

JUNE 2017

HealthLine

www.local4funds.org

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS LOCAL 4
HEALTH & WELFARE PLAN



Dear Health & Welfare Participant,

THIS EDITION OF *HEALTHLINE* FEATURES THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- Steps Challenge Update
- Filing Subscriber Claims
- Newborns' and Mothers' Health Protection Act
- Member Resource: Funds Office Website
- Grandfathered Health Plan

2017 STEPS CHALLENGE: 34.8 MILLION STEPS LOGGED

The Health & Welfare Plan sponsored a six-week steps challenge and the remarkable results are in. Ninety-one members enrolled in the challenge and netted a whopping 34,803,826 steps during the WINTER! To put the amount of steps into perspective, it would take just under 6 million steps to walk

from Boston to Los Angeles, and so our members walked cross-country almost 6 times in total. Our members went above and beyond with this challenge. The two individuals that achieved the highest average number of steps at the end of the six weeks each won a Trek Mountain Bike. Sixty-six percent of those enrolled in the challenge met their goal to walk an average of 7,000 steps a day and earned a \$50 gift card.

Congratulations to all Local 4 walkers on a job well done. The Plan hopes to roll out additional wellness initiatives in the near future. Don't put those sneakers back in the closet—keep logging those steps!

FILING SUBSCRIBER CLAIMS

All Department of Transportation (DOT) physical exams, massage

therapy, acupuncture, acupressure, and homeopathic medicine claims must be submitted by the subscriber (the member) to BCBS. A reimbursement form is available on the Benefit Funds website, www.local4funds.org, under the General Information/Forms tab. Your BCBS identification number must be printed on the form, and an itemized statement and receipt of payment must accompany the form. Any forms submitted to the Benefit Funds Office will be mailed back to the member for proper submission to BCBS.

NEWBORNS' AND MOTHERS' HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

This act requires group health care plans to provide a minimum hospital

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health bits



Think you or your child might be suffering from celiac disease?

The autoimmune disorder, in which the body reacts poorly to the presence of gluten, has a multitude of symptoms and can only be diagnosed by a blood test administered by a medical professional. But if you want help deciding whether to seek a doctor's opinion, the Celiac Disease Foundation offers a simple online self-test. Go to <https://celiac.org>. Under "Celiac Disease," click on "Symptoms Checklist."

If circumstances are bringing you down, pick up a pen. Writing about your feelings or experiences—even a traumatic event—can help ward off depression and improve your mood over time. Try writing for 15 to 30 minutes about whatever it is that elicits strong feelings in you and do so without judging the results. You may be surprised at how much better it makes you feel.



What Your Feet Say

ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

BY AGE 50, THE AVERAGE AMERICAN HAS LOGGED AN INCREDIBLE 75,000 MILES ON FOOT. Paying attention to your feet helps you keep them ready to meet this challenge. Just as important, it gives you clues to the health of the rest of your body.

CLUES IN YOUR SHOES

Listen to what your feet are telling you. Below are a few examples of common foot symptoms along with some of their possible sources:

- **Tingly feet** may be due to nerve loss from diabetes or other conditions. Nerve damage may also cause numbness or a burning sensation.
- **Open sores** on the feet may result from injuries, ill-fitting shoes, or long periods of being bedridden. They may also be a sign of

nerve damage, poor circulation, or diabetes. See your doctor if foot wounds are slow to heal.

- **Swollen feet** are sometimes a symptom of heart failure, especially when accompanied by tiredness and shortness of breath during routine physical activity. Other causes include injuries, infections, and varicose veins.
- **Thickened toenails** may be caused by an injury or nail fungus. But they could also be a sign of psoriasis or an underactive thyroid gland.

HEALTHY FOOT STEPS

With proper diagnosis and treatment, most foot health conditions can be relieved. If you experience foot health problems, including any of the symptoms listed above, talk with your primary care doctor or a foot health specialist.

IN STEP WITH FOOT HEALTH

What's causing that pain in your foot? To use an interactive foot health guide, go to www.foothealthfacts.org and click on "Where do you hurt?"

