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Spring
2009

Highlight on Health — University of Pennsylvania

Employees Tackle Weight Loss Challenge with Independence Blue Cross's Maintain, Don't Gain Program

The University of Pennsylvania is committed to supporting the physical and emotional health and well-being of its employees. The *Maintain, Don't Gain* Program — offered for the last three years through Penn's Division of Human Resources — is part of a larger health promotion initiative that began more than 13 years ago. This initiative is designed to promote a healthy, happy lifestyle at work and at home.

The Quality of Worklife department within the Division of Human Resources introduced IBC's *Maintain, Don't Gain* Program in November 2006. The program is designed to help prevent the seemingly inevitable weight gain that coincides with the holiday season. During the *Maintain, Don't Gain* Program, participants are weighed before Thanksgiving and after New Year's Day and aim to keep their weight within 2-3 pounds of their starting weight. Weekly motivational emails and incentive gifts help keep participants focused and encouraged. Message topics range from tips for healthy eating while traveling to recipes that can keep your blood sugar stable and allow you to enjoy special holiday fare. Those participants who stay within 2-3 pounds of their starting weight are guaranteed entry in a raffle for enticing gifts.

Since its inception in 2006, the *Maintain, Don't Gain* Program has continuously improved its success rate each year. In 2007, nearly 75% of the total participants were able to maintain or lose weight (about 40% actually lost weight). The following year, 90% of the participants either maintained or lost weight, with 35% maintaining their starting weight within 0-2 pounds and 54% losing weight.

This year in particular proved to be a banner year for the program — more people than ever before maintained or lost weight. A total of 135 employees completed the program with a record 93% either maintaining or losing weight. Of that number, 65% of participants lost weight, with some individuals losing as much as 10 pounds.

Because it's often easier to maintain healthy habits when you have others supporting you, participants were encouraged to form teams this year as well. The new team competition component of the program proved successful in its first year, with 101 participants forming 20 teams for a total weight loss of more than 140 pounds. Two employees also won gifts as a result of completing the program, which included an Apple iPod nano and a video camcorder.

Penn is committed to the idea that maintaining one's physical and emotional health and well-being makes for a more productive work and home life. That's why it offers a variety of health programs for employees, including Weight Watchers® at Penn, health fairs, wellness workshops, a flu shot program, and the Penn Walking Program, to name a few. After a decade of improving and expanding its wellness services, more than 3,000 employees now participate in Penn's health promotion initiatives.

Page 2

*National Walk @ Lunch Day
Health observances*

Page 3

*Diabetes and healthy eating
Recognizing skin cancer*

Page 4

*Study on Mediterranean diet
Healthy recipe*

National Walk @ Lunch DaySM 2009: Turn a working lunch into a walking lunch

Are you and your employees ready to celebrate National Walk @ Lunch DaySM on April 29? Blue Cross[®] and Blue Shield[®] companies, employers, and other groups across the nation are planning to participate in the annual National Walk @ Lunch Day by encouraging their employees to lace up a pair of sneakers and take a walk at lunch.

For the second year, IBC is promoting the health benefits of walking by participating in the special day. The event reminds employers and employees of the importance and ease of incorporating exercise into their daily routine. Walking is easy, convenient, and can be done without cost.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that the cost to treat illness and chronic disease caused by inactive lifestyles is nearly \$1,000 each year for every family in America. When done briskly and on a regular basis, walking can:

- decrease the risk of heart attack and type 2 diabetes;
- help control weight;
- lower blood pressure;
- improve muscle tone;
- reduce stress.

Employer groups in Philadelphia can join the walk around City Hall in Center City. For groups outside the city, information is available to help you plan a walk closer to your site. For information on the benefits of walking or about setting up a walking program at your facility, contact your wellness coordinator. Additional information is also available at www.ibx.com/news_events/events/walk_at_lunch/index.html.

Monthly health observances

April

Cancer Control Month — www.cancer.org

National Public Health Week — April 6-12 — www.nphw.org

May

Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month — www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=10&sub=99&cont=457

American Stroke Month — www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3026377

Lyme Disease Awareness Month — www.lyme.org

National Arthritis Awareness Month — www.arthritis.org

National High Blood Pressure Education Month — www.nhlbi.nih.gov

June

Sun Safety Week — June 1-7 — www.sunsafetyalliance.org

National Men's Health Week — June 15-21 — www.menshealthweek.org

July

International Group B Strep Awareness Month — www.groupbstrepinternational.org/

August

Cataract Awareness Month — www.aao.org/aaosite/eyemd/cataract.cfm

National Immunization Awareness Month — www.cdc.gov/vaccines

September

National Cholesterol Education Month — <http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/cholmonth/>

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month — www.ovarian.org

Prostate Cancer Awareness Month — www.fightprostatecancer.org

Healthy eating for people with diabetes

People with diabetes have to be mindful of everything they eat. They have to watch carbohydrates (including simple sugars), fats, calories, and sodium in the foods they eat all while keeping an eye on their blood sugar level. Many people think a diagnosis of diabetes means their favorite foods are now off limits. But, with resources from MedlinePlus, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Diabetes Education Program, a healthy diet can be simple *and* tasty.

