



VIP: Healthy VIEWS

SPRING 2018

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Get an asthma action plan

If you have asthma, find out from your doctor what you should do if your symptoms get more severe. They will work with you to develop an asthma action plan. This written plan will tell you what to do to help control your asthma.


Asthma and allergies: Your spring survival guide

Spring is in the air. And if you have asthma and allergies, pollen and pollution can cause your symptoms to flare up. But the change in seasons doesn't mean that you have to stay inside all the time. Take these steps toward relief.

- 1. Make a plan.** Do you start coughing and wheezing at the first signs of spring? Talk with your doctor to figure out what's causing your symptoms. They can work with you to create a plan that controls your exposure to allergens or may prescribe medicine to help control your symptoms.
- 2. Check the air quality.** Some types of air pollution can get worse during hot afternoons and evenings. If the air is polluted, you may find it harder to breathe when you are active outside. If you are sensitive to air pollution, you may want to check the air quality before you go outside.

You can find reports about the air quality in your area in local newspapers or on TV or radio stations.

- 3. Protect against pollen.** For many allergy sufferers, pollen and mold are the main problem. To keep these tiny particles from bothering your breathing, remember to:
 - Close your windows at night to keep pollen and mold from coming in.
 - Don't hang clothes or sheets outside to dry.
 - Shower and change your clothes after spending time outside.
 - Take your asthma or allergy medicine as directed.
- 4. Get help if you need it.** The spring and summer months can be difficult for many people with asthma, but there's no need to suffer. If you are still having trouble with your asthma despite trying to avoid triggers and taking medication, talk with your doctor.



Adults older than age 65 are twice as likely as other people to visit the ER because of a bad medication reaction.

Avoid trips to the emergency room

Each year, millions of people ages 65 and older head to the hospital emergency room (ER). But some trips don't have to happen. Here are three common reasons older adults visit the ER and how to prevent them.

Chest pain (Angina)

This distressing heart-related symptom merits a 911 call. But you can avoid it in the first place. If you or a loved one has coronary artery disease, talk with your doctor. Ask about aspirin therapy and other cholesterol-lowering medicine.

Also, keep your heart healthy:

- Stop smoking
- Watch your weight
- Try dieting, exercise, and medicine for high blood pressure, if necessary
- Manage diabetes if you have it

Falls

Older adults can end up in the ER because they've fallen and broken their hip or injured their head.

To reduce your risk of falling, talk with your doctor about your medicines. Can any of them make you

sleepy or dizzy? If so, ask for a new medicine that doesn't have that side effect.

Also, improve your balance. Doing an exercise like tai chi can help. Make your home safe too by:

- Installing railings on both sides of the stairs
- Adding grab bars to the shower
- Making sure your home is well lit
- Getting rid of anything you could trip on like loose rugs

Harmful medicines

Adults older than age 65 are twice as likely as other people to visit the ER because of a bad medication reaction. Take any medicine exactly as prescribed. Talk with your doctor before you change a dose or use an over-the-counter medicine.

Nurse advice line

Before you go to the ER, call our 24-hour nurse line for advice at 1-888-765-6375.

Need a cholesterol test?

Here is what to expect

Your body needs some cholesterol to function.

Too much cholesterol in your blood is harmful. It can build up and make it hard for blood to pump through your body. This can set the stage for heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes.

High cholesterol causes no symptoms. The only way to know whether you have a problem is to get a blood test.

The American Heart Association recommends that all adults ages 20 and older get this test every four to six years. Here is what to expect when you have your cholesterol checked.

Before the test

Ask your doctor whether you need to fast. If you do, do not eat or drink anything but water for nine to 12 hours before the test.

During the test

For the test, a small sample of blood is drawn from a vein in your arm or from a finger stick. This may cause minor discomfort, but it's over quickly. The blood sample is analyzed to measure your cholesterol levels.

