

Fall 2006

Healthy Lifestyles

A quarterly newsletter for members of

MOUNTAIN STATE
Blue Cross Blue Shield

ALLIANCE



**Relief
Made
Simple**

**Amazing
Allergy
Facts**

A Statewide “Taste of Ornish”

**The Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease®
Four Components – Countless Health Benefits**



Ornish, Tofu, and Yogi Bear

(Editor's Note: Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield employee, Allen Bleigh recently completed the 12-week Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease. Following are his thoughts and progress in his own words through his participation in the program.)

It is May 22nd and the first session of the Ornish Program has just finished. As I walk to my car the first thought that enters my mind is, Lord, what have I gotten myself into! The record keeping requirements, the diet, food I never heard of, and oh yes, something called yoga. I was thinking, this is not for me. There is no way this stuff will work. I can never eat that stuff called tofu, and I distinctly heard the program director mention, "No meat". I can never do this, besides, Gary Lavender owes me a steak dinner and now I will never collect!

As I enter the parking garage elevator at CAMC Memorial, a lady gets on with me and notices my Dean Ornish bag. Her eyes light up as she asks, "Are you in the Ornish program?" She then begins to tell me of the life changing results she has had. As a member of the very first Cohort, she explained that she has had one heart attack and two bypass surgeries and needed a third before Ornish came along. "Dr. Ornish saved my life", she told me. "That was 5 years ago and I never had to have the third bypass surgery. Stick with the program! It really works". I thought to myself,

maybe this will work. After all, I have tried to diet before, but this is not a diet. It is a new way of preparing and eating food. Yoga has nothing to do with Yogi Bear, but a lot to do with stress management and relaxation and I need this.

The day before I started the Ornish program my doctor told me I was a diabetic and needed to start taking insulin, but because I was starting in the program, he wanted to wait until the end of the first twelve week session before prescribing insulin. He explained that I was in the beginning stages of diabetes and he had seen great results from his other patients who had gone through the program and was hopeful that I could turn things around making insulin unnecessary. He gave me a glucose meter and I began checking my blood everyday. Besides the diabetes thing, my LDL was 123 and my HDL was 39. These were my readings even after five years of Zocor. With my family history of heart trouble, my doctor said Ornish is the answer. Besides this, I am on four different blood pressure medications; two of them are at a high dose.



The Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease is not a diet. It is a life-style change, and it works. On July 11th, I started week eight of the program and my life has already changed for the better. I have energy that I have not had since I was twenty years old. The yoga sessions have done more for my back problem than three sessions of extensive therapy of 12 weeks each. I have learned to deal with stress better and I am a lot more relaxed. I now enjoy life again.

At the beginning of week six, I was removed from the two high dose blood pressure medications. Now, at the beginning of week eight, I am totally off all blood pressure medications. And the results

keep coming. I have lost twenty-four pounds and still dropping. My energy level is increasing and I sleep better at night. My blood glucose fasting count has gone from an average of 130 to 115, and it is still dropping. I no longer have readings in the 180s to 190s, but I have had several readings in the 90s.

If you have heart trouble, diabetes, or are at high risk for either, please consider attending the next Ornish open house and learn how this life-style change can change your life. Yes, the diet is very restrictive, but you will be amazed at how fast your body adapts. As a matter of fact, the diet has been a complete surprise to me. I do not miss the foods I used to eat, well.... maybe pizza. But I can eat veggie pizza on a whole wheat crust which tastes just as good. And as for tofu, I ate it, enjoyed it and I did not even know I was eating it. You learn so much in the program about nutrition. I have come to learn that we have all grown up eating the wrong foods, prepared the wrong way, and usually we eat for the wrong reasons. The Ornish staff are professionals that have a great deal of experience and knowledge. They truly care about you as a person. This makes all of the difference in the world.

Part 2 - The Ornish Effect

Remember your school days when your summer vacation was over and it was time to start back to school? Many of us could not believe that our twelve week vacation was over. The same is true with the Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease. August 14th ended my first twelve weeks and I found myself amazed that the time had passed so quickly.

The blood test results revealed that I had accomplished a lot in that short



period of time. My life has been changed for the better. While statistics are a great way to "see" results, the way you feel and act says even more. Comparing myself to May 22nd, the start date of my cohort, today I am a new person. I feel better, have more energy, and I am

much calmer than before. These are differences I can see and feel within myself.

