

TAKE CHARGE!



for health and living

September 2015

Revised Cholesterol Testing

For decades, doctors have urged us to help protect our cardiovascular health by routinely checking our cholesterol levels. Recently, U.S. health officials revised guidelines for reducing heart disease and stroke.

Here's what you may expect your health care provider to do:

- 1. Focus** less on your specific cholesterol numbers to lower risk, and address other risk factors including age, family history, obesity and other health problems.
- 2. Discuss** choosing a statin (a drug that lowers LDL cholesterol) to guard against heart attack and stroke if you have had a heart attack or have type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure or very high LDL cholesterol.
- 3. Recommend** you take a statin if you are middle aged and have an elevated risk of heart attack or stroke within 10 years.

A standard cholesterol test measures several fats (lipids) in your bloodstream.

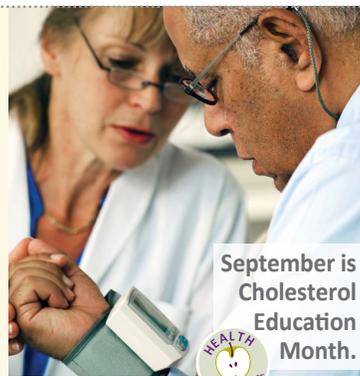
Desirable levels include:

Total cholesterol	Lower than 200 mg/dL
LDL cholesterol	Lower than 100 mg/dL
HDL cholesterol	Higher than 40 mg/dL
Triglycerides	Lower than 150 mg/dL

For lowering cardiovascular risk, lifestyle remains primary. The new guidelines emphasize treating obesity, plus regular exercise and tobacco cessation.



take charge



September is Cholesterol Education Month.

city events

Consider Dollar Cost Averaging to Reduce Market Risks – Deferred Compensation

Tuesday, September 8
12 noon – 12:45 pm
SMT 4080

Working and Home Balancing Act Webinar

Thursday, September 17
12 noon - 1:00 pm
Login: See future flyer*

Consider Dollar Cost Averaging to Reduce Market Risks – Deferred Compensation

Wednesday, September 23
12 noon – 12:45 pm
SMT 4080

Saving Calories and Cash

Thursday, September 24
12 noon – 12:45 pm
SMT 4080

Free Blood Pressure Screening

Wednesday, September 30
Stop by between
10:30 am and 1:30 pm
SMT 4096

*Or, call Central Benefits at (206) 615-1340.

Steps to Smart Health Care



You can get the best possible medical care with some simple steps:

- 1 Read your health care plan.** Use plan services such as an online patient portal, condition management and wellness information.
- 2 Make sure you understand your medical conditions and treatment options.** Follow your health care provider's instructions fully, or you'll risk having to restart treatment or return to the clinic or hospital for more care. Studies show that when patients are engaged in their care, they have better health outcomes.

➔ Continued on page 4.



An estimated 50,000 to 75,000 women of all ages will participate in local wellness events at more than 500 community locations across the country on September 30 as part of the 14th annual National Women's Health and Fitness Day. The 3 goals: Learn how to take charge of your health care, make smart health choices and make time for regular exercise. Check online at www.fitnessday.com/women/.



3 Common Fitness Questions

1 What's the best exercise for losing weight?

- > Start with a goal of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as walking, 5 days a week. Look for ways to get physical throughout each day. Increase the duration of your workouts and add strength training.

Note: First get your provider's okay if you're unaccustomed to exercise.



2 What's a simple way to build strength?

- > Beyond maintaining muscle, strength (or resistance) training is vital for losing body fat and fighting disease and disability. Plan for 2 or 3 workouts a week. Select 1 or 2 exercises for each of the major muscle groups. Work both sides of the body evenly. Do each exercise 8 to 15 times (reps) in sets of 1 to 3. Use weights that are heavy but comfortable to use – your last rep should be difficult, but not painful. Or try resistance band exercises. **To start:** Consider using a personal trainer.

3 What kind of exercise is best for obese or overweight people?

- > Try walking, water exercises, dancing or weight lifting. Talk with your health care provider before starting a vigorous sport.



Post-Surgery Homecoming

When facing a hospital stay for elective surgery, you'll have many questions. Knowing the answers in advance of surgery can build confidence and strengthen your mental and physical well-being.

1. Study the materials supplied by your health care team in preparation for surgery and recovery.
2. Work with your providers and discharge planner to evaluate the care you'll need after discharge.
3. Enlist a caregiver, friend or relative to assist you at the hospital and with home needs.



