

# health sense



**W**hen the holidays are here, they can bring good cheer. But it's also a time that can bring too much stress. And you might forget to take good care of yourself.

These four steps can help you enjoy the holidays in good health.

**1. Eat well.** Sweets and treats are a part of the holidays. You don't have to avoid them as long as you eat small portions balanced with healthy choices.

Be sure to have fruits and veggies each day. They give

your body key vitamins and minerals without a lot of calories. For a snack, grab a sweet orange instead of holiday candy.

**2. Move more.** Find fun ways to be

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**Contra Costa Health Plan's 2008 Report to the Community is now online! Check it out at [www.contracostahealthplan.org](http://www.contracostahealthplan.org).**

active, like walking each day with family or friends or riding a bike. Just 10 minutes of exercise 3 times a day can boost your health, ease stress and help keep extra calories from sticking.

**3. Get your rest.** Between cleaning the house, shopping for food and getting ready for company, your schedule may be full. Don't try to do more than you can. Get 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night. Take time to relax.

**4. Keep your spirits up.** Focus on what the holidays mean to you, such as connecting with friends and family and having fun.

Sources: American Dietetic Association; American Psychological Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



**M**any people have a problem with food and how much they eat. Some people have an obsession with food or weight. Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous, a 12-step program for weight management, can help.

**Do you have a food problem?**

- Have you ever wanted to stop eating and found you just couldn't?
- Do you try one diet after another, but can't lose weight or keep it off?

- Do you eat large quantities of food at one time (binge)?
- Do you binge and then throw up, exercise, or take laxatives to undo it (purge)?
- Do you eat differently when you're alone than you do in front of other people?
- Has a doctor or family member ever been worried about your eating habits or weight?
- Do you eat to escape from your feelings?
- Have you ever thrown away food

and then pulled it out of the trash and ate it later?

- Do you eat when you're not hungry?
- Do you eat in secret?
- Do you ever not eat at all or eat very little?
- Have you ever hidden food to make sure you have enough?
- Do you feel driven to exercise a lot to control your weight?
- Do you feel guilty or ashamed about what you've eaten?
- Are you waiting for your life to begin "when you lose the weight"?

**Where to go for help**

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you may have a food problem. Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous can help. There are no dues or fees.

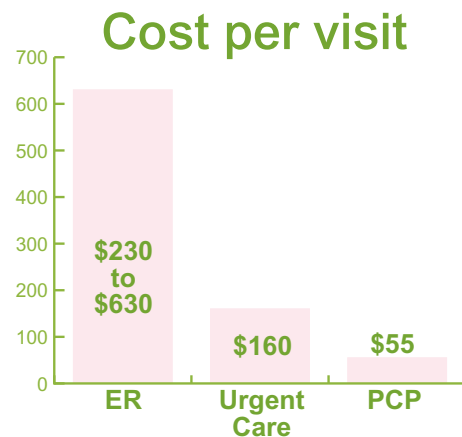
Call **800-600-6028** for a list of local meetings available in English and Spanish, or find more information about Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous at [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org).

## Is it an emergency? Know before you go

**W**hen people get sick, there are many ways to get medical care. Many people make appointments with their primary care provider (PCP), some call 24-hour Advice Nurses and some go to urgent care if the need is immediate. Others may go to the emergency room (ER) for medical care.

Sometimes, after hours of waiting in the ER, you find out

you didn't need to be there at all. Many visits to the ER are avoidable. Common reasons for avoidable ER visits include colds, flu, earaches, sore throats and headaches, especially in children.



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**take** **Contra Costa Health Plan can help. Before taking a trip to the ER, call your PCP or our 24/7 Advice Nurse Line at 877-661-6230 (press 1). Our Advice Nurses can refer you to the best, most convenient place to get you the care you need.**

# Be prepared for the flu

It's fall, and that means it's flu season. Influenza, or the flu, is a virus that can cause illness and sometimes death. Luckily, most people who get the flu recover within a week or so.

Last spring we saw a new virus, which is reportedly more dangerous—the H1N1 virus (formerly known as swine flu). Both seasonal flu and H1N1 are expected this flu season.

The good news is that there are vaccines that can protect you from getting the flu. The seasonal flu

vaccine and the H1N1 flu vaccine will be given separately. Both have been tested for safety in clinical trials.

We recommend that everyone get both the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 flu vaccine this year. People at high risk need to get vaccinated as soon as possible (see sidebar below).

## What you can do

Both seasonal flu and H1N1 spread through germs from coughing, sneezing and touching

common items, such as door handles or toys that many children play with. You can protect yourself and your family by:

- Avoiding contact with sick people.
- Using your arm to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Getting vaccinated.
- Staying home if you are sick.
- Washing your hands often.
- Keeping your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes.

