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United Service
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For Health Care
SPRING 2010

Brad Pitt's Greatest Performance:

Donating \$10 Million
to World Health care

plus
Recharge
Your Exercise Routine

and Go Green
for Health

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[cover story]

Brad Pitt's Greatest Performance:
Donating \$10 Million to World Health Care
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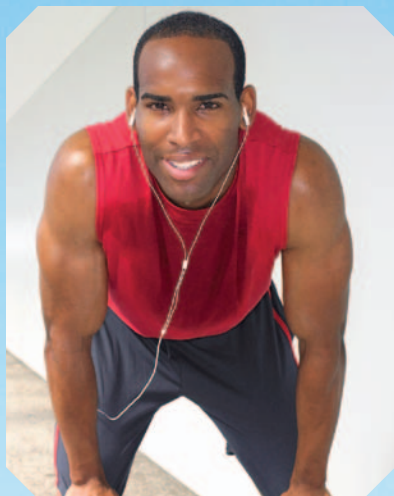
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Recharge Your Exercise Routine

YOU KNOW GETTING MOVING IS GOOD FOR YOU AND YOUR HEART'S HEALTH. BUT LATELY, YOUR REGULAR WALKING ROUTINE HAS YOU FEELING LIKE YOU'RE WALKING IN CIRCLES.



→ **DON'T DESPAIR IF YOU'RE GETTING BORED WITH YOUR** typical exercise routine: There are more ways to exercise than you ever thought possible. And experts recommend regularly trying new things to prevent physical activity

fatigue. Check out the following ways to bring new energy to your workout.

- **Take a hop, skip, and jump.** Jumping rope isn't just for schoolchildren anymore. This weight-bearing activity has the added bonus of strengthening bones.
- **Supercharge your chores.** Many things you already do around the house qualify as exercise if you do them long enough. Try washing and waxing your car for 45 minutes to an hour, gardening for 30 to 45 minutes, or raking leaves for a half-hour.
- **Get in the groove.** The average 150-pound person burns more than 300 calories per hour of dancing. You can do it at the gym, in a nightclub, or in the privacy of your own home. Just turn on some tunes and get moving.
- **Make a splash.** Water workouts can mean more than swimming. Aerobics classes are

often taught in the shallow or deep end of the pool. Working out in water increases your flexibility, reduces your risk for injury, and keeps you cool—this is key, as heart problems can contribute to heat-related illness.

- **Set a goal.** Aiming to finish a marathon or compete in a tournament can battle boredom. Training for a charity event allows you to help others while you get in shape.

Be sure to talk with your doctor before beginning any new exercise program. ●

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Calling all women: Are you looking to lose weight or lead a healthier, fitter life? Sign up for Choose to Move, the American Heart Association's free 12-week physical activity program for women. To learn more, visit www.choosetomove.org.

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We value your membership and are here to assist you should you need us. Please contact us at 800-872-1187.
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There's More than One Way to Lose Weight

IT SEEMS LIKE EVERY TIME YOU TURN ON THE TELEVISION, THERE'S A NEW COMMERCIAL FOR YET ANOTHER NEW DIET PLAN. WHAT DIET PLAN IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

→ **IN THEIR QUEST TO LOSE WEIGHT, AMERICANS HAVE TRIED JUST ABOUT EVERY KIND OF DIET IMAGINABLE.**

But is a particular combination of fats, proteins, and carbohydrates superior to others in the battle to drop those extra pounds? Researchers decided to find out. They compared four different diets over a two-year period to see which would be the most effective for weight loss, and their findings just may surprise you.

A Closer Look at the Study

In the study, funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and National Institutes of Health and reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers compared four different diets to see how each would affect body weight after two years. Of the 811 people who signed up to participate, 645 (80 percent) completed the study. The participants, who were overweight at the start of the study, reduced their calorie intake, but each did so in a different way. Each diet had different targets for the intake of fats, proteins, and carbohydrates. The diets were either low or high in fat, average or high in protein, or low or high in carbohydrates. All met the criteria for maintaining cardiovascular health—that is, they were all heart-healthy diets. Each participant also participated in both individual and group counseling sessions.

After two years, researchers found the four diets were equally successful in helping participants lose weight and maintain that loss over two years. What's more, all the diets reduced risk factors for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. One interesting note: participants' attendance at counseling sessions had a positive effect on their success. The study results, the researchers concluded, suggest that any type of diet, when taught for the purpose of

weight loss with enthusiasm and persistence, can be effective.

What This Means for You

According to the NHLBI, the study provides proof that as long as people follow a heart-healthy, reduced-calorie diet, there is more than one way to lose weight and maintain that loss. Truly, no one nutrient is the magic bullet for weight loss.

This is actually very good news, because it means people who need to lose weight have choices. As long as they take in fewer calories than they expend, they can eat a diet made up of foods they like and enjoy. And if you like what you're eating, you're more likely to stick with your diet plan.

How do you know if you need to lose weight? Most doctors use the body mass index, or BMI, to determine if a person is at a healthy weight.

BMI takes into account a person's weight and height. The average person is considered overweight with a BMI between 25 and 29; a BMI of more than 30 indicates obesity. If you want to know your BMI, you can check out a calculator at www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi.

If you are concerned about your weight, consult your doctor or a registered dietitian.

Together, you can discuss a weight-loss plan appropriate for you. •

Want more? Check out www.nhlbisupport.com/cgi-bin/chd1/step1intro.cgi for more information about heart-healthy diets and tools to help you achieve your weight-loss goals.



Get Active—and Back in the Game—with Video Games

DO YOUR KIDS PREFER THEIR VIDEO GAMES TO A GAME OF CATCH? ARE YOU HOOKED ON GAMES, TOO, AND STUCK ON THE COUCH? IF SO, YOU MAY WANT TO RETHINK YOUR GAMING LIBRARY. SOME VIDEO GAMES ACTUALLY HAVE HEALTH BENEFITS.

→ **AS VIDEO GAMES HAVE GROWN IN NUMBER AND POPULARITY, SO HAVE THE WAIST SIZES OF THEIR PLAYERS.**

But with the emergence of active products such as Wii Sports and Dance Dance Revolution, video game naysayers—and even some medical professionals—are realizing these electronic gadgets may actually have health benefits.

Burning Calories Indoors

Rates of obesity and type 2 diabetes in U.S. children and adults are rising. One reason is lack of exercise. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, kids should exercise 60 minutes each day, and adults should work out for 150 minutes each week. But most adults and children don't reach these recommended amounts.

"Active" video games may help change this. These games can turn your living room into a tennis court or dance hall. Instead of sitting on the couch, participants in an active game stand up and physically interact with images on screen. With the Nintendo Wii, for example, players take part in virtual reality sports games, such as boxing, golf, and tennis, swinging the remote control like they would a real racket or golf club. An accessory to the console, the Wii Fit, helps players improve their fitness by participating in balance and yoga exercises, among others. Another game, called Dance Dance Revolution, encourages participants to practice their moves by following onscreen dance steps.

