

# HEALTHY OUTLOOKS

SPRING 2013

MEMBERSHIP NEWS AND HEALTH TIPS FROM  
MEDICAL MUTUAL AND ITS FAMILY OF COMPANIES

## CHOOSE WISELY

Talk about what medical  
tests are needed

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HELPS YOU GET MORE  
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heart attack



MEDICAL MUTUAL®  
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## HEALTHY OUTLOOKS

### THE BEST IN MEDICAL CARE

To ensure high-quality healthcare, Medical Mutual® and its Family of Companies contract with providers to review medical services to determine if they are appropriate. The compensation these providers receive is based on their knowledge and experience, not on the number or type of approved or denied services.

The information provided, including the websites and any links, is for your information only. Any recommended treatment or services may not be covered. It is not intended to be, and should not substitute for, professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment from your treating provider. Decisions about care need to be individualized and should be made with your treating providers. The information provided does not establish or imply coverage for any particular treatment or service. Eligibility and coverage depend on the specific terms and conditions of your benefit plan.

 Visit us online at [MedMutual.com](http://MedMutual.com)



Is that test necessary? In a recent study, nearly half of primary care providers said their own patients get too much medical care. The problem has become so serious that several specialty medical groups joined together to launch a project called *Choosing Wisely*.

As part of this initiative, the providers created lists of services within their specialties of “Five Things Physicians and Patients Should Question.” These are lists of tests or procedures the providers say are done too often, are not really needed or are sometimes even risky. Examples include prescribing antibiotics for sinusitis or ordering EKGs for patients without symptoms of heart disease. The goal of *Choosing Wisely* is to help providers, patients and their families talk about what tests, procedures and treatments are best for each individual.

To get the message out, *Consumer Reports* has partnered with these providers (e.g., internists, cardiologists, radiologists) to produce easy-to-understand fliers that explain when tests and treatments are necessary and when they are not. These reports can help you talk with your provider about what care you really need and make sure you end up with the right amount of care: not too much, not too little.

For more information and free materials on *Choosing Wisely*, visit [ConsumerHealthChoices.org](http://ConsumerHealthChoices.org).

## Medical Mutual Goes Mobile

To give you access on the go, Medical Mutual is launching a new mobile app for iPhone and Android users.

With this app, you'll have ready access to:

- Your member identification (ID) card
- Our *Find a Provider* search tool

The mobile member ID card feature allows you to share your ID card by email. Additionally, using your phone's GPS, the app finds a list of doctors sorted by distance from your current location.

Watch for more app capabilities to help you get more out of your plan.



## CALL OUR QUITLINE FOR HELP

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the United States. Each year, approximately 443,000 Americans die from tobacco-related illnesses. Tobacco use causes cancer, heart disease, lung diseases, premature birth, low birth weight, stillbirth and infant death. Smokeless tobacco causes serious oral health problems, including cancer of the mouth and gums, periodontitis and tooth loss. We can help you quit for good. Take the first step to a tobacco-free life by calling our SuperWell QuitLine today at (866) 845-7702.

# Your Appeal Rights

→ Guidelines for filing a complaint or asking about a claim.

Healthcare and healthcare reform is a hot topic these days. Keeping up with the latest can be difficult. We don't want your appeal rights to be difficult to understand. We always encourage you to check your Certificate of Coverage or Benefit Book, as your rights may differ depending on the type of plan you have. However, we have general guidelines to follow if you have a question or complaint about how a claim was paid, or if a claim for a healthcare service or treatment was denied, reduced or terminated.

You may contact us by phone, in writing or online by submitting a question through our website. If you are not satisfied with the decision, you may request information about the appeal process. We follow all applicable state and federal laws regarding appeals and external review. Your Explanation of Benefits (EOB) form will provide information about filing an appeal.

An appeal must be initiated within 180 days from the date you received the original EOB. Along with the appeal request, you may submit written comments, medical records

and any other information about the claim you are appealing. We provide decisions on non-urgent care appeals within 30 days of the request. If the appeal results in an adverse decision, you'll receive a letter explaining your next appeal options.

Depending on your plan and the type of claim at issue, your next option may be to request an external review by an independent external review organization. If external review is available, you are not responsible for any costs associated with the review. Depending on your plan, the external review may follow the process established by your state's Department of Insurance, or the external review may follow a process established by federal law.