After the test

Cholesterol levels are measured in

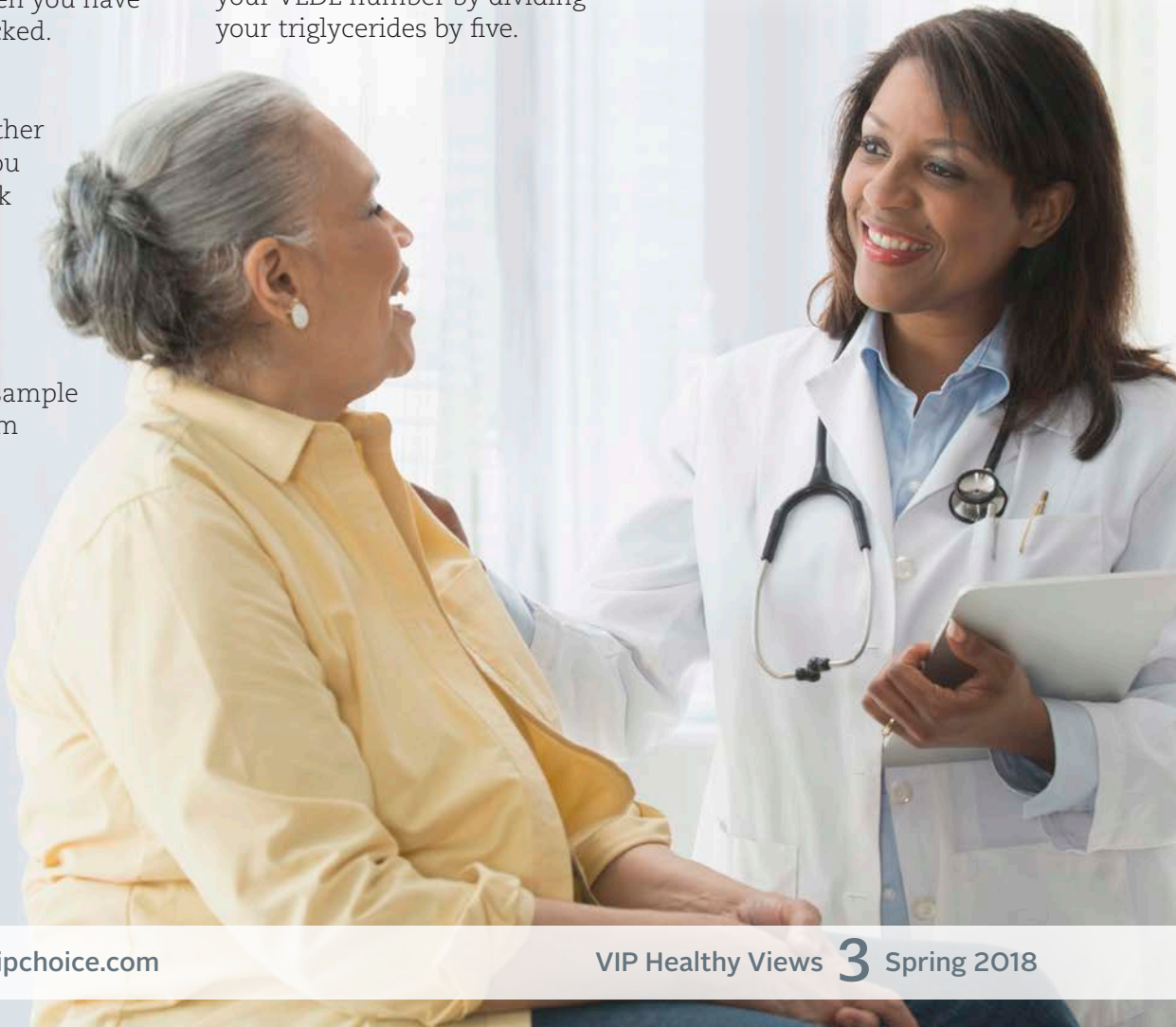
milligrams per deciliter of blood (mg/dl). If the lab did a test called a lipid profile, you'll see four numbers in the lab report:

- **LDL.** This is the "bad" cholesterol, which clogs your arteries.
- **HDL.** This is the "good" cholesterol. It helps clear LDL out of your arteries.
- **Triglycerides.** These are fats in your blood that can also affect your risk of having a heart attack or stroke.
- **Total cholesterol.** This number is your LDL, HDL, and VLDL cholesterol. The lab will get your VLDL number by dividing your triglycerides by five.

Understanding your test

Doctors used to focus on the numbers to decide whether your cholesterol numbers were healthy. Now they put those numbers in context. Ask your doctor to help you understand your results. They should also review your other risk factors for heart disease. These include your age, sex, family history, and personal history of smoking, diabetes, or high blood pressure.

Looking at your test results and risk factors gives your doctor a better understanding of your heart. If needed, your doctor can discuss a treatment just for you.



Don't let kidney disease sneak up on you

Every day, your kidneys have a major job. They filter roughly 120 to 150 quarts of blood to make 1 to 2 quarts of urine.

Your kidneys also balance sodium, calcium, potassium, and phosphate in your blood and prevent waste and fluid from building up in your body. Your kidneys also make hormones that control your blood pressure, produce red blood cells, and keep your bones strong.

Unknown damage

If your kidneys are not working right, you might not know it. About 30 million Americans have chronic kidney disease (CKD), damage that happens gradually. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says about 96 percent of people with CKD aren't aware of it.

