



# The Beacon

The Newsletter of  
Med-Cert, Inc.  
Volume 1  
Issue 8  
July 2003

## Med-Cert Medical Management Resources

*"Guiding your way to better health management"*

### Protect Yourself from Prescription Errors

#### *Understanding Your Medications*

The single most important way you can stay healthy is to be an active member of your own healthcare team. Understanding the importance your medication plays in your treatment is a big part of that. To get the fullest benefit from your prescription, avoid problems, and reduce possible side effects, ask your doctor or pharmacist the following questions:

- What is the name of the medicine? What is it supposed to do?
- What is the dose of the medicine?
- Are there food, drinks, other medicines, or activities I should avoid while taking this medicine?
- What are the possible side effects of the medicine? What should I do if they occur?
- How long will I need to take the medication?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- What should I do if I accidentally take more than the recommended dose?
- How often will the medicine's effects be checked? For example, checking your cholesterol level if you are taking a medicine to lower it.
- Is there any written information I can take home with me? (Most pharmacies have information sheets that you can use as an at-home reference.)

When you pick up your medicine at the pharmacy, check the label carefully to be sure it is the medicine you were prescribed by your doctor. In addition,

ask your pharmacist any questions you might have about the prescription.

#### *First-Time Prescription*

When your doctor prescribes a medication for you for the first time, make sure to tell him or her the following:

- The names of all medicines you are currently taking, including both over-the-counter and prescription medication as well as any dietary supplements. It is important for your doctor to know this information in order to prescribe the medicine that will be the most helpful. (Keep a list of medicines and how to take them.)
- Any concerns you have about using your medication. For example, if cost is a concern there may be a generic drug or another lower cost medicine you can take.
- If you are allergic to any medication or have had troubling side effects from a medication that has been prescribed to you.
- If you are or might become pregnant, or if you are nursing a baby.
- Any illnesses or problems for which another doctor or health professional is treating you.

#### *Assessing Effectiveness*

During your treatment, you should schedule a follow-up visit to your doctor to monitor your progress. Make sure to tell him or her:

- About any problems you are having with your prescription.

- About any side effects or problems you have had since starting to take the prescription.
- About any new prescriptions that another doctor may have given you and any over-the-counter medicines or dietary supplements that you started taking since your last doctor's visit.
- How you are feeling since starting the medication.

### Did you Know...



Even if you think you have your blood pressure under control, you may want to revisit the numbers. The U.S. government has recently revised its definition of high blood pressure to include numbers previously considered ideal. Now, any reading of 120/80 mm Hg or higher is considered something to watch or to treat. Have your blood pressure checked soon to see how it stacks up against the new numbers.

### Heartburn-Free Living

*Have you ever experienced any of the following symptoms?*

- Burning pain behind the lower breastbone
  - Burning pain that travels up the neck
  - Feeling of ingested food or liquid coming back up the throat (reflux)
  - Reflux that gets worse when bending over or lying down
  - An acidic or bitter taste in the mouth
- If so, you may have a condition that requires a medical professional's care. These symptoms may indicate anything from simple heartburn to

more serious conditions such as hiatal hernia or gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). The good news is that, regardless of what is causing your pain, you can get control over these symptoms with a few easy changes.

### *Easy Lifestyle Changes That Help*

**Loosen your belt** - Wearing loose clothing will decrease pressure on your abdomen, making it less likely that acid reflux will occur. You know your clothing is too tight if you cannot easily fit two fingers inside your waistband.

**Avoid Food Triggers** - Although they may taste good, the discomfort that results from eating certain foods may make a few items off limits.

**Relax and Unwind** - Stress may increase heartburn symptoms, so it is important to take time for you everyday. Try reclining slightly with a good book, a movie, or your favorite music.

**Make a Meal Last** - Stretch out your eating time over at least 20 minutes. If you eat too fast, you are more likely to overeat and induce heartburn. Drinking water with your meals also may help you to slow your pace.

