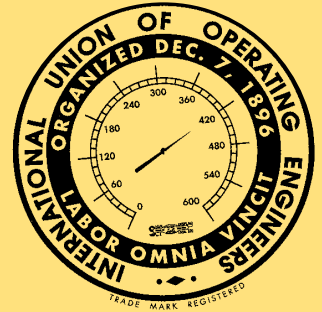


FEBRUARY 2008

HealthLine

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS LOCAL 4
HEALTH & WELFARE PLAN

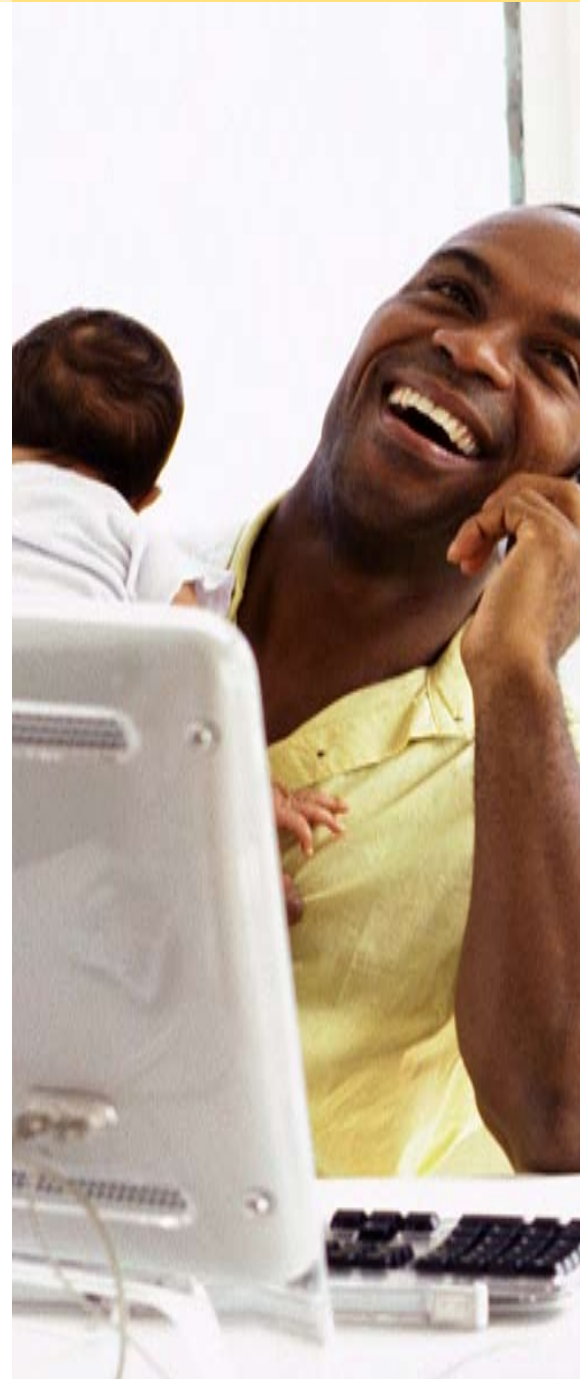


Dear Health & Welfare Participant:

WITH THE NEW YEAR UPON US, it is a good time to take stock of our health and initiate the lifestyle changes most of us need to ensure a long and productive life. As the results from the IUOE Local 4 Health Fair held this past October show, many participants could profit from using the new fitness and weight loss benefits that were announced in this space in December. Here are the key metrics from the health fair:

SCREENING	Normal or Good Range	Moderate or Fair Range	High-Risk or Abnormal Range
Total Cholesterol	67%	25%	8%
HDL/Good Cholesterol	27%	54%	19%
Cardiac-Risk Ratio	34%	52%	10%
Glucose	90%	10%	-
Blood Pressure	15%	43%	42%
Body Fat—Women	38%	35%	27%
Body Fat—Men	41%	24%	35%
PSA Testing and Digital Exam	100%	-	-
HPylori (Ulcers)	95%	-	5%
Bone Density	64%	27%	9%
Sun Damage Analysis	28%	59%	13%
Carbon Monoxide Testing	58%	21%	21%
Diet Profile	42%	39%	18%
Stress Profile	47%	30%	23%
Physical-Activity Profile	50%	9%	41%

continued on page 8



HARVARD HEALTH TIP

Even a little sleep deprivation leads to daytime sleepiness, which is associated with accidents.

