

# good health report

WINTER 2015

YOUR FAST TRACK TO LIVING WELL

## Do You Know Flu?

Simple steps to keep  
your family well

## Cancer Prevention

Screenings for colon  
and cervical cancer

The AvMed logo features the brand name in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A yellow circular graphic element, resembling a stylized 'A' or a partial circle, is positioned behind the letters 'v' and 'M'.

**AvMed**

Embrace better health.

# Good Health Report To Your Health



**W**elcome to AvMed. Whether you're a new or longtime member, we're pleased that you have chosen us as your trusted health partner for life.

We understand that you want the peace of mind of knowing you'll always have the high-quality healthcare you and your family need, when you need it. That's why we believe keeping you well is just as important as keeping you healthy. AvMed provides the encouragement, support, information, programs and tools you need to enjoy a healthier life.

As you read this issue and its focus on your New Year fresh start, remember to keep up with your scheduled preventive screenings and immunizations. If you don't know what kind of care you need and when, you can easily find out by visiting AvMed's website at [www.avmed.org](http://www.avmed.org). Select **Group** from the list under Members. Then click **Health and Wellness** followed by **Prevention and Education**.

To help you stay your healthiest, AvMed continues to offer some amazing tools, including the Activity Planner, Workout Library, Cardio and Strength Program and Dietary Planner. AvMed also offers a Personal Health Assessment, Weight Watchers® and smoking cessation programs, as well as nutrition counseling and yoga. Members can also receive discounts on complementary and alternative medicine options such as acupuncture, massage therapy, tai chi and relaxation techniques.

To access all of this and more, simply go to [www.avmed.org](http://www.avmed.org), log in to your account, select **Health and Wellness** and click on your **Wellness Portal powered by Healthyroads®**.

AvMed's **Nurse On Call Program** also gives you confidential access to a registered nurse 24/7 for any of your health concerns. Call **1-888-866-5432** to speak with a caring nurse today.

To your good health in the New Year!

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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## PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM FLU

**D**angerous diseases have been in the headlines, but did you know the more common flu can be just as harmful? Protect your family by taking these simple steps.

- 1 Get the flu shot.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says it's the single best protection against the flu. The CDC recommends everyone age 6 months and older get a flu vaccine every year.
- 2 Wash your hands.** Wet your hands, lather, scrub the fronts and backs, then rinse and dry well. If soap and water aren't available, an alcohol-based hand rub can kill germs.
- 3 Steer clear of people who are sick.** And when you're under the weather, stay home to avoid spreading the flu.
- 4 Keep your hands away** from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- 5 Keep surfaces clean** and disinfected. Wipe down your phone, remote control, door knobs and kitchen. If someone is sick in your house or office, do it double time.
- 6 Stay healthy** by getting eight hours of sleep nightly, eating plenty of nutritious food and staying hydrated.
- 7 Get moving!** A brisk daily walk is a powerful weapon against the flu virus. When you get your heart rate up, natural killer cells come out of hiding and circulate freely throughout the body.

The flu shot is free and widely available. You can get the vaccine at doctors' offices, pharmacies and retail clinics (bring your AvMed ID). If you have questions about the flu shot, speak with your pharmacist or healthcare provider.

## What to Know About Enterovirus

Enterovirus D68 activity was reported in dozens of states last year. Symptoms range from mild cold- and flu-like symptoms to severe, such as wheezing and difficulty breathing. While the highest infection rate has passed (the virus hits hardest in summer and fall), it's still best to be aware of the symptoms.

Children are particularly vulnerable because they have not yet developed the immunity needed to fend off the virus. Children with asthma may have a higher risk for developing severe respiratory illness caused by this strain of enterovirus.

To keep yourself and your children protected, wash your hands often (for at least 20 seconds each time) and don't share cups or utensils. Keep on top of disinfecting surfaces and your kids' toys. And remind your children not to touch their eyes, nose and mouth.

If your child has difficulty breathing, contact your healthcare provider immediately. Some people with severe respiratory illness may need to be hospitalized.

Keep an eye on reported cases through [www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/non-polio-enterovirus/index.html) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

# Is Your Blood Pressure Healthy?

Know the indicators of heart problems.

About one in every three adults in this country has high blood pressure. Are you one of them? High blood pressure is often called “the silent killer” because it has no symptoms, so it may be doing damage to your body without you even knowing it.

## WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

It's the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps blood. It's typically given as a ratio. The top number is your systolic pressure. That's the pressure when your heart muscle contracts. The bottom number, or the diastolic pressure, represents the pressure when the heart muscle is resting between beats.

