

# HEALTH REPORT

FALL 2013



## Why You Never Outgrow An Annual Checkup

Make the most of your yearly appointment.

**Y**ou're never too big to benefit from an annual checkup. If you're due—or overdue—call your doctor's office to schedule an appointment. Though fitting in an appointment takes some effort, regular visits to a primary care physician can help your long-term health. Here's how:

### Preventing disease before it starts.

Your doctor can prescribe medications and make recommendations to help you reduce your risk of all kinds of diseases.

**Catching problems early.** Your physician may notice changes, symptoms and patterns over time that can lead to an early diagnosis. In many cases, this can improve your chances of finding an effective treatment.

**Coordinating care.** Your doctor can provide a referral for more specialized care when you need it.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

Here are some of the important screenings and procedures your primary care physician may provide at an annual visit:

- Cancer screenings help catch the disease early, when it's most treatable.
- Blood pressure and cholesterol screenings help measure your heart disease risk.
- Blood sugar screenings can show if you're at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. If you have diabetes, your doctor can prescribe medications and offer guidance and resources to help you manage it.
- Vaccines provide protection from serious illnesses in adulthood. Your doctor checks that you're up to date on important boosters and annual vaccines.

## 5 QUESTIONS For Your Doctor

Schedule your annual physical today, and bring this list of five key questions.

- 1. What are my risk factors for heart disease?** Ask what your body mass index (BMI), blood pressure and cholesterol numbers are—and what they should be.
- 2. Am I due for any screenings or vaccines?** If you haven't been to the doctor in a while, you may need to catch up.
- 3. Should I be taking any medications?** Your doctor may prescribe cholesterol or blood-pressure reducing medications to help lower your risk of heart disease. Make sure he or she knows about any supplements or medications you are already taking.
- 4. How does my family history affect my disease risk?** Based on your family's health history, your doctor may adjust your screening schedule or prescribe medications to help reduce your risk of certain problems.
- 5. What lifestyle changes should I make?** Your doctor can look at the big picture and suggest how you can reduce your risk of disease in the future. So take notes—then follow through.

## 3 WAYS TO FIGHT FLU

There's still a lot to enjoy this fall—from cooler weather and changing leaves to football season—so don't let the flu spoil it. There are many ways to reduce your chances of catching the bug or spreading it to someone else. Here are some recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- 1. Get a flu shot.** The flu vaccine will protect you against the viruses that are expected to be most common this season.
- 2. Practice good hygiene.** Wash your hands with soap and hot water frequently throughout the day—not just before meals—and avoid touching your face. Spray hand-sanitizer on high-traffic surfaces at home and at work, such as phones, light switches and doorknobs.
- 3. Don't spread it around.** If you do catch the flu, protect those around you by staying home until 24 hours after your fever is gone. And always cough into your sleeve—not your hands.



## Stay Safe Behind the Wheel

Avoid distracted driving to protect your family.

**T**hough it may seem harmless to send a quick text or eat a snack behind the wheel, distracted driving contributed to 387,000 injuries and 3,331 deaths in 2011, the most recent year these statistics are available.

Distracted driving happens whenever you do anything that takes your eyes off the road. Texting while driving is the most dangerous distraction. On average, sending a text takes your eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, that's the equivalent of driving the length of a football field—with your eyes closed.

To protect your family from the real dangers of distracted driving, follow these steps:

- 1. Have a family meeting to discuss distracted driving.** Share facts and statistics, watch videos and talk about your own experiences driving distracted.
- 2. Sign the pledge.** Download a pledge form at [distraction.gov](http://distraction.gov) and have every member of your family sign it. Share ideas for staying

focused, like turning your phone on silent when you put your seat belt on.

- 3. Check in on each other.** It can be hard to break a bad habit. When you catch yourself or someone in your family sending a text while driving, talk about it and refocus on your pledge.



## Easy Does It: Low-Impact Fitness

Running is great exercise, but all that pounding on the pavement can feel rough on your joints. The good news is that there are plenty of effective, low-impact exercises out there to help you burn calories and build endurance.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

**ELLIPTICAL MACHINES.** Adjust the incline and resistance as your endurance improves to keep your workout challenging.

**CYCLING.** Take a ride outside in the fresh air, or sign up for a high-energy indoor cycling class.

**SWIMMING.** Get a total body tone-up and feel refreshed when you hop out of the pool.

**HIKING.** If you're lucky enough to live near rocky terrain, enjoy this calorie-blasting, leg-shaping workout with a view.