Before surgery, discuss:

- ✓ Medications and supplements you are taking to prevent possible interactions.
- ✓ The level and type of pain to expect following your operation.
- ✓ The level of home assistance you'll need for safety and comfort.
- ✓ Any necessary assistive devices and supplies.

Before you leave the hospital, discuss:

- ✓ Your diagnosis, health status, follow-up plans and contact numbers.
- ✓ Your post-surgery medications, including doses, frequency, duration of use and adverse effects.
- ✓ Any potential side effects.
- ✓ Your pain level – describe it as accurately as possible, particularly if it is significantly more intense than expected.
- ✓ Wound care, equipment use, or techniques for mobility, such as bed-to-chair transfers.

Pain and wound management at home: Ensure you and your home caregiver fully understand and follow guidelines for medication and wound care, including proper hygiene to prevent infection. Call your provider promptly if you notice any signs of infection, fever or increased pain at the surgical site or other unexpected symptoms.

QuikQuiz™: Understanding Stroke

True or False?

- T F 1. The number of U.S. patients treated for stroke in ERs is increasing.
- T F 2. People are preventing strokes by taking cholesterol-lowering statin drugs.
- T F 3. Men have more strokes than women.
- T F 4. You have a higher chance of successful treatment for stroke if you get to a hospital promptly (by ambulance than by any other means of travel).

ANSWERS:

1. **False** – A new CDC report finds the rate of ER visits for either stroke or mini-stroke (a temporary blockage of blood to the brain) decreased dramatically from 2001 to 2011, suggesting stroke prevention methods are working.
2. **True** – Other factors credited with the lower stroke rate: fewer smokers and better use of high blood pressure medications.
3. **False** – Women in the U.S. have about 55,000 more strokes than men each year.
4. **True** – Clot-busting drugs may only be effective when given soon after onset of stroke, often the difference between recovery and lifelong disability.

Call 911 immediately if you have or see someone having these warning signs of stroke: major weakness in arm, hand or leg; numbness on 1 side of the face or body; sudden severe headache, slurred speech or confusion, or problems with vision, severe dizziness or difficulty walking, or loss of consciousness.



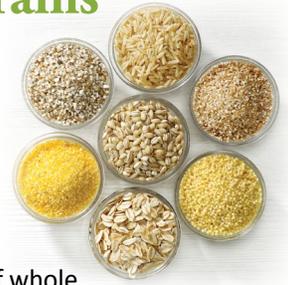
Checklist: Is Your Desk Conducive to Productivity?

eating smart

Secrets of Whole Grains

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Refined breads, rice and pasta may taste good, but they have fewer nutrients and less fiber than you'll find in equally delicious whole grains.



Why limit yourself when so many amazing whole-grain options await you on supermarket shelves? With a little know-how, you can reap the health benefits of a variety of whole grains, which are packed with fiber, B-vitamins and antioxidants.

What makes a grain whole? A whole grain has all 3 parts still intact: the fiber-rich bran, the vitamin-packed germ and the starchy endosperm. When grains are refined (to make white flour or white rice), the nutritious bran and germ are removed, which eliminates much of the nutritional value. That's why whole grains are a healthier option.

Try these whole grains:

✓ **Quinoa (keen-wah), millet, buckwheat and amaranth** – They boil to perfection in just 15 to 25 minutes. You can also toast them into granola, or boil with milk to make a porridge-like hot cereal.



✓ **Steel-cut or rolled oats** – They take about 30 minutes to cook for breakfast oatmeal. You can also combine them with savory ingredients to make a delicious lunch or dinner side dish.

✓ **Brown rice, wheat berries and pot barley** – Hearty and chewy, these grains take about an hour to cook. They make a great base for flavorful pilafs, stuffing or mock-risotto.



Always look for whole-grain wheat options. They provide a greater variety of nutrients – and more fiber, too. Or try making grain salads with **bulgur** (cracked whole wheat) or **freekeh** (free-kuh, young green wheat).

Colorful Quinoa Salad with Lemon-Cumin Vinaigrette

EASY | RECIPE
From Personal Best®

1 cup **quinoa**
2 cups **water**
1 **red pepper**, seeded and diced
1 **carrot**, peeled and diced
1 cup shelled **edamame**
(green soybeans), boiled
½ cup chopped fresh **parsley**
¼ cup **olive oil**
¼ cup fresh **lemon juice**
1 tsp ground **cumin**
½ tsp **salt**

Directions: In a medium-size pot, add quinoa and water. Bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes or until water is absorbed. Remove from heat and let sit 5 minutes. Spoon quinoa into a serving bowl. Add remaining ingredients. Stir to combine and serve.



