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Care ConnectionsSM

Sharing
knowledge for
better health

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Get your flu shot

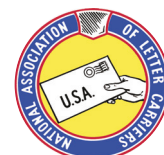
Vaccines, or shots, are a key part of taking good care of yourself. Cold, virus, and flu season is around the corner. Now is the time to put getting a flu shot on your self-care 'to do' list. Here are some things to know about the flu shot:

- Always talk to your doctor about what shots you need, what kind to get, and when. For instance, some people should not get nose spray vaccines. Your doctor will advise you.
- You should get a flu shot every year, especially if you are over 65 and/or taking medicines that lower your defense against germs.
- The flu shot will not give you the flu. It will help your body make certain kinds of proteins, called antibodies, that will kill flu germs that might enter your body. The vaccine might be made from a strain of flu other than the one making people sick. But it will still keep you from getting as sick as you would if you skipped the shot.
- The flu vaccine is safe, even for very young children. Serious reactions are rare. All family members living in the same house should get the flu shot. This helps keep everyone healthy.
- Getting a flu shot will not raise your risk for getting COVID-19. If you have not gotten your COVID-19 shot(s) yet, talk to your doctor about how to best do this.



Have questions? Give your program nurse a call. You can also visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web site at cdc.gov to learn more.

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Know your BMI

You might have heard your doctor or program nurse talk about BMI. But what is it, and why does it matter?

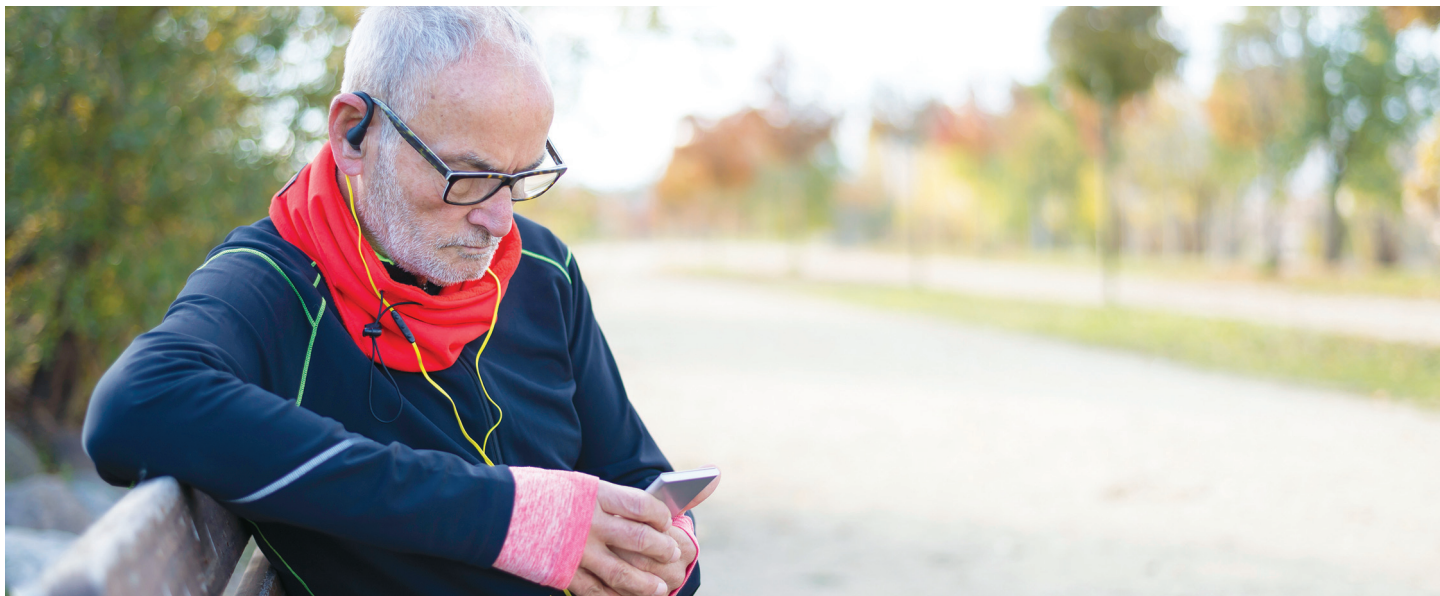
BMI stands for body mass index. BMI is a tool developed by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute that measures body fat, based on height and weight. Both adult men and women can use it. The BMI is not for use in children, though. The BMI categories are:

- Underweight = BMI less than 18.5
- Normal weight = BMI 18.5 to 24.9
- Overweight = 25-29.9
- Obese = BMI 30 or more

Why is it important to know your BMI? If your BMI is very high (above 30), you may be carrying too much fat. This can put you at risk for all sorts of health problems, like heart disease. Extra weight can also strain your joints, causing pain and fatigue. On the flip side, those who have an underweight BMI might not be getting enough calories to stay healthy. Your BMI can help you and your doctor figure out a healthy weight for you.

The BMI is useful but not perfect. It might overestimate body fat in athletes and others who have a muscular build. It may also underestimate body fat in older persons and others who have lost muscle.

Curious to know your BMI? You can download a BMI calculator app for your smartphone. Or, go to nhlbi.nih.gov to use the online calculator.



Managing your medicines

Do you keep an up-to-date list of all the medicines you take? This list can take many forms, and can help you in many situations.

Do you know what you take, when to take it, and how to take it? Managing your own medicines puts you in control of your care. Your doctors and nurses are there to help you, but in the end you are the one in charge. So help yourself out by being prepared. Your program nurse can help as well. If you do not yet have an up-to-date list of your medicines, ask your nurse.

Next, talk with your doctors and nurse about what else should go on the list. Your prescriptions come first, but is that all you take? Over-the-counter (OTC) pain killers (for example, ibuprofen), allergy medicine, even vitamins should be listed. Anything from a pharmacy you use regularly. Also add complimentary or alternative medicines, such as nutraceuticals or medical marijuana.

Good communication is key. Many who deal with chronic illness have a large care team and many doctors. You can help them all work together by keeping them in the loop. Also be sure to tell your program nurse and all your doctors before you start taking a new medicine or stop taking an old one. You may want to stop taking your medicine because you feel better or have side effects, but wait. Talk to your doctor first so your health does not get worse.

This is never more important than after a hospital stay. Have you been to the hospital lately? There may be changes between your hospital care and your normal care plan. Bring your hospital discharge papers to your primary doctor ASAP.

Medical Alert I.D.s

Having a medication card or med alert bracelet can save your life in an emergency. Med alert I.D.s can come in many forms. They can be bracelets, wallet cards, dog tags, arm bands, even tattoos. No matter what form the I.D. takes, be sure to have it with you 24/7.

What does a doctor or emergency medical professional most need to know?

- Your name and date of birth
- An emergency contact number
- Your condition
- Your prescriptions and dosage
- Allergies or medicines you SHOULD NOT take
- OTC medicines or supplements you take regularly