Imagine you’re given a beautifully wrapped present.

You’re sure this gift is going to be the most amazing thing you’ve ever seen, unlike anything you’ve received before. There’s a catch — you can’t open it for years, but you know it’ll be worth the wait. Now imagine the big day is almost here; that’s where we are in WHI. Precious years of effort by you and other women have generated a wealth of data. Because of your participation in this landmark study, we’re about to unwrap this incredible gift you’ve given to yourselves, women around the world, and future generations. Within just a few years, we’ll at last see the results and learn new information about diet, supplements, and hormones and what role they play in women’s health.

Congratulations and thank you for your efforts so far! Because WHI is a long-term study, it’s important to keep doing your particular study activities — filling out forms, taking study pills, following the WHI eating pattern, coming in for clinic visits — until the end. The information you contribute now is very important so that we can understand how your health changed over the years. You have a unique place in WHI and can’t be replaced. Even if we haven’t heard from you in awhile, we’d love to hear from you now. We’ve come so far together — let’s see it through!

Unique in Many Ways

WHI is not only one of the largest studies on women’s health ever done, it is one of the first studies to focus on including minority women. To ensure minority

This is BIG! We’re making history here, ladies! This is extraordinary research for all of us. We’ve never had such an extensive program before. This study shows Latinas how we can advance health. Hopefully, this will help our children’s children.

— Mary Gutierrez, age 68, Dietary, Calcium/Vitamin D, and Hormone Study participant, San Antonio Clinical Center
women were part of the program, 10 of the 40 WHI Clinical Centers made special efforts to enroll African American, Latina, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and Native American women. Almost 20 percent of all WHI participants are from racial/ethnic minority groups. If you’re one of these women, your role in WHI is especially important. You are a member of a group that has not always been included in health research, and WHI is trying to correct that. WHI will help us know more about the health of women within and among various racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.

WHI is also designed to include older women, with 22 percent of our participants aged 70 to 79 at the start of the study. It is common for people to have more health problems as they age, so studying older women’s health is very important. WHI wants to know what these health issues are and if diet, hormones, or supplements have an impact on health. Some participants may think that if their health has gotten worse, WHI doesn’t want them anymore. Nothing could be further from the truth! We need to track your health — good or bad — for the study results to be valid.

Close-out Contacts
Close-out visits (your last WHI clinic visit) will begin for Clinical Trial participants (those in the Hormone, Dietary, and Calcium and Vitamin D studies) in October 2004 and end in March 2005. At this final visit, you will complete some forms and may be given information about WHI for your healthcare provider. If you’re taking pills for the Calcium and Vitamin D Program, they will be collected and an exciting thing will happen — you will finally be unblinded — told whether you’ve been taking active or placebo (inactive) pills.

Regular health screenings are as important as ever after your WHI clinic visits end. Each woman in the Clinical Trial will receive a set of recommendations about health screenings (like mammograms) at the close-out visit. If you don’t already have a healthcare provider, it’s vital to find one for your future medical needs. Your WHI clinic practitioner can help you find a doctor, if you need one.

For participants in the Observational Study, no final clinic visit is scheduled. As in previous years, you’ll receive a packet of forms in the mail. In addition, you’ll receive information describing the health habits of OS women as a whole and highlights of some of our major findings so far. The mailings begin in April 2004 and will continue until March 2005. It’s very important to return those final WHI forms, because without your close-out information, we won’t have a complete picture of your health.

Future Results
Once all of the final visits and forms are collected, the very important job of analyzing the data begins. We expect the key findings from all study parts to be released in the spring of 2006. At that time, you will receive a special newsletter describing these results. Summaries of these findings will also be on the WHI website, www.whi.org. (Please see the article about accessing the Internet on pages 6 and 7.)
Beyond WHI
Because the information from WHI is so valuable and has such potential to benefit women's health, WHI scientists have made a strong case to continue following women in some parts of WHI. In April 2004, we received the good news that an extension of WHI had been approved. In the near future, we will be sending you more information about this exciting opportunity. We will then ask if you are willing to keep providing information about your health, since longer-term information is needed. If you agree, you would be asked to complete health forms by mail but would not continue to take study pills or follow a special dietary program. Your WHI Clinical Center will soon let you know more about the WHI Extension Study.

For all you've done, the WHI staff and researchers offer a heartfelt thank you. WHI is not possible without women like you. Thank you for being part of the answer!

