



Since 1976  
Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association

## Please, don't clean your plate! When it comes to portions, size matters

Twenty years ago, a fast-food cheeseburger had about 330 calories. Today's cheeseburger has nearly 600 calories. What happened? The burger got bigger. So did the fries, dessert and drink.

**Fact:** Americans have gotten bigger too. About 65 percent of adults, age 20 and older, are overweight or obese, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates. Part of the reason is the larger portions we eat at home and in restaurants.

"Americans have steadily increased their daily calorie consumption over the last 20 years, and calories add up to pounds," says Charles Fazio, MD, Senior Medical Officer at Medica. "One issue in weight control is what we eat, but maybe a more important one is how much of anything we eat."

### When eating in:

- ▶ Eat slowly and savor your food.
- ▶ Read nutrition information to determine correct portion amounts.
- ▶ Use a small bowl or plate for snacks. Or buy single-serving sizes.
- ▶ When you want a second helping, make it fruits or vegetables.

### When eating out:

- ▶ Do not order extra-large servings.
- ▶ Put down your fork, spoon or sandwich after every bite.
- ▶ Share your entrée with a friend. Or put half in a take-home box before you start eating.
- ▶ Stop eating when you feel full.

Remember: You are *what* you eat and *how much* you eat.



## WHAT DOES YOUR GUT TELL YOU?

Having a "tummy" or "beer belly" may indicate more than a weight problem. It could be a sign that you are at increased risk for heart disease.

**Fact:** Men with the largest bellies are 42 percent more likely to have heart disease, while the largest-bellied women have a 44 percent higher risk of heart disease, according to study results published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*.

Other studies have also noted the danger of abdominal fat. A woman whose waist is larger than 35 inches and a man whose waist is more than 40 inches may be more likely than other obese people to develop weight-related health problems, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disorders.

## CONTENTS

### Your Medica, Pages 2 & 7

- > A message from  
Lynn Gruber
- > MCHA 2006  
Survey Results
- > Ask the Pharmacist

### Your Health, Pages 3 & 4

- > Organic — Worth the cost?
- > Eat more, weigh less
- > ABCs of HRT

### Your Benefits, Pages 5 & 6

- > Buzzwords
- > Where there's smoke ...

### Your Resources, Page 8

- > Phone numbers
- > Did you know?

## MCHA — Medica CallLink Nurse Line

MCHA — Medica CallLink® nurse line gives MCHA enrollees access to a wide range of services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

### How does MCHA — Medica CallLink work?

Call the toll-free number to speak with a registered nurse. You can ask health questions, learn self-care tips or get information appropriate for your situation.

Please turn to page 2

## MCHA 2006 CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY RESULTS



During 2006, MCHA conducted automated Customer Satisfaction Surveys to identify our strengths and weaknesses. If you called MCHA Customer Service, you may have been randomly contacted. Approximately 800 MCHA members responded to our survey, and we appreciate your time and valuable feedback. While we understand that the automated survey is a concern to some, this tool allows us to survey more members and compile more insightful results.

The survey focused on how quickly calls are answered, Customer Service courtesy and issue resolution: 87 percent felt Customer Service met or exceeded expectations in how quickly calls were answered; 94 percent felt the Customer Care associates were courteous and respectful; and 90 percent felt the associates were knowledgeable about MCHA's products and services.

In addition, 88 percent said their questions were answered, and 78 percent felt their Customer Service issue was resolved.

MCHA will continue to conduct surveys and monitor your comments to improve the quality of our service. Should you receive a telephone call from MCHA in the future, please take the time to tell us about your experience. We value your feedback.

## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN by Lynn R. Gruber



Dear MCHA Member:

► **Federal Grant Awarded** — MCHA was awarded a federal grant September 30, 2006, that allows us to offer a premium subsidy program in Spring 2007 and helps to offset the plan's operating losses. The grant funds are limited and will be offered to MCHA members that meet certain income guidelines. **An information and application packet for the premium subsidy program will be mailed in May.**

► **MCHA Premium Rates** — Minnesota law requires MCHA premium rates to be set between 101 percent and 125 percent of the average premium of comparable individual policies sold in Minnesota's private market. Minnesota Commerce Commissioner Glenn Wilson is authorized to accept, reject or modify the proposed premium rates presented to him by the MCHA Board of Directors. His decision will be announced by mid-May, and approved rates will go into effect July 1, 2007. Thanks to all who sent us their comments or attended our meetings.