**You want the reading to be at or under 120/80.** As long as you're not having any symptoms (dizziness, light-headedness, blurred vision, etc.), the lower your pressure the better.

**Between 120/80 and 139/89 is considered** pre-hypertension and the American Heart Association defines high blood pressure as anything over 140/90. However, new guidelines for hypertension were released this year. A diagnosis of hypertension (high blood pressure) with or without a chronic illness, such as diabetes, can vary

with optimal blood pressure levels and between age groups. Ask your doctor about your ideal numbers based on health history and age. For a complete list of guidelines, visit [www.avmed.org](http://www.avmed.org), select **Health and Wellness** then **Prevention and Education**.

While you can check blood pressure at home, your doctor can put your blood pressure in context and suggest lifestyle changes.

High blood pressure can increase your risk for heart attack, stroke, kidney failure and other complications. Lifestyle changes to lower blood pressure include:

- Eating a healthy, lower-salt diet
- Moving more
- Losing weight and/or maintaining a healthy weight
- Managing stress
- Stopping smoking
- Limiting alcohol

Your healthcare provider may also prescribe medication (or several medications) to help lower your pressure.

## THE ROLE OF CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol, a fat-like substance, can build up in the walls of your arteries, causing them to narrow and impede blood flow. Like high blood pressure, high cholesterol causes no symptoms. That's why it's important to have a “lipid profile” done every five years. This simple blood test checks your cholesterol levels after a 9- to 12-hour fast.

To keep levels in check:

- Eat a diet that's low in saturated fat.
- Maintain your weight.
- Move your body for at least 30 minutes on most, if not all days of the week.

There's plenty of help available if you have specific areas to address. AvMed offers access to:

- Personal health assessments
- Biometric screenings
- Online health library
- Gym and alternative medicine discounts
- Weight Watchers® reimbursements
- Nutritional and dietary planners
- Activity challenges
- Cardio and strength programs

To learn more about these great tools, visit [www.avmed.org](http://www.avmed.org), log in to your AvMed account, select **Health and Wellness**, and click on **Wellness Portal powered by Healthyroads®**.

# 8 Ways to Be a Better Patient

Make the most of your regular appointments.

Quality healthcare begins with a close, trusting relationship with your doctor. Many studies show that patients who are actively involved in their own care receive the best treatment and get the best results. This quality care includes preparing for your regular doctor's appointments.

Here are some suggestions to make the most of your office visits:

**1 When seeing a specialist, gather all the appropriate records.** These include relevant medical records from other physicians, results and copies of X-rays, and other imaging studies and lab tests. Either personally deliver the records or follow up to make sure they arrived.

**2 Anytime you visit a doctor, write down lists for the following:**

- All the medications, herbs, vitamin supplements and over-the-counter remedies you are taking. (You may even want to bring the bottles with you.)
- Your medical history, such as prior treatments for chronic conditions or operations, and even those not related to your current problem.
- Your family health history (especially parents, grandparents and siblings), so your doctor can evaluate your risks.
- Questions about your condition or the reason for your visit, such as pain or medication side effects.
- Any other questions you may have.

**3 Be sure you understand your doctor's instructions.** Think about asking a friend or family member to go to the doctor with you. If you need a translator, ask another adult. Don't rely on a child to translate.

**4 Dress appropriately.** You may be asked to take off your clothes during an examination. Wear loose clothing that's easy to take off and put on.

**5 Bring your health care proxy and living will for the doctor to put in your file.** If you don't have either of these, ask your doctor how to prepare them.

**6 Arrive early** so you have time to fill out forms before seeing your doctor.

**7 Be honest with your doctor.** Don't be shy and don't hold back information about embarrassing problems such as incontinence, memory loss or sexual issues.

**8 Take notes and ask questions** if you don't understand something, including instructions for taking medication.

Let AvMed help you make the most of it. Great patient-doctor communication doesn't just happen. It requires proper planning prior to the appointment so you can successfully communicate your needs and concerns with your physician. To learn more, visit [www.avmed.org](http://www.avmed.org), and under *Health and Wellness*, select *Respect for you. Respect for your time.*



# Help Prevent Colon Cancer

Important information for  
men and women.

**A**lmost 100,000 people will be stricken with colon cancer this year. Excluding skin cancers, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in both men and women in the United States. Although you're powerless to control certain risk factors, such as age and your family history, you can decrease your chances of developing the disease by doing the following.

**Eat a healthy diet.** This includes lots of produce and whole grains. You should be getting your fiber from food, not supplements. Cut down your intake of red and processed meats, which have been linked to an increased risk of colon cancer.

