



# Our Point of View: *Addressing Metabolic Syndrome*

## *The Issue*

The epidemic of obesity and metabolic syndrome (MetS) – a cluster of conditions driven largely by unhealthy diet and inactivity – is threatening the health of Americans. Metabolic syndrome places people at high risk for developing diabetes, cardiovascular disease and other debilitating illnesses. Increasingly common, an estimated 50 million Americans have MetS.

Metabolic syndrome jeopardizes both the health and productivity of employees, while negatively affecting companies' health care costs. To address the impact of MetS, employers and individuals need innovative strategies that lead to healthier outcomes.

## *Our Approach and Expectations*

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Mexico (BCBSNM) is committed to addressing this growing public health concern, with the goal of guiding members with MetS back toward wellness. Our approach provides solutions for employers and members, and engages the community.

Our **Metabolic Syndrome Program** is designed to diminish or reverse the associated risk factors, using a multi-faceted approach that:

- > Offers wellness strategies along with medical management programs that help manage risk factors
- > Focuses behavior change around nutrition and fitness
- > Builds in support from family, coworkers, health coaches and social networks
- > Provides workplace wellness workshops, including a unique, onsite 10-week intensive course, along with online resources
- > Includes a self-referral online program

These interventions have succeeded in helping members make and sustain positive lifestyle modifications – losing weight, eating more nutritiously, exercising regularly, managing stress and quitting smoking. In turn, these behavior changes have led to improved health (measured by biometric tests).

### A Commitment to Wellness for Healthier Outcomes

- > **For employers:** To help employers create the wellness program that best suits and engages their employees, we provide planning tools and communications, incentive options, a variety of onsite programs and online resources. Our Employee Assistance Program offers additional mental wellness support that can help motivate and maintain healthy behavior change.
- > **For members:** Members can access nutrition, fitness, stress management, smoking cessation and condition management resources through our online Personal Health Manager. Incentive programs, such as Blue Points<sup>SM</sup>, help motivate and keep members engaged. Our BlueExtras<sup>SM</sup> discount program helps members save money on products and services that support healthy lifestyles.
- > **For the community:** BCBSNM helps build strong communities throughout the state through charitable giving, grants, volunteer projects, partnerships and sponsorships. Key initiatives address childhood obesity, and teach children and their parents how to live healthier lives. Our wellness Web site, [www.besmartbewell.com](http://www.besmartbewell.com), explores topics, such as childhood obesity, with the facts, prevention advice, resources and personal stories of real people.

## *Facts and Stats*

- Five risk factors are associated with MetS: elevated blood pressure, triglycerides and blood glucose; lower than normal HDL cholesterol; larger waist circumference.
- People with MetS have a five-fold risk of developing type 2 diabetes, a condition strongly associated with cardiovascular disease.
- Most of the cardiovascular health costs borne by employers are concentrated in the one-third of the working-age population with MetS.
- Working-age individuals with MetS have shown significantly higher medical costs:
  - With MetS: \$626 per member per month (PMPM)
  - Without MetS: \$367 PMPM

Sources: American Heart Association, International Diabetes Federation, The National Cholesterol Education Program – Adult Treatment Panel, Milliman Consultants and Actuaries