At the beginning of the program, I was classified as a diabetic with cholesterol levels leading to a heart attack. Today I am no longer classified as being at risk for diabetes and I am beginning

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Join Us for an Experience that could Change Your Life



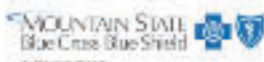
"A Taste of Ornish" Open House *

If you have heart disease or are at risk for developing it, now is the time to learn more about the Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease®. Please join us for an Open House to learn the countless health benefits of this program. Experience and sample the four components of the program: Nutrition, Stress Management, Exercise and Group Support. Meet the professional team that will support you every step of the way in improving your heart health.

Find an Open House near you.

St. Mary's Medical Center	November 6	4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Charleston Area Medical Center	November 9	6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (Registration 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.)
The Wellness Center @ City Hospital	November 13	6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
West Virginia University Hospital	December 7	6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
United Hospital Center	December 11	5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Please call 1-800-879-2217 to register for the Open House. Space is limited.



TASTE OF ORNISH

*Call the Customer Service number on the back of your ID card to confirm coverage.



Relief Made Simple

Whether you've got a headache, nagging back, or a sprained ankle, here's a guide to which pain reliever works best.

Workout Aches

Works best: Acetaminophen

As Tylenol, acetaminophen has been available over the counter for years. Kinder to the stomach than Advil (ibuprofen) or Aleve (naproxen sodium), acetaminophen is a good option

for many ailments typically treated with those other drugs. In fact, acetaminophen is the first choice of many pain specialists for relieving delayed-onset muscle

soreness from working out, mild arthritis pain and stiffness, headaches, and mild to moderate joint and back pain. It's also the best choice for pregnant women because it doesn't appear to boost miscarriage risks the way aspirin and ibuprofen do. Use something else if you regularly drink a fair amount of alcohol. Mixed with more than three glasses of alcohol a day, acetaminophen can wreak havoc on your liver. It's not clear whether fewer drinks put women



at risk, but experts still urge caution. Whether you drink or not, it's important to pay attention to how much of this drug you take: It's easy to overdose unwittingly, because there are more than 400 products that contain it. The recommended daily dose is 4,000 milligrams, or roughly 8 to 12 pills, depending on the strength. Overshooting that mark can cause big trouble—like liver failure.

Killer Headaches

Works best: Caffeine combos

The caffeine in Excedrin (which contains aspirin and acetaminophen) and Anacin (which contains aspirin) turbocharges the action of those pain relievers. Some

studies suggest the caffeine-boosted versions are better than aspirin or acetaminophen alone for headaches. The FDA has approved Excedrin for migraines; both drugs are an option for sore backs and menstrual cramps. Use something else if you get headaches frequently. Caffeine constricts blood vessels, and when it wears off, it can prompt agonizing rebound headaches. This is unlikely with occasional use, but if migraines dog you, ask your doctor if prescription medications make more sense.

Long-Lasting Relief

Works best: Naproxen sodium

As Aleve or Naprosyn, this OTC and prescription NSAID works in much the same way as ibuprofen, and is good for the same ailments. But it lasts longer (8 to 12 hours versus 6 for ibuprofen), so you probably won't have to take it as often.

It's a good choice if you have a condition that's likely to be around for a while—if you've had minor surgery, for instance, or if you have arthritis.

Use something else if your risk of heart disease is above average. New data suggests that naproxen, like Vioxx, might be unfriendly to your heart. Though the evidence is anything but conclusive, use it sparingly and check with your physician.

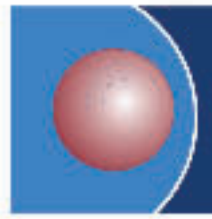
Arthritis

Works best: Etodolac

You may not have heard of this prescription NSAID, but it may be a smart replacement for Vioxx. In studies it seems to be as easy on the stomach as that drug, but it's half as expensive, just as effective, and safer. A 2004 study found that Etodolac caused 60 percent fewer GI tract complications than drugstore NSAIDs, protected the stomach as well as Vioxx, and didn't boost heart risks. Use something else if more convenient OTC choices get the job done without causing stomach problems. Also, keep in mind that even Etodolac can cause some stomach irritation if you use it for a long time.

A Once in a Lifetime Opportunity

...For what you're not expecting.®



CORCELL
SAVING BABY'S
CORD BLOOD®

The five minutes it takes to save your baby's umbilical cord blood could prove to be a once in a lifetime opportunity to protect that child or other family members from a growing number of life threatening diseases. Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield is pleased to introduce this opportunity to members through the **CorCell® Saving Baby's Cord Blood®** program. CorCell is a fully accredited company, dedicated to umbilical cord blood collection, processing and preservation since 1996.

Why Save Cord Blood?

