

# Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions®

An Independent Health  company

PHARMACY BENEFITS NEWSLETTER • VOLUME 11, ISSUE 3

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## Preventing and treating high cholesterol

Elevated blood cholesterol is one of the most common medical conditions, putting patients at risk for heart disease, heart attack and stroke. While high cholesterol can be hereditary, it is important to remember that most often, diet and lifestyle have a hand in your cholesterol level.

Cholesterol is a type of fat found both in the body and in certain foods. Low-density lipoproteins (LDL), often referred to as “bad” cholesterol, deliver cholesterol to the body. High-density lipoproteins (HDL) or “good” cholesterol, remove cholesterol from the body. When you have high cholesterol, you have too much LDL in your blood. It can stick to the walls of your blood vessels and clog them, slowing down the flow of blood to your heart and brain over time.

Ways to help maintain healthy cholesterol levels include:

- Consuming more foods low in saturated or “trans” fat including fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk products and lean meats;
- Maintaining a healthy weight with a Body Mass Index (BMI) between 18.5 and 24.9;
- Getting enough exercise – at least 30 minutes most days of the week;
- Limiting alcohol consumption; and
- Not smoking

If high blood cholesterol runs in your family, lifestyle modifications may not be enough to help lower your LDL cholesterol. Talk to your health care provider about the best treatment option, which may include a statin. Statins can help lower your cholesterol by reducing the production of cholesterol by the liver. They include medications such as atorvastatin (Lipitor®), fluvastatin (Lescol®), rosuvastatin (Crestor®) and simvastatin (Zocor®). Lower-cost generic versions of many statin medications are available.

Other medications used to lower cholesterol include nicotinic acid (niacin) and fibrates (such as Tricor). In addition, researchers are currently developing a new class of biologic drugs that lower cholesterol through inhibition of the PCSK9 protein. These medications, which would be self-injected and administered every few weeks, would be used for patients with the rare inherited disease called familial hypercholesterolemia, in addition to individuals who have had a poor response or intolerance to traditional cholesterol lowering medications.

It’s important to remember to talk to your health care provider about any concerns with your cholesterol. If they recommend medication to help lower your cholesterol, take it as prescribed, but continue your lifestyle changes.

## Pharmacy Help Desk extends hours

Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions has an on-site help desk dedicated to pharmacy customer service. Your pharmacist can call PBD directly if there is a problem with filling a prescription, and our help desk strives to ensure that services for participating pharmacies is both effective and efficient.

Our help desk recently extended its service hours, and staff are now available to take calls from your pharmacist Monday through Sunday from 7 a.m. – 11 p.m. Should you have any issues at your pharmacy, your pharmacist can contact our help desk at the number on the back of your ID card.

As always, if you have any pharmacy-related questions, you can call our Member Services Department at (716) 635-7880 or 1-888-878-9172, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Please direct questions or comments you have about the Pharmacy Benefit Dimensions newsletter to:

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## Ways to stay healthy and safe this summer

Summertime means more exposure to sun, disruption in our daily routines and schedules, and more time outdoors. Here are some things to keep in mind when it comes to medication adherence, sun exposure and safety during the summer months:

### Staying adherent

If travel is in your future, remember to carry all your medications in their original labeled containers and pack them in your carry-on bag, as checked bagged could be lost. If you are traveling to a different time zone, you may need to alter your dosing regimen. Speak with your pharmacist about adjusting the times that you take your medications. It's also important to remember to pack a full supply of your medication; therefore, we encourage you to check your prescription supply well before you intend to travel. If you find yourself short of medication before anticipated travel, you may be able to obtain an override for a vacation supply. Ask your pharmacist to call our Pharmacy Help Desk for this request should the need arise. *(See article about Pharmacy Help Desk on page 1.)*

### Sun exposure

While it is important to protect your skin from sun exposure due to the risk of exposure to ultraviolet rays, too much sun could adversely affect those regularly taking an over-the-counter prescription or chronic medication. Select medications can affect your ability to stay hydrated and respond appropriately to heat, while others may cause sensitivity to the sun. Some examples include Lasix, sulfa antibiotics, tetracyclines, ciprofloxacin and hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ). In addition, exposure to excessive sunlight can sometimes lead to adverse skin reactions with select antibiotics, blood pressure medications, hormones and oral diabetic medications.

Please remember to check your medication labels for information about sun exposure. You may also consider asking your doctor or pharmacist if your medications make you more susceptible to heat exhaustion or sunburn. If so, you'll need to take extra precautions to protect your body like drinking plenty of fluids and limiting sun exposure. As always, if you plan on being in the sun, choose a sunscreen of at least 15-30 SPF, apply it before going outdoors and reapply at least every 2 hours. Even if your sunscreen is labeled water resistant, it should be reapplied after exposure to water or excessive sweating.

### Insect repellent

While not often life threatening, mosquito bites can be a nuisance. You can reduce your chance of bites by minimizing the time you spend outdoors at times of high mosquito activity (dusk and dawn). When going outdoors, remember to cover as much skin as possible with clothing and use a repellent with an appropriate amount of DEET (the higher concentration of DEET, the longer the repellent will last.) In order to keep insects away from your home, remember to remove water sources that can serve as mosquito breeding habitats and to clean the rain gutters around your home regularly. If you have a pool, remember to routinely clean and chlorinate it.

### Tick bites/Lyme disease

There are a number of tick-borne diseases, Lyme disease being the most common in North America, and summer is a common time for increased exposure. Ticks are often carried on deer and pets, and may be hard to detect. In the majority of cases for individuals with tick bites, most develop no symptoms and many people do not remember being bitten. Some tips to help prevent tick bites include avoiding grassy areas and shrubs where ticks populations may be high, wearing light-colored clothing so ticks can be easily seen (and brushed off) and checking yourself, others, and pets if exposed to areas where ticks are likely to be located. If you observe a tick on the skin, remove it using fine-tipped tweezers as soon as you notice it. Be sure to watch for signs or symptoms of Lyme disease such a rash, fever or flu-like symptoms.

As always, if you have any concerns, see your health care provider.

## New generic medications now available

Generic medications are safe and effective, lower-cost alternatives to brand-name drugs. For your reference, here are some brand-name medications that recently have had a new generic alternative released to the marketplace.

Brand Name	Generic Name	Category
Kenalog® Spray	triamcinolone	Dermatologicals
Copaxone®	glatiramer acetate (Glatopa™)	Psychotherapeutic and Neurological Agents
Carac® Cream	fluorouracil	Dermatologicals
Abilify®	aripiprazole	Antipsychotics/Antimanic Agent
Zyvox® tablets	linezolid	Anti-Infective Agents
Focalin XR®	dexmethylphenidate	ADHD
Mestinon®	pyridostigmine bromide	Antimyasthenic/Cholinergic Agents

If you have any questions about generic medications, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist.