



WELLNESS WORKS around the state

MAINE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES HEALTH TRUST

WINTER 2004

Keep Yourself Healthy This Winter

Because Maine has a shortage of flu vaccine, the Maine Bureau of Health and healthcare providers are working together to help people who are in high-risk groups and who should get a flu shot.

If you are in a high-risk group and you need a flu shot, please contact your healthcare providers and ask them if they are keeping a list of people who should receive vaccine. If they are, ask them to put you on the list.

Note: The Bureau of Health defines people in a high-risk group as the following: all children ages 6-23 months; children ages 2-18 years with underlying chronic medical conditions, including those on chronic aspirin therapy; residents of long-term care facilities; adults age 65 and older; other adults with chronic underlying medical conditions; and women who will be pregnant during the influenza season. Other people who are considered to be at elevated risk for flu may include healthcare workers involved in direct patient care; and caregivers of infants younger than 6 months.

Meanwhile, there are a number of things you can do to protect yourself.

If you are frail and in poor health, try to discourage people who are ill from visiting you and stay home if you are ill. Wash your hands frequently, particularly after contact with others. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve if you cough or sneeze.

If you have not received the pneumonia vaccine (Pneumovax) or believe you might need an update, you may wish to discuss this vaccine with your healthcare provider. This vaccine is considered appropriate for those over age 64, those between 2 years and 64 years who have certain chronic diseases, those who have had an splenectomy, those whose immune system is compromised and those who live in certain social or environmental settings.

This information is taken from the Maine Bureau of Health Website. You can find more information on flu shots, and on ways that you can help to protect yourself from getting sick this winter, online at <http://www.maine.gov/dhs/boh>. Click on the link to "Flu Season 2004-2005", then click on the link to "Information for the Public".

"Keeping your body healthy is an expression of gratitude to the whole cosmos - the trees, the clouds, everything." –Thich Nhat Hanh



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Need Healthcare Information You Can Trust?

The Maine Health Management Coalition (of which the Health Trust is a member) is pleased to provide you with information on the quality of the healthcare furnished by doctors and hospitals around the state. As part of the Coalition's "Pathways to Excellence" program, you can learn what questions you should ask about your medical care. You can compare your doctor's practice to other local practices, as well as learning about some of the best primary care physicians in Maine. Check out the Coalition's website for reliable, independent information about local physicians and hospitals in Maine.

Simply log onto www.mhmc.info, or click on the Maine Health Management Coalition's link from the Health Trust Website, at www.mmeht.org.

Taming Temper Tantrums

Have you ever been in a store and seen a child screaming and crying and throwing an all out temper tantrum? Maybe this was one of your children or grandchildren. Regardless of who the child is, a temper tantrum can cause a lot of embarrassment and stress to the adult. Temper tantrums are a normal part of a child's emotional development. Yet it does not make them any easier to deal with!

Temper tantrums often occur when a child is learning how to control his or her emotions. This requires the child to learn the delicate balance between what he would like to do and what he is allowed to do. When there is a difference in these two, the child feels more frustration than he can handle and a temper tantrum results. In an attempt to avoid embarrassment and frustration many parents try to end the temper tantrum quickly by giving in to the child's demands. While it may bring the temper tantrum to an end, this also sends the child the message that throwing a tantrum is a sure way to get what he wants – which means you will probably have to deal with many more tantrums in the future!

If you have a child who frequently uses temper tantrums to get his or her way, you may want to try some of these

tips to end them quickly and with great success:

1. **Keep your cool.** This is probably the hardest thing to do, but children mimic what they see, so if they see you getting upset they are likely to keep the tantrum going. Staying calm when dealing with a screaming child is the best way to show your child how to deal with her emotions.
2. **Label the feeling.** It may be hard for your child to put what she is feeling into words. Try to help your child give what she is feeling a name and talk about it. This can help to defuse the situation quickly.
3. **Be firm.** Allowing your child to talk about his feelings and discussing those feelings with your child can help him see that you care about what is being said and can lead to better anger management in the future. Staying calm and firm gives a child a sense of security and also lets him know that you will not give in to the tantrum demands!
4. **Avoid overreacting.** If you do not give special attention to a child who is throwing a temper tantrum, he will see that a temper tantrum is not the way to get what he wants and will begin trying different communication techniques.

