

To Your Health!

Benefits Newsletter for VCCCD Employees

Winter 2011



Cool Ways To Cope With The Winter Blues

Did your motivation take a hike? Does hibernating throughout the winter sound a little too good? Have you misplaced your sense of humor? Each season of the year brings a unique change in weather patterns and although our winter is considered mild in this part of the country, it still affects the way we feel. So if you are experiencing the winter blues, here are some ways to help raise your mood during the winter months:

- ★ **Move it, Move it** – Exercise is not just for weight loss but also helps the mind by releasing endorphins that can improve your mood and energy.
- ★ **Here Comes the Sun** – In addition to providing Vitamin D, the sunlight can also improve your mood. The best part is that it's free! How about a walk on a sunny day!
- ★ **Avoid those cocktails** - Alcohol is actually a depressant and can add to the blues instead of alleviating them.
- ★ **Have a Healthy Kitchen** – Stock the shelves with healthy foods that make you feel good. What you eat can affect your mood.
- ★ **What about you?** – Treat yourself to a funny movie, yoga, a spa day, spending time with friends/family or something else you enjoy doing. This can motivate you and lift your mood.
- ★ **Zzzzz** – People naturally want to sleep more during the winter. With our busy lives we sometimes burn the candle at both ends. Extinguish the candle when you are feeling tired and get the much needed rest you deserve.



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

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Boost Your Mood!

The Pursuit of Happiness

Experiencing two or more weeks of any of the following symptoms, may be a sign of depression.	
Inability to think clearly	Inability to sleep or sleeping too much
Increase/loss of appetite	Physical complaints with no apparent cause
Inability to take care of responsibilities	Feelings of hopelessness/emptiness
Irritability or agitation	Suicidal thoughts

Sometimes the winter months can set off more than just the winter blues. Seasonal affective disorder, aka SAD, is a form of depression seemingly triggered by the shorter days, colder temperatures and gloomy climate of winter. Toss in a lack of sunlight, unhealthy eating patterns, and curtailed or non-existent exercise routines and the winter months become the perfect petri dish for SAD.

With any form of depression, when our motivation and ability to enjoy life shrinks beyond recognition, it's time to take notice. Getting help is not a sign of weakness, but a way to improve overall health and happiness.

The treatment for depression is two-fold. First, a mental health professional can help identify the underlying causes and develop appropriate coping mechanisms; Second, if a medication is deemed necessary, identify the right medication and dosage.

While antidepressants can bring relief, they are not a cure. Medication may treat some symptoms of depression, but can't change underlying contributions to depression in your life. Antidepressants won't solve your problems if you're depressed because of a pessimistic outlook, or an unhealthy relationship. That's where therapy and other lifestyle changes come in.

Studies show that therapy works just as well as antidepressants in treating depression, and it's better at preventing relapse once treatment ends. While depression medication only helps as long as you're taking it, the emotional insights and coping skills acquired during therapy can have a more lasting effect on depression. However, if your depression is so severe that you don't have the energy to pursue treatment, a brief trial of antidepressants may boost your mood to a level where you can focus on therapy.



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 mood without any adverse effects.

This general information is not intended to diagnose any medical condition or to replace your healthcare professional.

Reap the Benefits!

Generics Anyone?



There is a significant cost difference between brand and generic drugs. Because of this, it is a common belief that generics are inferior products. According to the FDA, this isn't the case. A generic drug manufacturer must ensure that the drug it is producing contains the same active ingredients as its brand name counterpart.

Additionally, the generic must prove that the active ingredient enters and leaves the bloodstream as rapidly and completely as its branded twin. Dosage form, concentration, and method of intake must also be equal. Variances between a generic and its equivalent are confined to color, shape, taste, inactive ingredients, preservatives and packaging. In rare cases, allergic reactions have been recorded to the preservatives and/or inactive ingredients in both the generic and its brand counterpart.

Antidepressant Medications

If your doctor prescribes an antidepressant, be sure to ask him/her if a generic drug is right for you. Each of the several classes of antidepressants has a list of common side effects including withdrawal symptoms if abruptly stopped. If you are already taking an antidepressant, be sure to consult your physician before changing or discontinuing your regimen.



Below is a table that shows the substantial cost savings by choosing a generic drug instead of a brand name drug. The data was obtained from local Ventura County Costco and Target pharmacies:

Retail Pharmacy	Costco				Target	
	30	30	90	90	30	90
Number of Tablets	30	30	90	90	30	90
	Costco Member	Non Member	Costco Member	Non Member		
Brand Prozac 20 mg	\$189.25	\$192.63	\$556.84	\$577.05	\$220.90	\$633.99
Generic Fluoxetine 20 mg	\$4.75	\$7.41	\$5.93	\$9.53	\$4.00	\$10.00

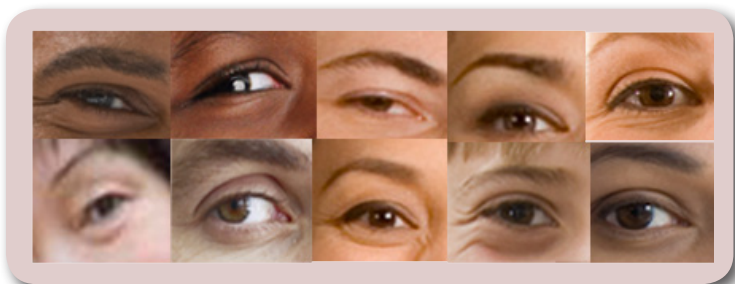
This information was obtained through Costco and Target and could change at any time.

Seeing Your Health

Your Eyes are the Windows to Overall Health

Having an eye exam can help more than just your eyes; it also adds to your overall health. During an eye exam, health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol can be detected. If detected during the early stages, these chronic conditions can be diagnosed before symptoms emerge.

Vision Service Plan (VSP) has a Vision Care Eye Health Management Program that focuses on early treatment and management of both eye and related health conditions. VSP partners with health insurance companies, such as Anthem Blue Cross, and can send data securely into the health insurance company's disease management system. This way, VSP members who need care the most can be provided with help in preventing any serious conditions from advancing.



Remember to visit the MyVCCCD portal for benefit information. Go to the Employee Information tab, Benefits information section to view information on medical, dental, life insurance and more.

By clicking on the To Your Health link at the bottom of Benefits Information section, you can also find additional information on generic vs. brand drugs and all archived *To Your Health* newsletters.



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

Express Scripts (Anthem Prescriptions)

Home Delivery Service
P.O. Box 66558, St. Louis, MO 63166
866-297-1013 www.anthem.com/ca

Health Net (Medical Plan)

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

Health Net (Mail Order)

CVS CAREMARK
P.O. Box 94467, Palatine, IL 60094
888-624-1139 www.healthnet.com

Kaiser Permanente (Medical Plan)

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

Kaiser Permanente (Mail Order)

9521 Dalen St., 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 enrolled in Anthem)

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

Medical Eye Services (Faculty enrolled in Anthem)

P.O. Box 25209, Santa Ana, CA 92799
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