

HealthyYou



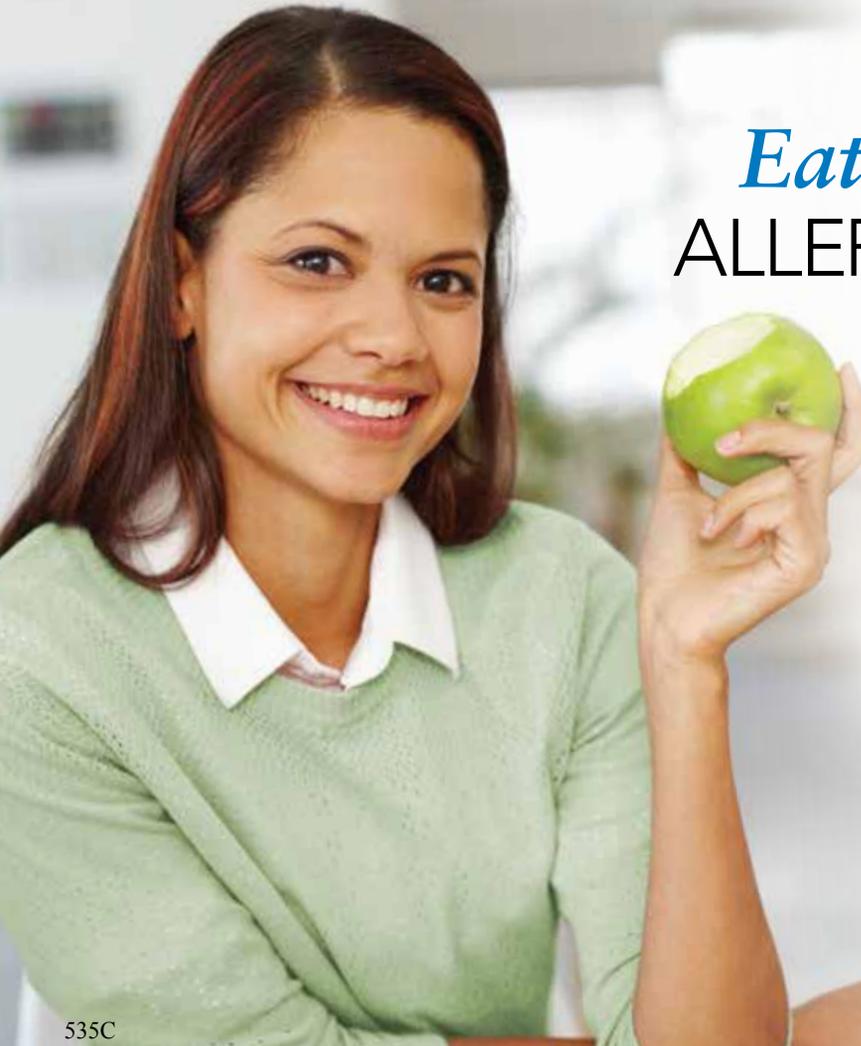
Live a healthier lifestyle

bcbks.com Spring 2016

National Walk
@Lunch Day,
April 27!

See page 6
for details.

Eat away your ALLERGIES THIS SPRING



535C

Coughing, sneezing, watery eyes. Hay fever springs up due to pollen in the air. If you're among the millions who suffer from seasonal allergies, studies show what's on your plate can help ease symptoms. Load up on these foods to breathe easier this allergy season.

- **Broccoli.** This veggie delivers an anti-inflammatory compound called sulforaphane. In a recent study, a broccoli extract rich in sulforaphane reduced the reaction people with allergies had to harmful air particles. The dose delivered was about the same as two cups of broccoli.
- **Apples.** The fruit contains kelling, a compound that works to keep airways open. It's just one of a powerful group of nutrients called flavonoids. These antioxidants prevent your body from pumping out histamines—chemicals that cause your eyes, nose and throat to swell when you catch a whiff of pollen. What if you prefer oranges to apples? Don't fret—all fresh fruits and veggies can contribute to allergy relief. In one study, adults and kids who ate the most produce were least likely to wheeze.
- **Yogurt.** Serve yourself a spoonful of probiotics. These good-for-you bacteria can alter the way your immune system responds to allergens, reducing your symptoms.
- **Fish, nuts and olive oil.** What do these foods have in common? Along with fruits, veggies, whole grains and beans, they're staples of the Mediterranean diet. When women eat this way during pregnancy, their children have fewer allergy and asthma symptoms years later.



