

# For Better Health

For Paramount Elite Members



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Summer 2008



## How to Handle Stable Angina

More than 6 million Americans experience angina—a type of chest pain that occurs when the heart muscle doesn't get enough oxygen. It's typically caused by coronary artery disease (CAD).

Most people who have angina have stable angina. This means there's usually a pattern to how the pain starts and stops. The good news is that you can manage stable angina effectively. Learning about why it develops is a good place to start.

### Reduced Blood Flow

With CAD, plaque, or fatty deposits, builds up on artery walls. As a result, arteries narrow, slowing the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart. When the heart is working hard—for example, during physical activity

or emotional stress—it needs more oxygen. Stable angina tends to flare up at these times because the heart has difficulty getting the extra oxygen it needs.

Symptoms may include heaviness, pressure, tightness, squeezing, or burning in the chest or discomfort in the arm, back, neck, jaw, or stomach. Flare-ups usually end after a few minutes with rest or medication such as nitroglycerin.

The symptoms described here may also be signs of a heart attack. So if you experience them for the first time, seek emergency help right away.

### Take Control

Not only can you treat stable angina flare-ups, but you may also be able to help prevent them. Managing this condition may involve:

- **Awareness.** Try to predict when angina attacks are likely to occur and then take steps to try to avoid them. For example, if you notice that chest pain often develops when you walk up stairs, take short breaks as you climb.

- **Lifestyle changes.**

Controlling your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar and maintaining a healthy weight are essential. Doing this eases the strain on your heart.

- **Medication.** To help prevent chest pain, some people are advised to use a long-acting form of nitroglycerin every day.

- **Cardiac rehab.** Through supervised exercise, classes, and counseling, you can learn to protect and strengthen your heart.

- **Surgery.** If necessary, a procedure to improve blood flow to the heart may be an option.

Be sure to talk with your doctor about ways to help control stable angina.

### Is It Angina or a Heart Attack?

If you have angina, it's vital that you recognize the signs of a heart attack. You can find them online at [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com). Click on "Better Health for Life" and search for "angina heart attack." Then click on "Recognizing a Heart Attack or Angina."

# Keep Your Bones Healthy

Ten million Americans have osteoporosis, a disease that causes bones to weaken and break more easily. Both men and women can develop osteoporosis, but women face a much higher risk. And Caucasian and Asian women are more likely than those of other ethnicities to develop this disease. Having a family history of osteoporosis boosts risk, too.

Many people don't realize they have osteoporosis until they break a bone. Fortunately, research suggests that a bone mineral density (BMD) test might help detect the disease.

## A BMD Test May Help

A BMD test is a quick and painless test that measures the strength of your bones. Some health organizations, including the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, advise BMD testing for all women ages 65 and older. Others, such as the National Institutes of Health, say there isn't enough evidence to recommend universal screening. So it's best to ask your doctor whether you should have a BMD test. Paramount Elite members are eligible for BMD tests as a covered benefit. Call Member Services at **1-419-887-2525** or toll-free **1-800-462-3589** to verify your specific coverage.

## Steps for Strong Bones

Healthy habits can help you keep your bones strong.

- Get plenty of calcium and vitamin D. People ages 51 and older need 1,200 milligrams of calcium every day. Those ages 51 to 70 should consume 400 international units (IUs) of vitamin D daily, and individuals older than age 70 need 600 IUs.
- Avoid or limit alcohol.
- Perform weight-bearing exercises, such as walking or dancing, on most days of the week.
- Quit smoking.



## Six Ways to Prevent Falls

Falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults, and 60 percent of these falls occur at home. Here are some helpful tips to help you stay upright.

- 1. Make sure that floors** and walkways are free of clutter and electrical cords.
- 2. Keep stairwells well-lit.** Install handrails on both sides. Put fluorescent tape on the edges of the top and bottom steps for visibility and nonslip treads on wood steps.
- 3. Install grab bars** or sturdy rails beside tubs, showers, and toilets.
- 4. Use a rubber bath mat** or place nonskid adhesive strips in the shower or tub.
- 5. Install a night-light** along the route between your bedroom and bathroom.
- 6. Eliminate throw rugs.** Secure loose area rugs with double-faced tape.

Being physically fit can help you avoid a fall, too. To learn more, go to [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/adultfalls.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/adultfalls.htm).



# What Is **Low** Blood Pressure?

“Normal” blood pressure is lower than 120/80 mm Hg. Although there’s no definite cut-off, 90/60 mm Hg or lower is often considered low blood pressure.

Some people naturally have low blood pressure, and it doesn’t present a problem. But if low blood pressure causes symptoms or you have sudden drops in blood pressure, it’s important to address it.

