

## Start your kids on a heart-healthy path

**Y**ou're there to help your children with their homework. And you remind them to brush their teeth.

But have you helped them do something good for their hearts lately?

You may think heart health is a grown-up concern. But it's never too early to start forming heart-healthy habits.

It's true that kids rarely get heart disease. But the process leading to adult heart disease can begin in childhood. That includes the slow buildup of fat and other substances in the arteries. It can put kids at risk for a heart attack or stroke when they grow up.

Other risk factors that can start in childhood:

- Obesity.
- Type 2 diabetes.
- High cholesterol.
- High blood pressure.

**Share the love.** February is American Heart Month. It's a great time to make some heart-healthy changes. For instance:

**Serve up good eats.** Saturated fats and trans fats can raise the risk of heart disease. Choose foods that are lower in saturated fat. That includes lean meat and low-fat

dairy. And limit foods that have trans fats. Those include cookies, cakes, crackers and pizza. Instead, load up on fruits and veggies.

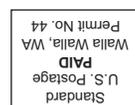
**Invite your kids into the kitchen.** Let them help you prepare healthy meals. It's a great way to teach them about good food choices.

**Encourage exercise.** Kids need 30 to 60 minutes of active time each day. Make being active a family affair:

- Go on walks or bike rides.
- Play sports together.
- Play fun, active games (hoops, anyone?) with your kids.

**Get your children checkups.** The doctor will check a child's weight, blood pressure and cholesterol. Be sure all the adults in the family get their checkups too.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; American Heart Association; UptoDate



# Test your cholesterol smarts

**D**o you know how to keep your cholesterol at a healthy level? These 5 must-know facts can help you get started.

**1. Your body needs cholesterol.**

This waxy substance is found in every cell in the body. It aids in vital functions like digestion.

Too much cholesterol can cause problems though. It can build up in arteries and lead to heart disease and stroke.

**2. There are good and bad types of cholesterol.**

Low-density lipoproteins, or LDL, are the bad kind. The higher the level of LDL in your blood, the higher your risk of heart disease.

HDL, or high-density lipoproteins, are known as the good kind. HDL carries cholesterol from other parts of the body to

the liver, where it can be removed. Higher levels of HDL mean you have a lower chance of getting heart disease.

**3. Testing is the only way to know if your cholesterol levels are within a healthy range.**

There are no signs or symptoms that let you know if your cholesterol levels aren't what they should be. But a simple blood test can let you know where you stand.

**4. Even young people should keep tabs on their cholesterol levels.**

The American Heart Association recommends cholesterol tests for everyone 20 years and older. Talk to your doctor about how often yours should be tested. It will depend on your health history and risk factors.

And the American Academy of

Pediatrics recommends children and teens have their cholesterol tested:

■ Once between the ages of 9 and 11.

■ Once between the ages of 18 and 21.

**5. To help control your cholesterol, cut down on foods high in saturated and trans fats.**

Those include:

■ Fatty meats.

■ Baked goods (like cookies and cakes).

■ Whole-milk dairy products and solid fats, such as butter.

You should also get plenty of exercise, reach and maintain a healthy weight, and not smoke.

Your doctor may also prescribe medicine to help you achieve optimal cholesterol levels.

Additional sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institutes of Health





# Make the switch

## CHOOSE HEALTHY FATS AND CARBS

**Y**ou want your food to taste good. But it should also be good for you. And you can have it both ways.

Start with simple swaps. Replace some of the bad fats and carbs in your diet with healthy ones.

**Fats: Choose liquid, not solid.** Solid fats stay thick at room temperature. They are also called saturated or trans fats. Examples include butter, animal fat, shortening and coconut oil.

These fats are in foods like:

- Regular cheeses.
- The skin or fat in meat and poultry.
- Baked goods.
- Most desserts.

It's best to avoid solid fats or save them for special days. Instead, try cooking with fats that stay liquid on your kitchen counter. And buy foods that are made only with these fats.

Examples are:

- Canola oil.
- Olive oil.
- Peanut oil.
- Sesame oil.
- Vegetable oil.

