

good health report

SPRING 2014

YOUR FAST TRACK TO LIVING WELL



A Step Ahead

Get your diabetes
questions answered

After Baby

Health tips for women



Embrace better health.

Good Health Report To Your Health



Spring is here and what better time to “embrace better health.” It’s a chance to reboot your health and wellness goals. We are here to help you live healthier in every stage of life. Here’s how to get started.

Your first step is completing AvMed’s personal health assessment. Log on to www.avmed.org and select “Health and Wellness” under “Embrace Better Health.” This easy, user-friendly, interactive tool allows you to take a confidential survey that records important information about your health and lifestyle. This helps to identify and minimize health risks by providing you with a personalized plan for good health.

If you suffer from a complex, life-threatening disease or chronic condition, AvMed’s dedicated Care Management team has some solutions. The team’s extensive clinical experience helps you successfully navigate the healthcare system by providing a helping hand and advocating on your behalf.

And our 24/7 Nurse On Call lets you speak confidentially with a registered nurse about any health concern. Just call **1-888-866-5432** anytime, night or day. We want to help you live better today and feel better tomorrow.

To your good health!

Michael P. Gallagher
President & Chief Executive Officer

MICHAEL P. GALLAGHER,

President & Chief Executive Officer,
AvMed

COREY MILLER,

Director of Public Relations & Communications,
AvMed

FELICIA LOPEZ-WALKER,

Managing Editor,
AvMed

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Phone: **305-671-5437**.

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SOMETHING IN THE AIR

For springtime allergy sufferers, the sound of birds singing again isn't so sweet. In fact, it's a warning sign that some of the worst allergy triggers, including ragweed, pollen, dust and mold spores are on the way.

If hay fever has made springtime your least favorite time of year, minimize your symptoms with these tips from the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology:

- Ask your doctor to determine your specific allergy triggers and ask him or her which medications will be most effective.
- Keep doors and windows closed to keep pollens outside.
- Shower before going to bed to remove pollen from your hair.

And remember, if you have asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, the same triggers can cause flare-ups this time of year. Talk to your doctor about how to prevent them.

Beta-Blockers

Medicine is one of the many tools your doctor has to treat a health problem. Taking medicine as your doctor suggests will improve your health and may prevent future problems. If you don't take your medicines properly, you may be putting your health (and perhaps your life) at risk. Beta-blockers are rate-control medicines used for atrial fibrillation. They are used if your heart rate is too fast, which may cause symptoms. Beta-blockers block the effects of certain hormones (catecholamines, such as adrenaline) on the heart. This helps slow the heart rate by blocking the number of electrical impulses that pass through the AV node to the lower heart chambers (ventricles). Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and keep all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.



Cervical Cancer Screenings

Why regular testing is so important for women.

A Pap test, or Pap smear, is the most effective screening test for cervical cancer. It's often part of a pelvic exam. Regular testing can help your doctor find and treat abnormal cell changes on your cervix before they develop into cancer.

Some women also get a human papillomavirus (HPV) test at the same time as a Pap test. Even if you've already had the HPV vaccine, you still need Pap tests because the vaccine doesn't protect you from all types of HPV. Women who have had the HPV vaccine should follow the same Pap test schedule as women who have not had the HPV vaccine.

- **WOMEN SHOULD START HAVING PAP TESTS AT AGE 21.** These recommendations apply to women who have never had a serious abnormal Pap test result.
- **WOMEN 21 TO 30.** Women in this age group can have Pap tests every three years. If any of your tests are abnormal, you may need to be tested more often.
- **WOMEN 30 TO 65.** For women in this age group, most experts say that you can have a Pap test every three years. Or you can have a combination HPV and Pap test every five years. If any of your tests are abnormal, you may need to be tested more often.
- **WOMEN 65 AND OLDER.** Women age 65 and older may no longer need Pap tests. Talk with your doctor about what's right for you.





The Cholesterol Connection

When to get tested and what it all means.

Though 20 may seem too young to worry about cholesterol levels, the American Heart Association recommends that all adults begin having a fasting lipoprotein profile screening then and repeating the test every five years thereafter.