While these active games are relatively new to the scene, studies are under way to evaluate their use as exercise tools—and the results are beginning to come in. One study, reported in *Pediatrics*, found that active video games doubled participants' energy expenditure



compared with seat-based screen time. Another study, reported in the *Journal of Pediatrics*, found that activity-promoting video games have the potential to increase energy expenditure in both children and adults. Still other studies have shown that the calories children burn when they play certain active video games are comparable to those burned in moderate to vigorous physical activities, such as brisk walking, skipping, jogging, and climbing stairs.

A Tool for Rehab?

Research into the possible benefits of using active video games as a rehabilitation tool—dubbed Wiihab—is also under way, but results are pending. Current studies are

examining how the games might relieve the symptoms of Parkinson's disease or help the elderly avoid falls.

In one study recently reported in *Physical Therapy*, researchers used the Wii Sports games with a teenage boy with cerebral palsy. They found the games helped him control his posture, react to visual cues, and walk with crutches.

Video games have indeed come a long way in helping players be physically active. They're not a substitute for a regular workout—but they are helping couch potatoes get a little exercise indoors. ●

How Seriously Do You Take Food Safety?

WHAT DO BEEF, PEANUTS, CHICKEN, CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE DOUGH, ALFALFA SPROUTS, AND DRY SPICES ALL HAVE IN COMMON? THEY'RE AMONG FOOD PRODUCTS THAT HAVE BEEN RECALLED IN RECENT YEARS DUE TO SAFETY CONCERNS.



→ THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 76 MILLION CASES OF FOOD BORNE ILLNESS EACH YEAR IN THE U.S.

However, experts say the vast majority go unreported or are not traced back to the source. According to a recent analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, norovirus and salmonella have been among the leading causes of food borne disease outbreaks. Food borne outbreaks of norovirus occur most often when infected food handlers don't wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet, the CDC says, while salmonella outbreaks occur most often after foods that have been contaminated with animal feces are eaten raw or insufficiently cooked.

Poultry, leafy vegetables, and fruits and nuts were the food commodities associated with the largest number of illnesses, the CDC found. And according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), frozen processed foods—such as pot pies—have also been a source of food borne illness in recent years.

While various government agencies and the food producers themselves try to ensure the food supply is safe, some experts argue that there are so many variables in today's global food-supply chain that consumers would be smart to take more responsibility for food safety themselves.

It's Up to You

One thing you can do to keep you and your family safe is pay attention to food recalls. The government and food companies alert the public to problems, but many consumers do not take heed. In fact, a recent survey found that only about 60 percent of Ameri-

cans have ever looked around their homes for recalled foods, and more than 10 percent said they had eaten a food they thought had been recalled. Researchers say the survey results suggest that most Americans view recalls as important, but not particularly relevant to them personally.

Food Safety Tips

You can also reduce your risk for food borne illness by handling, preparing, and storing foods properly. The USDA offers basic guidelines to keep foods safe:

- **Clean**—Wash your hands and food-preparation surfaces with hot soapy water often.
- **Separate**—Don't cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat, poultry, fish, and their juices away from other foods.
- **Cook**—Cook foods to proper temperatures; use a food thermometer to be sure. The safe internal temperature for meat such as beef and pork is 160° F, and 165° F for poultry.
- **Chill**—Promptly refrigerate foods that need it. Refrigerate raw meat and poultry within two hours after purchase or after one hour if temperatures exceed 90° F. Refrigerate cooked meat and poultry within two hours after cooking. •

For more detailed information and tips—and an up-to-the-minute list of recently recalled foods—visit the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service website at www.fsis.usda.gov.



Five Good-for-You Foods to Boost Your Nutrition

WHEN DESIGNING A VARIED DIET, CONSIDER MOVING SOME OF THESE “SUPER” NUTRITIOUS FOODS TO THE TOP OF YOUR PICK LIST.

→ **EXPERTS SEEM TO AGREE: GOOD NUTRITION INVOLVES A BALANCED DIET THAT INCLUDES A VARIETY OF FRUITS, vegetables, grains, and other foods.** Still, some foods and beverages pack more disease-fighting nutrients than others.

Berries

Various berries—including blueberries and raspberries—are high in antioxidants, making them potent disease fighters. And some research suggests that berries might even protect against food poisoning caused by certain types of bacteria.

Broccoli

Eating broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables has been linked to a lower risk for

certain cancers, including lung and colon cancer. The magic ingredient: a high level of glucosinolates, which are antioxidants. Other vegetables in the cruciferous family include Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and bok choy.

Salmon and Other Fatty Fish

All fish are low-fat sources of protein. But fatty types—such as salmon, herring, halibut, and sardines—contain high amounts of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3s have been shown to reduce the risk for early death in people with heart disease.

Other sources of omega-3s include:

- Fish oil supplements
- Flaxseed and flaxseed oil
- Walnuts
- Canola oil

Barley

In one study, middle-age adults who consumed barley-containing foods for about four months significantly reduced their total and “bad” LDL cholesterol. Another study found barley contained more disease-fighting antioxidants than any other cereal or grain. Other heart-healthy whole grains include oatmeal and whole wheat bread.

Tomatoes and Tomato Products

All red fruits and vegetables contain the pigment lycopene, which may help protect against certain types of cancer. But tomato products, such as ketchup and pizza sauce, are the richest source of lycopene in the American diet.

Don't like tomatoes? You can increase the levels of lycopene in your body by drinking 6 ounces of mixed vegetable juice a day. •

Bad-for-You Foods to Limit in Your Diet

Eating a piece of cake or a serving of French fries once in a while probably won't hurt you. But foods that contain few—or no—nutrients often take the place of healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables.

Plus, many junk foods, fast foods, and sweets are high in saturated or trans fats, which raise blood levels of heart-clogging cholesterol. These foods also tend to be high in calories.

So, put the following foods on your “enjoy occasionally” list:

- Fried chicken
- Sweetened soft drinks
- Candy
- Cakes, cookies, and pie
- Whole-milk ice cream
- Fast-food hamburgers
- French fries
- Potato chips and other chips



Try This Cancer-Fighting Menu

CANCER IS AMONG THE LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH IN THE UNITED STATES. ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY, ABOUT 35 PERCENT OF THESE DEATHS COULD BE PREVENTED IF PEOPLE MADE HEALTHIER FOOD CHOICES.

→ **MEAL PLANNING CAN GO A LONG WAY TOWARD LOWERING YOUR RISK OF DEVELOPING SEVERAL** different types of cancer. Check out this sample meal plan.

At Breakfast

Start your cancer fight with a breakfast that includes whole grains, which are rich in nutrients that may prevent colorectal cancer. Good choices include whole-grain cereal, toast, or waffles.

Then, add some fruit and vegetables, which are rich in many nutrients that can help ward off oral, stomach, esophageal, colorectal, and lung cancer. In fact, some experts believe that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables could prevent at least 20 percent of all cancers.