## This Is Still Your Year to Quit

**W**as quitting smoking one of your resolutions in 2013? There's still time to make good on your commitment—and more ways than ever to help you do it.

Here are a few strategies that can help you succeed once and for all. Remember, you may need to use more than one approach to have the best chance of success.

**Distractions.** Nicotine-free e-cigarettes and sugar-free lollipops can give you something to pass between your hands and mouth to keep them busy.

**Nicotine replacements.** Available as a patch, gum, lozenge, inhaler or nasal spray, nicotine replacements can double your chances of quitting successfully.

**Medication.** Taking Wellbutrin®, Zyban® or Chantix®—or a combination of one of these with a nicotine replacement—could further increase your chances of success.

**Counseling.** Whether in person or over the phone, counseling can double your chances of quitting successfully. Call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** for free telephone counseling or a referral to a counselor in your area. When combined with medication, this option is the most successful.

**Support groups.** Ask your local hospital about smoking cessation support groups or check out an online support forum, like **quitnet.com**.

Don't let another year go by. Talk to your doctor or visit **smokefree.gov** to learn more.

## His-and-Hers Signs of Heart Attack

Men and women are different—even in the way they experience heart attacks. Here are the four most common symptoms and how they may be experienced differently by gender.

- **Chest pressure, squeezing, fullness or discomfort.** This is the most common symptom among both men and women. Pain may be constant or on-and-off.
- **Pain or discomfort in the neck, jaw, stomach, arms or back.** Women are more likely than men to experience back or jaw pain.
- **Shortness of breath.** Women are more likely than men to experience this symptom.
- **Cold sweats, nausea, vomiting or light-headedness.** Women are more likely than men to experience nausea or vomiting.

### WHAT NEXT?

If you suspect you may be having a heart attack, take action. First, call **911** and tell the operator you believe you're having a heart attack. Never try to drive yourself to the hospital.

## Study: Overweight Kids Have a Higher Asthma Risk

Is your child carrying around a few extra pounds? If so, here's one more reason to help him or her get down to a healthier weight: A recent study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* found that overweight children were 1.16 times more likely to develop asthma—and obese children were 1.37 times more likely to do so.

Asthma is a condition in which airways narrow and swell, causing wheezing, coughing and difficulty breathing. Asthma currently affects more than 7 million children in the US.

Overweight and obese children have an increased risk of other health problems as well, like high blood pressure, high cholesterol,

pre-diabetes and joint problems. In the long-term, overweight and obese children are at greater risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, arthritis and certain cancers.

If you think your child may need to lose weight, talk to your doctor about how to help him or her achieve and maintain a healthy weight.



### Ingredients

- 1 lb. whole-wheat spaghetti, uncooked
- 1 10 oz. package frozen spinach, thawed, well drained
- 2 Tbsp. canola oil
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 Tbsp. chopped parsley
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. dried basil
- 2 Tbsp. margarine
- 1/3 cup water
- 2 oz. crumbled feta cheese

### Instructions

1. Combine spinach, oil, Parmesan, parsley, garlic and salt in a food processor or blender on medium speed until finely chopped.
2. Melt margarine in hot water and add to blender or food processor while running until blended.
3. Cook pasta according to directions and drain.
4. Toss mixture with cooked pasta and sprinkle feta cheese on top.

Serves 8

## Super Spinach

**P**opeye was right to keep countless cans of this super food on hand. Low in calories and packed with nutrients, spinach is an excellent source of vitamins A and K, iron and folic acid. It also contains fiber, magnesium and calcium, plus a hearty dose of health-boosting antioxidants.

To get more of this powerhouse veggie into your weekly menu, try using it in salads, tossing it into soups, layering it on sandwiches or adding it to omelets. Or try the recipe above.

This *Health Report* is being provided to you by the Northern Arizona Public Employers Benefit Trust and will be posted quarterly to our website. Its purpose is to keep you informed about current health and wellness topics that will help you and your family maintain good health and live healthy lifestyles.

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