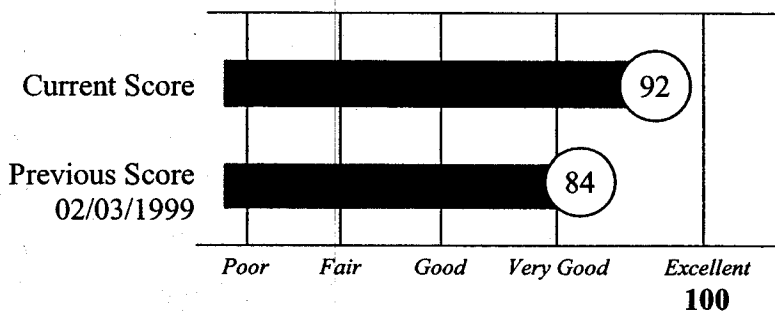


# Your Lifesteps Health Risk Appraisal Profile

## Wellness Score



Your Wellness Score comes from the information you gave on your HRA. Improving your health and updating your routine preventive services will improve your score in the future.

**Top 3**  
areas for you to  
think about,  
to improve your  
health right now!

**Weight**

**Physical Activity\***

**Stress\***

### What you're doing well:

- You do not use tobacco.
- You drink little or no alcohol.
- Your blood pressure is under 140/90.
- You use a safety belt all the time.
- You travel close to speed limit.
- Your physical activity level is good.
- You eat a high fiber diet.
- You eat a low fat/low cholesterol diet.
- You have good overall physical health.
- You have a regular rectal exam.
- You have a regular prostate exam.
- Your cholesterol level is below 200.
- You have a positive outlook on life.
- You have a low stress level.
- You have your routine preventive services.

### What you can do better:

- Stay within your healthy weight range.
- Learn your HDL cholesterol level.

**Keep up the good  
work!**



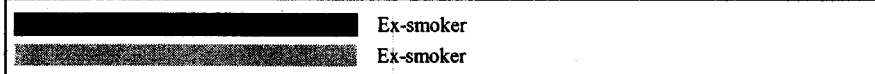
# Heart Health

Current  
 Previous

## HEALTH MEASURES

## TARGET

Cigarette Smoking



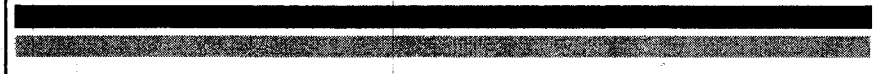
Ex-smoker

Blood Pressure



Less than 140/90

Cholesterol



Less than 200

Weight



117-154 lbs

Exercise



At least 3x/week

Needs Improvement

High Wellness

# Your Health Analysis

*Conditions*  
*are based on people of your age, sex and risk.*

*Now*

*Goal*

### Heart problems

Blood pressure	Normal	Less than 140/90
Diabetes	Do not have diabetes	Maintain healthy lifestyle
Weight	185 lbs	117-154 lbs
Cholesterol	Normal	Less than 200
HDL	Unknown	At least 35
Exercise	Exercise frequently	Exercise frequently
Cigarette smoker	Ex-smoker	Ex-smoker

### Stroke

Blood pressure	Normal	Less than 140/90
Cigarette smoker	Ex-smoker	Ex-smoker
Diabetes	Do not have diabetes	Maintain healthy lifestyle

### Lung cancer

Cigarette smoker	Ex-smoker	Ex-smoker
------------------	-----------	-----------

### Pneumonia/Influenza

Cigarette smoker	Ex-smoker	Ex-smoker
------------------	-----------	-----------

### Colon cancer

Colon cancer screen	1-2 years ago	Have a regular exam
---------------------	---------------	---------------------

### Diabetes mellitus

Diabetes	Do not have diabetes	Maintain healthy lifestyle
----------	----------------------	----------------------------

### Emphysema/Bronchitis

Cigarette smoker	Ex-smoker	Ex-smoker
------------------	-----------	-----------



# Weight/Nutrition

Maintaining a healthy weight reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, gallbladder disease and diabetes. Too much weight stresses your heart, muscles and joints.

- As you grow older you may require fewer calories per day. However, you continue to need nutrients.
- Talk to your doctor for guidance.
- Combine better nutrition with increased physical activity. Eat a variety of foods in moderation and move more.
- Eat regularly and keep healthy snacks available. Choose fresh fruit for dessert or a snack.
- Substitute fish, poultry or dried beans for meat entrees as often as possible.
- A high fiber, low fat diet rich in fruits and vegetables reduces the risk of cancer.

Your goal is the healthy weight range for men and women set by national guidelines.

*Where  
you are*

185 pounds

*Your  
goal*

117-154 pounds



# Physical Activity

Stay physically active! It is the best thing you can do for your mind and body.

- Physical activity improves mental alertness, helps you sleep better and improves your digestion.
- Walking and other activities help lower your blood pressure, heart rate and the demand on your heart.
- Regular stretching reduces pain and increases flexibility and the range of motion of your joints.
- Strength training two times a week improves balance and preserves bone density.
- Movement that adds up to 30 minutes a day includes activities such as house, garden and yard work.
- To reduce stress on the joints and ease arthritis pain, choose water activities, cycling, and walking.

*Where  
you are*

4+ times/week

*Your  
goal*

30 minutes, most days  
per week

# Stress



Low Stress

*Where  
you are*

Celebrate the well-being, satisfaction and control in your life that you have by better handling your stress.

Stress is your body's response to the demands of daily living. Any event can be stressful, whether it is positive or negative. How you handle stress determines its effect.

To continue staying on track:

- Look for a new sense of meaning and growth as you face life changes.
- Take time to relax each day in a way that works for you.
- Talk with someone you trust about your feelings.
- Eat well and eat regularly.
- Aim to be physically active in some way every day.

A balanced life

*Your  
goal*

To learn coping skills specific to your needs, call the Careline at 800-235-2302.

# Smoking



Ex-smoker

*Where  
you are*

Congratulations! You are one of the over 200 million Americans who choose a healthy, tobacco-free lifestyle.

- As a non-tobacco-user, you have lowered chances of lung cancer, heart disease and stroke.
- Avoid secondhand smoke which is known to cause cancer. Choose non-smoking public areas.
- Support loved ones or friends if they try to quit smoking.

Ex-smoker

*Your  
goal*



# Blood Pressure

Congratulations! Your blood pressure is within the recommended range. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and vision problems, and it often has no symptoms.

- Continue to check and monitor your blood pressure at least every two years.
- Learn and practice ways to manage anger and stress.
- Remember that weight, physical activity, alcohol use and smoking are lifestyle factors that could lead to high blood pressure.

*Where  
you are*

Normal

*Your  
goal*

Less than 140/90



# Cholesterol

Maintaining your cholesterol level reduces the risk of developing heart disease.

- The higher your HDL cholesterol level (the good cholesterol), the better.
- Frequent exercise may raise levels of HDL.
- Regular exercise, not smoking, a healthy weight and eating low-fat foods contribute to good cholesterol management.

*Where  
you are*

Cholesterol: Normal

HDL: Unsure

*Your  
goal*

Cholesterol less than  
200

HDL greater than 35

# Alcohol



0 drink(s) per week

*Where  
you are*

Fairly small amounts of alcohol can increase the likelihood of alcohol-related falls and other accidents. Most adults can drink moderate amounts of alcohol--up to one drink per day--and avoid alcohol-related problems.

You should not drink at all:

- If you plan to drive.
- If you take certain medications, including over-the-counter medicines.
- If you have medical conditions that can be worsened by drinking.
- If you are a recovering alcoholic.

