

# *inspire*

YOUR HEALTH, YOUR LIFE

MAKING SENSE  
OF LABELS

DANGERS OF  
DISTRACTED  
DRIVING

## *Winter Health* GUIDE



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Learn more and join at [SeniorCircle.com/InsideCircle](http://SeniorCircle.com/InsideCircle).

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## DON'T BE BLUE: *Frozen Is Fine*



Love blueberries and want to eat them year-round, but you're worried that frozen fruit may pack less of an antioxidant punch? Don't be. A recent study found freezing preserves the fruit's healthy qualities, while water leaching out into ice crystals actually increases the concentration of antioxidants.

Anthocyanin — the antioxidant that gives blueberries their color — helps your body reduce cell damage. So mix a handful of fresh or frozen blueberries into your cereal, smoothie or pancakes.



Have you noticed that your favorite foods are beginning to have words such as “whole grain” or “organic” on their packaging? Just because the packaging contains health-related wording doesn't mean the food inside is good for you. Researchers at the University of Houston found that consumers receive a “false sense of health” from nutritional claims featured on product labels. You can trust the nutrition facts label and ingredient list on the back panel to help you make an informed choice. Select items that contain a small number of familiar ingredients and those low in fat, calories, sugar and salt.

## Have Joint Pain and Stiffness?



# Eat Fish!

Recent research found that omega-3 fatty acids, found in several species of fish, such as salmon, trout and tuna, can help reduce joint pain and stiffness. Omega-3 fatty acids also increase the effectiveness of anti-inflammatory medications, which are used to ease discomfort. Your body does not produce these fatty acids on its own. To up your intake of essential fatty acids, add fish into your diet two or three times a week. One helpful tip: Choose wild salmon, which contains higher levels of omega-3 than the farmed variety. Not a fan of fish? Sprinkle walnuts or flaxseed on your salad or add them into a smoothie.

# Who You Gonna Call?

NO MATTER HOW BIG THE PROBLEM, THE GHOSTBUSTERS COULD HANDLE IT. WHY? THEY WERE EXPERTS IN THEIR SUBJECT, JUST LIKE PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS ARE IN THEIRS.

Imagine this scenario: One summer, Mary feels irritable and anxious much of the time. She thinks she is having panic attacks, so she visits a counselor. The next winter, she goes to the emergency department for heart palpitations. The following spring, she notices that her periods have become irregular, so she consults her gynecologist.

After many months, she learns that an overactive thyroid was causing her symptoms. However, no single provider had every piece of the puzzle, so it took her a long time to get an accurate diagnosis. A primary care provider (PCP) — a doctor, physician assistant or nurse practitioner who cares for overall health — would likely have been able to diagnose the cause of her symptoms much sooner.

It's important to develop a relationship with a PCP who gets to know you and your medical conditions over time. Specialists, urgent care providers and emergency room doctors

are experienced in their area of medicine; however, they do not usually know *you* and your health history like your PCP will.

## THEY MAKE YOUR LIFE EASIER

In addition to seeing the “big picture” of your health, a PCP can:

1. Maintain your comprehensive medical record, including medications, vaccinations and allergies
2. Understand your family health history and how it relates to any conditions you have
3. Track your screenings and immunizations to make sure you're up to date
4. Coordinate specialist care and multiple diagnoses
5. Provide counseling about wellness, nutrition and healthy lifestyles

We offer a variety of services to meet your family's healthcare needs. Visit [BigBendHealthcare.com](http://BigBendHealthcare.com) to learn more.

## A RANGE OF PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

Which primary care provider is best for you?

A **family medicine doctor** gives general medical care to people of every age. He or she forms ongoing relationships with patients and makes referrals to specialists when necessary.

A **geriatrician** provides medical care for elderly people and has expert knowledge of many conditions older adults experience.

A **gynecologist** cares for women's health and may also offer general medical care to female patients.

A **family nurse practitioner (FNP)**, like a family medicine doctor, offers comprehensive care for patients of all ages.

An **internal medicine doctor** provides general medical care for patients with complex or chronic conditions.

A **pediatrician** offers general medical care for infants, children and adolescents.

A **physician assistant (PA)** is a licensed medical professional who can act as a patient's primary care provider. PAs work under the supervision of a doctor and can prescribe medication.





# STAYING AT YOUR **BEST** *During the Winter*



WITH FEWER HOURS OF SUNLIGHT, STAYING POSITIVE IN THE WINTER CAN BE CHALLENGING FOR MANY PEOPLE. THESE **THREE STEPS** CAN HELP KEEP YOU ON TOP OF YOUR GAME THIS SEASON.

## *Step 1:* BOOST YOUR OVERALL IMMUNITY.

Keeping your immune system healthy is your best defense against colds, influenza (flu) and other respiratory infections common during the winter months. A strong immune system can also help you recover faster if you do become sick.

