

# VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute

## NEED A HUG? IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR HEART



A warm hug can lift your mood and relieve stress. But did you know that hugs, laughter and warm fuzzies can also help lower blood pressure and protect your heart?

**Hug a loved one.** Hugging someone you care about gives a positive boost to the brain, the heart and other body systems. Research suggests that hugs can increase levels of oxytocin (a feel-good hormone) and lower blood pressure.<sup>1</sup> Being a hugger may have a positive and protective effect on the heart.

**Laugh it up.** Laughter and a sense of humor may help protect against heart attacks. Mental stress, anger and hostility may contribute to fat and cholesterol build-up in the coronary arteries that can lead to a heart attack.<sup>2</sup> Laughter is good medicine, so find a funny movie or have a game night with family or friends.

**Tap into your social network.** Heart-healthy lifestyles can spread through social networks with positive results. Changing your diet and lifestyle can be a challenge, especially if you're trying to lose weight or quit smoking. It's easier when you share your experience with a group of supportive friends and family.

**Snuggle a pet.** Spending time with a furry friend can help you relax and also decrease your blood pressure and cholesterol levels.<sup>3</sup> Pets can help you get exercise and stay positive, too.

#### Sources:

1. Psychosomatic Medicine. "Effects of partner support on resting oxytocin, cortisol, norepinephrine, and blood pressure before and after warm partner contact." 2005 Jul-Aug. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16046364?dopt=Abstract> (accessed April 16, 2014)
2. University of Maryland Medical Center. "Laughter is the Best Medicine for Your Heart," July 14, 2014. <http://umm.edu/news-and-events/news-releases/2009/laughter-is-the-best-medicine-for-your-heart> (accessed April 15, 2014)
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Health Benefits of Pets." <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/health-benefits/index.html> (accessed August 8, 2014)

**GO YOU**®



"Cigna," the "Tree of Life" logo and "GO YOU" are registered service marks of Cigna Intellectual Property, Inc., licensed for use by Cigna Corporation and its operating subsidiaries. All products and services are provided by or through such operating subsidiaries, and not by Cigna Corporation. Such operating subsidiaries include Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, Cigna Health Management, Inc., Cigna Behavioral Health, Inc., vieliflex Limited, and HMO or service company subsidiaries of Cigna Health Corporation and Cigna Dental Health, Inc.

874671 02/15 © 2015 Cigna. Some content provided under license.