

## *Dry eye and allergies: A double* THREAT TO YOUR VISION

**Spring allergies often go hand in hand with itchy, watery eyes.** But new research suggests the opposite also can hold true.

Pollen, mold and other particles in the air also increase the risk for dry eye, researchers found.

This condition occurs when you don't have enough tears to moisten and protect your eyes. Symptoms include irritation and discomfort when wearing contact lenses. Your eyes may feel gritty, scratchy or a burning sensation.

More than a nuisance, dry eye can damage the surface of your eyes and impair your vision. See your eye care professional if you have symptoms. He or she might suggest:

- An air filter and humidifier to reduce allergens in your home.
- Switching contact lenses or wearing them less often.
- Blinking regularly. Take extra care to do so when reading or staring at a screen.
- Wearing sunglasses. Choose wrap-around frames to

protect from wind and sun.

- Applying over-the-counter artificial tear solutions.
- Using warm compresses, lid massages or eyelid cleaners to decrease inflammation.

If your dry eye doesn't respond to these treatments, you may need prescription medications or surgery.

**National Walk  
@ Lunch Day,  
April 27!**

See page 5  
for details.

### GET THE FACTS

For frequently asked questions about dry eye, visit [nei.nih.gov/health/dryeye/dryeye](http://nei.nih.gov/health/dryeye/dryeye).

# Stop back pain *before it starts*

**Back pain affects about eight out of 10 people** at some point in their lives, according to the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. You're more likely to suffer disabling back pain if you answer "yes" to any of these questions:

- Do you regularly bend and lift with your body in a twisted position?
- Are you overweight?
- Do you get too little exercise?
- Do you smoke?

To keep your back healthy, mind your posture, your lifting technique and your exercise routine.

## **STANDING, SITTING AND SLEEPING TIPS**

- When you stand, keep your ears, shoulders and hips in a straight line. Avoid slouching by holding up your head and pulling in your stomach.
- When you sit, rest your feet on a low stool. But don't just sit there. Switch positions often, and take frequent walking breaks.
- Choose a sleeping position that keeps your back straight. A good position is on your back with a pillow under your knees. Or, lie on your side with your knees bent.

## **REDUCE THE HEAVY RISKS OF LIFTING**

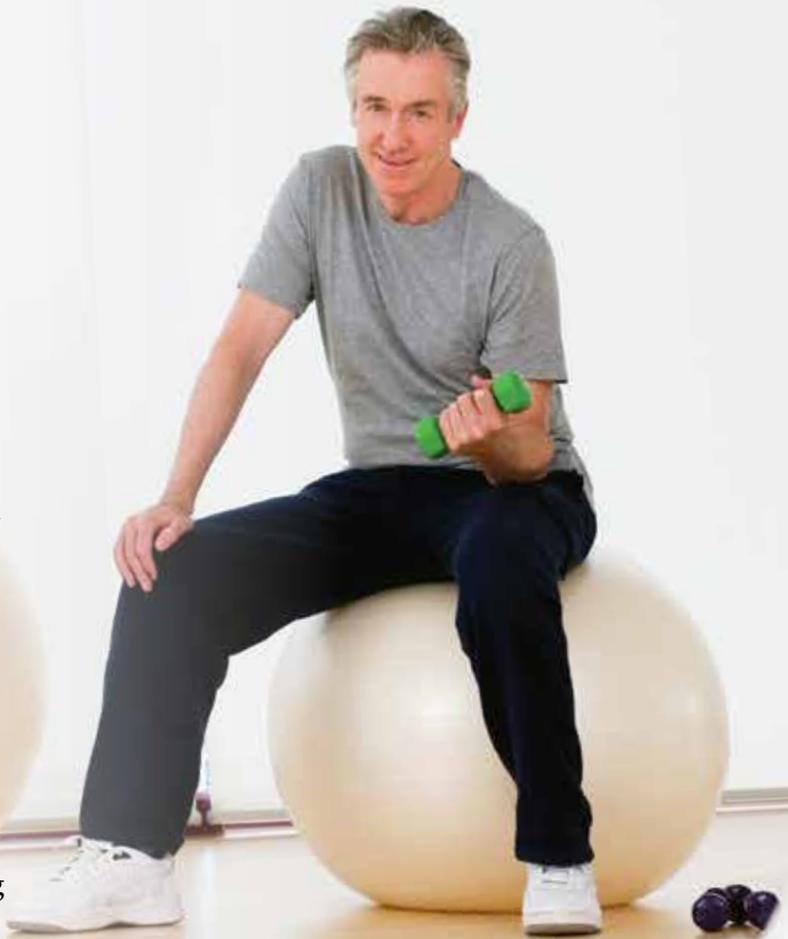
If something is too heavy or awkward to lift, ask for help. When you lift, follow these guidelines:

1. Face whatever you are lifting to avoid twisting.
2. Place your feet shoulder width apart to widen your base of support.

