Plan a healthy season with a winter tune-up!

Michigan winters can be fun and exciting, especially with the approaching holidays. With shorter days and colder weather, they also encourage typical hibernation habits—more food, more sleep and less physical activity.

You can minimize the impact of winter on your chronic condition by following these simple ideas for managing your care during the winter months:

• Schedule a physical exam with your physician. You’ll start the New Year with peace of mind and a comprehensive plan for managing your chronic illness.
• Avoid colds and the flu. Wash your hands frequently, eat properly, drink plenty of liquids and get a flu shot.
• If you have asthma or an upper respiratory disease, change your furnace filter often to minimize air pollutants that may aggravate your condition.
• It’s a good time to exercise because the weather is cooler, so develop an exercise routine you can maintain indoors or outdoors. You’ll have the satisfaction of knowing you’ll be in good physical condition when spring arrives.
• Prepare for bouts of depression, which often hit when the holidays are over. Schedule several social activities during January to ensure you have plenty of interaction with friends and family when the “winter blues” come around.
• Eat healthy, but don’t overeat. It’s natural to put on weight over the winter, but that can lead to depression and physical challenges in the spring. Avoid this by maintaining healthy dietary habits over the winter. Don’t worry if you fall over the holidays; commit yourself to a healthy diet starting with the New Year.
• Don’t change your sleep routine. Resist the temptation to sleep more than usual, which can actually leave you overly tired and less energetic.
• Use the winter months to clear out old chores you’ve been avoiding, such as cleaning basements, organizing files and photos, scrapbooking or creating a budget.
• Enjoy the snow! Plan winter activities such as sledding or ice-skating with friends and family.

With fewer distractions, winter can be a great time to make positive changes in all your healthy habits. Manage your chronic condition appropriately this winter, and you’ll be pleased with the results when the snow melts next spring.

Congratulations on improving your health!

What a great year this has been for many of you!

Our last edition of Health Chronicle offered valuable tips and tools for successfully managing your chronic conditions including:

• Diabetes
• Hypertension (high blood pressure)
• Asthma
• Depression
• Heart Disease
• Depression
• Heart Disease

The feedback from our members has been encouraging! Many of you have written, called and e-mailed to say you’ve been following these simple check sheets— with great results. All of us at HAP’s HealthTrack program would like to congratulate you for implementing these tips.

If you haven’t done so, there’s still time to make some exciting changes before the end of the year. Visit our Web site at www.hap.org/healthtrack for the easy-to-follow tip sheets listed in our last edition of Health Chronicle, along with all our past newsletter issues. You’ll also find online health programs, healthy recipes and other chronic condition information.

Remember, managing your condition begins with basic steps such as taking medication as prescribed by your physician, getting the right tests at the right time, and contacting your physician if you experience problems. Taking the first step can be that simple. And with the New Year approaching, there’s no better time to start than right now.

For more details or to speak with one of our nurses, e-mail us at HAPsHealthTrack@hap.org or call us toll-free at (800) 288-2902.
What’s a chronic condition – and how can HAP help?

A chronic condition is one that lasts a long time, usually a lifetime, and often can be controlled but usually not completely cured. Some examples are asthma, high blood pressure, depression, diabetes, heart disease, congestive heart failure (CHF) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

The good news is chronic conditions usually can be controlled through healthy eating, exercise, medications and intervention by your personal physician. HAP’s HealthTrack is a comprehensive disease management program that helps you follow your treatment plan through:

• Educational tools and information
• Supporting your physician relationship
• The Health Chronicle newsletter
• Care plans specific to your condition
• Action plans for changing your health behavior
• Coaching from our nurse case managers

For more information, e-mail us at HAPhealthtrack@hap.org or call toll-free at (800) 288-2902, Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Do it today!

Find hope, help when depression strikes

Coping with a chronic condition can impact both your energy and attitude. Often, that can leave you vulnerable to one of the most common complications of chronic illness – depression. That’s because when you’re diagnosed with a chronic condition, it’s not easy adjusting to the lifestyle changes, limited mobility and physical limitations often brought on by the illness. The burden of living with the disease can trigger feelings of frustration, hopelessness, sadness or even depression.

The results can be overwhelming. Depression can cause you to isolate yourself from friends and family, the people you need most during this difficult time. Other symptoms include:

• Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
• Loss of interest in hobbies and other regular activities
• Decreased energy, fatigue
• Difficulty concentrating, making decisions
• Difficulty sleeping
• Loss of appetite or overeating
• Physical symptoms such as headaches, digestive disorders, chronic pain

When you experience depression at the same time as a chronic disease, treatment is critical to recovering your quality of life. Leaving it untreated can aggravate your chronic condition, worsening your pain and fatigue, while early diagnosis and treatment can improve your overall medical condition.

Treatment may include therapy or antidepressant medications. Here are other tips for dealing with the depression you may be experiencing:

1. See your personal physician for diagnosis and treatment options
2. Take care of yourself – exercise, eat properly and get rest
3. Follow the treatment plan for your chronic condition
4. Ask your physician about medications that may help
5. Limit your alcohol intake
6. Stay connected with friends and family; join a support group
7. Maintain a daily routine of work, chores, hobbies and social activities

For more help, call your physician or contact us at HAPHealthTrack@hap.org or toll-free at (800) 288-2902.

More tips for your good health

If you have congestive heart failure (CHF) or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), tear out these easy checklists and keep them in your wallet or on the refrigerator for easy reference. These are the basic steps you should take to manage your illness. Your physician may ask you to do more.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is a disease of the airways that results in a gradual loss of lung function. COPD includes chronic bronchitis, chronic obstructive bronchitis, emphysema or a combination of these conditions.

COPD may be caused by smoking, passive exposure to cigarette smoke, occupational dusts and chemicals, and possibly even outdoor air pollution. Symptoms may include:

• Chronic cough
• Producing excess sputum
• Shortness of breath

COPD is not a reversible condition but treatment can slow its progression. You can also alleviate the symptoms of COPD through medications, deep breathing exercises, exercise, stress management, smoking cessation and healthy eating. It is also important to prevent lung infections by getting pneumonia and flu vaccines.

Carefully monitor yourself, with help from your physician and a case manager from HAP’s HealthTrack program.

Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)

“Heart failure” does not mean your heart has failed or stopped beating. Your heart, the muscle that pumps blood to all parts of your body, is not working as well as it should, allowing blood to back up into your lungs, liver or legs. This can cause shortness of breath, leg swelling and other problems. Organs in your body may not get the oxygen and nutrients they need, reducing their ability to function properly.

CHF may be caused by having had a heart attack, uncontrolled blood pressure, abnormalities with your heart valves, congenital heart disease (heart defects from birth), cardiomyopathy (weakened heart muscle), lung disease or a heart tumor. Symptoms may include:

• Swollen feet, ankles or abdomen
• Waking at night short of breath
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COPD Check Sheet

☐ Take your medications daily as prescribed
☐ Use controlled breathing techniques
☐ Eat small amounts regularly
☐ Use huff & puff cough to clear secretions
☐ Control anxiety/stress

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CHF Check Sheet

☐ Take your medications daily as prescribed
☐ Limit your salt and sodium intake
☐ Don’t smoke
☐ Weigh yourself daily
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