**Carbs: Choose complex over simple.** All carbs turn into sugar in the body. But complex carbs are higher in fiber than simple carbs. Whole grains are complex. Those include oats, barley and brown rice. These carbs are healthy and also fill you up.

## Improve your health with CCHP's new tool

Have you heard? We have a new health tool for adult members. It's called *My Health Discovery™*. And it can help you take steps on a path toward better health.

Here's how it works:

- Go to [www.cchealth.org/healthplan/health-ed.php](http://www.cchealth.org/healthplan/health-ed.php).
- Create an account. It takes just a couple minutes.
- Answer a few simple questions about your life.
- Get tips for improving your health.

The tool is unique in that it's personalized for you. Our goal is to help you be mindful and engaged with your health and habits. It addresses mental health too.

Simple carbs are made mostly of sugars. They include:

- Processed grains (like white flour).
- Some natural sugars (like fruit juice).
- The sugars added to foods and drinks.

Simple carbs have lots of calories and little or no health value. That's why it's best to limit or avoid them.

**Read the fine print.** Read food labels when you shop. The ingredients list tells you the types of fat in a food and if it's made with whole grain or is high in fiber. Check the nutrition info too. It lists the amount of sugar, so you can choose foods with less.

Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

# Advice nurses and urgent care

If you are sick or hurt, you may need urgent care. That means you need quick care but it's not an emergency. If you are not sure what kind of care you need, call the Advice Nurse line.

The Advice Nurse Unit is here to help Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) members. We are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including holidays. Call **877-661-6230, option 1**, to talk to an Advice Nurse.

If your call is about your child, have your child with you when you call. The nurse may need to ask your child questions. If your child is not with you

when you call, the Advice Nurse will not be able to help you. And that may delay getting care for your child.

Depending on your symptoms, you may be eligible for the following:

- An urgent care visit.
- A phone call with a CCHP doctor.
- To have an Advice Nurse order a prescription for your symptoms (only for certain symptoms).

In addition, nurses can give advice on topics such as:

- Questions on health care and meds.
- Infectious disease exposure.
- Caring for yourself or a family member.

- Current vaccine info for you or your child.
- Health resources in your community.

**Real patient stories.** "I called the Advice Nurse and told them I had back pain that would not go away. I was given tips on what I could do at home to help with the pain. My pain did not go away, so I called them back. The Advice Nurse helped me get a same-day urgent care appointment to see a doctor."

"My child was having trouble breathing. The Advice Nurse told me I should go to a children's hospital. At the hospital, we were told my child was really sick and that he needed to be seen. Their advice was important and saved my child's life."

## CASE MANAGERS

# Guides for your good health

**W**ould you like help with your health care needs? That's what our case managers do. They are a team of nurses and social workers. These health care experts can help you get the care you need. They will work with you, your family and your doctor to improve your health. In addition, they can connect you to needed local resources. The service is free for Contra Costa Health Plan members. This service is offered over the phone.

Ask for a case manager if you have:

- A hard time getting to your doctor visits, taking your meds as you should or eating well.



- Gone to the emergency room a lot (more than 3 times in a year).
- Gone to, or had to stay in, the hospital a lot (more than 2 times in a year).
- Difficulty with stable housing, lack of transportation to get to medical appointments, lack of food, or any other situation that may negatively affect your health.

## Call now

Get in touch with a case manager. Call **925-313-6887**.

- Please leave a message.
- Be sure to tell us what time we can reach you.
- We will return your call.
- You have the right to decline or stop this service at any time.

- Changes in your memory, mood, personality or behavior.
- Health issues that need to be watched closely.
- Any worries about caring for yourself or your loved ones.

## HEALTHY HABITS

# Dental care for the whole family

It's really pretty simple to keep a smile healthy. But even if you think you already know the best ways to care for teeth, you still have to put them into practice. So make these habits stick—and teach them to your kids:

**Brush enough.** Try to remember to brush your teeth twice each day. This helps remove plaque that can harm teeth. And when you use a toothpaste with fluoride, it helps protect your teeth even more. Brush for about 2 minutes. A soft brush will be gentle on your mouth.