The test, which measures total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol and triglycerides, is performed early in life to establish a baseline, and then monitored for changes that can be treated with medications, diet and lifestyle changes before permanent damage can occur.

A healthy cholesterol profile should include:

- A total cholesterol level of less than 200 mg/dL.
- An HDL cholesterol level of 60 mg/dL or higher, which has been shown to offer a protective benefit against heart disease.
- An LDL cholesterol level of less than 100 mg/dL, the optimal level for reducing heart disease risk.
- A triglyceride level of less than 100 mg/dL, the optimal level for reducing heart disease risk.

Cholesterol Management: Cholesterol is a waxy substance necessary for all living tissue. The body manufactures most of the cholesterol it needs. Additional cholesterol is taken in from certain foods we eat.

Too much cholesterol in the blood is not healthy, because it can build up in the walls of arteries, causing the blood vessels to narrow (atherosclerosis). Narrowed blood vessels carry less blood and may increase a person's risk for a stroke or heart attack.

Lowering cholesterol levels in the blood makes good sense, especially for people who are at risk for a transient ischemic attack (TIA) or stroke. Diet changes and, if needed, drugs can be used to keep blood cholesterol at an acceptable level.

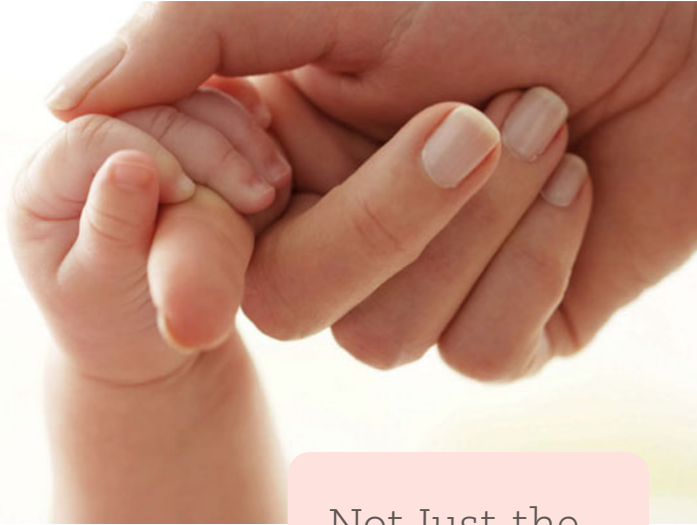
Treatment with cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins can slow the development of atherosclerosis in the carotid arteries for some people and may reduce the chance of having a TIA or stroke, especially for people who have a history of coronary artery disease.

THEN THERE'S TRANS FATS

Trans fats, or partially hydrogenated oils, are found in many of our favorite foods—fries, doughnuts, cookies, crackers, pizzas and pies, to name a few. They're also among the worst offenders when it comes to maintaining healthy cholesterol levels.

Trans fats don't just raise your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or bad cholesterol level, they also lower your high-density lipoprotein (HDL) or good cholesterol—a double whammy for your cholesterol profile.

The American Heart Association recommends reducing trans fats in your diet to less than 1 percent of total calories. Even better, avoid them altogether by checking the nutrition facts panel on foods at the store and asking what cooking oils are used when dining out.



Postpartum Care

Take care of yourself after giving birth.

Did you have a baby recently? Congratulations! Chances are, you're spending just about every moment caring for and thinking about your new little one, but taking care of yourself is just as important.

Every woman needs a postpartum visit with her doctor six weeks after giving birth. Your doctor will perform a physical exam to check your healing progress and overall health. It's also a great time to ask the many questions you undoubtedly have.

Talk to your doctor about weight loss and exercise, and foods or supplements you may need to ensure proper nutrition. Your doctor can help you set goals that are good for you—and, if you're breastfeeding, for your baby too.