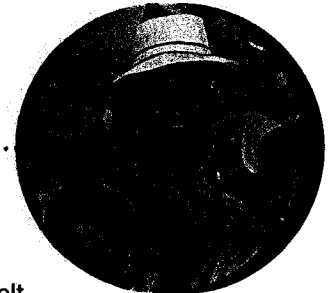
If you ever think alcohol is becoming a problem for someone close to you or for you, get help.

To learn coping skills specific to your needs, call the Careline at 800-235-2302.

None to 1 drink a day

*Your  
goal*

# Safety Belt



100%

*Where  
you are*

Congratulations for deciding to wear your safety belt.

- Don't drink if you plan to drive and don't drive after drinking.
- Never place the shoulder belt under your arm. In a collision you may break a rib, causing a puncture of the lung or heart.
- Wearing your safety belt sends a positive message to children and other passengers to buckle up as well.

100% safety belt use

*Your  
goal*

# Managing Your Health

---

You reported no diseases or health problems.

If you have any health concerns that are not addressed in your health risk appraisal, please discuss them with your physician. You alone are responsible for your health!

- Schedule an annual physical exam and regular check-ups. They could save your life! Early detection of a disease or illness increases your chance of a positive outcome.
- Inform all doctors (including your dentist) about your medications and nutritional supplements to make sure they are being used appropriately.
- Keep a record of any changes in your life and health, such as physical activity, eating habits, sleep, health symptoms and emotional well-being.
- Lead a healthy life. Eat well, be physically active, limit alcohol intake, avoid tobacco and keep a positive outlook. Be the best you can be!

## Life Balance

Positive thinking helps your physical and mental well-being.

- Set priorities and decide what does or does not need to be done.
- Find a way to reward yourself daily.
- Look to continuously improve the quality of your relationships with your family and with others.
- It's never too late to explore new interests. Join a group, go on a tour or take a class.
- Think about creating positive expectations while facing life changes.

Your current lifestyle choices impact your health and life satisfaction.

To learn coping skills specific to your needs, call the Careline at 800-235-2302.

*You can reach your health goals!*

*Look on the back page and see what to do next.*

# Your Next Steps



## *Suggested routine preventive services for 71 year old males.*

1. 

✓ Tetanus booster shot	✓ Influenza vaccine
✓ Blood pressure	✓ Pneumococcal vaccine
✓ Rectal examination	✓ Prostate-specific antigen test (PSA)
✓ Colorectal cancer screening	

(✓ = Good job, you're up-to-date!)

Other suggested recommendations: Dental exam, Eye exam for glaucoma.

2. *Call (800) 711-5934 for recorded Audio Health Library message---Request topic number:*

1831 Diet and Nutrition  
1830 Living a Balanced Lifestyle  
2050 Maintaining a Healthy Attitude

3. *Contact [www.lifesteps.com](http://www.lifesteps.com) with your email address to receive information online.*

4. *Congratulations for continuing to check your good health!*

Your answers to LifeSteps HRA indicate that you may benefit from additional LifeSteps information and resources by calling your Personal Health Advisor at **1-800-711-5934**.



**LifeSteps**

Health Promotion Program

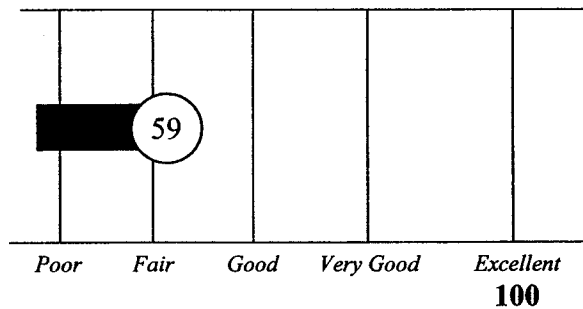
Building a Healthy Life One Step at a Time



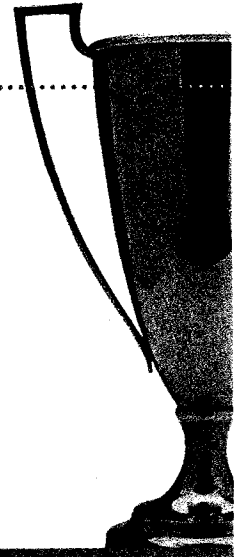


# Your Lifesteps Health Risk Appraisal Profile

## Wellness Score



Your Wellness Score comes from the information you gave on your HRA. Improving your health and updating your routine preventive services will improve your score in the future.



## Top 3

areas for you to think about, to improve your health right now!

**Cigarette Smoking**

**Cholesterol**

**Safety Belt Use**

### What you're doing well:

- You drink little or no alcohol.
- You have a regular breast exam.
- You have a regular Pap test.
- You have a regular mammogram.
- Your blood pressure is under 140/90.
- You travel close to speed limit.
- You eat a low fat/low cholesterol diet.
- You have good overall physical health.
- You have a regular rectal exam.
- You have a positive outlook on life.

### What you can do better:

- Quit cigarette smoking
- Do a breast self-exam monthly.
- Stay within your healthy weight range.
- Always buckle your safety belt.
- Increase your physical activity level.
- Eat high fiber foods daily.
- Learn your cholesterol level and decrease it to 199 or less.
- Learn your HDL cholesterol level.
- Talk to your health professional about routine preventive services: *tetanus booster shot.*

# Heart Health

## HEALTH MEASURES

## TARGET

Cigarette Smoking



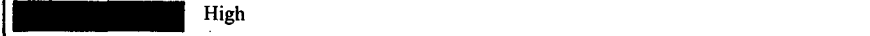
Non-smoker

Blood Pressure



Less than 140/90

Cholesterol



Less than 200

Weight



117-154 lbs

Exercise



At least 3x/week

Needs Improvement

High Wellness

# Your Health Analysis

## Conditions

## Now

## Goal

*are based on people of your age, sex and risk.*

### Heart problems

Blood pressure

Normal

Less than 140/90

Diabetes

Do not have diabetes

Maintain healthy lifestyle

Weight

170 lbs

117-154 lbs

Cholesterol

High

Less than 200

HDL

Unknown

At least 35

Exercise

Exercise occasionally

Exercise frequently

Cigarette smoker

Current smoker

Stop smoking

### Lung cancer

Cigarette smoker

Current smoker

Stop smoking

### Stroke

Blood pressure

Normal

Less than 140/90

Cigarette smoker

Current smoker

Stop smoking

Diabetes

Do not have diabetes

Maintain healthy lifestyle

### Emphysema/Bronchitis

Cigarette smoker

Current smoker

Stop smoking

### Colon cancer

Colon cancer screen

1-2 years ago

Have a regular exam

### Diabetes mellitus

Diabetes

Do not have diabetes

Maintain healthy lifestyle

### Pancreatic cancer

Cigarette smoker

Current smoker

Stop smoking

Alcohol

1 drink(s) per week

None to 1 drink a day



# Smoking

Smoking is the largest single, preventable cause of cancer, heart and respiratory diseases in the U.S.

- The harmful effects of smoking on your health build up over time.
- Quitting brings almost immediate improvement, including increased oxygen and circulation.
- Consult your doctor about ways to quit smoking.
- Remember that your secondhand smoke can impact the health of those around you.
- Think of your savings when you stop using cigarettes.

*Where  
you are*

Smoker

*Your  
goal*

Non-user of tobacco



# Cholesterol

Lower your total cholesterol level to greatly reduce the risk of developing heart disease.

