



# Employee Assistance Program

4514 South 67th Street • 402-593-1711

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Omaha Public Schools, Metro, Papio Natural Resources District, City of Omaha, Douglas County

## Health-e headlines™ : A Quick Glance at the Headlines

- Pump Up Your Heart In 5 Easy Steps
- Old Man Winterizing
- Top 10 Fruit Snacks For Kids
- Bye Bye Belly Fat
- The Line On Fallen Power Lines
- Casual Smokers At Risk
- Grandma's On Facebook
- Shots You Need: Checklist For Adults
- What To Expect When You're Expecting Menopause
- 3 Ways To Lower Your Cholesterol
- Night Driving
- Move Through The Stages Of Grief
- Do You Have Celiac Disease?
- Another Way To Heal Your Heart
- Sleep Tart
- Health-E Headlines
- **Featured Recipe:** Heart-Healthy Tex-Mex Chili Pie

### Pump Up Your Heart In 5 Easy Steps

Did you know that a good night's sleep can help prevent heart disease? That's just one way to lower your risk.

Dr. Holly Andersen, director of education and outreach at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, offers some easy steps to improve heart health and overall well-being:



**Step 1: Know your numbers.** Your blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglyceride levels are the most important numbers you will need to know before you take the path to good heart health. A normal blood pressure level is 140/85 or lower, total cholesterol levels should be less than 200, and triglycerides less than 150.

**Step 2: Start walking.** Exercise really is the fountain of youth. A simple 20- to 30-minute walk a few days a week can actually cut your risk of premature death by more than half. Physical activity also improves sleep, reduces stress, elevates

mood, reduces blood pressure, improves cholesterol, improves brain health, and prevents memory loss.

**Step 3: Laugh out loud.** Laughter is good medicine. Just 15 minutes of laughter is about equal to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise with respect to our heart health. So choose funny movies on Netflix. Laughter has also been linked to the healthy function of blood vessels, an increase in the brain hormones that improve mood, and reduction of pain and anxiety.



**Step 4: Focus on your waistline, not your weight.** Your waistline is a better measurement of your overall health

than your weight because the amount of fat around your waistline is directly linked to high blood pressure and high cholesterol and can place you at increased risk for diabetes. Anything you can do to make your waistline smaller is definitely a step in the right direction. Liposuction doesn't count!



**Step 5: Get a good night's sleep.** Sleep is one of the most undervalued elements of our daily routines, but it is absolutely vital to good health. Lack of sleep increases your blood pressure, induces stress, increases your appetite and slows down your metabolism, dampens your mood and decreases your brain power.

### Old Man Winterizing

Cold winds, icy rain and, in some places, snow—Old Man Winter is knocking on your door.

"Children are even more vulnerable than adults to cold-weather and winter-related injuries," said Dr. Karen Judy, pediatrician at Loyola University Health System.

Dr. Judy offers some tips to keep kids safe while playing outside in the cold.

- Dress your child in layers. If one layer gets wet, the child can remove it to keep moisture away from the skin.
- Avoid cotton clothes. They don't insulate if wet. Fleece and wool are better.
- Warm boots and mittens are extremely important as feet and hands are more prone to frostbite. Tips of the ears and nose are often forgotten and also are at risk for frostbite. Make sure they are covered.



- Wear a hat. Children can lose 60% of their body heat if their heads are not covered.
- Make sure kids come inside often to limit exposure to the cold.
- Change children out of wet clothing as soon as possible.

"Kids already have a lower body temperature than adults so they are more susceptible to deadly hypothermia [a deadly drop in body temperature], especially when wet," said Dr. Judy. Symptoms include shivering, drowsiness, slurred speech, and confusion.

"If a child exhibits these symptoms, get them inside immediately, out of wet clothes and into warm, dry clothes. Wrap the child in a blanket and call 911 immediately," she said.

*Frostbite* is frozen tissue and can cause damage to the skin. *Frostnip* is milder and often seen as red, numb, or tingly cheeks, nose, ears, fingers, or toes.