Studies have linked insomnia, an inability to sleep when desired, with a host of health problems, ranging from heart disease to elevated stress hormone levels to drops in immune function.

Source: Harvard Health Publications • www.health.harvard.edu



HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FAD DIETS?

1. Most fad diets are based on gimmicks or a manipulation of protein, fat, and carbohydrates in your diet.
 True False
2. It's not possible to lose weight on a fad diet.
 True False
3. The Atkins diet is healthy for the long-term.
 True False
4. Over-the-counter weight-loss pills are an effective way to lose weight.
 True False

1. True—by definition they are not based on sound dietetic science. 2. False—it is possible but it's not healthy. 3. False—because it limits groups of fresh produce, it can deprive your body of vitamins, minerals, and other beneficial nutrients. 4. False—there has been no demonstrated effectiveness and some, such as those that contain Ephedra, can be dangerous.

WEIGHT LOSS: Fact and Fiction

FINDING ACCURATE INFORMATION ON HOW TO LOSE WEIGHT SAFELY, effectively, and permanently can be difficult. Depending on the diet books you read or weight-loss Web sites you visit, you could be exposed to false, even dangerous, advice on how to lose weight.

The following facts regarding weight-loss fictions are based on information from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Weight-control Information Network.

Fiction: Fad diets work for permanent weight loss.

Fact: Fad diets aren't the best way to lose weight and keep it off. Fad diets often promise quick weight loss or tell you to cut certain foods out of your diet. You may lose weight at first on one of these

diets. But diets that strictly limit calories or food choices are hard to follow. Most people quickly tire of them, return to the way they ate before they went on the diet, and regain any lost weight.

Fad diets also are unhealthy because they rarely provide all the nutrients your body needs. **Instead:** Lose weight slowly (½ pound to 2 pounds a week) by making healthy food choices, eating moderate portions, and adding physical activity to your daily life.

Fiction: Skipping meals is a good way to lose weight.

Fact: Studies show people who skip breakfast and eat fewer times during the day tend

to be heavier than people who eat a healthy breakfast. This may be because people who skip meals tend to feel hungrier later and eat more than they normally would at dinner.

Instead: Eat small meals throughout the day that include a variety of healthy, low-fat, low-calorie foods.

CHECK IT OUT

Before changing your diet, check with a registered dietitian or doctor to make sure you're following a health-promoting plan.

To learn more: Weight-control Information Network, <http://win.niddk.nih.gov>, search for "diet myths"

RECOGNIZE FAD DIETS

Fad diets are those that promote quick weight loss; **advocate limited food selection (nothing but cabbage soup, for example)**; omit one or more of the food groups or major nutrients; include expensive supplements—some of which can be harmful in high doses; claim to be based on a previously undiscovered "secret"; or suggest food/products can change the body's chemistry.

Stay Out of the Doctor's Office

MOST PEOPLE VISIT THEIR DOCTORS WHEN THEY'RE SICK, but you can avoid a lot of those visits. The trick is to know what you can do to stay healthy.

Like an apple a day, the following recommendations can help keep the doctor away.

- **Don't use tobacco.** And promise yourself you'll never start if you don't smoke already.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Your doctor can tell you how much you should weigh. Exercise and low-fat foods can help you lose weight if you need to.
- **Exercise regularly.** Aim for a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least three times a week. Choose activities you enjoy, and, if you like, do them with a friend or family member so you'll have someone to encourage you to stick with it. If you're new to exercise, take it slow and easy. You're more likely to get hurt when you exercise too often, too long, and too hard.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Choose moderate portions of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, chicken, and fish. Don't eat a lot of red meat and fatty foods. Choose snack foods that are low in fat, sugar, and salt.
- **Manage your stress.** If you've got a lot going on in your life (and who doesn't), it's easy to become time-pressured and occasionally overwhelmed. To counteract the effects of life's difficulties, get plenty

of sleep, learn a relaxation exercise such as deep breathing or meditation and practice it daily, and take some time each day to disconnect from your cell phone and e-mail.

