

# Home+Health SENSE

a quarterly newsletter from THE MEDICAL TEAM



THE MEDICAL TEAM is committed to providing quality home care services in private homes and senior communities. We hope the information in this newsletter offers practical information about healthcare issues affecting seniors and helps illustrate why home healthcare makes sense. ❖



## Protecting Yourself from the Flu

**Influenza** or the “flu” is a viral respiratory infection which causes symptoms such as fever, chills, headache, dry cough or muscle aches. Illness may last several days or a week or more.

Those at high risk for getting the flu include people 65 years and older or anyone with long-term health problems such as heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes, asthma and anemia.

Usually people recover completely; however, complications can lead to pneumonia or death. Taking steps to avoid the flu is essential to avoiding serious complications, in particular for older Americans. During a regular flu season about 90% of flu-related deaths occur in people 65 years and older. ❖



### Flu Prevention Tips:

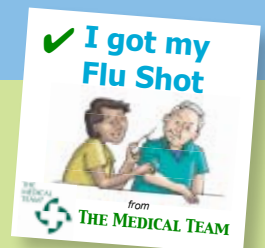
- **Get Vaccinated.** The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.
- **Maintain a healthy lifestyle** through rest, diet, exercise and relaxation.
- **Wash your hands often and thoroughly** with soap and water. Use an alcohol-based hand cleaner if soap and water are not available.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs spread this way.
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue** or cough or sneeze into your elbow. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- **Avoid close contact** with sick people.
- **Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean:** telephones, doorknobs, countertops.
- **Stay home if you are sick** with flu-like illness for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.

As part of The MEDICAL TEAM’s commitment to the health of our employees and the communities we serve, the company offers seasonal flu vaccination clinics.

Source: CDC, [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)

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# HOLIDAY BLUES

Depression, especially among seniors, can become more prevalent during the holiday season. The holidays can heighten feelings of grief and loss for seniors adjusting to changes related to the process of aging, such as life without a loved one, or a move from a lifelong family home into a retirement home or senior community. Depression is a very real and serious disease that can be life-threatening if left untreated.

Watch for warning signs of depression which include: persistent sadness (beyond mild holiday blues); lack of

interest; frequent crying; changes in appetite, weight or sleep; constant feelings of fatigue, restlessness, worthlessness, or guilt; suicidal thoughts.

If you or a loved one are depressed, contact your healthcare provider because depression is treatable. Patients may respond more readily when receiving psychiatric care in the comfort of home, surrounded by their family and possessions. THE MEDICAL TEAM offers an in-home care program to assist patients, families and caregivers who are broken and wounded by depression

and other behavioral health diagnoses to journey towards wholeness. The program is based on established research outcomes and meets all Medicare standards for psychiatric home care.

To learn more, please visit [www.medicalteam.com/journey](http://www.medicalteam.com/journey). You will also find our newest informational videos, which present an overview of the program and demonstrate its effectiveness, through the stories of patients with three common behavioral health diagnoses: depression, dementia and schizophrenia. ❖



*“It is important for family members, doctors and other caregivers to be alert to signs of depression during the holidays. Many elderly might feel that depression is a natural part of aging and may not seek treatment on their own.”*

—Karen A. Briskie, RN, MSN, Director of Behavioral Health, THE MEDICAL TEAM

## The following advice can help individuals overcome the seasonal blues

- Get out and socialize or invite family and friends over. Those who find it hard to get around should ask relatives and others for help traveling to parties and events.
- Volunteering can help improve mood. Contact local schools or religious organizations to ask about opportunities nearby.
- Don't drink too much alcohol because it can actually lower your spirits.
- Accept the fact that many people feel blue during the holidays and there is nothing wrong with not being “merry.”
- Talking to someone about your feelings may help you understand the reasons why you feel sad.

Source: “Seniors May Need Help Overcoming Holiday Blues”, [www.medicinenet.com](http://www.medicinenet.com).



## THE MEDICAL TEAM In the Community

THE MEDICAL TEAM encourages and supports individual and collective participation in local community events and social service projects throughout the year. This year our branches

have participated in charitable activities such as a “Relay for Life” race to support the American Cancer Society, events to raise funds for and awareness of Alzheimer’s disease, including the Alzheimer’s Association Memory Walk, and events to support a hospital pediatric unit, cancer survivors and the Brain Injury Association.