That's because your kidneys can stay on task while CKD takes hold. As the situation gets worse, however, you may notice swelling in your legs, feet, ankles, hands, or face. You might also experience the following symptoms:

- Fatigue and sleep problems
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Headaches
- Itching
- Weight loss

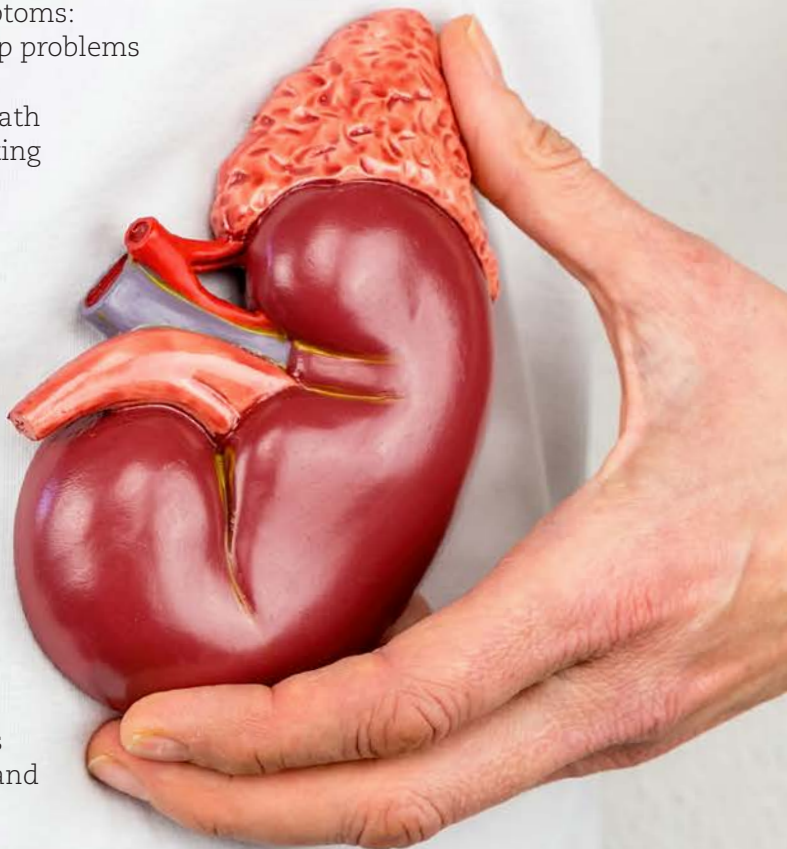
If untreated, CKD can also lead to kidney failure, heart disease, and stroke.

Kidney check

CKD can't be reversed, but you can keep it from getting worse. There are two tests that can help you and

your doctor track your kidney function:

- **Glomerular filtration rate (GFR):** This blood test measures creatinine, a waste product from your muscles when they naturally break down. A normal GFR is 60 or more. A GFR of less than 60 may mean you have kidney disease. A GFR of 15 or less may signal kidney failure.
- **Albumin:** This urine test checks for albumin, a protein that can pass into urine with kidney damage.



What is your risk?

Detecting CKD early can help keep your kidneys as healthy as possible. It is important to talk with your doctor about your risk. You can also do a self-assessment online. You can find it at www.kidney.org/kidneydisease/selfassessmentquiz.

3 tips for staying out of the hospital

No one wants an unplanned hospital trip. Fortunately, adopting a few healthy habits can keep you feeling your best—and clear of the hospital.

1 Take your medicines as directed. This means taking each medicine at the right time, in the right dose, as often as you're supposed to. Taking your medicines correctly helps keep any chronic conditions in check. Here are some tips that may help:

- Check in with your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about your medicines or their side effects.
- Use a pill container to keep track of your medications. Be sure to refill it on the same day and time each week.
- If forgetfulness is a problem, use timers to remind you.



2 Talk with your doctor. Your doctor is one of your most important allies in good health. Be sure to keep him or her up-to-date about any health conditions or concerns. This includes mentioning any new or unusual symptoms and asking questions if you don't understand your treatment plan.

3 Keep up with preventive care. Routine preventive care, such as mammograms and colon cancer screenings, can find any problems early, when they're often easier to treat. You should also keep up with vaccines, including a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor what preventive care you need.

Treating hypertension pays off

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, causes more heart related deaths in the U.S. than any other factor. And the number of Americans with hypertension is doing up.

What is considered high?

Normal blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg. When the top number in your blood pressure reading is between 120 and 129 and the bottom number is less than 80, you have elevated blood pressure. High blood pressure is when the top number is more

than 130 and the bottom number is 80 or higher.