► **Wellness Program** — The MCHA Board of Directors and our plan administrator, Medica, are reviewing "wellness" programs designed to help MCHA members achieve improved health. Obesity has become far too common in American youth and adults. Weight that exceeds medical guidelines — combined with a lack of exercise and good nutrition — can result in hypertension, diabetes and heart disease.

### CallLink nurse line ... from page one

#### Can you help me find a physician?

Referral specialists are available to help you find a physician or, if necessary, an urgent care facility in Medica's provider network. The specialist will help you find up to three providers who match the search criteria you specify. These providers are selected on a rotating basis, and the service is free to both providers and callers.

#### What other CallLink options are available?

The audio Health Information Library allows you to listen to recorded health and well-being messages. Simply call the same number. Topics range from Aging Well to Women's Health, with approximately 1,100 different messages to choose from.

#### Is there a Web site?

Yes: **HealthForums.com**<sup>SM</sup> provides health and well-being news, resources such as interactive health tools, discussion groups and live events, as well as fitness and other health information.

**MCHA — Medica CallLink nurse line** — we're here for you 24 hours every day. **1-800-962-9497**. TTY callers, call the National Relay Center at **1-800-855-2880** and ask for **1-800-962-9497**.

Always seek the advice of your physician or a qualified health provider regarding a medical condition. This service is not intended to provide a medical diagnosis or treatment. The information that will be provided to you will be prepared by Optum® and, as a result, MCHA and Medica take no responsibility for the content of the information.

## Eat more *and* lose weight? Bring it on!

You want to lose weight. But you are tired of dieting and you are hungry!

Well, try this fresh approach to weight management: Eat more, weigh less. The key is to trade the sweets, salty snacks and fatty meats for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Fruits and veggies are packed with flavor and nutrients, but they're skinny on fat, sodium and cholesterol. Look at these examples:

### Fruits

- ▶ 1 medium banana = 105 calories = 1/2 plain fast food burger
- ▶ 1 medium apple = 72 calories = 1/4 cup chocolate ice cream
- ▶ 1 medium peach = 58 calories = 1/3 ounce potato chips

### Vegetables

- ▶ 1 cup carrot sticks = 50 calories = 1 sandwich cookie
- ▶ 1 cup raw broccoli = 31 calories = 1/2 mini blueberry muffin
- ▶ 1/2 cup cucumber slices = 8 calories = about three M&M candies

There's another reason to fill up on fruits and veggies: You'll get vitamins, minerals and fiber that may lower your risk for stroke, heart disease and even certain cancers.

Eat more, eat smarter. Put some healthy greens, blues, oranges, yellows, reds and purples on your plate every day.



**Tip:** To maintain your weight, eat only enough calories to “fuel” you through the day. The amount depends on your age, gender and activity level.

## Eating for two may be too much

Pregnancy is no time to go on a diet. Nor is it an excuse to eat everything in sight. Weight gain is natural when you are expecting, but the amount depends on your pre-pregnancy weight. Here are general guidelines from the March of Dimes:

Your weight before pregnancy	Amount you should gain during pregnancy
Normal	25 to 35 pounds
Overweight	15 to 25 pounds
Underweight	28 to 40 pounds

Managing your weight during pregnancy can help protect your health and your unborn baby's health. It can also help you lose those extra pounds after you give birth.

### Get the help you need

Medica's Healthy Pregnancy program offers information, support and more for expectant moms. Register at [www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com) > *Member Resources* > *Pregnancy* or call **952-992-3390** or **1-888-992-3875**.

## IT'S NOT CHEAP BEING GREEN

From fruits to soups, organic options are now offered in every aisle of the supermarket. You may have wondered what all the hype is about.

Organic foods are produced, processed and handled differently than “conventional” foods. For example, organic farmers use techniques that encourage environmental protection and conservation. They avoid chemical fertilizers, pesticides and weed killer. Only products that meet strict federal standards may carry the “USDA organic” label. Growing food under these restrictions is usually more expensive.

Organic foods are not proven to be safer or more nutritious than conventional foods. However, many people are willing to pay more because they find organic foods tastier and they wish to support organic farming methods.

### Tips for going organic:

- > Products promoted as “hormone-free,” “free-range” or “all natural” are not necessarily organic.
- > Some organic foods may still contain a lot of calories, sugar, salt or fat. Read nutrition labels.
- > Wash all fruits and vegetables before eating or cooking them.

LEAVE THREE  
LEAVES ALONE!

After you kill a poison ivy plant, how long should you wait before you touch it?

