

# Health Wise

PERS HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

Winter 2007

## Inside:

Ready, Set, Quit!  
Tobacco cessation  
Page 2

Help Someone Quit  
Smoking  
Support tips  
Page 2

Resistant Bacteria  
Page 3

16 Ways to Eat More  
Fruits and Vegetables  
Page 4

The Health Risks of  
Being Overweight  
Page 5

Reduce TV, Improve  
Your Health  
Page 6

Better than Butter?  
Page 7

---

Health Wise Editor  
Sigrid Sharif

## Making the most of your doctor's visit

Article submitted by George M. Kimble, PERS Account Executive, The ODS Companies

Your doctor visit can often be a confusing and hectic time. Your PERS healthcare team wants you to take charge of your health and remind you it is okay to ask your doctor as many questions as necessary until you understand and feel comfortable with all of the information. At your next appointment, try asking these three questions to better understand your condition:

- 1. What is my main problem?**
- 2. What do I need to do?**
- 3. Why is it important for me to do this?**

The following tips can also help you get more from your next visit:

- Bring a family member or friend to help you
- Take a list of concerns and discuss them with your doctor or nurse
- Bring a list of all your medications and share the list with your doctor

- Ask your pharmacist questions about your medications

Although your doctor may be busy, it is important to get the information you need. Do not be afraid to ask questions until you understand your condition and how you should be caring for yourself.

It is also important for you to educate yourself about your particular medical condition and the latest research and medications that are currently being utilized for treatment. An information search at your local library or on the internet (such as the website [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)) will give you very helpful information and all the latest treatment options. Always discuss these treatment options with your doctor so that you can be assured that you are getting the best quality care.

# Ready, set, quit!

Article courtesy of Kaiser Permanente

Unless you've been living alone in a remote cave for the past few decades, you know that tobacco is bad for you. If you use tobacco, chances are high that you've tried to stop several times before.

Successfully quitting depends on developing new skills and habits, according to Hyatt Yu, coordinator of the tobacco-cessation program at Kaiser Permanente Health Education Services. And any behavior-change attempt involves looking at both the pros and cons of change.

Your tobacco dependency can be:

- Physical — nicotine is addictive, and your body becomes physically dependent on it.
- Behavioral — your use is a habit, usually associated with aspects of your daily routines.
- Social — tobacco use is often a shared activity, associated with friendship, relaxation and conversation.
- Mental — there's likely to be a pattern of "addictive thinking" that makes you continue to create excuses to use tobacco.
- Emotional — your moods can contribute to your desire to use.

Think about these five dependencies, and consider how they influence your tobacco use. Now consider how ready you are to make some

changes. How important is it for you to quit using tobacco? What are some of your reasons for wanting to make this change? Are these reasons strong enough to motivate you? Change is a complicated and challenging process. Scientists have developed theories about the stages a person goes through when trying to change a behavior.

**Contemplation.** In some ways, doing nothing is a lot easier than changing. You need a clear idea about what you want in order to discover your level of motivation.

**Preparation.** You will be more successful if you identify your patterns of tobacco use and make plans to handle daily life without tobacco.

**Action.** Make plans, set goals and keep adjusting them until you reach your goal. Take one step at a time — and understand that new steps may seem awkward and unfamiliar at first.

**Maintenance.** Your new behavior may still require attention, even after you've reached your goal. It takes time and practice for new habits to become automatic.

**Relapse.** You may slip back to prior behaviors. Don't let this throw you — reformulate your plan and get back into action mode quickly.

We're confident that when you are ready, you can quit.

---

## How you can help someone quit tobacco

Nicotine addiction can be as strong as addiction to heroin. "For those who make the attempt to quit using tobacco, the support of family and friends can make a big difference in their success," said Hyatt Yu, tobacco-cessation

coordinator for Kaiser Permanente Health Education Services.

### Talk about it

- Ask how you can help.

---

Quit,  
continued on page 3

# Quit

*continued from page 2*

- Be positive and encouraging. Make an effort to praise each success (like passing up a cigarette) with words of support. Share success stories of your own.
- Become familiar with the educational materials and methods being used by the person who is quitting so that you are better able to discuss his or her progress.

## **Get active**

- Find ways to break the daily routines that trigger tobacco urges. For example, do not sit around after dinner — get up immediately and go for a walk.
- Suggest activities that are incompatible with using tobacco, such as going to a movie.
- Worry beads and puzzles help keep the hands busy.