For those plans subject to Ohio's external review process, an external review for claims involving medical judgment is done by an Independent Review Organization selected by the Ohio Department of Insurance. For claims involving a contractual issue, the external review is done by the Ohio Department of Insurance.



## Preferred Drug Lists and Coverage Rules Available on *My Health Plan*

If you have prescription drug benefits provided through Medical Mutual and our relationship with pharmacy benefit manager, Express Scripts (formerly Medco), log into *My Health Plan* to review current information about the formulary (i.e., list of plan-preferred drugs that determine your copay or coinsurance) and coverage management rules like prior approval.

This information is regularly maintained so you can stay up-to-date with benefit changes and procedures.

If you do not have access to *My Health Plan*, call Customer Service at the number on your ID card or Express Scripts at (800) 417-1961 and ask for a paper copy of the current formulary guide or coverage management rules.


## ↘ How to Contact Care Management

**Do you have questions about topics such as inpatient admissions, denials or appeals? The Care Management department is available, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, from 8:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., EST at (800) 258-3175.**



## WEIGHT WATCHERS

As part of our commitment to improving the health of our members, we partner with Weight Watchers® to help you get on track toward a healthy weight and lifestyle. You can receive \$150 per calendar year with our reimbursement program for attending At Work or Community Meetings. To enroll, call (866) 204-2878 before the first meeting. Visit *My Health Plan* for frequently asked questions and eligibility details.



## Get Information Quickly With Our HEALTH RESOURCE CENTER

**D**id you know we have a health and wellness information hub available to *My Health Plan* users? The SuperWell® *Health Resource Center* offers interactive tools to help you get health information quickly. You can use it to figure out what's wrong if you're feeling sick, how to deal with a minor injury or condition, or just how to be healthier.

Visit [MedMutual.com](http://MedMutual.com) and log into *My Health Plan* today to check out these tools:

- **An Interactive Symptom Checker** allows you to click exactly where your symptoms are and suggests what could be causing the problem.

- **Virtual Health Guides** are interactive, conversation-style presentations tailored to the responses you provide. For example, if you want to know more about healthy eating, the guide will offer suggestions for you, based on the responses you give.

- **Decision Points** will help you learn about tests or treatments suggested by your healthcare provider.

- **A searchable Health Encyclopedia** provides information on everything from Aarskog disease to Zollinger-Ellison syndrome.

These new tools offer support and information to help you research and learn about health topics important to you.

# When Low Back Pain Strikes

→ Recognize when back pain will heal and when you need help.

**Y**ou may have turned the wrong way while getting out of your car and you felt a sharp, stabbing pain. You may have overdone it at the gym and feel achy. You may have lifted an armchair and bam! You felt it go out.

Almost everyone has experienced it: low-back pain. In fact, it is the most common cause of job-related disability and the second most common neurological ailment in the U.S. (only headache is more common).

Back pain will often go away on its own, or with some self-help exercises (see sidebar). These are signs that the pain is temporary and should ease on its own:

- Pain gets worse when bending or lifting
- Pain gets worse when sitting, standing or walking
- The pain comes and goes
- Pain extends from the back to the buttock or outer hip, but not down the leg

Back pain can occasionally indicate something more serious. See your healthcare provider for medical advice if you experience any of the following:

- The pain is severe and can't be controlled with over-the-counter pain medication
- The pain is associated with a pulsing in the abdomen
- Fever accompanies the pain
- The pain follows a fall, blow to the back or other injury
- You cannot control or pass urine or stool
- You have difficulty walking or balancing
- You have a history of cancer
- One leg feels numb or weak

Your healthcare provider can help determine what, if any, diagnostic tests are needed. He or she will also prescribe a treatment plan.



**ON THE MEND**  
Most back pain  
heals on its own,  
but take care not to  
reinjure the area.

## Self-Help Exercises

Back pain is common, so here are some simple exercises to ease minor back pain.

### → LIE ON YOUR BACK

- Move ankles up and down (Repeat 10 times).
- Slowly bend and straighten your knee (Repeat 10 times).
- Bend your knees and rest your hands below your ribs, tighten your abs to squeeze your ribs down toward your back, making sure to breathe and hold for five seconds (Repeat 10 times).
- Bend one knee while keeping the other one straight and tighten your abs to stabilize your lower back. Slowly lift the straight leg up about six to 12 inches off of the floor then hold for a few seconds. Slowly lower the leg (Repeat 10 times, then repeat with other leg).