As you age, your immunity can waver, so keep it at optimal levels by looking for ways to balance your life. Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Try going to bed earlier if you've been skimping on sleep.

The stress of holiday plans and gatherings can leave you overwhelmed and under the weather. Make time for the events that matter the most, but schedule some time to relax and reflect, too.

Eating well is also an important part of maintaining a healthy immune system. Add yogurt or kefir, which contain good forms of bacteria, to your diet to reduce infections while improving digestion. Rely on whole foods, such

as fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, lean proteins, and whole-grain carbohydrates, to nourish your body. Stay away from processed foods whenever possible. Other ways to keep your immune system happy include:

- **Enjoy tea time.** Whether you prefer Earl Grey or chamomile, tea's natural antioxidants can give your immune system an extra kick. Wind down after a busy day with decaffeinated tea — just limit your sugar and cream intake.
- **Start your meal with a bowl of soup.** A broth- or veggie-based soup can help keep your respiratory system running well and banish bad bacteria. If your soup contains tomato, you get the added benefit of lycopene, an antioxidant that has been shown to lower risk of certain types of cancer.

## THE BASICS OF A HEALTHY WINTER GETAWAY

If travel is on your agenda, protect your health with these simple tips.

- 1. Keep germs at bay** — Two weeks before you embark on your winter adventure or business trip, get your flu vaccination if you haven't already. While traveling, avoid touching your face, and wash your hands before meals and after contact with frequently shared surfaces. Use hand sanitizer to keep your hands clean in crowded airports and on flights.
- 2. Fit in exercise** — Long periods of sitting during travel can sap your energy and even contribute to blood clots. Once you arrive at your hotel, make use of the fitness center or perform a few stretches and jumping jacks in your room. Combine physical activity and sightseeing by exploring your destination on foot or strolling through an indoor local attraction if it's too cold for outdoor exercise.

**3. Stop SAD before it starts** — Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that typically affects people during the fall and winter months when shorter days equal less sunlight. Even those who live in areas with ample year-round sunshine may travel to regions where colder, shorter days leave you feeling a little blue. Talk with your doctor if you develop SAD symptoms, such as anxiety, sadness, or feelings of emptiness or guilt.

**4. Manage jet lag** — According to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, jet lag, which often occurs when you change time zones during travel, can cause fatigue, nausea, irritability, poor concentration and insomnia. Help prevent jet lag by gradually adjusting your sleep schedule before leaving for your trip. En route, drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration — a common side effect of flying that can worsen jet lag symptoms — and limit caffeine and alcohol both on the plane and during your stay to improve sleep quality.



### Step 2: DO THE NECK CHECK.

Feeling under the weather before a workout? Do a neck check. When you have a regular exercise routine, skipping out when you're feeling sick could actually make you feel worse in the long run. If your symptoms are above the neck — runny nose or sore throat — feel free to head to the gym, but take the intensity down a notch or two. Moderate exercise, such as walking, can help loosen sinus congestion and increase energy levels.

Experts suggest skipping a workout and resting if you have any digestive issues, chest congestion or a fever. If you have a fever, physical activity can lead to a dangerous spike in body temperature.

Once you're feeling better, gradually work your way into your exercise routine. Depending on the severity of your illness, you may need to work out for a shorter time or at a lower intensity for a few days.

### Step 3: STAY ACTIVE INDOORS AND OUT.

Changes in weather and temperature can affect how you exercise during the winter. Dress appropriately in layers. The layers closest to your skin — including your socks — should be made of moisture-wicking materials to keep skin dry, while exterior layers should be wind- and water-resistant. Apply sunscreen to your face and neck before heading outdoors. Don't think you need sunscreen in winter? According to the American Melanoma Foundation, 80 percent of the sun's ultraviolet rays pass through even on cloudy, cooler days. Also, put on sunglasses that protect against 99 to 100 percent of UV rays.

Don't discount non-exercise physical activity (NEPA), typically defined as a physical activity that doesn't involve raising the heart rate. A recent study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found that when people older than age 60 stay active — whether or not they make time for cardiovascular exercise — they tend to have better heart health. So what counts as NEPA? Performing light yard work, hunting, washing the car or doing small repairs around the house are a few examples. If you're having trouble making time for regular exercise, have a set schedule of chores or activities that keep you moving.

WHAT YOU SHOULD  
KNOW ABOUT

# Prediabetes

BEFORE DEVELOPING TYPE 2 DIABETES, A PERSON OFTEN HAS PREDIABETES, MEANING BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS ARE HIGH, BUT NOT AT DIABETIC LEVELS. A DIAGNOSIS OF PREDIABETES OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE HEALTH WHILE THERE'S STILL TIME TO PREVENT DIABETES.



Blood sugar can be measured with a simple finger stick — and the information gleaned from a blood sugar test can tell you a lot about your health. A normal blood sugar level is less than 100 mg/dL. People with glucose levels of 126 mg/dL or higher have diabetes. High blood sugar can harm nerves and blood vessels, resulting in blindness, kidney disease, heart disease, gum and teeth problems, and stroke.

