



MASSACHUSETTS

SPRING 2013  
NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR OUR  
**MEDEX<sup>®</sup> PLAN MEMBERS**

# healthytimes

Take control of your health.

Welcome to the **NEW**  
*Healthy Times!*

Look inside →

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**Start Exercising**  
(and Feel Good!)

**Get Smart**  
**About Cataracts**

**Bladder Problems:**  
Common and  
Treatable

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# make the most of doctor visits

Take control of your health. Make sure you give and get the right information at your next visit.

**E**ating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and using medicines as directed can go a long way in improving your health. So can talking openly with your doctor.

To make the most of each of your doctor visits, plan ahead. Beforehand, write down your health concerns, noting when any symptoms started, how often they occur, and what eases them.

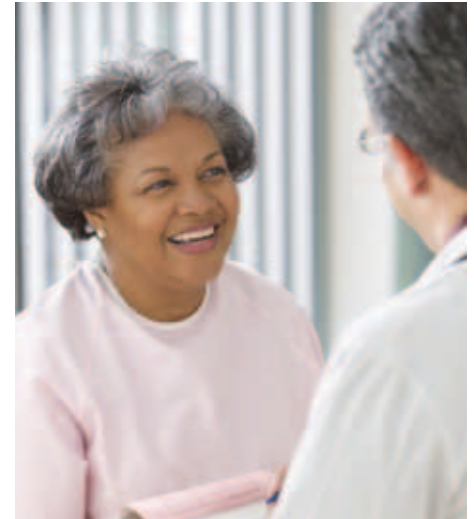
## What to bring

Bring the list of symptoms with you. You'll also want to bring a list of prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements you take, contact information for your other doctors, a list of your allergies, and important medical history.

## What to discuss

Here are a few more tips for building a solid relationship with your doctor. During your appointment:

- Be honest. Be prepared to discuss where you live, alcohol or tobacco use, your diet, sleeping habits, and any mobility issues. Discuss any chronic conditions you face.
- Take notes or ask your doctor to write down information for you. You might consider bringing a friend or family member to take notes.
- Ask plenty of questions. Don't hesitate to tell your doctor if you don't understand something.
- Call your doctor after your appointment if you have more questions, begin feeling worse, or have problems with medicines.



**At your appointments, always ask:**

1. What are my options?
2. What are the possible benefits and harms of those options?
3. How likely are the benefits and harms of each option to occur?



## good health starts with you

Keep reading to discover more ways to take control of your health. In this issue of the all-new *Healthy Times*, you'll learn about:

- Common health conditions and when to see the doctor
- The benefits of exercise
- A healthy recipe you can try today
- Perks that may be available to you as a member of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

➔ Go to [www.ahealthyme.com](http://www.ahealthyme.com) to find a complete guide to being well and staying healthy!

# what you can do about cataracts

Like smudges on a glass window, cataracts form on the lens of the eye, gradually limiting vision. Most people older than age 65 have cataracts to some degree.

## Reduce your risk

Some things place people at greater risk for cataracts, such as having diabetes or smoking. Ultraviolet rays from the sun may cause cataracts, too. Wearing a hat and sunglasses outdoors may reduce your risk of developing them.

## Be aware of changes

Cataracts progress slowly. Many people don't know they have cataracts until they have symptoms, such as:

- Blurred vision
- Difficulty seeing at night or in bright light

- Seeing halos around lights
- Dulling of colors, such as blues and reds

## Should you have surgery?

Talk with your doctor if you have vision problems. If you have cataracts, your doctor may recommend surgery. During surgery, the eye lens is replaced with an artificial plastic one.

Cataract surgery is one of the most common surgeries for people older than age 65 in the U.S. It's also extremely successful. More than 90 percent of people who have the surgery show an improvement in their vision.

But any surgery involves risks as well as benefits. Discuss all your treatment options with your doctor before making a decision.

## save on vision and hearing

Are you a direct-billed Medex Bronze or Medex Core plan member? The Medex Vision and Hearing Benefit Plan helps you more easily afford glasses and hearing aids. The cost of the Vision and Hearing Plan is \$7.67 per month for 2013. For more information, please call **1-800-678-2265 (TTY 1-800-522-1254)**, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

▶ Watch a short video on cataracts at [www.ahealthyme.com](http://www.ahealthyme.com). Search for "cataract animation."