Most people with hypertension have no signs. So it's important to ask your doctor to check your blood pressure, even when you feel fine.

Take steps for your heart

Work with your health care team to prevent or control high readings. They may recommend:

- **Diet changes.** Eating more fruits, veggies, and whole grains and less salt can lower blood pressure.

- **Medications.** If your doctor prescribes them, take as directed.

- **Exercise.** As little as an hour a week provides health benefits. If you're inactive, ask your doctor for help getting started.



Small changes are the key to healthy weight loss

If you're one of many people who made losing weight a New Year's resolution, make sure you're up to speed on the best way to drop those extra pounds. Losing weight is not about exercising for hours a day, skipping meals, or avoiding carbohydrates. It's about making small changes in your diet and physical activity level—and making them day after day and week after week. Consider making the following changes. Each one may help you reach your weight-loss goal.

Change 1 Eat breakfast. The National Weight Control Registry reports that breakfast is an everyday staple for 80 percent of people who have lost a significant amount of weight. Start the day with whole-grain cereal with fresh fruit and low-fat or nonfat milk.



Change 2 Weigh yourself every week. Step on the bathroom scale at least once a week. If you see the needle creeping up, you know it's time to make a little extra effort.

Change 3 Keep a food diary. Recording what, how much, and when you eat gives you clues about your eating habits. You may find that you eat too many high-calorie snacks at certain times of the day or that you skimp on low-calorie but filling fruits and vegetables.

Change 4 Cut calories. Eating fewer calories can lead to weight loss. You can reduce calories by eating smaller portions, skipping seconds, and putting half of your restaurant meal in a to-go bag.

Change 5 Turn off the TV. There's a link between too much TV time and weight gain and obesity. You don't burn many calories sitting on a couch. And for many people, watching TV means snacking.

Change 6 Become more active. Activities such as brisk walking and bike riding burn calories and make you more fit. Start slowly and increase your time—the more minutes the better. People who have lost weight and kept it off exercise an average of 60 minutes a day. Sneak more activity into your daily routine, too. Park farther from your destination, take a lap around the mall before shopping, and get up and do household chores during commercials.





2 ways to eliminate 100 calories

Consume
100
fewer calories
or

Burn
100
more a day
you can

Lose
10
pounds
in a year.



To cut 100 calories:

- Use skim or 1 percent milk
- Drink water or unsweetened ice tea instead of soda
- Choose water-packed tuna instead of tuna in oil
- Use reduced-calorie salad dressing
- Trim the fat from meat
- Have $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of rice or pasta instead of 1 cup
- Leave three or four bites of food on your plate
- Share your dessert



Baked sweet potato chips

Enjoy a crispy, satisfying snack without all the sodium.

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 tbsp. balsamic or apple cider vinegar
- 1 large sweet potato (1 lb.), peeled and very thinly sliced with a mandoline or vegetable peeler
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. garlic powder

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, whisk oil and vinegar together, then toss sweet potato slices in mixture. Sprinkle with spices, then toss again to coat.
3. Lay slices down on about six cookie trays lined with silicone liners or parchment paper. Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, checking every five minutes and switching trays around at least once to prevent burning. For a crispier texture, flip the chips over midway through baking.
4. Let cool, then enjoy.

Per serving

Serves four; serving size is 1 cup. Each serving provides: 137 calories, 4 g total fat (0.5 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat), 0 mg cholesterol, 63 mg sodium, 25 g total carbohydrates, 4 g dietary fiber, 6 g sugar, 2 g protein.





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Contact us by phone or by mail:

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Hours of Service

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Keystone First VIP Choice is an HMO-SNP plan with a Medicare contract and a contract with the Pennsylvania Medicaid program. Enrollment in Keystone First VIP Choice depends on contract renewal.

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Para información en español, por favor llame al department de atención al cliente de **Keystone First VIP Choice**.

Multi-Language Interpreter Services

If English is not your first language, we have free interpreter services to answer any questions you may have about our health or drug plan. To get an interpreter, just call us at **1-800-450-1166** (TTY: **711**). Someone who speaks English and your language can help you. **This is a free service.**

Tenemos servicios de intérprete sin costo alguno para responder cualquier pregunta que pueda tener sobre nuestro plan de salud o medicamentos. Para hablar con un intérprete, por favor llame al **1-800-450-1166** (TTY: **711**). Alguien que hable español le podrá ayudar. **Este es un servicio gratuito.**

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This information is available for free in other languages. Please call our Member Service number at 1-800-450-1166, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week. TTY/TDD users should call 711.