

For Better Health

For Paramount Elite Members

**FREE
Healthy
To-Do Lists
Inside!**


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HEALTH SYSTEM

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Winter 2009

Women Can Fight Cancer

According to a recent survey by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), nearly two-thirds of women believe that if no one in their family has cancer, they are unlikely to develop the disease themselves.



Unfortunately, this misconception has led to a great deal of inaction. For example, 18 percent of women have not had a Pap test or mammography in the past year because they didn't think the tests were necessary.

Cancer Does Not Discriminate

The truth is that most cancers occur in people with no family history of the disease. That's why no matter what, all women should have cancer screenings as recommended by their doctors.

According to the ACOG, all women ages 18 and older should have an annual gynecologic exam, including a pelvic exam. Women should also schedule screenings for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer.

Recommended Screenings

Cancer screenings are so important because early detection of cancer increases the chance of successful treatment. The ACOG recommends the following cancer screenings:

- **Breast cancer.** Have a doctor examine your breasts once a year. Mammography is recommended every one to two years for women in their 40s and annually for women ages 50 and older. Some experts recommend that women do a breast self-exam once a month.
- **Cervical cancer.** The Pap test is used to help detect cervical cancer. Women older than age 65 may not need routine Pap tests if their previous test results were normal. Talk with your doctor to see how often you should be screened.
- **Colorectal cancer.** If precancerous polyps—or growths—are found and removed, colorectal cancer can be stopped before it even begins. Colonoscopy, in which a doctor uses a camera attached to a flexible tube to examine the colon, is the preferred screening tool for detecting and removing polyps. The ACOG recently instituted new guidelines recommending that women ages 50 and older have a colonoscopy every 10 years.

Of course, these are general guidelines for normal-risk women. Women who have a family history of, or other risk factors for, certain types of cancer should always follow the advice of their doctor.

**Get Screened,
and You Could Win
a \$15 Gift Card!**



When you see your doctor for a preventive visit, cholesterol test, or screening for cervical, breast, or colorectal cancer, you'll be entered into a monthly drawing for a \$15 gift card. It's all thanks to Paramount Perks. So call today for an appointment and make your body and wallet healthier.

Dread the Doctor? Why Men Need to See Their Physician

A study by the American Academy of Family Physicians confirms what many health experts—and women—have observed: Men don't manage their personal health as well as they could. They're missing chances to find medical problems early on, when conditions are more treatable.

Survey Says

The study surveyed more than 1,100 men on their health habits. More than half of the men had not received a physical exam from their Primary Care Physician within the past year. And 18 percent of men ages 55 and older had never been screened for colorectal cancer. Recommendations for this potentially life-threatening disease are below.

Men's tendency to seek health care services only in crisis situations—and see themselves as healthy enough to skip checkups and screenings—is no surprise to psychologists. Studies have found that men are less likely than women to seek help for health issues. Men may fear that others will see their nonemergency doctor visits as unmanly or weak.

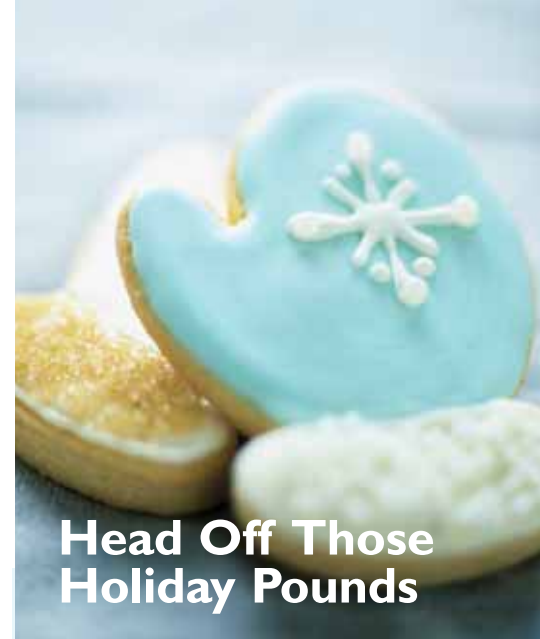
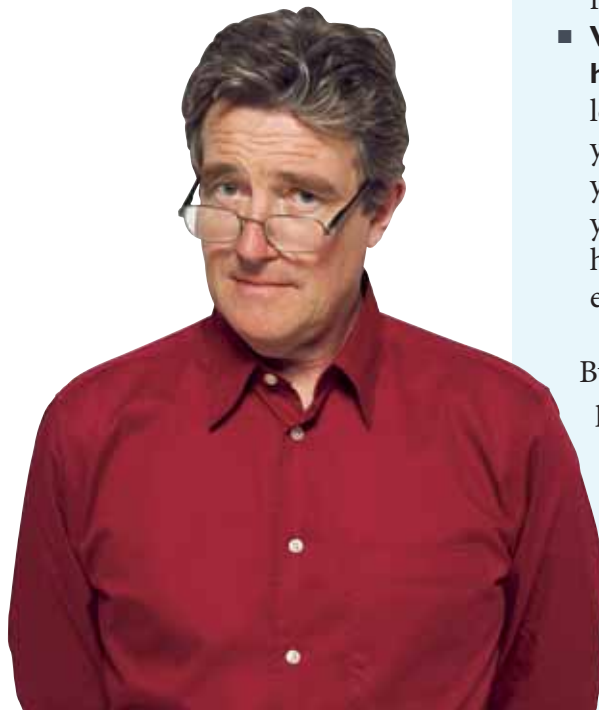
Cancer Screenings for Men

