

Spring 2006

Healthy Lifestyles

A quarterly newsletter for members of

MOUNTAIN STATE
Blue Cross Blue Shield



www.msbcs.org

Seasonal Allergies

NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT

WVU STUDIES

The Effect of Yoga on Low Back Pain

A Statewide "Taste of Ornish"

The Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease®
Can Change Your Life



TASTE OF ORNISH



The Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease is entering its fifth year of enrollment and the clinical and enhanced quality of life results experienced by over 400 West Virginia participants have been very significant. You are encouraged to attend a special “Taste of Ornish” promotion being conducted by five West Virginia hospitals and see how the program could benefit you.

This spring, you can visit one of the Ornish Program hospitals and experience first hand how the Ornish Program works. You can actually try the components of the program and meet with members of the caring and compassionate Ornish staff. Even if you are not available to visit the hospital in your area, we encourage you to call 1-800-879-2217 to learn more about the Ornish Program and how you might participate in it.

Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield is giving you the opportunity to play a greater role in your

health with the Ornish Program. This non-invasive comprehensive lifestyle modification program can slow, stop and even reverse heart disease – painlessly and effectively.

Join Us for an Experience that could Change Your Life



“A Taste of Ornish” Open House

April 3 – St. Mary’s Medical Center – 3:30pm to 6pm

United Hospital Center – 6pm to 7:30pm

April 6 – Charleston Area Medical Center – 5:30pm to 8pm

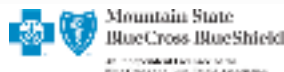
West Virginia University Hospitals – 5pm to 7:30pm

April 13 – The Wellness Center @ City Hospital – 7pm to 9pm

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 about the countless health benefits of this program.

Experience and sample the 4 components of the program – Nutrition, Stress Management, Exercise and Group Support. And meet the professional team that will support you every step of the way in improving your heart health.

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



The program addresses key risk factors associated with the onset and progression of coronary heart disease and consists of four components: nutrition counseling, moderate exercise, stress management techniques and group support. The Ornish Program team, comprised of a medical director, program director, cardiac nurse case manager, registered dietitian, exercise physiologist, certified stress management instructor and behavioral health clinician, works closely with you, to help you progress. All medical decisions, including the use of prescription medications, will remain with your personal physicians.

If you are interested in learning more about the Ornish Program or would like to attend “A Taste of Ornish” at one of the hospitals in your area, please call 1-800-879-2217 to make your reservation.

West Virginia University Studies Yoga's Effect on Chronic Low Back Pain

"Oh, my aching back!" If that is how you often feel, a research study funded by the National Institutes of Health and headed by Kimberly Williams, PhD in West Virginia University's Community Medicine department is looking for you.




The goal of the study is to compare the relative effectiveness of yoga therapy and standard medical care in alleviating chronic low back pain.


To be eligible, you must have recently had lower back pain that comes and goes over a three month or longer period. People who are chosen will be randomly placed into either a group that continues to receive standard medical care or a yoga therapy group that attends yoga classes twice a week for 24 weeks. Non-yoga group members who follow the study's rules will be eligible for free yoga therapy classes once the study is over.

If you are insured by Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield and suffer from chronic lower back pain, call Jeanne Goodman at (304) 293-BACK (2225) to find out if you qualify to join this free study. No previous experience with yoga is needed.

10-Minute Secret to Protect Yourself from "Old-Age" Stiffness

Stretching becomes increasingly important with age. Strength and flexibility routines, such as yoga and tai chi, can counteract stiffness, improve balance – and reduce your risk of falling by 50 percent. Simple solution: try to get 10 minutes of stretching everyday. Here are two simple lower back stretches you can do right from your chair.

A  **Corkscrew.** Put your right hand on top on your left shoulder. Then pull your right elbow to the left, while turning your head, shoulders and torso in the same direction. Switch hands and repeat in the opposite direction.

B  **Arch.** Place both hands on your lower back, inhale deeply, lean back slightly, and arch your back.

The Government's Revised Food Pyramid

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) food guide pyramid has a whole new look, with color-coded vertical bands for each of the food groups. The revised recommendations include:

- **Add whole grains** – breads, cereals and pasta to your diet.
- **Vary your vegetables** – eat more dark green, leafy vegetables and orange ones, too.
- **Focus on fruits** – eat more fresh fruits and limit sugary fruit juices.
- **Know your fats** – get most of your fat from fish, nuts and liquid vegetable oils.
- **Get calcium from low-fat or fat-free dairy products.**
- **Go lean with protein** – replace fatty meats with lean meat, poultry and fish.



To create your personal food pyramid based on your age and activity level, visit the USDA website at www.mypyramid.gov.

Busting Through Weight Plateaus

As you begin your journey toward a healthier, slimmer you, be prepared for weight plateaus. They are a natural part of the weight loss process, but they aren't a setback. It's all in how you measure your success. Even though the numbers on the scale may not be changing, you're gaining many health benefits from your new way of life.

