



King County

# Health Matters

VOL. 27, NO. 6

Supporting the King County Health Reform Initiative

JUNE 2007

FINAL COUNTDOWN

## June 30th Deadline for Healthy Incentives<sup>SM</sup>

**T**he deadline for participating in Healthy Incentives<sup>SM</sup> is upon us. If you haven't done so, there is still time to take the wellness assessment online by June 30th and earn the silver out-of-pocket level.

Last year we extended the deadline because there was confusion around the program. **This year there will be no extensions.**



### WHAT THE DEADLINE MEANS

If you and your spouse/domestic partner have taken the wellness assessment and completed your action plan, you are good for gold.

If you and/or your spouse/domestic partner have taken the wellness assessment but not completed your action plan, you must complete it by June 30th to earn the gold out-of-pocket level.

If you and/or your spouse/domestic partner have not taken the wellness assessment, you can still earn the silver level if you take it online by June 30th. Go to [www.harrishealthtrends.healthmedia.com](http://www.harrishealthtrends.healthmedia.com) to take the

wellness assessment. It is too late for you to earn the gold out-of-pocket expense level.

If you and/or your spouse/domestic partner choose not to take the wellness assessment, you will have the bronze out-of-pocket level for your 2008 medical benefits.

If you have any questions about your wellness assessment or your individual action plan, call Harris HealthTrends toll-free at 1-877-279-0624.

See page 3 for What's Next.



Tim Lane's job at DOT/Roads is to oversee the county's bridge inspection and maintenance program for about 300 bridges. Tim runs 5 days a week and takes weekends off. "It varies on my mood and the weather. If it's bad out, I'll run under the Alaskan Way viaduct and do weights in the gym here at the King Street Center."

His favorite run? "Definitely the waterfront. The air is the best and the park at the end, Myrtle Edwards, is really nice."

Are you a walker or runner? See Move More — June Events on page 5 to see all of the festive walking/running events taking place this month.

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## Men's Health Week

(See page 3)

## BlackBerry Thumb: Fact or Fiction?

**T**humbs hurting? Do you send a lot of text messages? You may have “BlackBerry thumb” — a catch-all phrase that describes a repetitive stress injury of the thumb as a result of overusing the keypads on small handheld devices such as BlackBerries, Treos and Sidekicks.

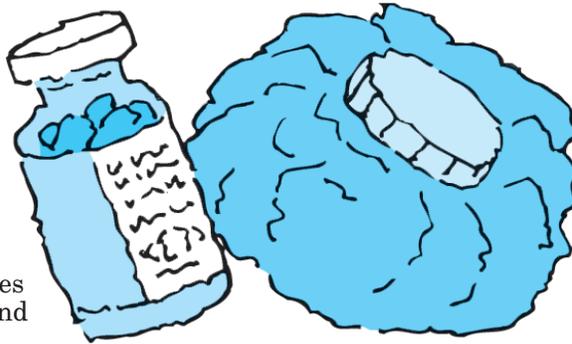
Repetitive motion injuries, which have long afflicted desktop and laptop computer users, are now invading the mobile handheld world. The small keyboards are tough on hands and wrists. Although far from being a widespread problem, there is an increase in the number of reported cases. It is important to be aware of your risk of injury if you spend a lot of time using handheld gadget keypads.

**Symptoms** — Pain or numbness in your thumbs or hands, swelling or throbbing sensation in thumbs.

**Possible injuries** — Tendonitis, aggravated arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome.

**Prevention** —

- Reduce or stop thumb typing.
- Only use your BlackBerry to send short messages.



- Type with the tip of a pencil eraser whenever your thumbs get sore.
- Stretch your thumb, fingers and wrists.
- Learn how to hold the device properly.
- Take breaks.
- Place a pillow in your lap so your wrists are in a more upright position.

**Treatment options** — For more extreme cases, treatment may include wearing a splint and applying ice to the affected area. If the pain persists, doctors may opt to inject the thumb area with a cortisone shot. Surgery may be required as a last resort.

For more information and a list of exercises, visit [www.asht.org/consumers/recentnews.cfm](http://www.asht.org/consumers/recentnews.cfm).

## CHOOSING A GYM 101

**C**ongratulations for making a commitment to fitness! Picking the right gym for you is an important decision. Below are some pointers to make this personal quest easier.