Makes 6 servings. Per serving:

251 calories | 9g protein | 12g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 8g mono fat | 2g poly fat
| 0mg cholesterol | 28g carbohydrate | 3g sugar | 5g fiber | 217mg sodium

Use this checklist to create a more productive work environment:

- Choose an object you love.** If you are allowed personal items, decorate your desk with a photograph, calendar, child's drawing or small souvenir that holds good memories and makes you feel positive.
- Control cords.** Use cord organizers or simple twist ties to organize computer and peripheral cords and keep them untangled and out of the way.
- Keep important items close.** Place the things you use the most within easy reach.
- Put unused items away.** Only keep on your desk what you need frequently, such as pens and other office supplies.
- Dust and declutter.** At least once a week, dust off your desk, clean your computer keyboard and phone, and remove unnecessary items.
- Tame paper.** Read, file, shred or recycle everything that lands on your desk before the end of the day. Avoid printing out or accumulating unnecessary papers.

best bites **Tip of the Month:**

Whole Grains

In addition to adding great taste and variety to the diet, whole grains have real health benefits. They can help reduce the risk of developing heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes and obesity. **In fact, people who eat 3 daily servings of whole grains can reduce heart disease and diabetes risk by 30%**, compared to people eating fewer servings.

– Cara Rosenbloom, RD



Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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News & Notes

- **Open Enrollment is Soon!** Make 2016 benefit choices Monday, October 5 through Friday, October 30. Watch your home mail in late September for your open enrollment letter.
- **Health Care Flexible Spending Account:** Start planning now for Open Enrollment. Add up your 2015 out-of-pocket expenses (copays, coinsurance) to estimate your 2016 costs. Your maximum contribution to a health care flexible spending account will increase in 2016 from \$2,500 to \$2,550.
- **Flex-Plan Services' Name Change:** Flex-Plan Services is changing its name to *Navia Benefits Solutions*. Emails or web site visits to the old domain name (flex-plan.com/) will be re-routed to the new Navia domain. Your user name and password and the phone number will remain the same. If you currently have a Flex-Plan Services Benefits card, you will receive a new card only when your current card expires. Contact Flex-Plan Services (800-669-3539) if you have questions.

top safety

Are You Ready?

Emergencies can happen at any time, so you need to **P-R-E-P-A-R-E**.

Plan an evacuation route.

Remember to designate an off-site meeting area in case you are separated during evacuation.

Evacuate immediately when you are instructed to do so.

Prepare an emergency disaster kit including first aid supplies, water, non-perishable foods and supplies. Also, take prescriptions, phone chargers, cash, pet food and medicine if you need to leave home.

Anticipate what will happen if an emergency occurs, update all contact information and make communication plans in case you are separated from family.

Revise and replenish. Go over your plan with your family at least every 6 months and replenish your disaster kit if needed.

Ensure your safety by locking up valuables and shutting off utilities, as well as securing doors and windows before evacuation.

September is Preparedness Month.



expert advice

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAFP

Q: Gene testing necessary?



A: Our genes pass hereditary information from 1 generation to the next. Tests can check the genes for changes that may increase the risk for certain diseases. But it's only 1 piece of the puzzle since diseases are caused by interactions between genes, lifestyle and the environment.

••• ➤ **Most people don't need genetic tests.** They may create worry and do more harm than good, especially if the results have little chance of helping the person.

••• ➤ **Carefully consider the benefits and risks of the tests.** Genetic tests can be useful for people with certain hereditary conditions. An example is testing for the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes in a woman who has a mother and sister with breast cancer.

Steps to Smart Health Care

➤ Continued from page 1.

3 Use preventive services offered by your health plan, such as vaccinations, and screenings for various cancers, type 2 diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure.

4 Learn your clinic's procedure for after-hours service. Some health plans include an on-call nurse line to help you decide what type of help you need. A walk-in facility or an urgent care clinic is a good option when you can't wait to see your provider, but you don't need emergency room (ER) care. Care at a walk-in clinic runs about a third of the cost of an ER visit.

5 Know when to use the ER. Emergency care is needed for:

- Broken bones and fractures
- Chest pain
- Choking
- Head, eye or spine injury
- Severe vomiting
- Severe abdominal pain
- Severe breathing trouble
- Sudden dizziness or excruciating headache
- Sudden injury due to motor vehicle crash, burns, deep wounds, etc.
- Swallowing a poisonous substance
- Unconsciousness
- Uncontrolled bleeding



Don't use the ER because it's convenient – you may end up waiting a long time for care.