

# Health Word

FALL 2007

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## Are You an Apple or a Pear?

Everywhere you look there are reminders about the ever-growing waistlines of the American public. From TV reports to magazine articles, weight gain or weight loss is a constant topic. According to the National Institutes of Health, less than half of American adults are at a healthy weight. This is an alarming statistic since being overweight and/or obese can lead to heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure and many other harmful conditions.

There are two basic body shapes – apples and pears. Apples carry extra weight around their middle, generally around the stomach and chest. Unfortunately, fat in these areas surrounds internal organs, such as the heart. Because of this, apple-shaped people have a higher risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure. However, according to experts, apples have an easier time losing excessive fat that has settled in the midsection, which helps reduce their health risk.

Pears store fat around the lower half of their bodies, normally in their hips and thighs. Pears carry their extra weight below the waistline and do not seem to have as high a risk of developing the same health conditions as apples do. However, since body shape is just one of the factors to consider when evaluating health risks, it is important that pear-shaped people do not take their weight for granted. Other factors for both types of people to consider include: family history, tobacco use, cholesterol levels and lifestyle.

There are two methods to learn what shape you are. First, you can simply stand in front of a mirror and decide where you think you store your excess weight. Is it around your stomach? Then, you're apple-shaped. If it is around your thighs, then you're a pear-shaped person. The other way to evaluate your body size is by taking your waist-to-hip ratio (WHR). To do this, use a

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## Diabetes – The Silent Disease



You can have diabetes for years and not know it. During this time, damage to your eyes, nerves and kidneys may have been going on for seven to 10 years. There are nearly 21 million children and adults in the United States who have diabetes – seven percent of the population. While an estimated 14.6 million have been diagnosed with diabetes another six million people or more are unaware that they have the disease.

### Are You at Risk?

Take our self test to see if you are at risk. Your risk for diabetes goes up as you get older, gain too much weight or if you do not stay active. Diabetes also is more common in African Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, American Indians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Risk factors for diabetes include:

- Having high blood pressure (at or above 140/90)
- Having a family history of diabetes
- Having diabetes during pregnancy or having a baby weighing more than nine pounds at birth

### What is Pre-Diabetes?

Pre-diabetes means you have blood sugars that are higher than normal but not yet high enough for you to be diagnosed with diabetes. At least 50 million people in the United States have pre-diabetes. Recent research has shown that some long-term damage to the body, especially the heart and circulatory system, may already be occurring during pre-diabetes.

Pre-diabetes is a serious medical condition that can be treated. The good news is that the recently completed Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) study conclusively showed that people with pre-diabetes can prevent the development of type 2 diabetes by making changes in their diet and increasing their level of physical activity. They may even be able to return their blood glucose levels to the normal range.

While the DPP also showed that some medications may delay the development of diabetes, diet and exercise worked better. Just 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity, coupled with a five to 10 percent reduction in body weight, lowered rates by 58 percent.

## Apple or Pear Continued from page 1

non-elastic tape measure to measure around your waist and the widest part of your hips. Once you have the two measurements, divide your waist measurement by your hip measurement. For example, if your waist is 40 inches and your hips are 39 inches, your WHR is:  $40 \div 39 = 1.03$ . Women should have a WHR at or below 0.80 and men should have a WHR of 1.0 or below.

If your WHR is above the recommended levels, talk to your doctor about what eating and exercise choices can help you reduce it. Remember, apple-shaped people tend to lose weight around their mid-section first. This means you'll start lowering your risk for harmful diseases or conditions as you begin to lose weight. For both apple and pear-shaped people, maintaining a healthy weight goes a long way towards your overall health and outlook.

## Diabetes Self Test

Concerned about your risk of developing diabetes? Take this quiz and see how you score. If the statement is false then score yourself a zero for that question. Once complete, total your score.