**Floss once a day.** Brushing can't clean the tight spaces in between teeth. That's why you need to floss them too.

**See a dentist.** It's important to get regular cleanings and checkups.

**Limit sugary snacks.** Compared to sweets or sodas, veggies and low-fat cheeses are less likely to cause cavities. And they're more nutritious too.

**If you smoke or chew tobacco, try your best to quit.** Your provider can help.

**Take care of tiny teeth.** If you have little ones, they'll need help cleaning their teeth. You can:

- Brush their teeth twice a day as soon as they come in. But use just a tiny amount of toothpaste at first.
- Start flossing your child's teeth as soon as 2 teeth touch.
- Schedule their first dental checkup by their first birthday.
- Teach your older kids the good habits of brushing and flossing.



## » IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN DENTAL SERVICES AND ARE A:

- Medi-Cal member, call Denti-Cal at 800-322-6384 (TTY/TDD 711).
- County employee, call your dental insurance plan directly.
- SeniorHealth Plus member or IHSS member, call between 7 and 7:30 a.m. the Pittsburg Health Center at 925-431-2505, the West County Health Center at 510-374-1097 or the Martinez Health Center at 925-370-5300.

## JUST FOR KIDS

# What you can do to keep your smile

Here are some rules to help you keep your smile. The letters of one word in each sentence are scrambled. Can you put the letters in order so that the sentences make sense?

1. Brush your teeth at least **ewitc** a day.
2. Eat healthy **ofsod**.
3. At least once a day, **slofs**.
4. See your **endttsi** regularly.
5. Wear a mouth guard when you play **osrpts**.



Answers: 1. twice, 2. foods, 3. floss, 4. dentist, 5. sports.



# We're in this together

## A FAMILY PLAN FOR BETTER HEALTH

**L**ots of things are better as a family. And that includes getting and staying healthy.

So, moms and dads, get the whole family involved in being active and eating right. If that sounds tricky, here's a 5-step plan:

- 1. Make family time active time.** Bike to the library as a group. Or set off to explore a nearby park. Train for a 5K. And ask your kids for ideas too. Then follow through.
- 2. Stay away from screens.** Limit kids' screen time to 1 or 2 hours each day. And remember: Kids learn from their parents. So try to set a good example.
- 3. Keep a family activity log.** Track

everyone's progress and post the results on your fridge. For a sample log, go to [www.morehealth.org/parenttips](http://www.morehealth.org/parenttips).

**4. Stock up on healthy foods.** Put a bowl of washed fruit on the table. That way it's easy to see and grab. And shop smart at the grocery store. You can't fill up on chips or candy when there's none in the house.

**5. Gather in the kitchen.** Let your kids help you plan and prep healthy foods. Eat together as a family too, as much as you can. Table time helps kids and parents stay close—a real win-win.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; National Institutes of Health

# Have a heart-healthy Valentine's Day

**O**n Feb. 14, hearts are the star of the show. Why not plan a heart-healthy Valentine's Day? These 4 ideas can get you started:

**1. Roses are red...and so are strawberries.** Dip them in dark chocolate for a treat that's delicious and heart-healthy too.

To cook up a colorful dinner, consider bright red produce:

- Apples.
- Beets.
- Cherries.
- Grapes.
- Peppers.

**2. Exercise is key to a healthy heart.** So why not plan an active date with your sweetheart? Skate hand-in-hand around the local ice rink. Chop and stack wood for the evening's romantic fire. Dance the night away. And make a pact to exercise together.

**3. Help soothe stress.** It can cause heart-related health issues—like higher blood pressure. Good gifts for reducing stress include:

- Passes to a local gym.
- A gift certificate for a massage.
- Some scented soap to use in the bath.



**4. Kids are sweethearts too.** So set a healthy example for your little ones. For school parties, help kids choose healthy treats.

Valentine's Day comes just once a year. But it's a great reminder to strive for a lifetime of healthy hearts.

Sources: American Heart Association; American Institute for Cancer Research; Produce for Better Health Foundation



## Farmers market on wheels

Live or work in Antioch, Pittsburg, Richmond or San Pablo? Freshest Cargo is a mobile farmers market truck that brings fresh, local produce straight to your neighborhood.

