

# Great Expectations<sup>®+</sup>

FOR HEALTH

## Women's Health Newsletter

A BlueChoice HealthPlan newsletter for women  
Fall 2008

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#### Mark Your Calendars

The 2009 Women's Health Conference is coming to Columbia.

The conference, entitled, "A Healthy Affair: Find the Time in 2009," is designed to educate women about the health issues that affect them.

These health issues include heart health, stress management and menopause.

The conference will be held Saturday, Feb. 21 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Columbia Convention Center in the Vista.

Participants will enjoy educational seminars, a continental breakfast, goody bags, door prizes and a great time!

To register, call 1-800-327-3183, ext. 25294 or (803) 786-8466, ext. 25294.

## New program to improve kids' health

BlueChoice<sup>®</sup> HealthPlan has launched an exciting program just for kids. Great Expectations **Healthy & Active Kids** is the newest addition to our health management series. The program, which stresses proper nutrition and exercise, is for kids age six to 17 who are overweight or obese.

Children identified by their doctor are enrolled at no cost in this innovative program. The program encourages new members to adopt a healthy lifestyle with the use of interactive tools and incentives.

Parents are encouraged to get involved in the decisions that will affect the long-term health of their kids, especially since healthy habits are best started at an early age.

We are committed to helping your family stay healthy and active. To learn more, visit our

Web site at [BlueChoiceSC.com](http://BlueChoiceSC.com) or call 1-800-327-3183 ext. 25068, or in Columbia at (803) 382-5068.



## Screenings save lives

Breast cancer has its own awareness month - October - because it is the second leading cause of cancer death among U.S. women.

Since 1990, death rates from breast cancer have been declining due to early detection through screenings.

Share the following breast cancer facts with your loved ones and make sure to get routine screenings.

The American Cancer Society advises:

- Women should receive a yearly mammogram starting at age 40.
- Women in their 20s and 30s should receive a clinical breast exam about

every three years. Young women should also perform self-breast exams.

- Women should know how their breasts normally feel and report any changes to their doctor.
- Women with a family history of breast or ovarian cancer and women who have been treated for Hodgkin's disease have a 20 to 25 percent greater risk of developing breast cancer.

Source: [cancer.org](http://cancer.org)

### BlueChoice HealthPlan Benefit

Most employer groups cover a yearly screening mammogram at 100 percent. Check your schedule of benefits or call 1-800-868-2528 for more information.



## Learn to control your stress

Stress often comes at the worst times, but you have a choice in how you handle it. You can use the adrenaline that comes with stress to help you get things done, or you can let it keep you from enjoying your life.

Don't let stress get you down. Instead, use it to keep you going! If you allow stress to weigh you down, it can cause some negative effects.

Try the following tips to reduce your stress:

- Keep a journal of what causes you stress. Be honest with yourself!
- Start a new hobby that lets you relax.

- Make plans to better manage your time and resources. If you can set aside time for yourself in the midst of a busy week, you'll enjoy the benefits later.

- Take good care of yourself. Eat well. Exercise often. Get enough sleep. Build healthy relationships. Stop smoking!

- Learn a new technique to relax your body. Yoga poses are rejuvenating. Meditation can help clear the mind.

- Also, don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Talk to those who are willing to help.

Source: [webmd.com](http://webmd.com)

## Back care program can bring relief

Because most Americans experience back pain as they age, BlueChoice HealthPlan has developed the Great Expectations **Back Care** program.

Since pain can vary, our program caters to those who suffer from dull aches to shooting pain.

Members with chronic pain may be considered for case management and have access to phone counseling. Chronic back pain lasts for three or more months.

Even though back pain is common, it can also be an indication of a serious condition. Talk to your doctor and visit our Web site at [BlueChoiceSC.com](http://BlueChoiceSC.com) to learn more.

### To relieve pain, you can:

- Try low-impact exercises to strengthen your lower back and abdominal muscles.

- Maintain a healthy weight. Excessive weight can cause improper balance and increase back strain.

- Always sit and stand up straight. Check your posture throughout the day.

- Adjust your work desk and chair to the right height for your body.

- Choose a chair with good lumbar support. If you must sit for a long time, get up and move around or take a moment to stretch your legs.

- Ask for help if you need to lift a heavy object. Lift with your legs, keeping the object close to your body.

Source: [ninds.nih.gov](http://ninds.nih.gov)

# Frequently Asked Questions About Hysterectomies

One in three American women have had a hysterectomy by the age of 60.

Many think that a hysterectomy is the only way to treat certain reproductive health conditions, but there may be other, less risky options. Be sure to discuss all of your options with your doctor.

## What is a hysterectomy?

A hysterectomy is an operation to remove a woman's uterus (womb). Sometimes, one or both ovaries and fallopian tubes are removed during a hysterectomy. There are two types of hysterectomies:

- *Abdominal hysterectomies* are performed through a cut in the abdomen. It usually takes most women four to eight weeks to recover from an abdominal hysterectomy.
- *Vaginal hysterectomies* are performed through the vagina. Most women recover in one or two weeks.

## Hysterectomies treat:

- Fibroids that may cause heavy bleeding or pain.
- Endometriosis when medication and surgery do not cure the condition.
- Uterine prolapse, which can lead to urinary problems, pelvic pressure or difficulty with bowel movements.
- Cancer of the uterus, cervix or ovary.
- Persistent vaginal bleeding if menstrual cycles are heavy or not regular, and non-surgical methods have been unable to control bleeding.
- Chronic pelvic pain caused by the uterus.

## Are there risks involved in getting a hysterectomy?

Yes. Some risks include: heavy blood loss, bowel injury, bladder injury, anesthesia problems, or the wound pulling open.

## If my cervix is removed, do I still need a Pap test?

Ask your doctor if you need periodic Pap tests. However, all women should have regular gynecologic exams regardless of whether or not they need a Pap test.

## What if I am told that I need a hysterectomy?

First, consider getting a second opinion. Then talk with your doctor about alternatives. Ask about surgical and non-surgical treatments for your condition.

## What are the options?

A hysterectomy may not be your only choice. Uterine fibroids, endometriosis or uterine prolapse may be treated with less invasive methods, which include:

- *Drug therapy:* Certain medications may lighten heavy bleeding or correct irregular uterine bleeding. It may also help with endometriosis.
- *Endometrial ablation:* During this procedure, a device uses electricity, heat or cold to destroy the uterine lining and stop uterine bleeding.
- *Uterine artery embolization:* This procedure treats fibroids by blocking the blood supply to tumors. It may cause the fibroids to shrink over time, which can reduce pain and heavy bleeding.
- *Myomectomy:* This surgical procedure removes fibroid tumors while leaving the uterus in tact. However, the tumors may return.
- *Vaginal pessary:* This procedure holds the uterus in place with an object that must be fitted for each woman.

Source: [womenshealth.gov](http://womenshealth.gov)

## BlueChoice HealthPlan Benefit

Pap screenings are covered with a copayment by most employer groups. Check your schedule of benefits or call 1-800-868-2528.

# BLUE CHOICE<sup>®</sup> HEALTH PLAN



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*This newsletter is for BlueChoice HealthPlan members. It provides information only and does not replace the advice of your doctor. You always should see your doctor for personal medical advice.*

*Do you have questions about your BlueChoice HealthPlan coverage? Try our Web site at [BlueChoiceSC.com](http://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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