So, toss some fruit on your cereal, add vegetables to scrambled eggs, or drink 100 percent juice. Aim for five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. To fit all of these in, you will need to start early—with breakfast.

For Lunch

Preventing cancer is about what you don't eat, as well as what you do eat. So, limit the following foods, which have been linked to stomach and possibly other cancers:

- Fatty cuts of beef or other meat
- Lunch meats and hot dogs that contain nitrates
- Grilled, salted, pickled, or smoked foods

Instead, think low fat and nutrient rich. For example, try a lean turkey sandwich on whole-grain bread, some fruit, and a bowl of minestrone soup.

Snack Time

Use snack time to add to your fruit and vegetable tally. Munch on an apple or carrot sticks.

For Dinner

Serve up some spaghetti with tomato sauce. Cooked tomato products may reduce the risk for some cancers. On the side, have cruciferous vegetables—such as broccoli or cauliflower—which may lower the odds of colorectal cancer. Cooking vegetables? Steam, bake, or microwave them to help retain their cancer-fighting nutrients. •

Still having trouble fitting in five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables? For some more ideas, log on to this website from the National Cancer Institute: <http://5aday.gov/recipes/tips.htm>.

ultimate summer fruit salad

Ingredients

2 peaches
2 plums
2 pears
1 cup strawberries, hulled

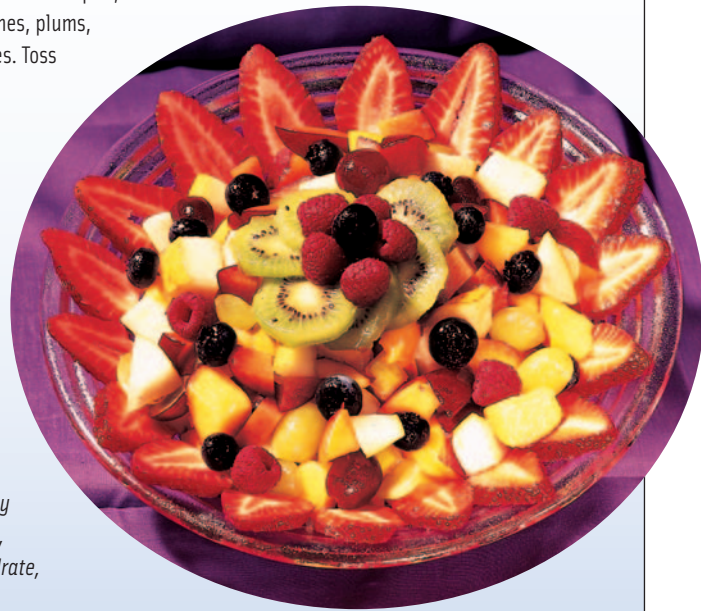
½ cup blueberries
½ cup raspberries
½ cup green grapes
1 cup cherries, halved and pitted
2 kiwi

Directions

Wash fruit under running water. Remove pits, stems, and seeds and cut peaches, plums, and pears into bite-sized pieces. Toss with strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, grapes, and cherries. Pare and slice kiwi for garnish. Top with yogurt if desired.

Divide this salad among six people and each of you will have the equivalent of about two servings of fruit.

Nutrition Facts: *Not including yogurt, each portion contains approximately 117 calories, 1.5 grams protein, 1 gram fat, 28 grams carbohydrate, and 5 grams dietary fiber.*



[COVER STORY]

Brad Pitt's Greatest Performance:

Donating \$10 Million to World Health Care

HE'S STARRED IN COUNTLESS FILMS AND IS KNOWN AS ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE MALE LEADING MEN in motion picture history. But one of Brad Pitt's biggest roles is that of a philanthropist.

read more →

Like Brad Pitt, you can give back to people who need a helping hand. And charitable giving does more than help you **feel like you're making a difference.**



AP Photo/Cheryl Geber

President Bill Clinton, left, hosting his Clinton Global Initiative University, and actor Brad Pitt, right, founder of the Make It Right Foundation, pose with DeeCarla Rogers while they greet volunteers and break ground for new homes in the Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans, Sunday, March 16, 2008.

→ **WHEN THE NEWS BROKE IN JANUARY THAT THE ISLAND NATION OF HAITI** had been struck by a horrific earthquake, Hollywood superstar Brad Pitt didn't hesitate.

Within 48 hours of the tragic disaster, which reportedly killed more than 150,000 people, the internationally renowned actor was on the telephone to one of his favorite health care charities: Doctors Without Borders.

Pitt's instantaneous reaction to the appalling catastrophe was typical for him; he immediately contributed \$1 million to the highly regarded physicians group. "We understand that the first response is critical," he told

reporters after announcing the grant, "in order to serve the immediate needs of countless people who are now displaced from their homes and suffering from trauma."

The instant donation from the 46-year-old Pitt—a cinema megastar whose smash-hit films have reportedly taken in more than \$2 billion during the past 15 years—was right in character. And it was also urgently needed: Pitt's donation helped Doctors Without Borders to begin constructing a 100-bed tent hospital in the capital of Port-au-Prince within a few days of the earthquake.

A History of Philanthropy

Pitt's gift to the people of Haiti made headlines in the wake of the Caribbean disaster, but it was hardly unique for him. In recent years, he and Angelina Jolie—also an international movie superstar and the mother of the couple's six children (three are adopted)—have given more than \$10 million to a variety of health care-linked charities that provide medical care and health education to some of the most economically stressed regions of the globe.

Among the major beneficiaries of their high-profile philanthropic efforts are the Global AIDS Alliance (\$1 million), Global Action for Children (\$1 million), the Namibia Red Cross (\$150,000) and U.N. relief agencies now working in Chad, Darfur, and Cambodia. But the Pitt-Jolie Foundation, established in 2006, has also donated major funds toward medical research, including \$100,000 for the little-known Epidermolysis Bullosa Medical Research Foundation, a nonprofit group that studies a rare skin disorder that often targets children.

Brad Pitt's abiding passion in recent years has clearly been world health—and it's no accident that he wound up as the narrator, in 2005, of a widely praised PBS documentary,

Rx for Survival: A Global Health Challenge, which explored public health problems in a countries scattered all around the planet.

A Responsibility to Give Back

So, why does Brad Pitt spend so much of his time and money working to improve health care in far-off locales that range from Cambodian jungle villages to refugee campus in Darfur and earthquake-wracked cities in Haiti and Pakistan? Why would one of the most famous and admired actors in the world (and also the "Sexiest Man Alive," according to *People* magazine) invest himself so heavily in this ongoing campaign to make life a little better for people he will never meet?

Ask those questions of the supremely gifted Pitt, whose meteoric career took off way back in 1987 with a minor role on the CBS soap opera *Dallas*, and he'll tell you his philanthropic efforts on behalf of world health are simply his way of "giving back."