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and other medical organizations encourage men to have regular health screenings to find health problems early. Ask your doctor about tests for the following:

- **Colorectal cancer.** Start having screenings at age 50, or earlier if you have a personal or family history of colorectal polyps. You should be tested for hidden fecal blood annually. Your doctor may order more screening tests, such as a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy.
- **Prostate cancer.** Age 50 is the usual age to start having a yearly prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test and digital rectal exam (DRE). If you have a family history of prostate cancer, start having screenings at age 45 or sooner.

Are You At Risk?

Answering a few quick questions can help you find out whether you're at risk for colorectal cancer. Visit www.paramounthealthcare.com and click on "Better Health for Life," "Interactive Tools," "Risk Assessments," and then "Colorectal Cancer Risk Assessment."



Head Off Those Holiday Pounds

Parties, hectic days, and holiday travel can mess up your healthy habits. That's why many people gain a little weight over the holidays, especially when there are so many high-sugar and high-fat foods nearby. Use these tactics to keep your health on track.

- **Every morning,** take a few minutes to plan your day. Decide where you can fit in 10 or 15 minutes of exercise—then stick to it. It could be as simple as taking a brisk walk around the mall before shopping for gifts.
- **When you're going to a holiday gathering,** bring a low-calorie dish along with you. You can add it to what your host is offering, and you'll be guaranteed to have a healthy option to eat at the party.

By staying focused and planning ahead, you can enjoy the season's festivities without adding to your waistline.

Eat Healthy on a Slimmer Budget

With food prices on the rise, many Americans are wondering how they can fill their grocery carts without emptying their wallets.

To stretch your food dollars, try some of these time-tested strategies.

Planning Makes Perfect

- **Add up how much you spend every month on food.** It can be eye-opening to add up grocery store receipts and restaurant bills. Start by writing down your daily food costs for a month or add them up using computer-based spreadsheet software. Consider ways to save money, such as eating out less often.
- **Plan a week's worth of meals and go grocery shopping just once a week.** This may help you save time and gas. Check your Sunday paper to see



what healthy foods will be on sale that week, and add those items to your grocery list.

- **Prepare a few meatless meals every week.** Meals built around beans or eggs can cost less than meat-based meals and still provide excellent nutrition. Look through a cookbook or go online for recipe ideas. The Paramount Web site is a great place to start. (See the end of this article.)

Shop Smart

- **Never shop while hungry.** Have a piece of fruit or your favorite healthy cereal to snack on while you shop. This can help you avoid the impulse to buy expensive or unhealthy items, such as fatty snacks.
- **Buy fresh produce that's in season.** Compare prices—sometimes smaller fruits and vegetables cost less than larger ones. And don't forget your local farmer's market, which may offer cheaper and fresher fruits and veggies.
- **Shop for less processed items.** These are often less expensive. For example, buy a head of lettuce instead of a bag of prewashed lettuce. Cook extra poultry or meat for sandwiches instead of buying luncheon meat from the deli, which can be costly.

Be a Clever Cook

- **Cook from scratch whenever possible.** This can help save money—and it doesn't have to take up too much time. For example, quick-cooking oatmeal is ready in minutes and costs less than ready-to-eat cereals. Add your own spices to rice instead of buying packaged flavored rice. Cooking from scratch is healthier, too—you can control the salt and fat.
- **When you eat meat, combine it with vegetables, grains, or pasta.** For example, you could make a stir-fry, curry, or casserole. This can add a healthy variety to your diet and help you save money by stretching out your meat portions.
- **Keep leftover vegetables or meat.** Add them to a container in the freezer. When it's full, you can make soup.

