



Health tips and resources for MCG employees and their families

WHAT DO FOOD, FURNITURE & SHOES ALL HAVE IN COMMON?

The simple answer is they can all affect the health of your joints!

Musculoskeletal (MSK) Condition is a very broad term that includes over 150 conditions associated with locomotion. Specifically, MSK Conditions include those conditions that affect joints, spine and appendage bones, muscles, and connective tissues. Many members on the health plan have experienced an MSK Condition by accident such as a fracture. Other MSK conditions are the result of natural aging, genetics, and hormonal fluctuations such as osteoporosis and osteopenia. Most other MSK conditions are the result of years of repetitive physical trauma or everyday lifestyle choices that amount to years of neglect of our musculoskeletal system. For example, gout – a very painful joint condition - is exacerbated by certain foods we select. It is the physical environment we create for ourselves – furniture, mattresses, car seats, shoes, handbags, workstations, etc. - that can perpetuate these conditions. It is important to note that neck and lower back pain and injury are the most prevalent and burdensome MSK conditions seen among our members.

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- How are you managing arthritis pain?
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Our message to you today is to begin paying attention to the signs and symptoms of an emerging MSK condition. Aches and pains in the joints and spine, inflammation and swelling in the hands, wrist, or feet, or everyday discomfort when moving around at work or home are ALL indications that your body needs some extra care and attention. The Manatee YourChoice health plan offers programs and personal resources tailored to your specific needs. We encourage you to manage pain and discomfort by exploring the following: HINGE Health, nutrition counseling, beginner yoga, fitness coaching, acupuncture, deep tissue and craniosacral massage, myofascial release, and chiropractic care.

Looking to utilize these benefits and don't know where to start? Visit our website and check out the Alternate Care Provider Directory as well as the Aetna Provider Directory to find a care provider in your area.

We hope you continue to read and look forward to helping you in your journey to better health!

UNDERSTANDING GOUT AND HOW TO REDUCE FLARE-UPS

Gout is an inflammatory form of arthritis that usually affects one joint at a time. It occurs when there is an abnormally high level of uric acid in the blood known as hyperuricemia, which leads to the formation of uric crystals in the joints. About 10% of the population with hyperuricemia develop gout. Gout affects an estimated 8.3 million people in the US!

A gout flare up includes severe pain, swelling, and redness on and around the affected joint. Gout flares can last weeks with treatment, which often includes prescription medication through a diagnosis by your physician and diet modifications. Research shows that minimizing, or better yet eliminating, certain food and beverages can reduce gout flare ups! So, what items should you pass up on your next trip to the grocery store?

Lastly don't forget to consume plenty of water. Adequate water consumption helps prevent gout attacks! Take a water bottle with you and be sure to refill it when empty. If you have questions about how to manage your gout flare ups through diet, please reach out to your Nutrition Advocate, Kay Renshaw, at ext. 6459.

PICK!

fruits
vegetables
poultry
fish filets
eggs
nuts & nut butters
rice
low-fat dairy

SKIP!

red meat
lamb
pork
soda
shellfish
candy
beer
grain liquor

HOW ARE YOU MANAGING ARTHRITIS PAIN?



Pain may be one of the hardest parts of having arthritis. Pain affects almost every aspect of life- work performance, the ability to complete daily tasks, and the ability to get quality rest. Over-the-counter (OTC) medications can be helpful for relieving mild to moderate arthritis pain. OTC medications are readily available and do not require a prescription, however OTC medications are still drugs and could cause harm if used inappropriately. If pain symptoms do not resolve, speak to your doctor about alternate therapy options.

OTC Medications to Consider

- Acetaminophen (oral)
 - Maximum daily dosage: 4,000 mg
 - Not recommended for patients with liver damage
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) (oral)
 - Ibuprofen maximum daily dosage: 1,200 mg
 - Naproxen sodium maximum daily dosage: 660mg
 - Aspirin maximum daily dosage: 4,000 mg
 - Risk for heart attack, stroke, or stomach bleed
- Salicylates (topical)
 - May be in combination with skin irritants and local anesthetics that relieve pain in one area
 - Not intended for long-term use
- Capsaicin (topical)
 - When applied as directed to affected joints, can take up to two weeks to see effect
 - Not intended for long-term use

Safety Tips

- Speak to your doctor or pharmacy advocate about the risks involved with taking over-the-counter medications long-term and choosing the appropriate pain medicine
- Take only one medicine with acetaminophen and one NSAID at a time
- ALWAYS read and follow the drug facts label
- Use the lowest effective dose or strengths for the shortest time
- Do not exceed the maximum daily dosage
- Avoid alcohol while taking medication

If you have questions about how to manage arthritis with OTC medications, please reach out to your Pharmacy Advocate, Bhavi Amin, at ext. 6406.



STRESS CAN BE A PAIN! Our bodies are well equipped to handle stress in small doses, but when that stress becomes long-term, it can have serious effects. Chronic stress causes muscles to be tense for long periods of time, which may trigger other reactions and promote stress-related disorders like tension headaches. Musculoskeletal pain in the low back and upper extremities has also been linked to job stress. Stress-relieving activities have been shown to effectively reduce tension, decrease the incidence of certain stress-related disorders, and increase a sense of well-being. **Try these forms of movement to alleviate pain caused by stress!**



Walking- The Anxiety and Depression Association of America reports that a 10-minute walk can be enough to restore calm and reduce stress and anxiety.