3. Bend your knees and tighten your stomach muscles.
4. Lift a heavy load close to your body.

## **EXERCISE PLAYS A ROLE IN PREVENTION**

Several different types of exercise may help prevent back injury and pain. To gently stretch your back muscles, for example, lie on your back with your knees bent. As you press your lower back against the floor, slowly lift your left knee to your chest. Hold for five seconds. Then relax your left knee and do the same thing with your right knee. Do 10 sets of this exercise.



## **Annual policyholders meeting set for May 12**

Plan 65 members are eligible to attend the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas annual policyholders meeting, scheduled for 8:30 a.m., May 12 at Polk Auditorium, 1234 Polk St., Topeka.

The agenda for the annual policyholders meeting is to elect four directors to open positions on the board of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas.

Names of the individuals nominated for these terms by the board's governance committee are available on the company's website at [bcbsks.com](http://bcbsks.com). From the home page select *About Us*, then *Governance* to view the list.



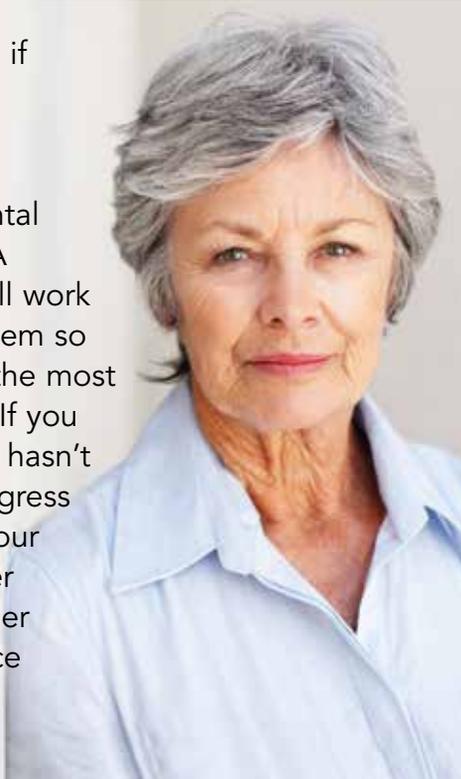
## Notice for snowbirds

If you've just returned from an extended out-of-town trip, welcome back! Once you unpack, be sure to update your mailing address so that you can continue to receive your claims information and other Plan 65 correspondence in a timely fashion.

Changing your address is simple; pick whichever option is most convenient for you:

- Write to us at 1133 SW Topeka Blvd., Topeka, KS 66629-0001
- Email us at [csc@bcbsks.com](mailto:csc@bcbsks.com)
- Visit BlueAccess®, the secure section of our website, at [bcbsks.com](http://bcbsks.com)

**Tell your therapist** if you feel like your therapy sessions aren't working, recommends Mental Health America. A good therapist will work to solve the problem so that you can get the most out of treatment. If you still feel like there hasn't been enough progress after discussing your concerns, consider talking with another therapist for advice or possibly switch providers.



## Did you know

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation provided nearly \$752,000 in grants to 258 health-related, non-profit organizations during 2015.

The BCBSKS Foundation, which marked its 10th anniversary in 2015, promotes the good health of Kansans who live in its 103-county service area. Through its giving, the BCBSKS Foundation focuses on key health issues that impact the lives of many Kansans. It funds programs and activities that promote health improvement, health care access, health education, healthy behaviors and prevention initiatives.