MedlinePlus offers a free tutorial for people with diabetes. The tutorial provides basic information about why diet is important, food groups, portion sizes, the food pyramid, and blood sugar levels. To launch the tutorial, visit www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/diabetesmealplanning/htm/index.htm.

The National Diabetes Education Program offers a nutritional program for the Hispanic and Latino community called *Más que comida, es vida*. (*It's more than food, it's life.*), which provides information in both Spanish and English. The program provides information to help with planning and preparing meals and making healthy food choices. It helps the Hispanic and Latino community deal with the cultural barriers of adopting a tasty but nutritious diet. For more information or to download or order materials, visit <http://ndep.nih.gov/>. The National Diabetes Education Program has a wealth of information available in a number of languages.

The CDC's Diabetes Public Health Resource offers information on a variety of topics for people with diabetes. The various sections include information about eye health, preparing for disasters, exercise guidelines, and the latest research. There is also information to help parents of children with diabetes. Two versions of the website are available — one in English and one in Spanish. For the English version, visit www.cdc.gov/diabetes/. For the site in Spanish, visit www.cdc.gov/diabetes/spanish/index.htm.

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Do you know what skin cancer looks like?

As temperatures rise, you'll probably be outside in the sun and enjoying the nice weather. But long-term exposure to the sun and frequent sunburns can lead to skin cancer. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) reports that one in five Americans will develop some type of skin cancer in their lifetime. So, would you be able to spot skin cancer if it happened to you?

SkinCancerNet, a site from the AAD, offers information about skin cancer — what it is, what it looks like, risk factors, and when to see a dermatologist. The site also provides tips on preventing skin cancer or preventing a recurrence. Suggestions include:

- Apply sunscreen daily to any exposed skin. Dermatologists recommend at least an SPF 15 sunscreen with full-spectrum protection.
- Avoid deliberate tanning — whether outside in the sun or in a tanning bed.
- Seek shade when appropriate.
- Be especially careful around water, snow, and sand as they reflect the sun and can increase your risk of a sunburn.

For more information, visit www.skincarephysicians.com/skincancernet/index.html.

Study shows women on Mediterranean-type diets may lower heart disease and stroke risk

In a recent issue of *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*, researchers reported that U.S. women whose usual diet most resembled a traditional Mediterranean one — high in monounsaturated fat, plant proteins, whole grains, and fish — were significantly less likely to develop heart disease and stroke. They had a 29 percent reduction in heart disease risk and a 13 percent reduction in stroke risk when compared to women whose diet least resembled a Mediterranean one.

A traditional Mediterranean diet consists of:

- fresh fruits and vegetables;
- whole grain foods including bread, pasta, rice, and couscous;
- beans, nuts, and seeds;
- olive oil

Dairy products, fish, and poultry are eaten occasionally on a Mediterranean diet. Red meat is consumed infrequently. While wine is consumed regularly, portions are normally small.

For more information on the study, visit the American Heart Association's website at <http://americanheart.media-room.com/index.php?s=43&item=671>.

Garbanzo Tabbouleh

- 1 cup bulgur (cracked wheat)
- 1 cup boiling water
- 2 cups diced tomatoes
- 1-1/2 cups cooked or 1 can (15 oz) garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 cup diced cucumber, peeled and seeded
- 3/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1/2 cup diced yellow bell pepper
- 1/2 cup sliced green onions
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh mint
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1-1/2 Tbsp olive oil

Combine bulgur and boiling water in a large bowl; stir well. Let stand 30 minutes or until water is absorbed. Add tomato and remaining ingredients; toss gently. Serve at room temperature. Makes 8 servings.

Nutrition facts

Serving size: 1 cup

Calories: 164

Total carbohydrates: 26g

Total fat: 4g

Saturated fat: 1g

Sodium: 160mg

Fiber: 2g

Protein: 6g

Cholesterol: 0mg

Source: California Dry Bean Advisory Board

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