"I've joined with a lot of other women who feel very strongly about taking care of their health. We'll leave behind a medical legacy so younger women won't have to face the same issues. The information gained from this study will affect medical school training, research, and women — not only women, but families, because when you have healthy mothers, you have healthy families."

—Martha Gould, age 72, Observational Study participant, Reno Clinical Center

This is the last regular issue of WHI Matters. We appreciate our regular readers — the women of WHI. We also thank the participants who wrote letters to the editor with their compliments, suggestions, and questions. We especially thank the women who were featured in the pages of this newsletter; their willingness to share their interesting lives and commitment to WHI united all of us. Even if you were never featured in the newsletter, we treasure the uniqueness and dedication of every woman in this study. You are an amazing group of women and much more could be written about you!

— The Editors

Letters
We'd love to hear feedback on the newsletter. We regret that we cannot answer questions about individual medical conditions. Published letters may be edited. Send a letter to:

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Seattle, WA 98109
or e-mail csteelqui@whi.org

Staff Information
WHI Matters is produced by the WHI Coordinating Center at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

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Ten years after starting enrollment in WHI, it's a good time to look back at the accomplishments of our participants, staff members, and researchers. This is also a good time to look forward to our future plans.

What WHI has achieved since its launch in 1993 is nothing short of remarkable, thanks to findings from the Estrogen-Alone part of the Hormone Program. They reported that estrogen alone was not beneficial overall in preventing disease. The results created major changes in medical care. Before 2002, about 75% of doctors were prescribing combined hormones to prevent chronic disease. Now, based on findings from WHI, almost all hormone prescriptions are given to women to relieve menopausal symptoms.

Many important findings have also come from the WHI Observational Study, including data indicating that exercise is protective against breast cancer. Results from the other WHI studies have yet to be published. Whatever those findings, they will be important to the health of future generations of women. All of this new information shows what an important contribution each of you has made to our growing knowledge about women's health. If at times it feels burdensome to complete another form about your health or to come to the WHI Clinic, please remember what your efforts have achieved and will achieve in the future.

Many scientists inside and outside the National Institutes of Health continue to contribute to WHI in important ways. These include the invaluable input from the independent Data and Safety Monitoring Board, which regularly reviews the data and advises the NIH on the safety of participants and the conduct of the study. A WHI Working Group provides a link between the study and the outside community. In addition (and most seen by you), hundreds of staff members at WHI Clinical Centers across the country pour their energies into the day-to-day work of the study. These staff members often say that what keeps them going and working hard are WHI's tireless and inspirational participants.

What does the future hold for WHI? It is certain that the data, blood specimens, and (for some of you) urine specimens that were collected...
over the years will become an important resource for fueling new research findings for many years to come. As mentioned on page 3, we plan to continue some WHI activities. Around the time of your last clinic contact, we will ask if you are willing to continue providing health updates.

We plan to keep all of you informed about the results from your study. We are hoping to hold a meeting in 2006 to showcase WHI findings. WHI representatives and participants will be invited to the meeting, which will also be broadcast so that everyone who is interested can see and hear about these important findings. One thing is for sure: we will do our best to keep you informed! We owe at least this much to you, the women who made WHI possible and its achievements a reality. Thank you!

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FOR YOUR HEALTH

- Studies have found that nearly one out of five medication doses are given in error at hospitals daily. Errors include the wrong drug, dose, or timing. Patient safety advocates urge patients to ask questions about their medications or ask a friend or family member to help. The first time you’re given a drug, ask what it’s for and who ordered it. Write down this information, along with a visual description (if it’s a pill), and keep it by your hospital bed. Ask how often you’re supposed to take the drug, and keep a log of doses. Afterward, make sure you are given the same drug; if it looks different, ask about the change.

- Winding down after a workout is important. Suddenly ending a strenuous exercise session can trigger a sudden drop in blood pressure that can lead to fainting or even heart problems, particularly in older adults. Before heading for the shower, walk around until your heart rate drops to just 10 to 15 beats per minute above its usual resting rate.

- Don’t use a fork to turn steaks on the grill or under the broiler. Piercing the meat can force dangerous bacteria, such as E. coli, from the meat’s surface into its cooler interior, where the germs can survive cooking. Keep everyone healthy by using tongs or a spatula instead.

- If you’re not taking your medications regularly, please let your doctor know. Many people forget to take their prescription drugs, or they don’t take them because of side effects. Others take them just before an appointment, hoping to make their blood tests look better. Such actions can cause unexpected problems. If you aren’t completely open with your health care provider, he/she may prescribe something stronger, raising the risk of side effects. If you take WHI study pills, being honest with the staff at your Clinical Center about how often you’re taking them is important, too, since this can impact study results.