### → STAND WITH YOUR BACK AGAINST THE WALL

Walk your feet out about 12 inches, tighten your abs and bend your knees 45 degrees and hold for five seconds. Slowly return to an upright position. (Repeat 10 times.)

### → STAND WITH YOUR WEIGHT EVEN ON BOTH FEET

Slowly raise your heels up and down (Repeat 10 times).

To learn more about managing low back pain, visit [MedMutual.com](http://MedMutual.com), log into *My Health Plan*, select *Resources & Tools*, *Health Resource Center* and launch *LBP Virtual Health Guide*.

# A Joint Effort

→ A look at rheumatoid arthritis and how to ease pain.

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic inflammatory disorder that affects the lining of the joints. For reasons that aren't entirely clear, the immune system of those with RA doesn't work properly. Instead of protecting the body by attacking foreign cells, the immune system turns against the body's own tissues, leading to painful swelling that may eventually cause bone erosion and joint deformity.

The majority of people with RA experience flares—intermittent bouts of intense disease—coupled with periods of remission (relief of symptoms). Symptoms include tender, warm and swollen joints, morning stiffness, fatigue and loss of appetite.

## WHAT CAN HELP

While there's no cure for RA, the earlier the disease is detected and treated, the better the prognosis. Early treatment of RA with disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs) has been found to be essential in controlling the disease and preventing joint damage. RA disease progression in the first two years will determine the extent of long-term disability. A brief delay in DMARD therapy, even for a few months, is associated with significant disability later.

Although there are many DMARDs, the most commonly used are methotrexate, leflunomide, hydroxychloroquine and sulfasalazine. Side effects vary, but may include liver damage, bone marrow suppression and lung infections. A newer type of DMARD is the biologic response modifier, which includes abatacept, adalimumab, anakinra, etanercept, infliximab and rituximab.



If you have been diagnosed with RA, please consider discussing DMARD therapy with your primary care provider (PCP) or rheumatologist to help protect your joints from more damage.

Those with RA must make sure to keep their joints flexible and heart, lungs and muscles strong. Therefore, exercise is a key component to any treatment program. Keeping fit will also help improve energy levels and decrease depression. Low-impact exercise like swimming, ballroom dancing and bicycling are good options. Speak with your healthcare provider about your exercise options.

## RA or OA: What's the Difference?

Although both rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and osteoarthritis (OA) cause pain and stiffness, the root causes of the pain come from two very different things.

Osteoarthritis is the wearing away of cartilage—the slippery tissue that covers the ends of the bones—in your joints. With no cartilage, nothing absorbs the shock of movement and bones rub together, causing pain. Over time, this rubbing can permanently damage the joint. OA usually affects the hips, knees, feet and spine.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a systemic inflammatory disease that affects the synovial membrane, which protects and lubricates the joints. Though RA can affect any joint, it usually affects the hands and feet first. It's caused not by wear and tear, but the immune system attacking the body.

**DO YOU HAVE RA?** Our Registered Nurse Case Managers can work with you and your doctor on a plan to help you achieve safe and cost-effective care and improve your quality of life. Call (800) 258-3175 to speak with a Case Manager.

# Men, Is It Time for a Health Check?

→ Maintain your health like you would anything else.

**F**eeling healthy? That's great. But you still need to see your healthcare provider on a regular basis. The National Institutes of Health recommend the following healthcare screenings for men. Men with chronic conditions, like diabetes or heart disease, may follow a more frequent schedule of doctor's appointments.

## ✓ CHECK UP

See your primary care provider to:

- Check height and weight
- Screen for tobacco and alcohol use
- Screen for depression
- Discuss osteoporosis screening (after age 50)

## ✓ DENTAL

Get a dental cleaning and exam every six months.

## ✓ EYE

Get an eye exam every two years if you have vision problems.

## ✓ BLOOD PRESSURE

If it's normal, have it checked every two years. If it's between 120/80 and 139/89 mmHg or higher, check it every year.

## ✓ CHOLESTEROL

Start screening for high cholesterol at age 35. Talk to your doctor if you have diabetes, heart disease, kidney problems or certain other conditions. You may need to start screening sooner.