(test your savvy on ... hearing loss)

1. Hearing loss is one of the most common chronic medical problems in the U.S.
True False
2. It may be harder to detect hearing loss in young children than it is in adults and older children.
True False
3. Hearing impairments are sometimes caused by easily treatable conditions, including excess earwax.
True False
4. Exposure to loud noise is a major culprit of hearing loss.
True False

ANSWERS

1. **True.** People with impaired hearing may have difficulty hearing well over the telephone, think other people are mumbling, find it hard to follow a conversation when two or more people are talking at once, and have trouble distinguishing between "s" and "th" sounds.
2. **True.** Symptoms of hearing loss in young children may include not turning to look at people who are speaking, not following simple directions, and not looking at objects when someone talks about them.
3. **True.** Other causes include birth defects, infections, heart conditions, head injuries, tumors, some medicines, chemicals, and aging.
4. **True.** People regularly exposed to loud noises should wear earplugs or other protective gear.

Too Young for a Hip Replacement?

MAYBE NOT

ONCE, HIP REPLACEMENT SURGERY WAS MAINLY FOR THE RETIREMENT SET. Today, a growing number of young and midlife adults are having the surgery, too.

In 2010, surgeons performed nearly 52,000 total hip replacements in Americans ages 45 to 54. That's three times as many as a decade before. In addition, about 15,000 were performed in people younger than age 45.

YOUNG HIPSTERS

Arthritis, injuries, and other conditions can cause serious hip damage at any age. If the damage is bad enough, it can be quite painful and interfere with daily activities. Nonsurgical treatments, such as medicine and physical therapy, are tried first. But if they don't provide enough relief, surgery may be an option.

In a hip replacement, surgeons remove damaged bone and cartilage. Then they're replaced with sturdy artificial parts. Today's artificial hips can handle more strain than older models. Still, having the surgery while young means living longer with the new hip. That's an added consideration if you're thinking about getting a hip replacement.

SOONER OR LATER

Compared to older people, young hip replacement patients are sometimes in better overall health. That improves the chances of a good outcome. People who get a hip replaced before the joint damage is too advanced also tend to recover more easily.

Yet there's a downside to being younger as well. After 15 to 20 years, the surface of the new hip joint can start to wear away. Pain and difficulty with doing daily activities may begin making a comeback. In some cases, another surgery might be needed. A second surgery on the same hip is generally more difficult than the first one.

Hip replacement surgery may lead to dramatically reduced pain. It may also help you get back to enjoying your normal activities. But it's not for everyone. If you're considering this option, weigh the pros and cons carefully with your surgeon.