- I am a woman who has had a baby weighing more than nine pounds at birth Yes (1 point) \_\_\_\_\_
- I have a sister or brother with diabetes Yes (1 point) \_\_\_\_\_
- I have a parent with diabetes Yes (1 point) \_\_\_\_\_
- My weight is equal to or above the chart below Yes (5 points) \_\_\_\_\_
- I am under 65 and get little or no exercise Yes (5 points) \_\_\_\_\_
- I am 65 or older Yes (9 points) \_\_\_\_\_

If you scored 10 or more points you are at high risk for having diabetes. Only your doctor can confirm if you have diabetes, but these factors put you at high risk.

If you scored three to nine points, you are at low to medium risk of diabetes right now. You can keep your risk lower by losing weight if you are above the chart, being active most days and eating a low-fat diet that is high in fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods.

### Height and Weight Chart

Height <small>(feet and inches in shoes)</small>	Weight <small>(pounds without clothing)</small>	Height <small>(feet and inches in shoes)</small>	Weight <small>(pounds without clothing)</small>
4'10"	129	5'7"	172
4'11"	133	5'8"	177
5'0"	138	5'9"	182
5'1"	143	5'10"	188
5'2"	147	5'11"	193
5'3"	152	6'0"	199
5'4"	157	6'1"	204
5'5"	162	6'2"	210
5'6"	167	6'3"	216
		6'4"	221

Source: American Diabetes Association



## Get Involved In Your Health Care

Two new books provide you with information on how to best participate in your health care and treatment. Becoming more involved in your care can help you avoid possible medical errors and give you confidence that you are getting the best – and safest – treatment possible.

*Patients as Partners: How to Involve Patients and Families in Their Own Care*, by Meghan McGreevy is designed primarily for health care providers, but also provides patients with case studies and examples that demonstrate the importance of communication in the provider/patient relationship.

*You: The Smart Patient – An Insider's Handbook for Getting the Best Treatment*, by Michael F. Rozen, MD and Mehmet C. Oz, MD, gives the patient information that will help them get through the confusing and complex world of health care.

Both books are informative easy reads, especially *You: the Smart Patient* because of its relevance, use of humor and entertaining illustrations. Check them out at the library or your favorite bookstore.

# Your Health Plan

## Are You Getting the Most Out of Your Health Plan?

The experts agree: preventive screenings are one of the most effective ways to prevent disease. BlueChoice HealthPlan covers preventive screenings at 100 percent! All you pay is your usual office copayment (\$0 copayment for mammograms)\*. Make sure you get the most “bang for your buck” from your health plan by getting your routine preventive screenings. Talk to your doctor about your individual risk factors in case an alternate schedule is required. Make a preventive screening appointment today and stay healthy!

\*Most groups cover mammograms at 100 percent with no copayment. Check your schedule of benefits or call member services at 1-800-868-2528 for more information.

### WOMEN

Here are the recommended tests and frequencies for women’s health:

Test	Frequency
Mammogram**	Every 1-2 yrs
Pap Smear	Yearly
Breast Exam - Self	Monthly
Breast Exam - By Physician	Yearly
Height/Weight/BMI	As needed
Cholesterol	Every 4-5 yrs
LDL	Every 4-5 yrs
HDL	Every 4-5 yrs
Triglycerides	Every 4-5 yrs
Blood Pressure	Yearly
Blood Sugar	Ask your doctor
Chlamydia/STD	Yearly
Colorectal Screening	Ask your doctor
Bone Density Exam	Ask your doctor
Skin/Mole Self Exam	Monthly

\*\*Mammograms are recommended beginning at age 40.

### MEN

Here are the recommended tests and frequencies for men’s health:

Test	Frequency
Physical Exam	Yearly
Prostate (PSA) Test***	Yearly
Testicular Exam - Self	Monthly
Testicular Exam - By Physician	Yearly
Height/Weight/BMI	As needed
Cholesterol	Every 4-5 yrs
LDL	Every 4-5 yrs
HDL	Every 4-5 yrs
Triglycerides	Every 4-5 yrs
Blood Pressure	Yearly
Blood Sugar	Ask your doctor
Colorectal Screening***	Ask your doctor
Skin/Mole Self Exam	Monthly

\*\*\*Prostate/Colorectal screenings are recommended beginning at age 50, earlier if you are African American. Talk to your doctor regarding your individual risk factors.

## Stay Current on Immunizations

Make sure your children are up to date on their immunizations! BlueChoice HealthPlan covers immunizations at 100 percent after your usual office copayment.

### Childhood Immunization Schedule (0-6 years)

<b>At birth</b>	HepB
<b>2 months</b>	HepB + DTaP + PCV + Hib + Polio + RV <small>1-2 mos<sup>1</sup></small>
<b>4 months</b>	HepB <sup>2</sup> + DTaP + PCV + Hib + Polio + RV
<b>6 months</b>	HepB + DTaP + PCV + Hib <sup>3</sup> + Polio + RV + Influenza <small>6-18 mos<sup>1</sup> 6-59 mos<sup>1,4</sup></small>
<b>12 months or older</b>	MMR + DTaP + PCV + Hib + Chickenpox + HepA + Influenza <small>12-15 mos<sup>1</sup> 15-18 mos<sup>1,5</sup> 12-15 mos<sup>1</sup> 12-15 mos<sup>1</sup> 12-18 mos<sup>1</sup> 12-23 mos<sup>1</sup> 6-59 mos<sup>1,4</sup></small>

- <sup>1</sup> This is the age range in which this vaccine should be given.
- <sup>2</sup> Your infant may not need a dose of Hep B at 4 months of age depending on the type of vaccine that your health care provider uses.
- <sup>3</sup> Your infant may not need a dose of Hib vaccine at 6 months of age depending on the type of vaccine that your health care provider uses.
- <sup>4</sup> All children between the ages of 6 and 59 months should receive vaccination for influenza in the fall of each year. First-time vaccinees should receive 2 doses, separated by at least 4 weeks.
- <sup>5</sup> This dose of DTaP may be given as early as 12 months if it has been 6 months since the previous dose and if you think you might not return for more shots by the time your child is 18 months of age.

Children should receive all the above recommendations by the age of two. Check with your health care provider about receiving combination vaccines. They are just as effective as single vaccines, but with less needle sticks!

Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for more information and childhood immunization schedules.



### Adolescent Immunizations (11-19 years)

Many people think vaccines are just for little kids. But guess what? There are millions of people between the ages of 11 and 19 who need vaccinations to prevent:

- Whooping Cough
- Tetanus
- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis A
- Chickenpox
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Polio
- Influenza
- Meningococcal disease
- Pneumococcal disease
- Human Papilloma Virus infection

Stay protected! Make sure you and your health care provider keep your adolescent’s immunizations up to date. Use your benefits to keep your children immunized.

Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for more information and adolescent immunization schedules.



## Fast Facts About Breast Cancer

- The National Cancer Institute estimates that one in eight women in the United States will develop invasive breast cancer during her lifetime. This risk was about one in 11 in 1975.
- More women in the United States live with breast cancer than any other cancer (excluding skin cancer). Approximately three million women in the U.S. are living with breast cancer; more than two million have been diagnosed with the disease and an estimated one million do not yet know they have the disease.
- Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women in the United States and worldwide (excluding skin cancer).
- Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death for women in the U.S, after lung cancer.
- Mammography screening does not prevent or cure breast cancer. However, it may detect the disease before symptoms occur.
- All women are at risk for breast cancer. **About 90-95 percent of women who develop breast cancer do not have a family history of the disease.**