With diabetes, either the body doesn't make enough insulin or it cannot use the insulin it produces effectively to deliver glucose to the cells. Instead, your cells may not have the energy they need to function well.

#### A MIDDLE GROUND

When fasting blood sugar levels are between 100 and 125 mg/dL, people are said to have prediabetes — a condition that often leads to diabetes.

Modest changes in your diet and lifestyle can help you lower your blood sugar. Your doctor may suggest you lose 5–7 percent of your body weight and make a habit of exercising briskly for at least half an hour, five days a week. He or she may prescribe medications or help you find other resources, such as a nutritionist or a workout program.

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**A primary care provider can tell you what your blood sugar level means. No primary care doctor? Call (432) 837-0430 to find a doctor.**

#### FREE DIABETIC EDUCATION CLASSES

Allison Ainsworth, CFNP at Big Bend Regional Health Center, offers free diabetic education classes several times a year.

In this series of classes, you will learn about diabetes, how to manage your symptoms, healthy eating, medications and what it means to take care of yourself. People with diabetes and their families are invited to attend.

Allison, along with a team of professionals, will guide you through the maze of information and misinformation that surrounds the diagnosis.

Classes are small, informal and personalized. Call today to sign up!

*Call (432) 837-0430 to sign up for diabetic education.*

# Distracted Driving = DANGER

WHEN DRIVERS ARE PREOCCUPIED, EVERYONE ON THE ROAD IS IN JEOPARDY.

**3,328**

people in 2012 were killed in accidents related to distracted driving.

**50%**

of high schoolers age 16 or older text or email while driving.

**660,000**

drivers at any given moment are using a cell phone while driving.

**10 percent**

OF ALL DRIVERS

**YOUNGER THAN AGE 20**

WHO WERE INVOLVED IN A FATAL CRASH WERE DISTRACTED AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT.



The average text is read in 4.6 seconds. Driving at 55 miles per hour, five seconds of driving is equal to 100 yards, nearly the length of a football field.

You may already know the danger of using cell phones and other electronic devices while driving, but distracted driving is defined as anything that takes your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel or your mind off driving.

Other common driving distractions include:

- adjusting the music
- eating and drinking
- grooming or putting on makeup
- interacting with other passengers
- texting

Young and inexperienced drivers are the most likely to be involved in a distracted driving accident, but no drivers are immune to the dangers. Studies have shown that texting while driving impairs your

ability to drive as much as — or even worse than — being drunk behind the wheel.

#### STAYING FOCUSED, STAYING SAFE

Thankfully, distracted driving accidents are completely preventable. If you have a new driver in your family, talk about the risks of all forms of distracted driving, not just texting or talking on the phone. Encourage everyone in your family to leave their smartphones in the glove compartment or another inaccessible place to avoid the temptation to check while on the road.

Don't be afraid to call out distracted drivers who are putting you and others in danger. Offer to read or send a text for him, or suggest she pull over to make a phone call.

\* Statistics from [distraction.gov](http://distraction.gov) (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)



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This publication in no way seeks to serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Consult your doctor before undertaking any form of medical treatment or adopting any exercise program or dietary guidelines.

# 3 WAYS

## *a Hospital Patient Portal Can Make Your Life Easier*

OUR PATIENT PORTAL CAN HELP SIMPLIFY  
MEDICAL MATTERS.

1

### CONVENIENCE.

With a personal, private Portal account, you have 24-hour access to your hospital inpatient records. All you need is a computer or device that is hooked up to the Internet.

2

### ACCESS.

It's easy to review your discharge plan and health information — even while you're on vacation. Only you can see what's in your account, but you can arrange to give a family member access, and you can share documents with your doctors.

3

### LESS PAPER.

Online health records are the wave of the future. You'll appreciate how easy it is to view and manage your information in the Portal.

### GET STARTED WITH MY HEALTH HOME

If you've had an overnight stay in the hospital, it's important that you have a personal Portal account.

Why? When you're discharged from the hospital, we do everything we can to help you understand and follow instructions for your recovery.

The Portal enhances your ability to keep on track with follow-up orders. And inside the Portal, you'll find health and wellness information specifically for your needs.

**Setting up a personal My Health Home account is free — and easy.**

Start the process the next time you are at the hospital or as you register for an inpatient stay.

1. At registration, share or confirm your email address.
2. We will send you an email with a link to set up your personal Portal account.
3. When you're in the Portal, follow the easy step-by-step instructions.
4. Visit your Portal account to view information about your hospital stay, download records and share information with your outpatient doctors.
5. Bookmark the Portal site and check it regularly for your updates, health information and links to other sites.

We want our patients to stay informed and involved in their healthcare every step of the way.

To learn more, visit [BigBendHealthcare.com](http://BigBendHealthcare.com) and click on "My Health Home Patient Portal."