"There's no doubt that I've been incredibly fortunate in my career as an actor," says the veteran performer, who's often described as the most popular box office figure in world cinema today, "and there's also no doubt that I've benefited hugely from

Actor Brad Pitt sits flanked by Haitian-born hip-hop musician Wyclef Jean, second from right, a street boy he helps support named Emanuel, and Angelina Jolie in the background, during a welcome celebration, at the Immaculate Conception School in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Friday, Jan. 13, 2006. Many kids receive scholarships to study with support from Yele Haiti, a charity founded by Wyclef, who hosted the visit to Haiti by Pitt and Jolie.

(AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

that success. For me, it just seems obvious that my good fortune carries with it a responsibility to do my best to contribute to society as best I can—and one way to do that is to focus on health care and issues related to public health.”

Small-Town Beginnings

The son of a trucking company executive and a high school guidance counselor, William Bradley Pitt was born in small-town Shawnee, Oklahoma, but grew up mostly in the bucolic environs of Springfield, Missouri, where he eventually wound up starring in a series of local high school musicals. After spending several years at the University of Missouri, he dropped out and hit the road for Hollywood, later telling reporters: “I wasn’t ready to settle down, that’s all. I loved films, and Missouri wasn’t where

movies were made!”

The rest of the Brad Pitt saga long ago became the stuff of movie legend. After landing a few bit parts in little-noticed films, he hit the jackpot while playing a high-octane vampire—the wonderfully named “Louis de Pointe du Lac”—in the 1994 film *Interview with the Vampire*. But his career really took off the following year, when he teamed up with the illustrious Morgan Freeman and highly regarded actress Gwyneth Paltrow in the crime thriller *Seven*, which would go on to win rave reviews and earn more than \$327 million in box offices scattered all around the world.

In recent years, Pitt’s career trajectory has soared into the stratosphere. While starring in blockbuster hits such as *Fight Club*, *The Mexican*, *Ocean’s Eleven* and *The Curious Case of Benjamin*

Button, he has proved again and again that he can sell more movie tickets than any other male actor in the world today.

Yet he’s also found time—in recent years with superstar actress Angelina Jolie—to adopt three kids and father three biological children of his own, while also traveling the globe constantly in order to pursue his avocation as a champion of improved health care for needy people in regions as diverse as Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.

According to the high-spirited and laughter-loving Brad Pitt, this passionate quest in support of medical research and better health care isn’t a part-time “avocation”—but a passionate *obligation* to serve his fellow citizens by donating a high percentage of his Hollywood earnings and advocating relentlessly on behalf of those

who need help most.

“I don’t think that what I’m doing is really all that special,” he often tells reporters who ask him about the motivation behind his widely publicized philanthropy. “It just seems to me that each of us has an obligation to help out where we can—and this is simply my way of trying to live up to that obligation, day in and day out.” •

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Like Brad Pitt, you can make a difference in the lives of people who need a little extra help. To get started, check out Charity Navigator at www.charitynavigator.org. For a list of health-related charities, just click on Health in the Browse by Category section.

Charitable donations to many organizations are tax deductible. This means that philanthropy can help your wallet, too.



Beat the Blues and Give Your Heart a Break

SURE, WE ALL FEEL A LITTLE GLOOMY FROM TIME TO TIME. BUT IF YOU HAVE HEART DISEASE, YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO GET DEPRESSED—A CONDITION THAT CAN “BREAK YOUR HEART” IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

→ **MOST OF US FEEL DOWN NOW AND THEN, BUT PEOPLE WITH HEART DISEASE MAY BE MORE LIKELY TO GET depressed.** While feeling blue may be a natural reaction to coping with a chronic health condition, depression can be hard on your heart.

If you're feeling depressed, you may be less likely to take your medication, eat a healthy diet, and exercise—all important factors in controlling heart disease.

Don't Despair—Take Action!

Strengthen your heart and fight off the blues with these easy tips.

- **Exercise.** Regular physical activity produces brain chemicals that can make you feel better as well as help the heart and blood vessels. Be sure to speak with your doctor to find out how much exercise is right for you.
- **Get outside.** Spending time in nature can boost mood and reduce stress.

Did You Know?

Having a supportive social circle strongly cuts a woman's risk of developing major depression, according to one study. To measure support, participants were asked how much they felt friends and family members helped them whenever they really needed it, listened to their worries or problems, and understood their feelings.



- **Eat fish.** Studies link the oils in fatty fish with lower rates of depression as well as better heart health. Health experts suggest consuming 6 ounces of fish like

mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna, and salmon at least twice a week. As an alternative, check with your doctor about taking fish oil capsules.

- **Go Greek.** A study in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* showed people who ate a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, and nuts experienced less depression than those not following such a diet. The added benefit? The Mediterranean diet may help improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

For Heart Health, Add a Touch of Fish Oil

Research suggests that fatty fish—such as herring and salmon—and omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil, may help lower the risk for heart disease in seniors. To find out if this holds true for middle-aged men, too, nearly 40,000 Swedish men ages 45 to 79 were asked about their diets. Over an average of seven years, nearly 600 developed heart failure. Those who consumed

modest amounts of omega-3s from fish—about 0.32 to 0.40 g each day—were 33 percent less likely to develop heart failure than those who consumed none. But consuming more than modest amounts did not add additional heart-health benefits. Three ounces of Atlantic salmon provides about 1 g of omega-3s.

When Should You Seek Help?

If you've been down in the dumps or lost interest or pleasure in doing things for more than two weeks, see your doctor. Taking steps to stomp out the blues can help you stay healthier and enjoy life again. •

What Is Post-Traumatic Stress?

IF YOU’RE BEEN THROUGH A TRAUMATIC EVENT, MEMORIES OF THIS INCIDENT MAY RESURFACE MONTHS OR YEARS LATER, CAUSING ANXIETY AND FEAR. THIS IS CALLED POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.

→ **FOR SOME PEOPLE, FRIGHTENING MEMORIES OF A TERRIBLE EVENT CAN RESURFACE MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS** after the ordeal. In reliving the event, people become fearful and unable to cope with daily life. Mental health experts call this post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a type of anxiety disorder.

“One of the biggest myths about post-traumatic stress is that it occurs most often in war veterans,” says Esther Giller, M.A., president of the Sidran Institute, an organization that helps people who have experienced traumatic life events. “In fact, women are most at risk, especially those who have experienced interpersonal violence, such as rape, or domestic abuse as children or adults.”