## ✓ COLON CANCER

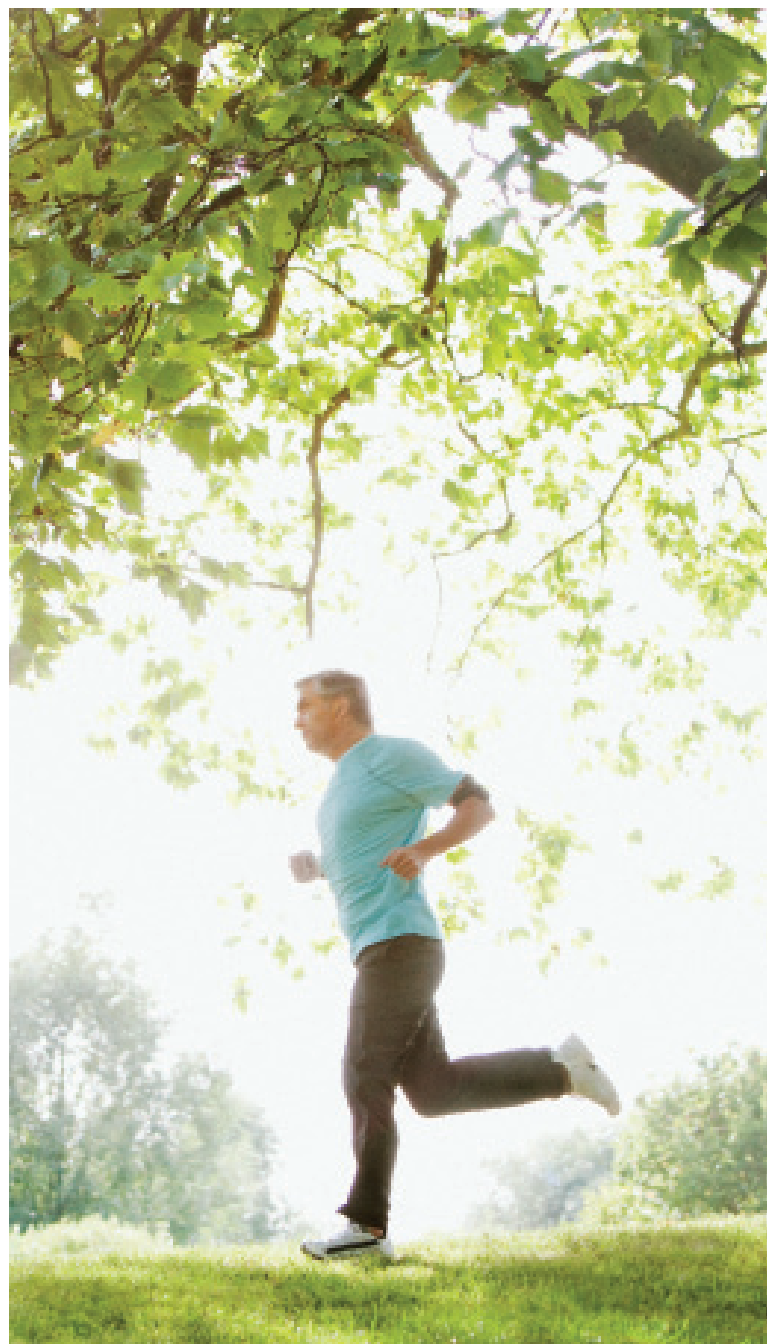
Starting at age 50, talk to your doctor about colorectal cancer screening, which may involve:

- A yearly stool occult blood test *or*
- A flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years with a stool occult blood test every three years *or*
- A colonoscopy every 10 years

If you're at higher risk for colon cancer (e.g., ulcerative colitis, a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or a history of large colorectal adenomas) you may need a colonoscopy more often.

## ✓ PROSTATE CANCER

At age 50, talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of prostate cancer screening.



## LEARN MORE

Visit [cdc.gov/men](http://cdc.gov/men) for more men's health topics and frequently updated news.







→ Not following directions could cause serious health problems.

# It's Your Medication Plan. Stick to It.

Nearly three out of four Americans admit they don't always take their medications as prescribed, according to the National Consumers League. What are they doing? Many don't bother to fill prescriptions. Some fill them, but don't pick them up. Others take it one step further: they bring the medication home but don't follow instructions.

All of this can have dangerous—even deadly—consequences. Not taking medication as directed causes more than one-third of medicine-related hospitalizations and nearly 125,000 deaths in the United States each year.

## DON'T HAVE A MEDICATION MISHAP

To make sure you take your medications like you're supposed to, always bring a pen and paper into the doctor's office so you can leave armed with helpful information.