In collaboration with local non-profit organizations and Area Agencies on Aging, during the holiday season our branches will help homebound elderly and disabled by donating gift baskets, blankets, meals and other food items to ensure they receive a gift for the holidays. ❖

# Healthy Eating at the Holidays



We all enjoy celebrating special occasions and holidays with good food, but it's a challenge to avoid overindulging and "feasting" during the end of year holiday season.

When preparing holiday meals at home, you can follow this holiday cooking substitution guide to make your meals healthier.

"If we do feast, as many people do, without control, then we set ourselves up for bad patterns, ill health, and weight gain," says Roger A. Clemens, DrPH, food science expert for the Institute of Food Technologists. The good news is we can enjoy special foods without overeating them. **Here are some tips to make it through the holiday season:**

- **Go easy on the alcohol.** Drinking alcohol can impair your ability to feel your hunger level. Alcoholic beverages increase your body's production of the stress hormone, cortisol, which causes abdominal weight gain.
- **Take small tastes of food** rather than real portions at parties.
- Make sure that you get at least **15 grams of protein** at meals.
- **Don't taste or eat everything offered.** Party foods are not precious rarities. You'll have other opportunities to eat them.
- **Make the party and the people** more important than the food.
- Always, always **stop eating before you feel full.**
- **Maintain your exercise program** throughout the holidays.
- Spend time remembering the **true meaning of the holidays.**



If your meal calls for:	Healthier Alternative
Creamed soups	Fat-free milk-based soups
Sour cream	Low-fat yogurt or reduced fat sour cream
Bacon	Canadian bacon, turkey bacon, or lean prosciutto
Turkey with skin (dark or white meat)	Turkey without skin (white meat)
All-purpose flour	Whole-wheat flour (you may only need half as much)
Pie crust	Graham cracker crust
Traditional stuffing	Add chopped vegetables to stuffing
Creamed vegetables	Steamed vegetables
Mashed potatoes/Candied sweet potatoes	Mashed sweet potatoes
Pumpkin or pecan pie	Low-fat angel food cake served with fresh fruit
Heavy cream	Evaporated milk. Low-fat evaporated milk has fewer calories, less fat
Baking chocolate	Cocoa powder, which still has a deep, dark-chocolate flavor
Butter, shortening or oil	Margarine or 1/2 the amount of fruit puree when baking

Sources: "Holiday Weight Management", [www.medicinenet.com](http://www.medicinenet.com), "Healthier Holiday Meals – Holiday Substitutions Guide", [www.nourishinteractive.com](http://www.nourishinteractive.com) and "Lose the Fat, but Keep the Flavor", Consumers Union of United States Inc.

## THE MEDICAL TEAM ranks in Top 25% of Home Care Agencies in U.S.

**HomeCare Elite**  
**2010 TOP**  
**2 AGENCY**

In 2010, for the fifth consecutive year, the company was named to the HomeCare Elite, a compilation of the top-performing Medicare-certified home health care

agencies in the United States. The company's Austin, TX, San Antonio, TX, Houma, LA and Reston, VA agencies were ranked in the Top 25% of agencies whose performance measures in quality of care, quality improvement and financial performance are the best. (Data was based on publicly available information from Home Health Compare and the CMS Cost Reports.) Over 9,000 agencies were included in the 2010 analysis.



## Excellence in Wound Care

THE MEDICAL TEAM offers a Wound Care Management Program which helps train patients to care for and manage their non-healing wounds or ulcers, surgical wounds or incisions from traumatic injuries, or new ostomies. Our multidisciplinary team approach includes patients and their caregivers.

The program, which utilizes standardized wound management protocols, leads to speedier recoveries and better results for our patients and is ranked highly, when compared with the performance of all Medicare-Certified home health agencies. **Our clinical teams have earned top scores, exceeding state and national averages, from Medicare's Home Health Compare for the high percentage of patients whose incisions or wounds improved or healed after an operation.**

## What if you could live to be 100?

If a genetic test showed that a person could live to be 100, here's how respondents to an AARP poll said that the information would influence their behavior:

- 49% say they'd take better care of themselves
- 45% would save more money
- 22% would live more adventurously
- 19% would start another career
- 10% would begin another romance

**More than 35% say they wouldn't change a thing**



Source: AARP, [www.aarp.org/health](http://www.aarp.org/health)

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