

# your health today

Fall 2009

• Your Guide to **Healthy Living** from **MCGHealth**

• [mcghealth.org](http://mcghealth.org)

## Say no to scars

A new kind of  
thyroid surgery

## When to worry about the flu

## Genetics and breast cancer

## Heart disease and depression

New screening  
guidelines

MCGHealth



# A shoulder to lean on

## MCGHealth support groups

### ALS Support Group

**WHEN:** Second Thursday of each month, 11 a.m.–2 p.m. Lunch is provided.

**WHERE:** MCGHealth Ambulatory Care Center, 1447 Harper St., 4th floor, Room 4306

**CALL:** The ALS Association of Georgia at 888-636-9940 for reservations

### Breast Cancer Support Group

**WHEN:** Second Thursday of each month, 5:30–7 p.m.

**WHERE:** MCGHealth Medical Center Breast Health Services, 1st floor

**CALL:** 706-721-4109 for more information

### Huntington Disease Support Group

**WHEN:** First Thursday of each month, 6:30 p.m. Dinner is provided.

**WHERE:** Marks Building, 1429 Harper St., Room 1122

**CALL:** 706-721-2798 for more information

### Infertility Support Group

**WHEN:** Second Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** MCG Medical Associates, 618 Ponder Place, Suite 2, Evans

**CALL:** 706-210-0642 for more information

### Mom's Connection Support Group

Ask questions and get advice from

our International Board Certified Lactation Consultant/educator/perinatal nurse and other guest speakers. Babies welcome.

**WHEN:** Every Tuesday, 1–2 p.m.

**WHERE:** 1225 Walton Way, Room 1010C

**CALL:** 706-721-8283 for more information

### Multiple Sclerosis Support Group

**WHEN:** Last Monday of each month, 6–7:30 p.m. Dinner is provided.

**WHERE:** MCGHealth Medical Center, 6th floor

**CALL:** 706-721-7239 for more information

### SPOHNC (Support for People with Oral, Head and Neck Cancer) Support Group

**WHEN:** First Tuesday of each month, 6–7:30 p.m.

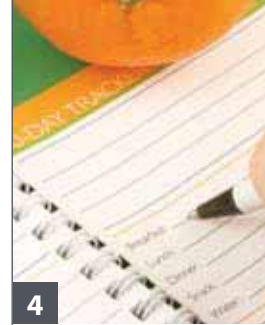
**WHERE:** MCGHealth Children's Medical Center Family Resource Center, 1446 Harper St.

**CALL:** 706-721-6100 for more information

### Support Group for Families Who Have Lost a Baby During Pregnancy, Childbirth or Early Infancy

Provides a forum for discussion as well as resources for anyone who has been affected by the loss of a baby.

**CALL:** 706-721-8299 for times and location



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For more information, please call 800-736-CARE (2273) or visit our Web site at [mcghealth.org](http://mcghealth.org).

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# Tips for a safe and healthy fall



## Recognizing concussions

**F**all means football and other contact sports that can lead to dangerous concussions. Make sure your kids wear safety equipment that fits properly. The two most common symptoms of concussions are confusion and amnesia, with or without a loss of consciousness. Concussions almost always involve the loss of memory of the impact itself. But the signs and symptoms can be subtle. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends you call a doctor if your child receives anything more than a light bump on the head.



## Ladder safety

**T**o avoid dangerous falls when cleaning your roof or gutters, make sure the rungs of your ladder are strong and dry. Place the ladder on level ground away from power lines and have someone hold the ladder for stability. For each four feet of distance between the ground and the roof, move the base of the ladder out one foot. Wear slip-resistant shoes, face the ladder and keep your body centered when climbing. Don't climb above the fourth rung from the top of the ladder.



## Power up with soups and chili

**A**s the weather cools, hot foods like soup and chili become more appealing, and they're a great way to increase your intake of vegetables and reduce your saturated fats. Try black bean soup with salsa, minestrone with cannellini beans or a vegetarian chili with red beans. For a heartier meal, partner spicy red beans or fiery Indian-style lentils with brown rice and serve with a salad.



