

LiveWell: Mid-Life

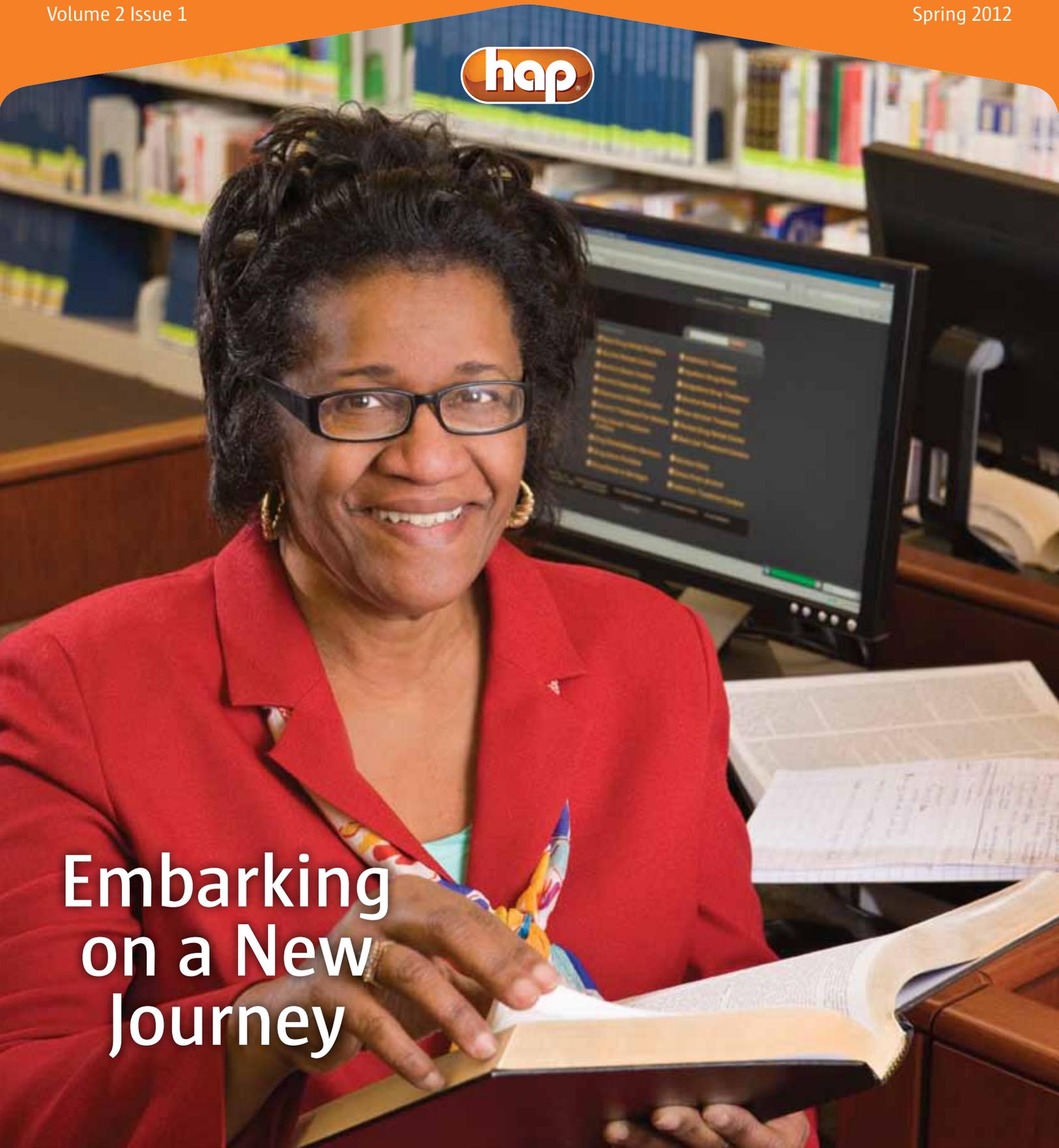
A Resource for Healthy Living

Volume 2 Issue 1

Spring 2012



Embarking
on a New
Journey



LiveWell: Mid-Life

A Resource for Healthy Living



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Your Health Care Partner for 2012

Welcome to the first issue of *LiveWell: Mid-Life* for 2012!