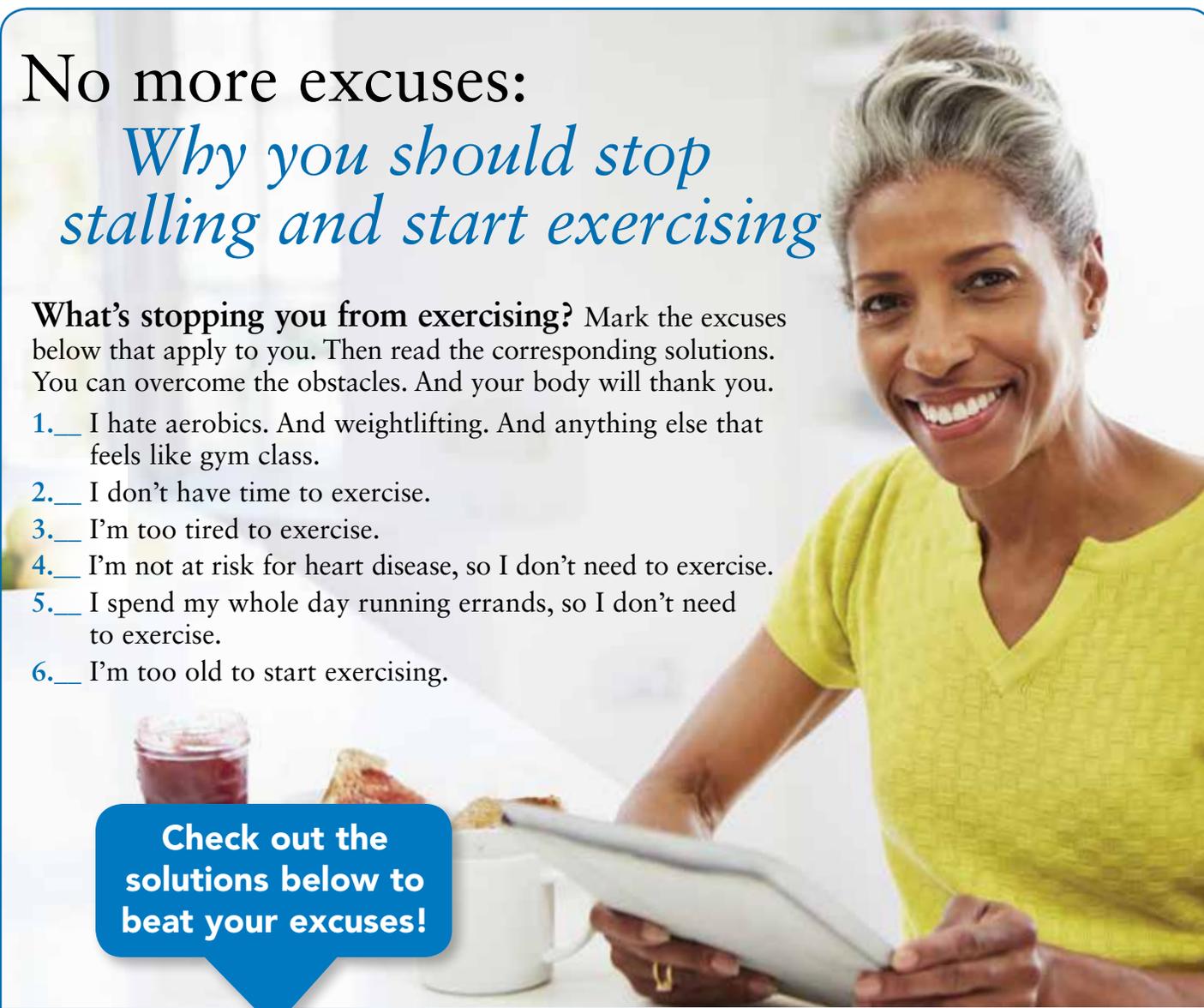
During 2015, the BCBSKS Foundation provided more than \$148,000 in grants to Kansas schools through its **Healthy Habits for Life** grant program. It also celebrated its 10th anniversary by giving \$10,000 each to 10 organizations that were chosen through a vote of BCBSKS employees. To learn more about the BCBSKS Foundation and grant opportunities, visit [bcbsks.com/foundation](http://bcbsks.com/foundation).

# No more excuses:

## *Why you should stop stalling and start exercising*

**What's stopping you from exercising?** Mark the excuses below that apply to you. Then read the corresponding solutions. You can overcome the obstacles. And your body will thank you.

1.  I hate aerobics. And weightlifting. And anything else that feels like gym class.
2.  I don't have time to exercise.
3.  I'm too tired to exercise.
4.  I'm not at risk for heart disease, so I don't need to exercise.
5.  I spend my whole day running errands, so I don't need to exercise.
6.  I'm too old to start exercising.