**Watch your weight and get moving.** Regular exercise may help keep colon cancer away, while being overweight may up your risk. Most studies have found that being overweight or obese increases the risk of colorectal cancer in both men and women, but the link seems to be stronger in men. Having more fat around the middle has also been linked to colorectal cancer.

**If you smoke, quit.** Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW to be connected to your state's quitline. Having supports in place will increase your chances of quitting successfully.

**Limit alcohol.** The American Cancer Society recommends no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.

**Get the tests.** The American Cancer Society says that the colorectal death rate has been dropping for more than 20 years in part because of better screening tools, including high-sensitivity fecal occult blood tests, sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy.

## ➤ When to Get Tested?

Your most powerful weapon against colon cancer? Regular screenings. Most experts recommend people at average risk start regular testing at age 50. Those who have a family history or other risk factors for colorectal polyps or cancer, such as inflammatory bowel disease or certain inherited conditions, may need more frequent screenings. Speak to your doctor about your own particular risk.

# Cervical Cancer Screenings

While cervical cancer used to be the leading cause of death for women in this country, that number has decreased tremendously, thanks largely to the Pap test. The test involves collecting a sample of cells from your cervix and vagina in order to look for changes that can lead to cancer.

In almost all cases, cervical cancer is caused by one of 12 types of human papillomaviruses (HPV). While most HPV infections will clear by themselves within a year or two, some will persist and cause cellular changes that can eventually develop into cancer. But it can take 10 to 20 years or more for a persistent infection with a high-risk HPV type to progress into cancer.

That's why regular screenings are so important. These include both the Pap test and HPV testing. If detected early,

cervical cancer is one of the most successfully treatable cancers.

The American Cancer Society recommends the following screening timeline:

- Have your first Pap test three years after intercourse, but no later than age 21.
- At ages 21-29, have a Pap test and pelvic exam performed every one to three years.
- At ages 30-65 screening with a Pap test plus HPV test every five years is preferred, though continuing the Pap test alone every three years is acceptable as well.
- Stop screening at age 65 unless there are serious cervical pre-cancer abnormalities or if you have had cancer in the last 20 years.

Discuss with your doctor if you are at risk, have a history of cervical cancer or if you are not sure whether you're at risk.

AvMed encourages members to take an active role in their health and well-being by getting the proper age- and gender-specific screenings. Visit [www.avmed.org](http://www.avmed.org), select *Health and Wellness* then *Prevention and Education*.

## ARE YOU AT RISK?

Your sexual habits can increase your risk of developing cervical cancer, including:

- Having sex at an early age
- Having multiple sexual partners
- Having a partner or many partners who are active in high-risk sexual activities

Other factors that increase your risk include:

- Having a family history of the disease
- Not getting the HPV vaccine
- Being economically disadvantaged
- Having a mom who took the drug DES (diethylstilbestrol) during pregnancy
- Having a weakened immune system
- Having an STD in the past
- Smoking

Discuss your risk factors with your doctor to decide the best screening practices for you.



# A Healthier Eggplant Parmesan

By baking the eggplant, you can keep fat to a minimum and maintain flavor.

- 2 egg whites
- 1 lb. eggplant, peeled and cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 1/2 c. plain dried bread crumbs
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 c. no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1 c. canned tomatoes, chopped with their juice
- 1/4 c. chopped fresh basil or 1 tsp. dried
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1 c. shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese (about 4 ounces)
- 1/4 c. grated Parmesan cheese

- 1 Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line baking sheet with foil sprayed with nonstick cooking spray.
- 2 In a shallow dish, beat the egg whites and 2 tablespoons of water until foamy. Dip eggplant into egg whites, then into bread crumbs, pressing crumbs into eggplant.
- 3 Place eggplant on baking sheet and drizzle oil over eggplant slices. Bake 30 minutes, turning eggplant over after 20 minutes, until golden brown and cooked through.
- 4 Meanwhile, in medium bowl, stir together tomato sauce, tomatoes and their juice, basil, salt and pepper. Spoon 3 tablespoons of tomato mixture into bottom of 9-inch-square glass baking dish. Place half of eggplant over sauce, spoon half of remaining tomato mixture over, and sprinkle half of mozzarella on top. Repeat this process.
- 5 Sprinkle Parmesan on top and bake for 20 minutes or until piping hot. *Serves 4.*

Source: AvMed Whole Health

**NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION PER SERVING:** 301 calories, 14g total fat, 5.2g saturated fat, 6g dietary fiber, 16g protein, 30g carbohydrate, 21mg cholesterol, 643mg sodium.

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 Miami, Florida 33256-9906

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