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Spring 2009

A message from Choice Medical Group

Choice Medical Group (CMG) continues to ensure that our High Desert residents have access to quality care with many choices. We've added several new physicians to our panel of providers and have also added more than 24 specialists throughout the community.

We want to welcome our new primary care physicians. Sangjun Byeon, M.D., family practice, is providing services in the newest area of our community, southwest and central Victorville. Marcela Espinosa, M.D., internal medicine, is providing services in south Apple Valley, with offices in the Jess Ranch-Sun City neighborhood and on Highway 18. Dr. Espinosa is part of Ram Kamath M.D.'s practice. Dr. Kamath has also opened a walk-in clinic available to all members of the community for after-hours and weekend services.

Keeping with our goal to provide healthcare services after hours and on weekends, CMG has teamed up with Dan Vasile, D.O., to open Meridian Urgent Care.

This state-of-the-art facility features on-site radiology and is adjacent to full-time laboratory and pharmacy services. Dr. Vasile focuses on providing prompt medical care with a team of experienced professionals, eliminating the need to wait in crowded emergency rooms charging high copays. Meridian Urgent Care also provides free blood pressure checks on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information, call Meridian Urgent Care at **(760) 242-7707** or stop by for a free blood pressure check. 

29/CMG

2 How to outsmart diabetes

4 Are your supplements safe?

7 Break free from anxiety



Got pre-diabetes?

It could be a blessing in disguise

If your doctor has told you that you have pre-diabetes, consider it as glass-half-full news instead of all-bad news. It's not the type of diagnosis that anyone welcomes, but you should greet it as a chance to improve your lifestyle—and prevent diabetes.

WHAT IS PRE-DIABETES, ANYWAY?

Pre-diabetes occurs when your blood glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough for diabetes. It's a warning that if you don't start watching what you eat and exercising regularly, you're likely to develop diabetes. You've also put yourself at an increased risk for heart disease and stroke.

WHAT CAUSES PRE-DIABETES?

When you eat, food is broken down into glucose, the body's main source of energy. Your body can't

use the glucose without the help of insulin, which is produced by the pancreas. When the pancreas doesn't make enough insulin or your body is unable to use what's available, glucose builds up in the blood. Over time, high levels of blood glucose can damage your kidneys, eyes and other vital organs. The risk factors for pre-diabetes include:


- extra weight around the waist
- a family history of insulin resistance
- lack of exercise

Usually, pre-diabetes has no symptoms, so you may have it for years without knowing. With more serious cases of insulin resistance, however, you may notice dark patches of skin or a dark ring around your neck. Some people also get dark patches on the elbows, knees, knuckles and armpits.



If you haven't been tested for pre-diabetes, do it now—especially if you're overweight. If you find that you're in the normal range, get checked again every three years.

If you're diagnosed with pre-diabetes, the American Diabetes Association recommends testing for type 2 diabetes every year or two.

To lower your risk of developing this dangerous condition, follow a low-fat, low-calorie diet and simply ride a bike, go for a brisk walk or do some other type of cardiovascular activity for just 30 minutes a day, five days a week. In one recent study of people with pre-diabetes, those who lost 5 percent to 10 percent of their body weight (that's just 10 to 20 pounds for a 200-pound person) and worked out at least five days a week reduced their risk of developing diabetes by 58 percent. 

You can **lower your risk** of developing pre-diabetes by eating **low-fat, low-calorie meals.**



Click! Creak! Crack!

What your joints are trying to tell you

Ever wonder what's behind the creaking and crackling your joints make as you go through your day? Perhaps you're most aware of your joints when they click as you climb the stairs or crack as you reach for that can of peaches tucked away on an upper shelf. Generally, these noises are harmless, but if you feel pain along with the noise, see your healthcare provider.

So what's with all the racket? Here are four common causes:

- Your joints are filled with synovial fluid, a lubricant that contains oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide. When you stretch a joint, the pop you hear is the sound of the gas being released.
- When you move, tendons—the bands of tissue that connect muscle to bone—move. You may hear a snapping noise as tendons rush back in place.
- Connective tissue that binds joints together and connects bones and cartilage may also tighten as you move your joints, creating a cracking sound.
- People with arthritis often lose cartilage. The resulting roughness of the joint surface can create a creaking noise. This sound is called crepitus.




