

To Your Health!

Benefits Newsletter for VCCCD Employees

Spring 2009

Know Thy Numbers Better!

You probably have your social security number, family members' birth dates, and ATM pin codes concisely stored in your memory and available at the flip of a neuron; but, what about the equally important numbers that help flip those neurons like your blood pressure or your fasting blood glucose levels? Are those numbers categorized somewhere within your memory under the "I'm Okay" or "I'm Working On It" column; or, are they happily residing in the "Ignorance is Bliss" column? Familiarizing ourselves with the essential numbers that frame our health and allow us to gauge its status should rank right up there with our pin codes! So let's talk about these essential numbers and how knowing them might work to our advantage. Later, we'll discuss Anthem Blue Cross's new website search engine that makes staying on top of these numbers a snap!



3. Compare baseline and newer readings to Mr./Ms. I. M. Healthy's benchmark numbers to gauge the appropriateness of any change.

It's often said that the key to making better healthcare decisions is to be more informed. One important way to do this is to:

1. Establish your baseline numbers – your personal benchmarks that define what's "normal" for you.
2. At periodic intervals, compare newer readings to baseline readings to note any changes from your "norm."

The goal is to observe over the passage of time, any departures from your established baseline, while comparing whether those changes are toward or away from Mr./Ms. I. M. Healthy's benchmarks. In other words, the goal is to stay one step ahead of developing trends and to spot "unusual for you" tendencies as quickly as possible. By staying on top of your numbers, you develop an advantage – you have the ability to move more quickly to neutralize suspect developments.

www.vccd.edu/departments/human_resources/benefits/



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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To Your Health!

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Your Baseline Numbers

Roll Up Your Sleeves

So how do you establish your baseline numbers? First you have to figuratively “roll up your sleeves.” That is, “roll up your sleeves” and find the time to see your family physician. Upon arrival, keep those sleeves rolled up and have your baseline blood pressure, triglycerides, cholesterol, and blood glucose levels measured. Make sure to ask for a copy of the results for handy reference and keep in mind that regular and periodic screenings are necessary to stay one step ahead of any developing trends. Also, like flu shots at the local supermarket or blood pressure monitors at the mall, you may be

surprised when the next opportunity to have an impromptu screening crosses your path – like a local health fair.

Knowing your numbers can keep surprises at bay. If you are surprised by impromptu screening results, you’ll know what the numbers mean and how to proceed.



Who are Mr./Ms. I. M. Healthy?

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Mr. Healthy has a waistline smaller than 40 inches and Ms. Healthy has a waistline smaller than 35 inches. They both know that maintaining a normal weight can actually add an average of 11 years to their lifespans.

The American Diabetes Association says they both have a fasting plasma glucose level over 70mg/dL but under 100 mg/dL, while the NIH says their blood pressure, on average, should be below 130/85mm Hg. Both Healthys have noted that their blood pressure readings taken in the evening or after a high-fat or salty meal can read slightly higher and are aware that this is generally not a cause for concern.

The staff at the Mayo Clinic says both Healthys have “good cholesterol” or HDL cholesterol readings above 50mg/dL, while their triglyceride levels come in under 150mg/dL.

Overall, it’s said that the “I. M. Healthy Family” serves as an excellent point of reference when assessing the appropriateness of biometric results and any subsequent changes.

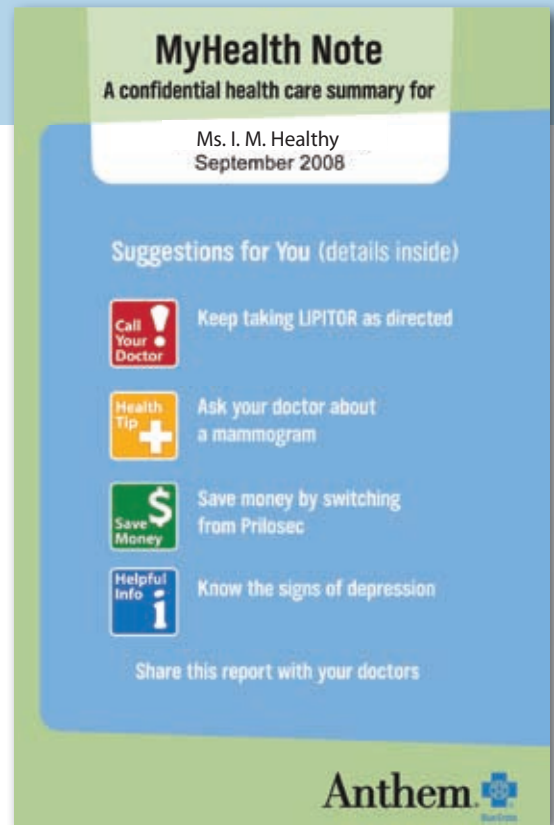
To further explain benchmark and baseline numbers, the American Heart Association and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute want us to be on the lookout for a grouping of three or more of the following personal biometric readings and, if present, take those readings to a physician for further evaluation.