Bring your child indoors immediately and remove all wet clothing. Immerse chilled body parts in warm (not hot) water until all sensation returns. Call your doctor if sensation does not return. If you see signs of frostbite, such as gray, white, or blistering skin, this is a medical emergency.

# Top 10 Fruit Snacks For Kids

Forget cookies. Fruit is now the number-one snack item parents give to children under the age of 6. That's because leading researchers believe that parents are taking childhood nutrition more seriously.

The Produce for Better Health Foundation suggests these top 10 fruit snacks for kids:



1. Popsicles (freeze fruit juice to make your own)
2. Fruit sandwiches (slices of apples or pears and low-fat cheese)
3. Peanut butter and fresh fruit
4. Fresh fruit dipped in low-fat yogurt
5. Fruit smoothies
6. Canned fruit or single fruit cups
7. Applesauce as a dip for fresh fruit slices
8. Dried fruit packs such as raisins
9. Fresh fruit dipped in poppyseed dressing
10. Frozen fruit chunks such as bananas and grapes



## Bye Bye Belly Fat

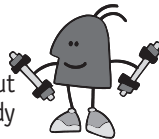
Aerobic exercise, not weight training, is your best bet when it comes to saying goodbye to that dreaded belly fat, a new study finds.

This isn't the fat that lies just under your skin and causes the unsightly muffin top. Belly or abdominal fat—known as visceral fat and liver fat—is located deep within the abdomen and fills the spaces between internal organs. It's been associated with increased risk for heart disease, diabetes, and certain kinds of cancer.

"When it comes to increased health risks, *where* fat is deposited in the body is more important than *how much* fat you have," said Duke exercise physiologist Cris Slentz, PhD, lead author of the study in the *American Journal of Physiology*. "Our study sought to identify the most effective form of exercise to get rid of that unhealthy fat."

The Duke study showed aerobic training greatly reduced belly fat and liver fat and improved some other risk markers for diabetes and heart disease.

Resistance (or weight) training is still effective for improving strength and increasing lean body mass. But aerobic training burned 67% more calories in the study when compared to resistance training.



Even moderation works. "What really counts is how much exercise you do, how many miles you walk, and how many calories you burn," Dr. Slentz said. "If you choose to work at a lower aerobic intensity, it will simply take longer to burn the same amount of unhealthy fat."

## Casual Smokers At Risk

People who smoke just a few cigarettes a day are exposed to the same serious health risks as heavier smokers, breaking a common myth that social or casual smoking is somehow safe or that they can easily quit.

Casual smokers who smoke between 1 and 4 cigarettes a day, are tripling their risk of dying of heart disease and lung cancer, according to Dr. Robin J. Mermelstein, a clinical psychologist and director of the Center for Health Behavior Research at the University of Illinois at Chicago who specializes in smoking cessation counseling. Light smokers represent about 7 million of the U.S. smoking population.

For light smokers looking to quit and stay smoke-free, Dr. Mermelstein offers the following advice:

- Think about the reasons you smoke. It will give you a clearer path to quitting. Does smoking relieve stress? Is it a large part of your social life?
- Get your head in the game. Get support products like nicotine replacement

therapy and online help. Customized online support services provide encouragement to help you break your behavioral and psychological link to cigarettes and is proven effective in helping smokers quit.

- Choose nicotine replacement that's right for you. Lighter smokers may be less likely to use nicotine replacement therapy to help them quit, which means they could be setting themselves up for failure. Nicotine replacement therapies are clinically proven to reduce the physical withdrawal symptoms like cigarette cravings and can double a smoker's chance of quitting successfully.

For light smokers or heavier smokers, research shows the most successful approach to quitting is a combination of medicine, such as nicotine replacement patches, that can help reduce the physical cravings of nicotine, and behavioral strategies that help smokers cope with those triggers to light up. Your employer may offer some of these options.