To find out when the Freshest Cargo truck stops by you, visit [www.freshapproach.org/freshestcargo](http://www.freshapproach.org/freshestcargo).

# Double your dollars at the farmers market!

**D**id you know? You can use your CalFresh EBT (food stamps) at the farmers market.

Farmers markets are outdoor markets where farmers and other local vendors sell fresh, healthy food. Fruits and veggies are picked at their prime, when they are most delicious and full of nutrients.

Better yet, at some markets, you can get fruits and veggies for FREE

with the Market Match\* program. Market Match doubles your CalFresh dollars, which means that for every \$10 you use from your EBT card, you get \$10 FREE to spend on fresh produce. And it's available year-round.

Using your CalFresh EBT at farmers markets is as easy as 1-2-3!

- 1.** Find the information booth at the farmers market.
- 2.** Swipe your EBT card and receive

Market Money in the form of vouchers or tokens.

- 3.** Use your money to buy fruits, veggies, cheese, yogurt, eggs, meat, fish and more.

Find your local farmers market at [www.fmfinder.org](http://www.fmfinder.org). Or download a list of all Contra Costa County markets at [www.freshapproach.org/marketmatchhome](http://www.freshapproach.org/marketmatchhome).

Have questions about using CalFresh and doubling your dollar? Call Fresh Approach at **925-771-2990**. You can also visit [www.marketmatch.org](http://www.marketmatch.org). Or just stop by your local farmers market to try it out!

\*Market Money doesn't expire. Each market association uses different vouchers or tokens, which are nontransferable across market associations. It has a \$10 limit per market per day. Match amounts may vary by market association.

Contra Costa Health Plan complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

ATTENTION: If you speak a language other than English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call **877-661-6230** (California Relay for hearing-impaired: **800-735-2929**).

El Plan de Salud de Contra Costa cumple con las leyes federales de derechos civiles aplicables y no discrimina por motivos de raza, color, nacionalidad, edad, discapacidad o sexo.

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al **877-661-6230, opción 2**, o al California Relay, el número para personas con discapacidad auditiva: **800-735-2929**.

# Baked tomatoes with quinoa, corn and green chiles

## Ingredients

- 2 poblano chiles
- 2 cups fresh corn kernels (about 4 ears)
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 6 large ripe tomatoes (about 4 pounds)
- 1 cup uncooked quinoa
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water
- 4 ounces colby-jack cheese, shredded (about 1 cup packed)

## Directions

- Preheat broiler to high.
- Cut the chiles in half lengthwise. Discard seeds and membranes.
- Place chile halves, skin side up, on a foil-lined baking sheet. Flatten with hand. Broil 8 minutes or until blackened. Place in a paper bag. Close tightly. Let stand 10 minutes.
- Peel chiles. Coarsely chop chiles and place in a bowl.
- Add corn and onion to pan; broil 10 minutes, stirring twice. Add corn mixture to chopped chiles.



■ Stir in oregano, oil, lime juice,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt, cumin and black pepper.

■ Cut tops off tomatoes and set aside. Carefully scoop out tomato pulp, leaving shells intact. Drain pulp through a sieve over a bowl, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract liquid. Reserve  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups liquid, and discard remaining liquid.

■ Sprinkle tomatoes with  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt. Invert tomatoes on a wire rack. Let stand 30 minutes. Dry insides of tomatoes with a paper towel.

■ Place quinoa in a fine sieve. Place sieve in a large bowl. Cover quinoa with water. Using your hands, rub the grains together for 30 seconds. Rinse and drain. Repeat twice. Drain well.

■ Combine reserved tomato liquid, quinoa,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water, and the remaining salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer for 15 minutes or until liquid is absorbed.

■ Remove from heat and fluff with a fork. Add quinoa mixture to corn mixture. Toss well.

■ Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

■ Spoon about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup corn mixture into each tomato. Divide cheese evenly among tomatoes.

■ Place tomatoes and tops, if desired, on a jelly-roll pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes.

■ Remove from oven. Preheat broiler. Broil the tomatoes  $1\frac{1}{2}$  minutes or until cheese melts. Place tomato tops on tomatoes, if desired.

Source: [www.cookinglight.com](http://www.cookinglight.com)