



Lifestyles for **Heart Disease**

Watch your blood pressure at home

As you get ready for the holidays and the stress that comes with this time of year, it's important to know where you stand in terms of your blood pressure. Monitoring yourself at home can keep you on track between doctor visits and throughout the season.

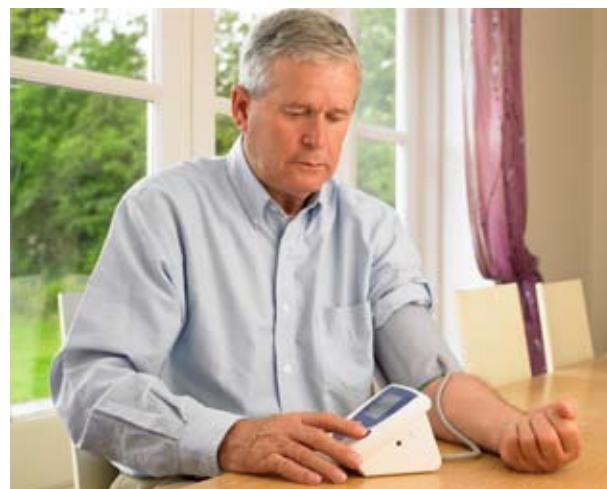
With home monitoring, you can help your doctor decide whether your treatment plan is working. It helps you feel more in control of your own health, too.

Blood pressure monitors come in two forms: aneroid and digital. Aneroid monitors come with a stethoscope and arm cuff that inflates by squeezing a rubber bulb. Digital monitors have a built in stethoscope and a screen that displays your reading. Some have cuffs that inflate automatically.

Both types of monitors can be found at Michigan Wright & Filippis stores, where you can show your Blues ID card and save 20 percent on all home medical equipment not covered by your health coverage, including blood pressure kits.

Some tips for measuring your blood pressure:

- Avoid alcohol, caffeine or smoking for at least 30 minutes before reading.
- Make sure your bladder is empty. A full bladder can change your reading.
- Sit comfortably for three to five minutes with feet flat on the floor.



- Rest your forearm on the table with your palm facing up.

Take your readings with you to your next office visit and review the numbers with your doctor. Remember: monitoring your blood pressure at home should never take the place of seeing your doctor.

Source: *Health A to Z*

Get moving to lower your cholesterol

Why is exercise so good for the heart? It increases the HDL (good) cholesterol and lowers the LDL (bad) cholesterol, which prevents fatty buildup inside the arteries.

Need to add a little more exercise into your daily routine? Here are a few tips to get you on your way:

- Start slowly at first; warm up in the beginning; go at a faster pace in the middle; and cool down at the end.

- Walk with friends, coworkers or pets to keep motivated.
- Count your steps using a pedometer. Try to take at least 2,000 more steps a day than you usually do, and gradually increase your steps.
- Wake up a little earlier and stretch before getting in the shower.
- Move while you watch TV. Jog in place during commercials.
- Play games with your kids. Play tag or just toss a ball back and forth. If your kids like video games, check out the Nintendo Wii®. With this interactive gaming system, the whole family can play games like tennis, golf and bowling that get you off the couch.
- Exercise while you work. Do neck rolls or arm raises (push hands out to the side and then up toward the ceiling).
- Always check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

Source: Health A to Z

Think about your drink

The holidays are just around the corner and the key to a safe celebration is drinking in moderation. For most people, this means no more than one drink a day for women, and no more than two drinks a day for men.



Resist the pressure to drink at each event. If you find that you have trouble controlling your alcohol use during the holidays, or any other time, seek help. Behavioral health care is available for conditions that cause emotional or mental distress. To reach the Behavioral Health Services department, call the number on the back of your ID card.

Planning on throwing a holiday party? Make your event a safe one by following these tips:

- Don't make alcohol the main focus of the celebration. Have music, dancing, games, food and conversation.
- Serve an attractive selection of nonalcoholic beverages. Offer coffee, tea, pop, cider, fruit punch, juice or flavored water.
- Appoint a bartender to monitor guests' drinking and serve measured drinks. Instruct them not to serve anyone who seems to have had too much or who is younger than 21.
- Stop serving alcohol at least one hour before the party ends.
- Do not let anyone drive drunk. Arrange for a ride with a sober driver.

Don't let the holidays get you down

Holidays are times for celebration with family and friends, but for many people this time of year can be stressful, even depressing.

Symptoms of the holiday blues include:

- Trouble sleeping
- Lack of interest in activities that usually make you happy
- Crying for no reason
- Feeling hopeless or worthless

Holiday depression often begins around Thanksgiving and lasts to the new year. In most instances, medication is not needed. Keeping stress in check helps avoid holiday depression.

Do your best to avoid the stress:

- Set realistic goals. Make a list of what is important to you. Learn to say "no" if you can't meet a request.
- Enjoy the present and forget the past. Create new holiday traditions.
- Try to get along with your family. This is not the time to resolve family problems.



- Keeping your hands away from your face and mouth
- Reminding your children or others who live with you to practice healthy habits
- Getting a flu shot at your doctor's office (Copayments and deductibles may apply.)
- Getting a pneumococcal shot, especially if you're older than 65. Pneumococcal disease is an infection that can affect your lungs, brain and blood.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Volunteer to help others. Organizations need people to visit the sick, deliver food and serve holiday meals.
- Enjoy holiday activities such as building a snowman, ice skating, sledding, caroling and looking at holiday lights and decorations.
- Eat healthy. Alcohol and sugar cause fatigue and irritability. If you drink, do it in moderation.
- Excessive drinking doesn't solve problems and makes you feel worse.
- Avoid spending too much on gifts or entertaining. Set a budget and follow it. Money worries cause stress.
- Get enough sleep so you have the energy to cope with holiday demands.
- Make time to relax by yourself. Have fun doing activities you enjoy. Try doing something new.
- Stay focused on positive things. Surround yourself with supportive, caring people who make you feel good.

Source: Health A to Z

Stay healthy this flu season


The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu shot each fall. About two weeks after the shot, antibodies develop to protect you against the influenza virus.

You can also protect yourself during the flu season by:

- Avoiding people who are ill
- Covering your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough
- Washing your hands often
- Using hand sanitizers when soap and water are not available

Symptoms of the flu:

- High fever
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Stomach symptoms (more common in children)



Checkups

Have you had the following screenings, exams and shots within the last year?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Total cholesterol	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LDL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HDL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Blood pressure
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Triglycerides	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flu shot
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complete a health risk appraisal test.	

These are general suggestions. Check with your primary care physician about how often you need these services.

Also, check with you doctor to see if your pneumonia shot is up to date.



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How to reach us

If you have any questions about this program, if you feel you have received this information in error or if you would prefer not to receive more information, call the Disease Management department. Please call to inquire about our resources for members with special needs.

Disease Management programs

800-392-4247

800-257-9980 (TTY)

8:30 a.m. to 5 pm. Monday through Friday

Customer Service

Call the number on the back of your ID card

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