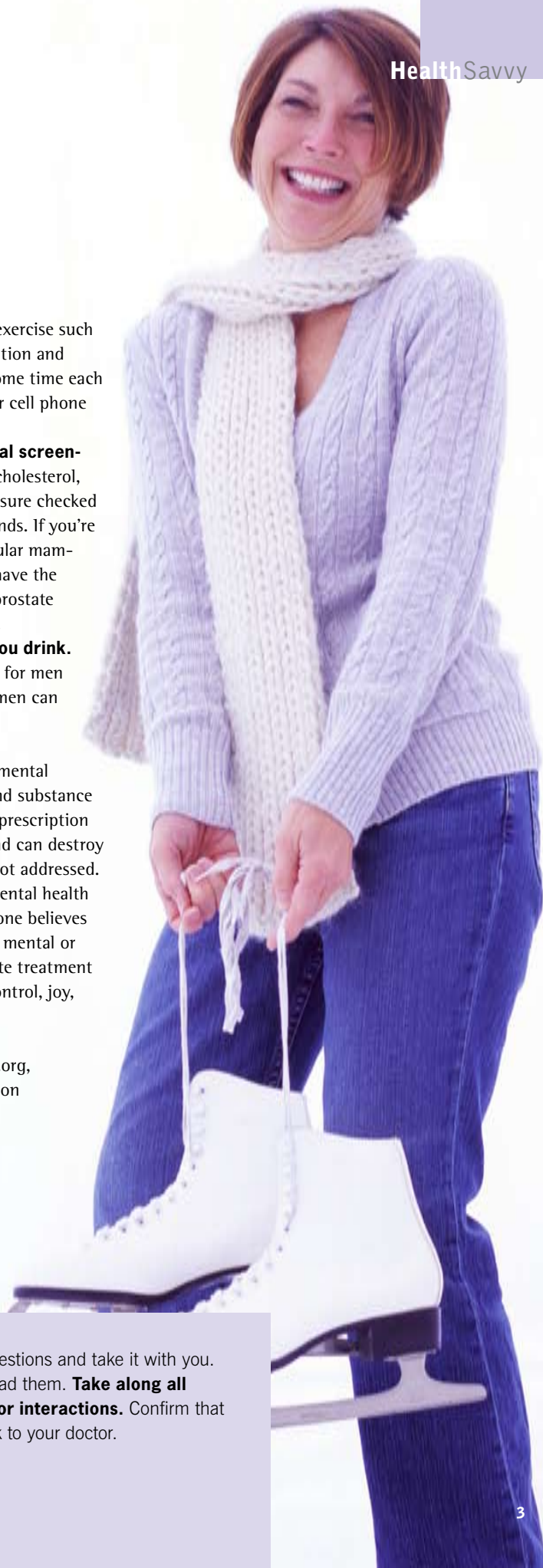
- **Get recommended medical screenings.** Be sure to have your cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure checked when your doctor recommends. If you're a woman over 40, have regular mammograms; if you're a man, have the appropriate screenings for prostate cancer when recommended.
- **Limit how much alcohol you drink.** More than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women can harm your health.

Finally, pay attention to your mental health. Depression, anxiety, and substance abuse—of alcohol or illegal or prescription drugs—are all too common, and can destroy your health and happiness if not addressed. Speak with your doctor or a mental health professional if you or a loved one believes you could be suffering from a mental or emotional problem. Appropriate treatment can give you back your self-control, joy, and hope for the future.

To learn more: FamilyDoctor.org, www.familydoctor.org, click on "Healthy Living"

APPOINTMENT 411

To make the most of every doctor visit: Write a list of questions and take it with you. Describe your current symptoms and how long you've had them. **Take along all medications you take so your physician can check for interactions.** Confirm that you understand your treatment plan by repeating it back to your doctor.





RESPONDING TO **Asthma Attacks**

ASTHMA IS A SERIOUS AND OFTEN LIFE-THREATENING DISEASE.

One key to controlling asthma is knowing how to spot the early warning signs of an attack. They aren't the same for everyone and may change.