- Monitor your cholesterol.
- The higher your HDL cholesterol level (the good cholesterol), the better.
- Frequent exercise may raise levels of HDL.
- Cholesterol levels may increase during menopause.
- Eat less total fat and saturated fat.
- Monitor your intake of high-fat meats, poultry and dairy foods while increasing vegetables, fruits and grains.
- Regular exercise, not smoking and a healthy weight may help in managing cholesterol.
- Cholesterol-lowering medications are important if prescribed by your doctor.

*Where  
you are*

Cholesterol: High

HDL: Unsure

*Your  
goal*

Cholesterol less than  
200

HDL greater than 35

# Safety Belt



<80%

*Where  
you are*

Using safety belts (in cars with air bags) is the single most effective thing you can do to reduce your risk while driving.

- Buckle up at ALL times. Most accidents occur close to home and at low speeds.
- Never place the shoulder belt under your arm. In a collision you may break a rib, causing a puncture of the lung or heart.
- Don't drink if you plan to drive and don't drive after drinking.
- Most states ticket a driver who is unbuckled.
- Wearing your safety belt sends a positive message to children and other passengers to buckle up as well.

100% safety belt use

*Your  
goal*

# Physical Activity



1 or 2 times/week

*Where  
you are*

Stay physically active! It is the best thing you can do for your mind and body.

- Being active for 30 minutes on most days is important for good health.
- Vary your activities to prevent injury and boredom. Rotate between intense and light exercise days.
- As you grow older your muscles and joints may become sore and stiff more easily. Warm-up and cool down for five minutes to increase circulation and reduce injury.
- Strength training two times a week can improve balance, preserve bone density and improve endurance.
- Regular stretching increases flexibility.
- Remember that physical activity includes structured fitness and recreational activities as well as "lifestyle" activities such as house, garden and yard work.
- Keep a record of your daily activity to stay on track.

30 minutes, most  
days per week

*Your  
goal*



# Weight/Nutrition

*Where  
you are*

170 pounds

Maintaining a healthy weight reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, gallbladder disease and diabetes. Too much weight stresses your heart, muscles and joints.

- As you grow older you may require fewer calories per day. However, you continue to need nutrients.
- Talk to your doctor for guidance.
- Combine better nutrition with increased physical activity. Eat a variety of foods in moderation and move more.
- Eat regularly and keep healthy snacks available. Choose fresh fruit for dessert or a snack.
- Substitute fish, poultry or dried beans for meat entrees as often as possible.
- High-calcium foods help build strong bones.
- A high fiber, low fat diet rich in fruits and vegetables reduces the risk of cancer.

*Your  
goal*

117-154 pounds

Your goal is the healthy weight range for men and women set by national guidelines.



# Stress

*Where  
you are*

Low Stress

Celebrate the well-being, satisfaction and control in your life that you have by better handling your stress.

Stress is your body's response to the demands of daily living. Any event can be stressful, whether it is positive or negative. How you handle stress determines its effect.

To continue to stay on track:

- Stay aware of your stress and what triggers it.
- Take time daily to relax in a way that works for you.
- Talk with someone you trust about your feelings.
- Eat well and eat regularly. Good nutrition is important.
- Aim to be physically active in some way every day.

*Your  
goal*

A balanced life

To learn coping skills specific to your needs, call the Careline at 800-235-2302.

# Alcohol



1 drink(s) per week

*Where  
you are*

Drink responsibly if you ever drink alcohol occasionally as part of social activities. Most adults may be able to drink moderate amounts of alcohol--up to one drink per day for women--and avoid alcohol-related problems.

You should not drink at all:

- If you plan to drive.
- If you take certain medications, including over-the-counter medicines.
- If you have medical conditions that can be worsened by drinking.
- If you are a recovering alcoholic.

None to 1 drink a day

*Your  
goal*

If you ever think alcohol is becoming a problem for someone close to you or for you, get help.

To learn coping skills specific to your needs, call the Careline at 800-235-2302.

# Blood Pressure



Normal

*Where  
you are*

Congratulations! Your blood pressure is within the recommended range. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and vision problems, and it often has no symptoms.

- Continue to check and monitor your blood pressure at least every two years.
- Learn and practice ways to manage anger and stress.
- Remember that weight, physical activity, alcohol use and smoking are lifestyle factors that could lead to high blood pressure.

Less than 140/90

*Your  
goal*

# Managing Your Health

---

You reported more than one health problem. You say you have arthritis and back pain.

- Schedule regular check-ups.
- Inform all doctors (including your dentist) about your medications and nutritional supplements to make sure they are being used appropriately.
- Keep a record of any changes in your life and health, such as physical activity, eating habits, sleep, health symptoms and emotional well-being.
- Lead a healthy life. Eat well, be physically active, limit alcohol intake, avoid tobacco and keep a positive outlook.
- If you have any health concerns that are not addressed in your health risk appraisal, please discuss them with your physician. You alone are responsible for your health!
- For more information, contact your Personal Health Advisor at 800-711-5934.

You reported more than five personal illness days in the past year.

For better understanding and assistance with managing a medical condition, please contact your Blue Cross/Blue Shield affiliate about their coordinated care management program at 800-768-6787.

## Life Balance

Balancing your life leads to less illness, better life satisfaction and improved family relationships.

- Watch out for thinking everything has to be done perfectly.
- Set priorities and decide what does or does not need to be done.
- Positive thinking is good for your physical and mental well-being.
- Find ways to continuously improve the quality of your relationships with family and with others.
- Set aside time for relaxation.

Your current lifestyle choices impact your health and future life satisfaction.

To learn coping skills specific to your needs, call the Careline at 800-235-2302.

*You can reach your health goals!*

*Look on the back page and see what to do next.*

# Your Next Steps



## *Suggested routine preventive services for 60 year old females.*

1.

- |                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Tetanus booster shot | ✓ Colorectal cancer screening |
| ✓ Blood pressure     | ✓ Pap smear test              |
| ✓ Cholesterol test   | ✓ Breast exam by MD or nurse  |
| ✓ Rectal examination | ✓ Mammogram                   |

(✓ = Good job, you're up-to-date!)

Other suggested recommendations: Dental exam, Eye exam for glaucoma.

2. *Call (800) 711-5934 for recorded Audio Health Library message---Request topic number:*

1844 Stopping Smoking  
1832 Reducing Cholesterol  
2262 Stay Active/Fit in Seniors

3. *Contact [www.lifesteps.com](http://www.lifesteps.com) with your email address to receive information online.*

4. *Your answers to the LifeSteps Questionnaire show that you could benefit from the following:*

Call your LifeSteps Health Coach at **1-800-685-5262** for free and confidential assistance in improving your specific risk factors.





## Shake the Salt Habit

You don't need sodium to spice your foods

By Beth Thayer, registered dietitian for Heart Smart®, part of the Henry Ford Heart and Vascular Institute, Detroit, Mich.

**T**ossing salt over your shoulder instead of into your mouth may do more than spare you some bad luck.

It may help prevent health problems, especially if you have heart disease, kidney disease and/or high blood pressure.

“Salt” is the common name for sodium chloride, which is 40% sodium and 60% chloride. The sodium content in salt is what causes us problems.

Sodium is an important mineral. It helps maintain proper fluid balance, regulate blood pressure, transmit nerve impulses and relax muscles. However, the body needs only about 500 milligrams (mg) of sodium each day: The average American consumes about 4,000 to 6,000 mg each day.

Our kidneys regulate the sodium level in our bodies. However, if the kidneys aren't working properly, as with some-

one who has kidney disease, the excess sodium isn't excreted. This can lead to water retention and edema, the swelling of soft tissues in the body.