**Check out the solutions below to beat your excuses!**

### **SOLUTIONS TO YOUR EXCUSES:**

1. Good news: You don't have to revisit gym class. Studies show that lifestyle activities are just as effective as structured exercise programs in improving fitness. So walk the dog, do yard work, run up and down the stairs or dance to your favorite CD. It all counts as exercise.
2. If you can't find 30 minutes in a row, break it up. Three 10-minute bouts of exercise are just as effective.
3. Yes, it's hard to get out of that chair. But if you do exercise regularly, you'll actually feel less tired and have more energy. Studies show you'll sleep better, too.
4. By not exercising, you are at risk for heart disease. An inactive lifestyle also increases your risk for diabetes, high blood pressure and colon cancer.
5. Is most of that errand time spent in the car? And what about your stress level? Exercise helps you feel better mentally as well as physically. So try to give yourself some *me time* most days to do an activity you enjoy.
6. Even people who start exercising later in life can reduce their risk for disease and reap the big benefits of regular exercise. In fact, exercise offers added bonuses to older adults: It can improve arthritis symptoms and decrease your risk for falls and fractures. Before you get started, talk with your doctor. Ask for help in designing a physical activity program that's right for you.

## Connect with us via social media

As social media fills our personal, daily existence, it continues to play a vital role in the business community as well—and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas is no exception. BCBSKS is using this form of media to create, share and exchange information.

Twitter is the company's latest foray into social media (@BCBSKS); now BCBSKS has everyday online exposure on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+ and our You + Blue blog.

As an example of sharing information, the You + Blue blog recently displayed important information about mammograms, described how to read the BCBSKS Explanation of Benefits and shared healthy recipes.

Trying to find all our social media connections? These new tools and platforms are neatly organized on one page at [bcbsks.com/AboutUs/MediaLibrary](http://bcbsks.com/AboutUs/MediaLibrary). There you can find our latest postings, messages, videos, blog writings, etc.

If you're on Twitter, be sure to follow @BCBSKS.



For the most benefit, continue walking daily throughout the year.



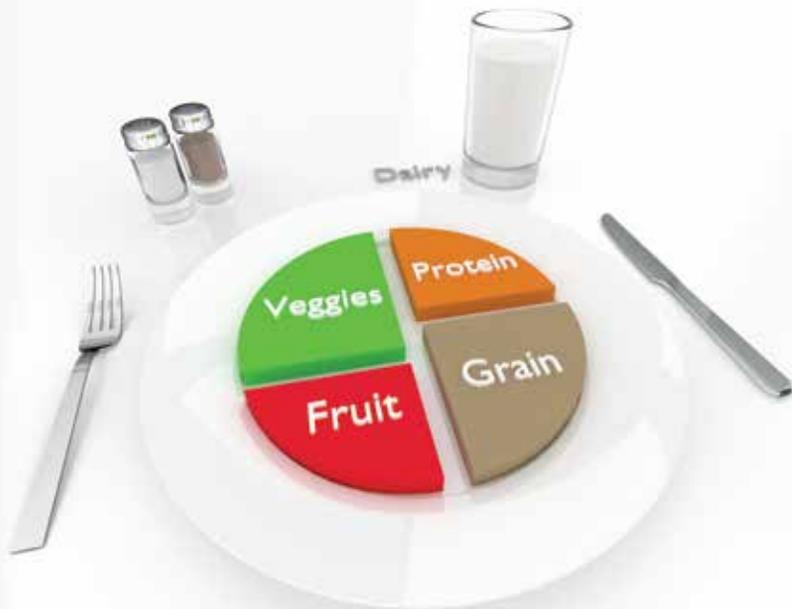
# Blue Cross observes 10 years of National Walk @ Lunch Day

**Research shows that sitting longer than six hours per day increases health risks** such as having higher levels of triglycerides, having a larger waist, and lowering levels of “good” cholesterol—even if you exercise for the recommended hour per day. Let's offset those findings together during National Walk @ Lunch Day.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, together with Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies from across the country, have designed a day to help members remember to incorporate exercise into their busy schedules. Join others by walking for at least 30 minutes April 27.