### So what can you do?

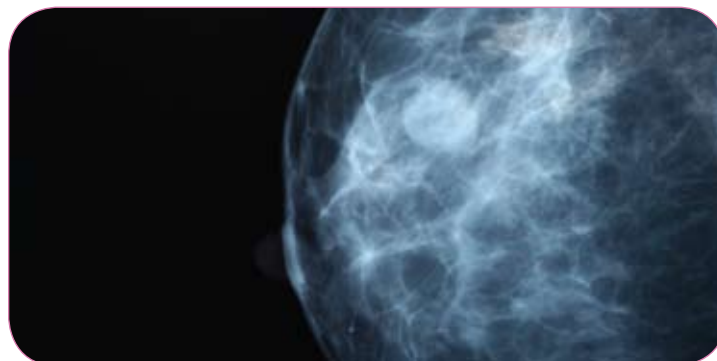
Early detection is the best defense against all cancers - including breast cancer. Most groups under BlueChoice HealthPlan offer 100 percent coverage for screening mammograms - so you pay no deductible or copayment for this test.\*

Breast cancer survival rates rise significantly when the cancer is diagnosed and treated early. High quality film-screen mammography is the most reliable way to find breast cancer early. Mammograms detect abnormalities that are much smaller than a woman can feel during a monthly breast-self exam.

Most women should begin annual mammograms by age 40. As risk factors vary, women are encouraged to discuss with their physician their individual risk factors and the most appropriate time to begin annual mammograms. If an abnormality or lump is found,

the prognosis is much better when detected early.

For more information on breast cancer awareness, visit the National Breast Cancer Awareness Month Web site, [nbcam.org](http://nbcam.org) or the visit the American Cancer Society Web site, [cancer.org](http://cancer.org).



\* Check your schedule of benefits or call member services at 1-800-868-2528 for more information.

## Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 Annual Notice

Do you know that your plan provides benefits for mastectomy-related services including all stages of reconstruction and surgery to achieve symmetry between the breasts, prostheses and complications resulting from a mastectomy, including lymphedema? The U.S. Department of Labor published *Your Rights After a Mastectomy - the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998*, which provides answers to frequently asked questions about WH-CRA. To obtain a free copy of this booklet, call toll-free 1-866-444-3272 or view it on the Web at <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/publications/whcra.html>. Your Certificate of Coverage or Individual Contract also provides information on this benefit.

## Say "Boo" to the Flu

Since flu activity in the United States generally peaks between late December and early March, the Centers for Disease Control recommends getting your flu shot before Halloween each year. BlueChoice HealthPlan reminds all members that a flu shot can reduce the effects of the flu this season.

### Still Scared of the Flu?

In addition to the flu shot, here are some simple steps that can reduce your chances of getting the flu and other illnesses:

- **Wash your hands** - try for at least 30 seconds using warm, soapy water up to your wrists.
- **Eat a balanced diet and get plenty of rest** - both of these are good tips for overall health, but they also help keep your immune system strong to fight off viral infections.
- **Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces** - cleaning and disinfecting are not the same. Cleaning with soap and water removes visible dirt and most germs, while disinfecting with a bleach solution or other disinfectant kills additional germs on surfaces.
- **Keep your distance** - limit or avoid contact with people who are sick, especially if they are coughing or sneezing.
- **Stay home if you are sick** - this prevents spreading the illness throughout the workplace. Also, if your kids are sick, keep them home from school to prevent widespread illness in a school.

BlueChoice HealthPlan covers flu shots at 100 percent after your usual office copayment. Getting your flu shot is the best defense against the flu. Be sure to talk to your doctor if you have an egg allergy.



# BLUE CHOICE<sup>®</sup> HEALTHPLAN

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Do you have questions about your BlueChoice HealthPlan coverage? Try our Web site at [www.BlueChoiceSC.com](http://www.BlueChoiceSC.com). We're open 24 hours a day here!

Member Services Phone Numbers:  
(803) 786-8476 or 1-800-868-2528  
8:30 a.m. to midnight, Monday - Friday

E-mail: [BlueChoice.SC@BlueChoiceSC.com](mailto:BlueChoice.SC@BlueChoiceSC.com)



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Your newsletter from  
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