsurance.

### What does this mean for you?

One reason your health plan costs are rising is that members of the plan are spending more money on health care. Unnecessary expenses drive up the costs you pay to have your health plan. Let's look at an example involving generic prescription drugs.

Generic drugs are just as safe and effective as brand-name drugs but often are available at a much lower price. So if you are diagnosed with high cholesterol, your doctor may prescribe a leading brand-name drug that costs more than \$136 for a 30-day supply — or you can ask for a generic alternative that costs less than \$27. The savings: nearly \$110.

The higher the overall costs of your employer's health plan, the more money that comes out of your paycheck to cover those costs. The lower the overall costs, the less money that comes out of your paycheck.

### To help reduce costs, you should:

- ❶ Get appropriate care for your health concerns, especially preventive care. Preventive care — such as immunizations, cancer screenings and annual physicals — is generally much less costly than treating conditions that have become advanced.
- ❷ Try to get the best value for your health care dollar. If your doctor says a generic drug will work just as well for you as the brand-name drug, switch to the generic.
- ❸ Do your homework before you access medical care. The cost data, quality tools and information available to you at these Web sites can help:

**[www.MainStreetMedica.com](http://www.MainStreetMedica.com)**

**[www.MNHealthCare.org](http://www.MNHealthCare.org)**

**[www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com)**>Health and Wellness Resources by [HealthForums.com](http://HealthForums.com)

Reining in the cost of health care will take an effort from all of us. Thank you for doing your part!

\*All costs are based on figures available at [www.MainStreetMedica.com](http://www.MainStreetMedica.com).

## It's that time of year. Do you know where your flu shot is?



Flu season can begin as early as October. It usually peaks in February or March, and can linger until May. Getting a flu shot\* early can help protect you for the entire season. Anyone who wants to lower his or her flu risk should have a flu shot.

The flu can be serious and even deadly for certain people. You should have a flu shot every year if you are in any of these groups:

- ❑ People 50 years and older
- ❑ People 5 to 49 years old with chronic health conditions, such as heart disease, asthma, diabetes or lung disease
- ❑ Children ages 6 months to 18 years old
- ❑ Pregnant women
- ❑ Health care givers who provide direct patient care
- ❑ Household contacts of people at high risk for flu complications
- ❑ Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children younger than 6 months
- ❑ Health care workers
- ❑ People who live in long-term care facilities



### Where to get a flu shot:

- ❑ Call your doctor.
- ❑ Visit [www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com) > *Flu tips and clinics* for locations and times.

\*Flu shots for members under 18 on individual business plans are excluded.

**Fact:** It's never too late. Getting a flu shot as late as January can still help protect you.

Source: Medica

## Don't let out-of-pocket costs surprise you

You may have certain expenses related to your health coverage, such as:

- ▲ **Premiums** - Regular payments you make to have a health plan.
- ▲ **Copayments (copays)** - Fixed amounts you pay when you receive services included in your plan. For example, you may have a \$25 copay for an office visit.

**Tip:** If a charge is less than your normal copay, you pay the lower amount.

Based on your plan, you may also have:

- ▲ **Deductible** - A set dollar amount you pay each year for certain medical services before your plan begins to pay.
- ▲ **Coinsurance** - The fixed percentage you pay for certain medical services. For example, you may have to pay 20 percent coinsurance for outpatient surgery.

Another important term:

- ▲ **"Out-of-pocket" maximum** - The total amount you pay in deductibles, copays and coinsurance during your plan year.

## BUZZWORDS



### PROVIDER

A doctor, clinic or hospital where you receive care. The regular doctor you visit for routine checkups may be called your primary care *provider*.

### REFERRAL

The process of being sent from one provider to another for care. Your doctor may *refer* you to a specialist for a particular type of care.

## BREAST CANCER FACTS



- ◆ One in every eight women will develop breast cancer at some time in her life.
- ◆ Among American women, about 182,500 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed in 2008.
- ◆ The number of women who die from breast cancer began decreasing around 1990, especially among woman younger than age 50.
- ◆ About 2.5 million American women alive today are survivors of breast cancer.
- ◆ Breast cancer risk increases with age.
- ◆ Following recommended screening guidelines can help lead to early diagnosis of breast cancer and improve the chances for successful treatment. For Medica's breast cancer screening recommendations, visit [www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com)> Members>Member Through Work>Manage My Health>Breast Cancer.

Sources: National Cancer Institute;  
the American Cancer Society

## Are breast self-exams worth your time?

### The answer: Only you and your doctor know for sure

This is a question receiving more and more scrutiny recently. Medical evidence shows that regular mammograms do save lives by finding many cancers in early stages before they spread. This has led some experts to question the value of breast self-exams, as there are some "false positive" results which can cause unnecessary worries or tests (biopsies).

Currently, there is insufficient medical evidence to recommend regular breast self-exams. It is true that some women have likely found lumps early when they have practiced regular breast self-exams. However, many women also have worried and undergone biopsies unnecessarily after finding lumps during self-exams that were not cancerous.

Whether breast self-exams are a good idea for you is a question you and your doctor need to answer together. Breast self-exams can help women become familiar with how their breasts normally look and feel. They can help women recognize changes that may indicate a problem, such as swelling, dimpling, pain or unusual discharge. A woman who notices such changes should call her doctor right away.



**Bottom line:** Women need to talk with their regular doctor to set a schedule of regular breast cancer screenings. This should include regular mammograms and clinical breast exams performed by a medical professional. During a routine visit, a woman who wishes to perform breast self-exams should learn the correct technique from her doctor or nurse.

## HOW TO DISPOSE OF EXPIRED MEDICATION

To flush or not to flush? That is the question you might ask when you need to dispose of expired medication. Answer: Do **not** flush. Flushed medication may harm the environment.

The best way to dispose of expired drugs may be to find out if a drugstore in your area will accept them. Or call the local agency that handles disposal of household chemicals and hazardous waste. These facilities often accept expired drugs.

**If you can't take medication to a hazardous waste facility, you may want to try this alternative method.**

- Before throwing away the drug container, be sure you remove and destroy the label. The label includes personal information about you, including your name, the prescribing doctor's name and the prescription number.
- Wet and crush tablets or empty capsules into a bowl and mix into a mush.
- Return mixture to the bottle and put the top back on.
- Secure the bottle further by wrapping it with duct tape.
- Then put it into a garbage can that is well out of the reach of children.