



**BlueCross BlueShield  
of Nebraska**

An Independent Licensee of the  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

# Living Well

FALL 2009

## Keep Bones Strong to Prevent Hip Fractures



**A** hip fracture is more than a broken bone. When it occurs in adults older than 65, it can be deadly. Take a look at how to prevent hip fractures and one of their main causes, osteoporosis.

### THE HIP FRACTURE PROBLEM

Older people are very vulnerable to hip fractures. That's because bones can become weaker as we age, largely due to osteoporosis. In fact, more than 1.5 million Americans have fractures related to osteoporosis each year.

Most hip fractures among older adults are caused by falls. Preventing both osteoporosis and falls can help you stay active and fracture-free.

### WAYS TO STAY STRONG

Follow these four tips to protect yourself from hip fractures:

- **Get enough calcium.** Calcium keeps bones strong. Men should get at least 1,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium a day. Women need about 1,200 mg of calcium. An 8-ounce glass of milk, for example, provides 300 mg.
- **Do not smoke, and drink alcohol only in moderation.** Tobacco and excessive alcohol use contribute to bone loss.
- **Take steps to reduce falls.** Eliminate hazards at home, such as clutter on floors and stairs, loose rugs, and electrical cords.
- **Talk with your doctor.** Find out what else you can do based on your own personal needs. ■

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### DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE!

You might qualify for discounted LifeLine services! LifeLine is a medical alert system. If you fall or hurt yourself, you can summon an ambulance at the touch of a button. Call Member Services in Omaha at **402-398-3869** or **800-424-7105** to see if you qualify.

# Seven Steps to Better Blood Pressure Control

**U**ncontrolled high blood pressure can increase your risk for heart attack, heart failure, stroke, and kidney disease. That's the bad news. The good news? You can take charge of your blood pressure with these seven key steps.

**1 Stay on your medications.** Taking your blood pressure medication every day is important. If you experience side effects, don't stop taking it. Instead, talk with your doctor. A different medication or dose may be needed.

**2 Limit sodium.** Go easy on salt and check food labels. A low-sodium food is one with 140 milligrams (mg) of sodium or less. Aim for less than 1,500 mg a day.

## how to reach us

*For questions about billing, benefits, or claims, contact:*

### Member Services

Monday–Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Central time)  
**402-398-3869** (Omaha)  
**800-424-7105** (toll-free)

### Mail to:

7261 Mercy Road  
P.O. Box 3248  
Omaha, NE 68180-0001

For information about our products and services, call:  
**877-881-2583** (toll-free).

**www.bcbsne.com**

**3 Set a cap on alcohol.** It raises blood pressure and adds calories to your diet. The golden rule: no more than one drink a day for women and two for men.

**4 Eat well.** Put plenty of fruits, vegetables, and low-fat and fat-free dairy products in your shopping cart. They contain essential vitamins and minerals that promote healthy blood pressure.

**5 Get physical.** Start with a 10-minute daily walk and build up to 30 minutes a day. If you've been inactive, talk with your doctor before starting an exercise routine.

**6 Quit smoking.** Nicotine narrows blood vessels and increases your heart rate—which increases blood pressure. Quitting will have a big impact on your blood pressure.

**7 Manage weight.** Carrying extra pounds makes your heart work harder and raises blood pressure. Losing just a few pounds can make a difference. Try eating smaller portions and burning more calories through activity. ■

### What's Your Number?

Ask your doctor to write down your blood pressure at every visit. Keep track of your numbers to see how well you stay on target over time.



## Wonderful Stuffed Potatoes

These heart-healthy potatoes are great for family meals.

**4 medium baking potatoes**

**¾ cup low-fat cottage cheese**

**¼ cup low-fat milk**

**2 tbsp. soft margarine**

**1 tsp. dill weed**

**¾ tsp. herb seasoning**

**4–6 drops hot pepper sauce**

**2 tsp. grated Parmesan cheese**

1. Prick potatoes with fork. Bake at 425 degrees for 60 minutes or until fork is easily inserted.
2. Cut potatoes in half lengthwise. Scoop out insides, leaving about ½ inch in the shell.
3. Mash what you scooped out in large bowl. Stir in remaining ingredients, except Parmesan. Spoon mixture back into shells.
4. Sprinkle the top of each with Parmesan.
5. Place on baking sheet. Bake 15 minutes or until golden brown.

