

SUMMER 2016 ISSUE 5

# HealthMatters

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PrimaryCare  
**Networks**  
CALGARY AND AREA



## ▶ Your *Health Matters*

Health Matters is published by Calgary and area Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to give you information about the programs, services and health teams available to you through your family doctors. More than 60,000 copies are distributed in the Calgary area.

Research shows when people visit a family doctor regularly, they are healthier and live longer. People with chronic diseases also receive more care, make fewer emergency department visits and are hospitalized less.

More than 1,300 family doctors in 346 clinics belong to PCNs in the Calgary area. They provide care for about 1.1 million patients.

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- › South Calgary Primary Care Network

Whether they're a family doctor, nurse, a pharmacist, social worker or a dietitian, they're all a part of your team.



# Your home team advantage

PCNs coach you to  
better health

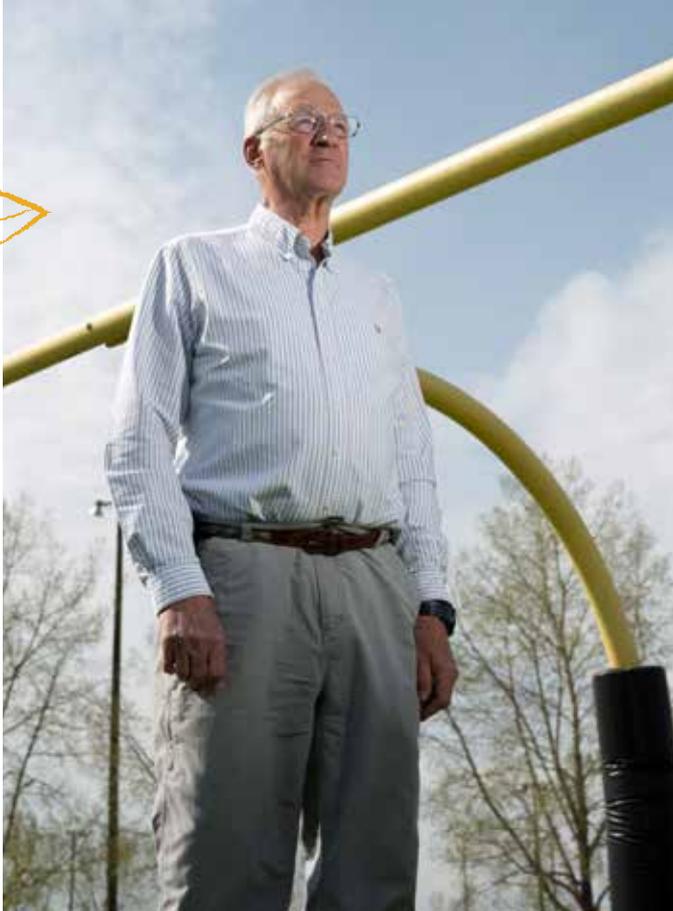
**BY JACQUELINE LOUIE**

Whatever your health goals, it helps to work with a team. Your team will guide you, encourage you and keep you on track with information, advice and resources that help you across the finish line.

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) have a team-based approach to helping their patients. "Whether they're a family doctor, nurse, a pharmacist, social worker or a dietitian, they're all a part of your team," says Mike Thompson, the health team manager with the Calgary Foothills PCN, which serves northwest Calgary and Cochrane.

PCN teams can also include health management nurses, psychologists, social workers and certified counsellors.

"Patients receive more comprehensive care by having different team members, who are all working together," he says. "There is strong collaboration and communication. Everyone is working with the same care plan to help patients meet their goals, and all care is coordinated in one place. It really ensures they get the comprehensive care they need."



Patient Ron McLane (left) and Krista VanEgmond, a health management nurse with the Calgary Foothills PCN.

It's a healthy lifestyle—exercise and a proper diet and it's accountability. I've got more energy than I used to and my sugar levels have come down.

One of main goals for every PCN team is to help patients better understand and manage their health. PCN teams also help patients make changes, such as learning how to eat healthier foods, quit tobacco or be more active.

"They looked at my diet and my lifestyle and it's been a great success," says Ron McLane, 76. He's been working with a nutritionist and pharmacist at the Foothills PCN to manage his diabetes more effectively. "It's a healthy lifestyle—exercise and a proper diet and it's accountability. I've got more energy than I used to and my blood sugar levels have come down."