## The Line On Fallen Power Lines

High winds and storms can cause power lines to fall. Be alert and always assume all fallen lines are energized, says MidAmerican Energy. Stay away from anything that is touching the line, such as a tree, fence, or vehicle.

- Do not touch someone who is being shocked by a fallen power line.
- Report the downed line to 911.
- Shuffle, don't run, from a fallen line. Shuffle with your feet together and on the ground. Warn others not to run. When a live wire touches the ground, electricity travels through the ground in all directions. If you run or take large steps, you increase the chance you could be shocked.
- Stay safe inside your car if a line comes down on or near your vehicle. Don't touch metal parts of the car such as the radio. Wait until electrical workers turn off the power and tell you it's safe to leave the vehicle.

## Grandma's On Facebook



Friend your Grandma cuz she'll friend you back. Seniors are turning to the Internet and social media and discovering Google and the computer mouse to be good company, say professors at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Reconnecting seniors with lost social circles and publications that went online, feeling good about learning something new, and, in some cases, recapturing their old hobbies are all benefits of online surfing for seniors.

Funded by a grant from the National Institute on Aging, the UAB team has been hosting 8-week computer-training courses for residents in independent and assisted-living facilities. Seniors who move into these homes often become depressed because they lose regular contact with their established social networks.

But email and networking appears to be a good remedy. In findings to be published in *Computers in Human Behavior*, researchers say Internet use reduces depression by 20 to 28% among older, retired adults.

Going online allows them to correspond with family and friends more often, see pictures of grandkids, and watch videos of family vacations.

Maybe you can open the door to cyberspace for an older adult in your family.

# Shots You Need: Checklist For Adults



Talk with your doctor about which of these vaccines you need, which need to be updated. The CDC recommends adults should be vaccinated according to this schedule ([www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4030.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4030.pdf)), and your doctor will know which are right for you based on age and other risk factors:

- Tdap (Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis/whooping cough)
- Flu
- Hepatitis A and B
- HPV
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Zoster (shingles)
- MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
- Meningococcal
- Pneumococcal

## What To Expect When You're Expecting Menopause

A positive attitude may help women cope with menopause, according to women's health specialists at Loyola University Health System. While many women may worry about this time in their life, doctors say this transition doesn't have to be difficult.

Perimenopause typically begins in a woman's 40s, but this phase can start as early as the 30s. Dr. Karen Deighan offers the following tips to help women play an active role in their health as they transition through menopause.

**Kick start your workout.** Prevent the "menopot." Most women gain 5 to 10 pounds during menopause. Fluctuations in hormones during this time may cause extra weight to gather around the waist. These pounds will be more difficult to lose if a woman waits until menopause to begin exercising. Getting a head start on a fitness regimen will prevent pounds from adding up during this time.

**Know your kegels.** Elasticity in the pelvic floor muscles can decrease in the years before menopause. Kegels and other pelvic-floor-strengthening exercises may prevent bladder leakage. However, many women do kegel exercises incorrectly. A proper kegel engages the pelvic floor muscles and not the abdomen, thighs, or buttocks. Women should hold this contraction for 10 seconds and relax for 10 seconds, 4 or 5 times in a row for best results.

**Pump some iron.** When estrogen levels dip, bones become thinner and more fragile. Weight-bearing exercises such as weight training plus aerobic classes or walking help to support the bones and reduce the risk for fractures.



**Flex your brain.** Exercising the muscles isn't the only body part that needs a workout. Building up the brain is just as important. Doing crossword and Sudoku puzzles and trying memory exercises, as with a grocery list, will keep the brain in shape and reduce the risk for memory loss

during menopause.

**Step up your sleep regimen.** Dips in estrogen levels may disturb sleep during perimenopause and menopause. And while many believe that side effects of menopause are all tied to a decrease in estrogen, many of the symptoms are directly linked to lack of sleep.



