

good health report

SPRING '10

YOUR FAST TRACK TO LIVING WELL

Start the Day The Right Way

Try a tasty and nutritious
breakfast burrito

The Final Countdown

Lifestyle changes
that lower your
“bad” cholesterol

AvMed Health Plans is pleased to present the inaugural issue of *Good Health Report*, a quarterly publication dedicated to your health.

AvMed is committed to helping you become an informed healthcare consumer. We hope you'll learn something new with each issue!

If you have questions related to your health or an article in *Good Health Report* prompts a concern, our nurses are available through AvMed's Nurse On Call. Through our tradition of personalized service, we work with you to help you recognize health risks and manage them.

We're here whenever you need us. Simply call the number listed on your AvMed ID card or you can e-mail us at members@avmed.org.

AvMED
HEALTH PLANS

Health plans with **your health** in mind.

Welcome to AvMed's *Good Health Report*



AvMed ... Health plans with **your health** in mind is more than an advertising slogan for us. This publication is another way we communicate with you about the importance of your health.

In this issue, you'll find information on protecting your vision from disease and injury, starting a fitness program and using water workouts to your advantage. We also have a feature on the risks of being overweight. AvMed is your health plan, and we see it as part of our job to help our members find new ways to stay healthy and productive.

A great way to start your fitness plan is to find out exactly how healthy you are and what you need to do to improve your health. Please find the time to log in to access AvMed's Health Report Card. It's an interactive and confidential personalized health assessment, which will help you to identify health risks and set goals based on your health needs.

Once logged in at our Web Site (www.avmed.org), click "My Account," then "My Health Tools." Scroll down to find the "Health Report Card" link.

To your good health,
Sincerely,

Edwin W. Hannum
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Phone: **352-372-8400**.

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Vision Insight

According to a study reported by the National Eye Institute, 3.3 million Americans age 40 and older are affected by low vision and blindness. And this number is projected to climb to 5.5 million by 2020.

Protect your vision from disease and injury by following these guidelines recommended by Prevent Blindness America:

- Have regular eye exams every one to two years.
- Wear proper eye gear around machinery and lawn mowers and during sporting activities.
- Wear sunglasses with 99 percent to 100 percent UVA and UVB protection.
- Avoid smoking, eat healthy foods, control your blood pressure and stay physically active.
- Be prepared for emergencies. Stock your first-aid kit with an eye shield and eyewash.

Eye care should start in childhood and continue over your lifetime. For eye-screening procedures or to locate the screening center nearest you, call Prevent Blindness America at 800-331-2020 or visit www.preventblindness.org.



New Beginnings

Starting a fitness regimen? Good for you. Follow these tips to help make exercise a habit that sticks.

- 1 Start slow.** If you take on too much, too fast, you'll burn out. Integrate exercise in a way that makes sense for your schedule and lifestyle. And keep it fun by trying new activities or inviting your friends to join.
- 2 Pace yourself.** Jumping into vigorous exercise without warming up can be dangerous. Allow several minutes at the beginning of each session to warm up. Walk before you run. Do leg bends and arm circles. Get your blood pumping a little, which reduces stress on the heart and your chances of pulling a muscle.
- 3 Cool it.** Don't forget to leave time to cool down afterward. Finishing your routine with 10 minutes of stretching is a good way to help stave off injury and improve flexibility.

Watch Out for Weight Gain

Putting on the pounds is hazardous to your health.

Carrying a few extra pounds isn't a big deal for most people. But if you cross the threshold into overweight and obesity, you're entering dangerous territory.

People who are overweight or obese are at greater risk for type 2 diabetes. In fact, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) estimates that more than 85 percent of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight. Researchers believe that being overweight may promote changes in the body's cells, making them resistant to insulin.

Weighing too much also means you're more likely to develop high blood pressure and high cholesterol, which puts you at greater risk for coronary heart disease and stroke.

In addition, being overweight may cause certain kinds of cancer, such as colon, esophageal and kidney cancer, as well as uterine and postmenopausal breast cancer in women.

Osteoarthritis is another condition that can be caused or aggravated by being overweight, because extra weight may

put too much pressure on the body's joints and cartilage, causing additional wear and damage.

REDUCE YOUR RISK

Now for the good news: Losing weight can dramatically lower your risk for many health problems. The most effective and safe way to lose weight is to burn more calories than you consume, says the National Institutes of Health.

- **Consume Less:** One pound of fat contains about 3,500 calories. To lose one pound a week, eat 3,500 fewer calories a week—or 500 fewer calories a day. Taking in fewer calories can be as simple as sticking to sensible portions. Center your meals on fruits, veggies and lean protein. Then, keep the serving sizes reasonable. A reasonable portion of meat is the size of a deck of cards.

- **Get Moving:** Burning more calories than you're consuming is key. For example, by riding a stationary bike at a fast pace for 30 minutes, a 155-pound person could burn off almost 400 calories—nearly the total number of calories you need to ditch daily to lose a pound a week.



➤ Before you begin any weight loss or fitness program, it's a good idea to talk with your doctor. He or she can help you set realistic and healthy goals. A thorough checkup is also a great way to establish your starting point, from which you can gauge your success!



Get Into the Swim

From the breast stroke to jumping jacks, working out in water is excellent exercise.

Water sports can offer serious exercise with significant benefits. In fact, vigorous swimming burns around 500 calories an hour. Plus, compared to more typical exercise like jogging or brisk walking, moving in water is low-impact and, therefore, easier on your joints. But it also works your muscles harder because water provides natural resistance.

What's more, you use your entire body when you swim or do water aerobics.

Not a great swimmer? That's OK. There are plenty of ways to get exercise in the water. Consider water polo, water aerobics and water gymnastics. Check out your local pool or gym for more ideas.

