

Appalachian Regional Healthcare Living



YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS GUIDE

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Healthcare reform and you

Healthcare reform under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is moving full speed ahead, with a number of changes on the way in 2014. Here are some of the important highlights for individuals and families:

▶ **Everyone must have health insurance.** This “individual mandate” requires everyone (with few exceptions) to have health insurance or pay a penalty. If you don’t have health insurance through an employer, you can buy your own (individual or family) policy or enroll in a free or low-cost health plan, depending on your income.

▶ **Guaranteed access to health insurance** means that you can get health coverage regardless of your health status or pre-existing conditions. Health insurance companies can’t turn you away or drop your policy due to a current or past illness, injury or other health condition.

▶ **Health insurance exchanges** provide a new way to shop for and enroll in health plans. As of October 2013, each state has its own exchange open for enrollment, with coverage effective in January 2014. Some states have chosen to implement state-run health exchanges, while others have opted for a federally facilitated exchange or partnership exchange with the federal government.

▶ **Health plans on the exchange** make it easy to shop and compare plans. You can review which medical providers

participate in various health plans and choose the best fit for you and your family. Health plans are classified as bronze, silver, gold and platinum based on the percentage of costs covered (premiums are lowest in a bronze plan, highest in a platinum plan).

▶ **Premium subsidies** may help make health insurance more affordable. Premium tax credits based on income offset the cost of premiums for those with income below 400 percent of Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Those who meet this income guideline may get a tax credit that can be applied to a health plan sold on the exchange.

▶ **Medicaid expansion** (in participating states) expands Medicaid health coverage to more low- to moderate-income Americans. Individuals and families can go to the exchange to find out if they’re eligible for Medicaid and/or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and enroll in these government programs.

Get started today!

Visit www.healthcare.gov and select your state to explore your healthcare option. Or, go directly to your state's health exchange website. Have questions on how to enroll? Visit your local ARH hospital admissions department for assistance.



4 holiday heart dangers

Don't fall victim to these health hazards

During November, December and January, more people die from heart attacks than at any other time of the year, according to Duke University researchers. Don't let the holidays and winter weather take a toll on your heart. Avoid the four following seasonal pitfalls:



1 Too much food and too little exercise. A little indulgence on special occasions is OK, but don't abandon your healthy lifestyle. Substitute low-fat or nonfat yogurt for mayonnaise in dips and dressings. Replace some of the bread in your stuffing recipe with chopped vegetables. Put on your sneakers and head for the mall to do some holiday speed-shopping!

2 Too much alcohol and smoke exposure. "Drinking too much alcohol can raise the level of some fats in the blood, increasing the risk of high blood pressure, alcoholism, obesity, stroke, suicide and accidents," says Hannah Asghar, MD, an interventional cardiologist at Beckley ARH Hospital. "More parties during the holidays may mean more exposure to secondhand smoke, which has been linked to cardiovascular-related death and disability."

3 Stress and anxiety. Family conflicts, traveling, shopping and cooking can make it seem impossible to relax, as can worrying about how to pay for everything. Stress may contribute to high blood pressure, so head it off with relaxation techniques like deep breathing or a yoga class. Accept your limits and don't aim for perfection.

4 Exposure to germs. Crowded malls, school plays, indoor parties, visiting relatives: It's no surprise that colds and flu are more common during the winter months. "People with heart disease have increased risk for dying of complications from the flu—so get a flu shot!" advises Dr. Asghar. Plus, cut your risk by washing your hands frequently, getting enough sleep and making sure other family members are up to date on their vaccinations.

Your heart and the weather ←

People who have coronary artery disease are susceptible to chest pain when exposed to the cold. Arteries constrict in cold climates, causing less blood flow and oxygen to reach the heart. In addition, the exertion of strenuous snow shoveling can put you at risk for heart attack, especially if you're out of shape.

Another cold-weather risk is hypothermia—when your body doesn't produce enough heat to stay warm. Most hypothermia deaths are the result of heart failure.

Fighting weight gain?

Talk with your doctor

Sandy, age 56, walks 30 minutes five days a week, limits her snacking to healthy treats and eats nutritious meals. Frustrated that she's still gaining weight, Sandy decided to visit her doctor after a friend suggested it.