**Keep gums and teeth healthy.** You'll be smiling and also protecting your heart health as well. Bacteria found in plaque on teeth can cause blood clots that can lead to heart attacks when they enter the

bloodstream. These bacteria also may irritate the arteries much the same way they do the gums. Flossing and brushing at least twice daily may protect a woman's heart as she enters menopause.

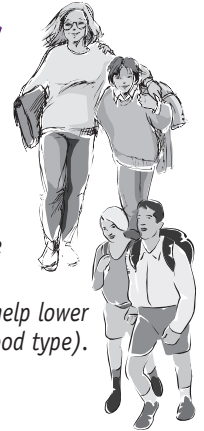
**Get screened.** Perimenopausal women should get the appropriate screening tests once a year. Women should have their cholesterol, vitamin D, and calcium levels checked. Annual mammograms and pelvic exams are important along with a colonoscopy beginning at age 50.

**Detox your diet.** Women will benefit from a diet rich in leafy greens and healthy fats such as salmon, avocados and olive oil, and limited processed foods. The hair and skin become dry and lose elasticity beginning in perimenopause. These foods will bring moisture to the skin and hair making them softer.

## Three Ways To Lower Your Cholesterol

1. **Diet.** Reduce the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet.
2. **Weight.** If you're overweight, dropping pounds can help lower your levels of LDL cholesterol (the bad type), total cholesterol, and triglycerides.
3. **Physical activity.** Regular physical activity can help lower LDL cholesterol and raise HDL cholesterol (the good type).

Source: NIH News in Health



## Night Driving

You may barely notice the changes in your eyesight as time goes by. But having more difficulty driving at night is one of the changes that occurs with age. Tiny muscles that control your eye's pupil size become weaker. The pupil is the round black-looking opening that lets light into your eye. It gets smaller in bright light and larger in dim light.

With aging, the pupil becomes smaller and less able to change in light. That's why people in their 60s need 3 times more light for comfortable reading than those in their 20s. Smaller pupils make it more difficult to see (and drive) at night too, according to the *NIH News in Health*.



## Move Through The Stages Of Grief



"People often don't know what to do to recover from grief," said Aurora Winter, Founder of the Grief Coach Academy, and author of *From Heartbreak to Happiness*. "Time alone does not heal. The right actions heal."

Here are 5 steps to take after the funeral or memorial service:

- **Express your feelings.** If you express your feelings, you get to release them.
- **Get support.** Healing is a process. Talk to a professional and get support to move through grief more quickly.
- **Accept your feelings and the situation.** Acceptance is a key stage of grief recovery.
- **Let go of the hope for a better yesterday.** Peace comes when you let go of the hope for a different outcome.
- **Help others.** This final stage gives meaning to what has happened.

## Health-e headlines

**Recycle.** A typical home generates about 140 pounds of trash *each month*. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality estimates nearly 45% of that trash can be recycled.

Thirsty? The increasing popularity of bottled water has led to an even greater increase in how much each American drinks. In 1980, we each drank about 2-1/2 gallons of bottled water. Now that figure is over 29 gallons a year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Indulge.** Women consider chocolate cake the ultimate food indulgence. Close behind are ice cream, pizza, truffles, caviar, and French fries, according to the *Better Homes and Gardens Food Factor* survey.

**Smokers' kids miss more school.** Children who live in homes with smokers miss more days of school than do children living in smoke-free homes, a nationwide study in *Pediatrics* confirms. Second-hand smoke accounts for more ear infections and colds that lead to children being absent from school.

## Featured recipe: Heart-Healthy Tex-Mex Chili Pie

Perfect for wintry nights or while watching sporting events, this hearty chili is accented with crisp corn tortillas, fat-free Cheddar cheese, and dollops of fat-free sour cream.

This recipe is worth repeating, so save time now by making a double batch and storing the leftover chili in an airtight container for up to 6 months in the freezer.