- Do not assume that your mammogram was normal if you do not hear from your doctor or imaging center within 10 days. Always confirm the results by calling your doctor or the place where you had the test.
Do you ever hear talk about the Internet or the “World Wide Web” and wonder what it's all about?

If you have never connected to the Internet, you may not be aware of the wealth of information that is available right at your fingertips. You can find websites with information on just about anything — health, seniors’ organizations, volunteer groups, other organizations, world news, travel, movies, games, weather, hobbies, recipes — you name it! On page 7 we provide a sample list of these websites, along with a description of what they provide. For example, as a WHI participant, there’s a special website just for you (www.whi.org). This site includes summaries of important WHI study findings, updates (some available in Spanish) and links (one-button connections) to other websites that might be of interest. In addition to linking to websites, the Internet provides a useful communication tool — many people use the Internet to correspond (in the form of electronic mail or “e-mail”) with their friends, relatives, and work colleagues.

If you’d like to take a look at the web but don’t have any idea how to get started, here’s a brief summary of what you’ll need to know. Once you’re on the Internet, there are dozens of very helpful tutorials to teach you the basics, such as how to search the web and send e-mail.

For those of you who are already web experts, we encourage you to take a look at the WHI website, as well as any others that may interest you.

If you’d like to connect, but don’t have a computer: Even if you don’t own a computer, there are many places within your community to access computers with free or inexpensive Internet connections. Some of these include:

- **Libraries** — Over 95% of U.S. public libraries have computers providing free Internet access to the public. Many also offer classes on how to use the Internet. If your local library offers this service, a librarian would be very happy to get you started.

- **Senior Centers** — Many community senior centers have computers with Internet access that are available for free or a minimal charge. In addition, they may provide classes on how to access the web and what to do once you’re on.

- **Clubs or organizations** — Many retirement communities and clubs have Internet access in the clubhouse or office. If you belong to an organization that offers this service, take advantage of it!

- **Family and friends** — If a member of your family has Internet access, ask if they’ll let you use their computer to connect to the WHI website. It will give you a flavor of what’s available and help you evaluate whether or not you’d like to spend more time exploring on your own.

If you have a computer and would like to connect from your home: Connecting to the Internet from your home is very convenient, but it involves several steps that cannot be covered here in detail. Basically, you’ll need a personal computer with a modem and either a telephone
The terms “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are often used interchangeably, but they actually mean two different things:

- The **Internet** is a huge network linking together millions of computers around the world.
- The **World Wide Web** is the universe of interconnected web pages that allows you to view documents and images on the Internet.

or cable line that will link your computer modem to the Internet. You will also need to sign up with an Internet service provider (ISP) that will connect you to the Internet and provide e-mail service. Some common ISPs are America Online (AOL), AT&T, Comcast, Earthlink, MSN, and Sprint (these are not recommendations, just common providers you may have heard of). The monthly charges for these services can vary greatly, so it helps to shop around.

To get your computer connected to the Internet, you’ll probably need to talk with someone knowledgeable to help you get started. You may find that your children (or even grandchildren!) know everything you need to know about getting connected. If that isn’t an option, most large computer stores have people who are willing to help (possibly at a small charge) or they may provide classes to explain the steps. Classes are also offered through SeniorNet learning centers nationwide and senior adult learning programs in many schools and colleges. Your ISP can also be helpful in guiding you through the steps. Finally, there are books that you can borrow from the library or buy that describe the steps to getting an Internet connection.

A first step might be to stop in at the local library and give the Internet a try. If you like it and feel that it’s something you’d like to continue with at home, check into some of these other resources. Your librarian may even be able to make some suggestions about local resources or books to get you started.

**Accessing information once you’re connected:**

If you’ve never connected to the Internet, your first visit may be a bit overwhelming. A good place to start is the WHI participant website. The Internet address, **www.whi.org**, is typed into the address box at the top of the opening webpage. After exploring that website, you may want to branch out to other areas. Use the mouse to click on some of the suggested links on the WHI website or type in an address from the list in this article. Another useful place to start is at one of the “search engines” that can search the whole Internet. Two commonly used search engines are **www.yahoo.com** and **www.google.com**. Keep in mind that any information you obtain from the Internet should be evaluated carefully, especially health information. There are no controls over the accuracy of the information. Consider the source very carefully, just as you would when reading any printed materials.

