

MERCY and UNITY HOSPITALS

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Health care in hard times

MONEY MATTERS — 4 WAYS TO HELP KEEP YOUR MEDICAL COSTS DOWN

WHEN TIGHTENING the purse strings becomes a necessity, there are some things you shouldn't eliminate from the budget. Health care is one of them. "Cutting corners on your medical care might actually cost you more in the long run," says Ryan Else, MD, internal medicine, Mercy Hospital. "More important, it may put your health in jeopardy."

Still, as deductibles and co-pays rise and many people find themselves without health insurance, lowering out-of-pocket medical expenses may become a priority.

These steps can help you stay healthy and lower your medical costs:

■ Practice good health habits. Smart

lifestyle choices, such as these, are key:

- Don't smoke, and avoid secondhand smoke. Lung disease, heart disease, stroke and cancer are just a few of the health problems associated with smoking that you might avoid by kicking your habit. For tips on quitting smoking, visit allina.com.
- Eat well. High blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis and heart disease may be linked to diet. Aim for a diet filled with fruits, vegetables and whole grains. And go easy on foods and drinks that are high in calories, sugar, salt or fat.
- Get active. Balancing your activity level with your calorie consumption will help you maintain a healthy weight—and

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HEALTH NEWS UPDATE

Mercy and Unity receive The Joint Commission accreditation

To earn and maintain their accreditation from The Joint Commission, Mercy and Unity hospitals each underwent an onsite survey last year. The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 4,200 hospitals in the United States.

The Joint Commission's standards address the hospital's performance in specific areas and specify requirements to ensure that patient care is provided in a safe manner and in a secure environment. The Joint Commission develops its standards in consultation with health care experts, providers and researchers, as well as measurement experts, purchasers and consumers.

As an independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's predominant standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Since 1951 it has maintained standards that focus on improving the quality and safety of care provided by health care organizations.

Its comprehensive process evaluates an organization's compliance with these standards and other accreditation or certification requirements. The Joint Commission accreditation and certification are recognized nationwide as symbols of quality that reflect an organization's commitment to meeting certain performance standards. ❖

Source: The Joint Commission



Lighten up a little: Even modest weight loss improves health

Slimming down to get healthier doesn't necessarily mean seeing dramatic results at your bathroom scale.

If you're overweight, you might help tip the scales of better health in your favor by trimming as little as 5 percent off your weight—that's 10 pounds if you weigh 200 pounds—the National Institutes of Health reports.

It still makes sense to aim for your ideal weight, which your doctor can help determine. But if you need an incentive to tackle those extra pounds, consider how losing even a fairly small

amount of weight can help head off some serious diseases:

- Heart disease and stroke. A 5 percent reduction in weight may help lower your risk by improving blood pressure, cholesterol and other contributing factors.
- Type 2 diabetes. In a landmark study, participants who lost 5 to 7 percent of their weight and exercised regularly prevented or delayed development of diabetes.
- Osteoarthritis. Excess weight strains the joints of your knees, hips and back.

You may reduce this stress on joints by losing even 5 percent of your weight.

Slow and steady wins the race. While overhyped diets promise quick results, it's best to lose weight gradually by consuming fewer calories than you use. Making sensible eating and exercise choices a way of life—like watching portion sizes and moving more—can get the job done over time.

For more helpful weight-loss tips, visit AllinaMercy.org and click on *Healthy Communities Magazine*. ❖

See what's new at Unity Hospital

Unity Hospital is in better shape than ever! With remodeling to improve patient safety and satisfaction and a number of new initiatives under way, Unity is growing like never before.

Learn about exciting changes by visiting a new page on our website: allina.com/unitygrowth. This special page features pictures of Unity's recent remodeling projects, such as the all-new emergency room and pediatrics unit. You can also read about our latest initiatives to improve the hospital for our patients and the community.

Unity Hospital is proud to be your neighborhood Allina hospital, offering world-class care. ❖



Unity Hospital is changing to serve you better. Check out our new emergency room at allina.com/unityER.



Health classes for you

Mercy and Unity hospitals offer screening programs, classes and support groups for a variety of health topics at low or no cost. Topics include weight-loss surgery, heart health, respiratory disease, cancer and more.

See Page 6 of this issue for more information on sessions starting soon.



Stay healthy with wellness programs at Mercy and Unity hospitals.

Visit allina.com/classes for more information.

