



Healthy  MercyCare™  
**LIVING**

Summer 2020

*A wellness newsletter for MercyCare members*

# How to Protect Against the Spread of COVID-19

While there is no vaccine to date, the best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed to the virus. To protect against exposure, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using a bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash your hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wear cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, such as grocery stores, pharmacies and gas stations.

## **What to expect when visiting Mercyhealth**

Mercyhealth has resumed in-person patient visits. At this time, you can schedule an appointment to meet with your physician at the clinic or, if you prefer, you can still consult with your doctor through teleMedicine (check inside this issue for more information).

Mercyhealth is also scheduling elective procedures in a gradual manner with careful thought and preparation so that these services can be safely performed using appropriate protocols and precautions. The health and safety of patients is Mercyhealth's top priority.

Mercyhealth has also implemented extra safety precautions in its facilities including:

- Extra cleaning and disinfecting of waiting rooms, exam rooms and nurse stations
- Spacing out chairs in waiting rooms and adding floor cues in most locations to promote social distancing
- Requiring partners, patients, visitors and vendors to wear a mask
- Monitoring temperatures of all patients when they enter a Mercyhealth facility
- Restricting visitors at all Mercyhealth facilities



## **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

**Mercyhealth in Your Own Home**

**Health Risks of Being Overweight**

**Safe Swimming in Backyard Pools**

**Stay Social and Safe During the Pandemic**

**Benefits of Wearable Health Technology**

**Get the Scoop on Sunscreen**

**Is it COVID-19, the Flu, a Cold or Allergies?**

**Foods You Should Add to Your Diet**

**Five Things to Know About Alcohol**

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Healthy Living is published by MercyCare Health Plans to inform its members of current health issues and improve the use of MCHP services. This publication should not replace the care and advice of your doctor. Always talk to your health care professional about your personal health needs. MercyCare Health Plans is a Qualified Health Plan issuer in the Health Insurance Marketplace.



## COVID-19 SYMPTOMS?

Here are the three ways for you to speak with a provider if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms:

1. [Mercyhealth Virtual Visit Now](#)
2. [Mercyhealth's COVID-19 NurseHotline \(833\) 648-0057.](#)
3. [Call your provider for an initial phone screening.](#)



## Mercyhealth in Your Own Home

### Mercyhealth Virtual Visit Now 24/7 Online Urgent Care

Mercyhealth Virtual Visit Now brings urgent care to you—at home, at work, at school—anywhere you have a minor health concern. A wide range of issues can be treated virtually, including, but not limited to:

- Allergies
- Cough
- Eye infections
- Joint pain or strains
- Lower back pain
- Minor skin problems
- Painful urination
- Sore throat
- Stuffy and runny nose

### Enroll today! Follow these easy steps:

- Visit [mercyhealthvirtualvisits.org](https://mercyhealthvirtualvisits.org) to learn more
- Download the app from the Apple App Store or Google Play



# Health Risks of Being Overweight

Obesity results from the energy imbalance that occurs when a person consumes more calories than their body burns. In recent decades, obesity has reached epidemic proportions in populations whose environments promote physical inactivity and increased consumption of high-calorie foods.

Obesity is a serious public health problem because it is associated with reduced quality of life, and is a leading cause of death in America. People who have obesity, compared to those with a normal or healthy weight, are at increased risk for many serious diseases and health conditions, including:

- High blood pressure (Hypertension)
- High LDL cholesterol, low HDL cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis (a breakdown of cartilage and bone within a joint)
- Sleep apnea and breathing problems
- Many types of cancer
- Mental illness such as clinical depression, anxiety and other mental disorders
- Body pain and difficulty with physical functioning

## Tips to Maintain a Healthy Weight and Avoid Obesity

The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight isn't short-term dietary changes—it's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity. While everything you like to eat can be enjoyed in moderation, reducing the calorie-rich temptations of high-fat, high-sugar or salty foods, can help you develop healthier eating habits.

Look for ways to make favorite dishes healthier. Balance calories by engaging in an appropriate amount of physical activity and avoiding too much sedentary time. Remember that small changes every day lead to a recipe for success!



## COVID-19 AND YOUR POOL

There is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to people through water in pools, hot tubs, spas or water play areas. Proper operation and maintenance, including disinfection with chlorine and bromine, should inactivate the virus in the water.

Remember to limit close contact with people who are not part of your household both in and out of the water. For example, by staying at least six feet away from people you don't live with and wearing cloth face covers when not in the water.

## Safe Swimming in Backyard Pools

Having a backyard pool can be a fun way for families to be active at home. Before you and your family and friends enjoy your pool this summer, it is important to know what to do to reduce the risk of injury and illness and maximize all the health benefits that swimming can bring.

### Take Steps to Prevent Drowning

- Make sure everyone has basic swim skills and water safety awareness.
- Provide continuous and close supervision to swimmers.
- Know how to recognize and respond to a swimmer in distress and how to perform CPR.
- Prevent access to the water when the pool is not in use with barriers such as four-sided fencing.

### Kill Germs in Your Pool

Disinfection (with chlorine or bromine) and pH are the first defense against germs that cause illnesses. Check your chemical levels every day (and more often when the pool is in heavy use) to ensure they are at 1-10 parts per million (ppm) free chlorine or 3-8 ppm bromine and pH 7.2-7.8.

### Diarrhea and Swimming Don't Mix

While enjoying your pool with your loved ones, it's important to make sure *not* to swim or let others swim if sick with diarrhea. Shower before you get into the water to remove dirt or anything else on your body. Once in the pool, try not to swallow pool water. Make sure to take kids on bathroom breaks regularly and check swim diapers every hour.