Swimming- A full-body workout (with no pressure on the joints) can be soothing for some people and make for an even better reduction in stress.

Dancing- Dancing is a wonderful way to ease stress while getting a solid workout. It can also be a social activity, which can help foster a sense of connectivity and support, helping you feel less anxious.

Yoga or Tai Chi- Yoga is often thought of as the gold standard in exercising for stress or anxiety relief. Another gentle practice called tai chi matches slow, deliberate movement with breathing exercises.

Hinge Health

We all know the saying, ‘summer bodies are made in winter.’ But what if your body struggles to move, no matter the season? If you are dealing with muscle or joint issues, Hinge Health, our approved digital physical therapy program can help. Their programs give you the tools to help you overcome back and joint pain. If you haven’t, sign up for Hinge Health at hingehealth.com/MCG and, join more than 300,000 participants who, on average, cut their pain by 68%. Hinge Health’s programs offer a “whole body” approach to keeping your joints healthy and pain free.



Their programs offer:

- Guided physical therapy to reduce your pain and help you feel better
- Customized exercises tailored to you - that you can do anywhere, anytime
- 1-on-1 health coaching for support and encouragement
- Educational resources to help how you think about pain

If you don’t have pain and are just looking to stay healthy, you can sign up for their free app. Recommended exercises will be tailored to you based on your job and lifestyle. Hinge Health is available to you and your eligible family members at no cost through your Manatee YourChoice Medical Plan.

Hinge Health will be hosting a webinar on Wednesday July 27th at 11 am. [Click here](#) to register to learn more.

YOUR BENEFITS ARE HERE FOR YOU!

Don't forget! As a Manatee YourChoice member, you have access to a team of professionals that can help with everything from diet to mental wellbeing. Each calendar year, MYC members can receive 5 free visits with:

- A personal trainer
- A health coach
- A registered dietician
- A certified counselor



Plus, all members age 19 and above have access to the MYC Fitness Center which includes free weights, a cardio theatre, and group fitness classes - like yoga, tai chi and dance!

THINKING ABOUT VEGGING OUT AFTER A MEAL?



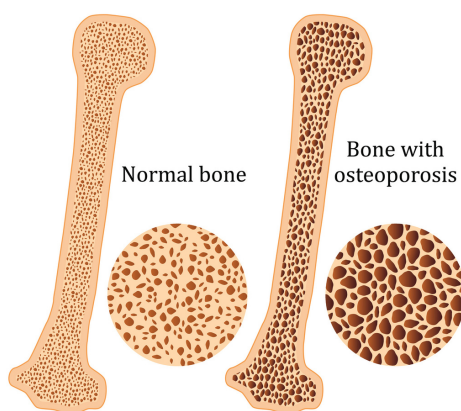
Think again!

Too much sitting compresses the internal organs in the abdomen including the stomach and small intestines. This may result in a slow down of the digestion process, resulting in bloating, gas, heartburn and constipation. Taking a short break to walk a bit will provide a "massage" to your intestines and improve the transit of food through your system. Poor posture may have the same effect. Pressure on the abdomen from slouching can make acid reflux worse and can slow down digestion.

AT RISK: OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis is the most common metabolic bone disease in the US. As we age, our bones can become brittle and weak and this can lead to fractures. 70% of the people with osteoporosis have not been screened so they are not aware they have osteoporosis. It is often overlooked and undertreated in large part because it is clinically silent before manifesting as a fracture. Early prevention and treatment are essential in the appropriate management of osteoporosis.

OSTEOPOROSIS



How can I manage my risk?

Good nutrition with calcium and vitamin D is important to keep our bones strong and healthy. Nerves and muscles also need calcium to function and if calcium is not available in the blood stream, the body will take calcium from our bones. To maintain a good level of calcium in the blood, people need between 1,000 to 1,200 milligrams every day. If you cannot meet your daily-required amount of calcium through your food, you may need a calcium supplement.

There are two basic types of calcium supplements: calcium citrate and calcium carbonate. Calcium citrate is easier on the stomach and can be taken without food. Calcium carbonate needs the acid in your stomach to dissolve the tablet and it is best taken after a meal. It is important to remember that the body can

only absorb approximately 500 to 600 mg of calcium at a time, therefore separate doses are required.

To get absorbed in the intestine, calcium needs vitamin D. Although vitamin D can be made in the skin when it is exposed to sunshine, the sun is not a reliable source of vitamin D. To maintain a good level of vitamin D, people need anywhere from 600 to 2,000 international units a day.

Do you suspect osteoporosis? Screening tools can help lead to a diagnosis. The gold standard is a Bone Mineral Density Test or DXA which is X-ray technology that measures the amount of bone density, usually in the spine and hip. DXA is a covered benefit for women age 65+, men age 70+, and anyone younger with one risk factor. If a diagnosis is made, common prescription treatments for osteoporosis include bisphosphonates, monoclonal antibodies, and parathyroid hormone analogs. Treatment will vary and is dependent on each individual's fracture risk. Standard pharmacy benefits apply, including co-pay cards for certain medications. All prescription medications for osteoporosis require calcium and vitamin D supplementation.



Please reach out to your nurse advocates (Jennifer Ruiz, ext 6409 or Debbie Miskell, ext 6407) if you have any questions regarding medical coverage. Your pharmacy team (Bhavi Amin, ext 6406 and Vanessa Rene, ext 6418) are here to help with pharmacy questions, prior authorizations, and copay assistance.