## Eating out the heart-healthy way

**D**ining out can be a challenge for people who want to eat right, so dietitians and physicians at MCGHealth Cardiovascular Center have partnered with local restaurants to make heart-healthy menu items available in our community. Look for our Heart Healthy Dining Program<sup>SM</sup> symbol at the following restaurants:

- Beamie's at the River
- Bee's Knees
- Boll Weevil Café & Sweetery
- French Market Grille
- Roly Poly
- My Friend's Place
- Takosushi
- Walton Way Deli

# Food diaries

## The “write” way to lose weight

**K**eeping a food diary can instantly increase your awareness of what, how much and why you’re eating. Diaries can also help you identify stressors that cause emotional eating, make changes that foster a healthier diet and reduce your intake of calories.

“You may not realize how many soft drinks, sweets and fats you’re eating until you write it all down,” says Samantha Ellefson, RD, a registered dietitian with MCGHealth. “You may be in denial about your portion sizes, or you may not realize that stress at work is affecting your eating habits. Food diaries can help you uncover all this information.”

Follow these steps to creating and using a basic food diary that will help you uncover your negative eating habits:

**Step 1**

Create a paper or online form in which you record what you ate, the amount you ate, when you ate it and your hunger level at the time.

These details will provide insight into emotional triggers



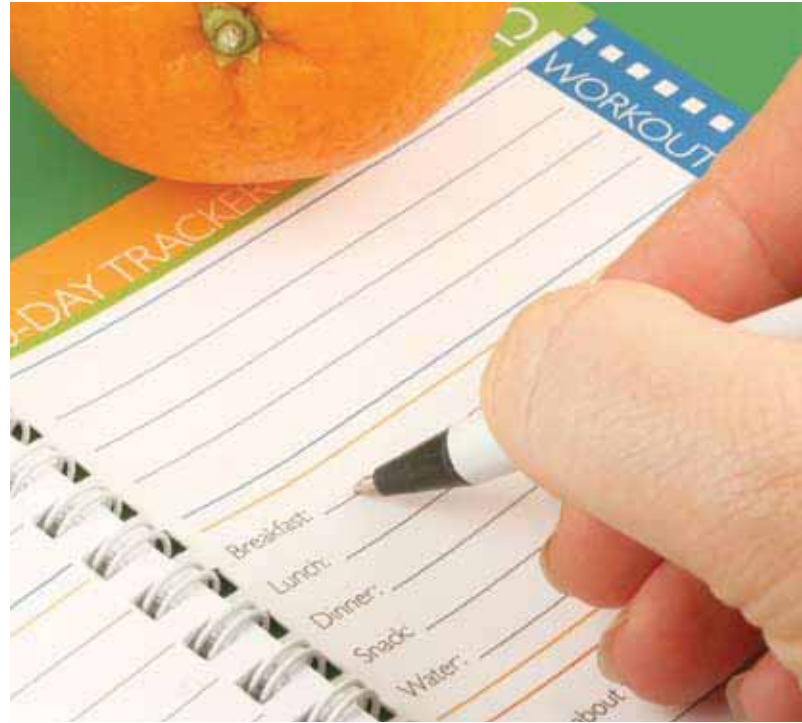
### Gain control!

To schedule an appointment with a physician who can help you manage your weight, call **706-721-CARE (2273)** or visit **mcghealth.org** to request an appointment.

“

**You may not realize how many soft drinks, sweets and fats you’re eating until you write it all down.**

—Samantha Ellefson, RD



as well as times and places where you are most likely to overeat or eat healthy or unhealthy foods.

**Step 2**

Update your diary every day for at least two weeks. Try to keep it with you, and make notes in it several times a day.

**Step 3**

Record everything, including ice cream binges, alcoholic beverages and extravagant desserts. “Don’t overlook those little extras like the sour cream on your baked potato, the handful of chocolate-covered peanuts and the mayonnaise on your sandwich,” says Ellefson. “These add up.”

**Step 4**

Be accurate and honest about portion sizes by measuring your food, whenever possible, during the time you keep your diary.

**Step 5**

Review your diary at the end of the time period. Look for portion distortion, emotional eating and places or times that lead to overindulgence. Then begin making changes to control the factors that are sabotaging your diet. ■

# Robotic thyroid surgery

## Avoid neck scars

**M**CGHealth is the only hospital in the Southeast offering da Vinci® robotic-assisted surgery for thyroid nodules. The procedure, which completely eliminates neck scars, is performed by David Terris, MD, surgical director of MCGHealth Thyroid and Parathyroid Center. The only center of its kind in the area, MCGHealth Thyroid and Parathyroid Center is staffed by endocrinologists, surgeons and radiologists who work as a team to provide multidisciplinary, coordinated care for patients who have thyroid and parathyroid gland problems.