Ask why you're taking the medicine and how you should take it. (What time of day? With food? Any foods or liquids to avoid?) Ask how long you should be on the medication and when you should start to feel better. Ask what you should do if you forget a dose (Double up the next time? Skip it altogether?). Be sure to ask about side effects and what to do if you experience any.

## BE OPEN WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Talk about any allergies or problems you've had in the past with a medication, and make sure you mention all of the other medications you take (e.g., prescription, over-the-counter medications, vitamins or herbs) to avoid any dangerous drug interactions. Tell your doctor if you smoke or drink alcohol. Cigarettes can change the way certain medications work, and mixing alcohol with certain drugs can be dangerous.

If cost is an issue, check with your prescription drug provider to make sure you're using your drug coverage in the most cost-effective way. And always ask if a generic is available for the medication you're taking.

## FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

When you get the medication home, read the warning label and any other information on the insert. Never purposely skip a dose, don't take more than you're supposed to and never take medication in the dark when it's easy to make a mistake. Also, always finish all the medication you've been given, even if you feel better.

## Tips to Manage Meds

As you know, it's important to take your medications as prescribed. To help you remember:

- Take it at the same time every day so it becomes a habit. Couple it with something that's easy to remember, like brushing your teeth or eating breakfast.
- Set the alarm on your watch, cell phone or computer to help you remember. Or sign up with a free service that sends an email every day to remind you.
- Keep a chart or calendar in a prominent place and mark when you've taken your drugs. If you take more than one medication, use different colored pens.
- If you don't have kids in the house, use a day-of-the-week divided pillbox to help you keep track.



# A HEADS UP ON CHILDREN'S SAFETY



→ From the playground to the football field, protect your child from concussions.

**A**n accidental head butt on the playground or a purposeful one on the football field can be more than just a little painful. It can be dangerous, sometimes even deadly. Almost half a million emergency room visits are made each year for traumatic brain injuries to children under 14.

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. We tend to think of team sports causing concussions in kids and although that often is the reason, kids can also get a concussion from ice skating, bicycle riding or even playing on the playground monkey bars.

### SAFETY TIPS

To keep your child safe, always put him or her in a car seat or booster (refer to [safercar.gov/parents/carseats.htm](http://safercar.gov/parents/carseats.htm) for more specifics), and make sure your child wears properly fitting, appropriate headgear when biking, skateboarding, ice skating, skiing and playing contact sports. When on the playground, make sure all the surfaces underneath are safe, soft and well maintained (with something like rubber padding or sand, not dirt or grass).

If your child has fallen, be on the lookout for the following:

- A dazed or stunned look
- Confusion about position
- Forgetting instructions
- Moving clumsily
- Showing behavioral changes
- Answering questions slowly
- An inability to recall events after a hit or fall

Children may experience the following symptoms with a concussion:

- Headache or head pressure
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double vision
- Sensitivity to noise or light
- Feeling sluggish or foggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion

If you think your child has a concussion, take him or her to a healthcare provider right away. Don't let your child return to the playground or sports field until your healthcare provider gives you the green light. And if your child plays sports, tell the coach about any injury your child has sustained.



### OTHER SAFETY MEASURES

- To make sure your child is safe and healthy, take him or her to the pediatrician on a regular basis—even if your child is feeling fine.
- Regular well-visits will help your healthcare provider catch any small problems before they become bigger problems, and he or she will be able to answer your healthcare and related parenting questions.
- You'll also be given information to keep your child in tip-top shape, such as what normal development is, how your child should be eating, how much sleep your child should be getting, as well as general safety tips. Well-visits are also the time to get your child's regular vaccinations.



## COPD by the Numbers

A recent study examined the prevalence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in the United States and the numbers are startling. Overall, an estimated 15 million adults have been told they have COPD.

The data showed considerable variation in the prevalence of COPD: From less than 4 percent of the population in Washington and Minnesota to more than 9 percent in Alabama and Kentucky.

The report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health also included details on survey questions. The survey found that about 62 percent of those with COPD feel the disease negatively affects their quality of life. Also, 50 percent of respondents take at least one daily medication for COPD and medication usage increases with age.

Remember, COPD can be managed to limit the impact on your daily life.



## Breathe Better

→ A guide to COPD management.

**C**hronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a progressive lung disease that includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis and makes breathing difficult. If you have COPD, it's important to get your lung function checked.