Others who are more likely to develop PTSD include:

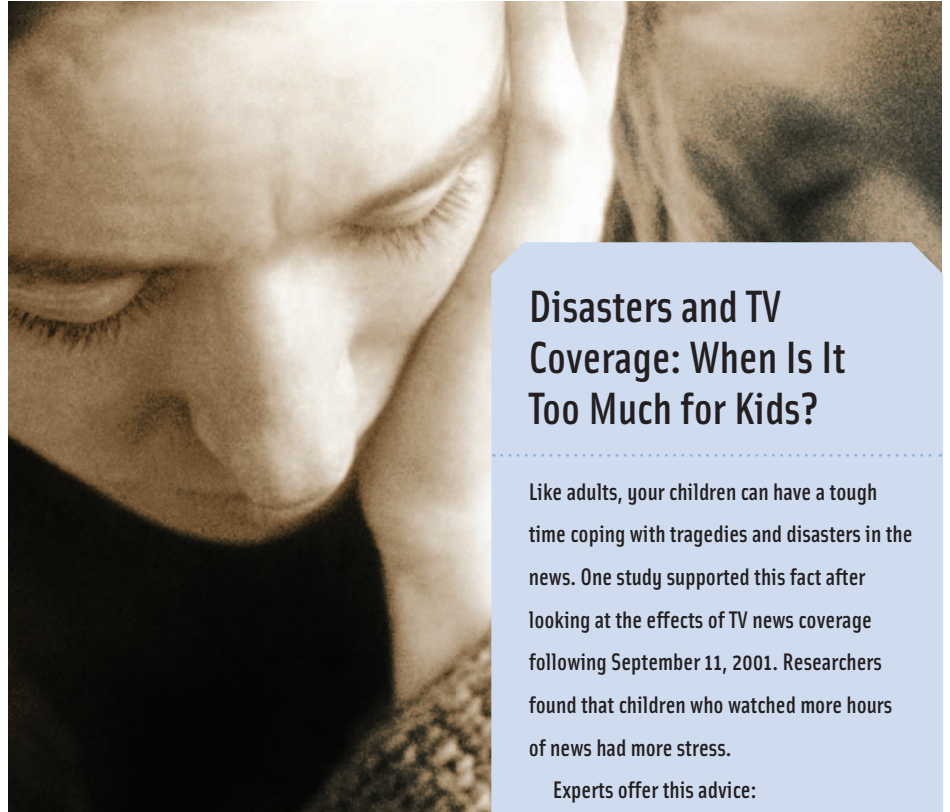
- Children who are neglected or abused
- Survivors of terrible accidents, fires, or natural disasters
- Emergency response workers, such as police, firefighters, and medical professionals
- Victims or veterans of war

Telltale Symptoms

People with PTSD feel anxious and hyper-alert, “like their life is out of control,” says Ms. Giller. “They know something is wrong, but they often don’t connect what they’re feeling now to a traumatic event in their past.” In an attempt to feel safe, they withdraw emotionally from others.

Other signs of PTSD include:

- Suffering frequent nightmares, flashbacks, or other vivid memories of the event
- Being unable to recall parts of the event
- Avoiding any reminders of the event, including people, places, thoughts, or activities
- Feeling constantly on guard or edgy
- Having difficulty sleeping



The most effective treatment for PTSD is a combination of professional counseling and medication. Because people with this condition tend to isolate themselves, “family members play a vital role in encouraging victims to get the help they need. With treatment, people can feel better very quickly,” says Giller. Talking with a family doctor or mental health professional is a good place to start. •

For more information, visit the [National Center for PTSD website—part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs—at <http://ncptsd.va.gov>](http://ncptsd.va.gov).

Disasters and TV Coverage: When Is It Too Much for Kids?

Like adults, your children can have a tough time coping with tragedies and disasters in the news. One study supported this fact after looking at the effects of TV news coverage following September 11, 2001. Researchers found that children who watched more hours of news had more stress.

Experts offer this advice:

- If your children are younger than age 2, discourage them from watching TV.
- For older kids, limit all TV—including video games and time spent on the Internet—to no more than one or two hours a day. Watch the news and other TV programs with them when you can.
- Try talking about tragic events instead of watching them on TV. Ask your children what they know and what they feel. Be honest about what happened, but use language that’s right for their age group. A talk and a hug can help your children feel safe.

Health Care Reform: Where Do You Stand?

REGARDLESS OF YOUR STANCE ON HEALTH CARE REFORM, THERE'S PROBABLY ONE THING WE CAN ALL AGREE ON: LEADING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE.

→ **UNITED SERVICE ASSOCIATION FOR HEALTH CARE (USA+)** IS A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION CHARTERED IN Washington, D.C., in 1983. In November 1987, the USA+ program became one of the first group association benefit programs set up to provide the small business owner, his or her family and employees with a quality benefits package, one that was previously available only to employees of large corporations.

At USA+, we're committed to promoting equal access to health care for all citizens of the United States, and specifically for members of our association. We stay abreast of legislation proposed by state regulators that may have a positive—or negative—impact on our USA+ members. And, when necessary, we contact regulators so we can have an opportunity to convey the views of the association's members.

Since the last presidential campaign, the cost of health care has been one of the most debated topics among Americans, and Congress has been embroiled in an intense debate over health care policy. The debate has included discussions as to whether:

All Americans should be forced to carry insurance or pay a penalty.

Insurance companies should be forced to accept all applicants regardless of health history, lifestyles and pre-existing conditions.

Employers should be forced to pay a portion of the premium for all employees.

Employees that lose their jobs should be able to obtain health care from the state or federal government.

Of course, there are some people who adamantly agree with some or all of these requirements, just as there are some who are vehemently opposed to some or all of these requirements. Regardless of which side of the aisle you're on, we can probably all agree that health care is a very sensitive subject—but not one that most people really think about every day. Many people don't wake up in the morning and immediately say, "I'm going to exercise today and make sure that I only eat nutritional foods" or "I will not drink alcohol or smoke."

Rather, we generally think about health care when we're not feeling well and need to see a doctor. If we do see a doctor and receive bad news regarding a debilitating or life-threatening disease, we become concerned

about who is going to pay for the care that we will need and not being there for our families and loved ones. And, frankly, it's a terrifying position to be in.

So what's the solution? Americans are fortunate to have one of the most advanced and innovative health care systems in the world. Students from around the world come to America to attend its colleges and universities. Whether you believe that our nation should move away from—or toward—government-run health care, there is one thing that we can all do to take control of our own health care.

And what is that one thing? Live a healthier lifestyle. Work to make the commitment to make necessary changes in your own life in order to improve and or maintain your current health.

As always, remember one thing: together, we can make a difference. •

For updates and information on health care reform in the United States, visit www.healthreform.gov.

Go Green for Health

ARE YOU LIVING “GREEN?” TAKING STEPS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT FROM ABUSE IS NOT ONLY THE RIGHT THING TO DO—IT CAN ALSO BOOST YOUR HEALTH.