5. **Offer a choice.** Giving your child a choice between two alternatives, with clear understanding of what the consequences will be, will allow for the child to learn the result of her actions. Be sure to stick with what you said, though, and don't waver on the consequences.
6. **Don't give up.** If the temper tantrum seems to be lasting forever, your child may be testing to see how much you can stand before giving in. Remember, this is a test of wills and yours needs to be stronger!
7. **Offer your child praise for good behavior.** Reinforcement for good behavior will demonstrate to your child how she should act in any situation and will deter her from throwing temper tantrums in the future.

Try each of these strategies and see how they work with your child. Some may work better than others, but you will soon start seeing progress in dealing with the temper tantrums!



Talking to Your Teens

Back when our children were small, who could have imagined what life would hold for them: pressures surrounding sex, alcohol, drugs, and a bewildering array of messages, choices, and consequences. While it's rare for parents to not want to help their children out, we also recognize that our children's need for independence grows as they do. And talking about touchy subjects can be especially difficult when teens tend to tune us out.

Create Time to Talk

Driving a teen to soccer or to meet her friends at the mall may seem like just another chore, unless you recognize it as an opportunity to talk. Of course, you may have to get the conversation going. Try telling your child a little about your day or inquiring about her friends, before asking her how things are going. If you aren't available to chauffeur, try to make a "date" on a regular basis to do something you both enjoy together, like cooking, hiking, or going to a concert or museum. Once you're accustomed to time alone together and have created a comfortable level of sharing, try approaching a touchy subject.

Do Your Research

Before discussing topics like sex, drugs, suicide, etc., do your homework. Get some pamphlets or read articles on-line on how to discuss a certain topic. If your child is not willing to discuss a touchy subject, give him an article to read. Let your child know that you're available if he needs your help.

Avoid Confrontations

Don't mount a personal attack, deliver a sermon, or convene a family conference to open a dialogue on a tough subject. No matter how serious the subject, it's important not to be heavy-handed or focus exclusively on your child. Say you've read an article or heard about a troubling situation from a colleague or a friend. Share this information with your teenager; then ask her opinion rather than simply offering yours.

Ten Tips for Healthy Relationships

Research has proven that people in healthy relationships are happier and have less stress than those who are not. Regardless of whether we are talking about a relationship with a spouse, partner, friend, parent, sibling, co-worker, or roommate, there are things we must do to ensure that the relationship stays healthy. These ten tips for healthy relationships have been shown to enhance any relationship:

1. **Keep expectations realistic.** Accept that you cannot be all things to all people. By the same token, try to accept other people as they are without changing them.
2. **Talk with each other.** Communication is essential to a healthy relationship. This means taking time to listen, asking questions, and sharing information.
3. **Be flexible.** Every relationship needs to grow and change. Being open and flexible to this change is the sign of a healthy relationship.
4. **Take care of you.** In order to like other people you have to

like yourself first. Take care of yourself as you would any other friend.

5. **Be dependable.** In a healthy relationship you need to be able to count on and trust that the other person will be there when you need them.
6. **Fight fair.** In any relationship there will be some rough times. By taking time to talk about what is bothering you without blaming the other person, staying on the topic of what is bothering you now (not everything that has bothered you for the last 10 years!), listening to the other person with an open mind, apologizing when you have done wrong and coming to a compromise that works for both of you, you will both come out winners in the end!
7. **Show you care by being open and caring with the other person.**
8. **Keep your life balanced.** We need the proper balance in all

aspects of our lives, which includes relationships. People in healthy relationships are not completely dependent on the other person.

9. **Practice makes perfect.** Relationships do not just happen on their own; it takes a lot of time and effort to make them work!
10. **Be yourself.** The healthiest relationships thrive and grow when two people can completely be themselves with one another without fear of being judged or rejected.

Source: Counseling Services, Kansas State University



Quick Tips To Combat Stress

The word “holiday” can inspire feelings of joy and excitement in some, but for many it can trigger panic and anxiety. Whether it is the dreaded holiday traditions or the feeling that everything must be perfect, the holiday season is a time when many of us find our stress levels soaring! However, there are ways to relieve some of the stress we may experience during this hectic time of year.