The effect of salt on the body can be illustrated by sprinkling salt on a potato: Liquid is pulled to the outer surface. When we eat sodium, fluid is pulled into our blood vessels. This extra fluid can raise the pressure in our arteries, which leads to high blood pressure.

Most health professionals recommend a maximum of 2,400 mg of sodium per day for healthy individuals. That's the equivalent of one teaspoon of salt.

You can reduce your sodium intake by removing the salt shaker from the table. Cook and prepare foods without adding salt. Substitute pepper, garlic, vinegar, lemon juice, herbs and spices to help flavor your meals.

**What is LifeSteps?** The LifeSteps Program is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the health and well-being of all employees — active and retired, UAW-represented, IUE-represented and salaried — and their family members. Through health information and support services, LifeSteps provides individuals with the tools to become more knowledgeable about the decisions that affect their health. **Neither the LifeSteps Program nor the information provided is intended to replace appropriate medical care and consultation with your personal physician. Rather, it is intended to help you improve your health through activities that prevent disease, with your personal physician's support.**



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# feelin' good

BUILDING A HEALTHY LIFE ONE STEP AT A TIME

## The ABC's of Asthma

**KNOW OXYGEN, KNOW LIFE;  
NO OXYGEN, NO LIFE**

It's easy to take air for granted. We can't see it, smell it or touch it. But when we can't breathe it, nothing else is more important.

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Identify Your Seasonal Allergens, pg. 2
- Hepatitis C: Risks, Prevention and Treatment, pg. 4
- A Health Screening Testimonial, pg. 11
- Shake the Salt Habit, pg. 16

Continued on page 7 • .....

# What's Making You Sneeze?

Discover the seasonal allergy culprits native to where you live

**R**agweed is rampant, your nose is running, your eyes are watering and your head aches — you may be suffering from seasonal allergies. Depending on where you live, you could be sneezing more than your fair share.

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) estimates that 35 million Americans suffer from seasonal allergic rhinitis, commonly referred to as hay fever. These allergies are a reaction to substances such as mold, spores and pollen.

The causes of hay fever vary both in regions and seasons; what makes someone wheeze in

Ohio could be completely different from what makes someone sneeze in Arizona.

Listed below are the most common seasonal allergens in each particular region, although many of these allergens are found throughout the United States.

Want some tips on how you can manage your allergies? Just call the UAW-GM *LifeSteps* Personal Health Advisor® at 1-800-711-5934 and speak with a registered nurse.

## Across the U.S.

Ragweed, which blooms from mid-August to the first frost, is the main fall allergen nationwide. It is often found along riverbanks, by roadsides, on vacant lots and in other areas where people have cleared natural vegetation.

### Up North

Outdoor mold is an allergen frequently found in soil, vegetation and rotting wood. Mold begins to appear after a spring thaw and reaches its peak in late summer or early fall.

### Out West

Russian thistle, Chinese elm and outdoor mold often trigger allergies for people on the West Coast. Additionally, mold growth in the West doubles toward the end of summer and into the fall, especially in cold, dark, damp places and after rainfall.

**FPO  
HI-RES ILLUS  
TO BE SCANNED  
AND PLACED.**

### Back East

The pollen of flowering native grasses and weeds blooming from early spring to fall is the primary cause of allergies for people in the East.

### Down South

Sagebrush, tumbleweed, fall elm and Russian thistle are common Southern allergens. Unfortunately for Southerners, the pollinating season starts earlier in the spring the further south you are. So the allergy season in the South can begin as early as January and last through October. Another Southern allergy setback: Outdoor mold lasts year-round.

## Home Control

### Tips to handle asthma and allergy triggers in your home

By Dr. Ralph Hanson, Medical Director, GM Powertrain

**M**ore than 17 million Americans suffer from asthma, and approximately 50 million have allergies. Asthma and allergies are related, because allergens, the substances that commonly induce allergies, can trigger an asthma attack.

If you're sniffing and sneezing long after allergy season, the source of your allergies may be in your own home. Controlling your home environment is an important part of asthma and allergy care. Here are some common allergens and ways to help reduce them in your home:

#### SMOKE

Tobacco smoke should not be allowed in the home of someone with asthma or allergies. If family members or friends want to smoke, ask them to go outside. Better yet, suggest they quit altogether. Also, don't use wood stoves and fireplaces, as the smoke can trigger asthma and allergic reactions.

#### PETS

Most pets can cause allergic reactions, especially cats and dogs. They should be taken out of the home. If removing the pet is unacceptable, keep the animal out of the bedroom and bathe your pet twice a week. Have a nonallergic family member brush the pet outdoors, and clean out the animal's cage or litter box frequently.

#### COCKROACHES

Cockroach allergens arise from dead roaches and roach droppings that collect in house dust. They are hard to remove. If you have these pests in your home, it's probably best to call an exterminator, and make certain to maintain a particularly clean house.

#### INDOOR MOLD

Humidity can cause mold under sinks and in shower stalls, refrigerators, basements and houseplants. Use a dehumidifier and a mildew-control spray. During the summer, use an air conditioner.

#### DUST MITES

Mites are tiny, microscopic spiders usually found in house dust. Their waste products — the particles you can see floating in a shaft of sunlight — can trigger an allergic reaction. Encase your mattress and pillows in airtight covers. Wash bedding weekly. Don't sleep on upholstered furniture and clean up surface dust as much as possible.

Ralph Hanson, D.O., M.P.H.  
Medical Director, GM Powertrain



## We Want to Hear From You!

*feelin'good* is designed to provide you with the latest health information and resources available through the UAW-GM *LifeSteps* Health Promotion Program. Your real-life examples and success stories can inspire others to get the most out of the program.

Have an interesting UAW-GM *LifeSteps* story to share? Send your letters to:

We Hear You  
*feelin'good*  
P.O. Box 2063  
Warren, MI 48090-9847

E-mail: [editorial@cecom.com](mailto:editorial@cecom.com)

Please include your name, address and daytime phone number. Letters chosen for publication may be edited for length and clarity.

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# Are You at Risk?

Second and third of a three-part series on hepatitis C

If you've had major surgery before 1992 or used blood products to treat clotting problems before 1987, you should be tested for hepatitis C, a form of liver disease that is the most common blood-borne illness in the United States.

Others who may be at risk include anyone who has ever injected illegal drugs or worked in occupations involving exposure to needles, and those who have received blood from a donor who tested positive for the disease. Children born from infected mothers also should be tested.

Unfortunately, most people don't know they're at risk and aren't tested because they don't have any symptoms. Early in its course, hepatitis C usually has no indications. When signs do occur, they resemble many other medical conditions: fatigue, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, headache, fever and nausea.

There are several blood tests that can determine if you are infected with HCV, the hepatitis C virus. One test, called anti-HCV enzyme immunoassay (EIA), is usually done first. If the virus is present, the anti-HCV EIA results should be

confirmed with another test, anti-HCV recombinant immunoblot assay (RIBA).

If you receive a confirmed positive anti-HCV result, don't panic. Just because the virus is present in your blood does not mean you have liver damage. Your doctor will decide what further tests need to be done to see if your liver has been harmed.

*Remember to check with your health care carrier or HMO regarding coverage for prescription drugs or tests associated with hepatitis C.*

## Know Your Options: Prevention and Treatment

Think about your family and friends. You probably know someone who is infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV) but doesn't realize it.

Most people infected with HCV don't have any symptoms for years. But the virus can lead to liver cancer and cirrhosis — irreversible scarring and damage to the liver — and ultimately to liver failure.