If you experience flu-like symptoms, such as a fever, runny nose, cough, sore throat, body aches and headache, call your primary care provider or one of our Advice Nurses at **877-661-6230 (press 1)**.

To find out where to get a flu vaccine, call the Public Health Flu Hotline at **925-313-6469** or visit [www.flucliniclocator.org](http://www.flucliniclocator.org). Seasonal flu and H1N1 flu information is also available at [www.cchealth.org](http://www.cchealth.org).



Wash hands often



Cover coughs & sneezes



Stay home when sick

## Who should get vaccinated?

### Groups that are a priority for seasonal flu vaccination include:

- Pregnant women.
- Children 6 months to 18 years old.
- Adults 50 and older.
- Health care workers.
- People with a chronic health condition, such as heart, lung or kidney disease; asthma; or diabetes.

- Caregivers of young children and seniors.

### People who are a priority for the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination include:

- Pregnant women.
- Anyone 6 months to 24 years old.
- Health care workers and emergency medical workers.
- Anyone between 25 and 64 with a chronic health condition, such as heart, lung or kidney disease;

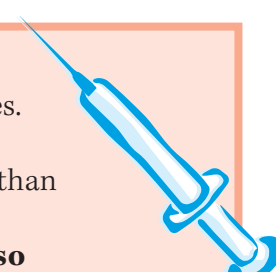
asthma; or diabetes.

- Caregivers of children younger than 6 months.

### You should also consider getting vaccinated against pneumonia if you:

- Are older than 65.
- Smoke.
- Have a chronic health condition, such as heart, lung or kidney disease; asthma; or diabetes.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)



## Are your kidneys working as well as they should?

Your kidneys need help to stay in good shape. Here are some things to keep in mind.

First, know that diabetes and high blood pressure can hurt your kidneys. These conditions are the main causes of kidney disease.

If you have diabetes, work with your health care team to keep it under control. You will need to: » Eat well. » Get plenty of exercise. » Take medicine and track your blood sugar level as your provider tells you to.

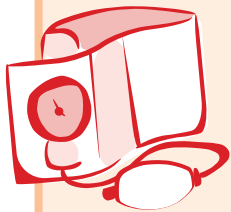
You'll also need to have your blood pressure checked regularly. Ask your provider how often to have it checked and what your pressure should be. To meet your goal, you may need to change your diet and exercise level.

And you may have to take medicine.

Other ways to help your kidneys: » Stay at a healthy weight. » Drink plenty of fluids. » Don't smoke.

Talk to your provider about having blood and urine tests to check for kidney disease.

Even if you have kidney disease now, these steps can help protect your kidneys.



# Kidneys work hard to keep blood clean

**C**leaning waste from your blood is a dirty job. But it's one done daily by two hardworking, fist-size organs in the middle of your back—your kidneys.

Healthy kidneys sift through about 200 quarts of blood every day. They remove about 2 quarts of materials your body doesn't need.

This waste comes from the normal breakdown of the body's tissues and from the food you eat.

The waste goes from the kidneys to the bladder and later leaves the body as urine.

That's not all. Kidneys also keep chemicals like sodium and potassium in the right balance. Kidneys also release hormones that:

- Prompt bone marrow to make red blood cells.
- Keep calcium levels normal, to keep bones healthy.
- Control blood pressure.

For the most part, the kidneys go about their chores quietly. Most people don't even notice them.

That can be true even if there are problems. Most kidney diseases occur silently. Damage can go on for years before it's found, often with blood and urine tests.



As kidney disease gets worse, you may: » Use the bathroom more or less often. » Feel tired. » Feel itchy. » Lose your appetite. » Have swollen or numb feet or hands.

## The two main causes of kidney trouble are high blood pressure and diabetes.

The 2 main causes of kidney trouble are high blood pressure and diabetes. If you have either condition, ask your provider what you can do to control it. This can help your kidneys last longer.

Source: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

## Screening tests

# Providing early cancer warning

**F**inding cancer early can be the key to surviving it.

That's why screening tests are so important. They can spot cancer even before you feel sick.

Work with your doctor to come up with the best screening plan for you.

Here are some common tests:



**Your doctor can help you develop a screening plan.**

### For women

■ **Pap test.** This test checks for cervical cancer. All women should have the test starting by age 21 or three years after they start having sex.

■ **Mammogram.** This test looks for breast cancer. The test should be done every 1 to 2 years starting at age 40. If you find any unusual lumps in your breasts, tell your doctor right away.

### For men

■ **Prostate cancer tests.** These tests can find prostate cancer. Ask your doctor if the tests are right for you.