## **Use food wisely**

- If you help prepare meals, learn which foods to avoid and which to keep on hand. Fresh fruits and vegetables are great for healthy snacking.
- Sugarless gum, cinnamon sticks or cloves are good low-calorie substitutes when there is an urge to smoke or chew tobacco.

## **Take a break**

- Sometimes, a person who is quitting tobacco needs some quiet time alone. You can best help by honoring the need for privacy.
- Be aware of the disruption that quitting is causing to his or her life. People who have recently quit may become irritable while battling their tobacco dependency. This irritability will lessen as time passes.

## **Consider your own actions**

- If you use tobacco products yourself, avoid using them while you're with people who are quitting, for at least the first two weeks of their effort.
- After the first few weeks, ask if it will bother them if you use tobacco in their presence.

## **Acknowledge the accomplishments**

- Reward the person who is trying to quit. Provide incentives such as a special dinner, a massage, or a trip to a ball game or concert. Think about a gift he or she might enjoy.
- Make a special occasion of the monthly anniversary of his or her quit date, and celebrate!

---

# Protect yourself against resistant bacteria

*Tips courtesy of Clear Choice Health Plans*

- Never take antibiotics to treat viral illnesses like colds or the flu. Antibiotics have no effect against viruses.
  - When you are prescribed an antibiotic, take EVERY DOSE, even if your symptoms go away. Taking part of the prescription only treats part of the infection.
  - NEVER share antibiotics. These strong medications can cause dangerous side effects.
- They should only be used under a doctor's care.
- Wash your hands well and often. This is the best way to keep from getting sick.
  - Ask your doctor about pneumococcal (pneumonia) and influenza (flu) vaccinations.

*Source: Oregon AWARE (Alliance Working for Antibiotic Resistance Education)*

# Health Matters

## 16 ways to eat more vegetables and fruit

*Article courtesy of the Kaiser Permanente Health Education and Services Department*

Food guides recommend anywhere from five to nine servings of vegetables and fruit daily. But few Americans eat at least five servings, let alone nine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Adding vegetables and fruit to your diet is an easy way to improve your health, said John Crawford, Kaiser Permanente Health Education Services manager.

“Healthy diets that include a lot of vegetables and fruit may reduce the risk of disease,” he said. “Vegetables and fruits provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber and other substances that are important for good health. And most are naturally low in fat and calories, and are filling.”

Look over these ideas and think about which you want to try. You could post this list in your kitchen — or take it with you when you shop for groceries.

- 1) Use ready-to-eat vegetables for snacks, like baby carrots or broccoli florets.
- 2) Try vegetable juice. One-portion cans make great snacks for the car or office.
- 3) Make a salad into a meal. Toss a couple of ounces of chicken, turkey, tuna, low-fat cheese or legumes into a large vegetable salad.
- 4) Roast or grill peppers, onions, zucchini, mushrooms or eggplant for new flavor.
- 5) Eat more vegetable-rich main dishes. Add vegetables to soups or stews. Mix grated vegetables into casseroles or extra-lean ground beef.
- 6) Add extra vegetables to your sandwich: tomato, sprouts, peppers, spinach, cucumber, grated carrots or lettuce.
- 7) Try having vegetables at breakfast. Add chopped vegetables to an omelette.
- 8) Purchase ready-cut fresh vegetables to use in stir-fries or side dishes.
- 9) At lunch, take along baby carrots, celery, sliced cucumber or red pepper. Add fat-free dressing, if desired. Keep these items on hand in a refrigerator at work, if possible.
- 10) Add fruit to your vegetables. Toss apple, pear, grape, melon, kiwi or orange into spinach or cabbage salad. Or, you can cook your vegetables with fruit.
- 11) Bake a sweet potato for dessert.
- 12) Simmer vegetables in broth or juice. Try carrots or beets in orange or apple juice, zucchini in tomato juice, or green beans in nonfat chicken broth.
- 13) Use fruit as your “vegetable.” A slice of cantaloupe or mango has some of the same nutrients as carrots.
- 14) Have one fruit serving with each meal. Add fruit to breakfast cereal, take fresh fruit with lunch, use fruit for a snack or dessert at dinner.
- 15) Substitute fruit for high-fat, sugar-filled desserts. Top angel cake with fresh fruit or add fruit to frozen yogurt.
- 16) Drink your fruit. Add a peach, apricot, berries or banana to yogurt, milk or buttermilk for a fruit smoothie.