- A) One month
- B) One year
- C) More than a year

If you guessed “C,” congratulations! The plant’s oil can cause a rash up to *five years* after the plant has died.

Poison ivy — as well as its evil sibling, poison oak — are common in our area. So stay alert and avoid these three-leafed plants. If you may have been exposed to them, wash the affected skin with soap and cold water as soon as possible.

**Tip:** Never burn poison ivy. The smoke can carry the oil into your nose, mouth, lungs and eyes.

## Is hormone therapy right for me?

To start or not? To continue or stop? Will it help me? Could it harm me?

Women have been asking these questions since 2002, when the National Institutes of Health halted a large study of hormone replacement therapy (HRT). It was determined that HRT may increase some women’s risk for stroke, heart disease and breast cancer.

For many women, however, HRT can provide much-needed relief during the transition into and through menopause. Menopause symptoms for some women go beyond hot flashes to include sleep disturbance, irritability, depression and decreased cognition. HRT also reduces the risk of osteoporosis.

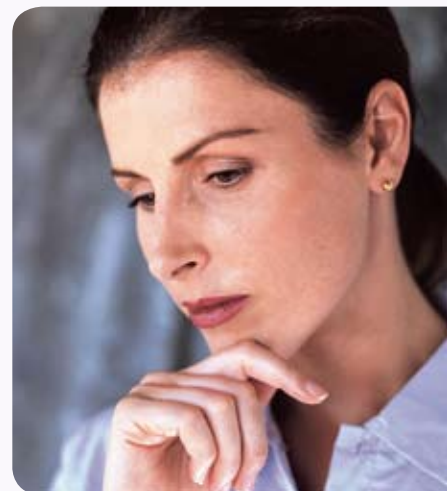
You and your doctor should carefully consider HRT’s potential risks and benefits **for you**. For example, HRT may be appropriate if you suffer from severe symptoms of menopause or have high risk for osteoporosis. But it may not be appropriate if you have had breast cancer.

## Ask your doctor

- ▶ What are the potential risks and benefits of HRT for me?
- ▶ If I decide to start HRT, when should I begin?
- ▶ How long should I continue HRT?
- ▶ Which type of HRT would you recommend?
- ▶ What side effects could I experience?
- ▶ What else should I know before making a decision?

## Explore other resources

- ▶ **www.medlineplus.gov:** National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health
- ▶ **www.acog.org:** American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- ▶ **www.menopause.org:** North American Menopause Society



## NEWS TO MAKE YOUR BODY HAPPY



## Healthy meals:

You’re a grown-up. So eat like one! Adults who have kids under age 17 tend to eat more dietary fat than other adults. They also may eat more ice cream, sweets, pizza and other unhealthy foods. Keep “kid snacks” out of the house, for your sake and the kids’.

Source: *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*.



## Fast food:

Is fast food “fat food?” In an *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* study of about 3,400 young adults, the more fast food the average participant ate, the more his or her body mass index (BMI) grew. However, eating in traditional restaurants was not closely related to a higher BMI, according to study findings.



## Praying online:

Praying with an online support group may help breast cancer patients cope better with their illness. A report in *Psycho-Oncology* found that language reflecting religious faith may help patients experience benefits, such as reduced negativity and enhanced confidence, that they can face the fight against cancer.

## Take your medicine: Trying to save could cost you more than money

What's your favorite excuse for not taking medicine? Whatever it is, it's not good enough. It is important for you to take your medicine as your doctor tells you to — especially for conditions such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, depression and infections.

*Excuse: "I feel better, so I don't need my medicine anymore."*

**Think about this:** Your body may not be fully recovered from the illness. Stop taking your medicine and you could get sick again. If the medicine is for a chronic disease, your body may need the medicine to keep feeling well and to prevent symptoms.

*Excuse: "Medicine is too expensive."*

**Think about this:** Compare the cost of your medicine with the cost (and inconvenience) of another trip to your doctor or the emergency room — or even a hospital stay — because you get sick again.

*Excuse: "My medicine isn't working."*

**Think about this:** Some medicines take longer to "kick in." In some cases, the proof of a medicine working well is that you feel normal. If you really think your medicine isn't working, call your doctor or pharmacist.

*Excuse: "I don't like to take pills."*

**Think about this:** If you have a problem swallowing a pill, medicines come in different forms. If you simply don't like taking medicine, remember: We want the end result, which is better health and better function.