■ **Testicular exam.** Check your testicles for unusual lumps or swelling that may mean cancer. See your doctor if you find any changes.

### For everyone

Everyone age 50 and older should be screened for colon cancer. There are several options. Some tests need to be done each year. Others only need to be done once every 10 years.

It's also a good idea to check your skin—especially your moles—

## Know the signs of cancer

Pain can be your body's way of warning you that something is wrong.

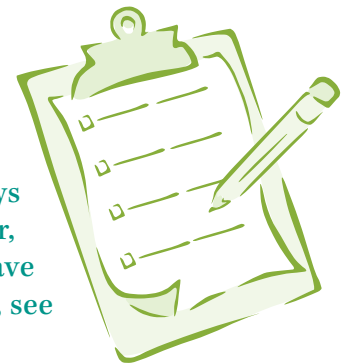
But while being pain-free is great, it doesn't always mean you're in good health. For example, it's rare to have pain in the early stages of cancer.

Luckily, your body has other ways to alert you to trouble.

When it comes to cancer, common signs include:

- A new lump in the breast or other part of the body.
- A sore that doesn't heal.
- A cough that won't go away or a hoarse voice.
- Changes in bowel or bladder habits.
- Ongoing indigestion.
- Trouble swallowing.
- Losing weight—10 pounds or more—for no reason.
- Feeling very tired for no reason.
- A change in a wart or mole.
- Unusual bleeding or discharge.

These symptoms do not always mean cancer, but if you have any of them, see your doctor.



Source: National Cancer Institute

for signs of skin cancer.

If you see changes in the size, color or surface of your moles, tell your doctor right away.

Source: American Cancer Society

# Are you ready to start breastfeeding?

**D**id you know that breastfeeding is the best way to nourish your new baby? While breastfeeding is the healthiest choice for your baby, you probably have a lot of questions. Here are some answers to common concerns from the American Academy of Family Physicians:

**Q. How soon after birth should I begin to breastfeed?**

**A.** Your baby should be placed skin-to-skin with you as soon as possible after birth and be kept

touching your skin during the first breastfeeding.

**Q. How long should I breastfeed?**

**A.** If possible, babies should have only breast milk for the first 6 months. No other foods or fluids are needed. Start giving your baby solid foods at about 6 months after birth. Breast milk should be an important part of your baby's diet for at least the first year and hopefully longer.

**Q. What if I don't have enough milk?**

**A.** Trust your body! Nearly every mother can make enough milk. Frequent breastfeeding makes more milk. Newborns nurse about 10 to 12 times every day, usually for



20 to 30 minutes, and you should hear swallowing.

**Q. What if I have nipple or breast pain?**

**A.** At first many mothers have tender nipples and some discomfort with the first few sucks. If you have pain that lasts longer, ask for help from a nurse or lactation consultant. Your baby may need more breast in his or her mouth.

## Free fitness DVD

Place your order now for a free exercise and nutrition video. Parents, grandparents and young children can benefit from this upbeat, fun DVD.

Call 925-313-6917 to reserve your copy.

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For more information about breastfeeding, call the Contra Costa Women, Infant and Child (WIC) Lactation Program at 925-646-5200 or the Contra Costa Breastfeeding Advice Line at 866-878-7767.

## Kids and food: Healthy attitudes about food start at home

Kids learn by watching their parents.

That's why it's so important to have healthy eating habits and a positive attitude toward food. If your kids see you making healthy food choices, they're more likely to do the same.

Some tips:

- Avoid negative talk about food.



- Teach kids to focus on what their body can do, not how it looks.

- Stock up on healthy foods, and limit junk food and fast food.

- Encourage kids to eat breakfast—especially on school days. Studies show that kids who eat breakfast do better in school.

- Turn off the TV, and eat meals together as a family.

Use this time to enjoy each other's company. Save any problems to talk about later.

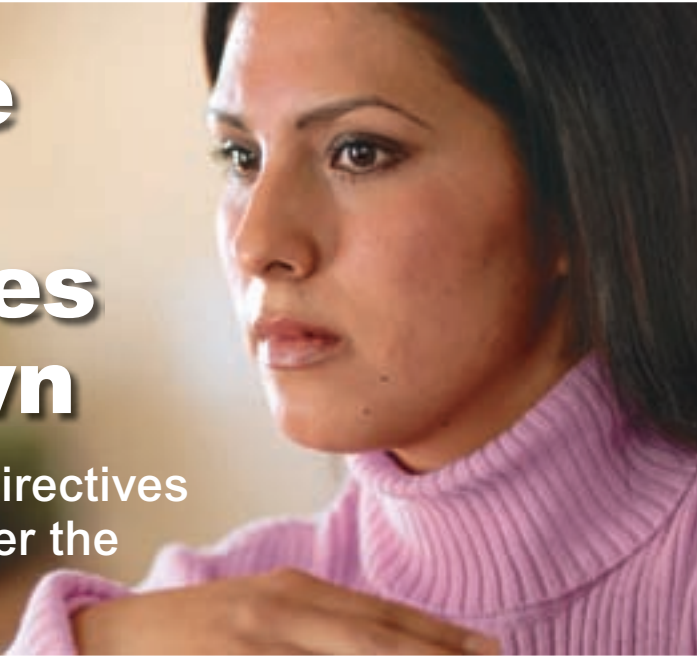
- Get them cooking. Kids have more interest in eating healthy foods if they help make the meal.