In PCNs, the family doctor is like a head coach—the person who calls the team's plays.

"We're an interdisciplinary team working together to help a patient," says Krista VanEgmond, a health management nurse with the Calgary Foothills PCN. "We are very accessible to patients. We help people

build their motivation and ability to manage their health concerns."

Health teams also connect patients to community resources such as health classes and workshops, including:

- Craving Change, for emotional eating
- Ask the Dietitian, for managing weight, diabetes, heart health and other problems
- Happiness Basics, for becoming happier
- Tobacco Cessation, for quitting tobacco.

Classes vary by PCN and by clinic.

Whatever your health, your PCN team is here to help you reach your "A" game and enjoy better health.

# The best (health) defence is a good offence

Join a PCN team for better health

**BY JENNIFER ALLFORD**

When you come to a PCN, you're joining a team that helps you manage your health. Just like a football player or member of a swim team, your doctor—the coach—and the rest of the team at your PCN will do everything they can to help you improve your performance—health wise.

.....  
1.1 million  
patients in and around  
Calgary visit 1,300 family  
doctors at 345 clinics  
.....

## Here's the drill:

We won't make you run through tires or other agility drills, but we will refer you to specialists, give you information and suggest programs that will help you get your health where you want it to be.

## Meet your team:

Each of our seven PCNs in Calgary and the surrounding area has a variety of health-care professionals on the team. Aside from the coach—your doctor—your other team members include:

- Nurses
- Dietitians
- Kinesiologists
- Pharmacists
- Social workers
- Psychologists
- Counsellors
- Physiotherapists
- Mental health clinicians

## Be your own quarterback:

As the quarterback of your health, you lead the charge to improve it. That means having realistic goals, good communication with your coach and teammates and keeping track of your progress.

## Keep a playbook:

Keeping a 'playbook'—a few observations about your day-to-day activities and how you feel—can be a valuable tool in tracking your health. It also gives your coach and teammates more information that can translate into better care and improved health.

- Whether you use
- pen and paper or an app
- on your phone, keeping
- a few notes will help
- determine patterns to
- when you feel great, or
- not-so-great

## Here are some activities to record:

- What you ate and drank, and when
- How you slept the night before
- Activities and exercise
- Illness, allergies or reactions
- Pain or fatigue
- Feelings (sad, happy, mad, excited, etc.).





# PCN team builds trust

Patient John Martin plays an active role

BY ANN GEORG

Since being diagnosed with diabetes in his 30s, John Martin's health has been a roller-coaster of obesity, high blood pressure and asthma, mental health problems and other problems.

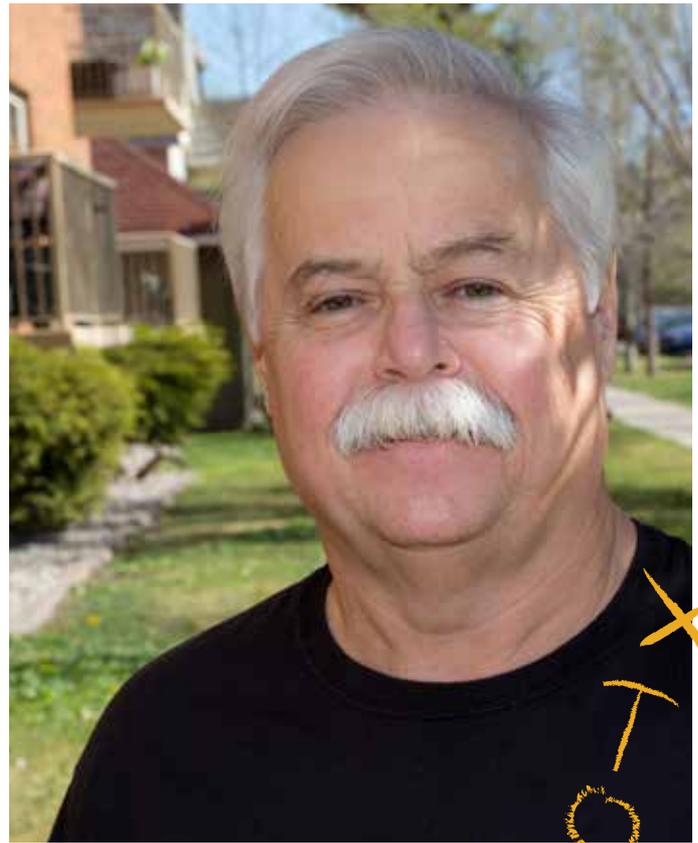
"I'm a 30-year veteran of navigating the health system," says Martin, now 64. He was frustrated by the complicated system and advice he didn't trust. That ended about seven years ago when he began seeing Dr. Agata Nowak at Calgary Foothills PCN.