- **Elevated waist circumference:** Men - Equal to or greater than 40 inches (102 cm); Women - Equal to or greater than 35 inches (88 cm)
- **Elevated triglycerides:** Equal to or greater than 150 mg/dL
- **Reduced HDL (“good”) cholesterol:** Men - Less than 40 mg/dL; Women - Less than 50 mg dL
- **Elevated blood pressure:** Equal to or greater than 130/85 mm Hg
- **Elevated fasting glucose:** Equal to or greater than 100 mg/dL

MyHealth Advantage

Helping You Look Out for You

On March 1, 2009 Anthem Blue Cross introduced **MyHealth Advantage**, a cutting edge addition to its successful 360° Health Program. This automatic and free service is actually a sophisticated search engine designed to help you look out for you! This unique software loads your medical claims, pharmacy claims, lab results, etc., into its databank and then compares your data to pre-established medical standards and best clinical practices (like the I. M. Healthy Family's benchmarks). In the event the search engine discovers a past due routine test, the program not only sends you a note (**MyHealth Note**), but sends a note to your physician as well! **MyHealth Advantage** is designed to look for a myriad of healthcare gaps, including untimely filling of prescriptions, departures from standard condition/medication pairings, and even the presence of higher risk patterns. So be on the lookout for a **MyHealth Note** - your ticket to knowing thy numbers better!



Sample of MyHealth Note

Make the most of your Anthem Blue Cross Plan! Before making an appointment, verify with your doctor or specialist that they are a participating provider.



Medical Eye Services (MES) & Vision Service Plan (VSP) Updates

VSP recently launched the **GetFIT Program**, an online resource dedicated to your vision and how it can be affected by diet and exercise. You can take advantage of **GetFIT's** many tools, tips and inspirations by visiting <http://www.vsp.com/discovery/html/GetFIT.jsp>.



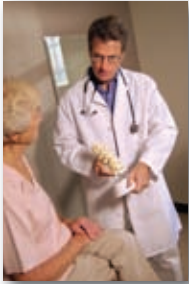
You can also get "in the know" by visiting MES's **Knowledge Center** available at <https://www.mesvision.com/knowledgeCenter/index.htm>. Check out the site's **Healthy Vision Tips** and learn what you can do to best protect your vision!

Membership is not required in either vision plan to access the wealth of knowledge available at both sites.

May is National Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month

The Silent Thief

Osteoporosis is known as “the silent thief” – it advances without any symptoms or discomfort until bones are so frail, they start to break. Those at high risk for osteoporosis are post-menopausal women, Caucasians / Asians with small thin frames, those having an immediate family member who as an adult has had a broken bone, and those using certain medications for cancer, asthma and arthritis. Other high risk factors include excessive use of alcohol and/or cigarettes, low calcium intake, and physical inactivity.



While osteoporosis is more common in women, twenty percent or two million of those diagnosed with the disorder, are men. In fact any male older than 50 is more likely to break a bone due to osteoporosis than he is to get prostate cancer! A woman's likelihood of developing osteoporosis is equal to her combined risk of breast, ovarian and uterine cancer!

Osteoporosis preventive screening services are covered by Anthem Blue Cross, Health Net and Kaiser as long as they are medically necessary under the terms and conditions of each plan. The following chart lists screening recommendations:

Osteoporosis Test aka Bone Mass Density Test	Women
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 65 and older • At onset of menopause • At any age with a long-standing absence of a menstrual cycle plus one or more risk factors • Upon physician recommendation
	Men
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 40 and older with one or more risk factors • Upon physician recommendation

Health Tip



Caffeine is naturally present in coffee and tea and is often added to soft drinks for its stimulant effect. Caffeine may play a factor in decreased calcium absorption – and calcium is an important component of healthy bones. A recent study suggests that drinking four or more cups of coffee per day may increase the risk of fractures. To help keep your bones in top shape, limit your daily caffeine intake to less than 330 mg.

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

Delta Dental

P.O. Box 7736
San Francisco, CA 94120
866-499-3001
www.deltadentalca.org

MetLife

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

Health Net (Medical Plan)

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

Vision Service Plan (ASCC)

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

American Fidelity (Cafeteria/125 Plan)

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

Kaiser Permanente (Medical Plan)

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

Medical Eye Services (Faculty)

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

WellPoint NextRx

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