There is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C. But there are effective ways to hinder transmission of the disease, such as avoiding the injection of illegal drugs, snorting cocaine and having unprotected sex, especially with multiple partners. If you are considering body piercing or tattooing, make sure the equipment is properly sanitized and the person performing the procedure follows proper cleaning methods, including washing hands and wearing latex gloves.

Drugs are licensed for the treatment of persons with long-term hepatitis C. About two to three out of every 10 patients who are treated get rid of the virus.

Not all hepatitis C patients require treatment. Your doctor will decide if you need treatment based on the progression of the disease.

If you've been diagnosed with hepatitis C but show no symptoms, you still need to be monitored carefully. Check with your doctor to determine how often you need to schedule office visits.

More information on hepatitis C is available through the UAW-GM LifeSteps AudioHealth Library®. Just call 1-800-711-5934, press "2" to choose the AudioHealth Library, press "1" to indicate you are ready to choose your topic, and enter the code "1952" for hepatitis.

*SOURCE: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/hepatitis](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis) or 1-888-4-HEPCDC.*

# Drowsy Drivers

Pull off the road and get some ZZZs!

If you close your eyes for one second while driving at 60 miles per hour, you've traveled 88 feet.

Now think about what can happen if you fall asleep behind the wheel. Pretty scary, isn't it?

Most drivers have experienced drowsiness while driving. But few realize the danger of driving when you're just too sleepy to be on the road.

Sleepy drivers cause more than 100,000 crashes a year in the United States. But these numbers tell only a portion of the story — accidents caused by drowsy drivers are underreported. Without definite criteria and objective tests, there is simply no way to determine how sleepy a driver

was at the time of a crash.

Drivers who have the highest risk of falling asleep at the wheel are young men ages 18 to 25, parents of newborns, night-shift workers, truck drivers and others who drive long distances, and those who suffer from sleep problems such as sleep apnea or insomnia.

Before you hit the road, make sure you've had enough rest. Repeated yawning, droopy eyelids, nodding and disconnected thoughts are all signs you should get some sleep. While driving, if you are weaving in and out of your lane and have no memory of the last few miles, pull off the road! Losing some driving time is a small price to pay for staying safe on the road.

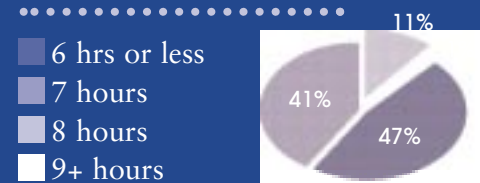
SOURCE: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).



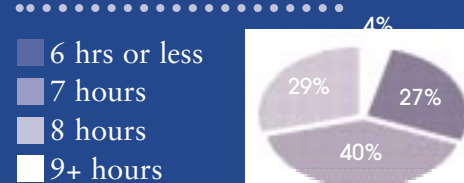
## Driving Statistics

22% of all LifeSteps participants say they drive more than 15,000 miles per year.

### Hours of sleep for current employees who drive more than 15,000 miles/year:



### Hours of sleep for retired employees who drive more than 15,000 miles/year:



### A longer commute increases the likelihood of speeding:

#### Active Employees

44% of people who drive more than 15,000 miles a year speed.  
36% of people who drive less than 15,000 miles a year speed.

#### Retired Employees

26% of people who drive more than 15,000 miles a year speed.  
16% of people who drive less than 15,000 miles a year speed.

(Note: The University of Michigan is responsible for protecting the confidentiality and privacy of all UAW-GM LifeSteps data.)

## Top 10 Tips to combat daytime sleepiness

10. Develop a relaxing sleep ritual.
9. Unplug the telephone in your bedroom.
8. Close the bedroom door and hang a "Do Not Disturb" sign on it.
7. Know the side effects of your medications.
6. Avoid taking alcohol and caffeine several hours before bedtime.
5. Don't look at the clock before bedtime — worrying about time just keeps you awake longer.
4. Maintain or improve your overall health.
3. Lower your thermostat before going to bed.
2. Block or mask outside sounds.
1. Go to sleep at the same time every day. Most people need an average of eight hours of sleep a night.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Transportation, [www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov).

## A Timely Cholesterol Test

Doctor recognizes the value of in-plant testing

**M**idge Collett's 54th birthday was a wake-up call.

Her father had died at that age of a heart attack. So Collett, of Kokomo, Ind., greeted her birthday with a renewed commitment to her health.

She began taking *LifeSteps* classes to help her quit smoking. She also had a cholesterol screening done at her plant.

"The screening was convenient, and the people who run the program are friendly," she says.

Her results were encouraging — 195 total cholesterol and 90 HDL, the "good" cholesterol that helps

keep blood vessels clear.

About a month later, she went to her doctor, Robert Steele, M.D., for an annual physical. When he asked her to take a cholesterol test, she mentioned she had just had one at the plant. Instead of duplicating the test, he said she could simply bring in her results to be placed in her file.

Steele says he accepted her cholesterol screening results because *LifeSteps* utilizes state-of-the-art screening equipment and qualified staff. Also, since her numbers were in a normal range, there was no need to check her cholesterol

again for the year.

Collett was impressed, she says, for two reasons. First, her doctor wasn't charging her for a duplicate test. Second, like most people, she's not too fond of getting pricked by needles.

Steele was equally impressed by the *LifeSteps* program. "Sometimes screening tests need to be interpreted by a physician so the results can be seen in context," he says. "But health education programs such as *LifeSteps* are extremely valuable in helping people strive to attain better health."

## An Easier Way

Order and receive your prescriptions at home!

**T**ake advantage of the Mail Service Pharmacy program if you have a traditional (basic or enhanced) or PPO plan. The program offers you the convenience of ordering from home and can *save you money*. In most cases, you can order up to 90 days of prescription drugs at once. That means three months of medications for just one copay. Plus, shipping is free.

Virtually all the same generic and brand-name drugs you purchase at a walk-in pharmacy are offered through the Mail Service Pharmacy program. What's more, the program screens all your prescriptions for potential drug interactions. If there

is a question, a registered pharmacist will contact your doctor.

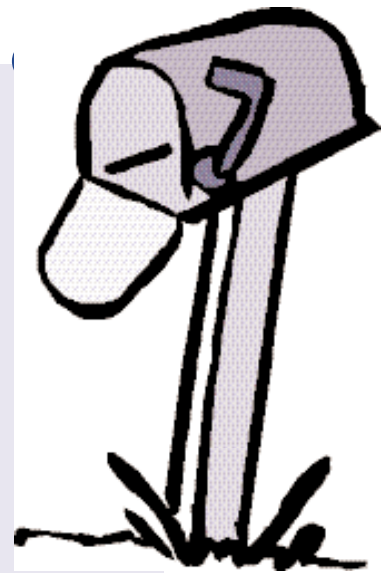
The program is intended only for ongoing prescriptions. It takes seven to 10 business days to receive your medications, so make sure you have a supply of medicine on hand while waiting for your order.

It's simple to get started. Just call 1-877-START MAIL (1-877-782-7862) to speak with a member services representative. Or log on to [www.merckmedco.com](http://www.merckmedco.com), click on "Prescription Refill/Renewal" and follow the easy, on-screen instructions. When you sign up online or via telephone, make sure you have your member number and

prescription information handy.

After your first prescription is filled, you can order refills quickly and easily by calling the above toll-free number or visiting the Merck-Medco Web site.

Many HMOs also offer similar mail-order options. Check your health plan for details.



Learn more about

# ASTHMA

The following four pages detail important information you should know about asthma. We encourage you to pull out this section and keep it handy! It's a reference that is sure to be a valuable learning tool.