Throughout the year, we'll pack each issue with inspiring member stories, wellness tips, exercise moves and more to help you look and feel your best. And be sure to keep an eye on your mailbox for invitations to special wellness events in your area.

Thanks to everyone who responded to our fall issue reader survey. Your feedback will help make the magazine even better. Here are some of your great ideas:

- Include more articles and tips on healthy eating and nutrition; and include more recipes.
- Continue to share real member stories.
- Ninety percent of readers said that the healthy lifestyle information received in the *LiveWell: Mid-Life* program has had a positive impact on their overall satisfaction with HAP.

For wellness tips and information, log in at hap.org. Then visit the *My Health & Wellness* tab, select *Member Programs* and click *HAP LiveWell: Mid-Life*. Not registered? Just click the *Register Now* link on our home page to get started.

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Lois Brown-Nelson,
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We've Gone Mobile

Sprain your ankle at a family gathering on the other side of town? Our new mobile site makes it easier than ever to find the nearest HAP-affiliated urgent care center.

If you have a smartphone, iPad® or tablet, just type hap.org into your browser, and our new mobile site will instantly optimize to your device.

Click on the *Find a Doctor* tab to quickly locate providers and facilities (including urgent care centers). You'll also find a *Contact Us* link, as well as links to the entire hap.org website and our new emergency travel services partner, Assist America®.

And because we're always listening, the mobile site also has a *Survey* tab. Once you've used the site, please let us know what you think.

Decoding the QR Code

Perhaps you've seen QR (quick response) codes like the one below in flyers, on billboards or in magazines. When you scan a code with your smartphone, the advertiser's mobile website will automatically display on your browser.

Scan this unique code to visit HAP's mobile website. If you need a QR code reader, there are many free apps available for download.



Get FREE Member Discounts!

HAP Advantage* offers valuable discounts on products, services, wellness-related activities and more! This program is available to all HAP members. Just show your HAP ID card or use the promotional code visible when you log in.

Here's a sampling of some of these special offers:

- Sign-up savings at YMCAs of Metropolitan Detroit
- Preferred rates at Weight Watchers®
- Admission discounts at local attractions such as the Arab American National Museum, Automotive Hall of Fame and Cranbrook Art Museum
- Special rates at the Best Western Sterling Inn
- Discounts at www.shop.NHL.com

For more details on how to take advantage of these great offers, log in at hap.org and click on *Member Discounts* in the *Quick Links* box.

*The HAP Advantage program is a value-added program and the services and products made available under this program are not covered benefits under the Health Alliance Plan (HAP) Subscriber Contract, Alliance Group Health Insurance Policy, Riders or Member Handbook or otherwise payable by HAP. HAP, its affiliates, agents and assigns make no representations or warranties regarding the quality, price or effectiveness of the services or products, or the credentialing of the providers, made available by HAP Advantage.

Embarking on a New Journey

When HAP member Lois Brown-Nelson lost her clerical job in 2006 after working 20 years at St. John Riverview Hospital in Detroit, the news was devastating.

“The hospital gave us 30 days’ notice that it was closing,” says Lois, 63. “I thought I was going to retire from that job. I had co-workers who had been there 45 years.”

With no other means of support, Lois set out to find employment. For a full year, she filled out dozens of applications, only to be told that she had too little experience or wasn’t qualified. She felt frustrated, but she didn’t quit looking.

“I want to be a positive role model for my grandchildren, who are in high school,” Lois says. “You have to keep moving forward.”

Just after receiving her final unemployment check, Lois’ search paid off. A friend told her of an opening for a life skills coordinator at Positive Images Inc. in Detroit, which provides services for women with substance abuse disorders.

“I didn’t know what the job entailed, but I’ve always had a desire to help others,” she says. “I stepped out on faith and applied. During the interview, I mentioned my associate degrees in teaching and science. I got hired on the spot.”