With these steps, you can fill your plate with tasty foods and still have a healthy savings account.

 **Find Delicious Recipes Online**
Jazz up mealtime with tasty and nutritious recipes at www.paramounthealthcare.com. Click on "Better Health for Life," "Library," and then "Healthy Recipes." Bon appétit!

Exercise Your Mental Muscles

If you enjoy working your way through a crossword or Sudoku puzzle, you're doing more than just entertaining yourself. Activities like these may help keep your brain sharp. Puzzles and brain teasers may help prevent what neurologists call cognitive decline, which brings symptoms including mild memory loss and even dementia. These symptoms can make it harder to carry out even simple daily activities, such as taking medication and running errands. And that can make it harder to live independently.

Studying the Brain

Fortunately, researchers have found some helpful ways to help keep aging minds sharp:

- **Train your brain.** Adults ages 65 and older who had 10 cognitive-training sessions improved their memory, reasoning ability, and mental-processing skills. When they were retested two years later, the improvements were still there.
- **Stay mentally active.** Activities such as listening to the radio, going to museums, reading the newspaper, and doing puzzles keep your brain healthy. In a four-year study of older priests and nuns, those who regularly did these

activities had a 47 percent lower risk for Alzheimer's disease.

Tips to Maintain Your Brainpower

To keep your brain sharp, use it often. Dive into activities that use your imagination or require memory and mental skills. Here are some ideas:

- **Play board games.** Choose anything from chess and checkers to word and trivia games.
- **Read newspapers and books** regularly.
- **Play card games** such as bridge, rummy, and canasta.
- **Visit the museum** or attend plays.

- **Do brain games and puzzles,** including crosswords, word puzzles, and math teasers.
- **Join a community theater group.**
- **Play a musical instrument.**

Limit TV Time

There's one activity that actually increases the risk for cognitive decline: watching television. Researchers think that's because it's a passive activity that requires little mental effort. This doesn't mean you have to throw out the TV. But consider switching to some more engaging activities instead of turning on the tube.



Personal Call Center *Representatives*



As part of our Paramount Perks program, Paramount Health Care would like to offer you a Personal Call Center Representative to answer any claims, benefits or general questions about your health plan.

If you would like a Personal Call Center Representative, you can enroll in one of two ways:

1) Complete form online at www.paramounthealthcare.com/PCCR

OR

2) Complete the form below and mail it to:

**Paramount Health Care
1901 Indian Wood Circle
Maumee, Ohio 43537**

Once your information is received by Paramount, you will be registered and receive a phone call from your assigned representative. At that time, you will be given the necessary information regarding how to make calls to your representative.

We hope you find the Paramount Perks services valuable. Be sure to watch your newsletters for additional services in the coming months. For more information please visit our website, www.paramounthealthcare.com and click on the Paramount Perks button. For more information about Paramount Perks, please call Member Services at:

Phone: 419-887-2525

TTY: 419-887-2526

Toll Free: 1-800-462-3589

TTY Toll Free: 1-888-740-5670



Personal Call Center Representative Request Form

Member Name _____

Member ID No. _____ How Many on Contract _____

Daytime Phone No. _____

Comments _____

If you're getting ready to have surgery, you know that it can be a stressful time. To help you feel less anxious and better able to cope, take a look at the tips below. If you know people who may be having surgery soon, cut out this article for them to read so that they can feel better prepared.

Talk with your surgeon before the operation.

Find out what the procedure involves and how long it will take. Ask your surgeon to draw you a diagram or describe the steps. Ask as many questions as you need to, such as:

- What type of anesthesia will be used, and what side effects can I expect?
- How long will I be in the hospital?
- How much pain will I be in afterward, and how long it will last?
- When will I be able to get back to my normal lifestyle?

Make a to-do list.