- Does the gym offer activities that are fun for you?
- Is the gym neat, clean and are the instructors friendly and helpful? Ask for a tour and a trial pass to check it out before you make a commitment.
- If the gym does not offer something you can't live without, just say no and go look at another gym.

To see the entire checklist, go to [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees).

## Quick summer salad

**A**dd a cup of your favorite summer fruits and/or vegetables, such as snow peas, strawberries, blueberries, and peaches or nectarines to three cups of washed and dried baby spinach leaves. Dress with a low-fat vinaigrette. This quick summer salad serves two and provides 2.5 servings of fruits and vegetables per person.



*The more brightly colored fruits and vegetables you add to your salads, the more nutrients you'll pack in.*

## WEST NILE VIRUS IS IN KING COUNTY Fight the bite!

**W**est Nile virus is caused by the bite of an infected mosquito. While many people do not experience any symptoms, others get illnesses ranging from mild to a very severe flu-like illness to disease affecting the brain, or even death. Thousands of people in the U.S. get infected every year.

Now that the virus has reached King County, be sure to avoid mosquito bites! When mosquitoes are biting, consider wearing insect repellent and clothes that cover the skin. Be sure that your windows have screens. Dump out standing water where mosquitoes breed. Visit <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/westnile> for more information.



## June Health Hero — Tom Friedel

**D**riving a virtual Route 66 turned into much more than a trip down memory lane for DES employee Tom Friedel. It may well have spared him from a lethal illness.

Friedel was looking for a way to bring his health back to the forefront of his life and chose the “Get Fit on Route 66” action plan, in part because it harkened back to the trip his family took in their brand-new 1954 Ford from a small Pennsylvania town to a new life in Seattle, via the famed blacktop. “That was quite an exciting trip for an 11-year-old,” says Friedel.

The Route 66 program also helped Friedel overcome inertia about getting a long overdue medical examination. That’s when his doctor found a mole on the back of his shoulder, soon diagnosed as early melanoma.

A full-scale exam ensued, the mole was excised and a check of the surrounding tissue showed no spread of the cancerous cells.

Looking back on the past year, Friedel credits Healthy Incentives<sup>SM</sup> for helping him regain his exercise



routine, lose weight, and avoid a far worse fate.

“Another year and the diagnosis would probably have been much different.”

“The real health hero here is my physician, Dr. James Bushyhead.”

## “June” Health Observances

### Men's Health Week June 11–17

**H**ealth experts recommend that men over 40 talk to their doctor about taking aspirin to prevent heart disease. Aspirin therapy may be prescribed earlier for smokers or men who have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes.

#### A checklist for men's health screenings:

**Blood pressure** — at least every two years. Aim for a BP under 120/80.

**Cholesterol** — every five years starting at age 35. If heart disease runs in your family, talk to your doctor about earlier screening. Normal total cholesterol is under 200.

**Diabetes** — if you have high cholesterol or high blood pressure, a blood test for diabetes is recommended.

**Colorectal cancer** — colonoscopy or other screenings beginning at age 50; earlier if you have a personal or family history of polyps or colorectal cancer.

**Prostate cancer** — talk to your doctor at age 40. Recommendations can differ because of race and family history.

**Testicular cancer** — a testicular exam by your doctor as part of your regular checkups. Testicular cancer is most common in men ages 15 to 34 years of age.

For more information about recommendations for prevention, go to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force at [www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm).

Sources: American Heart Association; American Cancer Society

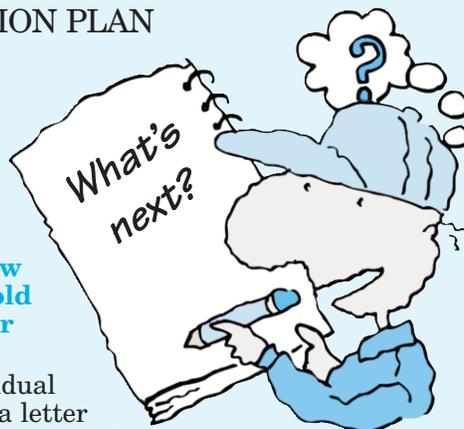
### I'VE COMPLETED MY ACTION PLAN

## What's next?

**A**bout 30 days after you have completed your action plan, you will receive a letter from Harris HealthTrends letting you know that you have achieved the gold out-of-pocket expense level for your 2008 medical benefits.