# Overweight = high risk for chronic illness

Article courtesy of Kaiser Permanente

More than 60 percent of adults and approximately 25 percent of children in the United States are overweight.

If you are overweight, you are more likely to develop:

- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High cholesterol
- Gallstones
- Blood-vessel problems
- Skin infections and rashes
- Sex-hormone problems (including infertility)
- Gout
- Heartburn
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Liver problems
- Osteoarthritis
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Some forms of cancer, such as colon, kidney, breast, and prostate

Researchers have found the more overweight a person — regardless of age — the higher his or her level of risk for chronic illnesses.

There also are psychological and cultural problems associated with being

overweight, according to Mary Lockhart, Health Education Services manager at Kaiser Permanente.

“The emphasis our society places on thinness may result in low self-esteem, a poor body image, depression and eating disorders,” she said. “Stereotypes may also make it more difficult for a larger person to find a job or to get promotions.”

Body mass index (BMI) is used to gauge overweight or obesity. BMI is determined by dividing your weight by your height in inches squared, then multiplying the result by 703. You can find BMI tables and online calculators to help with the figuring.

If your BMI is between 25 and 30, you are overweight. A BMI of 30 or more is considered obese in adults.

If you are overweight, you do not have to lose all of your excess weight to improve your health. Losing as little as five to 10 percent of your body weight can decrease your risk of these diseases and conditions. Also, you are less likely to regain a small

amount of lost weight than if you lost a large amount of weight fast.

Develop healthy eating habits. Eat regular meals, and avoid excessive snacking.

- ✓ Maintain a balance. Combine a variety of lean proteins (chicken, fish and low- and non-fat dairy products) with complex carbohydrates (vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes) and plant fat (canola oil, olive oil, nuts and seeds).
- ✓ Limit your intake of saturated (animal) fat found in meats, dairy products and tropical oils such as palm kernel and coconut, and partially hydrogenated fats found in many margarines, chips and packaged baked goods.
- ✓ Find non-food ways to reward yourself. Do not depend on food to make yourself feel good.
- ✓ Move around every day. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activities.

# Reduce TV, improve your health

Sedentary activities — those where you move around very little — have a significant negative effect on a person's well-being. If you're sitting, you're not getting the physical activity your body needs to stay healthy.

Watching television, playing video games, using a computer, reading, playing board games, sewing and writing are examples of sedentary activities.

TV viewing seems to be the most popular of these activities — and also seems to encourage the worst eating habits, including excessive snacking on high-calorie foods, reports John Crawford, Health Education Services manager at Kaiser Permanente.

Some researchers suspect TV advertising may influence this habit. According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, 202 junk-food commercials air during an average four hours of Saturday morning cartoons.

A study by a team from the Harvard School of Public Health found that watching television for an extra two hours a day increased the rate of obesity by 25 percent — and diabetes by 14 percent — in their research participants.

“Being overweight makes adults and children

prone to a variety of health problems — heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoarthritis, respiratory illness and more,” said Crawford. “And the more overweight a person, the higher his or her risk for these diseases and conditions.”

For improved health:

- Limit TV, Internet or video-game usage. Kaiser Permanente recommends no more than one hour per day — and none at all for children under the age of two.
- Participate in moderate physical activity every day — at least 30 minutes for adults and 60 minutes for children.
- Keep healthy snacks around the house, such as vegetables washed and cut into serving sizes, fresh fruit or air-popped popcorn.
- Reduce your consumption of sodas and juice drinks.
- When possible, combine watching television with some physical activity, such as walking on a treadmill. Make use of commercial breaks to get up and do simple leg or arm exercises, or for stretching.
- Have every family member keep track of TV, computer, and other non-active time each week. Make it a fun game to see who has the lowest total — or challenge each other to try to decrease your totals over time.



*TV-Turnoff Network is a national nonprofit organization that encourages children and adults to watch much less television in order to promote healthier lives and communities. For more information, visit their website at [www.tvturnoff.org](http://www.tvturnoff.org). Kaiser Permanente is a proud sponsor of National TV Turnoff Week, which will be April 21-27, 2008.*

# Better than butter?

## Choose wisely for a healthy heart

Article courtesy of Providence Health Plans

**Question:** I'm trying to eat heart-healthy, but I'm confused! Is margarine better than butter?

**Answer:** Generally speaking, both stick margarine and butter should be used sparingly as they are high in saturated fats, trans fats and calories. Reducing saturated and trans fats in your diet helps reduce your risk of coronary heart disease. However, a good quality margarine usually tops butter when it comes to heart health.

