

# For Better Health

For Paramount Elite Members



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## Go with the Flow—Learn About High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure (hypertension) has no telltale signs or symptoms, yet it can lead to serious illness and even death.

It's sometimes preventable, and while there is no cure, it can be treated.

Check off all the facts you know about high blood pressure.

- I know that coping with stress by smoking, eating junk food, or drinking alcohol will increase my risk for high blood pressure.
- I know that high blood pressure is not a natural part of aging.
- I know that not taking blood pressure medication as directed can make it harder to treat high blood pressure.

The more you know about high blood pressure, the easier it will

be to take steps to stay healthy.

What are you doing to keep your blood pressure in check?

- After talking with my doctor, I follow his or her exercise recommendations.
- I eat a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables.
- I manage stress in healthy ways.
- I don't smoke, or I am trying to quit.
- I avoid alcohol, or I drink only in moderation.

If you checked off at least one healthy habit, congratulations! Now consider how to add more to your life.

## Taking Drugs Safely

Many prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications can cause unwanted side effects. They may also interact with other medications, foods, or beverages.

### Medication Interactions

Here are some common medication interaction problems.

- Aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen can irritate the stomach, so take them with food or milk.
- Alcohol can cause problems with some medications. For example, people who take acetaminophen and drink alcohol are at greater risk for liver failure.
- Chemicals in grapefruit increase the risk for serious side effects with some medications, including carbamazepine, sertraline, and diazepam.

### What You Can Do

Here are some steps you can take to make medications safer.

- Tell your doctor which OTC products you take.
- Ask your doctor what you should do if you have side effects.
- Use one pharmacy so that your pharmacist can track your medications.

### Find Drug Info Online

Our online drug reference tool lets you find out about the medicines you take. Go to [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com) and click on “Better Health for Life,” “Library,” and then “Drug Reference.”



## Every Breath You Take: Understanding COPD

**Y**ou may not have heard of it, but chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is more common than people think. This breathing difficulty eventually strikes more than one in 10 Americans.

Many people who have this noncontagious disease don't even know it. But diagnosis is easy, and once you receive treatment, life can become a whole lot easier.

### Who Gets COPD?

As many as one in five COPD patients has never smoked. Simply breathing smoky or polluted air can obstruct the small air passages in the lungs, interfere with breathing, and contribute to the disease.

#### **COPD has several telltale symptoms, including:**

- A persistent cough with mucus
- Shortness of breath while exercising
- Wheezing
- Tightness in the chest

If you have these symptoms, call your doctor. A breathing test called spirometry can confirm the COPD diagnosis by seeing how much air your lungs can hold and how well you exhale after a deep breath. Other tests, including a chest X-ray, can show signs of COPD and help rule out

other causes for your symptoms, such as heart failure.

### Finding Relief

To slow the course of this incurable disease, the best thing you can do is to quit smoking. Steer clear of secondhand smoke and other irritants such as pollution and dust.

Medicines to ease your breathing include bronchodilators that open up your air passages and make it easier to exercise, and inhaled steroids that cut inflammation. You may also undergo pulmonary rehabilitation. This includes exercise training and education about how to do daily activities. People with severe COPD may require supplemental oxygen.

If you have COPD, avoid further stress on your lungs from infections such as flu or pneumonia. Talk with your doctor about getting the pneumonia vaccine and remember your yearly flu shot.



### Get the Latest News

For recent news and more about COPD, visit [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com). Click on "Better Health for Life" and then search for "COPD."

## Think About Your Drink

You may enjoy a drink of alcohol now and then, but drinking too much can be harmful for older adults. The aging process changes how the body handles alcohol. Alcohol can also interact with your medications, resulting in physical problems.

### Questions to Ask

If you answer yes to one of these questions, you may want to talk with your doctor.

- Do you typically have more than one drink per day?
- Have you ever felt like you should drink less?
- Do you drink because you feel sad?
- Have you hurt yourself or someone else while drinking?
- Have you felt guilty or lied about your drinking?
- Do you feel as if you need a drink first thing in the day?
- Are you annoyed when others criticize your drinking?