First and foremost, it is important to realize that we have the right to make changes to traditions! We may find that what we have been doing for the last 20 years is just not practical or fun anymore...so why not change it and make it represent you and your family? Second, set boundaries for yourself and others, particularly in terms of spending! The holidays have become highly commercialized, making us feel that we need to spend more and more money every year. If you see this happening with your family and friends, you may want to suggest drawing names or decide as a group to donate to a local shelter or food bank. Finally, if you still feel your stress levels rising during the holiday season, try some of these quick strategies for relaxing:

- **Laugh.** This is the most effective way to manage stress and improve your mood.
- **Be flexible.** Try letting someone else take charge of the holiday plans.
- **Say “no”.** Reducing the demands on your time by saying “no” will allow you to do something you enjoy!
- **Breathe.** Slowly inhaling and exhaling is a great way to relax and focus.
- **Set reasonable expectations.** Trying to be perfect can be very stressful. Setting reasonable and attainable goals for yourself and others is a sure way to ease your stress.
- **Don’t forget yourself.** During the holidays, many of us forgo exercising and eat a lot of sweets, both of which can cause our stress levels to increase and our mood to sour! Make a commitment to maintain your exercise routine and healthy diet even during the busy holiday season.

Protect Your Pet From Winter's Woes

With the cold winter months quickly approaching we need to think about keeping our pets happy and healthy. There are a variety of steps that pet owners can take to protect their pets from health and safety concerns during the winter.

Keep up the regular exercise. The shorter days and long cold nights provide a great excuse for snuggling up under a blanket in front of the fireplace. Dogs confined indoors because of winter weather will lack proper exercise and are likely to gain weight. When the weather permits, get your dog out for a walk. It's good for you and for your pooch!

Keep your pet warm. Dogs and cats are safer indoors except when taken out for exercise. Short-coated dogs may feel more comfortable wearing a sweater during the walks. If your dog is an outdoor dog, it must be protected by a dry, draft-free doghouse that is large enough to allow the dog to sit and lie

down comfortably, but small enough to hold in its body heat. The floor should be raised a few inches off the ground and covered with cedar shavings or straw. The house should be turned to face away from the wind, and the doorway should be covered with waterproof burlap or heavy plastic.

Coping with winter depression. Fewer hours of daylight means fewer opportunities for outdoor exercise. Energetic animals that require a lot of active play can become frustrated and depressed and this can lead to a variety of behaviors – barking, howling, and chewing furniture. Giving your pet more attention and encouraging active play whenever possible can help.

Other winter safety tips.

- Beware of antifreeze! It is extremely poisonous and a few teaspoons can kill a small dog or cat. Antifreeze has a sweet taste that animals like – it is important to keep it out of reach and clean up even small amounts that

drip onto the floor or driveway.

- Don't use metal water dishes outside; your pet's tongue could stick to the frozen metal. Use a non-freeze water bowl or a heavy plastic dish. Check the water several times a day to be certain it is not frozen.
- Remember that cats (and other critters) like to sleep under the hood of cars in the winter. To avoid injuring your pet, bang on the hood and wait a few seconds before starting the engine so your cat will have a chance to escape.
- The salt and other chemicals used to melt snow and ice can irritate the pads of your pet's feet. Wipe the feet with a damp towel before your pet licks them and irritates its mouth.

The Fitness of the Family

The emotional and physical wellness of a family are very similar. The fitness of a family has three components: flexibility, endurance, and strength. A flexible family is able to adapt to changes, both in the world and in the family structure. A family with endurance always offers each other love and support. A strong family is better able to endure tough times and challenges.

What kind of exercises can you do to improve or maintain a strong level of family fitness?

- Plan a fun family activity each week. Perhaps a bike ride, a road trip, even a movie day if the

weather does not cooperate. All family members have a chance to pick the activity.

- Try to eat at least one meal a day together as a family.
- Plan a family talk or meeting. Each week someone different is the leader. Discuss all the good and bad things that have happened during that week. Try to make the discussion comfortable for everyone.
- Have a family holiday! Create your own holiday and celebrate with food and fun.

For more information or additional ideas, visit www.nncc.org/Parents.