Have fun exploring — a whole new world awaits!

**Internet Sites of Interest**

- **www.seniornet.org** — Information on computer and Internet use for those aged 50+.
- **www.aoa.gov** — Administration on Aging. This web site includes hundreds of topics of interest to seniors, statistics, links to state and area agencies on aging, and many publications on a variety of topics (e.g., financial planning, driving, memory loss, safety). This site also includes an “Eldercare Locator” which can help find support resources in your community, such as transportation, meals, social activities, legal services, home care, caregiver services, and home repair.
- **www.aarp.org** — AARP, a non-profit organization for people over 50, offers a range of member benefits and services. Included in this site are several very good tutorials on Internet use.
- **www.seniorfriends.com** — Information on hundreds of diseases and health conditions. Includes health resources, a prescription interaction checker, and information on prevention, caregiving, and healthy living.
- **www.i-craft.com/seniors** — Crafts projects and ideas.
- **www.elderhostel.org** — Elder Hostel education and travel organization for adults.
Stay In Touch

Don't forget to call your local Clinical Center if your address or phone number change!

Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Bronx, New York • (718) 931-1010

Arizona Prevention Center
Phoenix, Arizona • (800) 241-9216
Tucson, Arizona • (520) 321-7440

Baylor College of Medicine
Houston, Texas • (713) 793-8366

Berman Center for Clinical Research
Minneapolis, Minnesota • (612) 341-7900

Brigham and Women's Hospital
Chestnut Hill, MA • (617) 275-0782

Center for Health Research
Portland, Oregon • (503) 335-6759

Charleston Memorial Hospital
Fall River, Massachusetts • (800) 742-3446

Detroit Clinical Center
Detroit, Michigan • (313) 966-6000

Emory University
Decatur, Georgia • (404) 370-7355

Evanston Hospital
Evanston, Illinois • (847) 570-1130

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
Seattle, Washington • (206) 667-6551

The George Washington University
Washington, DC • (202) 877-9700

Kaiser Permanente—Bay Area Clinic
Oakland, California • (510) 891-3201

Medical College of Wisconsin
Milwaukee, Wisconsin • (414) 805-7040

Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island
Pawtucket, Rhode Island • (800) 742-3446

Nevada Clinical Center
Reno, Nevada • (775) 734-4906

New Jersey Medical School
Newark, New Jersey • (973) 972-6107
New Brunswick, New Jersey • (732) 238-6546

Northwestern University
Chicago, Illinois • (312) 996-7397

Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio • (800) 251-1175

Chicago, Illinois • (312) 942-3395

Stanford Women's Health Initiative
San Jose, California • (408) 232-4999

Stony Brook Clinical Center
Stony Brook, New York • (631) 444-9800

South Bay WHI Program
Torrance, California • (310) 222-8010

UAB Preventive Medicine
Birmingham, Alabama • (205) 934-2294

UCLA Women's Health Initiative
Los Angeles, California • (310) 825-9502

UMASS/FALLON Clinical Site
Worcester, Massachusetts • (508) 595-2333

University at Buffalo
Buffalo, New York • (716) 829-3128

University of California, Davis
Sacramento, California • (916) 734-3219

University of California, Irvine
Orange, California • (714) 456-7241

University of California, San Diego
Chula Vista, California • (619) 498-4980
La Jolla, California • (619) 622-5770

University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio • (513) 584-6061

University of Florida
Gainesville, Florida • (800) 944-4594
Jacksonville, Florida • (904) 858-6975

University of Iowa
Davenport, Iowa • (800) 344-3515
Des Moines, Iowa • (800) 347-8164
Iowa City, Iowa • (800) 814-9535

University of Miami School of Medicine
Miami, Florida • (305) 243-4800

University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, North Carolina • (919) 560-5605

University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania • (412) 624-3579

University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin • (608) 267-1600

UTHSC
San Antonio, Texas • (210) 567-1850

UT Prevention Center
Memphis, Tennessee • (901) 347-8300

WHI of the Nation's Capital
Washington, DC • (202) 675-4770

WHI of the Triad
Greensboro, North Carolina • (336) 272-0455
Winston-Salem, North Carolina • (336) 777-3245

Women's Health Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii • (808) 441-5555

If you have questions, use the telephone number listed above to contact your Clinical Center.

Kaiser Center for Health Research
3800 N. Interstate Ave.
Portland, OR 97227-1098

Change Service Requested