

# Wellness Works

Experience. Wellness. Everywhere.®

Winter 2010

## New eCards Can Support Your Wellness Goals

Research shows that successful, healthy lifestyle changes are best achieved in small steps\*. A new online greeting card Web site – eCards for Health<sup>SM</sup> – is designed to encourage people to commit to small, healthy behavior changes and share their commitments with those they care about.



Visit [www.ecardsforhealth.com](http://www.ecardsforhealth.com) to view free, animated eCards about a variety of healthy behavior changes such as cutting down on sweets, walking more, reducing stress, or scheduling an annual physical exam.

Select the eCard that best reflects the healthy change you want to make and then e-mail it to a friend or loved one as a healthy gift and as a commitment to them and yourself. When you send an eCard, you also will receive tips related to your healthy change and links for more wellness information. New eCards will be continually developed and added to the collection.

Visit [www.ecardsforhealth.com](http://www.ecardsforhealth.com) today!

\*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## Burn, baby, burn!

You may know that regular physical activity can help you control your weight, but do you know why? Physical activity burns calories and boosts your metabolism, especially an aerobic activity like walking, jogging or swimming. When you burn more calories than you eat each day, you'll take off weight. You can also maintain your weight by balancing the number of calories you burn with the number of calories you eat.

Source: National Institutes of Health

## Eat, Drink – and Be Wary

It's that time of year for family celebrations, Super Bowl parties and get-togethers with friends. Often, the festivities include drinking alcohol. While drinking in moderation is okay, it's in your best health interest not to become too "merry."



Moderate drinking is defined by the federal government's 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. Drinking patterns are just as important as the amount. One to two drinks per day doesn't mean you can drink a "week's worth" of alcohol over a period of a few hours or a few days. The following counts as a drink:

- 12 fluid ounces of regular beer
- Five fluid ounces of wine
- One and one-half fluid ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits

Remember to drink responsibly and talk to your doctor about the potential risks associated with alcohol consumption.

Source: American Dietetic Association



**BlueCross BlueShield  
of Texas**



## Decking the Halls Without Wrecking Your Budget

Did you break your holiday budget this year? It's easy to spend much more than you intended before you even realize it. Plan ahead for next year by taking advantage of sales after the holidays and by following these common-sense tips:



### Stick to a cash budget

Decide what you really want to buy and write it down. Remember to include incidentals such as the family portrait or a new tablecloth for the holiday dinner.

### Avoid going into debt

If at all possible, don't use credit cards for holiday shopping. When the money is gone, the spending stops.

### Consider your options

Instead of buying gifts for your friends, get together for dinner or bake them their favorite cookies.

### Give practical gifts

Does your mom love a particular brand of shampoo/conditioner? Buy her a couple of sets and tie them together with a pretty bow. Or fill a makeup bag with a variety of cosmetics or a decorative gift box with the makings for a favorite dish.

Remember to shop for bargains after the holidays when prices are slashed. You will be well prepared to avoid the urge to splurge next holiday season.

Sources: Society for the Advancement of Education; American Psychological Association

## Stressed? Stop and Breathe

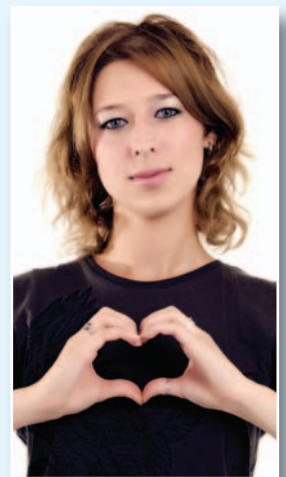
When you feel that stress is about to send you over the edge, stop and take a moment to breathe. Deep breathing changes your brain's chemical balance and helps to calm you down. Try the following breathing exercise:

1. Sit in a chair or on the floor.
2. Rest your hands on your stomach.
3. Slowly count to four while inhaling through your nose. Feel your stomach rise. Hold your breath for a second.
4. Slowly count to four while you exhale through your mouth. To control how fast you exhale, purse your lips like you're going to whistle. Your stomach will slowly fall.
5. Repeat the exercise three times.

Source: Mental Health America

## Reducing Risk Makes the Heart Grow Stronger

Are you in a risky relationship with your heart? It may be tempting to believe that doing just one healthy thing will take care of your heart disease risk. For example, you may hope that if you exercise regularly, you can still eat a lot of fatty foods and stay fairly healthy. Not true. To protect your heart, make the changes that address each and every risk factor you have, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, being overweight, smoking or high cholesterol.



February is American Heart Month. Make an appointment with your doctor for a thorough checkup and work together to help achieve your heart healthy goal. Remember to ask questions about your chances of developing heart disease and ways to lower your risk.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## How to Talk to Your Doc

### Enrich your health care by communicating with your doctor

Research shows that patients who have a good relationship with their doctor are happier with the care they receive. Plus, they report receiving better care.



When preparing for your next doctor's visit, consider these tips:

- Jot down a list of questions you need answered by the doctor.
- If you are seeing a new doctor, provide your health history, symptoms, medications, vitamins and supplements, and any allergies you have.
- Ask questions, take notes and ask for further explanation if you don't understand something.
- Follow up if you have questions, experience side effects, or if your symptoms get worse.
- Understand your diagnosis by learning about the condition and how to control or treat it.
- Take an active role in the decisions about your health care and treatment plan.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services