### What are thyroid nodules?

Thyroid nodules are lumps that form within your thyroid, a small gland at the base of the neck just below the Adam's apple. They're more common in women, and



the risk of forming thyroid nodules increases with age.

"Nodules are generally discovered during routine exams and rarely cause symptoms," says Dr. Terris. "Occasionally, nodules become so large you can feel them and see swelling at the base of the neck. If you find nodules, consult an endocrinologist. He or she will perform a biopsy to determine if your nodules are benign or malignant."

If the test results are suspicious or indicate cancer, or if the nodules are pressing on the throat or causing trouble swallowing, you may need a thyroidectomy, a surgery to remove the nodules and all or part of the thyroid gland.

### A new surgical option

Traditional thyroidectomies require hospitalization and a 3- to 4-inch incision in the neck, which leaves a visible scar. However, the robotic-assisted procedure can be performed through an incision under the armpit or in another remote location to avoid visible scarring.

"The system's true 3-D visualization delivers clearer images, and its instrumentation allows for increased precision, improving patient outcomes," Dr. Terris says. "The surgery may be right for motivated patients who want to avoid neck scars." ■



David Terris, MD, is among the first and a few surgeons in the world to use the da Vinci system for thyroidectomies.



#### When you need surgery

For more information about da Vinci robotic-assisted surgery, visit [mcghealth.org/robotics](http://mcghealth.org/robotics). To schedule an appointment, call 706-721-CARE (2273).

# Genetics and breast cancer

A question-and-answer session with  
 Carolyn Lovell, MAT, MS, board-certified genetic counselor

**Q:** If your mother or sister had breast cancer, are you doomed to have it as well?

**A:** No. Only about 5 to 10 percent of breast cancers are truly hereditary, or linked to mutations in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes. These genes generally work to help prevent breast cancer, but some women inherit a mutation in one of them that increases their risk.

**Q:** What might indicate a genetic mutation?

**A:** Families with these mutations generally have several affected relatives who were diagnosed with cancer before age 50, affected relatives in more than one generation and family members who have more than one cancer or unusual cancers, such as male breast cancer.

**Q:** How much does having this mutation increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer?

**A:** The average lifetime breast cancer risk for all women is 12 percent, but the risk for women who have BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations jumps to 35 to 50 percent by age 50 and 56 to 87 percent by age 70. These women are also at increased risk for ovarian and other cancers.

**Q:** How can a woman know if she has a mutation?

**A:** The only way to know for sure is through genetic testing. Talk to your physician about a hereditary risk assessment and BRCA analysis if you:

- have a personal history of breast cancer diagnosed before age 50 or ovarian cancer at any age
- have a family history of breast cancer diagnosed before age 50
- have relatives who have been diagnosed with ovarian cancer at any age
- have a male in your family with a history of breast cancer

Knowing you have this mutation allows you to take steps to reduce your risk of developing breast or ovarian cancer and to alert other family members.



**Know your risk**

If you would like more information or a hereditary breast cancer risk assessment, call **706-721-2809** or visit **mcghealth.org/cancer**.

# Colon cancer screening

## Know your options

**T**he number of Americans who die of colon cancer each year could be cut in half if everyone ages 50 and older had the recommended screenings.

According to James McLoughlin, MD, a surgical oncologist with MCGHealth Cancer Center, colorectal cancers generally begin with small clumps of cells called polyps. If these polyps are discovered and removed early, they don't pose a major problem. If not, they can become malignant.

### Screening guidelines

The American Cancer Society recommends that men and women ages 50 and older follow one of these five screening options:

- (1) Fecal occult blood test (FOBT) or fecal immunochemical test (FIT) every year.** These tests find hidden blood in the feces that could indicate polyps.
- (2) Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years.** A flexible, lighted tube is inserted through the rectum into the lower part of the colon, allowing a physician to see about half of the colon through an attached video camera and display monitor.
- (3) FOBT or FIT every year plus a flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years.**
- (4) Double contrast barium enema every five years.** Barium sulfate is used to partially fill



## Coming soon: A new era in cancer care

**M**CGHealth's new outpatient cancer center will open in 2010 and revolutionize cancer care in our area. Designed by patients for patients, it will feature a healing environment like none other. To take a virtual tour of the center, visit [mcghealth.org/cancer](http://mcghealth.org/cancer).



