

# NEWS

## Health Net



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## STAY ACTIVE AS YOU AGE


See the reference list of women's health screenings on page 6.

This spring and early summer is a great time to find an activity you like and get moving. Look inside for more news you can use about exercise for all ages, protecting your skin

against the sun, health screenings, and more. And remember to visit [www.healthnet.com](http://www.healthnet.com) for more health information and online programs.

### Get a report on your health in minutes!

Take your employer-sponsored health assessment or our Health Risk Questionnaire.

 Log on to [www.healthnet.com](http://www.healthnet.com) and click *Decision Power Health & Wellness* > *Complete a Health Risk Questionnaire*. After finishing it, you'll receive a confidential, personalized report on your risk factors and conditions. You will also get recommendations on how to improve your overall health. Try it today!

# MAKE EXERCISE A FAMILY AFFAIR



**R**egular exercise promotes weight control, disease prevention and heart health, among other things. People of all ages and body types can benefit.

But many of us don't get all the exercise we should. If you need some help staying active, consider making exercise a family affair.

Here are a few ideas:

- **Start small.** Begin with activities everyone is willing to try. For example, get the whole family together for a walk after dinner. Or plan to walk to school with your kids a couple of times each week.
- **Take control.** Set limits on screen time. Fewer hours spent with the TV, computer or video games frees up time for more active pursuits. Two hours – or less – a day is a good goal.
- **Learn something new.** Let your kids be the experts. Ask them to show you how to play their favorite game or sport. You can also teach them a game you enjoyed as a kid.
- **Share chores.** Get the kids to help with yard work, washing the car, working in the garden or cleaning the house. These jobs have to get done anyway, and they can be good exercise for everyone.
- **Have fun.** Plan a weekend hike or bike ride with the kids. Organize a family softball or basketball game. Take everyone to the park. Set aside time to visit the zoo or a local pool.

Exercising as a family not only helps you stay fit, it also teaches your kids an important way to stay healthy.

Sources: National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Start  
your program  
online!

Get some extra help  
from Health Net. Log on to



[www.healthnet.com](http://www.healthnet.com) and

click *Decision Power*

*Health & Wellness > Start an*

*Exercise Program.*

Keep  
your  
asthma  
in check

Do you have asthma? If so, your coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath may keep you from enjoying everyday life. They may even become serious enough to be dangerous.

# BREATHE EASY AND FREE

## *A guide to managing springtime allergies*

Spring brings blooming trees, lush grasses and wily weeds – and about 35 million Americans start to itch, sneeze and wheeze.

It's called hay fever or seasonal allergic rhinitis. Trees and plants send their dustlike pollen to our noses, and a chain reaction of congestion, scratchy throat and watery eyes begins.

To prepare for this season, give the inside of your home a deep cleaning. During winter months, windows, shelves and vents collect dust and mold that can cause allergy attacks.

Other allergy-fighting strategies:

- Stay indoors with the windows closed in the morning. Pollen counts tend to be highest from 5:00 a.m.–10:00 a.m.
- Wear a pollen-filtering face mask when outdoors.
- Use the clothes dryer instead of

the clothesline. Allergens can collect on laundry as it hangs outside.

- Wash bedding in hot water every week.
- When possible, keep the windows closed and the air conditioning on at home or in the car.

Medicines can help manage symptoms of seasonal allergies.

Some over-the-counter choices include:

- Antihistamines to relieve itching in the nose and eyes, sneezing, and nasal drainage. Check the label to be sure the product you choose doesn't cause drowsiness.
- Eye drops to relieve itchiness and other symptoms.
- Decongestants to ease congestion and swelling.

Talk to your doctor if nonprescription medicines don't control your



Create your Personal Health Record

Go online to [www.healthnet.com](http://www.healthnet.com), log on as a member and choose *Decision Power Health & Wellness > Populate My Health Record* to create a complete medical snapshot that you can print out and take with you the next time you visit your doctor.

symptoms. Prescription versions may work better, or your doctor may suggest combining different medicines to help you breathe easier.

Allergy shots may also be an option. The shots can help gradually decrease sensitivity to things that cause allergy symptoms. Shots are the best way to reduce allergy symptoms over a long period of time, according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

But there are ways to control your asthma. You can stay on top of your symptoms with an asthma action plan. It should have these steps:

- Know your asthma triggers. For example, tobacco smoke, pollens and dust mites can bring on symptoms in some people. Try to avoid your triggers.
- Keep up with your long-term medicines. They control the chronic airway problems that asthma can cause. You should take them even if you aren't having symptoms.
- Carry a quick-relief inhaler at all times. Use it as soon as you notice asthma symptoms.

