

your health
is our **priority**

As a teenager, Howard Aborn, 57, a member from Melrose, Mass., was a force to be reckoned with at the hockey rink.

Years later, as an active family man, he never imagined he'd face serious health problems.

"About five years ago, my health started to deteriorate," he

says. "Suddenly, I had to take prescription medications, and I knew I needed to make changes for my health."

A heart attack averted

Howard had been diagnosed with coronary artery disease after feeling unwell at a hockey convention.

When he returned home, he went to his doctor, who recommended a stress test to monitor his heart's response to exercise. The results suggested he had severe blockage of one of the arteries in his heart.

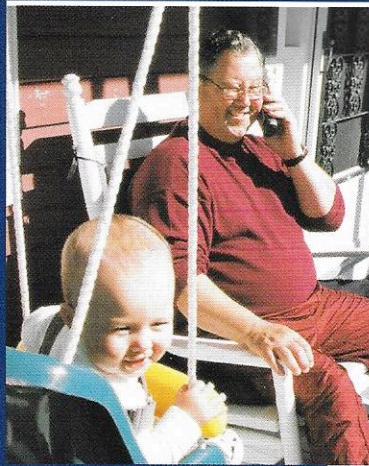
The blockage was caused by a buildup of cholesterol and other substances in the artery wall. If

the hardened substance—called plaque—were to break off, it could cause a stroke. Most heart attacks result from this condition.

Howard was immediately hospitalized, and doctors performed further procedures to open the blockage and return proper blood flow to his heart, preventing a heart attack from

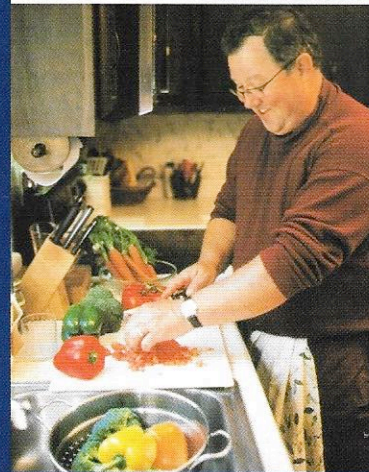
Working Toward Better Health

Communication



Howard and Chris, his Tufts Health Plan case manager, talked on the phone once a week to follow his progress.

Nutrition



An enthusiastic cook, Howard got tips on lightening up his favorite foods.

As he continues on the road to better health, Howard's goal is to someday teach his grandchildren, including 1-year-old Anthony, to ice skate.

occurring.

Not long after this, Howard woke one morning feeling sick and experiencing a sensation of soap in his eyes. Doctors in the emergency room found he was having a mild stroke, which was treated before serious damage could occur.

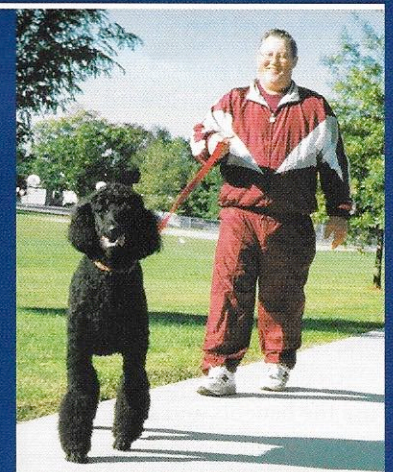
In addition, Howard had high

cholesterol, he had put on a few pounds and he had sleep apnea, a breathing disorder that caused him to wake frequently during the night.

"I wasn't sleeping well," Howard says, "and I was under a lot of stress."

Exercise

Howard has decided that walking is the best exercise program for him.



Photographs by Webb Chappell

A partnership for health

With so many health concerns, Howard knew he needed to make some healthy changes, but he didn't know where to start.

In September 2002, Tufts Health Plan identified Howard, based on data from medical and pharmacy claims, as a member who might benefit from enrolling in Tufts Health Priority Care. (See sidebar on page 9.)

That's when Tufts Health Plan case manager Christine Waible, R.N., stepped in. As a nurse specially trained to manage complex medical conditions, Chris works with members and their doctors to support health-care goals.

Chris called Howard on the phone, and they discussed the seriousness of his health status, his prescriptions, and whether he was taking any steps toward healthier living.

They agreed to work together toward goals for his improved health. Chris sent a letter to Howard's primary care physician (PCP) telling him of his patient's enrollment in the Tufts Health Priority Care program.

Starting with rest and relaxation

After the two spoke, Chris knew the first thing Howard needed to address was his stress. She helped Howard understand that to take control of his health issues, he needed to be relaxed and well-rested. They agreed to speak about once a week on the phone to follow his progress.

Chris encouraged Howard to use the benefits and services available to him as a member. She first suggested that he use his

member discount on massage therapy, and she provided him with the names of some network massage therapists.

She also emphasized to Howard the importance of speaking with his PCP whenever he had an issue or question, no matter how minor he thought it might be.

"I reminded Howard that he should call his doctor to report any changes in the way he was feeling," says Chris, "and that he shouldn't wait to ask a question if he had one."

This encouragement led him to seek help for his lack of sleep. Howard underwent a sleep test, and as a result, his doctors prescribed a special breathing mask to help prevent sleep interruptions.