THREE TO TRY

If you can't find a class that fits your schedule, just head to the local pool

during free swim time and try these simple exercises on your own, in water that's up to your neck.

1 Walking, running or marching. It's tougher than it sounds. Use the same good form and posture you would on dry land and you'll get a vigorous, low-impact workout.

2 Jumping jacks. Again, it's basically the same exercise you'd do out of the water. Let your arms come out of the water and over your head when you jump up, spreading your legs and pointing your toes, and remember to keep your feet flat when you land.

3 Pull-ups. Hold on to the side of the pool and lower your body as far as you can. Keep your knees bent and pull yourself up as high as possible.



Tackle your cholesterol counts once and for all by making positive changes to your lifestyle.

The Final Countdown

Everybody needs cholesterol. Our bodies require the wax-like substance to produce cell membranes and certain hormones.

It's when you've got too much LDL cholesterol—the so-called “bad” cholesterol—that you're in trouble. LDL cholesterol can build up in arteries and increase your risk for heart attack and stroke.

Understanding what contributes to poor cholesterol numbers is the best way to improve them.

CAUSE: SMOKING

Cigarette smoking lowers your good cholesterol, increases blood pressure and decreases your ability to exercise effectively. It's one of the most dangerous behaviors that you can control and, in the words of the surgeon general, “is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the U.S.”

➤ **FIX:** Quit. Sure, it's easier said than done, but the resulting benefit

to your body makes quitting a top priority if you're a smoker. Talk with your doctor about quitting.

CAUSE: A BAD DIET

While your body produces some cholesterol, about 25 percent of your body's total cholesterol comes from the food you're eating.

➤ **FIX:** In general, a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and lean meat is your ideal option. If you're eating out, avoid menu items that are fried, stuffed, sautéed or served au gratin. Instead, select dishes that are steamed, roasted, boiled, baked or grilled.

CAUSE: INACTIVITY

If you lead a largely sedentary life, then you're at increased risk for build up in your arteries and weight gain.

➤ **FIX:** Get active for 30 minutes most days of the week. If a gym membership isn't for you, then stick with everyday exercise such as walking, gardening and dancing.

➤➤ The American Heart Association recommends getting your cholesterol checked at least once every five years—and more often for men over 55 and women over 45. If you're due, call your doctor today to schedule a blood lipid profile.



Start the Day Right

Help yourself to a smart morning meal and all the benefits it brings.

You've heard it before, and it remains true: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It can reduce your hunger later in the day and helps maintain your insulin response—which, in turn, combats weight gain. It can also boost your energy level.

But busy lives make for busy mornings. The solution? Change your idea of breakfast.

In the old days, families started the day with mounds of syrup-laden pancakes nestled next to piles of bacon and an egg over easy. The smarter option is to balance your carbohydrates and protein.

Carbs will help you feel satiated while protein kick-starts your mind and body. Toast with egg whites, an apple with a schmear of peanut butter or an English muffin with a slice of low-fat cheese are great options.

Up your level of fiber for the day by ensuring your toast is whole wheat. Or,

enjoy a bowl of oatmeal. For people who have less time, a bowl of whole-grain, fortified cereal with skim milk topped with canned fruits makes for a solid choice.

Try out the tasty, nutritious and quick dish below for a more creative option.



SOUTHWESTERN EGG WHITE BREAKFAST BURRITOS

Total preparation and cooking time: 20 minutes

Makes 4 servings

6 egg whites
 2 Tbsp. skim milk
 Nonstick cooking spray
 ½ c. diced red bell pepper
 ¼ c. chopped scallion
 ½ tsp. Southwestern seasoning blend
 ¼ tsp. salt
 ¼ tsp. pepper
 ¼ c. low-fat shredded cheddar cheese
 4 8-inch whole-wheat tortillas
 1 c. salsa

In a bowl, combine egg whites and milk. Spray a nonstick sauté pan with cooking spray. Add pepper and scallion and sauté for five to six minutes until softened. Add egg mixture, Southwestern seasoning blend, salt and pepper. Cook until egg mixture is firm and fluffy. Add cheese and stir occasionally for one to two minutes until cheese is melted. Heat tortillas in microwave for 10 to 15 seconds until lightly warmed. Divide egg mixture evenly into tortillas, fold edges in and roll up tortillas. Serve with salsa.

Nutrition information per serving: calories, 140; fat, 1.5 g (saturated fat 0 g); cholesterol, 0 mg; sodium, 700 mg; carbohydrates, 27 g; fiber, 2 g; sugars, 4 g; protein, 11 g

We're Here to Help

How you can learn more from AvMed.

We are committed to providing you superior service, all day and every day, after hours, on weekends and on holidays—whenever you need us, we're always just a phone call away.

Call Us: Simply call the number listed on your AvMed ID card or e-mail **members@avmed.org**, whatever's most convenient for you. TTY users should call **877-442-8633**. Assistance is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Calls are answered in the order they arrive by staff members who identify themselves by name, title and AvMed Health Plans. Staff members will use the same identification style when returning a call to you regarding any issue.

Healthy Living: Have you been diagnosed with a high-risk pregnancy or had a catastrophic event or accident? Do you face chronic illness or the challenge of making healthy lifestyle choices? Talk to your

doctor about your health condition and AvMed's Healthy Living programs.

Go Online: Would you like to learn more about your health? Explore AvMed's Web Site at **www.avmed.org** for reliable, comprehensive and up-to-date resources. Aside from the enrollment material you received when you started your membership, there is a lot to learn about how to use your health plan effectively.

The online information can help you answer questions when they arise. It's a good idea to know how to navigate the site when you have time so you can find answers when you need them quickly. Take the time now to create your username and password. Just go to **www.avmed.org** and follow instructions on the home page. It's that simple.



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