

# Great Expectations<sup>®+</sup>

FOR HEALTH

## Women's Health Newsletter

A BlueChoice HealthPlan newsletter for women  
Spring 2008

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## See what's new with BlueChoice HealthPlan

To better serve your needs, the staff of BlueChoice HealthPlan has revamped its Great Expectations<sup>®</sup> **Weight Management** and **Quit Smoking** programs.

By enrolling in either program, members are provided with helpful hints and tips and other tools, like a relaxation CD, to help them adjust to lifestyle changes. The cost to enroll is \$15 for either program or \$5 if you are already enrolled in another disease management program.

To enroll in one of the updated programs or simply learn more, call 1-800-327-3183, ext. 25294 or in Columbia at (803)382-5294.



## Vaccinations: Fact vs. Fiction

This article shares common myths and facts about vaccinations so you can make more informed decisions.

**Fiction:** Vaccinations do not work.

**Fact:** Vaccinations are an effective means of preventing certain infectious diseases. Historically, examples of successful vaccination programs include small pox, polio, measles, rubella, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus and diphtheria vaccines.

**Fiction:** Vaccine side effects are often worse than the diseases they are meant to prevent.

**Fact:** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers vaccinations much safer than risking infection.

For BlueChoice HealthPlan members, recommended immunizations are covered at 100 percent after your regular office visit copayment. Contact customer service at 1-800-327-3183, ext. 25305 to learn more about your schedule of benefits.

To learn more about children's vaccinations, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics' Web site, [www.cispimmunize.org](http://www.cispimmunize.org). Also, search [www.immunizationinfo.org](http://www.immunizationinfo.org), the National Network for Immunization Information's official Web site.

Source: 2007 Wyeth Pharmaceuticals Vaccination Fact vs. Fiction handout

## Get active to beat your blues



Research has shown that regular exercise is an effective, but often underused way to treat mild to moderate depression.

In addition to warding off bad feelings, regular exercise can reduce stress and anxiety, boost self-esteem and improve your sleep. Researchers believe any form of exercise can help reduce depression.

The good news about depression is that it is treatable. As a BlueChoice HealthPlan member, you have access to physicians who can treat your depression by prescribing antidepressant medications and/or referring you to a mental health professional for counseling.

Talking with your doctor about how you feel is an important first step. You can further help your doctor treat you by actively participating in your treatment. Ask questions and follow through with the treatment plan you and your doctor have agreed upon.

### Getting Started: Exercise can be fun!

To get the most benefit, you should exercise at least 20 to 30 minutes, three times a week. Current studies suggest that four or five times a week is best. If you are a beginner, exercise for 20 minutes and build up to 30-minute sessions.

When starting out, you should plan a routine that is easy to follow and maintain. As the program becomes more routine, you should vary your exercise times and activities.

Always check with your doctor before beginning any type of exercise program.

#### Other helpful hints:

- Choose an activity that you enjoy. Exercising should be fun, not a chore.
- Do a variety of exercises so that you don't get bored. Look into scheduled exercise classes at your local community center.
- Exercise does not have to put a strain on your wallet. Avoid buying expensive equipment or health club memberships unless you are sure you will use them regularly.
- Stick with it. If you exercise regularly, it will soon become part of your lifestyle.

#### Other benefits of regular exercise:

- Strengthens the heart
- Makes the body better able to use oxygen
- Increases energy levels
- Lowers blood pressure
- Improves and strengthens muscle tone; builds and strengthens bones
- Reduces body fat
- Helps you look fit and feel healthy

# There is no cure for HPV...

## But now there's an affordable vaccine

The American Cancer Society recommends HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccination for 11 and 12-year-old girls. The vaccine, which is a three-shot series, helps prevent certain infections that can cause cervical cancer and genital warts.

HPV is called a "papilloma" virus because some types of HPV cause warts - or papillomas - which are non-cancerous tumors. Almost half of the infections affect 15 to 25 year olds.

Treatments cannot cure HPV, but vaccines can prevent infections. Most employers cover vaccinations at 100 percent after your regular office visit copayment. Check your schedule of benefits for more information.

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



## Migraine Myths Revealed

### Myth:

If I suffered from migraines, I would know that I have them.

### Fact:

Some 14 million Americans experience migraines, but are undiagnosed.

### Myth:

All migraines are so severe they require bed rest.

### Fact:

Migraines range from mild to severe. So even if you don't need bed rest, you could have migraines.

### Myth:

It's not a migraine unless the pain is only on one side of my head.

### Fact:

Migraine pain can be felt on one or both sides of the head, the back of the neck, on the face, around the eyes and/or in the sinuses.

### Myth:

Migraines cause nausea and aura (seeing spots or flashing).

### Fact:

Not all migraines cause nausea, and only 20 percent cause aura. Migraines are often accompanied by a variety of symptoms.

### Myth:

I get headaches with my period, so they must be menstrual headaches.

### Fact:

Headaches triggered by your menstrual cycle are often migraines.

### Myth:

I get some relief from medicines, so my headaches are not migraines.

### Fact:

If you don't get complete relief, your headaches could be migraines.

If any of these myths sound all too familiar, you may be suffering from migraines. That's why BlueChoice HealthPlan offers our award-winning Great Expectations® **Migraine** program.

The migraine program provides members with free materials that help identify triggers, explain medications, chart your headaches and encourage you to work with a doctor to manage your migraines. We believe that by working together, you can reduce the impact headaches have on your life.

For more information about Great Expectations **Migraine** program, call 1-800-327-3183, ext. 25289, or enroll in the program by logging into My Insurance Manager<sup>SM</sup> through our Web site, [www.BlueChoiceSC.com](http://www.BlueChoiceSC.com).

Source: *Glaxo Smith Kline*



## Want to know more?

Learn more about the importance of regular mammograms and other issues affecting women's health at [womenshealth.gov](http://womenshealth.gov), a Web site maintained by the U.S. Department for Health and Human Services.

# Mammogram 101: Get the Facts

A mammogram is a safe screening test used to look for problems with a woman's breasts. It only takes about 15 minutes. The test uses a special, low-dose X-ray machine to take pictures of both breasts. The results are recorded on X-ray film or sent directly to a computer for a radiologist to examine your results.

During the mammogram, you stand in front of a special X-ray machine. The person who takes the X-rays, called a radiologic technologist, places your breasts (one at a time) between two plastic plates. The plates press your breast to make it flat. You will feel pressure on your breast for a few seconds. It may cause you some discomfort. You might feel squeezed or pinched, but you shouldn't feel pain.

A mammogram, or X-ray of the breast, along with a clinical breast exam, performed by a physician, is the most effective way to detect breast cancer early.

Checking your own breasts for lumps or other changes is called a breast self-exam. This is also a good way to detect breast cancer.

If a lump is found, your doctor may order other tests, such as an ultrasound or a biopsy - a test where a small amount of tissue is taken from the lump and the area surrounding the lump. This tissue is sent to a lab to look for cancer or changes that indicate that cancer is likely to develop in your breasts.

Breast lumps or growths can be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). Finding breast cancer early improves a woman's chances of surviving. There are also more choices of treatment when breast cancer is detected early.

Speak with your doctor about when you should start having mammograms, and how often you should have them.

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

## Preparing for your Mammogram

First, contact the facility where you are having the mammogram for any special instructions.

Make your mammogram appointment for a week after your period, as your breasts tend to hurt less after your monthly cycle. If you have breast implants, tell your mammography facility when you make your appointment.

Wear a shirt with shorts, pants, or a skirt. This way, you can undress from the waist up and leave your bottoms on when you have the mammogram. Do not wear any deodorant, perfume, lotion or powder under your arms or on your breasts the day of your mammogram.

# Frequently Asked Questions About Colonoscopies

A colonoscopy is an excellent screening exam for colorectal cancer, which is commonly referred to as “colon cancer.” Too often people don’t get this test. Then the cancer can grow and spread unnoticed, like a silent invader. In many cases, by the time people begin experiencing symptoms, the cancer has advanced and is difficult to treat. Nine out of 10 people whose colon cancer is discovered early will still be alive five years later, and many will enjoy normal life spans. Being misinformed and embarrassed have scared people away from this lifesaving test.

## • What is a colonoscopy?

A colonoscopy is an exam that allows a doctor to closely examine the inside of the entire colon for signs of cancer or polyps. Polyps are small growths that, over time, can become cancer. The doctor uses a slender, flexible, hollow, lighted tube about the thickness of a finger. This “colonoscope” is gently eased inside the colon, through the rectum. It has a tiny video camera which sends pictures to a TV screen. Small puffs of air are put in the colon to keep it open and allow the doctor to see clearly. The exam takes 15 to 30 minutes to complete. Patients are given medicine to help them relax, which often puts them to sleep during the procedure. It’s important for people to talk with their doctor to understand their personal risks for getting colon cancer and the guidelines they should follow for testing.

## • Why are colonoscopies so important?

Removing polyps prevents colorectal cancer from ever starting. Cancers found at an early stage are more easily treated.

## • Will it hurt?

No, this exam is not painful. For the most part, patients are given medicine to sleep through the colonoscopy, so they will not feel anything.

## • Who will do the exam?

A colonoscopy is generally done by a doctor, usually a gastroenterologist or a surgeon.

## • Will I be in a private room?

A colonoscopy is performed in a private area. It may be done in a hospital outpatient department, a clinic or a doctor’s office. The patient’s privacy is generally given top priority.

## • How do I prepare? Will I need to miss work?

The preparation for a colonoscopy requires you to go the bathroom a lot. You follow a special diet the day before the exam and take strong laxatives in the hours before the procedure. You may also need an enema to cleanse the colon. The key to retrieving good pictures is to have the colon cleansed. Because a colonoscopy is done under sedation, people usually miss a day of work. You might want to schedule the procedure for a Monday, so you can be at home the day before without taking an additional day off work.

## • How will I feel afterward? Will I need someone to drive me home?

Most people feel OK after a colonoscopy, but you may feel a bit “woozy.” As you wake up from the sedation, you are watched and given fluids. You may experience mild discomfort from gas and bloating. Because you have been sedated, most facilities ask that someone drive you home.

## • What if they find something?

If a small polyp is found, your doctor will probably remove it during the procedure. If your doctor sees a large polyp, a tumor, or anything else abnormal, he will perform a biopsy. For the biopsy, a small piece of tissue is taken out through the colonoscope. That tissue is then sent to a lab where it is checked under a microscope for cancerous or precancerous cells.

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

### **BlueChoice HealthPlan Benefit**

**Most groups cover colonoscopy screening at 100 percent, so you do not have to pay a deductible or a copayment. Check your schedule of benefits for more information.**

# BLUE CHOICE<sup>®</sup> HEALTHPLAN



Your Partner in Good Health<sup>™</sup>

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Columbia, SC 29260-6170

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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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