### Help Is Available

You may be able to keep your drinking under control with the help of a counselor or other local resources. Ask your doctor for a referral.



# Harmonize Your Health with an Ancient Practice

Tai chi is popping up in towns across the United States. Community centers and gyms offer classes. You may even see people practicing it in local parks.

## Tai Chi Benefits

This ancient practice is being put under the microscope of modern medicine. Studies suggest that tai chi offers several health benefits.

- **It reduces falls in older people.** Tai chi movements, which are done from a standing position, improve strength, balance, and coordination—all important for preventing falls.
- **It may help with joint pain.** Some small studies suggest that tai chi, which is considered a weight-bearing exercise, may reduce the pain and stiffness of osteoarthritis.
- **Tai chi may improve blood pressure.** In a study of 126 people who had recently had a heart attack, doing tai chi once or twice a week lowered systolic blood pressure (the top number of a blood pressure reading) just as much as doing aerobic exercise. Tai chi also lowered diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number).
- **It keeps you active.** Although tai chi is a low-intensity activity, some studies show that it improves aerobic fitness, or the heart's capacity for exercise.
- **Tai chi strengthens the body's defenses.** Recent research shows that older adults who did tai chi for several weeks developed a much stronger immune system than adults who didn't do tai chi.
- **It's calming.** It's no surprise that a relaxing activity like tai chi helps reduce stress. But tai chi also helps people get to sleep faster and sleep longer.

## Getting Started

Here are some of the basics about tai chi that can help you get moving.

- **Find an expert.** It's best to learn tai chi from a teacher, rather than a book or video, so that you learn the movements correctly.
- **Try it alone or with a group.** Tai chi is fun to do in a group, but once you learn it, you can also practice tai chi on your own.
- **Ask your doctor first.** Although tai chi is safe for most people, check with your doctor if you have any concerns.

## Get Moving with More Fitness Tips

Besides tai chi, you can also get fit with yoga, water exercise, and more. Visit [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com) and click on “Better Health for Life,” “Wellness,” “Fitness,” and then “Older Adults.” Remember to talk with your doctor before you begin a new exercise.



*Tai chi (pronounced “tie chee”) is a centuries-old Chinese exercise that uses relaxed, flowing movements, as though you were moving your hands and body through water.*



## Have You Been Screened for This Common Cancer?

When it comes to screenings for cancer of the colon and rectum, a lot of us procrastinate. But these screenings are fast and not painful.

Even testing such as colonoscopy may take only 15 to 20 minutes. And that's time well-spent, because screening can detect cancer in its early stages. Tests can also locate abnormal growths—called polyps—years before cancer develops.

How effective is screening? Doctors say three out of five deaths from colorectal cancer could be prevented with regular screening.

### Who Needs to Be Screened

If you're age 50 or older, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends regular checks for colorectal cancer. However, you may need to get tested at an earlier age if you have:

- A previous history of polyps or colorectal cancer
- A family history of polyps or colorectal cancer
- Inflammatory bowel disease

### Multiple Choices

You have several options when it comes to screening:

- A test for hidden blood in the stool, called a fecal occult blood test, every year
- A barium enema, or lower gastrointestinal series, which is an X-ray of the lower digestive tract, every five years
- A sigmoidoscopy, a procedure that checks the lower colon and rectum using a tiny camera, every five years
- A colonoscopy, another procedure that checks the entire colon and rectum with a camera, every 10 years

You may need more frequent testing depending on your health history.

If you're due for a screening, ask your doctor which test is right for you.



## Come to Our Big Band Dance Parties!

Grab your dancing shoes and join us at Paramount Elite's Big Band Dance Parties.



April 3—Garden Party  
September 25—Fall Fiesta  
December 4—Jingle Bell Ball

They'll be held from 7 to 11 p.m., at Stranahan Great Hall at 4645 Heatherdowns Blvd., Toledo, Ohio.

Jeff McDonald's Swingmania Orchestra will provide the music. There will also be door prizes, free snacks, and a cash bar. This event is free for Paramount Elite members who bring their ID card and \$5 for guests.



