



# NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND Benefit Trust

NNEBT is a non-profit Trust Fund providing Teamster members and their families with quality health and welfare benefits.

News from The Trust

NOVEMBER 2009

## Notes from the NNEBT

### ■ H1N1 SWINE FLU UPDATE

**Disease trackers at the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention** believe that the second wave of the H1N1 (Swine Flu) virus could be more severe than an average flu season because the virus is new and most people are not immune to it. The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination this year. This season, there will be two vaccinations: one for the seasonal flu and one for the H1N1 flu. The seasonal flu shot will not protect you against the H1N1 and the H1N1 shot will not protect you against the seasonal flu.

Members of Northern New England Benefit Trust's medical program are covered for flu shots if the shot is administered at your doctor's office or a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA) or Cigna affiliated convenience care clinic. Please call the member services number on your health insurance card (Cigna 1-800-244-6224; BCBSMA 1-800-241-0803) and ask for their list of clinics that would be considered a participating provider. You should always contact your primary care doctor for his/her advice on the H1N1 flu shot especially if you have chronic health issues. Some states, such as New Hampshire, will be providing free flu shots to residents they consider to be high risk. You should contact

the Public Health Director's office for the state you live in to confirm if you qualify for a free H1N1 vaccine.

### ■ RECONSTRUCTIVE BREAST SURGERY

**The Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act (WHCRA)** includes protection for individuals who elect breast reconstruction in connection with a mastectomy. WHCRA provides that group health plans and health insurance issuers that provide coverage for medical and surgical benefits with respect to mastectomies. It must also cover certain mastectomy benefits, including reconstructive surgery and the treatment of complications (such as lymphedema, which is a condition of localized fluid retention and tissue swelling). If reconstructive breast surgery following a mastectomy is something you wish to explore, your medical provider will be your best source of information as he or she will authorize all reconstructive surgery with your insurance carrier, be it Cigna Healthcare or Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts.

■ **OPEN ENROLLMENT IS JANUARY 1 For Municipal Members Or Members With Monthly Eligibility With Northern New England Benefit Trust.** Open enrollment is the time of year when members covered through a municipality



may add or delete dependents to their health insurance coverage. Throughout the year if a municipal member has a life-changing event (birth, adoption, marriage, divorce, death of a spouse, etc.), the member has 30 days to notify the Trust of the event so that the member's family status may be changed accordingly and the employer's corresponding remittance for coverage changed. For example, if a municipal member were married on September 15 and did not notify NNEBT within 30 days that he/she wished to add a spouse to the policy, open enrollment is that member's opportunity to add his/her spouse to the coverage plan. The member should always notify the employer as well of any life-changing events so that the employer and Northern New England Benefit Trust may co-ordinate on family status and eligibility. Please contact your employer immediately if you wish to make changes for the coming year.

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# Better Blood Pressure

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

**Is your blood pressure staying too high?** In addition to prescribed medications, lifestyle changes can help bring it down to a healthier level, according to the American Heart Association and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). To learn more about lowering blood pressure with lifestyle, take the quiz.



**1. Long-term effects of untreated high blood pressure (HBP) include:**

- a. Heart disease
- b. Stroke
- c. Kidney failure
- d. All of the above

**2. The best physical activity for lowering blood pressure is aerobic exercise.**

- True  False

**3. The risk factor with serious impact on blood pressure is:**

- a. High-protein diet
- b. Alcohol abstinence
- c. Tobacco use
- d. None of the above

**4. The recommended sodium limit for people with HBP is 2,300 mg daily.**

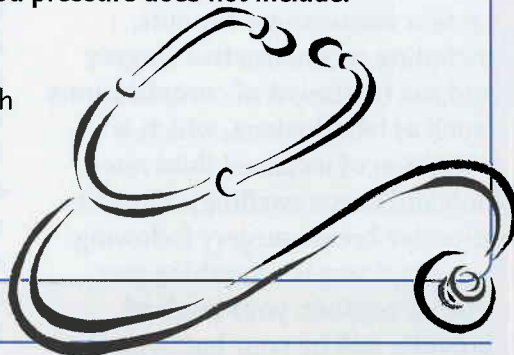
- True  False

**5. The DASH diet for lowering blood pressure does not include:**

- a. Fruits and vegetables
- b. Full-fat dairy products
- c. Lean meat, poultry and fish
- d. Cereals and grains

**6. Nearly 25% of adult Americans have hypertension.**

- True  False



and excess alcohol consumption; the recommended limit is 2 drinks a day for men and 1 for women.

4. *False.* To help control HBP the American Heart Association recommends a daily limit of 1,500 mg of sodium for people with HBP and those at high risk for developing it, including African Americans and middle-aged and older adults. The limit for healthy people at lower risk for HBP is 2,300 mg (1 teaspoon of salt) a day.

5. *b.* The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet includes low-fat or non-fat dairy foods, and at least 8 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Substituting whole grains for refined grains plays a role as well. NHLBI research shows this diet works as effectively as some blood pressure medications in some people.

6. *False.* Nearly a third of adults have HBP while more than half of those age 60+ have it.

**More info** ▶ National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

## What the Numbers Mean

The first (higher) number represents the *systolic* pressure exerted as your heart is pumping blood. The second (lower) number represents the *diastolic* pressure exerted by the heart at rest, between beats. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

### NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

Category	Systolic	Diastolic
High Blood Pressure	140 or higher	and 90 or higher
High Normal	130-139	and 85-89
Normal	120-129	and 80-84

A level *below* 120/80 ("120 over 80") is considered ideal. **Note:** If you have diabetes or kidney disease, your provider will diagnose high blood pressure in 2 visits if your reading each time is 130/80 or higher.

## ANSWERS

1. *d.* High blood pressure, or hypertension, usually starts slowly and silently – without symptoms. Serious effects such as heart disease, stroke or kidney failure usually develop much later.

2. *True.* Any activity that involves moderate aerobic exercise performed at least 5 days a week can significantly lower blood pressure. Aerobic refers to activity you can perform nonstop for several minutes at a slightly elevated heart rate; progress gradually to 30 to

60 minutes per day – with your provider's approval. *Tip:* Even 10 minutes of exercise 3 times a day can help lower blood pressure.

3. *c.* People with hypertension who smoke or chew tobacco experience significantly higher rates of cardiovascular disease – a good reason to quit. Smoking causes blood vessels to narrow, forcing the heart to beat faster and work harder. *Tip:* Though moderate alcohol intake may aid heart health, there is a direct connection between HBP



**B**elieve it or not, you can drop pounds and still enjoy eating. Instead of cutting out food, cut portion sizes, and choose lighter alternatives. For example:

- 1. Replace a 2-ounce bag of potato chips with 1 cup of plain popcorn to save 141 calories.
- 2. Cut 125 to 150 calories by sipping mineral water with a lime twist instead of wine or beer.
- 3. Cut 30 to 60 calories per tablespoon by using reduced-fat mayonnaise instead of regular.
- 4. Reduce the size of your meat portions from 6 ounces to 3, about the size of a deck of cards.
- 5. Replace your doughnut or cinnamon bun with a whole-grain English muffin.
- 6. Dining out: Choose baked, broiled or grilled chicken or fish rather than red meat or deep-fried foods. Try vegetarian pizza with less cheese and no fatty meats.

## CALORIE CUTTING 13 Easy Ways



Need to lose but love to eat? *Get moving.* Burning an extra 150 calories each day in planned exercise can help you drop  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound a week. Any activity helps. The key is frequency.

- 7. Replace a candy bar with a banana for more nutrition and about 100 fewer calories.
- 8. Choose canned fruit packed in natural juice rather than syrup.
- 9. Limit peanut butter to 1 tablespoon per sandwich.
- 10. Split dessert with a friend.
- 11. Replace a can of regular cola with a tall glass of water.
- 12. Steam your vegetables rather than sauté them in oil or butter.
- 13. Have a low-calorie day to save up for a treat – dessert, dinner out or a special occasion.

## At Home with Exercise

Let's face it – gyms and group exercise aren't for everyone. If you're the type who'd rather work up a sweat in the comfort of your home, here's how to make the most of your personal gym:

- **Create a dedicated space.** Post a "workout zone" sign, or cover the area with a rubber mat. Stake your territory and you are more likely to use it.
- **Gear up.** Choose shoes and clothing appropriate for your needs.
- **Make exercise a pleasure.** Yes, you can. Get moving to your favorite show or to music (but not too loud – protect your hearing).
- **Exercise to TV, video or Internet fitness programs.** You can re-search DVD reviews on the Web to find ones best suited for you.
- **No room for equipment?** How about pushups, crunches, jogging in place, or dancing? Invest in portable, inexpensive exercise bands, hand weights, a step bench or yoga mat.

*Note:* Gradually progress to 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. Get your provider's advice first if you have a medical condition or are new to exercise.

**MORE TIPS:** You can include 100 to 200 calories' worth of treats every day, depending on your nutritional needs. And try a new cookbook that emphasizes flavor instead of fat for fewer calories. Remember, eating is about health and pleasure.



**Home exercise** can be as effective as a gym workout with the added benefits of privacy and saving money and commute time. Running out of excuses?