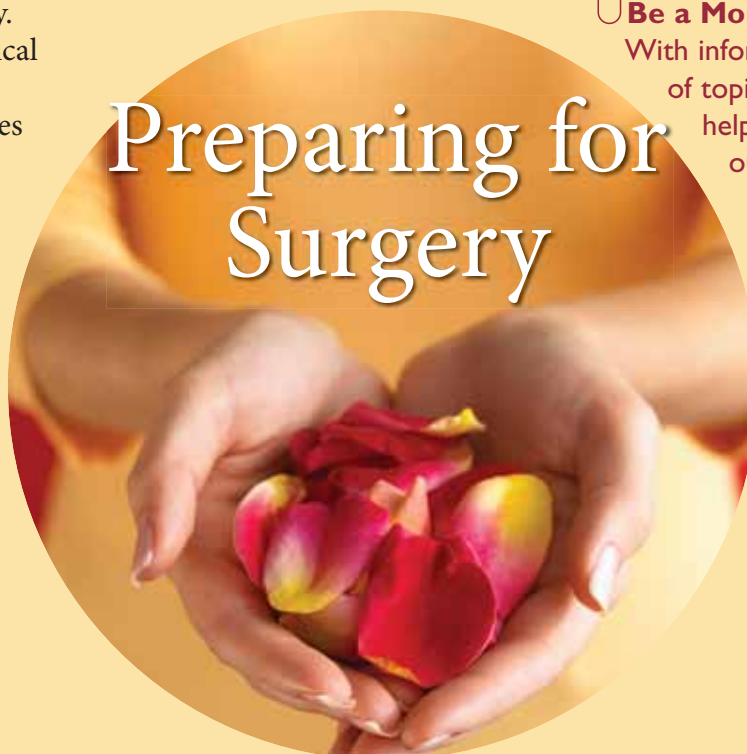
- It might include these items:
- Get presurgery blood tests and X-rays.
 - Have a presurgical evaluation with the surgeon to review your medical history.
 - Donate blood for yourself in case it's needed during surgery.
 - Purchase or rent medical equipment if needed.
 - Buy food and beverages you'll want during recovery.
 - Fill drug prescriptions.
 - Make arrangements to be away from work.
 - Ask a trusted friend or neighbor to look

- after your house, take in the mail, and care for pets.
- Find someone who will drive you home from the hospital and, if possible, stay with you overnight.
- Arrange for help with meals, cleaning, or health care during your recovery.

Get ready to go.

- Pack a bag for the hospital. Include toiletries, robe, slippers, and clothing that's easy to get on and off. Don't forget your health insurance card, glasses, and hearing aid, if you have one. You may want to pack earplugs, a sleep mask, reading material, and a pen and notepad. Also bring phone numbers of people you may want to call, some cash, and any prescription medications you take.
- Leave your jewelry, credit cards, and other valuables at home.
- Bring any X-rays or lab reports your surgeon doesn't already have.

With a little preparation, your hospital stay will be more enjoyable, and you'll be back on your feet as quickly as possible.



Be a More Informed Patient

With information on hundreds of topics and illustrations to help clarify complex procedures, our Web site is a great resource to look at before you have surgery. Visit www.paramounthealthcare.com and click on "Better Health for Life," "Library," and then "Surgeries & Procedures."



Here's to Your Hearing

Do you find it hard to hear when you talk on the phone? Do others complain that you turn the TV up too loud? These are common signs of hearing loss, and it's often part of getting older.

About one-third of Americans ages 65 to 74 and almost half of people ages 75 and older don't hear as well as they used to.

Can You Repeat That?

Ask yourself some questions to see whether your hearing needs help:

- Does it seem like other people mumble or slur their speech?
- Do you have to strain to understand what others are saying?
- Do you have a hard time hearing others when there is background noise?
- Is it hard for you to understand women and children?
- Do you often have to ask people to repeat themselves?
- Do people around you get annoyed because you often can't hear what they are saying?
- Do you have a ringing, roaring, or hissing sound (tinnitus) in one or both ears?

Why Is It Hard to Hear?

Hearing loss occurs as you get older because blood supply to the ear decreases. The eardrum also

can change, making it harder for sound waves to reach the inner ear. If you've been exposed to loud noises over the years, they may have damaged the inner ear or the ear's nerves, too. Examples of loud noises that cause hearing loss are construction noise, traffic sounds, loud music, and noisy equipment, such as lawn mowers and snowmobiles.

Many people don't realize their hearing has gotten worse because it happens so gradually. If you have signs of hearing loss, see your doctor. He or she may check your hearing or send you to a hearing specialist.

Don't be embarrassed by a hearing problem. By getting help, you'll be able to enjoy life more.

How Is Hearing Checked?

Find out what happens at a hearing evaluation. Go to www.paramounthealthcare.com and click on "Better Health for Life," "H" in the encyclopedia at top, and then "Hearing Evaluation, Your."

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.

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