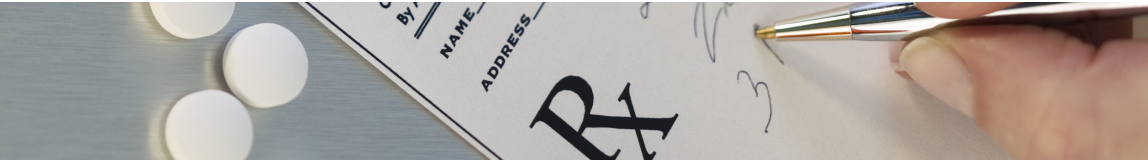


To Your Health!

Benefits Newsletter for VCCCD Employees

Spring 2010



Prescription Drugs Most Used By VCCCD Employees and Retirees *Are you in the top three?*

As you can see in the chart below, the three top prescription drugs utilized last year were **antihyperlipidemic** (high cholesterol), **antihypertensive** (high blood pressure) and **anti-depressants**. A key concept to keep in mind in using these types of prescription drugs is that lifestyle choices do play a huge role in maintaining optimal health. As always, please consult your doctor for advice.

See the articles on the following pages for suggestions on how to improve your health if you have one of these conditions.

2008-2009	Anti-hyperlipidemic	Anti-hypertensive	Anti-depressants
Number of Prescriptions	3,635	3,489	2,181
Insurance Paid Amount	\$395,636	\$169,939	\$160,860
Average Paid Per Prescription	\$108.84	\$48.71	\$73.76

Data provided by Anthem Blue Cross



Ventura County Federation of College Teachers
AFT Local 1828,
AFL-CIO

Service Employees International Union
SEIU Local 99



Ventura County Community College District

Presented by:

Joint AFT/Management Health Benefits Committee

ASCC Health Insurance Committee

VCCCD Wellness Program Update:

Are We Losing It?

Yes! Not our sanity, but lots of pounds. The weekly Weight Watchers meetings are successfully taking place at each campus location and the DAC. At last check, the total combined pounds lost for all locations was 507.8! Participants who signed up and attend the required number of meetings will have the entire cost paid by Anthem Blue Cross.

Did You Go On The Bus?

In early March, the Anthem Health Screening Bus visited each campus location and the DAC. We had a great turnout with 287 people attending. If you participated, we hope that the information provided to you from the Bus and the health risk assessment were valuable tools in taking care of your health.

Location	Number of People	Total Pounds Lost
Onxard College	20	124.2
Moorpark College	20	139.6
Ventura College	12	112.6
DAC	20	131.4
Total	72	507.8

Oxnard College and the DAC began their program on February 4th. Moorpark and Ventura Colleges began February 11th.

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To Your Health!

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Cholesterol - The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

What does cholesterol do?

It's vital to many functions within the body such as aiding in the production of hormones, playing a role in digestion, and being a structural component of cells. Your liver makes the cholesterol that your body needs. You also get cholesterol from the food you eat.



If you have too much cholesterol, it starts to build up in your arteries. To understand what happens, think about how a clog forms in the pipe under a kitchen sink. Like the buildup of grease in the pipe, the buildup of cholesterol narrows your arteries and makes it harder for the blood to flow through them. It also

reduces the amount of blood that gets to your body tissues, including your heart. High cholesterol doesn't make you feel sick, but can lead to serious problems, including heart attack and stroke.

What lifestyle changes can you make?

- **Reduce the amount of saturated fat you eat.**
- **Make better food choices.**
- **Lose 5 - 10 pounds.**
- **Exercise on a consistent basis.**
- **Quit smoking.**

If you have high cholesterol, have your cholesterol checked regularly. This is done through a blood test. Your results can help your doctor know if lifestyle changes have helped.

What are the different kinds of cholesterol?

- Low-density lipoproteins (LDL) are “bad” cholesterol. LDL is mostly fat with only a small amount of protein.
- High-density lipoproteins (HDL) are “good” cholesterol. HDL is more protein than fat. It helps clear the bad cholesterol from your blood so it does not clog your arteries.
- Triglycerides are another type of fat in the blood that can affect your health. If you have high triglycerides and high LDL, your chances of having a heart attack are higher.

How can you remember what's good and what is bad? It may help to think of HDL as the “Healthy” cholesterol and LDL as the “Lousy” cholesterol. Or you could remember that HDL should be HIGH and LDL should be LOW.

What are the best levels for each type of cholesterol?

- LDL should be less than **100**. A level of 160 or above is high.
- HDL should be more than **40**. The higher your HDL, the better. A high HDL number can help offset a high LDL number.
- Triglycerides should be less than **150**.