The job marks the beginning of an exciting second career for Lois, who helps young women overcome their obstacles and find employment and housing. She says she now has a greater appreciation for the struggles these women face.

“These women are very determined to get off alcohol and drugs and do something positive with their lives,” Lois says. “One of our clients initially had no job and was living on



disability income. She ended up becoming a certified nursing assistant. We helped her find employment, a car and an apartment. Seeing her completely turn her life around in 18 months was very gratifying.”

Now, Lois is preparing to become a certified addiction counselor so she can help create treatment plans for her clients.

“I love the fact that I can see the long-term effect of my work,” she says. “I’m very fortunate – this job has changed my life. Changing careers can be challenging, but also rewarding. Don’t be afraid to explore career options in different fields. You’re never too old to start a new journey.”

“You have to keep moving forward.”

– Lois Brown-Nelson

Coping with Caregiving

You've reached the stage in life when you're ready to spend more time with your spouse or grandchildren. Suddenly, life throws you a curveball – one of your parents has had a stroke and needs around-the-clock care. If this type of situation hasn't happened to you personally, you probably know someone affected.

As many as 65 million Americans are caregivers. Whether it's caring for a loved one with disabilities, or an elderly relative with dementia, Alzheimer's disease or a debilitating illness, caregiving can be stressful and emotionally draining. But there are ways to handle these responsibilities and take care of your own needs.

“Minimize stress by communicating regularly with family members about mom or dad's needs,” says Sallie Justice, a caregiver trainer with the Area Agency on Aging 1-B in Southfield. “Be realistic about the help you need, and don't be afraid to ask for help. It's okay not to have all the answers.”

You can also find help outside the family. In addition to family caregiver training, the Area Agency on Aging can refer you to in-home respite care services and personal care aides.

“Trained caregivers can attend to your parent's needs for a few hours each week,” she says. “That gives you a chance to take care of errands or other business.”

Because caregivers spend an average of 21 hours per week helping a relative, they often have difficulty maintaining their own health. Sallie says many caregivers have high blood pressure, depression or other chronic conditions.

“Don't become isolated – stay connected with family and friends,” she says. “Find at least an hour each day to do something you enjoy. You could meet a friend for lunch, read a good book or go for a walk.”

For more caregiving tips and resources, visit these websites:

- National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
www.n4a.org
- National Family Caregivers Association
www.nfcares.org
- Click on Aging
www.clickonaging.com



Need a breather? Try this exercise.

Deep-breathing exercises are great for relieving stress. Set aside 10 to 20 minutes a day to follow these simple steps and relax:

- Sit comfortably with your back straight.
- Breathe deeply through your nose and from your abdomen.
- Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles.
- Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to inhale enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale.

Don't Be Shy about Prostate Health



Elisabeth Heath,
M.D.

Your prostate probably isn't something you'll discuss with the guys. But it's a topic you should take up with your doctor.

"Take charge of your prostate health," says Elisabeth Heath, M.D., director of prostate cancer research at the Karmanos Cancer Center. "Prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death for men in the U.S."

The prostate is a walnut-size gland in the male reproductive system. An enlarged prostate can lead to symptoms like painful urination or a weak urinary stream. Lifestyle changes, medication and surgery can help.

Early-stage prostate cancer usually shows no symptoms. That's why it's important to make prostate cancer screening part of your annual covered physical.



"The disease is curable when found early," Dr. Heath says. "The chance of getting prostate cancer rises after age 50. African-Americans and people with a family history of the disease are at increased risk."

Treatment options include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy and hormonal therapy.

"Don't avoid talking to your doctor if you're concerned about prostate health," Dr. Heath says. "Your discussion could lead to early detection and a better outcome."

Calcium: Your Best Source for Strong Bones



To remain healthy and active as you age, it's important to take care of your bones today. That's especially true for women, who are at increased risk of osteoporosis, a decrease in bone density that can lead to bone fractures.