- 1 pound extra-lean ground beef
- 15.5-ounce can no-salt-added black beans, rinsed and drained
- 14.5-ounce can no-salt-added diced tomatoes, undrained
- 8-ounce can no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup chopped red onion
- 1/2 medium yellow bell pepper, chopped
- 1/2 medium green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt-free all-purpose seasoning blend

- Cooking spray
- 4 6-inch corn tortillas
- 1/2 cup shredded fat-free cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup fat-free sour cream

In a large nonstick skillet, cook the beef over medium-high heat until browned. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the beef to a slow cooker. Add the remaining chili ingredients to the slow cooker, stirring to combine. Cook on high for 3 to 4 hours or on low for 7 to 9 hours, or until the onions and bell peppers are tender and the flavors have blended.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 375°F. Lightly spray a baking sheet with cooking spray. Using a sharp knife, cut each tortilla into 8 triangles. Place in a single layer on the baking sheet. Lightly spray the tops with cooking spray. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the chips are golden brown and crisp. Let the chips cool for 15 minutes.

When the chili is ready, place 8 tortilla chips with a pointed end up around the inside of each rimmed soup bowl. Ladle the chili into the bowls. Sprinkle the Cheddar cheese over the chili. Top each serving with a dollop of sour cream.

Serves 4 (1 1/2 cups per serving): 371 calories, 6.5 g fat, 317 mg sodium, 8 g fiber, 39 g protein.

Used with permission from the American Heart Association's Face the Fats program.

## Do You Have Celiac Disease?

If you can't eat bread or anything containing wheat, rye, and barley because of gluten—a protein found in these grains—you may have celiac disease. Millions of Americans get gas, diarrhea, and other symptoms when they eat foods with gluten, says the National Institutes of Health.

Different people have different symptoms, but talk with your doctor if you or your child has one or more of these problems after eating bread or cookies, for example:

- Gas
- Bloating, belly pain
- Ongoing diarrhea
- Pale, foul-smelling or fatty stool
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Fatigue
- Bone or joint pain
- Bone loss or weakening
- Anemia (lower red blood cell count)
- Behavior changes (children become irritable)
- Tingling, numbness in the legs
- Muscle cramps
- Seizures
- Itchy skin rash

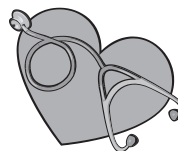
### Naturally gluten-free

Some foods are naturally free of gluten—the specific proteins that occur naturally in wheat. However, the term *gluten* is commonly used to refer to certain proteins that occur naturally not only in wheat, but also in rye, barley, and crossbreeds of these grains, and that can harm people who have celiac disease.

The only treatment for this disorder is a life-long gluten-free diet. Someone with celiac disease must avoid eating foods that contain gluten because it may cause immediate stomach pain and long-term serious illness.

Some foods are naturally gluten free, like these:

- Milk not flavored with ingredients that contain gluten, such as malt
- 100% fruit or vegetable juices
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Butter
- Eggs
- Lentils
- Peanuts
- Seeds, such as flax
- Tree nuts, such as almonds
- Non-gluten-containing grains, such as corn
- Fresh fish, such as cod
- Fresh shellfish, such as clams
- Honey
- Water



## Another Way To Heal Your Heart

Attending a non-religious spiritual retreat can help patients with severe heart trouble feel less depressed and more hopeful about the future, a University of Michigan Health System study has found.

Heart patients who participated in a 4-day retreat that included techniques such as meditation, guided imagery, drumming, journal writing, and outdoor activities saw immediate and longer lasting improvement in tests measuring depression and hopefulness. The study conducted by University of Michigan researchers was published in *Explore: the Journal of Science and Healing*.

## Sleep Tart



Instead of the traditional glass of warm milk for sleep, try 2 daily glasses of tart cherry juice—one before bedtime and another when you wake up in the morning. A study published in the *European Journal of Nutrition* found that study participants slept longer and better.

Why cherries? There's melatonin in tart cherries, which is a powerful antioxidant that helps regulate the sleep-wake cycle.