- Don't make kids eat all the food on their plates.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; American Dietetic Association

# Make your wishes known

Advance directives help answer the 'what ifs'



**W**hat if? It's a question many people think about when it comes to health. What if you get sick or injured and can't speak for yourself? Would you want to be kept on life support?

An advance directive is a way to deal with these questions. And it's a way to make sure your wishes are followed. It is also a kindness to your loved ones so that they don't have to guess if you can't speak for yourself.

Types of directives include a:

**Living will.** This lets you detail which treatments you want or

don't if you can't speak for yourself.

**Durable power of attorney for health care.** This lets you appoint a friend or relative to make medical decisions for you if you can't do that yourself.

**Do-not-resuscitate order.** This lets caregivers know you don't want to receive CPR if your heart stops.

Writing a directive isn't hard. A doctor can provide forms you can fill out. A doctor or lawyer can help make sure your directive meets all state laws.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Hospital Association

## Ask 3 questions for better health

Getting better health care can be as easy as 1, 2, 3.

At your doctor visit, ask:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why should I do this?

Asking these questions can help you understand what you need to know.

For example, your doctor may say you have high blood pressure or diabetes. Asking the three questions will help you learn:

- How your condition harms your health.
- How to reduce your risks.
- Why it's important to take action.

If you still don't understand something, ask more questions. Your doctor wants you to understand.

Source: Partnership for Clear Health Communication

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For more information, go to [www.putitinwriting.org](http://www.putitinwriting.org).

## Mental health: Taking care of your mind matters

A healthy mind matters. So does a healthy body.

In fact, feeling sad and feeling sick can go together.

Sometimes people with serious health problems may also be depressed.

And depression can lead to headache or stomach problems.

That's why you need to take care of both your mind and your body.

**Help is available.** Many people don't get help for mental health problems. They might worry about what others will think.

But caring for your mental health is just like seeing your provider for high blood pressure.

Talk to your provider if you need help. He or she may suggest that you see a mental health therapist or counselor.

**When to get help.** You may want to get help if you have:

- Stress that doesn't go away.
- Feelings of worry or sadness that don't go away.

# Creamy cauliflower and roasted garlic soup

**Y**ou can prepare the roasted garlic up to 1 day before you cook this soup.

## Ingredients

- 1 medium head garlic, cloves unpeeled but papery outer skin removed
- ½ teaspoon plus 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 medium leeks (about 1½ cups), white part only, washed and sliced
- ½ to 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- Salt to taste
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper
- 1 pound (about 3½ cups) coarsely chopped fresh cauliflower
- 3 cups low-fat, reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 can (12 ounces) fat-free evaporated milk
- 4 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese

## Instructions

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut off ½-inch slice from top of head of garlic. Place on sheet of foil. Drizzle ½ teaspoon oil on top of garlic.
- Roast 45 to 55 minutes or until cloves are soft. Let cool 5 minutes. Squeeze garlic from skin directly into small bowl. Mash with fork and set aside.
- In large, nonstick saucepan,

heat 2 teaspoons oil over medium heat. Add leeks, thyme, salt and white pepper. Cook, stirring, 6 to 8 minutes or until leeks are translucent but not browned.

■ Stir in roasted garlic. Cook 30 seconds. Add cauliflower, broth and milk. Over medium-high heat, bring to gentle boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook 8 to 10 minutes or until cauliflower is tender. Let cool 5 to 10 minutes.

■ Using blender or food processor, puree half of cauliflower and 1 cup cooking liquid until smooth. Pour into medium bowl. Repeat process with remaining cauliflower and

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1 cup liquid. Stir puree back into saucepan. Reheat if necessary. Ladle soup into bowls and sprinkle each serving with 2 teaspoons Parmesan cheese.

## Nutrition Information

Makes 6 servings. Per serving: 114 calories, 3g total fat, <1g saturated fat, 15g carbohydrates, 9g protein, 2g dietary fiber, 432mg sodium

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