Serves eight; each serving provides: Calories 113, Total fat 3 g; Saturated fat less than 1 g; Cholesterol 1 mg; Sodium 136 mg

# Fill Your Empty Nest with a Pet

**W**ith the children grown and grandkids living busy lives, your house might not feel so much like a home. If you're looking for a companion to offer love and activity, consider a pet. Finding a furry addition to your family may even help you stay healthy.



Dogs encourage exercise because they need walks. But owners of cats and other pets also seem to reap physical and emotional benefits.

## SHAGGY STRESS-BUSTERS

One reason why pets help our health may relate to stress. When solving math problems, pet owners in a study reacted less to the stress and recovered from it faster than those without pets. This was especially true if the pet was there during the test.

The presence of a pet may reduce heart rate and blood pressure. Also, petting an animal releases chemicals in the brain that help us cope with pain and distress. ■



## HEALTH'S BEST FRIEND

Owning a pet may lead to better mental and physical health. Many studies have explored the link between pets and health. They found:

- Women with pets tend to have lower heart risks than those without pets
- Animal owners generally live longer than non-owners
- Heart attack patients who own pets are less likely to die during the year after a heart attack, compared to non-owners
- Older adults are more likely to continue to walk, shop, prepare meals, and do laundry for themselves if they own a pet
- Owning a pet is linked with a lower risk for depression among people recently widowed

## CONSIDER ADOPTING!

With the downturn in the economy, more people are giving up their pets to shelters. Visit [www.nehumanesociety.org](http://www.nehumanesociety.org) or call **402-444-7800** to ask about adopting from the Nebraska Humane Society.

## Thanks for Making Us 'Highest Ranked'!

Nothing matters more to us here at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska than the happiness and well-being of our members. So we could not have been more thrilled when you, our members, helped us become "Highest in Member Satisfaction Among Health Plans in the Heartland Region."

This honorable distinction is the result of a study by J.D. Power and Associates, a prestigious national firm that surveyed health



plan members in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska. Our members consistently scored us very high in these categories:

- Coverage and benefits
- Claims processing
- Provider choice
- Approval processes
- Billing statements

We are very pleased that our members think so highly of our efforts to serve them. And remember, if you ever have a question or need assistance, call Member Services at 402-398-3869 or 800-424-7105.

Celia Juel,  
*Corporate Communications*

Brian Pickering, APR, *Vice President, Corporate Communications and Brand Management*

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## OUR COMMUNITY



### What Is a Specialist?

For most of your health needs, you can see your primary care doctor. But a medical problem such as heart disease or asthma may require you to visit a specialist.

Specialists are doctors who focus on an area of medicine. A cardiologist, for example, has extra training in caring for the heart.

Because you are a member of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, you do not need a referral to see a specialist. If you have questions about how to access specialty care, call Member Services in Omaha at **402-398-3869** or **800-424-7105**.

### We Cover H1N1 Vaccines

A vaccine for H1N1, formerly called swine flu, will be available this fall. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska covers this vaccine. Certain people—for example, adults ages 25 to 64 who have a chronic medical condition—are encouraged to get the H1N1 shot. Check your benefits to verify vaccine coverage or call Member Services in Omaha at **402-398-3869** or **800-424-7105**.

### Congratulations, Grant Winners!

As a Nebraska-based company, we believe strongly in giving back to our community and supporting programs that are important to you, our members and our neighbors. That's why Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska offers wellness grants every year.

The winning programs focus on areas of major concern in Nebraska, such as childhood obesity, diabetes prevention, and providing health care to the uninsured. This year's winners include the Building Healthy Families program at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and KBAM (Kids, Body, and Mind) at the Hastings Family YMCA, among others.

Visit "Who We Are" at [www.bcbsne.com](http://www.bcbsne.com) to read more about our commitment to Nebraska.

For more health and wellness tips, visit [www.bcbsne.com](http://www.bcbsne.com).