- Use a peak flow meter. This tracks how well air moves out of your lungs. The score helps your doctor decide how you should use your medicines.
- See your doctor for checkups. He or she may adjust your medicines for better control. You may be able to take less medicine.

# TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR MOUTH AND TEETH

**W**ant to hang on to a healthy smile? Good habits are hard to beat.

Regular brushing and flossing helps remove plaque. This sticky stuff builds up on teeth and causes cavities. It can even lead to gum disease and loose teeth.

To help make sure those pearly whites last:

- Brush at least twice a day. Use a soft brush and fluoride paste. Buy a new brush every three months.
- Floss between teeth every day to remove plaque your brush can't reach.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods and limit snacks; go easy on sweets and sugary drinks.

It's just as important to see your dentist regularly for checkups and cleanings. In between visits, report any tooth or mouth problems right away. If you smoke or chew tobacco, ask for help with quitting.

Sources: American Dental Association; National Health Information Center



## May is National Smile Month!

We encourage you to remember the importance of:

- Brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Visiting a dental care provider as often as they recommend.
- Choosing healthy foods for a tooth-friendly and nutritious diet.

When you're on vacation, don't forget your toothbrush!

### No smoking = a healthier mouth

Health Net has an online smoking cessation program to help you kick the habit! It takes only about 30 minutes of your time per day.



Log on to [www.healthnet.com](http://www.healthnet.com)

> *Decision Power*

*Health & Wellness*

> *Quit Smoking.*



# The truth about common cancer myths

## GUARD YOUR SKIN

**W**henever we're outside, our skin faces a threat from above.

The sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can damage skin and increase the risk for skin cancer. Harmful UV radiation can get through even on cloudy days, so sun safety isn't just important on blue-sky afternoons at the beach.

### Protect your skin

While you can't shun the sun entirely, you can take steps to minimize UV exposure and protect your skin. Try this advice from the American Cancer Society, the American Academy of Dermatology and other experts:

**Limit sun exposure.** UV rays are strongest during the middle of the day, from about 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., so have fun out of the sun during these times. If you're going to be outside, stay in the shade whenever you can.

**Use a sunscreen.** Look for one with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 that also provides broad-spectrum protection from both UVA and UVB rays. Apply sunscreen about 20 minutes before heading out, and reapply every two hours and after swimming or sweating.

### Wear appropriate clothing.

Because they cover much of your skin, consider long-sleeved shirts and long pants or long skirts. Also, tightly woven fabrics block the sun's rays better than materials you can see light through.

**Add sunglasses and a hat.** Choose sunglasses that block at least 99 percent of UVA and UVB rays to help protect eyes and surrounding skin. A wide-brimmed hat can help protect your neck, ears and face.

**Forget the tan.** Tanning, whether done outdoors under the sun or indoors at a tanning bed, can cause future skin problems.

Finally, it's also a good idea to check your skin regularly for signs of skin cancer, such as a change in the size, color or shape of a mole or other growth or an area that bleeds. Report any problems to your doctor right away.



Learn more! Go online to [www.healthnet.com](http://www.healthnet.com), log on as a member, choose *Decision Power Health & Wellness* > *Research Conditions* and type "skin cancer" in the search box for more in-depth information.

Additional source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Scientists still have a lot to learn about cancer. But they know enough to debunk a few common myths about the disease.

A few examples:


**1. Saccharin and aspartame cause cancer.** False. Research shows no link between these government-regulated sweeteners and cancer.

**2. Drinking fluoridated water causes cancer.** Not so. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reviewed extensive research and found no credible evidence to support this.

**3. Underarm antiperspirants are linked to breast cancer.** Wrong. Neither the National Cancer Institute nor the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has found any connection.

**4. Cell phone use triggers cancer.** Not true. Cell phones do emit radiation, but not the kind that causes cancer. Studies so far say cell phone use is unrelated to cancer.

Knowing these facts about cancer can help you make smart lifestyle and health care choices.

For more information, visit the  National Cancer Institute website at [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).

# WOMEN: GET SCREENED, PROTECT YOUR HEALTH



**Y**ou want to be healthy for a long time. Screening for diseases can help.

Screening tests can help find some diseases early. That can make them easier to treat. Screening can even help prevent some conditions.

