

Any Oregonian without prescription coverage can now sign-up

December 7 was the first day that any Oregonian without prescription drug coverage was eligible to enroll in the Oregon Prescription Drug Program (OPDP), which is the state's bulk-purchasing pool for prescription medications and offers savings up to 60 percent for uninsured citizens. Measure 44 was enacted by the voters last month, removing previous age and income eligibility restrictions for OPDP.

Information is available online at www.opdp.org or the toll-free number 1-888-411-OPDP (6737).

"The increasing costs of health care and prescription medications are placing a real hardship on Oregonians who do not have health insurance with drug coverage," Governor Ted Kulongoski said. "An overwhelming majority of Oregonians agreed with the passage of Measure 44 that it is time to do our part to make sure our citizens have access to affordable prescription drugs – and this marks an important new step in that direction."

Changes under Measure 44

officially take effect December 1 and will offer relief on prescription drug costs for the more than 600,000 uninsured adults and children who are currently without prescription drug coverage. Also because of a waiver that the Governor secured from the Federal Government, older Oregonians enrolled in the Federal Medicare Part D prescription drug program may be eligible to participate in OPDP.

The Governor also applauded the work of the AARP, Oregonians for Health Security and other critical partners, including State Senator Bill Morrisette, for championing this program and leading the charge to victory for Measure 44 and uninsured Oregonians.

"The Oregon Prescription Drug Program is a proven approach that will now be even better at allowing our state to tackle the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs and bringing more affordable, accessible medicines to Oregonians of all ages," said Jerry Cohen, state

director of AARP Oregon, who along with Sen. Bill Morrisette served as one of Measure 44's co-petitioners. "This is a solid and critical first step in lowering health care costs for everyone and creating a healthy Oregon."

"This is a great day for Oregonians through the state," said Senator Bill Morrisette, chief co-petitioner for Measure 44. "Oregon is once again a trailblazer and sets an example for the federal government to follow."

"This not only helps Oregonians without prescription drug coverage, but it helps all Oregonians by lowering drug costs," said Mary-Beth Healy, Executive Director of Oregonians for Health Security.

The Governor also announced that the Northwest Prescription Drug Consortium, a partnership between OPDP and a similar purchasing pool in the state of Washington, signed a contract with The ODS Companies for Pharmacy Benefit Administration services. The

contract, which takes effect February 1, 2007, promises to increase savings for OPDP members, to improve the administrative efficiency of the program, and to make drug purchasing through the pro-

gram even more transparent.

For more information about the program contact Missy Dolan, Administrator of the Oregon Prescription Drug Program at 503-373-1595.

Serving oysters for the holidays? Cook them first to prevent illness

Eating raw oysters has led to foodborne illness in recent months. The illness was caused by *Vibrio* bacteria that occur naturally, especially during the summer when the ocean is warmer. Symptoms include diarrhea, cramps, nausea, vomiting, fever and chills and usually occur within 12 to 24 hours of having eaten and last no more than three days.

The illness can be prevented by cooking oysters thoroughly. After the shell opens, boil an additional three to five minutes. When steaming, heat for another 4 to 9 minutes after the shell opens. Boil or steam smaller quantities so that oysters are fully cooked.

To cook shucked oysters, boil or steam for three minutes or until the edges curl. Other methods include frying at 375 degrees or broiling three inches from the heat, both for three minutes, or baking at 450 degrees for 10 minutes.

It's especially important for people with weakened immune systems to avoid raw oysters. This includes pregnant women and young children, older adults, and those with serious illnesses such as HIV, AIDS, cancer, diabetes, and kidney disease.

Source: Carolyn Raab, Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist, Oregon State University.

"Fill up on water" and other weight control myths

We've all heard those quick little tips, like fill up on water before you go to a party or use sugar-free foods to save calories. Do these promoted tips really work or are they simply myths?

- "Fill up on water before a big party." Water satisfies thirst, not hunger. While water may fill the stomach, you'll still feel hungry. Instead of water, try drinking a thicker drink, like a vegetable cocktail (V-8 juice) or milk-based beverage to help fill you up quicker. Another tip is to eat a broth-based soup before

starting other foods.

- "Using fat-free and sugar-free foods lets me eat all I want." Fat-free and sugar-free doesn't mean calorie-free, check nutrition labels carefully – these products don't give you a license to eat more! Remember that you're trying to save calories, so over-eating reduced calorie products can create pounds of weight also.

- "I'll skip breakfast and lunch so I can eat at the party." Skipping meals slows the metabolism, which can lead to weight gain. Also, skipping

meals may make you so hungry that you over-eat at the party!

- "Don't eat after 8:00 at night." While it's normal that the metabolism slows during the early morning hours while you sleep, when you eat is not as critical as the quality and amount of food you choose. Eating later at night is not always a good idea because we tend to choose munchies that are high calorie and lead to mindless nibbling. It's also very easy to get into the night snacking habit.

- "I'm addicted to chocolate!" While chocolate may contain a psychoactive ingredient, there is an extremely low level – certainly not enough to create an addiction. What we do crave is the sensory experience we get with chocolate. We desire the flavor and smell of chocolate. Eating any good-tasting food can create a desire to repeat the experience.

- "I eat less at parties because I have lots of people to visit with." Adults do what they see at holiday parties...eat! We tend to eat 50 percent more food when eating with friends! Focus on how much you've eaten and have those lively conversations in a room that doesn't have food.

- "Exercise makes me hungry." Physical activity actually regulates your feeling of fullness and hunger. Exercise should suppress appetite and retain muscle mass; and muscle burns calories. So during the holiday season, make sure you keep walking and strength training.

Source: Susan Mills-Gray, Nutrition Specialist, University of Missouri Outreach and Extension.

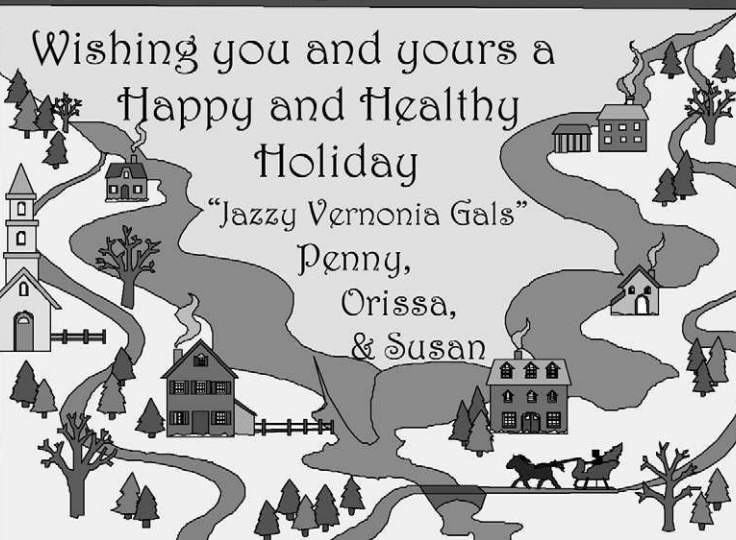


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