## **A person with low blood pressure may have:**

- Dizziness
- Light-headedness
- Nausea
- Blurred vision
- Trouble concentrating
- Brief losses of consciousness (fainting)

## **What Causes It?**

Several things can cause blood pressure to drop too low, including:

- Being dehydrated
- Heart problems that hamper blood circulation
- Thyroid and other gland problems
- Medications, such as diuretics, beta-blockers, tricyclic antidepressants, drugs used to treat erectile dysfunction, and drugs for Parkinson’s disease

## **Take It Easy**

Low blood pressure can also be caused by changes in the nervous system that make it harder for blood vessels to contract and relax normally. This can lead to a type of low blood pressure called orthostatic hypotension that occurs when you stand up. People with it should follow the “slow-and-go rule” (see “Slow and Go!” on page 5).

If you have symptoms of low blood pressure, it’s a good idea to see your doctor. Before going, jot down your symptoms. Also note what you were doing when they occurred, such as taking a hot bath or standing up suddenly. Bring along a current medication list, too. All that information will help your doctor diagnose the problem.

## Slow and Go!

If you feel light-headed or dizzy when you stand up, you may have orthostatic hypotension. Be sure to follow this “slow-and-go” rule.

- When getting out of bed, first sit on the edge of the bed for a moment.
- Point your toes, then flex them (stretch the toes up and back). Repeat this 10 times.
- Stand up.
- Count to 10 before walking.

Do this anytime you’ve been sitting or lying down for more than 20 minutes.



### Quiz Yourself on Low Blood Pressure

See what you know about low blood pressure with an online quiz. Go to [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com) and click on “Better Health for Life,” “Interactive Tools,” “Quizzes,” and “Low Blood Pressure Quiz.”

# Are You Losing Weight Without Trying?



Seeing the needle on the bathroom scale go down is usually welcome news. But not always.

A sudden or significant loss of weight when you’re not trying to lose weight can be a sign that there’s an underlying health problem, such as intestinal troubles, cancer, diabetes, or depression.

### Identify the Cause

Losing too much weight too quickly can lower immunity, making it harder to fight infections and get better after an illness. And it weakens muscles and leads to fatigue, so it’s harder to carry out your usual activities.

Sometimes it’s easy to see what’s causing weight loss. Older adults, especially those living alone, may have a poor appetite and not eat enough. That’s partly because the senses of taste and smell diminish with age, so food may not taste as good. Eating alone is a factor, too—people tend to eat more when they dine and socialize with others. For some, it’s just too tiring or difficult to shop for

groceries and fix healthy meals.

Medications that blunt the appetite or bring on nausea can also be to blame. Or it could be an undiagnosed health condition. Weight loss can be triggered by the following:

- Alzheimer’s disease
- Cancer
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Digestive troubles
- Heart disease
- Infections
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Thyroid problems

### When to Seek Help

An unintended weight loss of 10 percent or more in the past six months is cause for concern. If you or a loved one has had this happen, schedule a visit with your doctor. He or she can examine you to find out the cause and take steps to get your health and nutrition back on track.

## Find Foods to Keep You Young

Is the fountain of youth in your fridge? Find out which foods may help slow aging on our Web site. Go to [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com) and click on “Better Health for Life,” “Wellness,” “Nutrition,” “Older Adults,” and “Foods and Aging.”



When older people feel gloomy, they often shrug off their feelings. Family members may also ignore these warning signs of depression, thinking they're just part of old age.

Yet the signs of depression are too serious to snub. Here's what you should know about depression to protect yourself or someone you love.

**Q. What are the warning signs of depression?**

**A.** Older adults who are depressed tend to lose interest in what they once enjoyed and may stop taking care of themselves. They may also be irritable, anxious, or fatigued or lose weight. They may even think about death frequently.

Because some of these symptoms can be signs of other medical problems, it makes sense to see a doctor. Some medicines can also cause side effects that mimic depression.

**Q. Maybe it's dementia, not depression. How can I tell the difference?**

**A.** Depression may come on very quickly, while signs of dementia creep up over a longer period of time. While depressed people may have trouble concentrating, they can usually remember recent



events. People with dementia often can't.

**Q. Is depression linked to other conditions?**

**A.** Sometimes. Depression often goes hand-in-hand with other ailments, such as heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and anxiety disorders. It's also common after a stroke. Certain medicines can also cause symptoms of depression. These include some medicines for arthritis and high blood pressure. Abusing alcohol can also trigger depression.

Depression can affect healthy older adults, too, including

those who have never had it before.

**Q. What should I do if I suspect depression?**

**A.** Realize that people with depression may be ashamed of their feelings. Remind them that depression affects more than their mood. It can aggravate pain and worsen aspects of some diseases, such as diabetes and coronary artery disease. It can also put them at higher risk for developing physical and cognitive problems. But antidepressant medicine, therapy, or both can help.

Encourage your loved one to talk with a doctor. If he or she is confused or withdrawn, you may want to go to the doctor's visit, too.