Calcium is crucial for maintaining bone health. Women age 50 and older need about 1,200 mg to 1,500 mg of calcium each day. To reach that goal, eat three low-fat dairy servings a day (one cup of low-fat milk or yogurt, or one ounce of cheese, equals one serving).

If you're lactose-intolerant or don't like the taste of dairy products, a calcium supplement can help keep your bones strong. Look for one that contains vitamin D, which helps bones absorb calcium. For better absorption, take calcium supplements in small doses (500 mg or less) with food. Take one supplement for every dairy serving you miss.

To learn more, watch the webinar *Are You and Your Family Eating Enough Calcium?* on the *Weight Wise* page. Log in at hap.org and select the *My Health & Wellness* tab. Then select *Member Programs* followed by *Weight Wise*, and look for the section with Zonya Foco's on-demand webinars.

Partners in Health – Partners in Wealth



Robin Thompson, M.A.

You might be surprised to learn that the average age of a widow in the U.S. is 55. And since women live longer than men, husbands need to consider their wives' distinct financial needs when planning for retirement.

“Husbands are typically the family financial planners,” says WXYZ Channel 7 Action News “*Money Coach*” and Budget

Wise Consulting president Robin Thompson, M.A. “But women have different financial needs. Since they historically earn less than men, they have less savings, Social Security benefits and pension funds for retirement. Husbands should take those factors into account.”

Robin says couples should create their retirement plans together. Start by talking about your retirement hopes and dreams. Then focus on how much money you'll need to save.

“What do you want to do when you retire? Travel or enjoy recreational activities? Where do you want to live? Will it be near the grandchildren or in a more exotic location? Are you planning to downsize? Answering these questions will help you define when you can retire and how much it will cost,” she says.

More items to consider:

- **Retirement Budget** – Clearly define what you and your spouse want to achieve in retirement and how long you can live before running out of money. Find out how much income your spouse would have if you passed away.
- **Company Pension** – If you choose to take it as lifetime monthly income, your spouse is best protected with a “joint and survivor” pension that’s guaranteed for life.
- **Social Security** – The longer a worker waits to claim Social Security benefits, the higher the payout will be, including the widow/widower’s benefit.
- **Beneficiaries** – Review the beneficiaries listed on your insurance policies and 401(k) plans.
- **Important Papers** – Assemble your will, health care proxy, power of attorney and investment documents in one place, and review them with your spouse.

“The most important thing couples should do is create a plan,” Robin says. “The sooner you get a handle on your finances, the better off you’ll be.”



Need Some Financial Advice?

If retirement planning sounds complicated, a certified financial planner can help.

“A financial planner can offer an objective opinion and suggest different strategies you may not have considered,” Robin says.

To find a certified financial planner near you, visit the Financial Planning Association website at www.fpanet.org. You’ll also find useful tools, resources and tips to help you achieve financial independence in retirement.

Strong to the Core

You may not be a dancer or a professional athlete, but core strengthening exercises should be part of your fitness routine. Why are they so important?

“Core strengthening impacts the deep abdominal muscles that support the spine when we sit, stand, bend over, pick things up and exercise,” says Ericka Dawydko, a certified fitness trainer and wellness director at the Livonia Family YMCA. “The torso is the body’s center of power, so strengthening that area will lead to better balance and stability.”

Here’s the best part: You don’t need a gym membership or weights to build a strong core. See your doctor for a checkup before starting an exercise program. Do some light stretching, then try these exercises at home on a mat or carpeted surface:

Bridge exercise

- Lie on your back with your knees bent.
- Keep your back in a neutral position (not arched or pressed on the floor). Don’t tilt your hips.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles, and slowly raise your hips until they are aligned with your knees and shoulders.
- Hold this position for three deep breaths, then slowly return to the start position. Repeat five to 10 times.



Superman exercise

- Lie on your stomach with a rolled towel under your hips to support your back. Place a folded towel under your forehead. Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Raise your right arm off the floor and hold for three deep breaths. Lower your arm and repeat with your left arm.
- Raise your right leg off the floor and hold for three deep breaths. Lower and repeat with your left leg.
- Repeat five to 10 times.