## the abc's of asthma

Asthma is a chronic disease in which air is blocked from flowing in and out of the lungs, usually by muscle constriction, muscle swelling and excess mucus.

The cause of asthma is unknown. Factors in the environment, called triggers, can set off asthma attacks. Common triggers include tobacco smoke, air pollution, pollen, allergens from animals and insects, abrupt weather changes, mold and viral infections.

A person suffering from an asthma attack feels a sensation similar to drowning. As airways to the lungs narrow and tighten, the asthmatic finds breathing increasingly difficult. Wheezing and coughing are common symptoms.

If someone suffers an attack, administer asthma medication immediately. If symptoms do



not improve, seek emergency medical help right away.

If you have asthma, you are not alone. An estimated 17.3 million Americans suffer from the disease — 5 million under the age of 18.

There is good news, however. People afflicted with asthma can lead normal lives. A variety of medications are available to help control asthma symptoms. Identifying and avoiding triggers also reduces the likelihood of having an asthma attack.

So take heart. Even though the condition is a lifelong disease, it can be controlled through proper management.

John Dunitant

## Just remember to:

- Learn about the condition and identify triggers likely to provoke an attack
- Avoid such triggers or situations
- Take medications regularly as prescribed

### SOURCES:

National Institutes of Health, [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov); and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

## Quarterly Question

Do you have a success story on how you handle the challenges of asthma?

Tell us! Send your letters to Quarterly Question, *feelin' good*, P.O. Box 2063, Warren, MI 48090-9847, or e-mail us at [editorial@cecom.com](mailto:editorial@cecom.com). Please include your name, address and daytime phone number. Letters chosen for publication may be edited for length and clarity.



# Ten Myths About Asthma and Allergies

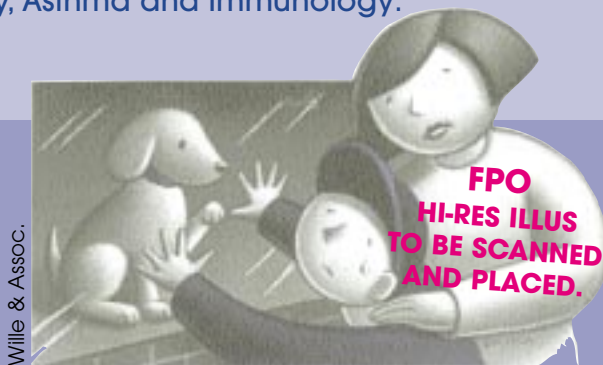
Learn the facts and you'll breathe easier

You long for a four-legged friend, even if your nose runs and your eyes tear up around dogs. Besides, your neighbor said certain breeds don't affect people with asthma and allergies.

**Your neighbor is wrong.**

A nonallergic dog breed is just one of many myths surrounding asthma and allergies.

Here are the top 10 myths about asthma and allergies, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology:



**MYTH #1: Some dog breeds, such as Chihuahuas, are better for people with asthma and allergies.**

**FACT:** The protein found in a dog's saliva, dander and urine is what triggers allergies — not pet hair. So no breed is safe.

**MYTH #2: Continuous exposure to pets decreases sensitivity to allergies.**

**FACT:** This is false. Continued exposure can, in fact, increase health risks.

**MYTH #3: Children outgrow asthma.**

**FACT:** Some children have asthma symptoms that clear up during adolescence, while other children's worsen, but the tendency toward extrasensitive airways remains. There is no way to predict whether a child will have asthma as an adult.

**MYTH #4: Asthma can be cured.**

**FACT:** There is no cure for asthma. But with proper diagnosis and treatment, people with asthma can lead normal, active lives with little disturbance to their quality of life.

**MYTH #5: The use of inhalers is dangerous.**

**FACT:** Inhaled medications, including corticosteroids, taken as prescribed, are the safest and most effective treatments for asthma.

**MYTH #6: Alternative medications are as effective as prescribed treatments.**

**FACT:** Alternative medications generally should not replace traditional, scientifically proven medications. Safety and effectiveness of these drugs remain largely unproven.

**MYTH #7: Moving to a warmer climate, such as to the southwestern states, will cure asthma and allergies.**

**FACT:** Moving to warmer temperatures may relieve allergies temporarily. However, allergies to native plants in the new area soon may develop. There is no safe place to move from allergies and asthma.

**MYTH #8: Chiropractors can treat asthma effectively.**

**FACT:** Asthma results from overreactivity of the immune system. That's why allergy and immunology specialists are the best professionals to treat asthma and allergies.

**MYTH #9: Allergies are a harmless problem.**

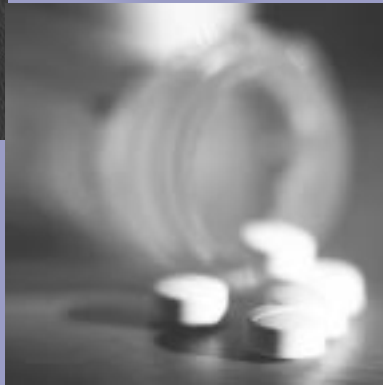
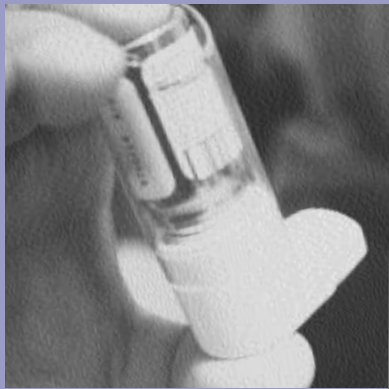
**FACT:** Allergies are a serious condition and should be properly treated. If left untreated, they can lead to chronic respiratory problems and other serious disorders.

**MYTH #10: Smoking doesn't trigger allergies or asthma.**

**FACT:** Smoking seriously affects allergies and asthma. Other triggers include pollens, mold, animal dander, dust mites, cockroaches, latex, stinging insects and certain foods.

*SOURCE: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org).*

●●● health coach



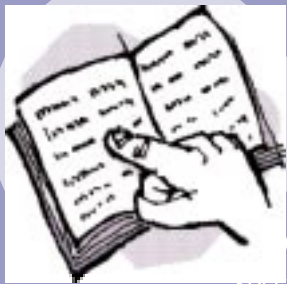
## Two Types of Asthma Treatment

There are so many different treatments for asthma, it can sometimes be confusing. But don't get mixed up!

Treatment is usually broken up into two main groups:

- Medications taken on a daily basis to help prevent and control ongoing symptoms. Corticosteroids, for instance, work to fight inflammation that may be obstructing an airway.
- "Rescue" medications, such as bronchodilators, that help to relieve symptoms. These medications combat coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and breathing problems by opening airways to make breathing easier.

**Learn key words so you can understand your doctor's advice**  
 Gain a better understanding of asthma and allergies and their treatment by familiarizing yourself with related terms:



terminology  
+ talk

**Allergen** — Any substance that triggers an allergic reaction.

**Allergist** — A doctor who specializes in treating allergies.

**Anaphylaxis** — Hypersensitivity to certain substances that results in a severe allergic reaction — usually involving swelling throughout the body. Without immediate treatment, it may be fatal.

**Bronchial tubes** — The major air passageways of the lungs and the tubes branching from them.

**Bronchodilators** — Drugs that open air passages by relaxing the tightened muscles surrounding the bronchial tubes. They come in inhalant, tablet, capsule, liquid or injectable forms.