However, asthma attacks usually can be predicted. Warning signs may include:

- A chronic cough, especially at night
- Difficult or fast breathing
- Chest tightness or discomfort
- Becoming out of breath
- Fatigue
- Itchy, watery, or glassy eyes
- Itchy, scratchy, or sore throat
- Repeated rubbing of the throat
- Sneezing
- Stopped-up or runny nose
- Headache
- Fever
- Restlessness
- Dark circles under the eyes

RECOGNIZE AN ATTACK

Someone who's having an asthma attack often has the following symptoms:

- Shortness of breath and wheezing
- Cough or raspy breath
- Agitated movement
- Blue lips or fingertips
- Appearing to use neck and facial muscles to breathe

RESPOND RIGHT AWAY

If someone has these signs, follow this three-step plan:

- 1. Have the person sit upright.** Be calm and reassuring; asthma worsens with panic.
- 2. Give the person two puffs of an albuterol inhaler,** such as Airomir, Asmol, Bricanyl, or Ventolin.

Use the person's own inhaler, if possible. If not, use one from a first aid kit or borrow one.

Inhaler medication is best given through a spacer, if available. The person should take one puff at a time, then take four breaths from the spacer after each puff.

- 3. Wait five minutes.** If the person shows little or no improvement, call for emergency medical help immediately. Keep the person calm until help arrives.

KEEP IT CONTROLLED

The best way to avoid asthma attacks is to keep asthma controlled. To do this:

- Visit the doctor every six months.
- Avoid your asthma triggers.
- Take asthma medication exactly as prescribed.

Controlling your asthma does take effort, but it's worth it. As long as you do it, you can live your life without asthma slowing you down.

To learn more: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology at www.aaaai.org

EVERYDAY ASTHMA

Asthma attacks interfere with daily activities, including attending school and going to work. **Every year American children ages 5 to 17 miss 14.7 million school days due to asthma;** American adults ages 18 years and older miss 11.8 million work days due to asthma.



MEN AND **Depression**

MEN WHO ARE DEPRESSED often have different symptoms than women who have the condition. These signs may include fighting with their spouses, losing interest in sports or sex, working six or seven days a week, and becoming more uncommunicative than they usually are.

And, instead of asking for help, men who are depressed are likely to drink alcohol to excess, take drugs, or become frustrated, discouraged, irritable, and sometimes abusive or violent. Men also can become self-destructive when depressed, which is played out by engaging in dangerous behaviors, such as driving too fast or engaging in high-risk, unprotected sex.

These behaviors are often an attempt by men to hide their depression, which they perceive to be a weakness.

To help men, it's important for family members, employers, and men themselves to realize it's dangerous to accept society's expectations that men should ignore emotional pain.

It's dangerous to family members who can be targets of domestic violence; dangerous to strangers who may bear the brunt of anger and reckless behavior; and dangerous to the men themselves, who suffer a high rate of depression-related suicide.

Men are more prone to suicide because they're less likely to recognize they're in trouble. And, although more women attempt suicide than men, men are more likely to be successful.

In addition, because of a cultural stigma that labels men who need help as weak and vulnerable, they often falsely fear being diagnosed with a mental illness could cost them the respect of their family and friends, or their standing in the workplace.

In a culture that expects males to be tough and independent, many men are reluctant to seek therapy. They feel ashamed that they can't solve their problems by themselves, which can isolate them further.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

One of the most important steps men can take to preserve their mental health is to establish a network of family and friends to rely on. Regular exercise also can help, in some cases as much as medication.

However, if signs of depression are evident for two weeks or more, it's likely the man is depressed and should see a doctor or a mental health professional for an accurate diagnosis.

Certain medications and medical conditions can cause depression and should be ruled out as causes.

There is hope for men who are depressed, and most men who seek and receive appropriate treatment recover and go on to enjoy full and productive lives.

To learn more: National Institute of Mental Health, www.nimh.nih.gov, search for "men and depression"

GET THE FACTS ABOUT **Elective Surgery**

ELECTIVE SURGERIES ARE NON-EMERGENCY PROCEDURES. They may be medically required, such as cancer biopsies, or optional, such as laser surgery done to correct nearsightedness or plastic surgery to replace your hair or tuck your tummy.