*Excuse: "I forgot to refill my prescription."*

**Think about this:** Ask if your pharmacy has a "refill reminder" program. Or make a note on your calendar when it's time to refill.



## COST-SAVING TIP



### Check the network

Your doctor should refer you to a network provider when you need specialty care. Still, it won't hurt to make sure the specialist is in Medica's network. Doing so will help ensure that you have the highest benefit level. For a list of network providers, check your member documents or Find A Doctor at [www.medica.com](http://www.medica.com).

## SIMPLE RULES FOR TAKING YOUR MEDICATION

- 1) Set out your daily medication every morning.
- 2) Plan out when to take your medication. Some medications are best taken on an empty stomach, others after eating.
- 3) Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about any side effects that concern you.
- 4) If you have a problem with your medication — including a money problem — talk to your doctor. Don't just stop taking it.

**Remember:** Medication safety is in your hands.

## BUZZWORDS

**Health care provider:** Anyone who gives you care. This could be a doctor, nurse, therapist or other medical professional.

**Primary care provider:** The doctor (or nurse practitioner) you choose to coordinate all of your care. Your regular doctor should provide routine checkups and non-emergency care. He or she will also refer you to a specialist as needed.

**Specialist:** A doctor who practices in a specialized field of medicine. Surgeons, cardiologists and urologists are a few kinds of specialists. Be sure you know if you need a referral from your regular doctor before you see a specialist.



## DEALING WITH BULLIES — HELP YOUR CHILD DO IT!



Bullies have been talking tough and picking fights for many generations. But your child still should not have to put up with a bully.

**If your child is being bullied, offer this advice:**

- > Talk with your child. Show your concern and support.
- > Ask questions. Or use drawings or puppets to help a young child talk about being bullied.
- > Call your child's teacher or principal about the problem.
- > Make sure your child knows not to fight back or get revenge on a bully.
- > Teach your child coping skills. For example, your child should try to stay with a group or take a different way to school.

Being bullied can make your child feel scared and alone. So make sure he or she has chances to build self-confidence. Encourage your child to explore new interests, talents and friendships.

## Luke D. Loon's Kids' Stuff

### Something's in the air And it may make you sneeze!

*Achoo!* Does that sound like you? If it does, you might have an allergy.

A lot of people suffer from allergies in the spring. That's because trees, flowers and grass make more pollen this time of year. Pollen is like a dust that comes from plants. Many people are allergic to it.

There is an allergy for just about everything. You might be allergic to dust — or even dogs and cats!

If you have allergies, try to stay away from whatever causes them. You might save yourself some sneezes.



## New benefits help you kick the habit

### Where there's smoke, there's Medica to help you quit

Pills and patches and gums ... oh, my! Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) can greatly boost your chances of quitting smoking. Now, all Medica members have expanded NRT benefits. The pharmacy program now includes NRT inhaler, nasal spray and the new FDA-approved NRT Chantix (pill).

**Fact:** In studies, 24 percent of people who used Chantix to stop smoking were still smoke-free after one year. That compared to 16 percent who used another popular stop-smoking medication and 10 percent who received a placebo.

*Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration*



### Why NRT?

Using tobacco causes your body to crave the nicotine that's in tobacco. Your body then becomes addicted to the nicotine, and dependent upon tobacco to calm the craving for nicotine. NRT eases your cravings and other withdrawal symptoms. Using NRT, along with stop-smoking counseling, can increase the likelihood of success even more.

**Fact:** Nicotine replacement therapy plus quit-tobacco counseling may increase your chance of success sixfold.

*Source: Archives of Internal Medicine, 2003*

### Which option is right for me?

Your experience of kicking the tobacco habit will be as unique as you are. Your doctor can help find the best course of NRT for you. Free & Clear®, Medica's quit-tobacco program, will help you work with your doctor to find the right NRT for you.

Call Medica Customer Service to learn about your NRT benefits and other ways we can help you quit smoking. Or for more information about Free & Clear, call **1-866-QUIT-4-LIFE (1-866-784-8454)**. As a Medica benefit, Free & Clear is offered to you at no cost.

**Quitting tobacco may be the best decision you will ever make. Do it for you; do it for your loved ones.**

## Thump-thump, thump-thump, thump-thump: Heart health news you just can't beat

The number one cause of death in America isn't cancer or stroke. It's heart disease.

Are you leading a heart-healthy life? How many of the following statements are true of you?

- I do not smoke.** Smoking is a leading cause of heart disease.

*Action item:* If you smoke, see page 6 to learn how Medica can help you quit.