### Early detection is key

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call **706-721-CARE (2273)** or visit [mcghealth.org/cancer](http://mcghealth.org/cancer).

and open the colon. Air is then pumped into the colon to make it expand so the physician can produce clear X-ray images of the lining of the colon.

- (5) Colonoscopy every 10 years.** The gold standard of colon testing, this procedure allows a physician to directly visualize the entire colon and remove most polyps. "If you have a family history of colon cancer, you may need earlier, more frequent screenings," Dr. McLoughlin says.

Adults at increased risk of developing colon cancer may need to talk with their physicians about additional screening recommendations. ■

# Go fishing for heart health

**Want to help prevent heart disease? Eat fish.** They contain unsaturated fats called omega-3 fatty acids that appear to reduce the risk of dying of heart disease. Evidence suggests that eating just one to two servings of fish each week could reduce your risk of dying of a heart attack by a third or more.

“Omega-3 fatty acids are thought to reduce inflammation throughout the body. They’re also believed to decrease triglycerides, lower blood pressure and reduce blood clotting,” says John Thornton, MD, a cardiologist with the MCGHealth Cardiovascular Center.



**Evidence suggests that eating fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids is more beneficial than taking supplements.**



## Fatty fish are best

Some fish are higher in omega-3 fatty acids than others, including salmon, herring and tuna. But many other types of seafood contain small amounts of omega-3 fatty acids. Most freshwater fish have less omega-3 fatty acids than fatty fish from the sea.

## What about mercury?

Many people worry about mercury in fish, but scientists believe that this risk is generally outweighed by the health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids.

“If you’re concerned about mercury, pay attention to the types of fish you eat and limit your consumption to twice a week. Salmon is typically low in mercury, while large fish such as shark, tilefish, swordfish and king mackerel tend to have higher levels of mercury,” says Dr. Thornton.

## Who should take extra care?

Pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under age 12 should limit the amount and type of fish they eat to:

- no more than 12 ounces of fish a week
- no more than 6 ounces of canned tuna a week
- no amount of fish that’s typically high in mercury (shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish)

## What about supplements?

Evidence suggests that eating fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids is more beneficial than taking supplements. However, people with heart disease may benefit from supplements and should discuss this with their physicians. ■



### Keep your heart healthy

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call **706-721-CARE (2273)** or visit **[mcghealth.org/cardio](http://mcghealth.org/cardio)**.

# Depression and heart disease

## New screening guidelines you should know

**F**or some time, physicians have known that there is a strong link between heart disease and depression. According to the American Heart Association, people who survive heart attacks or are hospitalized with heart problems have a depression rate three times that of the general public. It's now recommended that all heart patients be routinely screened for depression.

"Caregivers are now asked to administer a two-item questionnaire to heart patients. If needed, the patient will then undergo a more comprehensive screening and an evaluation by a professional qualified in the diagnosis and management of depression," says L. Michael Prisant, MD, FACC, FACP, a cardiologist with MCGHealth Cardiovascular Center.

### Why depression is dangerous

"Clinical depression can affect how a person thinks and behaves and cause

both emotional and physical problems that can prevent people from leading normal lives," says Dr. Prisant. Depression can be particularly harmful in heart patients, as it can prevent them from following their treatment plans.

"People who have untreated depression may forgo their medications, pay less attention to nutrition and not follow up on cardiac rehabilitation," Dr. Prisant says. "For these and other reasons, heart patients who have untreated depression may be more vulnerable to continuing or recurring heart problems."