KEEPING JOINTS HEALTHY

Exercise can preserve range of motion and flexibility and increase joint stability, but speak with your healthcare provider before you begin. To keep your joints in tip-top shape, take good care of them:

- Pick a cardiovascular activity that's easy on the joints such as walking, bicycling, water aerobics or swimming. Don't forget to include range-of-motion exercises (slow, gentle movements such as shoulder circles and leg swings). If you're not in great shape, start training three times a day for as little as two minutes at a time.
- When you lift heavy objects, distribute the weight evenly.
- Be kind to aching joints. Use self-help devices such as jar openers, reach extenders and buttoning aids.
- Don't sit and rust. Keeping your joints in the same position may cause stiffness, so change positions often.

Oil your joints

Extra-virgin olive oil acts much the same way as ibuprofen when it comes to reducing arthritis inflammation and pain, according to research conducted at the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia. Three and a half tablespoons of the oil is equal to a 200 mg tablet—but that adds up to more than 400 calories. The best way to counter the calories? Instead of adding more calories to your diet, use extra-virgin olive oil in place of other fats.

- But know when to rest. Respect your body's signals that you're getting tired and alternate physical activities with less vigorous activity. 





The top 10 'natural' products

Are they good for what ails you?

The term “natural” on a product label doesn’t always mean it’s healthy—or even safe. Often when people want to try alternative or complementary treatments, they turn to herbs and supplements. And yes, they come from nature, but many of these products haven’t been well studied and can be sold without being tested and regulated. But that’s starting to change: By next year, all supplement makers will be required to test their products for contaminants and ensure they’re correctly manufactured and labeled.

In the meantime, be aware that natural products may do more harm than good and can even interfere with prescription drugs. Before you take any natural products, talk with your healthcare provider and check out the chart at right for the latest research on the 10 most commonly used supplements. ^{HK}



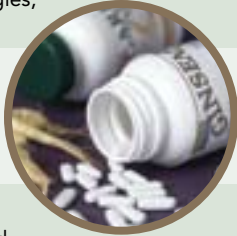
	Natural product	What it's used for	Effectiveness
1	ECHINACEA 	Colds, flu and other infections	It won't prevent infection, and studies on whether it can treat colds and flu have had mixed results.
2	GINSENG	Erectile dysfunction, hepatitis C, menopausal symptoms, high blood glucose and blood pressure	Studies show it may lower blood sugar, but more research is needed to confirm its use for this and other conditions.
3	GINKGO	Memory loss/dementia, asthma, bronchitis, fatigue, ringing in the ears, leg pain caused by narrowed arteries, sexual dysfunction and multiple sclerosis	New research finds it does not prevent dementia or memory loss; studies on other uses are ongoing.
4	GARLIC 	High cholesterol and blood pressure; some people use it to try to prevent some types of cancer	It may improve high cholesterol levels and atherosclerosis, and some studies say eating garlic may lower the risk of certain cancers.
5	GLUCOSAMINE	Osteoarthritis (OA) 	It works best on knee OA and may help with other forms of OA.
6	ST. JOHN'S WORT	Depression, anxiety, sleep disorders and nerve pain	Some research suggests it helps mild or moderate depression—but not more serious depression.
7	PEPPERMINT OIL	Nausea, indigestion, colds, headaches, muscle and nerve pain and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)	It seems to work for IBS and indigestion, but other uses haven't been studied enough.
8	FISH OIL/OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS	High blood pressure, high triglycerides, inflammation, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and many other conditions. It may also help with infant brain development.	It's best for lowering high blood pressure and triglycerides, and it seems to help with RA, inflammation and brain development.
9	GINGER 	Stomachache, nausea, diarrhea, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and joint and muscle pain	It seems to relieve pregnancy-related nausea, but how it helps with other conditions is unclear.
10	SOY	High cholesterol, menopausal hot flashes, osteoporosis, memory problems, high blood pressure and breast and prostate cancers	Daily soy may lower LDL cholesterol and reduce hot flashes, but more research is needed for other uses.

SOURCES: National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine; Mayo Clinic

Risks/possible side effects

It's generally safe, but some people experience gastrointestinal problems. Others, especially those with asthma or certain allergies, may have a reaction.

Headaches, sleep problems, gastrointestinal problems, allergic reactions



Headache, nausea, stomach upset, diarrhea, dizziness and allergic skin reactions. Ginkgo may increase bleeding risk, and ginkgo seeds can cause seizures.

It's generally safe but may have a blood-thinning effect, so it's not recommended before or after surgery or dental work.

Upset stomach, drowsiness, insomnia, headache, skin reactions and sun sensitivity

Anxiety, dry mouth, dizziness, gastrointestinal symptoms, fatigue, headache, sexual dysfunction and increased sensitivity to sunlight. It may interfere with some drugs.

In small doses, it seems to be safe for most adults but can cause allergic reactions and heartburn.



Some fish contain mercury, but supplements are safe. The most common side effects are stomach pain, burping, heartburn and diarrhea.

Ginger's side effects are rare when it's taken in small doses, but powdered ginger can cause gas, bloating, heartburn and nausea.

It's considered safe in foods, but supplements may cause nausea, bloating and constipation. Soy has been said to both increase and decrease breast cancer risk, but more research is needed.

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Serving our aging community


Choice Medical Group (CMG) primary care physicians are full-time providers who live and work in the community they serve. Many of our primary care physicians have additional geriatric training and some are also board certified in geriatrics. With baby boomers aging, geriatric care is key to our High Desert residents' good health.

In 2008, CMG expanded services to our geriatric patients by opening the Senior Care Center.

This state-of-the-art facility is in Choice Plaza on Highway 18, in Apple Valley. The center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This facility provides support and comprehensive services to our senior patients. CMG members are welcome to stop by for a free blood pressure check or to make an appointment for a free yearly physical.

Stay fit

The center also offers a successful Senior Flexibility Class. This class is held every Tuesday and is taught by a certified instructor.

All services provided at the Senior Care Center are only offered to CMG members. To find out more about the services offered at the Senior Care Center, call **(760) 242-WELL** or contact CMG's main line at **(760) 242-7777, ext. 228, or 224.** 

healthkeys®



"Doing our part in our community ... to keep you healthy."

Administrative Offices

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Quick quiz

Test your health savvy

When it comes to your well-being, knowledge is power. Brush up before your next checkup. Answers appear below.

- 1** Seasonal allergies have been linked to:
- A. stroke
 - B. eating disorders
 - C. depression
 - D. heart disease

- 2** Approximately how many teaspoons of sugar are found in a 22-ounce soda?
- A. three
 - B. six
 - C. eight
 - D. 15

- 3** Smokers are at risk for heart disease, stroke and:
- A. dementia
 - B. cataracts
 - C. chronic bronchitis
 - D. all of the above

- 4** If you or someone you love has a stroke, the clot-busting drug tPA may reduce long-term disability if administered within:
- A. 15 minutes
 - B. one hour
 - C. three hours
 - D. 24 hours

- 5** We should consume no more than how many teaspoons of salt a day?
- A. one
 - B. four
 - C. eight
 - D. 12

ANSWERS: 1. C, 2. D, 3. D, 4. C, 5. A



Test prep

The pros and cons of prostate cancer screening

The prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test is a blood test used to look for signs of prostate cancer in men. The prostate, located underneath the bladder and in front of the rectum, makes some of the fluid that protects sperm in semen. The higher the PSA level, the greater the odds that cancer is present.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends that health-care providers offer the test to patients beginning at age 50 (Medicare covers the test for this age group) and test high-risk men beginning at age 45. But once you turn 75, the risks of screening—and treatment—may outweigh the benefits. You're more likely to develop prostate cancer if you:

- are age 65 or older
- have a father or a brother with prostate cancer
- are African-American (Asian and Native American men have the lowest risks)

- eat a diet high in fat (particularly animal fat)

Although testing may help detect prostate cancer early, many cancers are slow-growing and never spread beyond the prostate gland. Unfortunately, the PSA test can't tell you which type you have. Other problems with the test: It often says you have cancer when you don't. And other factors such as aging, infection or prostate enlargement can affect PSA levels. By having unnecessary treatment, such as surgery or radiation, on a non-aggressive form of cancer, you may risk serious side effects like urinary incontinence, erectile dysfunction or bowel dysfunction.

AN ALTERNATE OPTION

Many healthcare providers also perform a digital rectal exam (DRE), in which they insert a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum to check for signs of prostate cancer. It's not as effective as a PSA test, but sometimes it finds cancer in men who have normal PSA levels. Ask your healthcare provider to help you decide when and if you should be tested, and visit the ACS Web site at www.cancer.org for more information about prostate cancer prevention and screening.

Worry too much?

It may be generalized anxiety disorder

Stress can create sleepless nights, changes in eating patterns and anxiety. But sometimes it gets out of control. When you startle easily and can't relax or concentrate, day in and day out, for at least six months, you might be dealing with generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD. The condition, which is marked by a state of chronic anxiety, exaggerated worry and tension—even when little or nothing provokes it—may come on gradually. GAD is caused by a disturbance of chemicals in the brain and it can get worse during stressful times. The sooner you seek treatment, the better. Left untreated, GAD can grow worse and even become debilitating.

THE MIND-BODY LINK

GAD doesn't only affect your mind. You might experience sleep difficulties, fatigue, headaches, muscle aches, difficulty swallowing, twitching, irritability, sweating, nausea, light-headedness and feeling out of breath. Some sufferers can socialize and hold down a job but others may be unable to.

See your healthcare provider if:

- You find it impossible to clear your mind of fear and worries.

- You've lost control of your ability to rein in your emotions.
- Anxiety is keeping you from taking care of responsibilities.

GET RELIEF


GAD can be treated with:

- **Medication.** Anti-anxiety medicines, such as Xanax or Valium, start working in just 30 to 90 minutes. But they can be habit-forming, and you can't drive while taking them. Buspirone, another anti-anxiety drug, may take several weeks to work, but it isn't sedating or addictive.

Antidepressants may also help. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) like Prozac and Paxil can take a few weeks to work but aren't considered habit-forming.

- **Talk therapy.** Talking about your problems can help. Cognitive behavioral therapy teaches you to identify unhealthy thoughts that create anxiety and replace them with positive ones.

- **Relaxation techniques.** Practice deep breathing and yoga to reduce stress and calm you.

Sometimes, a combination of therapies is needed. If you're worried all the time, don't wait to get help—and get your life back. 



Health

dollars & sense

Want to cut medical expenses without compromising your health? Try the following tips to help keep your costs in check.

Check your benefits

The National Council on Aging offers a free, confidential online service to help older adults save healthcare dollars. Benefits CheckUp helps people ages 55 and older find programs to save on healthcare, prescription drugs and in-home services. It also assists with meal programs, legal services and housing and offers information about volunteering, nutrition programs and education opportunities. For more details, visit www.benefitscheckup.org.

Duck away from quackery

Who doesn't like a quick fix? But when it comes to unproven health remedies, keep your hard-earned cash in your wallet and talk to your healthcare provider first. Such treatments may seem irresistible, especially when they promise quick fixes for relieving pain, treating illness or even slowing the aging process. But they could be a waste of money or even dangerous. Think twice about products that promise "a quick cure," treatments made from a "secret formula" and those that require payment upfront or claim limited availability.



HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND MORE

For more than 19 years, Choice Medical Group (CMG) has been committed to our mission statement to “deliver superior medical services, ensuring health and quality of life to the people within the community they serve.” For more information about CMG and our programs, call our member services liaison at **(760) 242-7777, ext. 224**.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Diabetes class for Choice members 	First and third Mondays of each month	1:30–4 p.m.	Ask your primary care provider for a referral to attend this class.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Nutrition class for Choice members 	Third Wednesday of each month	4–8 p.m.	Ask your primary care provider for a referral to attend this class.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Senior flexibility class for Choice members ■ Senior flexibility class for nonmembers 	Every Tuesday Every Thursday	8:45–10:15 a.m. 8:45–10:15 a.m.	Call (760) 242-7777, ext. 228 , for more details. There is no charge for Choice members. A \$5 per-session fee applies to nonmembers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clinically supervised weight management 	By appointment only	Various	Call (760) 242-WELL for more information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Free physicals for Choice members 	Monday–Friday, by appointment only	8 a.m.–5 p.m.	Call (760) 242-WELL for more information.