When you’re ready for something more challenging, Ericka recommends trying some exercises with a fitness ball. You can find one at stores like Dunham’s Sports,[®] Target or Walmart for about \$15 to \$20.

Abdominal crunches with a fitness ball

- Sit on the ball with your feet on the floor about hip-width apart. Keep your back straight, and cross your arms on your chest.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles.
- Lean back until you feel the muscles in your midsection tighten. Hold for three deep breaths.
- Return to the start position, and repeat five to 10 times.

“Stick with these core exercises,” Ericka advises. “It takes about four to eight weeks to see results.”

Self-Care for Sore Backs



Georgia Griffin,
D.O.

Maybe you overdid it shoveling snow last week. Or perhaps you carried one too many boxes to the attic. Whatever the cause, your lower back has been stiff and sore for days. If you can still get around normally with only minor discomfort, there are a few things you can try at home for relief.

“You might think the best thing to do is “baby” your back until it feels better.

But resting isn’t necessarily the best remedy,” says Georgia Griffin, D.O., neuromusculoskeletal specialist at McLaren Medical Center–Macomb.

“You don’t want to just lie around – that will slow your recovery time,” says Dr. Griffin. “Try some low-impact activities like walking or swimming. Avoid strenuous activity that involves bending or twisting, but remain as active as the pain will allow.”

If you’re tempted to pick up a heating pad, grab an ice pack instead. “Heat provides comfort on the skin, but the tissues underneath can become swollen,” she says. “Instead, apply an ice pack to the area for five to 10 minutes every half-hour.”

“An over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication such as Advil® or Aleve® can also help. But use it with caution,” Dr. Griffin says.

“If you’re taking a blood-thinning medication, have stomach issues or a history of ulcers, an anti-inflammatory can cause increased swelling,” she says. “It’s best to ask your doctor first.”

Dr. Griffin adds that you should see a doctor if your pain lasts for more than four weeks or becomes worse.

“Persistent pain may mean that something more serious is going on,” she says. “Many people have degenerative arthritis, which can be treated.”



“When we’re young, our bodies have a certain tolerance for poor posture,” Dr. Griffin says. “As we age, our body is less able to compensate. Stretch regularly to stay flexible.”

“Prevention is really the best medicine for maintaining a healthy back. You don’t necessarily have to go to a gym. Start walking regularly. Buy a fun exercise video. Find an activity that works for you so it becomes a habit. Your back will thank you for it.”

Need more help? To create a personalized plan to manage back pain and regain control over your daily activities, log in at hap.org. Then visit the *My Health & Wellness* tab and click on the *iStrive*SM icon and select **Manage my back pain**.

For long-term lower-back maintenance, it’s important to remain flexible, maintain muscle strength and be mindful of your posture.

Don't Be Fooled – Shop Smart for Groceries

It's easy to get tricked at the grocery store. We want to shop smart, so we load our carts with items marked “reduced fat” or “healthy lifestyle.” Despite our intentions, falling for marketing hype can lead to some unhealthy food choices.

“Read the nutrition labels carefully instead of the deceptive packaging,” says Zonya Foco, registered dietitian, author and television host. “Find your healthy ‘go-to’ brands and stick with them.”

To keep overly processed, high-calorie items out of your cart, shop for select items around the store perimeter.

“That’s where you’ll find fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats like chicken and fish, and low-fat dairy items,” she says. “Then dart into the aisles for items like canned tuna and salmon, whole-grain pasta, brown rice, beans and oatmeal.”

Skip the chips, pretzels and cookies. You’ll find the healthiest snacks in the produce section.

“Pick up items like apples, carrots, grapes and celery,” she says. “Fruits and vegetables help to lower blood pressure and provide antioxidants to fight disease. Other snacks can’t do that.”

Zonya says you should also skip the soda aisle. Make ‘healthy soda pop’ instead.