FREE DELICIOUS RECIPES

Download healthy recipes from our website.
Just visit [bcbks.com/CustomerService/
Members/newsletter/recipes](http://bcbks.com/CustomerService/Members/newsletter/recipes).

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas
1133 SW Topoka Blvd.
Topoka, KS 66629-0001

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. Your body will thank you.

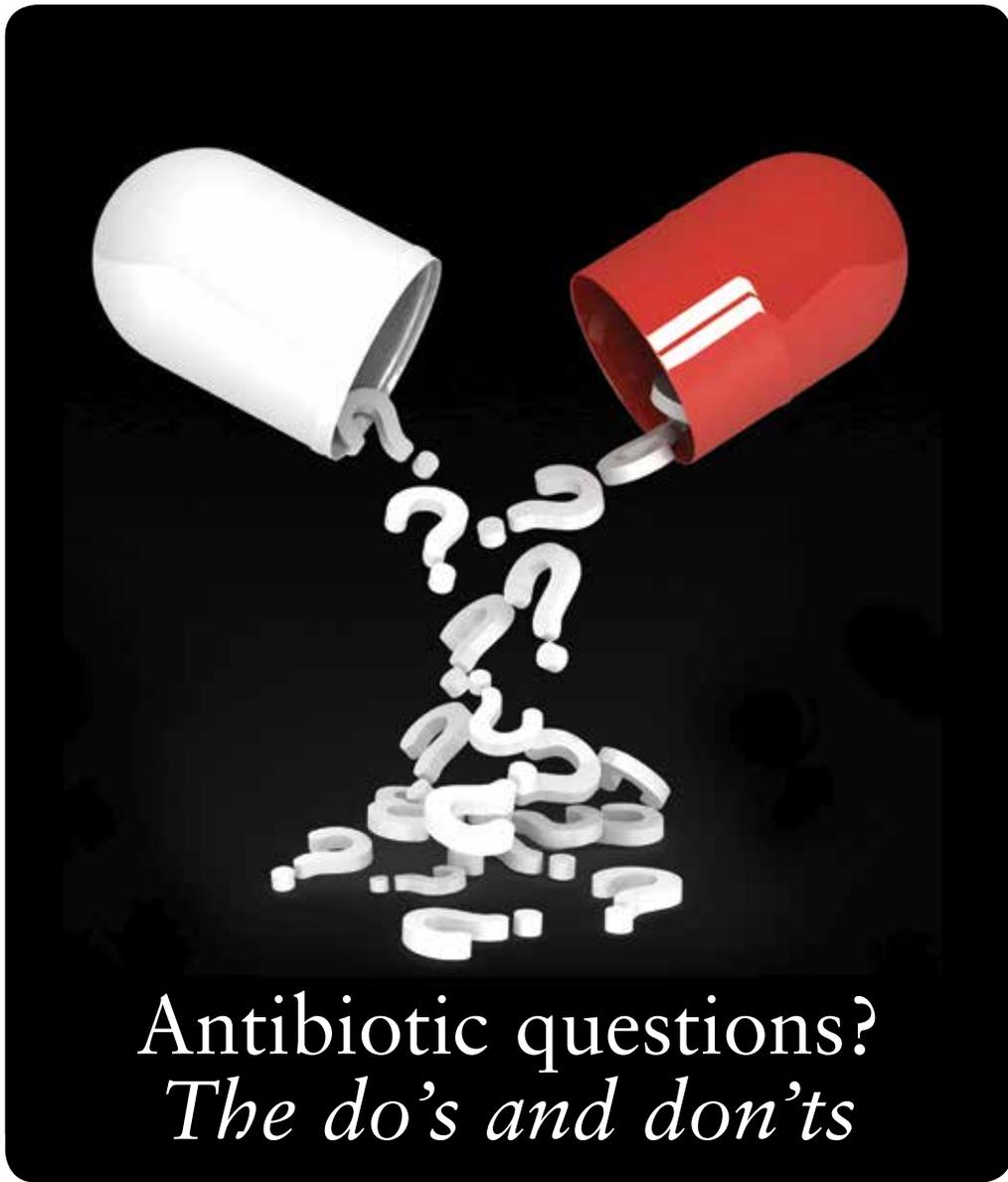
1. I hate aerobics. And weight lifting. And anything else that feels like gym class.
2. I don't have time to exercise.
3. I'm too tired to exercise.
4. I'm not at risk for heart disease. I don't need to exercise.
5. I spend my whole day running errands. I don't need to exercise.
6. I'm too old to start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



Check out the solutions to beat your excuses below!