The Pressure is On

What is blood pressure? Blood pressure is a measure of how hard the blood pushes against the walls of your arteries as it moves through your body. It's normal for blood pressure to go up and down throughout the day, but if it stays up you have high blood pressure.



Another name for high blood pressure is hypertension. High blood pressure is called a “silent killer,” because it doesn't usually cause symptoms while it is causing damage.

What are the causes? In most cases, doctors can't point to the exact cause. But several things are known to raise blood pressure, including being very overweight, drinking too much alcohol, having a family history of high blood pressure, eating too much salt and getting older. Your blood pressure may also rise if you are not very active, don't eat enough potassium and calcium, or have a condition called insulin resistance.

What are the symptoms? High blood pressure doesn't usually cause symptoms. Most people don't know they have it until they go to the doctor for some other reason.

Without treatment, high blood pressure can damage the heart, brain, kidneys, or eyes. This damage causes problems like coronary artery disease, stroke, and kidney failure. Very high blood pressure can cause headaches, vision problems, nausea, and vomiting.

How is high blood pressure diagnosed? Normal blood pressure is 120/80. Your blood pressure must be at least 140/90 on three or more separate occasions to cause concern, and it is usually measured one to two weeks apart. You may have to check your blood pressure at home if there is reason to think the readings in the doctor's office aren't accurate. You may have what is called white-coat hypertension, which is blood pressure that goes up just because you're at the doctor's office.

What lifestyle changes can you make?

- **Lose extra weight.**
- **Exercise.**
- **Limit alcohol to 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women.**
- **Include 3,500 mg of potassium in your diet every day. Fresh, unprocessed whole foods have the most potassium. These foods include meat, fish, nonfat and low-fat dairy products, and many fruits and vegetables.**

Adults should have a blood pressure of less than **120/80**. High blood pressure is **140/90** or higher. Many people fall into the category in between, called prehypertension. People with prehypertension can make lifestyle changes to bring their blood pressure down. These can help prevent or delay high blood pressure. Blood pressure consists of two numbers, systolic and diastolic. Someone with a systolic pressure of 120 and a diastolic pressure of 80 has a blood pressure of 120/80, or “120 over 80.”

- The systolic number shows how hard the blood pushes when the heart is pumping.
- The diastolic number shows how hard the blood pushes between heartbeats, when the heart is relaxed and filling with blood.



Antidepressants - Take with Therapy

There is an increasing trend in healthcare of medications being prescribed to treat mental health conditions and symptoms such as depression, stress and anxiety. Medication can reduce the symptoms of depression, but it doesn't treat the underlying problem.

The research on these conditions shows that combining both talk therapy and medication is more effective than medication alone. Talk therapy, also known as psychotherapy, can help get to the root of the depression, change negative thinking patterns, and provide new ways of coping. Emotional insights and coping skills acquired during therapy can have lasting positive effects on your mental health.

In addition to therapy, other effective treatments for depression include exercise, meditation, relaxation techniques, stress management, support groups, and self-help steps.

While these treatments require more time and effort initially, their advantage over depression medication is that they boost your mood without any adverse effects.

Is depression medication right for you?

If you're considering antidepressants as a treatment option, make sure you carefully consider all of your treatment options.

Questions to ask yourself and a mental health professional

- Is my depression severe enough to justify drug treatment?
- Is medication the best option for treating my depression?
- Am I willing to tolerate unwanted side effects?
- What non-drug treatments might help my depression?
- What self-help strategies might reduce my depression?



VCCCD Health Benefits Contact Information Directory

Anthem Blue Cross (Medical Plan)

P.O. Box 60007
Los Angeles, CA 90060
800-288-2539
www.anthem.com/ca

Health Net (Medical Plan)

P.O. Box 9103
Van Nuys, CA 91409
800-522-0088
www.healthnet.com

Kaiser Permanente (Medical Plan)

P.O. Box 7004
Downey, CA 90242-7004
800-464-4000
www.kaiserpermanente.org

Delta Dental

P.O. Box 7736
San Francisco, CA 94120
866-499-3001
www.deltadentalins.com

Vision Service Plan (ASCC)

P.O. Box 997105
Sacramento, CA 95899-7105
800-877-7195
www.vsp.com

Medical Eye Services (Faculty)

P.O. Box 25209
Santa Ana, CA 92799-5209
800-877-6372
www.mesvision.com

MetLife

P.O. Box 3016
Utica NY 13504
800-638-6420
www.metlife.com

American Fidelity (Cafeteria/125 Plan)

3200 Inland Empire Blvd., Suite 260
Ontario, CA 91764
800-965-9180
www.afadvantage.com

WellPoint NextRx

P.O. Box 961025
Fort Worth, TX 76161
866-274-6825
www.anthem.com/ca