## try this!

Can you spot the words in these scrambled letters? Hint: All the words appear somewhere on this page.

1. NIISVO
2. ATCRASCTA
3. EUGYRSR

Answers: 1. VISION, 2. CATARACTS, 3. SURGERY





# get fit for mind & body

You probably already know that exercise is good for your physical health. But did you know that staying active can also reduce your stress levels—and may even ward off depression? Now that’s something to smile about.

**T**here’s no shortage of reasons to exercise. Besides keeping your weight in check, it also lowers your risk for heart disease, stroke, some cancers, and type 2 diabetes.

Research shows that exercise may boost your mental health, too. It can ease anxiety and even reduce your

risk for depression. In some cases, it may work as well as antidepressant medications. Exercise reduces stress, improves self-esteem, and boosts your energy level.

### **What’s the link?**

Experts still aren’t sure exactly how physical activity is linked to mental

health. Several studies suggest that biological effects triggered by exercise might provide mental health benefits.

These biological effects include changes in the activity of the nervous system and the release of serotonin, endorphins, and other chemicals in the body.



## save on fitness

If you are a Medex Bronze or Medex Core member, you can save on fitness activities and health club membership fees. As of January 1, 2013, you can now save on fitness activities at a participating Council on Aging (COA) facility.

### **Where you can qualify**

A COA facility must offer fitness classes or have fitness equipment. Download a list of COAs at [www.mass.gov/elders/service-orgs-advocates/coa/](http://www.mass.gov/elders/service-orgs-advocates/coa/). (Please note: Not all COAs offer these services.)

You can also claim the benefit after participating in fitness activities at your local health club, YMCA, YWCA, or JCC.

### **How to start saving**

Make sure to get paperwork from your fitness center. Send it to us with the Medex fitness benefit form. This form is available at [www.bluecrossma.com/medicare](http://www.bluecrossma.com/medicare). Click “Member Resources,” then “Plan Documents.” Then scroll down to “2013 Medex Fitness Benefit Form.” You can receive up to \$150 per calendar year.



## did you know?

For every hour of walking, you may increase your life expectancy by up to two hours.

However, in one study, the social benefits of exercise appeared to play a larger role than exercise's physical effects in lowering depression risk. Those benefits included interacting with others and receiving support.

### Which type of exercise is best?

Studies show that both vigorous and moderate exercise can lift your spirits. Exercising for 20 to 40 minutes or more is better for reducing anxiety and increasing energy than shorter bouts of exercise.

### How often do I need to exercise?

Doctors don't yet know exactly how often you need to exercise for good mental health. But it seems that physical activity needs to be regular to combat stress, anxiety, and depression. Choose an exercise you enjoy. That way, you're more likely to make it a habit.

Here are a few tips for making exercise part of your regular routine:

- Exercise at a level that's right for you. Working too hard can make you feel worse instead of better.
- Change your outlook. Instead of thinking you don't have time to exercise, tell yourself that exercising gives you more energy so you can get more done.
- Maintain a regular schedule that's reasonable. Don't say you'll work out in the morning if you're not an early riser.
- To stay motivated, join a class or exercise with friends or family.

➤ **Take control of your health with exercise. Talk with your doctor about the benefits of regular exercise, ask questions, and develop a health and exercise plan that's right for you. For help setting and reaching your fitness goals, visit [www.bluecrossma.com/getactive](http://www.bluecrossma.com/getactive).**

## could you be depressed?

Staying fit can help combat depression. However, it's important to understand that depression is not a normal part of aging, is different from a case of the blues, and can have physical and mental effects. Read the following statements and place a checkmark next to any that apply to you.

Lately, I...

- Feel helpless, sad, or irritated for days at a time
- Have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Sleep too much
- Feel very tired and do not have a lot of energy
- Am not interested in visiting with family or friends
- Don't feel like participating in activities
- Can't concentrate on activities
- Eat far more or far less than usual
- Drink alcohol or take drugs
- Feel guilty or worthless
- Have thoughts of death or suicide

If you checked any of the statements, talk with your doctor. Bring this list to your appointment. If you have thoughts of suicide, seek help immediately. Remember, you can get the help you need to live a full and happy life.