Even when trying your best to cut portions, stop snacking and be more active, some pounds may seem impossible to lose—or worse, weight keeps creeping up! Uncovering the factors behind your weight gain may help you take control.

"Start with a visit to your doctor," recommends Andy Chhabra, MD, an internal medicine physician at Summers County ARH Hospital. "It's possible that an underlying health condition or medication you're taking could be the culprit behind your weight gain."

Your doctor can help you look at the following:

► **A medical problem.**

Causes for sudden weight gain can include thyroid problems, heart issues or kidney disease. Your physician can help identify if any of these conditions are present.

► **Medications.** "Certain medicines, such as anti-depressants, may contribute to weight gain," Dr. Chhabra says.

► **Menopause.** The hormonal changes accompanying menopause might make you more likely to gain weight around your abdomen.

► **Aging.** Muscle mass diminishes with age, while fat increases. "Loss of muscle mass decreases

the rate at which your body uses calories, making it more challenging to maintain a healthy weight," explains Dr. Chhabra.

► **Genetics.** If your parents or other close relatives carry extra weight, you may be more likely to do the same.

Stress. Significant stress factors such as children leaving (or returning) home, divorce, death of a loved one, job loss or other life changes may affect your diet or exercise habits.

No magic formula—just healthy habits

The basics behind effective weight management remain:

- Move more through daily aerobic activity and resistance training.
- Eat wisely, choosing more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein.
- Seek the company of friends and family who'll support your efforts.

Your doctor can help you look at losing weight in a new light. Call for an appointment today.

“It's possible that an underlying health condition or medication you're taking could be the culprit behind your weight gain.”

—Andy Chhabra, MD,
an internal medicine physician at
Summers County ARH Hospital



Need a new doctor?

Visit www.arh.org and click on "Find a Physician" to get started!



High? Low? Just right?

A blood pressure primer



Goldilocks may have been on to something in her pursuit of the perfect bowl of porridge. Avoiding extremes and finding the happy medium is a good idea, especially when it comes to blood pressure. Both high blood pressure and low blood pressure increase your risk of dangerous conditions. So what is “just right” blood pressure, and how do you maintain it?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries as your heart beats. “Your blood pressure reading is made up of two numbers measured in millimeters of mercury [mm Hg]: systolic pressure, the measurement of pressure when your heart beats; and diastolic pressure, the pressure in between beats,” explains Bethany Rose, DO, a family practice physician at Williamson ARH Hospital. In general, your blood pressure is considered normal if it’s above 90/60 and less than 120/80 mm Hg.

Hypertension: silent but dangerous

Sometimes called the silent killer, high blood pressure (HBP), or hypertension, can damage your body for years before it causes noticeable symptoms. “Left unchecked, high blood pressure can have deadly results, including heart disease and stroke,” Dr. Rose says. HBP also causes arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), eye damage and vision loss. In addition, hypertension is a leading cause of kidney failure.

Get a read on your blood pressure ←

Category	Systolic (in mm Hg)		Diastolic (in mm Hg)
Hypotension	Less than 90	and	Less than 60
Normal	Less than 120	and	Less than 80
Prehypertension	120–139	or	80–89
Stage 1 Hypertension	140–159	or	90–99
Stage 2 Hypertension	160 or more	or	100 or more

How low can you go?

Low blood pressure occurs when the force of blood being pumped through the body is lower than normal, which can reduce the supply of blood traveling to your brain and the rest of your body. “Although low blood pressure is more loosely defined than HBP, most normal blood pressure doesn’t dip much below 90/60 mm Hg,” notes Dr. Rose. Symptoms of low blood pressure include blurry vision, confusion, dizziness, fainting, light-headedness, weakness and sleepiness.

Finding (and maintaining) the happy medium

About two-thirds of Americans over age 65 have high blood pressure, but HBP isn’t necessarily an inevitable part of growing older. Recent studies indicate that, when it comes to blood pressure, lifestyle choices may outweigh the effects of aging. So, what lifestyle choices can help you achieve a blood pressure Goldilocks effect?