**Conjunctivitis** — Inflammation of the eye. It can be a symptom of an allergic reaction.

**Corticosteroids** — An effective asthma medication that can be inhaled or swallowed. It's not related to the steroids misused by some athletes.

**Hay fever** — The more common term for allergies.

**Immunotherapy** — Allergy shots or vaccinations. A process in which allergenic material is administered in increasing concentrations over a period of time in order to decrease allergic symptoms when someone is exposed to an allergen.

**Otitis media** — The medical term for ear infections, which can be caused by allergic reactions.

**Reflux disease** — A common asthma trigger in which stomach acid flows back up the esophagus.

**Sinusitis** — Inflammation of the nasal sinuses, the hollow cavities within the cheek bones found around the eyes and behind the nose.

## How to Use an Inhaler

**M**any asthma medications come in metered-dose inhalers, or MDIs. The small, portable inhalers contain a gas-propelled device that dispenses measured doses of the medicine. Always follow the directions for the specific inhaler you're using. Here's how to use a gas-propelled MDI safely and properly:

- Remove the cap and shake the inhaler. If necessary, attach the spacer to the inhaler.



- Exhale slowly and steadily.

- Place the inhaler in your mouth or one to two inches from it. If you're using a spacer, place the spacer mouthpiece in your mouth.



- Press the canister once to release a dose of the medicine while you inhale very slowly and as deeply as possible.

- Hold your breath for about 10 seconds.

- Breathe out slowly and steadily.

- Keep the cap on when the inhaler is not in use, and rinse only the mouthpiece and cap in warm water as needed.

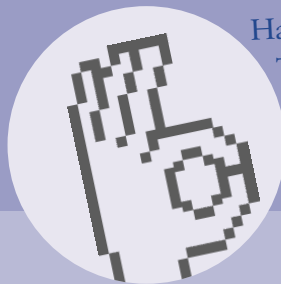


Colorforms Inc.

*SOURCE: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/index.htm).*

## Choice Clicks to Pick

Where to find asthma and allergy information on the Web



Have questions about your allergies or asthma? The following Web sites can help you find the information you need.

### [www.lifesteps.com](http://www.lifesteps.com)

Once you log on, click on the health information link in the menu on the left, then type in "asthma" or "allergies" under Quick Search in the menu on the right. You'll find numerous links to the latest information on both conditions.

### [www.allergies.about.com](http://www.allergies.about.com)

About.com sponsors a Web site that compiles information on specific

topics of interest and provides links to other suggested sites. The allergy and asthma section is comprehensive. There's even a segment on pets with allergies!

### [www.allernet.com](http://www.allernet.com)

Sponsored by the National Pollen Network, this site provides pollen counts nationwide, as well as a detailed Q & A section, a glossary of allergy and asthma terms and magnified pictures of airborne allergens.

## Tips for Taking Control of Asthma

If you have asthma:

- Request a written care plan from your doctor.
- Identify and avoid things that are likely to trigger asthma attacks.
- Control the panic that can accompany an attack. Stay calm and get help.
- Determine whether you can handle a situation yourself or need to go to an emergency room.
- Make sure your personal asthma emergency action plan is on file at work and/or at your school.
- When using inhalers, follow the instructions on your prescription; studies show inhalers are used improperly by eight out of 10 patients.

*SOURCE: American Lung Association of Michigan, 1-800-543-LUNG.*

To discuss your symptoms with a registered nurse, call the UAW-GM LifeSteps Personal Health Advisor® at 1-800-711-5934.

# Pressure Under Control

A health screening uncovers one man's hypertension

Everyone suffers from occasional headaches and fatigue. Lonnie Morgan of Arlington, Texas, thought his throbbing head and sleepiness were nothing unusual, even though his symptoms were recurrent.

The reason for his headaches and sluggishness was his allergic reaction to year-round blooming plants — or so he thought.

During a UAW meeting in Dearborn, Mich., Morgan attended a *LifeSteps* health screening. A *LifeSteps* screening technician checked his blood pressure and was alarmed because it was so high. He was instructed to see a doctor immediately.

The diagnosis surprised Morgan, especially since he'd been treated for high blood pressure before and had been on an exercise plan to control his weight. He even had been allowed to stop taking previous blood pressure medications because of his health improvements.

Normal blood pressure levels are 130/85 or

less. At the doctor's office, Morgan's levels were 159/104, considered dangerously high.

Since then, Morgan has been taking his blood pressure medication faithfully. His levels dropped to 110/80, well within the optimal range. Now he gets his blood pressure checked regularly, just to be sure.

**"If it hadn't been for that nurse encouraging me to go to the doctor, I would probably still be suffering," he says.**

"I feel great, better than I have in years," Morgan says. He encourages anyone who can attend a health screening to do so.

"The people are always extremely nice. The program is there for your use, and it's the best thing you can do."

Are you concerned about hypertension? Call the UAW-GM *LifeSteps* Personal Health Advisor® at 1-800-711-5934 and speak with a registered nurse.

Colorforms Inc.



If you have high blood pressure and are overweight, losing weight — **even just a few pounds** — can lower your blood pressure.



**Weight loss can also increase the effectiveness of blood pressure medications.**



## YOUR PRIVACY IS PROTECTED

NOTICE TO ALL UAW-GM EMPLOYEES, RETIREES AND ELIGIBLE FAMILY MEMBERS

The UAW and General Motors support the *LifeSteps* Program and have gone to great lengths to help ensure that your privacy is fully protected. Should you choose to participate in the UAW-GM *LifeSteps* Program, any individual information you share is kept in strict confidence by the approved UAW-GM *LifeSteps* vendors. Your individual information is NOT shared with the UAW or General Motors.

## A Little Friendly Competition

Corporate Cup puts emphasis on healthy lifestyle



Jon Muresan

*Team members Ray Jeffery, Brenda Loveday and James Jeffery represented GM in the 17th Annual Midwest Regional Corporate Cup Relays.*

**M**otivation is key in any endeavor. This is especially true when it comes to exercise. So why not make staying in shape a team effort?

That's exactly what the GM Corporate Cup team — a group of GM employees, including UAW members, together with GM retirees, summer interns and co-op students — decided to do. They participated in the 17th Annual Midwest Regional Corporate Cup Relays held June 16 in Canton, Mich. Donations were collected for Special Olympics Michigan.

“The competition is about having fun, staying healthy and meeting and teaming up with other GM employees from Southeast Michigan,” says GM

Corporate Cup team captain Brenda Loveday.

Participants competed in track and field-style events that were a challenge for walkers, runners, long and high jumpers and shot-putters of all abilities. Events included a 10k run, 5k walk, team shot put, team jump (each person high jumps and long jumps) and mixed team running relays that ranged from 200 to 3,200 meters.

“The event is about feeling good, not guts and glory,” says Ray Jeffery, a UAW-GM employee at the Milford Proving Grounds and a team member since 1993. “It’s a jump-start to a healthy lifestyle and the ideal thing for me.” Jeffery has even motivated his father, James, a GM retiree, to participate.

## Women’s Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998

During each of the past three years, all enrollees received a notice informing them of coverage for breast reconstruction and other related services following mastectomy. The provisions of the law continue to apply and the required coverage is included under the Health Care Programs. Please contact your health care carrier or HMO with questions.

health bit



*LifeSteps* donated team shirts to the 73 GM athletes and was also on hand to conduct body-fat analyses.

If you would like to be placed on a team mailing list or want more information on how to join, e-mail Brenda Loveday at [brenda.loveday@gm.com](mailto:brenda.loveday@gm.com) or check out [www.eteamz.com/gmcorpcup](http://www.eteamz.com/gmcorpcup).