- Umbilical cord blood is a unique and potent source of **life-giving stem cells** like those found in bone marrow.
- Preserved cord blood stem cells represent a significant new resource that can rebuild the blood and immune system.
- Cord blood stem cells can be safely stored for possible transplant in the future to **treat more than 70 life-threatening diseases**.
- Medical researchers are currently exploring new uses for cord blood stem cells in treatments for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, heart attack, stroke, spinal cord injuries and diabetes.
- Collecting cord blood is **safe for mother and baby** and free of ethical controversy.
- Cord blood stem cells are a perfect match for the donor child and may also benefit siblings and other family members.
- The **original purity** of a baby's umbilical cord blood stem cells is ensured with CorCell's unique closed sterile processing system, exceeding the FDA's highest standard for processing purity.



Special Discount for CorCell Program

ALL Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield members are entitled to a **\$350 discount** on the collection and processing of baby's umbilical cord blood. You can give this life-saving gift to your child, grandchild, niece, nephew, friend or other loved one. Gift Certificates are available. Cord blood stem cells can only be collected within minutes of the birth of a baby. By preserving a newborn's cord blood stem cells, you are making a potentially life-saving resource available for the future. To learn more about cord blood stem cell storage or CorCell's convenient payment plans, please visit **www.msbcbs.com** to link to CorCell or call **1-888-326-7235**.

CorCell provides services related to the collection and long term storage of umbilical cord blood. Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield has arranged a discount for such services. The discounted services, available to current members and which add value to the plan of benefits, are provided solely by CorCell and are **not a covered benefit of Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield**. Please review CorCell's program materials for more information and instructions to access these services.

5 AMAZING ALLERGY FACTS

1 Sensitive to pollen?

Wash your hair before bedtime.

Reason: You'll remove any pollen and keep it from settling on pillows and bedding. **Also:** Avoid irritants such as tobacco smoke, automobile exhaust, hair spray and perfume; wash your hands frequently; plan outdoor activities when pollen counts are low.

2 The best time to take an antihistamine, which

helps block allergic reactions, is just before symptoms start.

Just remember: Some allergy medications can cause

sleepiness. So never take one when safety requires you to be alert. **Suggestion:** Ask your healthcare provider about antihistamines that cause less drowsiness.

3 Dust mites

love to nest in area rugs and make you sneeze and itch. **If you're allergic,**

Australian researchers offer

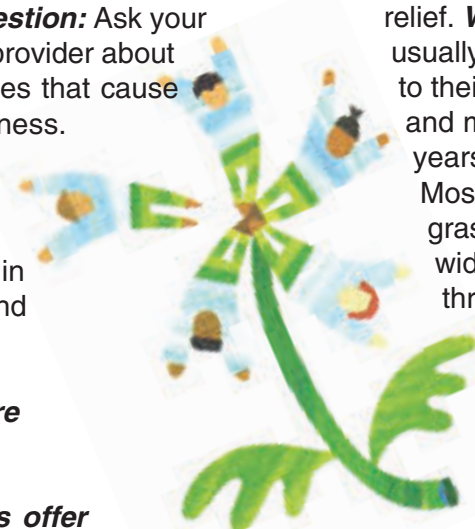
a simple solution: Place area rugs outdoors in direct sunlight for a few hours until they become warm and dry. **Result:** Mites dry up and die.

4 Moving to another location

is no guarantee of allergy relief. **Why:** People usually develop allergies to their region's pollens and molds within a few years of moving. **Plus:** Most allergy-provoking grasses are widespread throughout the world.

5 As many as 20% of Americans believe they have a food allergy, but

true food allergies are actually rare. What most people consider food allergies are usually signs of digestive problems, food poisoning or stress.



Healthy Lifestyles

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Healthy Lifestyles is published quarterly for Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield members to provide general information. It is not intended to provide personal medical advice, which should be obtained directly from a physician.

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the process of repairing my body. And the statistics back this up. Before the program: A1C was 6.7, now 5.6: LDL was 103, now 62: Triglycerides were 169, now 97. My METS rating or functional capacity increased twenty percent. I also lost 34 pounds--not bad for twelve weeks. And at the end of 17 weeks weight loss totaled 50 pounds.

Many of my co-workers have inquired about the program and how it has changed me. The one point I try to share is that the Ornish Program will give your life back and allow you to have a better future. This means more than anything. Imagine being able to enjoy an active and satisfying retirement with family and grandchildren. That is the Ornish effect.

If life seems to be passing you by due to high blood sugar or cholesterol, do yourself a favor and check out this program. While all people are different and you may not get the same statistical result I did, you will get the same "I have my life back" effect.

