



# Newsletter

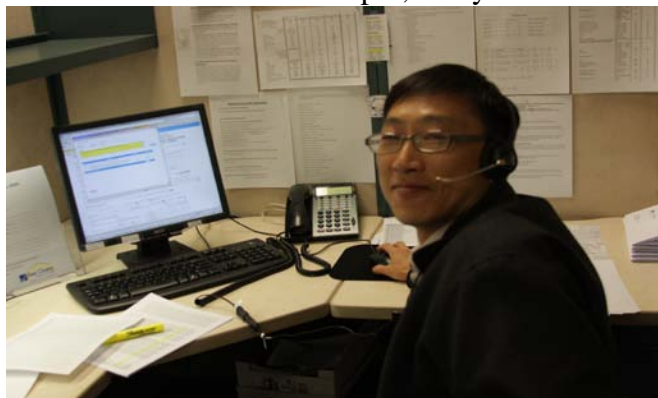
Issue 3

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## IN THE SPOTLIGHT...

### ECHP Customer Service

Keeping our culturally diverse customer base in mind, ECHP employs some of the most versatile and culturally sensitive individuals as its Customer Service Representatives. These bilingual, well-trained and dedicated individuals are available to assist members from 8am-8pm, 7 days a week



## Low Income Subsidy (LIS)

### What is "Extra Help"?

"Extra Help" (also called Low Income Subsidy or LIS) is available to help people with Medicare who have limited income and resources pay for Medicare prescription drug coverage. Anyone who has Medicare can get Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage. If you qualify for "extra help", you will receive assistance in paying for costs such as monthly premiums, annual deductibles, and prescription co-payments related to a Medicare prescription drug plan. Many people qualify and don't know it. It is estimated that over 1.8 million Medicare beneficiaries may be eligible for "extra help" but are not currently enrolled.

**Contact your local Social Security Office to see if you qualify for this "extra help".**

## 24 Hour Fitness is Back!

Easy Choice Health Plan (HMO) believes that fitness can be an important part of your overall health and wellness. That's why Easy Choice offers its members free Active Level membership at 24 Hour Fitness as part of the 2011 Easy Choice Health Plan (HMO) benefit.



### Important Facts about regular exercise:

- Helps you lose fat and preserve muscle
- Improves sleep
- Improves your bone density and reduces your risk of falls and fractures
- Lowers your risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, gall stones, and colon cancer
- Raises self esteem and improves mood and relaxation
- Decreases migraine headaches
- Reduces discomfort from arthritis
- Reverses the natural muscle loss that occurs with aging

## Assess Your Risk for Congestive Heart Failure

1. Do you have coronary artery disease?
2. Have you ever had a heart attack?
3. Have you ever had damage to your heart muscle?
4. Do you have a heart defect that has been present since birth?
5. Do you have high blood pressure or take medication for high blood pressure?
6. Do you have diabetes?
7. Are you overweight (body mass index greater than 25)?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, then you might be at risk for congestive heart failure. Please discuss your findings with your doctor.

**Since heart failure often takes years to develop, identifying your risk early is an important part of prevention**

## Do you need transportation to Medical Providers?

You can schedule taxi rides to and from your medical appointments within 10 miles from your residence. Rides must be scheduled 24 hours in advance. Rides with wheelchair access require 48 hour notice.

**Step 1:** Call ECHP toll free at 1-866-999-3945, 8am-8pm, 7 days a week. TTY/TDD users should call 1-800-735-2929.

**Step 2:** Provide your ECHP ID number, address and phone number, the appointment time and the pick-up and drop off information.

**Step 3:** Meet your taxi at the front curb of your residence within 5 minutes of your scheduled pick up time.

**Step 4:** When you are ready to be picked up, call ECHP to request your return ride home at 1-866-999-3945. Do not call the taxi company directly for your return ride, or they will charge you.

## CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE (CHF)

Congestive Heart Failure is a common phrase often heard in discussions about the complications of aging. You will often just see the abbreviation CHF in medical records and communications. Congestive Heart Failure is caused by a progressive enlargement of the heart over time. The thinned, diminished heart muscle becomes an ever-increasingly inefficient pump as it begins to fail. When a patient with CHF drinks too much liquid, the volume of the serum in the blood increases and the heart handles the work load it is asked to pump. This is exacerbated in patients with kidney disease because the fluid cannot be cleared from the body fast enough to relieve the heart. This backing-up of fluid may also be triggered by eating salty foods. We often see an increase in the number of elderly patients with CHF in Emergency Rooms during the holidays. This is due to an increase in intake of salty foods, alcohol and other fluids. At its worst, CHF is characterized by difficulty breathing, swollen ankles and feet, a racing pulse and bluish colored lips and nails and dizziness. CHF is often a complication of Obesity and of Diabetes in patients who have allowed their disease to progress without control. It is also brought on by high blood pressure in which compliance with medication schedules has been poor and in patients with heart valve disease. The best way to avoid the development of CHF is to exercise cautiously with 30 minutes of vigorous walking a day, five days a week, to avoid eating salty foods or adding salt unnecessarily to foods and, if you have diabetes, high blood pressure or a heart valve problem, see your health care provider on a regular basis. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you are in the provider's office and don't hesitate to look for resources on-line or in the provider's office for healthy recipes and cooking tips for using less salt and sugar in your meal preparation. Keep your weight under control and have your blood sugar and blood pressure checked at regular intervals. If you have a history of heart valve disease, make certain you have your heart checked annually. With these measures you can be assured that you will be able to protect yourself against Congestive Heart Failure.