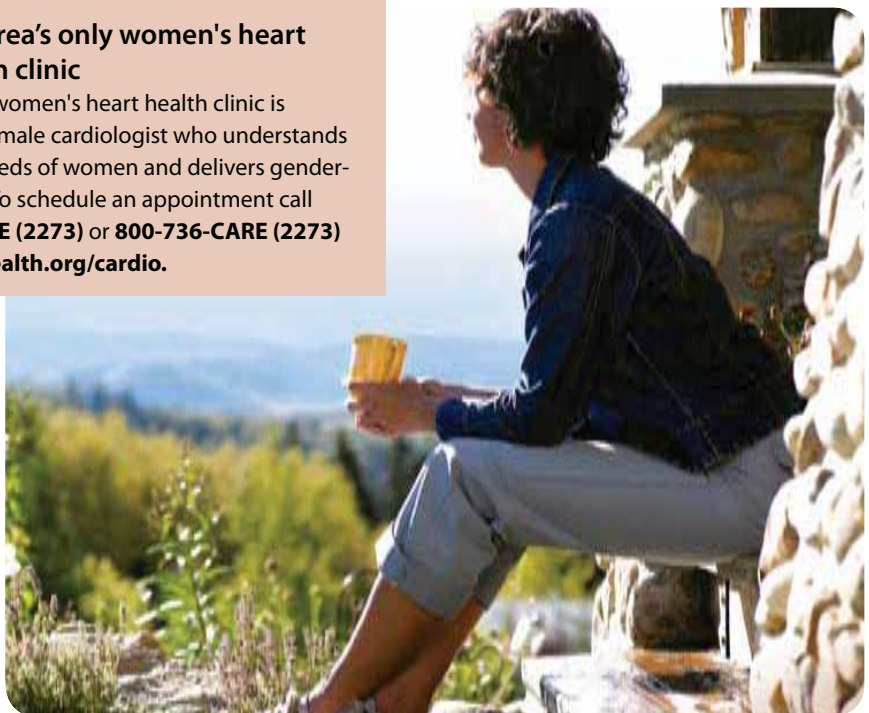
### Treatment options

The good news is that depression is very treatable. "Even people who have severe depression can generally return to their normal daily activities if they're effectively diagnosed and treated," Dr. Prisant says. Treatment options include antidepressant medications, cognitive behavioral therapy and physical activity such as aerobic exercise or cardiac rehabilitation. ■



#### The area's only women's heart health clinic

MCGHealth's women's heart health clinic is staffed by a female cardiologist who understands the unique needs of women and delivers gender-specific care. To schedule an appointment call **706-721-CARE (2273)** or **800-736-CARE (2273)** or visit [mcghealth.org/cardio](https://mcghealth.org/cardio).



# Launching a life of health and wellness

## Annual pediatric and teen exams get you started

**T**he best way to monitor your child's growth and development is through regular physical exams. MCGHealth Pediatric Practice Site is the ideal place to have those exams. This bright, attractive space was designed just for children. It offers the area's largest team of pediatricians and adolescent medicine physicians, supported by certified pediatric nurses, respiratory therapists, registered dietitians and certified asthma educators. What's more, child life specialists are available to help your child understand and cope with care.

### When to schedule exams

In addition to visits during the first year of life, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children see their physicians at 15 months, 18 months and 24 months, and then annually up to age 21.

"Annual exams are a great time for parents to raise concerns about medical or behavioral

### Walk-in appointments for established patients

**M**CGHealth Children's Medical Center offers "Early Bird" walk-in sick care appointments for established pediatric and adolescent patients from 8–9 a.m. Monday through Thursday on the third floor of MCGHealth Ambulatory Care Center at 1447 Harper St.

### Adolescent medicine specialists bridge the gap

**T**he teen years (ages 12 to 18) are a critical time of physical, emotional and cognitive development, when children need guidance from a trusted physician. MCGHealth staffs the largest team of adolescent medicine physicians in the area. They understand the health and social issues teens face and offer sensitive exams, care and health education to help kids transition into healthy adults.