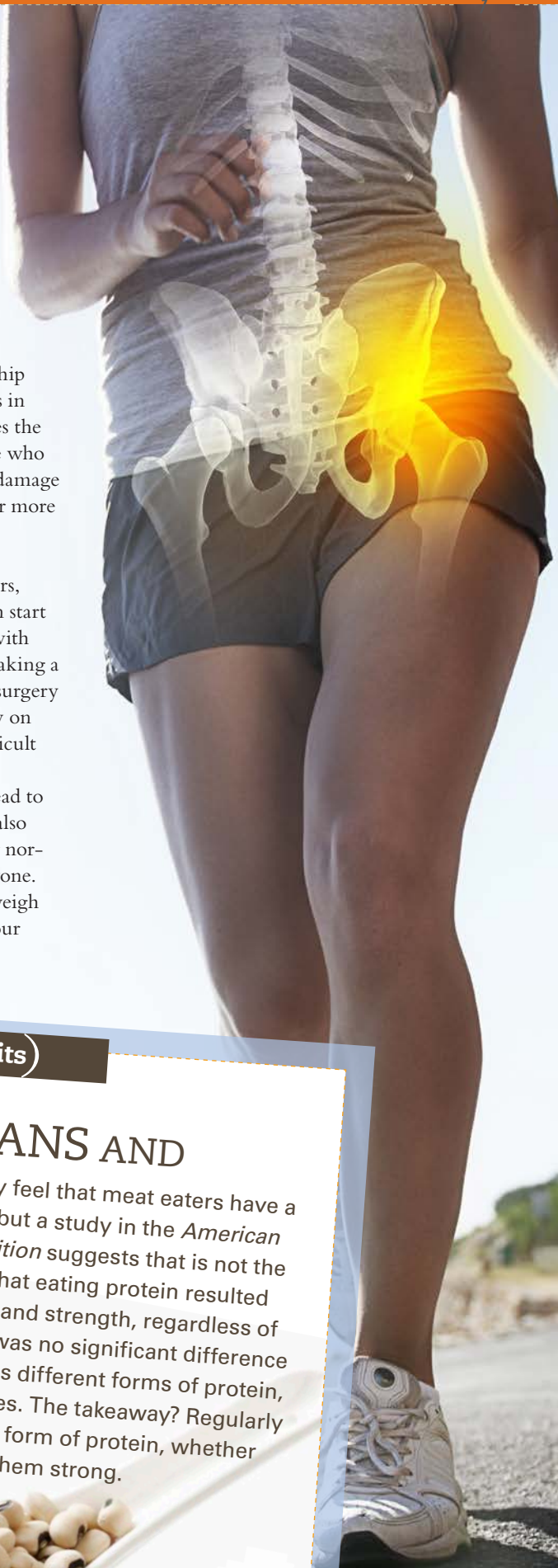
MORE ON HIP REPLACEMENT SURGERY

See how hip replacement surgery is done. Go to <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/videoMenu.cfm>. Scroll down to Animations and click on "Total Hip Replacement."

(health bits)

VEGETARIANS AND VEGANS

may feel that meat eaters have a muscle-building edge, but a study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* suggests that is not the case. The study found that eating protein resulted in greater muscle mass and strength, regardless of the food source. There was no significant difference in these measures across different forms of protein, from red meat to legumes. The takeaway? Regularly feed your muscles some form of protein, whether plant or animal, to keep them strong.





www.local4funds.org



IUOE Local 4 Health & Welfare Plan
PO Box 660
Medway, MA 02053-0660

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Is it better to eat before a workout or wait until afterward? If you are trying to lose weight, a study in the *International Journal of Sports Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism* suggests you shouldn't wait. Researchers found that exercisers who ate breakfast shortly before a treadmill workout burned fat at a higher rate than those who ate postworkout. Better yet, that fat-burning effect continued for 24 hours after exercising.

Exhibiting a sense of humor at work raises your status in the eyes of your coworkers, but only if your jokes are considered appropriate. That's the conclusion of a study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. A good sense of humor indicates both confidence and competence, but inappropriate jokes lower your competency in the eyes of others. So don't be afraid to make a humorous comment on the job—as long as it doesn't offend.

A sedentary lifestyle ages you at the cellular level, a study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* found. Nearly 1,500 women ages 64 and older wore devices that measured their daily activity. Those that were sedentary for approximately 10 hours a day and did not exercise had shorter telomeres, structures in the DNA of every cell that diminish as you age. The most sedentary women had telomeres indicating they were biologically eight years older.



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stay for the mother of a newborn child of 48 hours after a vaginal delivery and 96 hours after a cesarean section. Federal law does not, however, prohibit the mother's or newborn's attending physician, in consultation with the mother, from determining that a shorter length of stay is appropriate.

The Plan requires admission certification of your maternity stay only if the minimum length of stay (48 or 96 hours, as applicable) is exceeded. A stay exceeding the minimum length requires authorization and is subject to review for medical appropriateness.

Under the Plan, a pregnancy-related hospital stay is treated like an illness, as required by federal law.

MEMBER RESOURCE: FUNDS OFFICE WEBSITE

The Local 4 Benefit Funds website has a wealth of information about the various benefit plans offered to its members. To find information about the Health & Welfare Plan, visit the website at: www.local4funds.org. The website is a quick resource to link members to the various service providers that work with

the Plan. Most mailings are also posted online, so if you missed an important message from the Benefit Funds Office, be sure to check the website for up-to-date information.

GRANDFATHERED HEALTH PLAN

Please note that this Plan is a "grandfathered health plan" under the Affordable Care Act. For more information, please refer to page v of your Summary Plan Description, or page vii of the online version.

**Sincerely,
Your Board of Trustees**

Louis G. Rasetta, Chairman
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IUOE Local 4

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Administrator

Gina M. Alongi