However, just because these surgeries are considered optional doesn't mean they're any less serious than emergency heart or brain surgery.

If you're considering having an elective surgery, you should follow the same guidelines you would for any surgery. You should consider all your options and determine which is best for you. You should understand the details of the operation, including the possible risks and complications, as well as how the operation is expected to improve your quality of life.

Learning as much as you can about any elective surgery you're considering can help you be an informed and safe health care consumer.

ELECTIVE ESSENTIALS

Depending on the procedure, elective surgery can be performed by a surgeon in a hospital or by a physician in an ambulatory or outpatient surgical center or doctor's office.

Major categories of elective procedures include:

- **Plastic surgery**—cosmetic or reconstructive surgery, such as breast augmentation or reconstruction
- **Refractive surgery**—laser surgery for vision correction
- **Gynecological surgery**—hysterectomy or tubal ligation
- **Exploratory or diagnostic surgery**—procedures to determine the extent of a medical problem, such as cancer, or to remove tissue samples for a biopsy
- **Cardiovascular surgery**—angioplasty or implantation of a pacemaker
- **Musculoskeletal surgery**—hip or knee replacement

RISK MANAGEMENT

Elective surgery risks vary by the type of procedure performed and the general health of the person having the operation. Most surgeries carry a risk for infection, hemorrhage, shock, or blood clotting. Anesthesia, whether general or local, presents its own risks.

Although no medical procedure is risk-free, taking steps to control or moderate surgical risks can improve your chance for a positive outcome.

To do so:

- Make sure the hospital or ambulatory surgical center you're considering is accredited, which demonstrates a commitment to meeting high patient safety standards.

Surgical centers are accredited and evaluated by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC) and The Joint Commission.

To verify accreditation of a hospital or an ambulatory center, go to **www.aaahc.org**, then click on "Search for Accredited Organizations." You also can visit **www.jointcommission.org**.

- Learn if your surgeon is certified by going to the American College of Surgeons Web site at **www.facs.org/public_info/yourhealth/findadoc.html**.
- Check your insurance coverage. Call your health insurance provider before scheduling any elective procedure, as coverage for nonemergency surgery can vary.

Remember, the decision to have elective surgery is yours to make. Don't hesitate to ask all your questions and carefully consider the answers.



TOOLS FOR CHANGE

4 Steps to a Healthy Brain

When you head to the gym to get your back and belly in shape, don't forget there's one more "B" you need to work out. And it may be the most important one of all—your brain.

Here are four keys to keeping your brain sharp and youthful, no matter what your age:

- 1. Physical activity.** Get regular aerobic exercise. A healthy heart and good circulation will aid your brain's well-being.
- 2. Mental stimulation.** Any regular activity that challenges the mind will help strengthen links among brain cells. It can even prompt formation of new cells.
- 3. Good nutrition.** The brain is 60 percent fat—the body's fattiest organ. This fat helps allow nerve transmission. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as fish, will help maintain the good fat in the brain without putting bad fat on the waistline. Other foods that promote brain health are ones with antioxidants such as red grapes, fruit juices, and green leafy vegetables.
- 4. Socialization.** Research indicates that people who isolate themselves from others are more likely candidates for dementia in their senior years. Don't retire and watch life pass you by. Do volunteer work, join a hobby club, take dancing lessons—stay connected with other human beings.

EXERCISE WITH Health Challenges

EXERCISE IS GOOD FOR WHAT AILS YOU, even if you have diabetes, high blood pressure, or arthritis.

Most people should aim for a consistent 30-minute workout that can be done all at once or in three 10-minute sessions a day at least three times a week. Ask your doctor to recommend a safe and appropriate exercise program for you.

Everyone should warm up before exercising with five to 10 minutes of moderate activity followed by stretching. After a workout, cool down slowly for five to 10 minutes. Walking at a medium pace is a good warm-up and cooldown activity.

Here are specific exercise recommendations for several chronic conditions.

DO IT WITH DIABETES

A regular exercise program can help stabilize blood sugar, reduce the need for insulin and medication, and keep weight under control—all of which are important for someone with diabetes.