Videos Help with Tough Medical Decisions



If you have a health problem, it's important that you get accurate information about your condition and treatment options. Being informed can help you work with your doctor to make medical decisions. Unfortunately, it's not always easy to get balanced, easy-to-understand information that explains what you need to know. Luckily, if you have one of the most common health conditions, there may be a video that can help.

About the Videos

At Blues On Call, we believe that knowledge is power. That's why, as appropriate, we offer award-winning Shared Decision-Making® videos about:

- ▶ Back pain
- ▶ Benign prostatic hyperplasia
(also known as enlarged prostate)
- ▶ Breast cancer
- ▶ Colon cancer screening
- ▶ Coronary heart disease
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ End-of-life issues
- ▶ Menopause
- ▶ Osteoarthritis of the hip or knee
- ▶ Prostate cancer
- ▶ Uterine fibroids and abnormal uterine bleeding
- ▶ Weight loss surgery

These videos summarize the results of the medical studies about these conditions. Using the results from those studies, the videos explain treatment or testing choices, and outline the possible risks and benefits of each choice. Because new studies are emerging all the time, a team of medical experts reviews the programs every six months. Plus, the videos include interviews with doctors and other medical experts who are familiar with the latest research. More importantly, the videos feature comments from people like you, who are facing the same medical decision or problem.

Through the videos, real people explain what they went through when making tough medical decisions. They also tell you how they feel about the choices they made. For example, in the video on treatment for early breast cancer, one woman explains that she opted to have her whole breast removed rather than just the tumor, because she didn't want to have to worry that some cancer might still be left in her breast. And in the videos on back pain, several people describe how they coped with their pain while waiting for their backs to heal.

Working with Your Doctor

Watching a video is just one step in the process of making a medical decision. The real decision-making happens in the doctor's office. But the videos can help prepare you to talk with your doctor about your options. After watching a video, you'll probably have questions about how treatments or other options apply to you. Watching a video can also help you think about your personal preferences. That's important, because often there is no treatment that's right for everybody. Once you're informed, you and your doctor can work together to find the treatment that's right for you.

A Blues On Call Health Coach Can Help

To find out if there is a video that's appropriate for you, call a Health Coach. Health Coaches are specially trained healthcare professionals, such as nurses, dietitians, and respiratory therapists. They are available by phone, anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at no charge to you. If appropriate, a Health Coach will send you a complimentary video about your topic of interest.

To talk to a Health Coach, call 1-888-BLUE-428. You can also get information online by clicking on the Blues On Call link at www.msbcbs.com.



Quick Tips for Stress Relief

Looking for a way to decompress? Try one of these helpful tips:

- ◆ An easy way to feel better is by letting natural light wake you up. The onset of dawn is a natural signal that wraps up your dreams without interrupting them, raises your body temperature, and gets your hormones ready for the day. So try leaving your blinds open and wake up with the sun—you'll probably feel a lot more refreshed. If you're afraid of oversleeping, keep an alarm clock as a backup. You probably won't need it.
- ◆ Each day, pencil in a couple of minutes on your planner for complete silence. Turn off your phone, don't check your e-mail, and don't talk to anyone. Noise zaps your positive energy; it increases heart rate and the level of cortisol (the stress hormone), interrupts thoughts, and rattles nerves. Silence is a time-out; it calms you down. You can have silent time while working, gardening, or taking a walk. Just make sure you schedule it. You can't sneak the time in, or you're sure to be interrupted.
- ◆ Take your dog for a walk. Walk briskly and look at nature—the trees, the flowers, the birds in your neighborhood. Walk for at least 2 miles or 30 minutes. Feel refreshed and healthy for getting some recommended exercise (according to the new food pyramid).
- ◆ Relax. This 30-second exercise stops you from carrying one encounter into the next. Sit in a chair with your back straight, knees over ankles, and your feet flat on the floor. Keep your eyes open, focusing on your nostrils as you breathe deeply, allowing your shoulders to rise naturally, and releasing any sense of tension as they fall.
- ◆ If you're feeling overwhelmed by negative emotions, belly breathing can help. Place your hands on your stomach as you slowly inhale, and imagine it's a big balloon that's slowly filling with air. As you slowly exhale, make sure your abdomen stays relaxed. Take at least two or three more slow and deep breaths, keeping your focus on the rise and fall of your belly. Repeat 3 to 5 times.
- ◆ When your chest feels tight, a well-timed sigh can help you loosen up, draw in more oxygen, and go with the flow. Breathe in slowly through your nose. Exhale deeply, also through the nose, letting out a heavy sigh as the air rushes out of your lungs. Repeat 8 to 12 times whenever you feel the need to calm yourself.