# Dealing with Depression

When you have a chronic condition, it's common to feel blue about your health concerns once in a while. But when the mood lingers, it could be a sign of depression. This can sap your energy, making it harder for you to take care of yourself. Fortunately, treatment is available. Here's how to recognize the signs of depression and get help when you need it.

Talk with your doctor if you have several of these signs of depression and they last for more than a few weeks:

- Ongoing feelings of sadness, emptiness, or anxiety
- Loss of interest or pleasure in the activities you once enjoyed
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
- Tiredness or lack of energy
- Restlessness or irritability
- Eating more or less than usual
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Trouble thinking clearly or making decisions
- Unexplained aches, pains, or digestive problems
- Thoughts of death or suicide

## Help Is Available

If you have a case of the blues that you just can't seem to shake, talk with your doctor. The main treatment options for depression are medications and psychotherapy (talk therapy).

## What Is Pre-Diabetes?

Have you had your blood sugar (glucose) level checked lately? An increased level of sugar in the blood can be a sign of pre-diabetes. When you have pre-diabetes, your risk of developing full-blown diabetes increases. Your chance of developing heart disease and stroke goes up, too. The good news is that you can possibly reverse pre-diabetes by making some changes.

### When It's Pre-Diabetes

Insulin is a hormone that helps cells turn blood sugar into energy. When the body's cells don't use insulin properly or the body doesn't make enough insulin or both, you have insulin resistance. It can cause sugar to build up in the blood.

### What You Can Do

Regular physical activity and weight loss can help improve the way your body uses insulin. That can help treat pre-diabetes.

### The following tips can help:

- Talk with your doctor about an exercise program.
- Build up to moderate-intensity exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days if your doctor says it's OK.
- If you're overweight, aim to lose 5 to 10 percent of your body weight gradually.
- Eat your usual foods in smaller amounts.
- Limit fat intake to less than 25 percent of your daily calories.

# Keeping Men's Bones Healthy

Many men don't worry about developing osteoporosis because the disease is more common in women. But about 2 million men have osteoporosis, and an estimated 12 million men have low bone mass, which increases their risk for the disease.

Many men don't know they have osteoporosis until they have hip or other fractures.

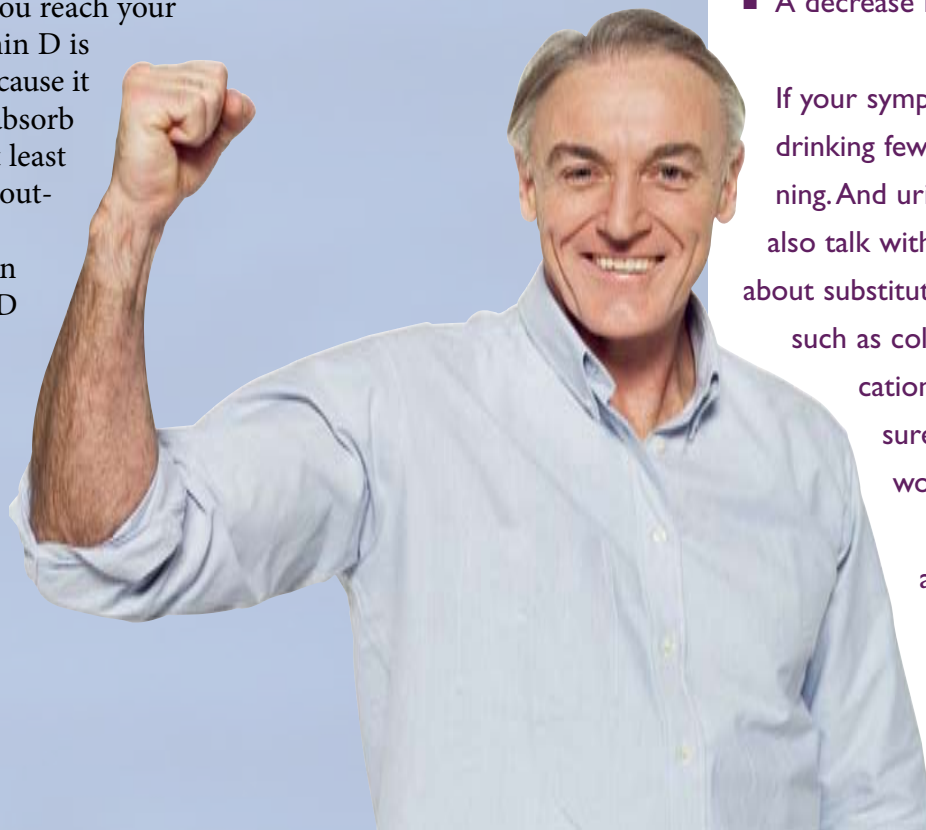
The good news is that there's a lot you can do to preserve your bone health and reduce your risk for fractures. Here are some tips.