Doctors check your lung function through a spirometry test, which helps diagnose COPD and also tracks changes in lung function over time. The test is simple: You take a deep breath, then blow out as hard and as fast as you can using a mouthpiece connected to a machine with tubing. The spirometer then measures the

amount you exhale and how long it took you to exhale. In addition to spirometry, here are tips to manage your disease most effectively.

- If you smoke, quit now. Call the SuperWell® QuitLine at (866) 845-7702 to speak with a smoking cessation counselor for help.

- Take your medication as prescribed by your healthcare provider. Medications can include: bronchodilators, which relax the muscles around the breathing tubes; anti-inflammatories (or steroids), which reduce the swelling and mucus production

inside the airways; and antibiotics, which can fight flare-ups caused by bacterial infections.

- Use your oxygen as prescribed. Oxygen therapy can help with shortness of breath and may be necessary if COPD is severe.

People with COPD are at greater risk for serious complications from the flu and pneumonia, so you should also talk to your healthcare provider about an annual flu vaccination, as well as a pneumonia shot.

# After a Heart Attack

→ Help prevent another cardiac event.

**A**fter a heart attack or cardiac event, your healthcare provider will likely suggest cardiac rehabilitation—a professionally supervised program that will help move you toward a heart-healthy lifestyle. Initially, your activities will vary depending on your condition.

## CONSIDER CARDIAC REHAB

If you're recovering from major heart surgery, rehab will likely start with sitting up in a chair or taking a few steps. You'll also work on range-of-motion exercises, such as moving your fingers, hands, arms, legs and feet. Over time, you'll increase your activity level.

Once you leave the hospital, rehab will continue, where you'll learn how to manage every aspect of your heart health to reduce your risk of heart problems down the road. That includes how to eat right, how to safely exercise and even how to deal with stress more effectively.

## OTHER LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Your doctor will also keep a close eye on your cholesterol and blood pressure numbers. If you're a smoker, concentrate on stopping immediately. Other lifestyle changes, such as drinking less alcohol or making changes to your diet may also be necessary.

Educational counseling and emotional support for you and your family are also part of the process to help you maintain a lifestyle of healthy habits, which will help cut your risk for future problems. Your doctor can help determine when to resume normal activities, such as returning to work or traveling.

If your doctor doesn't refer you to cardiac rehab, ask about it! Though the lifestyle changes may be hard to adjust to at first, stay positive and know you're helping to keep your heart strong.

## Warning Signs

We've all seen a dramatization of someone having a heart attack, clutching their chest as they fall to the floor. But real-life heart attacks are rarely so dramatic. At first, many people don't realize they are having a heart attack.

No matter how faint, don't ignore the signs and symptoms. Signs include: chest discomfort, which may be intermittent and feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, indigestion or pain; upper-body discomfort, which can include the arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach; shortness of breath, a cold sweat, light-headedness and nausea.

For women, the signs can be more subtle. While the most common symptom is chest pain or discomfort, women are more likely to experience shortness of breath, pressure or pain in the lower chest or upper abdomen, dizziness, light-headedness or fainting, upper back pressure or extreme fatigue. If you experience these warning signs, don't delay getting immediate help. Every minute counts when you're experiencing a heart attack or cardiac event.



→ What you'll find on your plan website.

# For Your Information



## READY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT A CONDITION?

Check out the *SuperWell Health Resource Center*, where you have access to thousands of health topics.

A wealth of information is available to you on our website—MedMutual.com. Log into our secure member portal, *My Health Plan*, for around-the-clock access to your detailed account and health plan information.

### Click **Benefits & Coverage** for:

- ID Cards
- Benefit Book
- Coverage Information
- Prior Approval

### Click **Claims & Balances** for:

- Claims Summary
- Benefit Deductible
- FSA Balance

### Click **Resources & Tools** for:

- Getting Care, Determining Appropriate Care
- Finding a Provider
- Member FAQs (Member Rights and Responsibilities)
- Health Resource Center
- Symptom Checker

### Click **Resources & Tools, then Forms** for:

- Member Appeals
- Claims Customer Service
- Claim Forms
- Verification Forms

### Click **Healthy Living** for:

- Updated Preventive Care Guidelines
- Quit Smoking
- SuperWell® Disease and Maternity Management Program