Speak up!  
don't let bladder  
problems limit  
your life



Urinary issues can be difficult to discuss with your doctor, let alone your partner or friends. But they're common and treatable, and nothing to be ashamed of. Talking about them is the first step toward relief.

Continue reading to learn more about common types of bladder problems. This knowledge can help you start a conversation with your doctor.

### Overactive bladder

**THE PROBLEM:** Overactive bladder occurs when the muscles that control your flow squeeze too often. You're often struck with a sudden, overwhelming urge to go, even if your bladder's not yet full.

**THE SOLUTION:** Medications can help your muscles relax and provide relief. Or your doctor may recommend therapies such as timed urination or changing the amount of fluids you drink. Losing weight if you're overweight and quitting smoking may also help, and both can improve your overall health.

### Urinary tract infections (UTIs)

**THE PROBLEM:** UTIs result from an invasion of disease-causing bacteria into your bladder or

urethra, the tube through which urine flows out of your body. You might experience a more frequent urge to urinate, a burning pain when you do go, and cloudy or foul-smelling urine.

**THE SOLUTION:** Some women are more prone to UTIs than others. If you get more than two per year, your doctor may recommend taking low doses of antibiotics to prevent them.

### Urinary incontinence

**THE PROBLEM:** Urinary incontinence is the loss of bladder control or the leakage of urine. Coughing, laughing, sneezing, or heavy lifting causes leakage, or you might be unable to hold urine long enough to reach a toilet.

**THE SOLUTION:** The simplest treatment for incontinence? Kegel exercises. To do them, squeeze the muscles you'd use to stop the flow of urine. Hold for three counts. Relax for three counts. Do this exercise in sets of 10, three or more times a day. After six to eight weeks, stronger pelvic muscles will help prevent urine leakage. Lifestyle changes such as losing excess weight or avoiding alcohol can help. Surgery is an option in some cases.

## true or false?

25 million Americans have  
some form of urinary incontinence.



To find out the answer, take our online quiz. Go to [www.ahealthyme.com](http://www.ahealthyme.com). Search for "urinary incontinence quiz."

# power your plate with antioxidants

**A** natural way to stop disease and cancer? Antioxidants are the real deal.

## How antioxidants work

Antioxidants protect the body from unstable molecules called free radicals. Found naturally in the body and the environment, free radicals can damage our cells. They have been linked to heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and some cancers. Antioxidants hunt down and “disarm” free radicals, preventing them from causing harm to the body.

## How to get your fill

Antioxidants include familiar nutrients such as:

- Vitamin C, found in strawberries and green peppers

- Vitamin E, in nuts and vegetable oils
- Beta-carotene, in red pepper and apricots
- Lutein, in egg yolks and peas

Try these ideas to add more to your diet:

- Enjoy pink grapefruit and tomatoes. They contain lycopene, an antioxidant that may help prevent cancer. (If you are taking medications, check with your doctor first to make sure grapefruit is safe to eat while taking your medication.)
- Add sliced mango—rich in vitamin C and beta-carotene—to a salad.
- Make bean soup. Lentils, pintos, and red and black beans are good sources of antioxidants.
- Steam carrots, which nearly triples the antioxidants found in the raw kind.
- Don't peel apples and cucumbers. This removes about half of their antioxidants.



## mango & melon salad with strawberry sauce

### Ingredients:

- 1 mango
- ½ cantaloupe
- ½ honeydew
- 1½ cups fresh or partially thawed frozen strawberries
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- ¼ cup confectioners' sugar (or sugar substitute)

### Preparation:

1. Peel and slice mango, cantaloupe, and honeydew into bite-sized pieces. Place mango, cantaloupe, and honeydew pieces in a large serving bowl.
2. In a blender, blend strawberries, lemon juice, and sugar until smooth.
3. Drizzle sauce over fruit salad and serve.

➤ Makes four servings. Each serving provides 177 calories, 1 g total fat, no cholesterol, 29 mg sodium, and 4 g fiber.



