



Fall/Winter 2016

## Chronic conditions and depression: What's the connection?

Any illness that lasts for a long time can affect more than your body. It can also affect your mood. It doesn't matter what type of illness you're living with. You could have heart disease, diabetes, arthritis or AIDS.

Doctors call illnesses like these chronic diseases. And if you have one, it's easy to feel stressed. You might be in pain. You may be upset or scared that your disease might get worse. You may worry about your future.

### Depression takes a toll

Stress like this is why people with a chronic disease often become depressed. Unfortunately, this depression can hurt your health even more. You may not eat well or exercise. You may not have the energy to care for yourself — or take steps to control your disease.

### Are you depressed?

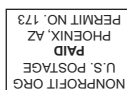
Watch out for depression's warning signs. You might:

- Feel hopeless, very sad, anxious or irritable
- No longer enjoy things you once did
- Sleep too much or too little
- Lose your appetite or overeat

If there's any chance you're depressed, tell your doctor right away. Treatment can help.

### Are you stressed?

Talking to other people with the same chronic illness can help. Ask your doctor to put you in touch with a support group.



## Yearly flu shots help keep you well

If you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), getting an annual flu shot can help keep you from getting sick. Try to get the shot as soon as you can each fall. That can help protect you from the flu all season.

Some people shouldn't get the flu shot. For instance, don't get one if you've had a bad reaction to one in the past. Ask your doctor if a yearly flu shot is right for you.

Sources: American Thoracic Society; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## HIV and pregnancy: Why testing matters

Are you thinking about having a baby? Are you pregnant now? Be sure to get tested for HIV. That's the virus that causes AIDS.

A woman who has HIV can pass the virus on to her child. This can happen while she is pregnant. It can also happen when she is giving birth.

If a woman knows she is infected, she can take steps to keep her baby — and herself — well. Special medicines can help her avoid passing the virus on to the baby.

These medicines work best if you start them early. But if you can't, they can still help if used before labor begins and the baby is born.

Testing is encouraged for all pregnant women, even those who don't think they have HIV. About 15 percent of women who have the virus don't know they have it.

Learning your HIV status will help ensure you and your baby are healthy.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Testing, Medication and Counseling.** Every pregnant woman should get tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS). Ask your doctor about how to get tested. If you test positive for any STD or HIV, your doctor can give you medication and help you find counseling. Testing, medication and counseling are provided at no cost to you.

**Flu season alert**

Influenza can be miserable & deadly.  
Nearly everyone 6 months or older should get a yearly flu shot.

- ✓ **Vaccinate!**
- ✓ **Don't wait.**
- ✓ **Don't hesitate.**

It takes **2 weeks** for the flu shot to be fully effective.

Get it **NOW** so you're protected when you need it.

The graphic features a calendar grid with two dates highlighted in orange: the 10th of the month and the 28th. An arrow points from the 28th to the text 'It takes 2 weeks for the flu shot to be fully effective.'

**Take your best shot at staying well.** For more information or to make an appointment, call Mercy Care Plan Member Services at **602-263-3000**, or **1-800-624-3879**. If you are deaf, or have difficulty hearing, call **711**.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



## Member Handbook

You can get this year's Member Handbook from Mercy Care Plan Member Services at no cost to you. They can also provide you with a copy of the Provider Directory at no cost to you.

## Medicines

### Know what you're taking

Many of the medications you take may contain acetaminophen, also known as APAP. It is in Tylenol as well as some common over-the-counter (OTC) medicines for fever, cold and flu, and sleeplessness. Too much acetaminophen can harm your liver.

To keep from harming your liver, watch how much acetaminophen you take.

- Follow the medicine's dose directions. Don't take more than what is listed.
- Don't take more than one medicine at a time that has acetaminophen.
- Don't take more than 4g (4,000mg\*) in 24 hours.
- Always check to see if OTC or prescription

medicines contain acetaminophen.

It can be hard to tell how much acetaminophen is in your medicines. You can ask your doctor to help you figure out how much you're taking.

Make sure you tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the medicines that you are taking, including OTC drugs.

It may help to make two lists: one of the drugs that you were asked to take by your doctor and one of the drugs that you buy from the store. Give both lists to your doctor or pharmacist.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist to write down the amount of acetaminophen in all of your medicines.

Add up the amount that you take in 24 hours. This amount should not be more than 4,000mg\*. If you are getting close to 4,000mg, talk to your doctor right away.

It is important for you to know how much acetaminophen your child is taking too. Make sure you talk to your child's doctor about acetaminophen.

*\*For adults only. This amount is not recommended for children and could cause serious harm.*

**Need help making an appointment?** Mercy Care Plan Member Services is available to help you Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please call **602-263-3000**, or **1-800-624-3879**. If you are deaf or have difficulty hearing, call **711**.

If you do not have a way to get to your health care visit, we can help. Call Member Services three (3) days before your appointment to arrange a ride.

## Keep in touch with your doctor

Risks for a number of health problems increase as people age. These include arthritis, cataracts and certain cancers. Sometimes, there are many risk factors such as your genetics, where you live and your lifestyle.

By working with your doctor, you can learn more about your specific risks. Just as important, you can learn how to head off those things that pose some of the greatest risks. For example, your doctor might ask that you stop smoking, improve your diet, get more exercise and have certain screenings done. In some cases, you might need medication.

Make sure that your doctor understands your beliefs and values. If you have certain cultural or religious needs, or would like to include others in the talks about your health, let your doctor know. Your doctor can help you get healthy and stay healthy by putting together a health plan with your values and beliefs in mind.

Don't forget to speak up. You are your own cheerleader for good health. Let your doctor know if you have concerns.



Remember, before you leave your doctor's office:

1. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the state of your health.
2. Let your doctor know if they are asking you to do something that goes against your beliefs.
3. Make sure you are clear on the actions you need to take to stay healthy or get better.
4. If you need to take medication, make sure you know what time of day to take them and any other actions.

5. Let your doctor know if you would like others to be present or talk with your doctor about your health.

If you have any questions or need an interpreter during your visit, please call Mercy Care Plan Member Services Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., at **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879**.

If you already have a health problem, it's important to work closely with your doctor. Doing so can help you manage your condition and be as healthy as possible.

*Sources: AGS Foundation for Health in Aging; National Institutes of Health*

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This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

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