- ▶ **Shed extra pounds.** Blood pressure generally rises as weight increases.
- ▶ **Hop to it.** According to the Mayo Clinic, 30 to 60 minutes of exercise a day can lower blood pressure by 4 to 9 mm Hg.
- ▶ **Slash sodium and boost potassium.** Generally, high-potassium/low-sodium diets improve your blood pressure. Choose potassium-rich leafy greens, blackberries, grapes or grapefruit rather than sodium-packed packaged snacks.
- ▶ **Check your blood pressure regularly to make sure you’re within normal limits.** “Adults younger than 65 should have their blood pressure checked every two years,” advises Dr. Rose. “After age 65, have your blood pressure checked at least every year.” Your doctor may recommend more frequent screening if your blood pressure is high.

WOMEN: Make the most of your annual checkup



With work and family obligations, it can be tempting to forgo an annual health exam. But an annual checkup not only keeps your medical history up to date but also provides the perfect venue to discuss any questions or concerns about your health.

You can make the most of the time with your doctor by taking the following steps:

► **Prepare a list of questions.** “An annual exam is your time to ask about any health concerns you might have,” says Richard Wisman, DO, a family practice physician at Beckley ARH Hospital. Make a list of health questions beforehand to ask your doctor. Bring this list with you as a reminder of your questions and as a place to jot down notes.

► **Review your family’s health history.** When addressing your personal health concerns, doctors often need to know more about your family’s medical history. Preparing for these questions before your appointment can help it run more smoothly.

► **Anticipate future concerns.** Although an annual exam tends to focus on your present health, brainstorm any other questions you might have in the future. “If you’ve set any future health goals—losing weight, quitting smoking, lowering cholesterol—now is the time to discuss them with your doctor,” Dr. Wisman says.

Time for a screening? ←

You may have or discuss the following screenings during your annual checkup. Depending on your personal or family health history, your doctor may recommend that you start some screenings at an earlier age. Ask your doctor how often these and other screening tests should be done.

	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s+
Blood pressure screening	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cholesterol screening		CWD	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diabetes screening (if blood pressure is higher than 135/80)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cervical cancer screening	✓	✓	✓	✓	CWD	CWD
Pelvic exam (with STI screening)	✓	✓	✓	✓	CWD	CWD
Breast cancer screening (mammogram)			CWD	✓	✓	CWD
Colon cancer screening				✓	✓	CWD
Osteoporosis screening					✓	CWD

CWD = Check with your doctor

These are general guidelines and are not intended as medical advice. Talk to your doctor about screening tests that may be right for you.

Help for ear infections

Ear infections are a common ailment of winter and tend to occur more often in children than adults. Symptoms may pop up two to seven days after the start of a cold or upper respiratory infection. Here's what you need to know to keep your child well:

What triggers ear infections?

Inflammation and infection of the middle ear is the most common type of ear infection. "A middle ear infection is typically short in duration, yet painful, and often seen in babies and young children," says Scott Martin, DO, a pediatrician at Williamson ARH Hospital. "It occurs due to fluid buildup behind the eardrum when the Eustachian tube, which connects the middle of each ear to the back of the throat, becomes blocked. These passages are shorter and more horizontal in young children, making fluid drainage more difficult." Fluid trapped in the ear is an ideal place for bacteria to grow. Also, children's immune systems aren't entirely developed, making them more prone to infection.

Contributing factors to the development of ear infections include:

- colds and sinus infections
- allergies
- mucus and saliva buildup during teething
- infected adenoids
- irritants including secondhand tobacco smoke

What to look for

Babies and young children may not be able to tell you they are suffering from ear pain, so the following symptoms are key signs that an ear infection may be present:

- rubbing or tugging the ear
- fever
- irritability and more frequent crying
- restless sleep
- decreased appetite
- clear fluid draining from the ear