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 exercise bursts are just as effective, if you keep your heart rate up during each stint.
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? 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. It can improve arthritis symptoms and decrease your risk for falls and fractures. Talk with your doctor before you get started. Ask for help in designing a physical activity program that's right for you.



Antibiotic questions? *The do's and don'ts*

It starts out as the sniffles, but by the time you wake up the next morning, you know it's here: a cold. And it feels like a bad one. Stuffy head, sore throat, coughing, sneezing, the works. Time to call the doctor and get some antibiotics, right? Maybe not.

Antibiotics can be powerful medicine. But you have to use them safely and correctly. And sometimes that means not using them at all.

FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES FOR USING ANTIBIOTICS

Do This	Don't Do This
Take them for bacterial infections like strep throat.	Take them for common cold symptoms like runny noses and coughs. Your body will fight off the illness on its own.
Take all the medication prescribed. (If you use only part of the medicine, it can mean you treated only part of the infection.)	Take them unless your doctor says you need them. They won't help and won't prevent other people from catching your cold. And they can create stronger bacteria that are harder to treat.



Mike Atwood,
M.D., Chief VP,
Medical Affairs
& Chief Medical
Officer, BCBSKS

Do I really need an antibiotic?

Winter is finally over but coughs and colds are still common this time of year. Fighting these illnesses is never easy, but it is important not to cause more harm by taking unnecessary antibiotics.

Viruses cause the vast majority of sore throats and acute upper respiratory illnesses. These conditions typically last less than a week and are best treated with rest, fluids and over-the-counter medications for the acute symptoms. Antibiotics are effective when needed but only treat bacterial infections, not viral coughs and colds or the flu.

Prevention is important. Get a flu shot each fall and employ frequent hand washing during flu season. Taking inappropriate antibiotics for a viral illness "just in case" can cause unwanted side effects and may contribute to increased problems with drug-resistant infections.

Talk with your physician when you have severe symptoms or when symptoms persist despite supportive measures. Your physician can determine if antibiotic treatment is in your best interest. Learn more at: cdc.gov/features/getsmart.



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. There you can find our latest postings, messages, videos, blog writings, etc.

1 in 5 teens miss out *on medical treatment*

Researchers surveyed almost 15,000 teens nationwide in 1994 and 1995, when they were about 16. Twenty percent reported at least one instance during the previous year when they thought they should get medical care but didn't.

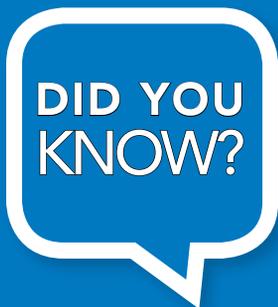
The scientists surveyed the study participants again when they were 30 years old. Those who'd skipped out on doctor's visits had a much higher chance of a wide range of health problems.

Skipping doctor's visits may directly turn teens into sicker adults, the study authors note. After all, they're not only missing

treatment for existing conditions, but also they won't receive preventive care to ward off future health woes.

In addition, habits formed during adolescence may carry over into adulthood. Teens who form a pattern of avoiding doctors might be more likely to continue doing so as adults.

➡ **Even healthy teens should have a checkup once per year, government experts say. Get tips for talking with your teen about health and a guide to making the most of each appointment at healthfinder.gov/healthtopics/population/pre-teens-and-teens.**



The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation provided nearly \$752,000 in grants to 258 health-related, nonprofit 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.

Get your blood *pressure checked*

High blood pressure contributes to more heart-related deaths in the U.S. than any other factor. The number of Americans with hypertension is increasing.

Most people with hypertension have no signs. So it's important to ask your doctor to check your blood pressure, even when you feel fine.

Work with your health care team to prevent or control high readings. They may recommend:



To calculate your risk for hypertension—and learn more about how to prevent it—visit the American Heart Association at heart.org/highbloodpressure.