It's a Fact...Peanut butter is a good cold-weather treat for birds because they need extra fat in their diet to keep warm. And, contrary to popular belief, it's perfectly safe for the birds — they *won't* choke on it. Spread peanut butter on a pine cone, roll it in bird seed and hang the pine cone from one of your tree/bush branches.

Indoor Walking

Do you cringe at the thought of exercising outdoors when it's below 0°? If you want to stick with your walking program through the cold winter months, check out the Healthy Maine Walks website at www.healthymainewalks.com to find free indoor walking locations in your community!



Welcome to the Health Trust!

The Health Trust would like to welcome two new members to its group health insurance plans.

On September 1, 2004, the Town of Patten and the Midcoast Council for Business Development and Planning (MCBDP) both joined the Health Trust. Welcome to the Health Trust!



Avoid Winter Weight Gain

Dealing with the winter blahs

Does your family seem to lose a little of its spark in the winter? The shorter days, colder nights and bone chilling temperatures can take their toll on everyone. Fortunately, there are some simple steps you can take to make the season fun for everyone.

- Keep your environment light. Open the curtains, decorate with light colors, anything that will make your day as bright and colorful as possible.
- Get light. Work near a window or simply step outside several times a day. The natural light will do wonders for you.
- Don't give in. You may be tempted to give in to the temptation to curl up on the couch and hibernate till spring, but fight it. Make an effort to get out, see friends and family, and keep social.
- Find activities that you can enjoy in the winter. Some local businesses and recreation departments offer reasonably priced snowshoe or ski rentals. Get outside and enjoy the beauty of a Maine winter!

Do the cooler temperatures and shorter days already have you thinking of holiday candy and cold afternoons snacking on hot chocolate and cookies? The winter season often means eating more comfort foods and spending more time bundled up inside. If you find that each winter you tend to gain more and more weight, and losing it in the spring is becoming harder and harder, you may want to make a few changes to your winter lifestyle. Consider the following suggestions in your effort to maintain a healthy and happy weight throughout the winter.

- Don't diet. Now is not the time for many of us to try to lose weight. Instead, focus more on maintaining your current weight. Often just the idea of depriving yourself of your favorite foods can haunt you until you give in.
- Think ahead. If you know you will be eating more calorie-laden foods later in the day, conserve your calories in the morning.
- Avoid being hungry. The hungrier

you get, the more likely you are to eat the worst foods on the table.

- Drink smart. Consume plenty of water; it is empty of calories and may make you feel too full to eat a lot.
- Be aware of empty calories. Soda, alcohol and even some juices contain empty calories and extra sugar. Some may even make you thirsty, or crave salty snacks!
- Keep active. The more active you are, the more calories you can afford to consume without sacrificing your health. Also, the more active you are, the less time you will have for mindless munching.
- Know your triggers: the television, boredom, or stress. Know what emotional or situational triggers cause you to eat foods you probably don't really want or need.
- Have fun! Remember, parties are more about the people than the food.
- Be kind to yourself. An occasional slip up is fine; just don't use it as an excuse to give up on your healthy lifestyle.

Simple Strategies to Maintain Your Weight During the Holidays

During the holiday season most of us struggle with maintaining our current weight. To help you maintain a healthy lifestyle during this hectic season, think of the following acronym for the word "holiday". Each letter gives you a healthy hint for staying on track and monitoring your weight!

H – Healthy serving size. The food is memorable and reflects the season, but the portions don't have to be gigantic! Savor and enjoy, but control the portions so that they are like any other day. Remember that more is rarely better.

O – Only one indulgence. Holidays would not be what they are if we didn't indulge in our favorite treats. The key is one indulgence. One eggnog, one dessert or one serving of Thanksgiving turkey is fine, but we do not need all of the trimmings for every dinner. Pick the one indulgence that you are really looking forward to eating and enjoy it.

L – Leave something on the plate. Our senses are assaulted by buffets, endless supplies of cakes and candy all through the season. There is no need to clean the buffet table or empty the holiday basket. The same can be true of the big meal and the ridiculously full plate. Leave something on the plate.

I – Interact rather than indulge. For too many, the holidays focus around food, food and more food! This year, resolve to spend more time on traditions, spending time with friends and family, conversing and sharing news, parties and memories. It is better to spend time playing and talking rather than eating and drinking.