If you didn't complete an individual action plan, you will also receive a letter from Harris HealthTrends notifying you of your out-of-pocket expense level and informing you of the appeals process to use if you disagree with the out-of-pocket expense level assigned to you.

If you have not received notification of your out-of-pocket expense level by July 20th, call Harris HealthTrends (not King County) toll-free at 1-877-279-0624.



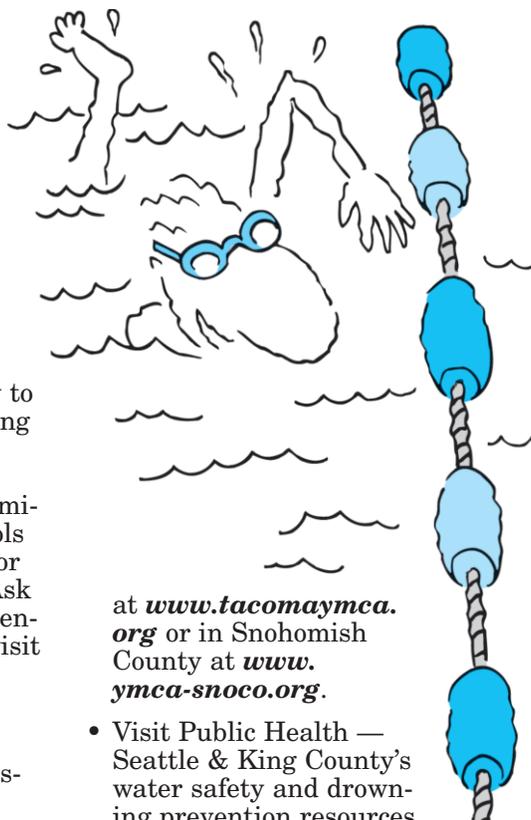
# Get in the Swim of Things

**S**wimming is a fun and healthy activity.

Swimming can strengthen muscles, relieve stress, regulate breathing, increase circulation and is gentle on bones and joints. Swimming can be enjoyed by almost everyone.

King County is a great place to enjoy swimming, whether you like to swim at the beach, an indoor pool or an outdoor pool. Pools offer an opportunity to play in the water, take swimming lessons, learn water safety, get certified as a lifeguard, take a water aerobics class, and for families to swim together. Some pools offer women-only swim times for those with modesty concerns. Ask staff at your local community center for more information, and visit the below resources for more swimming options:

- **Pro Parks Learn to Swim Program** offers free swim lessons to 3rd and 4th graders in the Seattle School District, Seattle private schools or home-schooled students. Visit [www.cityofseattle.net/parks/aquatics/learntoswim.htm](http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/aquatics/learntoswim.htm) for details or call your local Seattle area pool.
- A listing of **King County pools** can be found at <http://www.metrokc.gov/parks/pools>. All King County swimming pools feature mechanical or hydraulic chair lifts for disabled access. Most have portable access stairs.
- The Seattle Parks and Recreation web site (<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/Aquatics/index.htm>) offers information on local **Beaches, Pools** (includes hours and information about ADA accessibility), **Wading Pools** and **Open Water Swimming**.
- Many **YMCAs** have pools. Look for facilities near you in Seattle/King County at [www.seattleymca.org](http://www.seattleymca.org), in Tacoma



at [www.tacomaymca.org](http://www.tacomaymca.org) or in Snohomish County at [www.ymca-snoc.org](http://www.ymca-snoc.org).

- Visit Public Health — Seattle & King County's water safety and drowning prevention resources at [www.metrokc.gov/health/injury/drowning.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/injury/drowning.htm). Their site includes a short video on water safety.

## Looking for a gym with a swimming pool?

The following organizations are part of the King County Gym Discount Program, and have swimming pools at some or all of their locations. Check out [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees) and click on the Gym Discount Program button for details.

- 24 Hour Fitness
- Allstar Fitness
- Bally Total Fitness
- Epicenter at Bellevue
- Gold's Gym-Redmond
- Highline Athletic Club
- LA Fitness
- Olympic Athletic Club
- Sammamish Club
- Stroum Jewish Community Center at Mercer Island
- Washington Athletic Club
- YMCA Seattle
- YMCA Snohomish
- YMCA Tacoma-Pierce County

**T**ry the fruit and vegetable of the month. Go to [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees) for tips, recipes and more.