→ **ACCORDING TO THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, WHEN IT COMES TO AIR POLLUTION, THE greater the level of pollutants in the air, the more there's a chance for asthma flare-ups and irritation to the eyes, nose, and throat, as well as more serious problems, such as chest pain.**

You can help improve the environment for everyone. Below are a few tips to get started:

When Home, at Work, and Outside

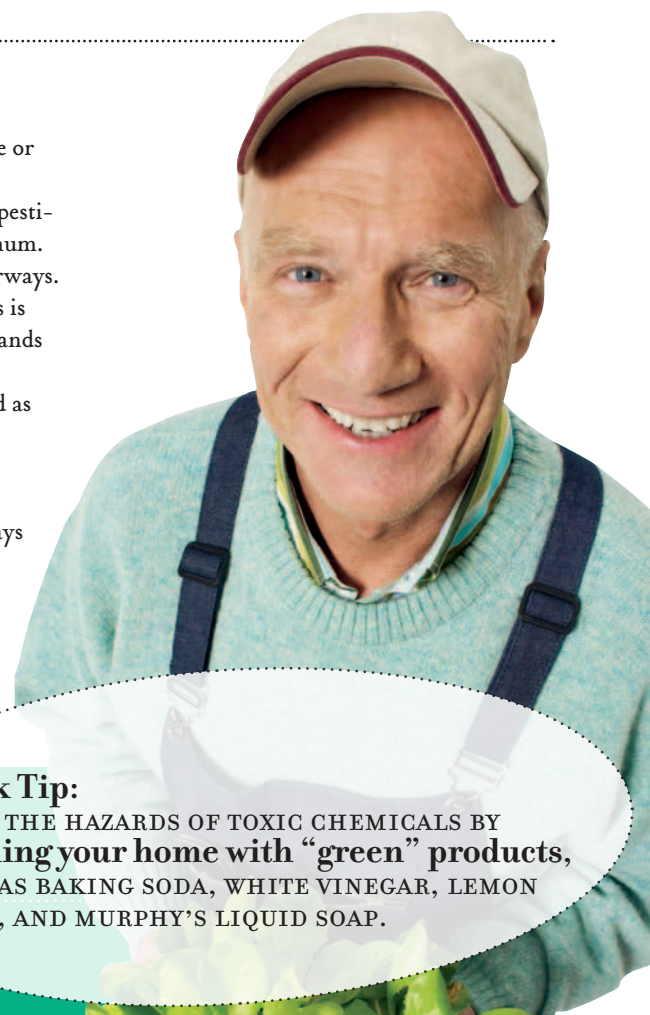
- Buy local products whenever possible. It reduces energy burned to transport goods.
- Avoid waste by reusing items such as cups, lunch containers, and grocery bags.
- Try using nontoxic products to clean your home.
- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs.
- Invest in rechargeable batteries.

Around the Yard

- Grow a green thumb. Whether inside or outside, plants clean the air.
- Pull weeds by hand instead of using pesticides, and keep pesticides to a minimum. Runoff of pesticides can harm waterways.
- Set mower blades high. Shorter grass is prone to weeds and disease and demands more intervention.
- Plant native plants, which don't need as much water as introduced species.

In the Car

- Try to drive less, especially on hot days or during heavy traffic.
- Accelerate slowly.
- Get regular vehicle tune-ups.
- Resist “topping off” your gas tank and avoid spilling gasoline. •



Gardening Is Good Exercise

Do you prefer digging in the dirt to sweating on a treadmill? Well, here's some good news. These gardening tasks use the same amount of energy as walking at a moderate pace:

- Raking and bagging leaves
- Digging or hoeing
- Weeding while standing and bending
- Trimming and hauling branches from shrubs or trees
- Mowing the lawn with a power mower

So, why not consider getting out your gardening tools and getting a workout? Experts recommend exercising moderately for 30 minutes on most days of the week. If you prefer more vigorous exercise, you can meet your exercise quota by performing heavy-duty gardening tasks for 20 minutes or more at least three times a week.

Gardening activities that count as vigorous activities include the following:

- Carrying heavy loads, such as sacks of compost
- Climbing and trimming trees
- Mowing the lawn with a push mower

To avoid aches and pains from gardening, warm up by walking for a few minutes. Then, after gardening, take another short walk to cool down. Finish by stretching the muscles you used.

Quick Tip:

AVOID THE HAZARDS OF TOXIC CHEMICALS BY **cleaning your home with “green” products, SUCH AS BAKING SODA, WHITE VINEGAR, LEMON JUICE, AND MURPHY'S LIQUID SOAP.**



FAQs About High Blood Pressure Medications

DO YOU HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE? TRY NOT TO WORRY—THERE ARE MEDICATIONS THAT CAN HELP YOU. JUST KEEP IN MIND THAT IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU TAKE THEM CORRECTLY.

→ **NEARLY ONE IN THREE AMERICAN ADULTS HAS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE. THE CONDITION IS ESPECIALLY common in people with metabolic syndrome. Blood pressure that's higher than normal increases chances of stroke, heart disease, and kidney failure.**

Fortunately, a wide variety of medications are available to help control blood pressure. Many people need more than one to manage high blood pressure. Here are answers to questions you may have about these drugs.

Q On days I feel good, should I still take my blood pressure medicine?

A. Always take medications as prescribed. Generally, you can't tell if blood pressure is high by the way you feel. Never stop taking a blood pressure medicine or change your dose or how often you take it without talking with your doctor first. Stopping some medications suddenly could cause your blood pressure to rise very quickly to a dangerously high level.

Q Do I need to take my medication with food?

A. Medication directions may tell you to take drugs on an empty stomach or with food. If not, talk with your doctor or pharmacist. Also, find out if you need to avoid certain foods or drinks. Grapefruit and grapefruit juice, for example, can interfere with certain drugs and increase side effects. Take medicines with a full glass of water unless you're told differently.

Q What should I do if I think my blood pressure medicine is causing me problems?

A. Tell your doctor about any discomfort that seems to be related to medication. Often, symptoms will go away over time.



Others may be avoided by changing dosage or switching to a different medication.

Side effects vary with the medication, but some common ones include:

- Headache
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Extreme tiredness, weakness, drowsiness, or lack of energy
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Weight loss or gain
- Nervousness or anxiety
- Chest pain or irregular or racing heartbeat
- Cough, fever, congestion, or flu-like symptoms
- Skin rash

People with diabetes need to be particularly careful of blood pressure drugs that can affect blood sugar level or make managing diabetes more difficult. These include diuretics and beta-blockers.

Q Is it OK to take over-the-counter (OTC) drugs like pain relievers or cold medicines?

A. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking an OTC drug if you are taking any prescription medications. People with high blood pressure have a bigger risk for complications from combining OTC and prescription drugs. So, try to limit how often you use OTC medicines. Decongestants and antihistamines in cold and allergy medications, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, like aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen, can affect how your blood pressure medicine works, increase blood pressure, or speed up your heart rate.

Q Can I still have a glass of wine or a beer?

A. Drinking alcohol can cause side effects in people taking certain high blood pressure medicines. Talk with your pharmacist or doctor about whether alcohol will interact with your particular medication. Also, don't take medicine with an alcoholic drink.

Q What about using herbal supplements?

A. As with OTC medications, people who take medicine for high blood pressure should be careful with herbs, which can change the way drugs work. Always ask your doctor before using any herbal supplements. •

Acetaminophen: What Parents Should Know

ACETAMINOPHEN IS A POPULAR DRUG USED TO REDUCE PAIN OR FEVER IN CHILDREN—AS LONG AS THEY'RE GIVEN THE RIGHT AMOUNT. TOO MUCH CAN CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS.