D – Daily exercise. The holidays are not a time to abandon a disciplined, healthy lifestyle. Don't let vacations hinder your efforts – go skiing, take a walk in the woods or along the beach. Get up and move!

A – Alcohol in moderation. Moderation is the key to a healthy lifestyle. But with respect to the empty calories in alcohol, the potential of impairment while driving and even the effects on your behavior, moderation is the key to maintaining a healthy weight and lifestyle.

Y – Your family traditions. Put the meaning of the holidays ahead of the food and beverage that too often become the focal point of family gatherings. Each family reflects on their traditions and this includes food, but there is much more to it than that. It is healthier to focus on the non-culinary parts of your holiday.

Source: WeightLossGold.com

MMEHT Benefits Corner

Change in Copay: Effective January 1, 2005, the copays charged for formulary (preferred) prescription drugs will change, for all Health Trust plans. There will be no change in copays charged for generic and non-formulary brand name prescriptions.

Current Copays	Copays Effective 01/01/05
Up to 30 day supply: \$10 generic / \$20 preferred brand name / \$40 non-preferred brand name	Up to 30 day supply: \$10 generic / \$25 preferred brand name / \$40 non-preferred brand name
31-90 day supply: \$20 generic / \$40 preferred brand name / \$80 non-preferred brand name	31-90 day supply: \$20 generic / \$50 preferred brand name / \$80 non-preferred brand name

After reviewing a great deal of information regarding the usage of medical services by Health Trust participants, and comparing benefits offered by the Health Trust to those offered by other public and private employers throughout the state of Maine, the Trustees voted to make this change. By increasing the preferred brand name copay by \$5 for a 30-day supply, the Health Trust hopes to motivate participants to use less costly (but just as clinically effective) generic drugs.

If you have any questions about this change, or about any of the Health Trust's benefit plans, please contact a Health Trust Service Representative at 1-800-852-8300 (in Maine) or 207-621-2645 (out of state).

New Life Insurance Carrier

The Health Trust is pleased to announce that effective January 1, 2005, the Health Trust's Life Insurance Plan will be underwritten by The Prudential Insurance Company of America. Prudential will replace the Health Trust's current life insurance plan carrier, Hartford Life Insurance Company, for all of the Health Trust life plans – Basic Life, Supplemental Life and Dependent Life.

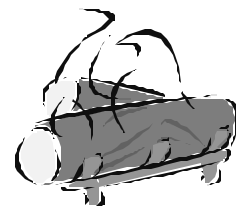
There will be no change in the Life Insurance Plan premiums. Health Trust participants enrolled in the Life Insurance Plan will receive new policy certificates early in 2005.

The MMEHT Board of Trustees selected Prudential following a competitive bid selection process. Prudential is the second largest life insurance company in the U.S. and receives very strong financial ratings.

Safe Home for the Holidays

With so many things going on during the holiday season, it may be easy to forget how important home safety can be! Accidents can happen at any time, but with the added hustle and bustle of the holidays, it is especially important to take extra steps to prevent a disaster from ruining your festivities. Keep these simple tips in mind when preparing your house for the holidays:

- If you have a wood-burning stove at home, be sure to have the chimney checked before throwing a log on the fire. It is also a good time to make sure your smoke detectors are working and be sure to have a fire extinguisher nearby, just in case. A single spark can easily fly through a fire screen and possibly cause a fire. Review your home escape plan with your family as well. This will ensure that you and your family know how to get out of the home in the case of fire.
- Do not overload extension cords with too many strings of holiday lights. This could create a fire hazard. If you have toddlers and infants in the house, be sure to protect open electrical sockets with childproof plugs. You will also want to avoid hanging extension cords or low decorations, as these can create a choking and strangulation hazard for your children!
- With all the baking that usually accompanies the holidays, be sure to follow kitchen safety rules. Always turn pot handles to the back of the stove and if possible have children stay out of the kitchen entirely when you are cooking. Another safety tip is to set the table with place mats instead of a cloth. Pulling a tablecloth edge can cause hot drinks, glasses, or knives to fall and potentially injure someone.
- If you are traveling for a holiday party, be sure to buckle up! Appoint a designated driver before you leave for the party. This will ensure that everyone returns home safely!