- **Don't smoke or drink too much alcohol.** This can cause bone loss.
- **Talk with your doctor if you take steroids** for asthma or other medications that may affect your bones.
- **Watch your intake of calcium and vitamin D.** You need about 1,200 milligrams of calcium a day. Milk, yogurt, and fortified cereals can help you reach your daily goals. Vitamin D is also important because it helps your body absorb calcium. Spend at least 10 minutes a day outside in the sun so that your body can produce vitamin D naturally.

- **Get moving.** Ask your doctor whether it's safe for you to engage in weight-bearing activities, such as walking and jogging, which can help preserve your bone mass.

## Living with Osteoporosis?

If you have osteoporosis, learn how to strengthen your bones and more. Visit our Web site at [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com) and click on "Better Health for Life," "O" in the encyclopedia at top, and then "Osteoporosis."



## Prostate Problems?

Problems with the prostate gland become more common as men age. It surrounds the urethra, the tube that carries urine away from the bladder. In a common problem, benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), the prostate enlarges and presses against the urethra.

BPH isn't cancer and doesn't cause it. However, some symptoms of BPH can mimic those of prostate cancer or an infection called prostatitis. So talk with your doctor if you have any of these BPH symptoms:

- A frequent need to urinate, especially at night
- Difficulty urinating or stopping the flow of urine
- Sudden or urgent urination
- Dripping after urinating
- A decrease in urine flow

If your symptoms are mild, try drinking fewer fluids in the evening. And urinate often. You can also talk with your doctor about substitutes for medicines such as cold and cough medications or blood pressure drugs that may worsen symptoms.

If your symptoms are more severe, treatments are available.

## Member Services

Monday–Friday  
8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

In Ohio:  
1-419-887-2525  
1-800-462-3589  
TTY 1-888-740-5670

In Michigan:  
1-734-529-7800  
1-888-241-5604  
TTY 1-888-740-5670

¿Necesita  
un interprete?  
1-419-887-2525

Please send suggestions  
for the newsletter to  
[mindy.cross@promedica.org](mailto:mindy.cross@promedica.org).

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# You Can Quit!

Have you given up on quitting smoking? If you have tried to quit before and you started smoking again, don't despair.

Many people have to try to quit a few times before they become a nonsmoker for good. Here are some things to think about to get you ready to try again:

- **Smoking costs a lot of money.** What else could you do with the money you spend on cigarettes? If you quit today, how much money would you save in six months? In a year?
- **No matter how old you are** or how long you have been smoking, when you quit, your health gets better quickly.
- **Everyone smokes for a reason.** What is yours? Notice the patterns for when you smoke. Do you smoke when nervous, angry, or stressed? How else could you cope with these feelings?
- **What went wrong when you tried to quit before?** What would you change about how you tried to quit last time?



## Let Us Help You Stop Smoking

You don't have to quit smoking alone. Help is a phone call away. Simply call **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)** to speak with a quitting specialist and enroll in Quit Line cessation counseling. You'll receive a Quit Kit with helpful tips on quitting smoking and more. You'll also be able to receive up to eight weeks of free nicotine-replacement therapy. So call today!