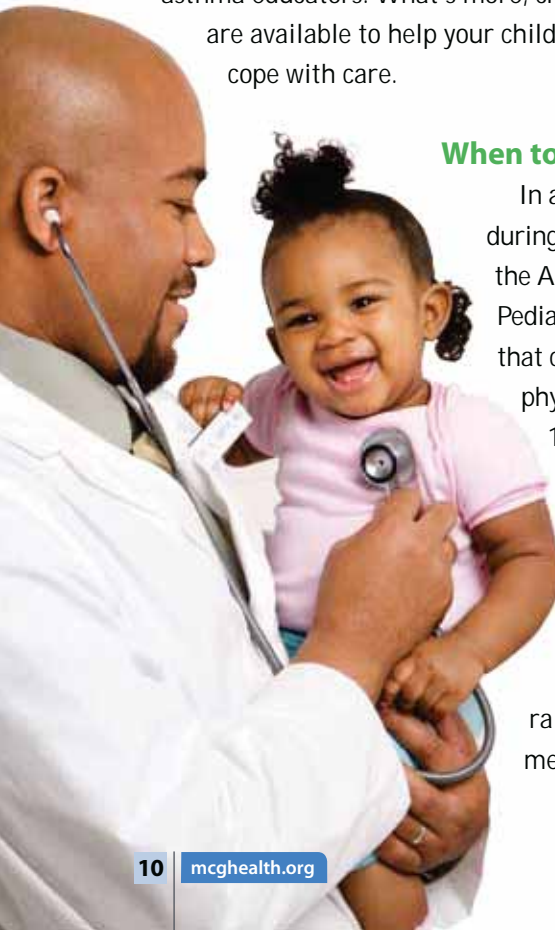
### Kick off to a healthy year

To schedule an exam for your child or adolescent, call **706-721-KIDS (5437)** or toll free at **888-721-KIDS (5437)** to speak to a member of our care team or visit [mcghealth.org/kids](http://mcghealth.org/kids).

issues and discuss preventive care," says Davidson Freeman, MD, a pediatrician and adolescent medicine physician at MCGHealth Children's Medical Center.

### The value of regular checkups

During these visits, your child's physician will perform a routine health assessment, measure his or her developmental milestones, make sure immunizations are current, monitor his or her physical and emotional well-being and check for scoliosis in teens. ■



# The flu > Watch for these danger signs

**M**any people are more concerned with the influenza (flu) virus this year than usual because of the H1N1 virus, but in truth, any type of influenza virus can be dangerous to people at high risk.

## Get a flu shot

“A flu shot may be your best protection against the illness,” says John Fisher, MD, an infectious disease specialist with MCGHealth. “Almost anyone 6 months of age and older can have the flu vaccine.”

If anyone in your household is infected with the flu, it’s important to monitor them closely. “Most people recover completely from the flu, but it can become dangerous, particularly for the elderly and people who have chronic diseases,” Dr. Fisher says.

## Warning signs in children

Children who have the flu may require emergency medical attention if their symptoms include:

- fast breathing or trouble breathing
- bluish or gray skin color
- not drinking enough fluids
- severe or persistent vomiting
- not waking up or not interacting with others
- irritability and not wanting to be held
- flu-like symptoms that improve then return with fever and worse cough

## Warning signs in adults

Adults who have the flu may require emergency medical attention if their symptoms include:

- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- sudden dizziness
- confusion
- severe or persistent vomiting



## Influenza by the numbers

- **25–50 million** Americans get influenza every year
- **150,000** Americans are hospitalized for influenza every year
- Up to **40,000** people die from influenza every year



### Beat the flu

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call **706-721-2273 (CARE)** or visit **[mcghealth.org](http://mcghealth.org)** to request an appointment.

- flu-like symptoms that improve then return with fever and worse cough

“If you have the flu, limit your contact with others as much as possible, and stay home for seven days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer,” says Dr. Fisher. ■

**Healthy Eating**

# Garden harvest soup

Makes 6 servings (about 1½ cups each)

- 2 small onions, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 1 small red bell pepper, sliced
- 1 small yellow bell pepper, sliced
- 2 cups whole-kernel corn
- 5 cups reduced-sodium fat-free chicken broth
- 1 cup green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 medium zucchini, sliced
- 1 yellow summer squash, sliced
- ½ to ¾ tsp. dried basil leaves
- ½ tsp. dried oregano leaves
- salt and pepper, to taste
- ⅓ cup fat-free milk, optional
- finely chopped parsley, as garnish

**Per serving:** 136 calories, 2.8 g fat, 0.4 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 161 mg sodium, 8.4 g protein, 21.3 g carbohydrate.

**Diabetic exchange:** 0 milk, 4 vegetable, 0 fruit, 0 bread, 0 meat, 0.5 fat

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**1** Sauté onions and garlic in oil in large saucepan until tender, about 5 minutes. Add carrots, bell peppers and corn and sauté 5 minutes. Add broth, green beans, zucchini, squash and herbs; heat to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, until vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**2** Whip milk with immersion blender; stir into soup just before serving. Pour soup into bowls; sprinkle with parsley.