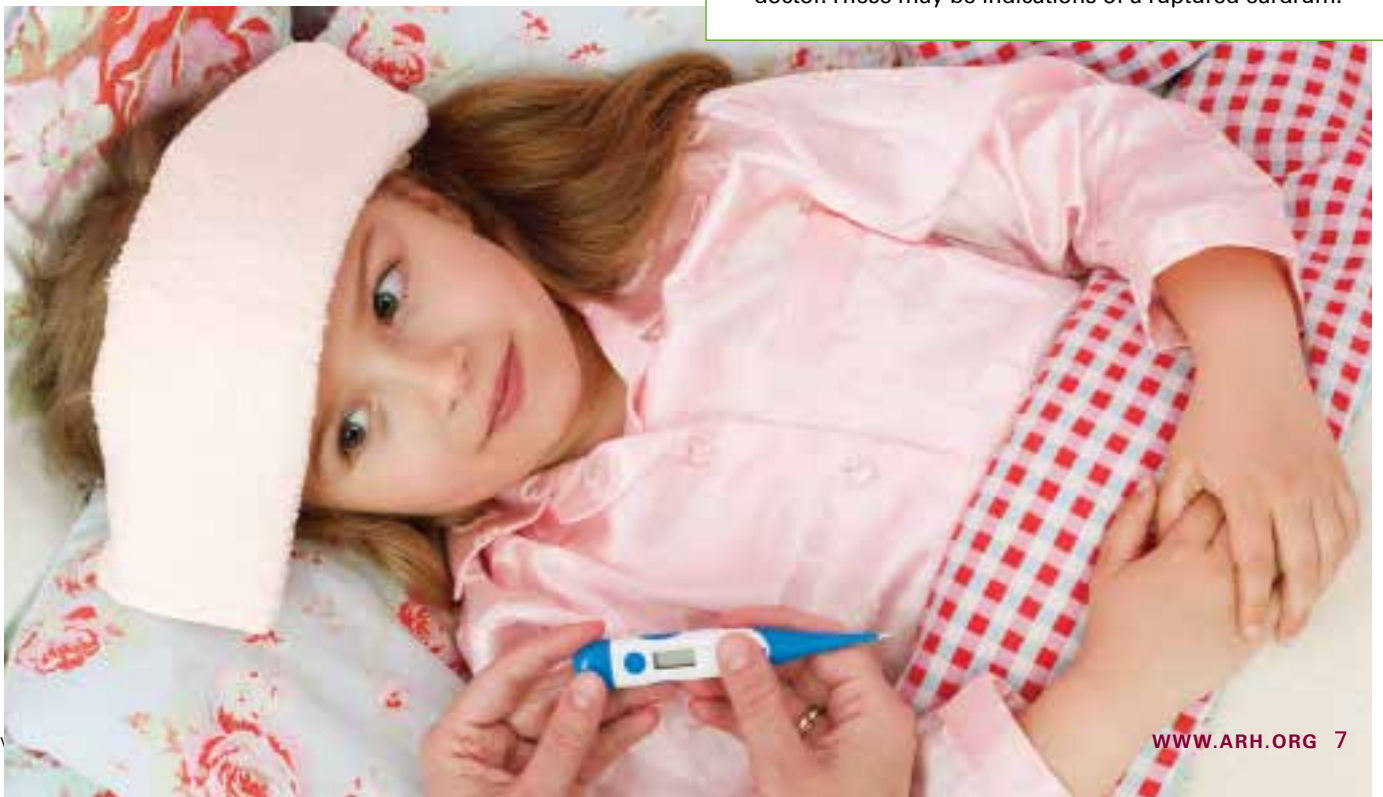
Many ear infections will heal without treatment; however, a visit to your child's pediatrician can help to determine the severity of the infection. "Rather than over-prescribing antibiotics for ear infections, many doctors may first advise a watch-and-see approach, along with a pain reliever to ease your child's pain," Dr. Martin says.

You can help reduce discomfort of an ear infection by taking these steps:

- Place a warm compress over the ear.
- Encourage plenty of rest to help the body fight infection.
- Relieve fluid buildup pressure by offering plenty of fluids. Chewing gum may help older children.

→ A note of caution

If an ear infection lingers longer than three days or you notice pus or blood draining from your child's ear, see your doctor. These may be indications of a ruptured eardrum.