- **Fruit:** *Pluots*® and *Apriums*® are complex hybrid fruits that are part plum and part apricot. Like plums, pluots have smooth skin. Like apricots, apriums have slightly fuzzy skin. Pluots and apriums are known for their sweetness and flavor; the sugar content of these fruits is much higher than that of a plum or apricot alone.
- **Vegetable:** *Okra* grows as an elongated, lantern shape vegetable. It is a fuzzy, green-colored, ribbed pod that is approximately 2–7 inches in length. This vegetable is more famously known by its rows of tiny seeds and slimy or sticky texture when cut open. Okra is a powerhouse of valuable nutrients. It is a good source of vitamin C. It is low in calories and is fat-free.



## Eat Smart When Dining Out

**S**ummer is fast approaching! It's a time when we spend more time outdoors, more time on the go and as a result more time dining out. Whether it's meeting friends for dinner, graduation celebrations or just not wanting to cook on a hot day, we do more dining out in the summer months than during any other time of the year.

While you are dining out this summer, remember...you can take a healthy approach to dining out and there are resources available for healthier restaurant options.

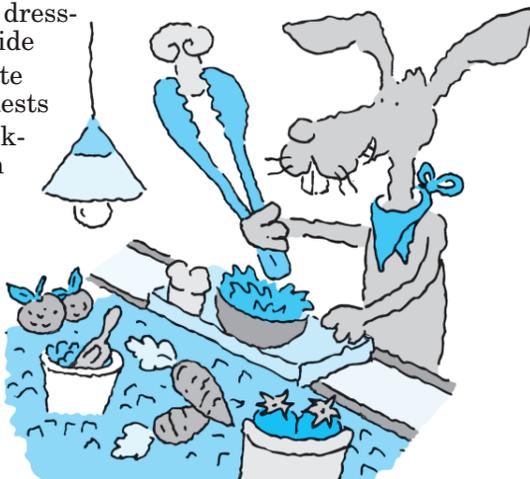
### TIPS TO HEALTHY EATING WHEN DINING OUT

#### Ask the restaurant to:

- Serve margarine rather than butter with the meal
- Serve fat-free (skim) milk rather than whole milk or cream
- Trim visible fat from poultry or meat
- Leave all butter, gravy or sauces off a dish
- Serve salad dressing on the side
- Accommodate special requests
- Use less cooking oil when cooking

#### Select foods which are:

- Steamed
- Garden fresh
- Broiled
- Baked
- Roasted
- Poached
- Lightly sauteed or stir-fried



#### Resources:

- **The Healthy Dining Finder**, [www.healthydiningfinder.com](http://www.healthydiningfinder.com), helps you easily identify nutritious choices served at nearly 30,000 popular restaurant locations in all 50 states. New restaurants are joining the program every week. The site provides various nutrient values and much more.
- **Natural Choice Directory: Restaurant guide**, [www.naturalchoice.net/sec3.htm](http://www.naturalchoice.net/sec3.htm). The Natural Choice Directory is your local "Healthy Yellow Pages" for businesses and services that address the community of health conscious consumers in the Puget Sound area.

## Move More — June Events

**S**ummer is just around the corner and western Washington has a plethora of outdoor events for everyone from beginner to seasoned athlete. Visit [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees) for more activities including bicycling, inline skating and walking events in King and Pierce counties.

**June 2: Issaquah 5K** — Lake Sammamish State Park; flat 5k course; 8 am; (425) 392-3866, [www.issaquahtri.com](http://www.issaquahtri.com)

**June 8: Fremont 5K & Briefcase Relay** — Seattle; (206) 729-9972, [www.promotionevents.com/events/events-07/Fremont](http://www.promotionevents.com/events/events-07/Fremont)

**June 9: Sound to Narrows Run/Walk**, — Tacoma, Wash.; 5k and 12k run/walk, 2k Junior Shuffle, Diaper Dash; 8:30 am; (253) 403-3065, [www.soundtonarrows.org](http://www.soundtonarrows.org)

**June 9: Everett Street Scramble** — Everett; run and/or bike to visit 30 locations on a map; (425) 892-6454, [www.streetscramble.com](http://www.streetscramble.com)

**June 10: Furry 5K** — Seattle; 5k run/walk. Join the fun as thousands of people run and walk with their dogs to raise money for the Seattle Animal Shelter's Help the Animals Fund; [www.furry5k.com](http://www.furry5k.com)

**June 16: Puget Sound Race For the Cure** — Seattle; 5k run/walk starting at Seahawk Stadium to benefit the Komen Breast Cancer Foundation; (206) 632-6586, [www.komenpugetsound.org](http://www.komenpugetsound.org)

**June 16: 1st Annual MetroRoadeo Fun Walk** begins at 8 am and goes for 2.2 miles. ("You Can Do 2.2!") This is part of the 31st annual MetroRoadeo held at the Training & Safety Facility in Tukwila. Contact [Darryl.Russell@metrokc.gov](mailto:Darryl.Russell@metrokc.gov) or (206) 684-2834 for more info.

**June 23: HotFoot** — South Kitsap Community Park, Port Orchard; 5k (1 mile and kids' dash) trail run. Proceeds benefit SKFR Volunteer Association Community Scholarship; [hotfoot@wavecable.com](mailto:hotfoot@wavecable.com), (360) 509-4525, [www.skfrva.org/hotfoot5k.html](http://www.skfrva.org/hotfoot5k.html)

**June 23: Run/Walk with Pride** — Seattle, Seward Park; 10k run & 4k run/walk; 9 am start, 7:30 registration; (206) 228-1537; [www.seattlefrontrunners.org/2006/04/run-and-walk-with-pride.htm](http://www.seattlefrontrunners.org/2006/04/run-and-walk-with-pride.htm)



This year's Puget Sound Race for the Cure takes place on June 16th.

# your benefits

## Had a major life event? Go online to update your benefits!

**C**ertain qualifying life events let you make benefit changes in the middle of the year. You are now able to make midyear benefit changes online. Changes you can make due to a qualifying life event include things like choosing a different medical plan, adding or changing your life and accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and modifying your flexible spending account.

Qualifying life events include marriage, birth or adoption, divorce and establishment of a new domestic partnership, to name a few.

If you need access to a computer to make your midyear benefit changes, there is a computer available in the Benefits and Retirement Operations office. If you want to reserve this computer, need help making changes online or have questions about qualifying life events, contact Benefits and Retirement Operations at [kc.benefits@metrokc.gov](mailto:kc.benefits@metrokc.gov) or 206-684-1556.

***\*To sign in, you must know your employee ID number, which is located near the top of your pay stub. Your employee ID number is not your Social Security number, badge number or transit operator number.***

### Two Easy Steps

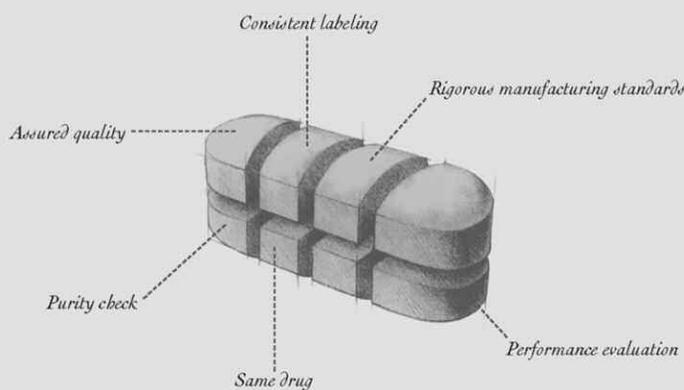
Using the online system to make midyear changes is easy — just follow these two simple steps:

1. Go to [www.metrokc.gov/mybenefits](http://www.metrokc.gov/mybenefits) and follow the sign-in instructions.
2. Once you've signed in, click the **My Life Events** link on the left side of your computer screen.



King County

Think it's easy becoming a  
**generic drug**  
in America?  
**Think again.**



FDA ensures that your generic drug is safe and effective. All generic drugs are put through a rigorous, multi-step approval process. From quality and performance to manufacturing and labeling, everything must meet FDA's high standards. We make it tough to become a generic drug in America so it's easy for you to feel confident.

Visit [www.fda.gov/cder/](http://www.fda.gov/cder/) or call 1-888-INFO-FDA to learn more.