**Resist Reclining** - Lying down on a full stomach or while you eat increases pressure on the abdomen, which can lead to heartburn. Give your stomach time to digest food properly by remaining upright for at least three hours after you finish eating.

### *How do you know if you should be concerned about your heartburn?*

If you suffer from persistent heartburn two or more days a week, even though you have treated it and changed your diet, it could be acid reflux disease. Heartburn, a painful burning sensation in your chest, is the most common symptom of acid reflux disease. Acid reflux disease can result from the persistent presence of acid in your esophagus.

### *Talk to your doctor now about the long-term risks*

Over time, the acid that causes heartburn can lead to serious damage to your esophagus called erosive esophagitis. If left untreated, it could lead to ulcers of the esophagus, cancer of the esophagus, asthma, chronic coughing, wheezing, or inflammation of the throat, voice box or airways. Only your physician can diagnose acid reflux disease and determine if there is any damage to your esophagus, so it is important to talk to your doctor.

### *Four Triggers That May Surprise You*

You already may be aware of some of the common heartburn triggers, such as smoking or fatty foods, but did you know that the following items could trigger heartburn symptoms, too?

**1. Peppermint Gum** - Peppermint relaxes the muscles in the lower esophagus, which may allow stomach acid to flow up into your esophagus.

**2. Anti-Inflammatory Medications** - Some medications can cause heartburn symptoms. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen do so by irritating the stomach lining.

**3. Tomato Sauce** - The acids in tomatoes and tomato products may exacerbate your symptoms by irritating the stomach lining.

**4. Birth Control Pills** - These pills can decrease the strength of the esophageal sphincter over time.



### *A Bad Bottle Habit*

If you are in the habit of washing and reusing plastic water bottles, you may want to limit the practice. Washing water bottles before you reuse them can help cut down on illness-causing bacteria. However, researchers caution that washing and reusing disposable water bottles repeatedly may accelerate the breakdown of the plastic, increasing your exposure to potentially harmful chemicals. Limit yourself to one or two reuses.

**Benefit:** Protecting your immune system can make your RealAge as much as 6 years younger

### *Incredible Cranberries*

Cool off this summer by sipping cranberry juice each day. It might make your heart healthier.

Cranberries are full of heart-healthy flavonoids, nutrients that function as



antioxidants in the body and help reduce the risk of disease. Now, new research has revealed a correlation between cranberry juice consumption and a reduced risk of atherosclerosis, a common disease of the circulatory system.

**Benefit:** Eating a diverse diet that includes four servings of fruit per day can make your RealAge as much as 4 years younger.

### *Med-Cert provides:*

*Utilization Management, Maternity Management, Large Case and Wellness Disease Management, Transplant Coordination and Stop Loss Assessments*

**For information on any of our services, please call 866-261-5657 (toll free).**

**We are on the Internet. Visit us at:**

[www.medcertinc.com](http://www.medcertinc.com)

## *Recipe Corner*



### *Healthy Garden Quiche*

One clove garlic - finely chopped  
1/2 cup chopped onions  
1/2 cup sliced fresh mushrooms  
1-tablespoon diet margarine  
Eight slices lite cheese (slices cut up)  
2 tablespoons flour  
1-cup egg product (no cholesterol)  
1-cup skim milk  
1/2 cup shredded carrots  
1/4 teaspoon Italian seasoning

In saucepan, cook onion, garlic, and mushrooms in margarine. In bowl, toss cut up cheese pieces with flour. Add onion mixture and remaining ingredients. Mix carefully. Pour into lightly greased 9-inch pie plate. Bake in preheated 350-degree oven for 45 minutes or until set. Refrigerate leftovers.

This newsletter is brought to you courtesy of Med-Cert, Inc. Our sources for this edition were WebMD, Real Age - Health Tools and Tips for Living Younger, RecipeSource, and the National Health Observances web sites.

EDITING