Keeping our kids healthy

STUDENTS LEARN PERSONAL RISK FACTORS FOR CHRONIC ILLNESS

OBESITY in children is on the rise, putting them at greater risk for adult diseases like high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

Twelve years ago, the concern over the health of Anoka County children prompted the 5M7 Lions Club and Mercy and Unity hospitals to offer health screenings in Anoka County middle and high schools. The program started at Coon Rapids High School and expanded to Fridley, Anoka and Buffalo schools.

“Most people are surprised to hear that our teenagers are at risk for a number of diseases,” says Brenda Link, RN, Mercy and Unity hospitals’ Wellness Program manager. “More than 50 percent of

students we’ve screened have high blood pressure, and 16 percent have high cholesterol.”

During the screenings students watch a presentation about heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure and receive diagnostic tests for blood pressure, cholesterol

and blood glucose levels. Students at risk will receive one-on-one education sessions with a health care professional. Parents of students at extreme risk receive a letter with

recommendations for changes to diet and exercise, and suggested topics to discuss with a primary care doctor. Link says that response from parents has been positive.

“Many parents have called me to learn more about what changes they can make,” Link says. “By

“More than 50 percent of students we’ve screened have high blood pressure, and 16 percent have high cholesterol.”

—Brenda Link, RN, Wellness Program Manager

educating youth and parents about what the test results mean, they start to understand how their actions impact their health.”

Mercy and Unity hospitals’ Wellness Program was created as part of the hospitals’ commitment to improve the health of the communities they serve. In addition to school screenings, the program works with community organizations to provide low- or no-cost screenings to residents and organizations.

MAKING CHANGES

For many children, a visit to their primary doctor is a good start for improving their health. A doctor can talk through test results and offer tips on diet and exercise.



Additional resources can be found by visiting allina.com, selecting *Conditions & Treatments* and then *Heart Health*. You’ll find helpful information about treatment for high blood pressure and diabetes, as well as useful weight, blood pressure and appointment work sheets. ❖

Are you at risk? Take our Heart Health Inventory at allina.com under Conditions & Treatments.

Ready to meet

back

*Special preparations
for your pending arrival*

TO BE A GOOD parent is to look out for your child's well-being. Marcia Hauck, RN, director of Unity Hospital's Family Birth Center, says, "Preparing before your baby's arrival is an important step in giving them the best start possible in life." Below are a few of the most important steps to consider as your delivery draws nearer.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

If you haven't already settled on a doctor for your baby, now is the time to do so. Even the healthiest babies need frequent checkups, and the first one will take place at the hospital.

Remember, too, that your doctor could potentially see your child through well-baby visits to first sniffles to—sooner than you think—adolescence. So you'll want to find a doctor you trust and feel comfortable talking to.

Before your baby arrives, you'll also want to decide if you're going to breastfeed or use formula.

Keep in mind that breast milk:

- is the ideal first food. It contains exactly the right amounts of nutrients to help

oy

babies grow and is more easily digested than formula.

- contains natural antibodies that help protect babies from ear infections, diarrhea, pneumonia and allergies.
- is free—and requires no preparation time.

SAFETY FIRST

Perhaps your most important responsibility as

a parent is to keep your baby safe.

When it comes to traveling, no newborn is safe without a car seat, and you'll need one for that first ride—the one that will take your baby from the hospital to your home. Your baby should ride in a

Give your child the best possible beginning; learn more at allina.com/pregnancycare.

rear-facing car seat until he or she is both a year old and weighs at least 20 pounds.

You'll also need a safe place for your baby to sleep. Most new cribs

and crib mattresses sold in the United States are safe. But be wary of used cribs,

which may not meet crib safety standards or may have been recalled.

KNOW WHEN YOU'RE READY

Not all babies arrive on schedule. That's why it's important to know the signs that labor is near—or here:

successfully, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

So ask the lactation specialist at your hospital for help if you have any trouble. And consider these tips for successful breastfeeding:

- Respond to your baby's cues. Nurse when your baby is hungry.
- Help avoid sore nipples by making sure your baby's mouth covers as much of your areola (the dark area around your nipple) as possible.
- Drink plenty of fluids.

Fast facts on epidurals

It's normal to have some concerns or questions about the pain of giving birth.

That's why it's important to talk to your doctor about the different types of pain relief that are available to you. You'll likely discuss one of the most effective forms of pain relief: an epidural block, or *epidural* for short. If you're not familiar with this kind of pain relief, here are a few key points to consider:

- An epidural numbs the lower half of your body. It blocks pain from contractions. Even so, you'll remain awake and alert.
- It's given by injection. The numbing medicine will be injected into a small area below your spinal cord.
- You have flexibility. You can typically have an epidural shortly after your contractions begin or later in your labor. An epidural can be used for either a vaginal birth or a cesarean delivery.
- Complications are rare. Still, headaches and other side effects can occur, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists cautions. Ask your doctor to explain both the advantages and drawbacks of an epidural.

