

# health awareness



A COUNTY HEALTH POOL PUBLICATION

JUNE 2015



## MEN'S HEALTH MONTH

Some say men take better care of their cars than they do themselves. But at least a car comes with an owner's manual telling you when scheduled service is due.

Few health maintenance issues are as predictable as tire rotations and oil changes. But attention to just a few basic health issues can go a long way. Since you can't trade yourself in, it's well worth it to review some health maintenance and check-up tips for men.

### Know Your Cholesterol Levels

The No. 1 killer of men today is cardiovascular disease, mostly heart attacks and strokes. Although the last few decades have seen the rate of death from cardiovascular disease fall, it's

still men's top health threat. And high cholesterol is a major preventable risk factor.

The American Heart Association recommends you get your cholesterol checked beginning at age 20, then every five years. Everyone with high cholesterol needs treatment, although for many that will mean diet and exercise.

### Check Your Blood Pressure

Don't expect to feel symptoms of high blood pressure. Until hypertension's daily pounding of your arteries has damaged your body, you won't notice a thing. Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80, and medicines are prescribed for pressures of 140/90 and higher.

Why care? High blood pressure causes or makes worse a

long list of health problems: heart attacks, strokes, erectile dysfunction, and kidney disease, to name a few. Most cases can be prevented, and controlling your blood pressure is an easy place to start.

First, though, you've got to know your numbers. Call your primary care doctor, or just walk in to your neighborhood fire station -- no appointment necessary.

### Get Screened for Colorectal Cancer

Unlike many other forms of cancer, colorectal cancer typically grows for years before spreading. If caught early, it can be cured.

A colonoscopy is somewhat awkward and slightly embarrassing. It is, though, a highly ef-

*(article is continued on reverse side)*

fective method of finding colon cancer. Often, polyps that may turn into cancer can be removed during the colonoscopy. Other methods of screening that don't require colonoscopy are also available. Screening begins at age 50, sometimes earlier if you have a family member who had colon cancer.

Unfortunately, 50% to 75% of people don't get a colonoscopy and benefit from their advantage over colorectal cancer. The National Cancer Institute estimates that in 2015, about 49,700 deaths will occur from colorectal cancer. Don't be a statistic.

### **Learn About Prostate Cancer Screening**

Prostate cancer screening is controversial. Using the notorious gloved finger (digital rectal exam), a blood test (prostate specific antigen or PSA), and biopsies if necessary, doctors can detect abnormal growths in the prostate gland early in many men. Sometimes, screening catches prostate cancers, saving men's lives.

But surprisingly, screening hasn't been proven overall to help men survive prostate cancer. That's because screening detects many cancers that, if left alone, would never cause problems. These cancers are nevertheless removed surgically -- leaving some men who might never have died from prostate cancer with side effects such as impotence or incontinence.

### **Wisdom Teeth Benefit Reminder**

- Surgical removal of impacted wisdom teeth is covered under your Medical Plan
- Regular extraction of wisdom teeth is covered under your Dental Plan
- Medical benefits may be provided from an outpatient facility, physician, dentist or oral surgeon
- The Medical Plan minimizes out-of-pocket costs
  - \$1500 annual maximum on all CHP Dental Plans

If you still have questions please contact your CHP Benefits Administrator

### **Get to Know Your Doctor**

Men are less likely to go to the doctor than women. Men's health conditions are often more serious when they do finally seek help. Men lead women in 14 of the top 15 causes of death in the U.S. See a pattern developing here?

Experts disagree as to whether healthy men need yearly checkups. But if you have a health condition, you should be in your doctor's office often enough to notice the magazines change.

Visiting the doctor may sometimes feel like an unproductive, stressful hassle. But routine doctor appointments may also save your life down the road. Is your health worth it?

### **Refresh Your Refrigerator**

It's not coincidence that both the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Soci-

ety continually advise, "eat your vegetables (and fruits, too)."

Cancer, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's, eye disease, diabetes, and other health conditions all involve damage to cells. It's thought that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables -- the best source of antioxidants -- may prevent some cases of these illnesses.

Also, the more plant-based foods you're eating, the less saturated fat and total calories you'll be taking in. Over time, less fat means a healthier weight, improved cholesterol, and better health.

Current guidelines recommend far more daily fruits and vegetables than most Americans eat. Ideally, you should eat mostly plant-based food for most meals, and enjoy meat as a small side dish.

– From *webmd.com*