Then, for the most benefit, continue walking daily throughout the year. Visit [bcbsks.com](http://bcbsks.com) for more information.





## Have diabetes? Tips for eating

A healthy diet is important to managing your diabetes. But you don't have to give up your favorite foods. Make smart food choices like whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Eat smaller portions. Enjoy some foods, like chips and sweets, in moderation.

A registered dietitian can help you create a food plan based on your needs. The average person should consume between 1,600 and 2,000 daily calories, divided into these food groups and servings:

- 8 starches
- 2 milks
- 4 vegetables
- 4 to 6 ounces of meat and meat substitutes, such as cheese, tofu, eggs and peanut butter
- 3 fruits
- Up to 3 fats and 1 sweet

Try these healthy ideas in the morning:

### **BREAKFAST:**

Two pieces whole-grain toast with 1 tablespoon peanut butter, ½ grapefruit, 1 cup low-fat or nonfat milk

### **MORNING SNACK:**

One cup low-fat yogurt

Following a healthy diet also is a great way to help prevent diabetes from developing.

## Mexican Pozole No need to travel—get your Mexican food fix right at home!

- 2 lb. . . . . lean beef (eye round roast), cubed
- 1 tbsp. . . . . olive oil
- 1 large . . . . . onion, chopped
- 1 clove . . . . . garlic, finely chopped
- ¼ tsp. . . . . salt
- ⅛ tsp. . . . . ground black pepper
- ¼ c. . . . . cilantro
- 1 can (15 oz.) . . . . . stewed tomatoes
- ⅓ can (2 oz.) . . . . . no-salt-added tomato paste
- 1 can (1 lb., 13 oz.) . . . hominy

Heat olive oil in a large pot. Gently blot beef cubes dry with paper towels, carefully place them in the pot, and sauté. Mix in onion, garlic, salt, pepper, cilantro and enough water to cover the meat.

Cover pot and cook over low heat until meat is tender. Add tomatoes and tomato paste. Continue cooking for about 20 minutes. Add hominy and continue cooking for another 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, over low heat. If too thick, add water for desired consistency.

Tip: As a variation, boneless, skinless chicken breasts may be used instead of beef cubes.

Serves 10. Each serving provides: Calories: 253, Protein: 22 g, Fat: 10 g, Saturated fat: 3 g, Carbohydrates: 19 g, Fiber: 4 g, Sodium: 425 mg, Cholesterol: 52 mg.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute/National Institutes of Health



# Take your medications properly to save money

You know that you need to take your prescribed medications for optimal health. But did you know that taking your medicine correctly can actually help you save money? Studies have shown that medication noncompliance costs U.S. consumers \$100 billion to \$300 billion annually due to emergency room and hospital admissions, extra doctor visits and supplementary medications. So take your medications the right way to cut out unnecessary medical bills.

## TO TAKE YOUR MEDICATIONS PROPERLY:

- Refill your prescriptions before you run out.
- Keep taking your medications even if your symptoms have disappeared.
- Refill all your prescriptions at one pharmacy to reduce your risk for interactions.
- Take the prescribed dose.

## KEEP YOUR MEDICATION COMPLIANCE ON TRACK WITH THE FOLLOWING TIPS AND TOOLS:

- Take your medications at the same time in the morning and/or evening.
- Link taking your medicine with a task, such as brushing your teeth.
- Use a pillbox that allows you to organize your pills by time of day and days of the week. Choose a specific time each week to refill it.
- Track your compliance by using sticky notes or a whiteboard to list the drugs you've taken so far that day.



### How do I know if Medicare or Plan 65 is the primary payer?

Medicare is always the primary payer of your health care services if you have Plan 65. Plan 65 supplements your Medicare coverage by paying designated coinsurances and deductibles.

### What should I do with my claims if I go to a provider in another state?

If you receive services outside the state of Kansas or in Johnson and Wyandotte counties, please advise your provider to submit the claim along with the Medicare Summary Notice to their local Blue Cross Blue Shield for processing.



## Color in or out of the lines

Playtime at any  
age for health

The latest coloring books aren't just for kids. Use colored pencils, crayons or fine-tipped markers to shade in designs like butterflies and tranquil landscapes. Beyond the fun involved in creative expression, coloring intricate designs called mandalas might even ward off anxiety. That's according to a study in *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*. Try coloring the designs on this page to help ward off stress.



## HealthyLiving

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