Helpful Tips for Choosing a Multivitamin

When looking for a multivitamin, you may become overwhelmed with all of the choices. Keep these things in mind when choosing one that is best for you.

- Don't spend a lot of money. A multivitamin shouldn't cost more than a few cents a day. Most store brands or generic products are fine.
- Look for "USP" on the label. This means the product meets the standards of the U.S. Pharmacopeia.
- Look for 100% of the Daily Value for vitamin D, B₁ (thiamin), B₂ (riboflavin), B₃ (niacin), B₆, B₁₂, and folic acid; plus at least 20 micrograms of vitamin K.



- You don't need a huge amount of vitamin A. The multivitamin you choose should contain no more than 5,000 IU of vitamin A. At least 40% of this should be in the form of beta-carotene.
- Choose a multivitamin with 100% of the Daily Value of these minerals: copper, zinc, iodine, selenium (preferably from yeast, but not more than 200 micrograms), and chromium (no more than 200 micrograms).
- Consume your calcium. Due to the bulky nature of calcium, most multivitamins do not carry large amounts. Unless you consume enough dairy products, collards, broccoli, fortified orange juice, and salmon or sardines, you should take a separate calcium supplement. Everyone needs at least 1,000 milligrams a day of calcium. Women over 50 and men over 65 need 1,200-1,500 milligrams a day.
- Premenopausal women should look for 100% of the Daily Value of iron

- in a multivitamin. Individuals with the genetic disorder, hemochromatosis, should avoid supplemental iron. Men and postmenopausal women need only 45% of the Daily Value of iron, so they may be better off choosing a multivitamin with no iron.
- Avoid large doses of copper, zinc, and vitamin A.
- Take your multivitamin with food. If your multivitamin has iron, don't take it with your calcium supplement, as the iron can interfere with calcium absorption.
- Words you don't need to look for on the label: "high potency," "senior formula," "stress formula," "starch-free," "natural," or "slow release." Added ingredients such as enzymes, hormones, amino acids, PABA, ginseng, and other herbs serve no purpose and only add to the price!

Source: UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, August 2004

Do You Need a Multivitamin?

There are so many different kinds of multivitamins on the market today; you would think that everyone needed to take one. But that just isn't true. The best way to get your nutrients is from a healthy, balanced diet. Unfortunately, many of us fall short in meeting the daily requirements of several key minerals and vitamins, most notably vitamin D and folic acid. For this reason, many people are now taking a multivitamin.

So should you take a multivitamin? You may want to consider adding a multivitamin to your daily regimen if you fit in one of these categories:

1. People over 60. As we age, our bodies become less able to absorb and utilize certain nutrients.
2. Women of childbearing age. Folic acid is known to prevent a variety of birth defects. Women need to build up a supply of folate for several weeks before becoming pregnant to have the best result.
3. Pregnant or breast-feeding women. A multivitamin will probably be recommended for this group, but you should discuss this with your doctor.
4. Strict vegetarians. There are certain vitamins and minerals that come from animal protein that vegetarians may need to replace by taking a multivitamin.
5. People on weight-loss diets, heavy drinkers, or smokers. These people may have many shortfalls of vitamins and minerals.
6. Anyone not eating a balanced diet. If you are not eating at least five fruits and vegetables a day, as well as whole grains, low-fat dairy, and small servings of lean meat, poultry, or fish, you may be missing some key vitamins and minerals from your diet.

While not everyone needs a multivitamin, there are some people who could benefit by adding a multivitamin to their diet. But remember, even if you take a multivitamin, you still need to eat a healthy, balanced diet in order to maintain optimal health.



Source: UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, August 2004



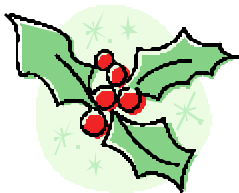
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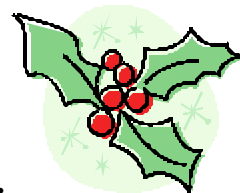
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Visit our website at
www.mmeht.org

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From All of Us to All of You



Wishing You the Very Best of Holiday Seasons –
And a New Year Filled With Joy!!!