**Help a Loved One Stay Upbeat**

- If your loved one is a caregiver, encourage him or her to share the load with another.
- Encourage your loved one to spend time with family and friends.
- If your relative has lost a spouse, suggest that he or she join a support group to meet others facing the same issues.



## Learn About

## Colorectal Cancer Screenings

Even if you're feeling well, routine screenings for colorectal cancer are important to help keep you healthy. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of death by cancer in the U.S. But if caught early, it can be treated. Adults ages 50 and older should be screened for colorectal cancer every year. People who have a family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps and those with inflammatory bowel disease may need to begin screenings at an earlier age.

Depending on your situation, your doctor may recommend one or more of the following:

- **Fecal occult blood test**, which checks for blood in the stool. Stool samples are collected at home and then sent to a laboratory for testing.
- **Flexible sigmoidoscopy**, which is typically conducted in a doctor's office or clinic. To perform the test, the doctor inserts a flexible, lighted tube into the rectum to examine the lower part of the colon. The doctor may also collect tissue samples and polyps for further examination. A flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years is recommended.



- **Double-contrast barium enema**, which uses an X-ray to check for polyps in the colon. A barium solution is inserted into the colon, which is inflated with air to get a clear X-ray image. A double-contrast barium enema every five years is recommended.
- **Colonoscopy**, which is generally performed in a doctor's office or an outpatient clinic, is similar to the flexible sigmoidoscopy. However, a colonoscopy uses a longer tube that allows the doctor to see the entire colon and take tissue samples or remove polyps if necessary. A colonoscopy every 10 years is typically recommended.

### Are You At Risk?

Visit [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com) and find out your risk for colorectal cancer with our online quiz. Click on "Better Health for Life," "Interactive Tools," "Risk Assessments," then "Colorectal Cancer Risk Assessment."

## ¿Habla Español?

*Es la ley para que los doctores, los hospitales y los planes de salud proporcionen un intérprete, gratis, cuando una persona no puede hablar o entender inglés bien.*

It's the law for doctors, hospitals, and health plans to provide an interpreter for free when a person is not able to speak English well.

To get the best care, you have to be able to tell your doctor what's wrong with you. And then the doctor has to be able to tell you about the care you'll get. This can be hard if you and your doctor don't speak the same language.

Unless we know that someone wants or needs language help, we won't be able to help arrange for it. **Here are some things you can do, depending on your language skills.**

- Carry an "I Speak ..." card that tells others you need an interpreter. See below.
- Let Member Services know you need an interpreter so that we can put a note in your file. The next time you call, we can get an interpreter on the phone right away.
- Share this article with family or friends who may not know their rights.
- Volunteer as an interpreter for the ProMedica Language Assistance Program.

### A Card for Spanish-Speaking Members

This wallet card lets people know that you need a Spanish interpreter. Cut it out and bring it when you see your doctor or go to the hospital. To request a card in another language, call Member Services at **1-419-887-2525** or toll-free **1-800-462-3589** (TTY: **1-419-887-2526** or **1-888-740-5670**).



#### **Yo Hablo Español / I Speak Spanish**



Yo necesito un intérprete de idioma en español para mi cita médica. Por favor, anote en mi expediente médico e idioma que yo hablo y mi necesidad de tener un intérprete. Gracias. 🍷

I need a Spanish language interpreter for my health care appointment. Please write my spoken language and my interpreting need in my patient chart. Thank you. 🍷

Source: PALS for Health & ALAS para tu Salud

# Mediterranean Diet = Brain Food?

Mediterranean diets include plenty of fruit, veggies, beans, and fish, and they bring more than just flavor to your table.



These tasty diets offer many disease-fighting benefits, too. Studies have shown they can cut the risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, and several types of cancer. But the diet doesn't just help your body. It can also help your brain by fighting Alzheimer's disease.

## Research Reveals Brain-Food Link

Recent studies have found that people who eat a Mediterranean diet have a much lower risk for Alzheimer's disease. In one study, the people who followed the diet most closely had a 68 percent lower

risk for the condition, compared with those who didn't stick with it as well.

Researchers think the antioxidants in fruits, vegetables, and other foods in the Mediterranean diet may help protect the brain against damage that might lead to Alzheimer's. Or these foods may help control inflammation in the brain, which could contribute to the disease.

## Tour the Mediterranean from Your Kitchen

To give your meals a Mediterranean flavor:

- Drink a glass of pomegranate juice with breakfast.
- Dip slices of fruit into low-fat yogurt for a snack.
- Try a bean or vegetable soup for lunch, such as a zesty gazpacho.
- Sauté broccoli rabe or other greens with tomatoes, olive oil, and garlic for a quick side dish.

**Want Something New for Dinner?** Check out healthy and yummy recipes on our Web site. Go to [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com) and click on "Better Health for Life," "Library," and "Healthy Recipes."

ALL MODELS USED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY.

## 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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