## reach your goals



Whether your aim is to quit smoking, reduce stress, or eat better, MyBlueHealth<sup>SM</sup> sets you up for success. Take your FREE personal health assessment at [www.ahealthyme.com/pha](http://www.ahealthyme.com/pha).

Slice the mango in half along the seed. Pull the halves apart. Place each half peel-side down. Score the fruit down to the peel—but not through it—in a tic-tac-toe fashion. Bend the peel backward so the cubes are exposed. Cut cubes off peel, then remove any remaining fruit that is clinging to the seed.





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Welcome to the  
**NEW Healthy Times!**

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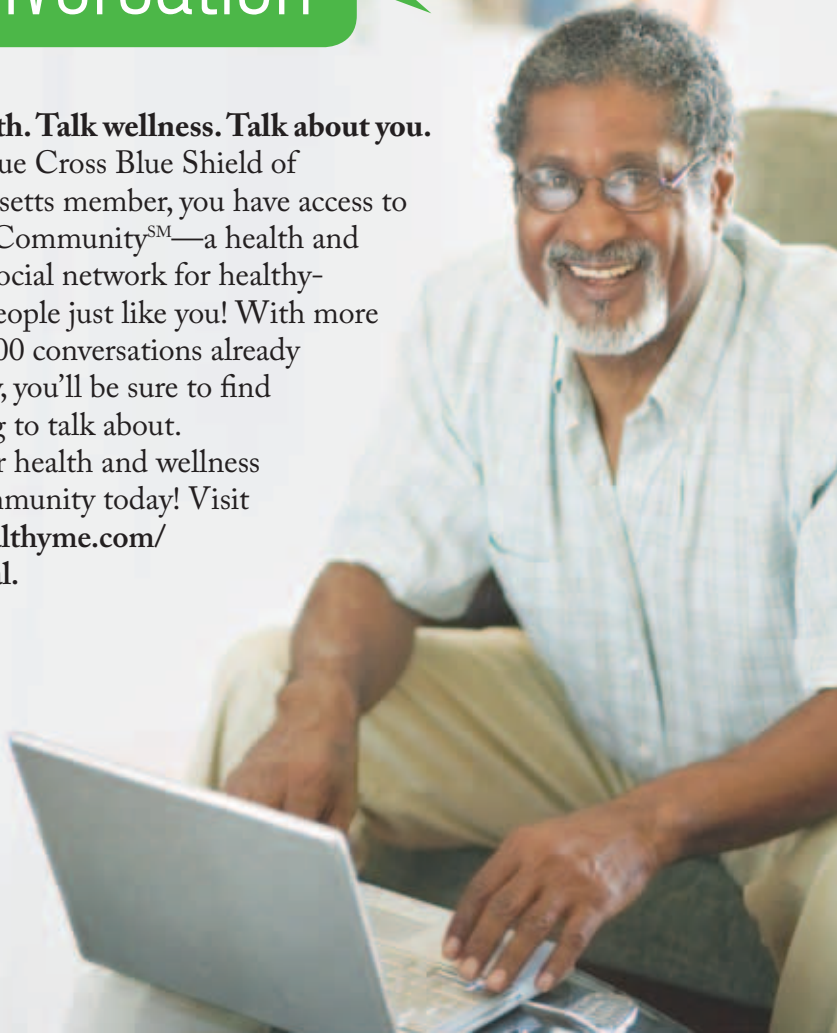
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join the  
conversation

**Talk health. Talk wellness. Talk about you.**

As a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts member, you have access to My Blue Community<sup>SM</sup>—a health and wellness social network for healthy-minded people just like you! With more than 52,000 conversations already under way, you'll be sure to find something to talk about.

Join our health and wellness social community today! Visit [www.ahealthyme.com/HWSocial](http://www.ahealthyme.com/HWSocial).



**how to reach us**

[www.bluecrossma.com/medicare](http://www.bluecrossma.com/medicare)

1-888-277-2408  
(TTY 1-800-522-1254)

8 a.m. to 6 p.m.,  
Monday through Friday

**a reason to smile**

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts offers affordable dental coverage to complement your medical coverage. Dental Blue<sup>®</sup> 65 is a preventive dental plan for individuals age 65 or over, living in Massachusetts. Call us at **1-888-366-3212** for more information.

