Heart health: It’s a numbers game

Learning you have heart disease can be rough, especially when your doctor tells you what you need to do: perhaps start exercising or eating better. Another important part of your care is to see your doctor regularly. Many things — such as cholesterol and blood pressure — are key indicators of your heart health. That’s why making sure you monitor these is an important part of your care. Here’s where to start.

Blood pressure

When you take a photograph, the snapshot captures a specific moment in time. But it doesn’t show you what happened next. The same is true of blood pressure readings. It fluctuates throughout the day. A screening test performed by your doctor depicts your blood pressure level only at that instant. Monitoring your blood pressure at home can help you manage it even better. The American Heart Association recommends charting your daily blood pressure readings to bring to each doctor appointment.

Cholesterol

Together, cholesterol and triglycerides are known as lipids. Your lipid levels can be checked with a simple blood test. When you have heart disease, this test helps your doctor measure how well your risk factors are controlled.

Body mass index

Your BMI compares your height to your weight, letting you know whether you’re considered healthy, overweight or obese. A BMI of more than 30 is considered obese. The easiest way to figure it out is to use the online BMI calculator. Log in to your plan’s website as member. Click on BlueHealthConnection® and then Tools and Media. Then choose Calculators.

Get online nutritional counseling that can improve your eating habits — for life. To get started:
> Visit your plan’s website.
> Log in as a member.
> Click on the Health & Wellness tab.
> Click BlueHealthConnection®.
> Click My Digital Health Coaching and then click Nourish.
Managing blood pressure: Small steps lead to big benefits

Being diagnosed with high blood pressure can seem overwhelming. There is a lot to learn and do. Before you get started, take a few deep breaths. Then, take it one step at a time.

Managing high blood pressure takes daily effort. But small changes in your daily habits can make a world of difference. Check out these suggestions from health experts:

> **Try to add more potassium to your diet.** This nutrient may help keep your blood pressure in check. Foods such as bananas, lima beans, cantaloupe and dried apricots are packed with potassium.

> **Check your weight.** If you’re carrying too many pounds, make an effort to lose a few of them. To drop excess weight, try eating smaller portion sizes.

> **Make your meals savory without all the salt.** Add flavor to carrots with cinnamon or rosemary, for example. Liven up green beans with dill or curry powder. Choose fresh meats, poultry and fish, rather than canned or processed types.

> **Don’t skip any of your blood pressure medicine.** Check your medicines and order any refills before they run out. Each time you get a refill at the pharmacy, jot a note on your calendar to order and pick up the medicine about a week before you run out.

> **Aim to get at least 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week.** Try a brisk, 15-minute walk during lunch and another after dinner.

> **If drinking alcohol, do so only in moderation.** Women should set the limit at one drink a day, while men shouldn’t have more than two daily drinks.

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**EVERY YEAR**, ask your doctor about these wellness checks. You may need some of them more than once a year.

- Blood pressure
- Total cholesterol (HDL, LDL, triglycerides)
- Flu shot
- Don’t smoke. If you need help quitting, contact Quit the Nic at 1-800-811-1764. Hours of QTN are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Also, check with your doctor to see if your pneumonia shot is up to date.

**CONNECT TO A NURSE**

Want to talk to a BCN chronic condition management nurse? Now you can connect online by using our nurse callback form found at [bcbsm.com/bcnccmreferral](http://bcbsm.com/bcnccmreferral).
The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services have set a nationwide goal to help prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. These agencies, with other federal and private-sector organizations, are using educational campaigns, health care technology and additional tools to take strides against stroke and heart disease.

**Getting to the heart of the problem**

Every year, more than 2 million Americans have a heart attack or stroke, and every day, more than 2,200 die from cardiovascular disease. Heart disease and stroke are the first and fourth leading causes of death, respectively, in the U.S. The good news is that there are plenty of steps you can take to help prevent these conditions — and avoid becoming a statistic.

**The ABCs of lowering your heart disease and stroke risk**

- **A**ppropriate aspirin therapy: Aspirin can help people who have suffered a heart attack or stroke, and it may help even prevent these conditions. Experts advise people to discuss the benefits and risks of aspirin with their doctor.

- **B**lood pressure control: High blood pressure raises the risk for heart attack and stroke, as well as kidney failure, heart failure and other diseases. Since this condition usually causes no symptoms, people can have it for years without knowing it. Have your blood pressure checked regularly. Take steps to control it if it’s high.

- **C**holesterol management: High cholesterol also can lead to heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular problems. It, too, typically has no symptoms. Fortunately, managing cholesterol levels can slow, decrease or even stop plaque buildup in arteries, which lowers cardiovascular risks.

- **S**moking cessation: The long list of health hazards linked to smoking includes heart disease, stroke, aneurysms and cancers. People of all ages can reap health benefits by quitting smoking.

**Know your ABCs**

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INGREDIENTS
1 can (15½ ounces) low-sodium chickpeas drained and rinsed
2 cups cherry tomatoes, rinsed and halved
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons fresh oregano, minced (or 1 teaspoon dried)
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
½ teaspoon salt-free seasoning blend
4 whole inner leaves of romaine lettuce, rinsed and dried

DIRECTIONS
In a large bowl, combine chickpeas (or garbanzo beans) and tomatoes.
In a small bowl, combine olive oil, vinegar, oregano, pepper and salt-free seasoning blend. Whisk until the ingredients blend into a thick sauce and the oil and vinegar no longer separate. Pour over the beans and tomatoes. Mix gently to coat.
Line four salad bowls with a romaine lettuce leaf. Top each leaf with one-fourth of the bean mixture.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION PER 1¼ CUPS SERVING: 265 calories; 10 g fat; 35 g carbs; 12 g protein; 0 mg cholesterol; 116 mg sodium.

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Health and wellness or prevention information
If you have questions about this program, have received this information in error, would prefer not to receive further information or want to inquire about resources for members with special needs, please call:

1-800-392-4247 | TTY callers dial 711
8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday
For Customer Service, please call the number listed on the back of your ID card.
Setting and reaching goals is an important part of your heart disease care. Your doctor is your partner in doing this. Take this form with you to your next appointment and talk to your doctor about your test results and personal goals. Check in with your doctor on your progress and ask him or her how often you should update this plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My personal goal</th>
<th>My results today</th>
<th>What I can do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood pressure:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Follow an eating plan from my doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By date:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Use only 1 teaspoon of salt per day (2,300 mg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Take my blood pressure medicine as directed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDL cholesterol:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Follow a low-fat, low-cholesterol meal plan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Have a fasting cholesterol test at least every year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Take my cholesterol-lowering and heart medicines as directed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of exercise:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Ask my doctor about an exercise program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By date:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Walk or ________________ (another exercise) for ____ minutes, ____ days a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Make healthy food choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMI:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Drink water every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By date:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Join a smoking cessation program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term target: Less than 30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term target: Between 19 and 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco use:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By date:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: No tobacco use</td>
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(continued on next page)
My heart action plan (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My personal goal</th>
<th>My results today</th>
<th>What I can do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol use:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Limit my alcohol use (A drink is one 12-ounce beer, 4 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof spirits.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By date:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: No more then two drinks per day for men and no more then one drink per day for women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood sugar (A1C):</th>
<th></th>
<th>□ Keep my daily blood sugar in a good range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By date:</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Follow my meal plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target: Fasting blood sugar less than 110 and HbA1c less than 7 percent</td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Schedule a diabetes checkup with my doctor (HbA1c, eye and foot exams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ Take my diabetes medicines as directed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This diabetes plan was created for:

_________________________  _______________________
Name                                    Date

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