**Generic Drugs: Safe. Effective. FDA Approved.**



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your health-care providers, *not* to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

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# choose generics

## Prescriptions Drugs — It's not what you see on the TV that counts.

**R**ecent news coverage of generic drugs and their brand-name prescription counterparts might leave reasonable people concerned.

Don't be.

A variety of prescription drugs are available to treat many conditions. More generics are available now than ever before. And, doctors agree, choosing the right drug isn't a "one size fits all" proposition.

Common sense (and volumes of scientific evidence) suggest it's best to start with proven drugs that are effective for the vast majority of people.

With prescription drugs, "new" does not necessarily mean better. Sometimes, it means "worse" (remember Vioxx?). Often, the most heavily advertised drugs are no better for most patients than those with long track records of safety and efficacy.

Generally, the most significant difference between well-known, brand-name drugs and their generic counterparts is their price.

Old suspicions may die hard, especially amid multi-billion-dollar advertising campaigns by pharmaceutical companies, but before dismissing your doctor's recommendation of a generic drug, consider the following.

The Food and Drug Administration recognizes generics as a safe and smart option. Every single generic drug that reaches the U.S. market passes the same rigorous safety and efficacy review and approval processes as any brand-name drug.

Common sense suggests resisting the temptation to believe everything we see or hear in advertising, or to assume that a brand name alone makes a drug better.

As a health care consumer, your choice is between scientifically demonstrated results that can also make health care more affordable, and the pervasive claims of well-financed drug marketing campaigns.

*Hugh Straley, MD, is medical director of Group Health and vice chair of the board of Puget Sound Health Alliance. John Verrilli, MD, is chief of medicine at Swedish Medical Center, First Hill, and a member of the Alliance's Clinical Improvement Team on Pharmaceuticals.*