She understood Martin's many health issues and referred him to specialists who diagnosed him with a rare lung disease (allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis) linked to asthma and connected him to treatment he needed.

That made a huge difference in my life," Martin says. "Since then I haven't gotten any sicker. I've gotten better.

Martin is now an active player on a PCN team. Pharmacist Cecli Zenuk, a diabetes specialist, is one of his teammates. "He's a patient with complex health problems and I work with him to make sure he sees the other PCN team members he needs. This has given him a better experience in health-care system."

When Zenuk started seeing Martin about five years ago, they worked to help Martin manage his blood sugar and weight.



John Martin has made lifestyle changes to improve his health, with help from his PCN.

Martin began following an adapted version of the Canada Food Guide and Zenuk encouraged him to walk and cycle. As these lifestyle changes began to show results, Martin's insulin intake was adjusted.

Martin visits Zenuk at least four times a year—more often than he sees his family doctor—and their time is spent working on Martin's long-term goals and talking about health. Generally, Martin schedules his appointments to coincide with his regular blood tests.

"We set an agenda,"

Zenuk says. "We review his results and re-evaluate his health plan as needed and I make sure his questions are answered. Over time, John's confidence in his ability to manage his health has grown and with that, so has his trust that we're meeting his needs."

Martin agrees and adds his PCN care is keeping him healthier and reducing his medications.

"Some of my meds are pricey, so when I can give one up, my health care is not such a load on the system," he says. "That's a bonus for everybody."

# Seriously, guys?

Go to the doctor already!

BY MIKE FISHER

When it comes to health, men can be divided into two categories. Those who go the doctor regularly and those who don't.

Men, especially those between 20 and 44 years old, are less likely to see their primary care doctor than women.

Dr. Ted Jablonski, a Calgary-based physician and expert on men's health issues says some men need more encouragement than women to visit the doctor.

In the end, it's about building a relationship, says Jablonski—the one a guy can have with his physician. "If men get to know their doctors and get comfortable and trust them, they're much more likely to seek out an appointment."

Here are a few reasons why guys who don't go to the doctor regularly may want to reconsider.

## Reason #1: It's good maintenance

A regular visit to your doctor is what a tune up is to your car: good maintenance. You wouldn't skip an oil change because things seem to be running OK, so why skip a doctor's appointment? You need a check under the hood, too.

## Reason #2: It's easier to take the time now

We get it. Life is busy. But every hour you invest in your health has payoffs down the road. Better to take a couple of hours off when you're healthy than to be off work for a few weeks or months because you get sick.

## Reason #3: It's healthy to man up

Life is a journey. Your health is the engine. Some men know they need to drink less, quit smoking, lose weight or start an exercise program. Why not face up to it?

## Reason #4: It's simple to find a PCN

More family physicians and PCNs are taking on new patients than ever before, especially in Calgary. Guys, they've never been easier to find. You won't even need a GPS.

## Reason #5: No time like the present to get the equipment checked

Getting a simple and quick examination allows you to catch things early instead of trying to catch up. Life is fast paced enough without getting your health stalling or requiring emergency help.

Dr. Ted Jablonski is an expert on men's health issues.



# Primary Objective

BY JENNIFER ALLFORD

**Name:** Gary Bourget, 56

**Health condition:** Type 2 diabetes

**How has your PCN helped you?** My life has changed dramatically for the better. My blood sugar levels are at a steady level. My life is easier.

**Health goal:** I have learned that the issues I have will never go away. I've decided to accept that this is my life, keep that under control and work on my diabetes.

**Working together:** "Gary is doing great. We've worked with him to get his sugars down and he's feeling much better and happier," says Esmond Wong diabetes outreach educator, Calgary Foothills PCN.