→ TO REDUCE A CHILD'S PAIN OR FEVER, MORE PARENTS

turn to acetaminophen than to any other drug. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), acetaminophen is generally considered safe and effective when used according to the label directions. But using too much can cause liver damage.

In late June 2009, medical experts advising the FDA suggested that the agency reduce the maximum adult daily dose of acetaminophen, and require just one standard formula for the nonprescription liquid acetaminophen for young children. Right now, the infant drop formula is three times as strong as the children's liquid formula. This means that giving a child a child-sized dose of the infant formula could result in an overdose.

Another thing to consider is that there are currently about 600 different products on the market containing acetaminophen, including cough and cold medicines. Thus, it's possible to give your child an overdose if you happen to give two medications at once that both contain acetaminophen.

Using Acetaminophen Safely

Here are some of the FDA's recommendations regarding how to safely give acetaminophen to infants, children, and teenagers:

- Check the active ingredients in all the medicines that your child is taking or may take. Your child should never be taking more than one medicine that contains acetaminophen at a time. You might see acetaminophen abbreviated as "APAP" on prescription medicines.
- Read all the information given by your child's doctor and follow directions.
- Read the information on the "Drug Facts" label on over-the-counter (OTC) medica-

tions or on the prescription label, and follow directions.

- Choose the right formula and the right dose based on your child's weight and age. On OTC medicines, the "Directions" section of the "Drug Facts" label gives you this information. If it's not clear what is right for your child, ask your pharmacist or doctor what to do.
- Use the measuring tool that comes with the medicine. It will give the exact dose. If you don't have the right measuring tool, ask a pharmacist. Don't use a spoon that's meant for cooking or eating.
- Give your child the medicine only as directed. Don't give them an extra dose. If the medicine isn't helping, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

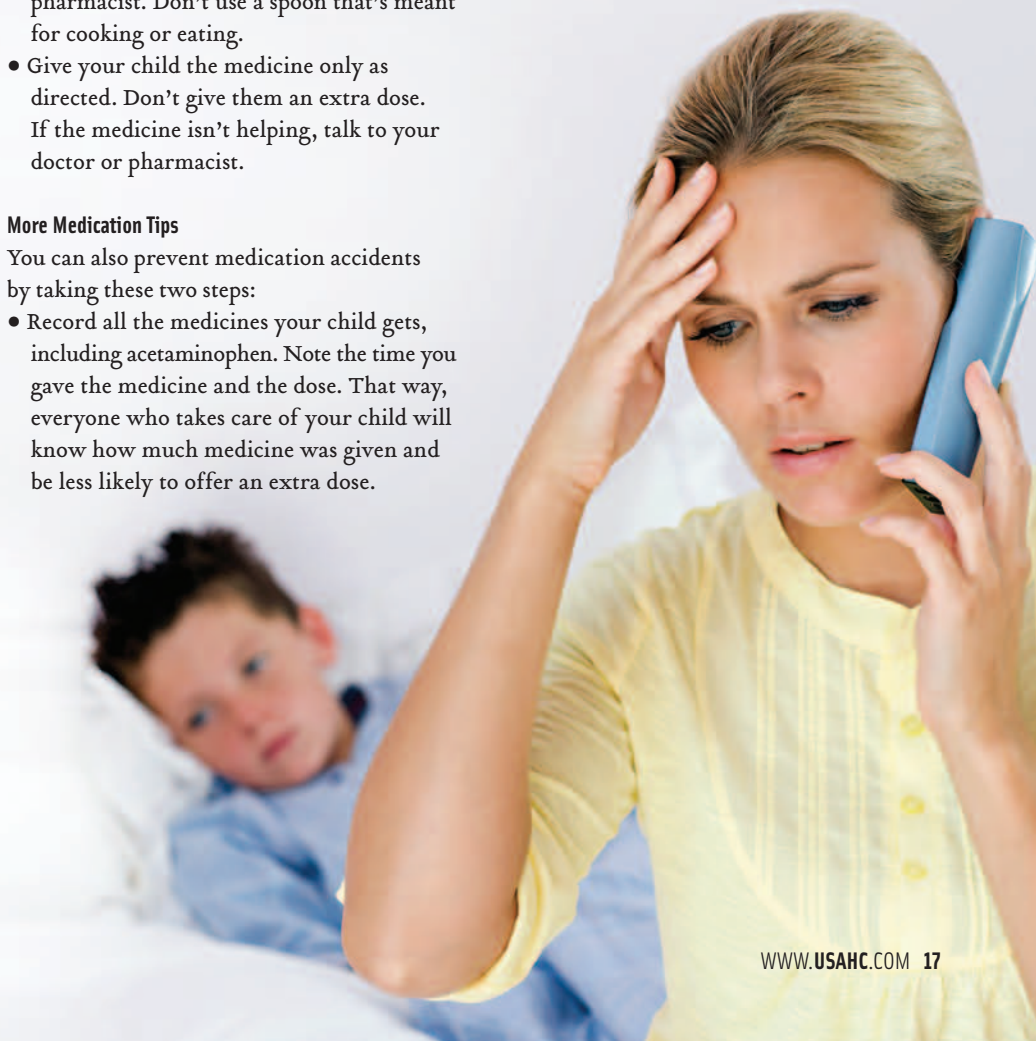
More Medication Tips

You can also prevent medication accidents by taking these two steps:

- Record all the medicines your child gets, including acetaminophen. Note the time you gave the medicine and the dose. That way, everyone who takes care of your child will know how much medicine was given and be less likely to offer an extra dose.

- Store all medicines where kids can't reach them: in a cabinet, a locked box, or a closet.

The symptoms of liver damage—yellow skin and eyes, dark urine, nausea, vomiting, and appetite loss—may develop only after irreversible damage occurs. They can be similar to flu symptoms and may thus go unnoticed for several days. So, if you think your child may have had too much acetaminophen, call 911 or Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 immediately. •



Want to Reduce Your Out-of-Pocket Medical Expenses?

Check out the USA+ Limited Benefit Plan.

THREE USA+ MEMBERS. THREE STORIES ABOUT THE MONEY THEY'VE SAVED WITH THEIR USA+ MEMBERSHIPS. LEARN MORE BELOW.

→ SOME OF OUR UNITED SERVICE ASSOCIATION FOR HEALTH CARE (USA+) MEMBERS ARE PEOPLE WHO can't qualify for major medical insurance—due to pre-existing conditions—and individuals that can't afford the premiums offered by major medical insurance companies. These members still want to have some level of coverage in order to minimize their out-of-pocket expenses and the amount of money that they will have to pay for their medical care.

USA+'s limited benefit policy helps members achieve this objective—and the insurance company that underwrites the limited benefit policy paid more than \$3 million in member claims, each year, for the past several years.

In this edition of our newsletter, you can read just a few success stories about members who joined our association—and how the membership program is working out for them.

Julius Sughrue

USA+ member since April, 2006

He's a highly regarded insurance consultant in Dallas, Texas – and also a skilled, second-degree black belt in the martial arts. Ask Julius Sughrue how he's managed to accomplish so much – while struggling with cystic fibrosis since his infancy – and this 45-year-old kung fu fighter will tell you it's all a matter of attitude.