Keep these cautions in mind:

- If you have retinopathy, avoid activities that sharply raise blood pressure, such as weight lifting.
- If you have poor sensation in your feet, take special care to choose proper footwear.
- Check your blood sugar levels before and after workouts and every 20 to 30 minutes during prolonged exercise.
- Have a snack if you have signs of hypoglycemia—dizziness, sweating, trembling, or double vision.

WORK OUT WITH HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

A few sessions of moderate physical activity each week can reduce blood pressure and lower the risk for stroke and heart attack for people with high blood pressure.

If your blood pressure is mildly elevated, exercise along with a healthy diet may bring it down to normal. If you need medication, exercise will make it more effective and possibly allow you to take a lower dose.

For your safety, ask your doctor to recommend a specific workout.

BE ACTIVE WITH ARTHRITIS

People with arthritis find that exercise strengthens the muscles around their joints, increases range of motion, reduces pain, and increases flexibility and endurance.

To keep your joints safe:

- Don't push yourself too hard. Take a break or slow down if you notice inflammation or redness in your joints.
- Apply heat to the joints you'll be using before you exercise.
- Ice your joints after exercising. Use a cold pack for 10 to 15 minutes.

No matter what your condition, build your exercise program around activities you enjoy. Exercise with a friend or join a class at a local fitness center.



continued from page 1

Those who attended this event had a wonderful opportunity to become better educated on health issues, spend time with a counselor on their blood test results, and get needed screenings done in a no-cost, convenient manner. In addition to the above, attendees could spend time with a nutritionist for consultation, get a flu shot, enjoy a chair massage, or confer with representatives from Best Doctors, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and Modern Assistance Programs. We hope you enjoyed this day and were motivated to initiate a lifestyle change.

Sincerely,
Your Board of Trustees


Louis G. Rasetta, Chairman	IUOE LOCAL 4
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John J. Shaughnessy Jr.	
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Form MA 1099-HC

Under the new Massachusetts Health Care Reform legislation, Massachusetts residents are required to file Form MA 1099-HC with their 2007 tax returns showing that they and covered family members had health insurance during 2007.

Please be advised that these forms will be issued by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts for the 2007 coverage year and should be received by you by the January 31 due date for all such tax forms.

If you have not received the form, you can contact the Fund Office, and we will follow up with Blue Cross Blue Shield.



Friday, February 1 is National Wear Red Day, sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's The Heart Truth campaign. For information on how you can help women around you take action to prevent and control their risk factors for heart disease, visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/hearttruth—and be sure to show your support by wearing RED that day!

HealthLine

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QUESTIONS & Answers

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO GET MY KIDS VACCINATED FOR CHICKENPOX?

If you haven't discussed this with your children's doctor yet, that's the best place to start. Their doctor knows their medical history and can help you weigh the pros and cons of the vaccine. Chickenpox is generally a mild illness, but it can be very uncomfortable. It can cause fever, nausea, headache, and itchy rash with blisters that break open and crust over. There can be a few blisters or hundreds. It can take up to two weeks for them to heal enough for the child to return to school or day care. Chickenpox also sometimes leads to serious complications, such as skin infections or pneumonia. Experts consider the vaccine to be a safe way to spare most children from suffering through this preventable illness.

HOW DOES WEIGHT LOSS AFFECT DIABETES AND MY HEART?

More than 80 percent of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight. Being overweight also is a risk factor for heart disease. When you have these conditions, taking off excess pounds is one of the most important things you can do to feel better and stay healthy. Losing weight and exercising more can help control your blood glucose level, which may reduce the amount of diabetes medication you need to take. In addition, weight loss can help lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol and triglyceride levels. It also can improve how your heart and blood vessels work and decrease inflammation throughout your body, which is thought to play a key role in the buildup of fatty deposits inside the arteries. Losing just 5 to 15 percent of your body weight may help reduce your risk of developing heart disease or having a stroke.

Information in the publication is the opinion of the authors. Personal decisions regarding health, finance, exercise, and other matters should be made after consultation with the reader's professional advisers. All models used for illustrative purposes only. All editorial rights reserved. (6272)