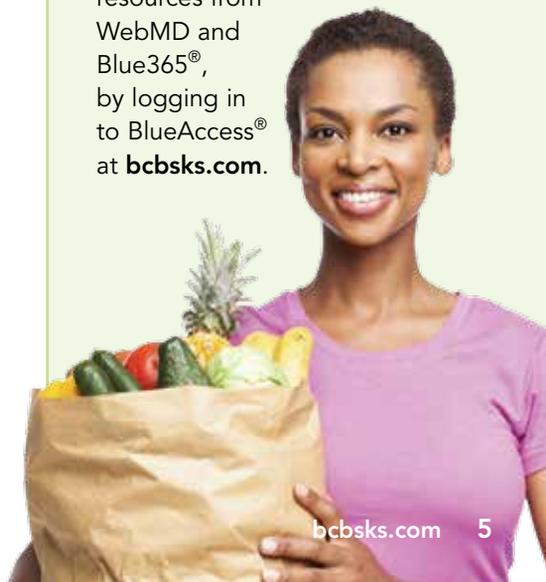
Health assessment provides healthy road map

Learning about your health and potential health risks is the perfect way to start improving your health. Our health assessment, powered by WebMD® through HealthyOptions at bcbsks.com, is a powerful tool providing a snapshot of your current health and health risks.

After you complete the assessment, you are provided a personalized dashboard based on the results. You can tweak the health dashboard a little more by selecting additional topics of interest.

Or, perhaps your health assessment will tell you that you are currently in good health, in which case you'll simply need to keep making healthy choices regarding your diet, cardiovascular activity and more. Making positive choices about your health regimen helps you feel better, look better and gives you more energy. Making healthy lifestyle choices also is a contributing factor in controlling health care costs.

To start taking advantage of developing your healthy roadmap, access our members only services, including exclusive health and wellness resources from WebMD and Blue365®, by logging in to BlueAccess® at bcbsks.com.



Blue Cross celebrates 10 years of National Walk @ Lunch Day[®]



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

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 during your lunch break April 27. Visit bcbsks.com for more information.



Buttons and Bows Pasta

This family-friendly pasta dish can be used as an entrée or paired with chicken or a light fish. It’s also a great recipe to make in bulk and save for use throughout the week.

- 2 c. (8 oz.) dry whole wheat bow tie pasta (farfalle)
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. garlic, minced (about 1 clove)
- 1 bag (16 oz.) frozen peas and carrots
- 2 c. low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 tbsp. fresh parsley, rinsed, dried and chopped (or 1 tsp. dried)
- 1 medium lemon, rinsed, for 1 tsp. zest (use a grater to take a thin layer of skin off the lemon)
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper



In a four-quart saucepan, bring three quarts of water to a boil over high heat. Add pasta and cook according to package directions. Once pasta is done, drain water from pot.

While the pasta cooks, heat olive oil and garlic over medium heat in a large sauté pan. Cook until garlic is soft, but not browned. Add peas and carrots. Cook gently until the vegetables are heated through. In a bowl, combine chicken broth and cornstarch. Mix well. Add to pan with vegetables and bring to a boil.

Simmer gently for one minute. Add parsley, pasta, lemon zest and pepper. Toss gently and cook until the pasta is hot. Serve 2 cups of pasta and vegetables per portion.

Yield: 4 servings. Each serving provides: Calories 329, Protein: 13 g, Total fat: 6 g, Saturated fat: 1 g, Carbohydrates: 59 g, Fiber: 9 g, Sodium: 127 mg, No cholesterol.

Source: “Delicious Healthy Family Meals,” National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute/National Institutes of Health

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 STRATEGIES

- 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.