“Regular and diet soda contain phosphoric acid, which can decrease bone density and wear down tooth enamel,” she says. “Instead, try mixing sparkling water with fruit juice to make a healthy soda-pop drink.”

Lastly, review your cart before hitting the checkout lane. Are there any artificial, processed items you can do without – such as boxed dinners?

“You want to fill your cart with naturally colored items like red peppers, blueberries and bananas,” she says. “Fresh food has far more vitality and will never play tricks on you.”



Good Food Label Guidelines

Confused by the nutrition label on food items? Here are some guidelines to help you pick the best food for your family:

- **Cereal** – Choose one with at least three grams of fiber and no more than eight grams of sugar per serving.
- **Bread** – Look for loaves with 100 percent **whole** grain and at least two grams of fiber per slice.
- **Frozen meals** – The best have 800 mg or less of sodium, 10 grams or less of fat and five grams or more of fiber.
- **Cheese** – Find a package with five grams of fat and 200 mg of sodium per ounce, or less.
- **Salad dressing** – Select one with 300 mg or less of sodium and no more than two grams of saturated fat per two tablespoons.

Slow-Cooker Gypsy Stew

Try this delicious slow-cooker stew for a healthy and hearty meal.

Ingredients

- 2 cans (15 ounces each) garbanzo or navy beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen spinach
- 1 pound cubed pork tenderloin or skinless, boneless chicken breast (optional)
- 1 cup water
- 1 can (14 ½ ounces) diced tomatoes, no salt added
- 1 large sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 red or yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- ¼ teaspoon salt (optional)
- 8 grinds of fresh pepper (or to taste)
- 8 dashes cayenne (optional)



Directions

Add all ingredients to slow-cooker. Cover and cook on LOW 10 to 11 hours, or on HIGH 5 to 6 hours, until beans are tender.

Serves 8.

Nutrition information for one serving made with pork:

Calories: 260	Total Fat: 4.5 g
Sodium: 640 mg	Fiber: 8.5 g
Sugars: 8 g	Protein: 21 g
Carbohydrates: 34 g	

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Alcohol and Your Health

For most of us, moderate drinking isn't harmful. Moderate is defined as one drink per day for women, and up to two for men. Yet, nearly 14 million adult Americans are alcoholics.

So how can you tell if you have a problem?

On National Alcohol Screening Day® (Thursday April 5), alcohol screening centers will offer **free, anonymous screenings** for alcohol-use disorders. They can also provide information about how alcohol abuse affects health, and refer people with alcohol problems for further evaluation.

To learn more about this event and find a screening center near you, visit www.nationalalcoholcreeningday.org.

HAP can also help

Members with alcohol concerns can call HAP's Coordinated Behavioral Health Management department toll-free at **(800) 444-5755**.

Test Your Alcohol Knowledge

Think you know everything about drinking? Take this quick true/false quiz.

- Beer and wine are less intoxicating than liquor. T F
- You can sober up quickly by drinking coffee. T F
- Eating a big meal before drinking will keep you sober. T F
- Alcohol slows down your reaction time. T F
- Drinking alcohol will warm you up when you're cold. T F

Answers: 1. F 2. F 3. F 4. T 5. F



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Cut Your Prescription Costs

Just because prescription costs are rising doesn't mean you have to overspend on medications. Here are five simple ways to save:

1. **Talk to your doctor** – Take small steps toward a healthier lifestyle, such as changing your diet and exercise habits. Then ask your doctor if you can stop taking any medications.
2. **Ask for generics** – They have the same active ingredients as brand-name medications but are often less expensive.
3. **Order by mail** – Save by buying a 90-day supply of a medication you take regularly.
4. **Shop around** – Although it is best to use one pharmacy for your prescriptions, shop around to find one that offers certain medications for around \$4.
5. **Go online** – www.needymeds.org is a great resource for free and discounted medications through patient assistance programs.

Remember, using one pharmacy will help to maintain consistent prescription records. It's also the best way to avoid possible drug interactions.



GOT FEEDBACK?

Story ideas? Suggestions?

We would love to hear from you.

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