Here are a couple of strategies to help you deal with weight plateaus in a positive way.

Change your mindset

When the needle on the

bathroom scale seems to be taking a break, stay focused on your healthy lifestyle by expanding your definition of weight loss success. Keep in mind that eating better and exercising regularly have changed your body composition — you'll likely have more lean body mass, which weighs more than fat. And although the scale may not reflect these changes, rest assured that people who eat right and exercise regularly can experience health benefits, including a decreased risk of heart disease and diabetes, a better blood lipid profile, improved blood sugar control, and lower blood pressure.

Focus on how you feel

Eating right and exercising regularly aren't only about losing weight. They're about feeling great, too. Keep a journal to track how your mood and energy levels have changed throughout the course of your weight management plans. If you lose weight and keep it off, you'll also benefit from a strong immune system.

Check your work

Finally, there is always the possibility that your weight plateau is related to your exercise levels or eating habits, so if you're having trouble reaching your weight loss goal, take the opportunity to make positive changes to your habits. Tweak your exercise routine to work different muscle groups, try

a different cardiovascular exercise, and experiment with different healthy food choices to help make your diet even more diverse.

Achieving permanent weight loss success takes time, so don't be discouraged by the occasional plateau.

Providers Encouraged to Maintain Open Dialogue With Patients

Mountain State does not prohibit or otherwise restrict a health care professional, acting within the lawful scope of practice, from advising, or advocating on behalf of, a patient who is enrolled under a Mountain State plan, about:

1. The patient's health status, medical care, or treatment options (including any alternative treatments that may be self-administered), including the provision of sufficient information to the individual to provide an opportunity to decide among all relevant treatment options;
2. The risks, benefits, and consequences of treatment or non-treatment; or
3. The opportunity for the individual to refuse treatment and to express preferences about future treatment decisions.

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A quarterly newsletter for members of Mountain State Blue Cross Blue Shield, Inc.

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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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Seasonal Allergies

BLUES ON CALLSM

Nothing to Sneeze At



It never fails. You have an uneventful winter, spring arrives, and just when the trees are starting to bloom, your nose erupts into a sneezy, watery mess. Your eyes get teary and itchy, and even your ears seem to itch. Or maybe this happens at the end of summer, when ragweed season is in full swing. Either way, you may have hay fever, or what doctors call seasonal allergic rhinitis.

Allergic rhinitis is common in the United States, affecting roughly 1 out of every 10 people. The seasonal variety is usually caused by pollen, but molds, dust mites, and animal dander can also cause the condition. While you may feel powerless against your allergies, there are things you can do to reduce your symptoms.

Your Home is Your Haven

When your symptoms are at their worst, consider going inside and shutting the windows and doors. If you have air conditioning or an air filter, turn it on. It will help pull pollen out of the air inside your house. Even the air conditioning in your car will do the trick, if you are looking for a little relief.

When you do go outside, try to do it in the late afternoon or after a fresh rain, when pollen counts are lowest. And if you have to mow the lawn, consider wearing a face mask designed to filter dust or pollen.

Medications Can Help

If you want to take medications, antihistamines are a good defense against allergy symptoms. They come in both over-the-counter varieties and in prescription form. The most common side effect of antihistamines is sleepiness, however non-drowsy formulas do exist. If you decide to take one, and you already take other medications, ask your doctor or pharmacist whether you should beware of any drug interactions.

Nasal steroid sprays, such as Flonase or Rhinocort, can also help with seasonal allergies. However these medications are available only by prescription. Also, they work best if you start using them before allergy season starts.

If you have never seen a doctor about your seasonal allergies, you might consider doing so. He or she might be able to prescribe medications that work better than those available without a prescription. Plus, you may discover that your symptoms are due to something other than seasonal allergies, which your doctor can help resolve.

A Blues On Call Health Coach Can Help

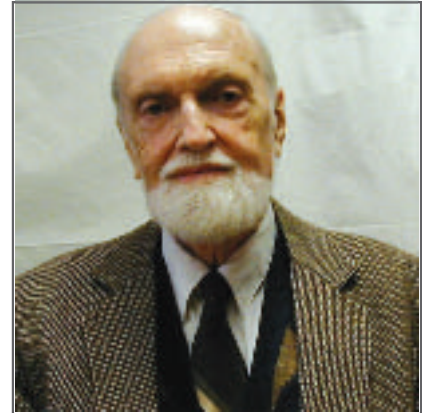
To learn more about seasonal allergies, call a Health Coach. Health Coaches are specially trained healthcare professionals, such as nurses, dietitians, and respiratory therapists. They are available by phone, anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at no charge to you.

To talk to a Health Coach, call 1-888-BLUE-428. You can also get information online at www.msbcbs.com and clicking the  BLUES ON CALL logo.



The Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease® Can Change Your Life

Following is the personal testimony of 77-year-old Joseph Renahan who completed the Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease at Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown, West Virginia. Mr. Renahan had the opportunity to experience firsthand both the Ornish Program and the hospital's cardiac rehab program. Through this participation he has experienced outcomes to his health that have significantly changed his life for the positive.



In April of 1998, Joseph Renahan suffered a heart attack and immediately underwent open-heart surgery which included two bypasses and angioplasty with a stent. About three months later Mr. Renahan began cardiac rehab. However, he was sent home after only fifteen minutes of exercise when the monitor indicated that his heart was unable to withstand any rate beyond the minimum. It was at that time that his doctors discovered he had a ventricular septal defect that would require surgery.

Because of his delicate condition, Mr. Renahan's doctors felt that he would not survive an additional surgery, so they decided to add another stent to his heart. After this procedure he was able to resume cardiac rehab and completed several weeks of the program without missing one session.

Wanting to further enhance and continue his recovery,

Mr. Renahan began researching the Ornish Program after purchasing Dr. Ornish's book, *Reversing Heart Disease*. As a result of his research, and with the discovery that he could participate in the program at Ruby Memorial, Mr. Renahan entered the Ornish Program.

"I enjoyed the fact that the exercise aspect of the Ornish Program was closely monitored. Also, the nutrition aspect involved conforming to specific guidelines every day, along with developing clear ideas about the essential daily components instead of merely knowing which foods to avoid," Mr. Renahan noted.

The yoga component provided Mr. Renahan extremely useful modes of stress management and enhanced physical flexibility together with an ongoing personal assurance and self-control. Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of the program for Mr. Renahan was the lasting feeling of camaraderie and

strong motivation he developed in the support group of the Ornish Program.

Following his participation in the Dr. Dean Ornish Program for Reversing Heart Disease, Mr. Renahan has been able to lose 20 pounds and has significantly reduced his cholesterol and blood pressure levels. With these results, his cardiologist has reduced some of his medications.

"I feel less light-headed that way and therefore more secure when I take my daily walks," Mr. Renahan stated. "I feel certain that the Ornish Program, with its clearly defined components and its creation of a secure, self-disciplined environment, has greatly enhanced my recovery."



By the Numbers:

KIDNEY DISEASE

Scary statistics reveal one of America's fastest-growing and most devastating diseases.

More than 375,000 Americans are being treated for kidney

failure, also called end-stage renal disease (ESRD). Of these patients, more than 275,000 are on dialysis and more than 100,000 have a functioning kidney transplant.

Over the last five years, the number of new patients with kidney failure has averaged more than 90,000 annually.

The current annual cost of treating kidney failure in the United States is approximately \$17.9 billion.

More than 67,000 deaths occur each year as a result of kidney failure. African-Americans, one of the groups most at-risk for kidney disease, are four times more likely to develop ESRD than whites. They make up 32.2 percent of all cases.

More than half—57.5 percent—of ESRD cases are caused by diabetes or high blood pressure. Proper management of these diseases is critical for preventing ESRD. If you have diabetes, an annual kidney test is a must. With high blood pressure, maintain close contact with your doctor to

keep your numbers where they should be.

In addition to these preventive measures, you can make smart lifestyle decisions to keep your kidneys in good working order.

- Drink lots of fluids to keep your kidneys working
- Exercise
- Don't smoke
- Maintain a healthy weight

Chronic kidney failure usually develops slowly, with few signs or symptoms in the early stages. Many people with chronic kidney failure don't know they have a problem until their kidney function has decreased to less than 25 percent of normal.

If you have any of the following symptoms, see a doctor at once:

- Swelling of the face and ankles
- Puffiness around the eyes
- Frequent urination (especially at night)

- Rusty or brown-colored urine
- Back pain just below the rib cage

With ESRD, the kidneys function at less than 10 percent of normal capacity. People with ESRD need either dialysis or a kidney transplant to stay alive.





Risk vs. Rewards

With heart disease, it's all about risk. Recent research has shown that heart attacks don't "just happen." A study of 400,000 heart patients over a period of more than 20 years found that a full 90 percent of heart attack sufferers had at least one of the four major risk factors: smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure or diabetes. The reward of controlling these risks is a much better chance of keeping your heart healthy.

These aren't the only risk factors. Simply growing older also increases your chances for heart disease. A family history of heart disease puts you at risk. Your race and gender also play a part. The difference with these factors is, there's nothing you can do about them.

You can, however, do quite a lot to control the "big four" risk factors.

- Smoking puts you at risk for heart problems almost 10 years before non-smokers. Ask your doctor to help you quit.



- You can control high cholesterol through diet, exercise, medication or some combination of the three.
- High blood pressure also can be tamed through diet and exercise, while some will need help from medication.
- Heart disease is one of the most common and deadly consequences of diabetes, so strict blood sugar control is essential.

Reward yourself with heart health – lower your risk for heart disease.