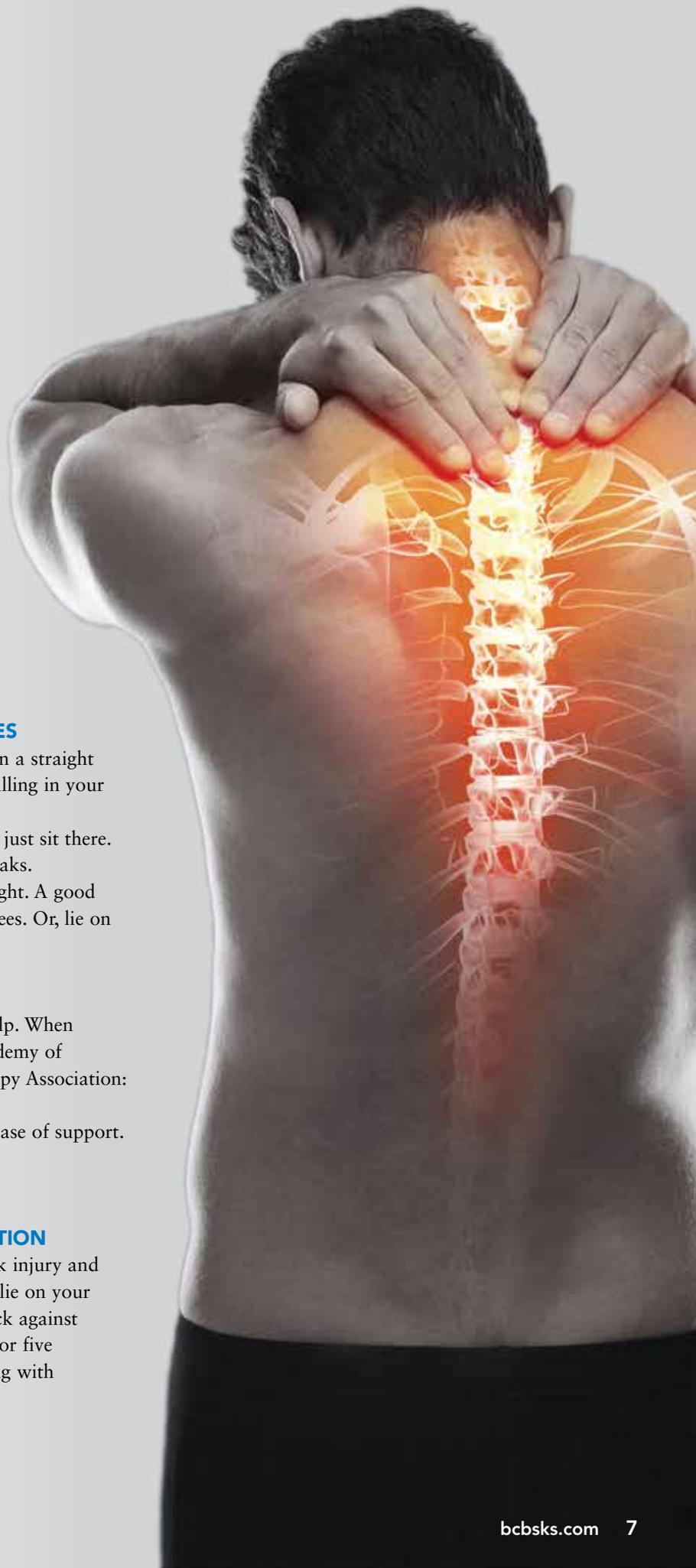
REDUCE THE HEAVY RISKS OF LIFTING

If something is too heavy or awkward to lift, ask for help. When you lift, follow these guidelines from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and the American Physical Therapy Association:

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 AN ACTIVE 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.



Spouse's stroke hurts your health, too

Strokes can leave survivors struggling to move, speak or perform everyday activities. A new study suggests these brain attacks also might impact the health of patients' partners in the long term. In the study, husbands and wives of stroke survivors scored lower on tests of physical, mental and overall health. The more impaired the survivor, the poorer the spouse's mental and physical health.

The strain involved can wear caregivers down psychologically and contribute to physical problems such as heart disease and stroke. If you take care of a spouse with special needs:

- Eat a nutritious diet and exercise.
- Watch for signs of depression in yourself and your spouse.
- Look for resources such as adult day care, home aide service or respite care.

Color in—or out of—the lines

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*.



HealthyYou

Healthy You is published as a service for members of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. The newsletter is intended to provide general health information. It is not intended to provide personal medical advice, which should be obtained directly from a health care provider. © 2016. Printed in U.S.A.

Surprising contact lens mistakes you're probably making

Contact lenses can sometimes be a pain. In fact, about one-third of contact lens wearers have visited the doctor because of eye pain or redness related to contacts.

ACCORDING TO A NEW SURVEY

99 percent
of lens wearers make at least one mistake.

80 percent
of people used a contact lens case for too long.

1/2 of people
didn't replace their contacts often enough.

Proper care can prevent eye infections. Follow these habits to reduce the risk for eye infections:

- Use fresh solution every time.
- Never store contacts in water.
- Change your contacts as often as your doctor recommends.
- Don't swim or shower while wearing contacts.