- Health Assessment
- Health Awareness
- *Healthy Outlooks* Newsletter Archive
- Fitness Discounts
- Weight Watchers®
- The Chef's Garden
- Discounts

### At the top of MedMutual.com, click **About Medical Mutual, Corporate Profile**, then **Quality Improvement Program** to access the following:

- Quality Improvement Program Description
- Quality Improvement Program Evaluation
- Technology Assessment Program Description
- Appropriate Care (Member Affirmation Statement)

For questions or to receive this information in writing, call the Clinical Quality Improvement (CQI) department at (800) 586-4523 or write to:

**Medical Mutual CQI department**  
**MZ: 01-5B-7501**  
**2060 East Ninth Street**  
**Cleveland, OH 44115**





# Why a Full-Term Pregnancy Matters

→ Give your baby a strong start by carrying to full-term.

**E**ach year, more than half a million babies in the United States are born prematurely—before 37 weeks of pregnancy—according to the March of Dimes. Because a developing baby goes through important growth during the final weeks of pregnancy, the earlier a baby is born, the more severe his or her health problems are likely to be. Prematurity can also mean a longer hospital stay.

## Some consequences of prematurity include:

- Breathing and respiratory problems
- Visual problems, including retinopathy of prematurity
- Feeding and digestive problems
- Intellectual disabilities
- Cerebral palsy

The causes of premature birth are numerous and complex, and sometimes premature birth occurs without an identified cause. Some

known risk factors are: multiple births, a previous pregnancy with preterm birth, a mother's chronic health problem(s), certain infections during pregnancy, cigarette smoking and alcohol use.

## You can decrease your risk of premature delivery by:

- Scheduling a prenatal visit as soon as you suspect you are pregnant
- Quitting smoking and avoiding alcohol
- Eating a healthy diet and taking prenatal vitamins as recommended by your healthcare provider
- Knowing the signs of preterm labor and what to do if they occur

Work with your provider throughout your pregnancy to maximize your odds of carrying your baby to full term. Also, make sure to keep all of your prenatal appointments, even if you've had healthy children before.

## REGULAR SCREENINGS FOR WOMEN

Even when you feel fine, it's critical that you see your doctor for regular Pap tests and mammograms. According to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force:

- Healthy women ages 21 to 65 need a Pap test every three years.
- Women ages 30 to 65 who want to lengthen the screening interval should get a Pap test with an HPV test every five years.
- Women over age 65 who have had adequate prior screening and aren't at risk for cervical cancer might not need screening.
- Women who have had their cervix removed and have no history of high-grade precancerous lesions or cervical cancer do not need screening.
- Women ages 50 to 74 years should have a mammogram every two years.

Of course, these are general recommendations for women. When it comes to your specific situation, you should always talk to your doctor about your own testing timeline.

## LEARN MORE

Visit [marchofdimes.com](http://marchofdimes.com) for more information about prenatal health.



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2060 East 9th Street  
Cleveland, OH 44115-1355



This newsletter is published to provide you with health tips, education and plan updates. The recommended services may not be covered. Eligibility and coverage are subject to the specific terms of your benefit plan.

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MFC

# Sugar Substitutes

→ Are artificial sweeteners better for you?

**N**o sugar, no calories. Artificial sweeteners sound wonderful. They pack 100 times more sweetening punch than table sugar, so you only need a dash to get that sweet taste, potentially saving hundreds of calories a day. But are they all they're cracked up to be? The jury's still out.

Sugar substitutes like saccharin, aspartame and sucralose can be a good alternative to sugar if you have diabetes because they don't raise blood sugar levels. And, according to the National Cancer Institute, there's no proof that artificial sweeteners cause cancer.

However, sugar substitutes may, in fact, backfire when it comes to weight loss. One study published in *Obesity* found that participants who drank more than 21 diet drinks per week were twice as likely to become overweight as people who didn't down the synthetic sweet stuff.

Artificial sweeteners may stoke your sweet tooth and set off cravings that lead you to binge on high-calorie foods later. So your best bet is to use sugar substitutes in moderation, and focus mostly on natural, nutritious foods like fruits, vegetables, lean meats and whole grains. If you have diabetes, check with your healthcare provider about using sugar substitutes.

**LEARN MORE**  
Artificial sweeteners are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. To learn more, visit [fda.gov](http://fda.gov) or [cancer.gov/cancertopics](http://cancer.gov/cancertopics) and type "artificial sweeteners" into the search field.