## A screening schedule

Here are some recommended tests:

**Pap test.** It can help find and prevent cervical cancer.

**How often should you get it?** Once every 1 to 3 years. Begin when you start having sex or after age 21.

**HPV test.** This test can find the virus that can cause cervical cancer.

**How often should you get it?** Talk with your doctor about this test.

**Mammogram.** This X-ray can find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat.

**How often should you get it?** Once every 1 to 2 years. Begin at age 40.

**Colonoscopy.** It can help find and prevent colorectal cancer.

**How often should you get it?**

Once every 10 years. Begin at age 50. There are also other options for colorectal cancer screening. You can get a flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years. Or you can get a barium enema every 5 to 10 years.

**Thyroid test.** It can help find disease or cancer in the thyroid.

**How often should you get it?** Once every 5 years. Begin at age 35.

**Blood sugar test.** It can help detect diabetes.

**How often should you get it?** Once every 3 years. Begin at age 45.

**Bone density test.** It can help reduce your risk for a broken bone.

**How often should you get it?** At least once after age 65. Between the ages of 40 and 64, discuss testing with your doctor or nurse.

**Blood pressure test.** It can help find high blood pressure, a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

**How often should you get it?** At least once every 2 years.

**Skin check.** It can help find skin changes before they become cancer.

**How often should you get it?** Do a monthly self-exam. Your provider should check your skin once a year.

This list is for women at average risk for disease. Your provider might suggest a different plan for testing. It depends on your personal and family health history.

## Remember to check your Health Net benefits

Use this list to help remind you to schedule well-care visits with your doctor. This article is not medical advice and does not imply specific benefit coverage. Always seek and follow the care and advice of your personal doctor. Please check your plan benefit language for coverage, limitations and exclusions.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



# DISCHARGE PLANNING – HERE'S TO A HEALTHY RECOVERY

**Y**ou may be eager to leave the hospital as soon as your doctor says you're good to go. But before you pass through the hospital's doors, there's one more thing to do. It can help ensure you don't have to return anytime soon.

Review the discharge plan that has been made for you. And get answers to questions you may have.

## Why a discharge plan?

It may seem odd to plan for when you get out of the hospital. But research shows that a good discharge plan plays a key role in your getting and staying well. Good planning can help you:

- Recover better.
- Understand your health condition.
- Lower the risk of making mistakes with your medicine.

## Answers to your questions

Ask the discharge planner or your nurse any questions you have, such as these:

- What medicines will I need to take? When will I need to take them? Make sure this includes all of the medicines you take.
- Is it OK to bathe? Cook? Drive? What will I need help with?
- Will I need to eat a special diet?

- Do I need to see my doctor or have any tests? Be sure any appointments are written down.
- What symptoms do I need to watch for? Who do I call if they occur?

Try to have your caregiver with you when you ask your questions. This may be a friend or family member.

Let the discharge planner know if you have questions about insurance. Also speak up if you think you need help at home. The discharge planner can ask a social worker to meet with you to talk about your needs and local resources. And one more thing: Write down a phone number you can call at any time with any questions.

## Case Management for serious illness

If you're facing a serious illness, you may need extra help. Health Net has a team of nurses and health care professionals who can work with you. To request an evaluation to find out whether Case Management can help you, call the Customer Contact Center number on the back of your Health Net ID card.

Sources: Family Caregiver Alliance; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

**We're  
here  
for you**

If you have questions,  
please call the  
Customer Contact  
Center at the phone  
number listed on your  
ID card.

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## Asparagus salad with lemon-soy sauce

### Ingredients

- 1¼ pounds thin asparagus stalks, cut diagonally into 1½-inch lengths
- 8 whole scallions, trimmed to include a little green
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- ¼ teaspoon fresh ginger, minced
- 5 scallions, trimmed to include a little green, minced and divided into 2 batches
- ½ cup fat-free, reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon reduced-sodium soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice, or to taste

### Directions

- Steam asparagus and whole scallions in a steam basket over boiling water (or in microwave with a small amount of water) until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Rinse under running cold water to stop cooking and set color. Drain and cool.
- To make dressing, heat oil in small saucepan over medium-high heat. Add ginger, and stir until it begins to color. Add half the minced scallions and cook for a few seconds. Add broth, vinegar, soy sauce and sugar. Set aside.
- Just before serving, place remaining minced scallions in large bowl. Add steamed



asparagus and scallions. Bring dressing to a boil over medium-high heat for 30 seconds. Gradually stir in pepper and lemon juice, tasting to achieve an appealing tart and peppery flavor. Toss vegetables with dressing.

### Nutrition information

Makes 4 servings. Amount per serving: 97 calories, 4g total fat (less than 1g saturated fat), 12g carbohydrates, 5g protein, 5g dietary fiber, 134mg sodium

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

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