# Your Kids Are What You Eat

Good eating habits influence better nutrition for your children

By Beth Thayer, registered dietitian for Heart Smart®, part of the Henry Ford Heart and Vascular Institute, Detroit, Mich.



If your children are filling up too often on soda pop and french fries, take a look at your own diet before chastising them.

Children are strongly influenced by what parents and other family members eat. If parents eat fruits and vegetables, their children are more likely to eat and enjoy fruits and vegetables, too.

Because diet plays such a strong role in health, it's important to teach children how to eat healthy. A poor diet can increase their chances of developing obesity and diabetes, as well as high cholesterol and high blood pressure. This can lead to the early onset of heart disease. Autopsies have shown that children can begin to develop fatty plaque in their arteries at a very young age.

The good news is parents can teach their children healthy eating habits. It may take a while to get a child who usually fills up on soda pop and french

fries to begin substituting milk and fruits, but it can happen if you keep a few things in mind.

Remember that their food likes and dislikes change rapidly. Foods they refuse today may be favorites tomorrow. Therefore, introduce new foods consistently and start the “one bite” policy: Allow them to take one bite and then decide if they would like more. Try introducing the food at the start of the meal when the child is hungriest, and serve it with familiar foods. Sometimes it takes up to 10 tries before a child decides a food is tasty, so don't give up.

## Are You SAD?

Learn the signs of Seasonal Affective Disorder

When winter draws closer and the days get shorter, do you feel sad, sluggish and lonely? If so, you might have more than a typical case of the winter blues.

Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, is a form of depression related to seasonal variations of light. Symptoms begin during the fall and winter months — when daylight hours are shorter — and lift in the spring, when daylight hours lengthen.

Signs of SAD, other than feeling depressed during winter months, include weight gain, excessive sleeping and a craving

for sugar and carbohydrates.

While the cause of SAD is unknown, melatonin — a sleep-related hormone in the brain — has been linked to the condition. The hormone, which may cause symptoms of depression, is produced at higher levels in the dark. Thus, when the days are shorter and darker, the production of melatonin increases.

If you experience mild symptoms of SAD, arranging your home to receive more sunlight may be helpful.

Serious cases of SAD may require bright-light therapy,

also called phototherapy. The patient is directed to sit in front of a device made of white fluorescent lights for a prescribed period of time each day.

If bright-light therapy does not work, an antidepressant drug may be used. Discuss your symptoms thoroughly with your doctor. Also, remember to check with your health care carrier or HMO for coverage on the treatment of SAD.

Douglas Shimmin

SOURCE: National Mental Health Association, [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org).

# Let It Snow!

Walking in winter  
can work wonders

**E**ven if colder temperatures and falling snowflakes don't thrill you, winter can be the perfect time to walk off weight. Sure, trudging through snow may not be your idea of physical activity, but let's look on the positive side for a moment.

Research shows daylight increases levels of serotonin, a hormone that helps calm cravings. So walking outside might ease your yearning for high-calorie snacks.

Winter also offers a refreshing change of pace. The invigorating cold air can clear your mind and help to reduce stress. Low amounts of stress can cut back levels of cortisol, a hormone that may increase appetite and promote fat storage.

Moreover, plodding through snow or walking into the wind helps you burn more calories because they require more energy.

But winter weather calls for some special preparation. Be sure to follow these tips:



Wear a scarf or mask loosely over your nose and mouth to prevent the sting of icy cold air when you inhale. This is especially important if you have asthma or heart problems.



Choose shoes with soles designed for traction.



Allow at least 10 minutes to warm up. When it's cold, your heart and muscles need more time to get ready.

Don't shrug your shoulders at the thought of winter. Use this time to boost your chances of starting the new year a size smaller or maintaining your current optimum weight!



## The Scoop on Snow Shoveling

Snow shoveling can be a good physical activity, but extra precautions should be taken if you decide to ditch the snow blower. The National Safety Council offers the following tips to help you get a handle on safe shoveling:



- Take it slow! Shoveling can raise your heart rate and blood pressure dramatically. Pace yourself and be sure to stretch and warm up first.
- Shovel only fresh snow. It's easier to shovel than the wet, packed-down variety.
- Push the snow as you shovel instead of lifting it out of the way.
- To support your back, push with your legs bent while holding your stomach in. Place one foot in front of the other and bend your knees. Keep your back straight.
- Dress warmly. Wear a turtleneck sweater, cap, scarf, face protection, mittens, wool socks and waterproof boots.
- Stop if you experience any of the following warning signs: chest pain, pain in the neck or jaw, palpitations, major muscle or joint pain, nausea or vomiting, trouble breathing or excessive fatigue.

SOURCE: National Safety Council,  
[www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org).

## A Recipe for Saving Money

Generic drugs are just as good as their brand name counterparts!

**T**here are many ways to prepare spaghetti, but all recipes must include two primary ingredients — pasta and tomatoes. In the same fashion,

generic drugs must be composed of the same active ingredients as their brand name counterparts.

In fact, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tests all new generic medications and only approves them if they are equal in safety and effectiveness to their brand name equivalents.

The difference between generics and brand name drugs is in the color and shape — never in the active ingredients.

Brand names work the same way as generics, but you may have to dig deeper into your wallet —

they can cost up to 60% more. That's because manufacturers bear the costs for research, development sales, advertising and marketing of the drug. In turn, they pass these costs on to you.

Take, for example, diltiazem SR, the generic name of a leading heart medication. This drug is equivalent in active ingredients, dosage form and strength to its brand name counterpart, but costs nearly \$50 less!

The same is true for diclofenac, the generic name of a common pain medication. It too costs roughly \$50 less than its brand name equivalent!

There's no reason to be concerned about using generic drugs. In fact, more and more GM enrollees are using them every day.

Unless your doctor instructs you to take a certain brand name medication, most pharmacies can fill your prescriptions with generic equivalents. If your prescription is not available in a generic form, ask your doctor or pharmacist whether there's a similar generic drug that may be right for you.

*feelin'good* would like to hear your questions or concerns about using generic drugs. We will answer them in an upcoming issue. Send your letters to Generic Drug Questions, *feelin'good*, P.O. Box 2063, Warren, MI 48090-9847. Or e-mail us at [editorial@cecom.com](mailto:editorial@cecom.com).

## What You Don't Know Can Hurt You

Are you among the more than 75% of women who have fibroid tumors?

**T**hree out of four women have them, but many don't know it. They're called fibroids, or noncancerous tumors in the uterus. Untreated, fibroids grow rapidly and have become the No. 1 reason for hysterectomies — removal of the entire uterus — in the United States.

Fibroids vary in size from as small as a pea to as large as a basketball and may appear anywhere in the uterus — and in any number.

It's a medical mystery why fibroids occur. Since most fibroids don't cause any symptoms, they're often unexpectedly discovered during a routine gynecologic exam. When symptoms do arise, they may include heavy menstrual bleeding,

excruciating cramps, swelling, frequent urination, leg and pelvic pain, anemia, infertility, constipation and repeated miscarriages.

If you experience these symptoms, don't hesitate to contact your doctor. There are several treatment options, including myomectomies (a surgery that removes fibroids but allows women to still have children), embolization (a nonsurgical process that blocks blood flow to the fibroid, thus shrinking the tumor) and hysterectomies.

For more information on fibroids, call the UAW-GM *LifeSteps* Personal Health Advisor® at 1-800-711-5934 to speak with a registered nurse or visit the National Institutes of Health's Web site at [www.nichd.nih.gov](http://www.nichd.nih.gov).

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