Lightening. This is the feeling you get when your baby has moved lower in your pelvis. Lightening happens anytime from a few weeks to a few hours before the start of labor.

An increase in vaginal discharge. This discharge can be clear, pink or slightly bloody. It can occur several days before labor or at its onset.

Your water breaks (a trickling or gush of watery fluid from your vagina). Labor may still be several hours away—or it may be starting now.

Contractions. Contractions that occur at regular intervals, become stronger and occur despite movement generally signal that labor has begun.

Now that you know the signs of labor, be sure to ask your doctor:

- After labor starts, when should I call you?
- Are there special steps I should follow when I think I am in labor?

A WISH TO YOUR FAMILY

We know you'll be receiving many congratulations on your baby's birth.

We add our congratulations, too. And we wish you and your growing family the healthiest—and happiest—of futures. ♦

An encouraging word on nursing

You've made an important choice—a wonderful one—if you've decided to breastfeed. Congratulations.

Still, don't be discouraged if things don't go perfectly at first, especially if you've never breastfed before.

It's normal to have a few challenges (such as sore nipples or overfull breasts) when you begin breastfeeding—and even to second-guess your decision to nurse. But don't stop nursing prematurely. With practice and support, nearly all women can breastfeed

COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION *and* SUPPORT GROUPS

*Programs with a fee are noted with an asterisk. Unless another number is noted, call Allina Class Registration at 1-866-904-9962 or visit allina.com/classes for information about these activities. Several of these programs are offered in cooperation with local and national associations.



CANCER

Cancer Resource Center

Call 763-236-6060 (Mercy) or 763-236-4040 (Unity).

Breast Cancer Support Group
Cancer and the Family
Living With Cancer
Look Good, Feel Better
Prostate Cancer Support
Renewing Life

CAREGIVER EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

Faith Community Nurse Program

Call 763-236-4342 for more information.

GRIEF

Grief support groups are available for adults, teens, children and preschoolers; for pregnancy and infant loss; for death of a spouse, child, parent or grandparent; for death by suicide or violence; for job loss; or for life transition.

HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Wellness/Health Improvement Program

Health or fitness testing, individual consultation and educational presentations on a variety of topics to

employees and other groups, provided onsite at the workplace. For more information, call 763-236-8041.

Blood Pressure Screenings
Heart or Stroke Screening*
Monitored Exercise Programs*
Women's Heart Program*

HEART

Cardiac Club

Cardiac Education Classes

- Anatomy of the Heart
- Benefits of Exercise
- Heart-Healthy Nutrition
- Life Changes
- Low-Sodium Strategies
- Medication Information
- Risk Factor Evaluation
- Strength Training
- Stress and Relaxation
- Weight Management

Heart Failure and Mended Hearts Support Groups (Mercy)

For more information, call 763-236-8041.

PREGNANCY, BIRTH & PARENTING CLASSES

- All About Babies*
- Birth and Parenting Preparation*
- Breastfeeding Preparation*
- Celebrating Families
- Changing Shapes™: Pregnancy*

- Expectant Father*
- Expecting Multiples*
- Infant and Child CPR*
- Infant Massage*
- New Brother/New Sister*
- New Parent Connection
- Pregnancy After Infant Loss
- Refresher: Birth and Parenting*
- Small Talk (sign language)*
- Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (VBAC)*
- Yoga Fitness*

RESPIRATORY

Breath of Mercy (COPD support)

Respiratory Health (Unity)

F.A.M.E. (Focused Asthma Management Education)*

Lung Power (pulmonary rehab)*

Respiratory Screening/Counseling*

TOBACCO CESSATION*

Freedom From Smoking*

Call 763-236-8008 for dates, times and locations.

WEIGHT-LOSS SURGERY

Unity Hospital's Bariatric and Weight Loss Center offers free, introductory weight-loss seminars led by experts. Call Allina at 1-866-904-9962 for dates, times and to register. Or visit AllinaUnity.com and look for Unity's Bariatric and Weight Loss Center under *Services and Programs*.

Support Groups

Surgical weight-loss support groups meet in 12 locations; to learn more, call 763-236-2068 or go to AllinaUnity.com.

A special group, Find Your Weigh, is designed for surgical weight-loss clients who want to stay on track.

Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Unity Hospital classrooms (lower level)

OTHER

Arthritis and Fibromyalgia

Brain Injury Support Group

Diabetes Care Education Classes*

Ostomy Support Group

Stroke Support Group



Great care close to home

ALLINA MEDICAL CLINIC HAS EXPANDED CARE TO NEW LOCATIONS IN BLAINE AND BROOKLYN PARK

WHETHER you're not feeling well today, managing a chronic condition or taking preventive measures to ensure continuing good health, going to the doctor and taking care of yourself should be as easy as possible.

That's why Allina Medical Clinic now offers excellent doctors, lab services, X-ray and staff in Blaine and Brooklyn Park. Residents can get quality care close to home, designed for convenience as well as your health.

A PATIENT-CENTERED FACILITY

Our new buildings offer easy

access, a convenient location and plenty of parking right outside the door.

The clinics were designed for patients, with comfortable check-in areas, no stairs to climb and only a few steps to everything you need. You can come in, get the care you need and get on with your day with minimal time and effort.

HELPFUL TOOLS FOR YOU

In addition to great doctors working in a state-of-the-art facility, you'll enjoy conveniences from your home, including:

- 24/7 appointment scheduling by phone or online

- MyChart, an easy-to-use tool that provides you quick and secure online access to your medical information at your convenience. You can schedule an appointment; view your lab results, allergies, medicines, immunizations and medical history; view billing statements and pay bills online; and use research and tracking tools to monitor your health conditions.

A BETTER MEDICAL RECORD FOR BETTER CARE

To further enhance the quality and safety of patient care, Allina Medical Clinics in Blaine and Brooklyn Park shares a secure electronic medical record with Unity Hospital and other Allina hospitals and clinics.

With this electronic medical record:

- Your Allina caregivers have immediate, easy access to your complete medical history with a click of the mouse. This is helpful when you have emergency treatment or procedures at Unity or other Allina hospitals or see Allina specialists.
- The system cross-checks new prescriptions being considered to ensure there are no negative interactions with allergies or current medicines.
- You won't have to repeat your health history as often.

TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

For an appointment or for more information, call Allina Medical Clinic–Blaine at 763-236-5400 and Allina Medical Clinic–Brooklyn Park at 763-236-5300.



For more information about our doctors and services, visit allinamedicalclinic.com. ❖



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Health care

—Continued from front page

lower the risk of diabetes, heart disease and osteoarthritis. Exercise can also strengthen lungs and muscles and may ward off depression. Aim for at least 2½ hours of exercise each week. Don't worry about joining a gym or purchasing exercise equipment. A brisk daily walk can be beneficial.

- Be safe. Wearing seat belts in vehicles and helmets on bikes reduces your risk of injury.
- Practice prevention. Wear sunscreen to prevent skin cancer, and wash your hands often to keep germs at bay.
- Manage stress. Stress can be toxic to your body and contribute to a host of health problems, reports Mental Health America. To combat stress, try to balance work with play and make time for relaxation. Always get adequate sleep.
- **Have a primary care doctor.** Seeing a doctor regularly can help keep your immunizations up-to-date. This may enable you to avoid illnesses such as influenza and shingles. Regular appointments

also provide opportunities for screening tests. These tests may catch health problems early, when they might be easier—and possibly less expensive—to treat.

Know when to seek help.

According to the American College of Physicians, many minor medical problems correct themselves or improve with home or over-the-counter remedies. These treatments may be worth a try before seeking medical help.

Allina
Financial
Assistance
Services are
here for you.

For instance, if you sprain an ankle, many doctors recommend the R.I.C.E. approach to treatment—rest, ice, compression (wrapping the ankle in a bandage) and elevation (raising the ankle to prevent swelling from getting worse).

However, if your condition fails to get better or if you're not sure whether you need assistance, you should seek professional advice. And you should always get immediate help for a medical emergency.

Ask about generics.

Generic medicines have the same purity, strength and quality as their brand-name counterparts, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. But they're less expensive than brand-name medicines. Patient assistance programs may be available if you



can't afford your medicine. Ask your pharmacist for details.

Whatever you do, don't decide on your own to stop taking your medicine in order to save money. If you're worried about the cost of a medicine—or any other aspect of your care—talk to your doctor. Together, you can work to keep costs under control while staying on top of your health.

ALLINA FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

Allina Financial Assistance Services offers programs to help people who may be struggling to pay their medical bills. For more information, call 612-262-9000 or go to allina.com and click on *Quick Links*.