Don't hesitate to bring up any physical or emotional concerns you have. Every woman has at least some questions about postpartum issues, including:

- Constipation
- Urinary incontinence
- Vaginal discharge
- Varicose veins
- Non-healing cuts or lacerations
- Mood swings
- Symptoms of possible postpartum depression
- Managing hormonal shifts, such as when your period starts again
- Resuming sexual activity and how to do so comfortably
- Birth control options, especially if you're breastfeeding

Your visit is also a great opportunity to ask parenting questions. Yes, your baby's pediatrician will provide guidance, but your own doctor can be a great source of advice and reassurance. After all, you relied on your doctor to take care of you and your baby for nine months, so there's no reason to stop now.

Not Just the Baby Blues

Having a baby should be a happy time. But new moms can sometimes feel sad in the months after giving birth. If these feelings don't go away, a woman might have postpartum depression. About one in five new moms suffers from this. Could you be one of them? Take this quiz to find out:

- Do you feel sad for long periods?
- Are you crying a lot?
- Do you have trouble eating or sleeping?
- Do you feel helpless or alone?
- Do you have trouble focusing or making decisions?
- Do you have little interest in your baby?
- Are you afraid of hurting yourself or the baby?

Stay a **Step Ahead** of Diabetes

Get answers to some common questions.

When it comes to managing your diabetes effectively and avoiding serious complications, your health-care provider is your best friend. Whether you choose to see an endocrinologist, internist or a primary care provider, it's important to make sure that he or she is someone you're comfortable with, listens to your concerns and answers your questions.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I SEE MY HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS?

Schedule a visit with your doctor once every three to six months—and keep your appointment.

During these visits, your doctor will weigh you, check your blood pressure and examine your feet for potential problems. Once a year, your doctor will also perform an eye exam, HbA1C lab test (a three-month snapshot of how well you're managing your blood sugar), cholesterol screening and a urine test to check for kidney damage.

TIPS FOR YOUR VISIT

To make the most of your time together, ask your doctor the following questions.

FOOT HEALTH

ASK: How should I care for my feet? How often should I check them? What is cause for concern, and what should I do if I find a problem?

EXERCISE

ASK: Am I healthy enough to begin an exercise program? What do you recommend and what should I avoid? Should I monitor my blood sugar during exercise?

EYE HEALTH

ASK: Should I see an eye doctor? What eye problems should I watch for?

BLOOD SUGAR

ASK: When should I check my blood sugar, and what numbers are too high or too low? Should I have glucagon on hand?

EAT WELL, BE WELL

A big part of living well with diabetes is eating well—and the Mediterranean diet may be the best way to do that. Low in saturated fats and high in fiber, it's based on the eating habits of people in southern Europe like Greece, France, Spain and southern Italy, who experience lower rates of obesity, heart disease, hypertension, cancer and diabetes.

The diet focuses on fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes, cereals, nuts and seeds, and includes moderate amounts of olive oil, cheese, yogurt, fish and poultry. Adherents also limit eggs to no more than four per week and red meat to a small amount each week. They also enjoy low to moderate amounts of red wine. Ask your doctor if the Mediterranean diet is right for you.



Tri-Berry Salad

Vinegar, black pepper, and allspice accentuate the sweet flavor of the berries in this dessert salad.

- 1/4 c. orange juice
- 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- 1/8 tsp. allspice
- 3 c. halved strawberries
- 1 c. raspberries
- 1 c. blackberries
- 1/2 c. toasted walnuts, coarsely chopped

- 1** In large bowl, whisk together orange juice, vinegar, sugar, pepper and allspice. Add strawberries, raspberries and blackberries, and toss to coat.
- 2** To serve, spoon berry mixture into bowls and sprinkle walnuts on top.



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION PER SERVING

205 calories; 10g total fat; 1g saturated fat; 2.2g monounsaturated fat; 6.3g polyunsaturated fat; 8g dietary fiber; 3.6g protein; 29g carbohydrate; 0mg cholesterol; 8mg sodium.

(Good source of anthocyanins, copper, fiber, folate, magnesium, potassium, vitamin B6, vitamin C.) Serves 4.

Source: avmed.wholehealthmhd.com

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Miami, Florida 33256-9906

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