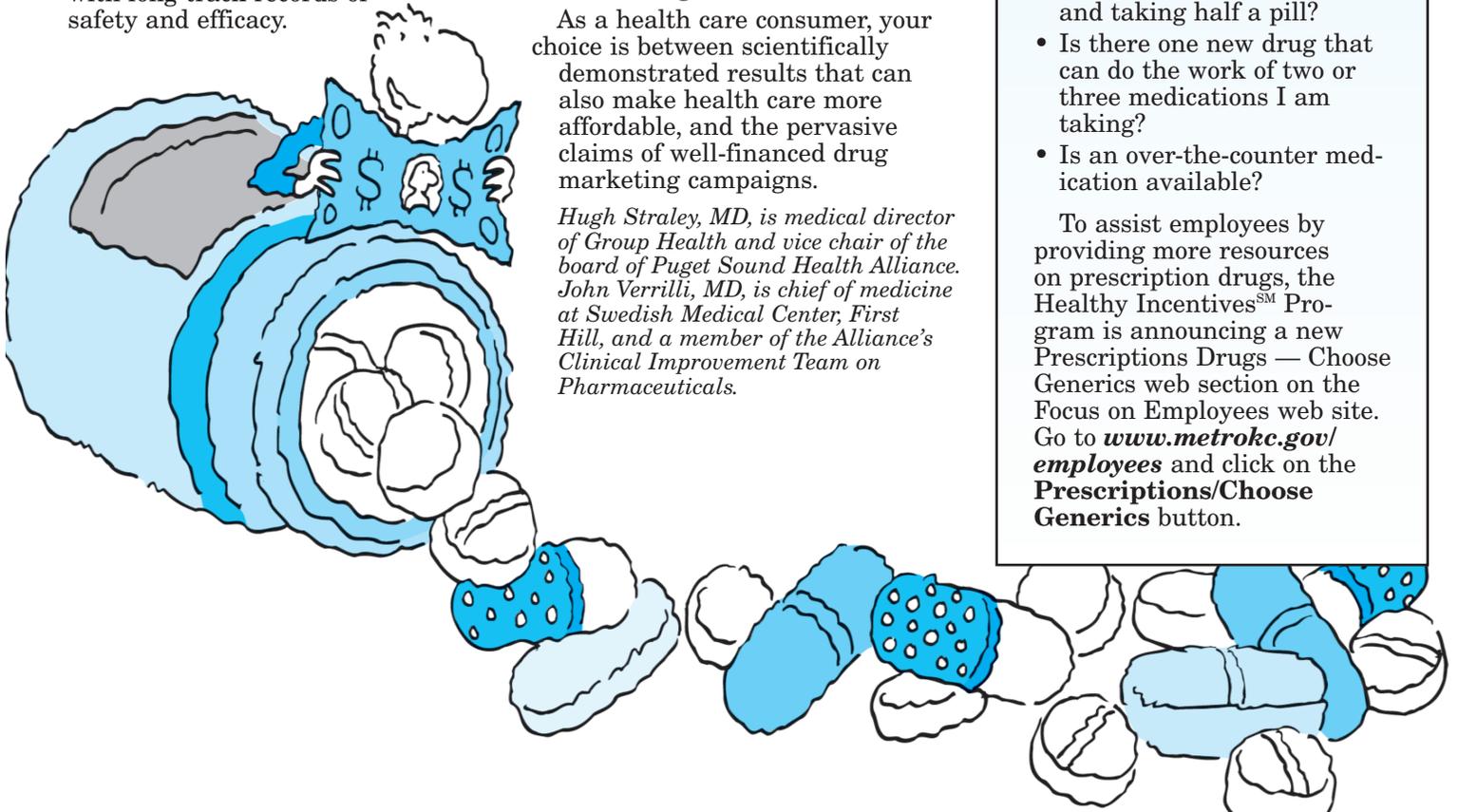


### COMMON SENSE ON PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

**A**t least once a year, review your prescription medications and ask your doctor these questions:

- Are there any lifestyle changes I could make that might make it possible for me not to need this medication?
- Is a generic or generic equivalent available?
- Is there another drug that costs less but has the same effectiveness?
- Can I save money by splitting pills with double dose and taking half a pill?
- Is there one new drug that can do the work of two or three medications I am taking?
- Is an over-the-counter medication available?

To assist employees by providing more resources on prescription drugs, the Healthy Incentives<sup>SM</sup> Program is announcing a new Prescriptions Drugs — Choose Generics web section on the Focus on Employees web site. Go to [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees) and click on the Prescriptions/Choose Generics button.



# your health matters

## 2ND ANNUAL LIVE WELL CHALLENGE — COMING SOON!

**Get Ready! Get Set! Start forming your teams!** The 2nd annual Live Well Challenge is fast approaching.

- Register: July 9–27
- Event: August 6–September 30

The *new and improved* Live Well Challenge is bound to spark some fierce but friendly competition among King County employees.

You asked for it! You got it!

### New for 2007:

- More opportunities and activities to earn points. Areas include eat smart, move more, stress less, quit tobacco and much more!
- A more challenging competition. There's something for every fitness level.
- Easier point calculations.
- More opportunities to win prizes.
- Streamlined materials and information.
- A more user-friendly database for Team Captains.

Close to 1200 people participated across 172 teams last year. A remarkable success! Our goal is to increase participation this year. King County employees...you can do it!

Visit: [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees).

## Quit Tobacco

### KING COUNTY EMPLOYEE RESOURCES:

- **Free Online Customized Support** — HealthMedia's BREATHE® program. Go to <http://quit-tobacco.healthmedia.com>. Click on Sign Up Today and enter a unique username. Access code is IWILLQUIT.
- **Free Telephone Support** — Call the King County Tobacco Quit Line at **1-877-279-0624**.
- **Reimbursement for the patch and other nicotine replacement treatment** — check out King County's comprehensive tobacco cessation benefits online.
  - KingCare<sup>SM</sup> Members — prescription drugs and alternative treatments to ease nicotine withdrawal, over the counter drug coverage for nicotine replacement treatments (patches, gum)
  - Group Health Members — Free and Clear program and nicotine replacement therapy

### COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

- **Washington State Quit Line** — 1-877-270-STOP (7867) or online at [quitline.com](http://quitline.com)
- **Public Health's free quit kit** — 206-296-7613

For more information, visit [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees) and click on Quit Tobacco or call 206-684-1556.

## 2007 Healthy Workplace Funding Initiative

**T**he year is half over... has your workgroup submitted an application for the Healthy Workplace Funding Initiative? If not, it's not too late, but hurry...the funds are not eligible for carry-over.

Don't miss your chance to make healthy changes to your workplace with yoga classes, exercise equipment, nutrition classes, fresh fruit delivery and much more.

Need ideas or assistance? Visit [www.metrokc.gov/employees](http://www.metrokc.gov/employees) or contact Pam Mitchell at (206) 684-2119.