### **The difference between butter and margarine**

Butter is made from milk fat and contains both saturated fat and cholesterol — the two dietary ingredients that raise

blood cholesterol and increase the risk of heart and vascular disease. Just one tablespoon of butter contains over seven grams of saturated fat. That is one third to one half of a day's recommended amount. Margarine is made from vegetable oils, so it contains no cholesterol. But many brands of margarine also contain trans fat from hydrogenation — a process that “solidifies” liquid vegetable oil into a spread. Similar to saturated fat, trans fat also increases cholesterol levels. The harder the margarine, the more trans fat it contains, so your best choice is soft tub margarines (instead of stick margarine) that list

water or oil as the first ingredient.

### **The verdict?**

Soft tub margarine is a healthier choice since it contains no cholesterol, less saturated fat and reduced or no trans fats. If you are trying to minimize trans fat in your diet, check the ingredients list as well as the Nutrition Facts label. If partially hydrogenated oil is listed, it contains trans fat. An even better option? Skip butter and margarine altogether and choose liquid oils such as canola, olive or safflower.

*Terese Scollard, RD, LD, Providence Health System — Nutrition Services*

## Keep your coverage from terminating

Please be aware that if you are on Medicare you cannot be enrolled in two Medicare Part D plans at the same time or other retiree coverage, including Tri-Care, that is receiving Medicare funding.

The PERS Health Insurance Program incorporated the Medicare Part D prescription

drug benefit into all Medicare plans offered through PERS in January 2006. If you enroll in another Medicare Part D plan or terminate your Medicare Part D directly through Medicare you will be disenrolled completely from the PERS Health Insurance Program, including your

medical and optional dental coverage.

**If your coverage is terminated due to enrollment in an individual Medicare plan, you will not be able to re-enroll in the PERS Health Insurance Program.**

# Numbers You Should Know



**PERS Health Insurance Program**  
**www.pershealth.com**  
 P.O. Box 40187  
 Portland, OR 97240-0187  
 503-224-7377 • 1-800-768-7377

**PERS Pension Office**  
**www.oregon.gov/pers**  
*Mailing Address*  
 P.O. Box 23700  
 Tigard, OR 97281-3700  
*Street Address*  
 11410 S.W. 68th Parkway  
 Tigard, OR 97223-8634  
 503-598-7377 • 1-888-320-7377

**Kaiser Permanente**  
**www.kaiserpermanente.org**  
 500 N.E. Multnomah, Suite 100  
 Portland, OR 97232-2099  
 503-813-2000 • 1-800-813-2000

**Providence Health Plan**  
**www.providence.org**  
 3601 S.W. Murray Blvd. #10  
 Beaverton, OR 97005  
 503-574-8000 • 1-800-603-2340

*Mailing Address*  
 P.O. Box 4327  
 Portland, OR 97208-4327  
**Claims**  
 P.O. Box 3125  
 Portland, OR 97208-3125  
**Providence RN**  
 503-574-6520 • 1-800-700-0481

**Clear Choice Health Plans**  
**www.clearchoicehp.com**  
 2650 N.E. Courtney Drive  
 Bend, OR 97701  
 541-385-5315 • 1-888-863-3637  
**Claims**  
 P.O. Box 7469  
 Bend, OR 97701

**ODS**  
**www.odscompanies.com**  
 601 S.W. Second Ave..  
 Portland, OR 97204-3156  
**Medical**  
 503-243-3880  
 1-800-962-1533 (Oregon)  
 1-800-852-5195 (National)  
**Dental**  
 503-243-4494  
 1-800-452-1058 (Oregon)  
 1-800-852-5195 (National)  
**Pharmacy**  
 503-265-4709  
 1-888-786-7509  
**Claims**  
 P.O. Box 4030  
 Portland, OR 97208-4030

Ready, Set, Quit!  
 Tobacco cessation  
 Page 2  
 Help Someone Quit  
 Smoking  
 Support tips  
 Page 2  
 Resistant Bacteria  
 Page 3  
 16 Ways to Eat More  
 Fruits and Vegetables  
 Page 4  
 The Health Risks of Being  
 Overweight  
 Page 5  
 Reduce TV, Improve  
 Your Health  
 Page 6  
 Better than Butter?  
 Page 7

P.O. Box 40187  
 Portland, OR 97240-0187



PRSR STD  
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
 PORTLAND, OR  
 PERMIT NO. 1039