"The key to living with cystic fibrosis is to surround yourself with upbeat, optimistic

THEY'VE DONE VERY WELL BY ME,
paying my bills quickly AND
PROVIDING ME WITH **speedy**
cheerful service.



people and to maintain the right outlook on life," he says. "Most of the time, I'm a really cheerful guy, and I never let my illness control my attitude. If you take good care of yourself, both mentally and physically, you can live a very good life in spite of this ailment."

Along with maintaining a winning attitude and managing his illness effectively day in and day out, Sughrue says he's been able to pay all his medical bills on time – thanks to his continuing membership with United

Service Association for Health Care (USA+).

"I've never totaled everything up," says the high-spirited Sughrue, "but I'm sure that USA+ has paid at least \$50,000 for my medical care over the years. They've done very well by me, by paying my bills quickly and providing me with speedy cheerful service."

"As an insurance consultant myself, I understand how important good service is . . . and I feel very fortunate to have USA+ on my side, as I manage my cystic fibrosis and take care of my medical bills."

continued on last page

Help or Hype? Natural Remedies to Tame Asthma Symptoms

LIFE CAN BE A LITTLE BIT CHALLENGING IF YOU HAVE ASTHMA. WADING THROUGH THE VARIOUS MEDICATIONS TO TREAT THIS CONDITION, INCLUDING NATURAL REMEDIES, CAN BE EVEN TOUGHER. TAKE THIS QUIZ TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ALTERNATIVE ASTHMA THERAPIES.

→ **YOU SEE THEM ON TELEVISION ADS, IN MAGAZINES, AND ON THE SHELVES OF HEALTH-FOOD STORES.**

But can alternative therapies really ease your asthma symptoms? Find out in this quiz.

Fact or Fiction?

1. No herbs or supplements have been shown to help asthma. It's all "junk science."
2. You should never tell your doctor if you're using these therapies. He or she might get upset.
3. Certain supplements that claim to help asthma could actually make your symptoms worse.

Answers:

1. Fiction. Though many natural remedies lack scientific backing, there is evidence that some may help certain people cope with symptoms.

Recent studies have focused on traditional Chinese herbs, including ganoderma and ginkgo biloba. In the right combination, these plant extracts may improve asthma by boosting the immune system and preventing airways from swelling.

Other therapies that have shown promise include:

- Pycnogenol, extracted from the bark of a certain pine tree
- Magnesium
- Choline
- Fish oil
- Vitamin A

However, more research is needed to confirm the benefits, determine who should take them, and find out how and when they work best.

2. Fiction. Always talk with your primary care doctor or allergist before trying any treatment, natural or otherwise. Some herbs can

interact with your current asthma medications, making your breathing more difficult or causing new health problems.

Share a list of all the treatments you use with your doctor. Be clear on whether you are trying these therapies instead of the medicines you were prescribed or if you're combining alternative and conventional treatments.

3. Fact. Though some supplements prove helpful, use caution, especially if your asthma is allergic. Therapies derived from plants can cause skin rashes or respiratory symptoms. For example, echinacea—commonly taken to ward off colds—is in the same family as ragweed. It can trigger allergies in those with hay fever. Butterbur has been shown to cause itchy skin and eyes along with asthma symptoms when taken by mouth. Green tea has been linked to coughs. Talk with your doctor if you have nasal, sinus, or other respiratory problems after taking natural remedies. •

Articles in this magazine are written by professional journalists or physicians who strive to present reliable, up-to-date health information. Our articles are reviewed by medical professionals for accuracy and appropriateness. No magazine, however, can replace the care and advice of medical professionals, and readers are cautioned to seek such help for personal problems.

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In Their Words: Great Savings for USA+ Members

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"IT'S ENORMOUSLY COMFORTING TO KNOW THAT USA+ stands behind me, EAGER AND WILLING TO HELP AT ALL TIMES."

medical claims payments. For Sandy, these payments have been crucially important in staying above the poverty line and enjoying a comfortable life style. "As a medical patient with a potentially disabling illness," explains the 46-year-old homemaker, "it's enormously comforting to know that USA+ stands behind me, eager and willing to help at all times."

Sandra Regan

USA+ member since December, 2005

Like Julius Sughrue, fellow cystic fibrosis patient Sandy Regan in Boca Raton, Florida says she has also been able to manage her illness successfully for many years, thanks in part to the quick efficient service that she receives as a member of USA+.

"My membership in USA+ has been extremely helpful for me as a chronic illness patient," says Sandy, a skilled long-distance runner who specializes in 13-mile "half marathons" and loves the "terrific feeling of accomplishment you get when you cross that finish line."

"My medical bills are paid on time, first time and every time," she adds, while estimating that her USA+ membership has so far netted her more than \$30,000 in

says she was "enormously relieved" a few months ago when her membership in USA+ brought her a major benefit. "I had to get an MRI for my brain injury," says Karen, a former mortgage loan processor who was hurt when her car slid across an icy bridge. "The bill was \$1200, and I wasn't sure it would be covered. In spite of my health issue, I live a very active, vigorous lifestyle – and I need my money for other things beside medical bills."

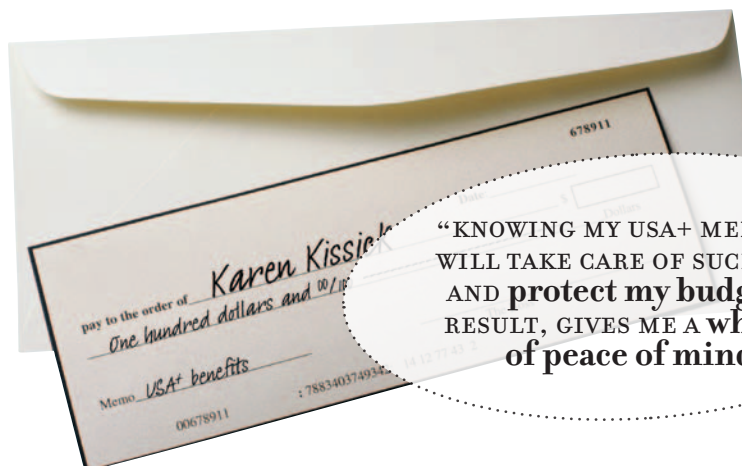
"But the check came right away, and I felt better fast," she says. "Knowing my USA+ membership will take care of such bills, and protect my budget as a result, gives me a whole lot of peace of mind!" •

Karen Kissick

USA+ member since September, 2006

In Indianapolis, Indiana, meanwhile, a 53-year-old homemaker named Karen Kissick

Want to share your experience as a USA+ member? We'd love to hear from you. Please give us a call at 1-800-872-1187.



"KNOWING MY USA+ MEMBERSHIP WILL TAKE CARE OF SUCH BILLS, AND protect my budget AS A RESULT, GIVES ME A whole lot of peace of mind!"