- I see my doctor regularly** for checkups, including blood pressure and cholesterol screenings.

- I exercise at least 30 minutes most days.**

*Action item:* If you are not physically active, ask your doctor about a safe, effective exercise program for you.

- I maintain a healthy weight.** Excess body weight makes your heart work harder.

- I follow my care plan** for conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol (if applicable).



If you marked all of the statements, congratulations! Keep in mind that factors such as your age and family health history can also affect your heart disease risk. If you did not mark all of the statements, talk to your doctor about how you can lead a heart-healthier lifestyle.

**Fact:** Nearly 700,000 people die of heart disease in the United States each year.

*Source:* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## ASK THE PHARMACIST



### Q: Will Medica pay for allergy medicine I buy at the drugstore?

**A:** Your Medica pharmacy benefits cover certain over-the-counter (OTC) allergy medicines as long as you follow **all three** of these steps:

- 1) Make sure the medicine is on Medica's drug formulary;
- 2) Ask your doctor to write a prescription for the medicine; and
- 3) Have the prescription filled at a Medica network pharmacy.

**Hint:** You can find an up-to-date drug formulary and network pharmacy listing at [www.myMedica.com](http://www.myMedica.com).

**Please Note:** Loratadine and loratadine/pseudoephedrine are included on Medica's drug formulary. These are popular generic antihistamines used to treat allergy symptoms. They are sold as Alavert®, Claritin®, Claritin-D® 12 Hour and Claritin-D 24 Hour, as well as under many generic and store brand names.

Medica will not pay for any OTC medicine you buy without a prescription. Clarinex® is not on Medica's drug formulary.

CORCHOICES:  
NO COST, NO  
COOKIE CUTTERS



Cookie cutters are great when you're baking treats. But they're no good when you need help managing a chronic illness.

Medica's CorChoices® program doesn't take a cookie-cutter approach to disease management. It gives you personalized help with common chronic illnesses, including:

- > Asthma (children)
- > Coronary artery disease
- > Congestive heart failure
- > Diabetes (adults)

CorChoices includes one-on-one counseling, a 24-hour nurse line, a phone-based library of health information and more. There is no cost to eligible members.

Call **952-992-8460** or **1-888-365-8240** for help.

And leave the cookie cutters in the kitchen.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Metro: **952-945-8000** — Regional: **1-800-952-3455**  
 TTY: **952-992-3190** (metro), **1-800-841-6753** (regional)  
 Individual plans: **952-992-1805** (metro), **1-866-894-8051** (regional)

**MEDICA CALLLINK®** *Physician referral or speak with a nurse, 24 hours a day*  
 General: **1-800-962-9497** — TTY National Relay Center: **1-800-855-2880**  
 (ask for **1-800-962-9497**)

**UNITED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**  
 General: **1-800-848-8327** — TTY: **1-800-543-7162**

**MEDICA'S FRAUD HOTLINE**  
 24-hour English/Spanish language fraud hotline **952-992-2237** or **1-866-821-1331**  
 For the Russian language fraud hotline, call **952-992-3893**  
 For the Somali language fraud hotline, call **952-992-3214**

**DISEASE MANAGEMENT**  
Medica CorChoices<sup>SM</sup> *Diabetes, congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease, childhood asthma*  
 General: **952-992-8460** or **1-888-365-8240**  
 MCHA: **1-800-775-3422**

Medica AccordantCare<sup>TM</sup> *Chronic conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease* **1-866-217-2919**

Health Advantage by Medica® *Personalized depression management*  
**1-866-658-4662**

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**Healthy Attitudes<sup>TM</sup>**  
**MEDICA®**

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 Minneapolis, MN 55440-9310  
[www.myMedica.com](http://www.myMedica.com)

**DID YOU KNOW?**



**> 50 million**  
 Number of Americans who suffer from chronic pain due to a disease, disorder or accident (see page 2).

*Source: American Academy of Pain Management*

**> 33 pounds**  
 Amount of bananas the average American eats per year (see page 3).

*Source: Dole Food Company*

**> 70%**  
 Percentage of current smokers who want to quit (see page 6).

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005 survey*

*Attention. If you want free help translating this information, call 1-800-952-3455. This information is available to people with disabilities by calling 952-992-2322 (voice), or 1-800-952-3455 (toll free), or 952-992-2357, or 1-800-234-8819 (TTY), or 711, or through the Minnesota Relay at 1-877-627-3848 (speech to speech relay service).*

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