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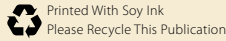
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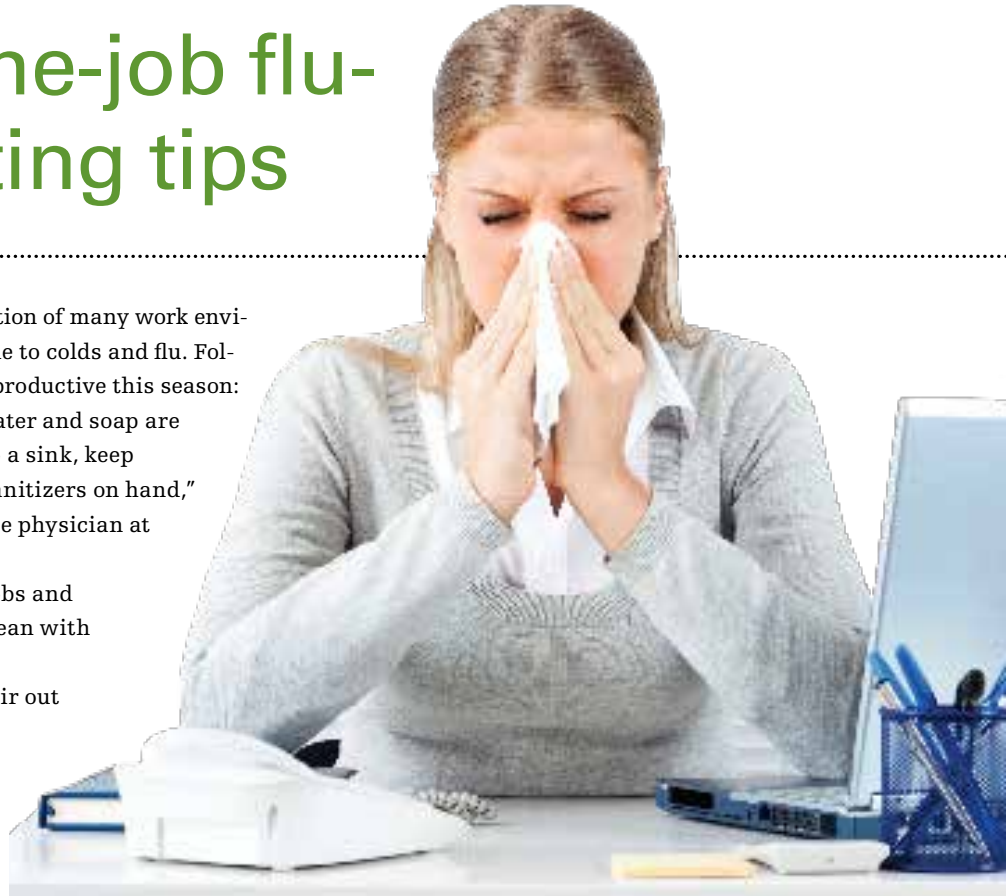
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10 on-the-job flu-fighting tips

The tight quarters and poor ventilation of many work environments can make you susceptible to colds and flu. Follow these 10 tips to stay well and productive this season:

- 1 Wash your hands frequently. "Hot water and soap are best, but if you don't have easy access to a sink, keep alcohol-based disposable wipes or gel sanitizers on hand," says Amanda Lowe, DO, a family practice physician at Williamson ARH Hospital.
- 2 Keep keyboards, telephones, doorknobs and surfaces that people touch frequently clean with a disinfectant and paper towels.
- 3 If you can, crack open a window to air out your space.
- 4 Make sure your workplace is stocked with plenty of tissues.
- 5 Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, where germs enter your system.
- 6 Avoid close contact with someone who's sick.
- 7 Don't smoke or allow smoking. "If your office isn't smoke-free, ask that it becomes so," recommends Dr. Lowe.
- 8 Consider getting the flu vaccine. (See "A shot of good health" for more information.)
- 9 Eat well, exercise and get enough sleep. "A healthy body is more likely to ward off germs than one that's run-down," Dr. Lowe notes.
- 10 Finally, if you're sick, stay home to recover and protect your co-workers.



→ A shot of good health

Each year, influenza leads to 70 million lost workdays, 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths in this country. Because viruses are constantly changing, people need to receive a new shot or the nasal-spray vaccine every year.

Flu shots are now available for \$20 at Appalachian Regional Healthcare pharmacies and clinics! To find a location near you, visit www.arh.org and click on "Our Services," then "Clinics" and "Flu Shots."