"As soon as Howard was able to get a handle on the stress in his life and get a good night's sleep, it allowed him to focus on his physical health," says Chris.

Eating right and exercising again

With Chris's encouragement, Howard made a concerted effort to exercise and eat healthier foods.

Chris understood that Howard enjoyed cooking and eating, especially Italian food, so she suggested tips about healthy eating. And when his physician



Howard has a new lease on life thanks to the support of Chris and Tufts Health Priority Care.

Howard, grandson Anthony, and Samantha the dog walk around the neighborhood.

gave him the go-ahead to increase his activity level, Chris was there to help.

"When Chris and I first started talking about exercise, I admitted I had a treadmill at home that was covered with clothes,"


Howard says. "Chris pushed me a bit, and soon, the clothes came off the treadmill."

Chris also encouraged Howard to take advantage of the Weight Watchers® membership discount for plan members. Howard and

Wellness Programs Offer Many Ways to Health

At Tufts Health Plan, our goal is to help members in sickness and in health. That's why we offer a range of health and wellness programs to help you maintain and improve your health.

- Acupuncture services
- Fitness center discounts
- Hospital-based health and wellness seminars
- Massage therapy
- Weight Watchers®
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Eyewear discounts

 for more information

To learn more about our wellness programs, visit us on the Web at www.tuftshealthplan.com and select Member Rewards.

his wife, Susan, joined together, and they continue to support one another in making healthy eating choices. Howard is well on his way to achieving his goal weight, and continues to check in with Chris on his progress. He has also significantly reduced his cholesterol level.

Howard has decided that walking is the best exercise plan for him. He started by taking

she knows I have the answer. Then she follows up with me. It's a great thing that Tufts Health Plan is doing."

Making a difference

Howard is one of many members whose lives have been improved by working with a Tufts Health Priority Care nurse.

Chris is committed to helping members toward their goals to get healthier and improve the quality of their lives.

But she's modest about her role.

"Every nurse hopes to make a positive difference for a member like Howard," she says. "He has done all the work. I've just given him some tools to help him along. He trusted me, and that has made all the difference."

Howard continues on the road to better health. His goal is to get back on ice skates so that he can play hockey again and teach his grandchildren to

skate. He feels he has a new lease on life, and that he has a friend in Chris.

"When Chris called, I was shocked that a health insurance company was offering me help," he says. "Since we started talking, it's been like having a friend help and listen to you when you need it.

"I want to be here to see my grandchildren get married," Howard adds, "and I think I can do it."

short walks in his neighborhood, and is now making his way around a lake near his house. His dog and his 1-year-old grandson, Anthony, whom he cares for two days a week, accompany him.

Howard feels much better. The improvements he has made in his lifestyle have given him a positive outlook, and his relationship with Chris is rewarding.

"When something goes on, I talk to Chris about it," says Howard. "She asks me what I need to do for myself, because



Tufts Health Priority Care A Partnership for Your Health

Tufts Health Priority Care, a Tufts Total Health Care program, reaches out to members with complex medical conditions who might benefit from the help of a Tufts Health Plan nurse.

Our nurses work with complex medical conditions that include diabetes, heart disease, many types of cancer, organ transplants, hemophilia, autoimmune deficiency syndrome, cystic fibrosis and cerebral palsy.

Tufts Health Priority Care also supports members with high-risk pregnancies and young members with a variety of childhood medical conditions.

How do we identify members who might benefit? We identify members who might benefit from Tufts Health Priority Care by using innovative technology to review our claims data.

In addition, network physicians directly refer patients who are members of Tufts Health Plan.

What happens when a member enrolls? When we identify a member we think might benefit from Tufts Health Priority Care, a Tufts Health Plan registered nurse contacts the member directly to assess his or her needs and interest in the program.

When the member enrolls, the member and the nurse work together to identify and accomplish positive steps to improve the member's health and quality of life, including the role of diet, exercise and other health care supports that can make a difference.

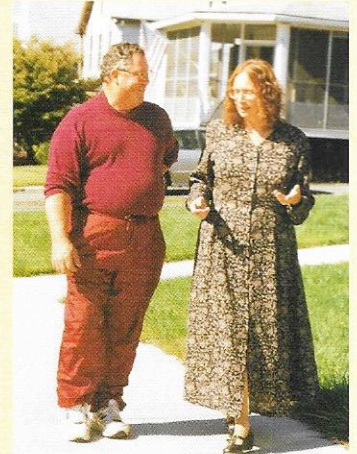
How do we work with a member's doctor? Tufts Health Priority Care is intended to support the care prescribed by the member's doctor.

After a member enrolls in the program, we send the member's physician a letter telling him or her of the patient's participation in the program.

The Tufts Health Plan nurse stays in contact with the member's PCP on an ongoing basis to ensure that all goals support the physician's plan of care for the member.

Does enrolling in the program cost anything? The program is available at no cost to members who use the Tufts Health Plan network. Participation is always voluntary.

For more information about Tufts Health Priority Care, call (888) 880-8699, extension 3532.



Howard and Chris recently met after working together over the phone for more than a year.