## Stay Social and Safe During the Pandemic

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has been stressful for many people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and can cause strong emotions in adults and children. If you or a loved one are living alone, it is important to not feel isolated. Check in with your loved ones often ... Virtual communication can help you feel less lonely and isolated. Consider connecting via telephone, email, mailing letters or cards, text messages, video chat and social media.

It is also important to keep your loved ones safe—especially those who are elderly and on their own. Try these helpful tips:

- Know what medications your loved one is taking. Try to help them have a four-week supply of prescription and over the counter medications. Monitor other medical supplies (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) needed and create a back-up plan.
- Stock up on non-perishable food (canned foods, dried beans, pasta) to have on hand in your home to minimize trips to stores.
- If you know a loved one living in a care facility, monitor their situation and speak with facility administrators or staff over the phone. Ask about the health of the other residents frequently and know the protocol if there is an outbreak.

And, don't forget to take care of your own emotional health. Caring for a loved one can take an emotional toll, especially during an outbreak like COVID-19. There are ways to support yourself. Stay home if you are sick. Do not visit family or friends who are at greater risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Stay in touch virtually to support your loved ones and keep them safe.

# Benefits of Wearable Health Tech

Wearable technology includes small devices using computers and other advanced technology that are designed to be worn in clothing or directly against the body. Familiar examples of wearable technology include “smartwatches” and fitness trackers (think Fitbit and Apple Watch). There are over 77 million of them circulating in the US adult population.

Health-focused sensors that monitor physical activity can track your steps run/walked, distance traveled, calories burned and even sleep patterns. The sensors then upload the information online or to an app, so you can track your progress over time.

While they offer an easy way to track movement, passively using these wearables won't help increase your fitness level. In other words, just looking at the data that is recorded and not analyzing how to improve your activity won't improve your overall health.

However, by paying attention to the habits you have, and looking for opportunities to make small changes to better your outcomes—using the stairs instead of the elevator, getting off a stop earlier on public transportation, parking farther away from your destination—you can change your behavior to improve your cardiovascular health and potentially lower your weight.

You can also look for data trends in your activity with fitness trackers. If you notice you are regularly missing one of your activity goals, you can modify your behavior. The whole goal is to get moving, but not all at once. Make sure you set small, attainable goals and increase your activity level as you are able so as to not injure yourself by starting off doing too much too fast.

And remember they are not a cure for weight loss. Eating healthy and increasing activity levels are key to maintaining good health.





# Is it COVID-19, the Flu, a Cold or Allergies?

Since they share so many symptoms, it can be hard to know which condition you have, but the guidelines below can help. You may have COVID-19 if you have a fever and trouble breathing, along with the symptoms listed below. These symptoms can occur from 2 to 14 days after exposure. If you don't have problems breathing, it might be influenza. It may be allergies if you don't have a fever but your eyes are itchy, you are sneezing, and you have a runny nose. If you don't have a fever and your eyes aren't itchy, it's most likely a cold. It is important to call your doctor and self-isolate if you're concerned about any symptoms.

<b>SYMPTOMS</b>	<b>COVID-19</b>	<b>ALLERGIES</b>	<b>FLU (INFLUENZA)</b>	<b>COMMON COLD</b>
FEVER	COMMON		COMMON	SOMETIMES
COUGH	COMMON		COMMON	COMMON
SHORTNESS OF BREATH	COMMON			
MUSCLE ACHES	COMMON		COMMON	SOMETIMES
SORE THROAT	SOMETIMES		SOMETIMES	COMMON
DIARRHEA	SOMETIMES		SOMETIMES	
CONGESTION	SOMETIMES	COMMON	SOMETIMES	COMMON
LOSS OF SMELL	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES
RUNNY NOSE	SOMETIMES	COMMON	SOMETIMES	SOMETIMES
ITCHY EYES		COMMON		
SNEEZING		COMMON		
CHILLS	SOMETIMES		SOMETIMES	
REPEATED SHAKING WITH CHILLS	SOMETIMES			
HEADACHE	SOMETIMES		SOMETIMES	



### CAN I EAT MY COMFORT FOODS?

You can enjoy your favorite foods even if they are high in calories, fat or added sugars. The key is eating them only once in a while and balancing them out with healthier foods and more physical activity.

#### General Tips for Comfort Foods

- Eat them less often. If you normally eat these foods every day, cut back to once a week or once a month.
- Eat smaller amounts. If your favorite higher-calorie food is a chocolate bar, have a smaller size or only half a bar.
- Try a lower-calorie version. Use lower-calorie ingredients or prepare food differently.

## Foods You Should Add to Your Diet

A healthy eating plan that helps you manage your weight includes a variety of foods you may not have considered. If healthy eating makes you think about foods you can't have, try refocusing on all the new foods you can eat. For example, think of the following foods the next time you shop:

1. **Add a variety of colors to your plate.** Foods like dark, leafy greens, oranges and tomatoes—even fresh herbs—are loaded with vitamins, fiber, and minerals. Try adding frozen peppers, broccoli or onions to stews and omelets to give them a quick and convenient boost of color and nutrients. Or, make a red sauce using canned tomatoes (use low sodium or no salt added), herbs and spices.
2. **All fresh, frozen or canned fruits are great choices.** When your favorite fresh fruits aren't in season, try a frozen, canned or dried variety of a fresh fruit you enjoy. Note that canned fruits may contain added sugars or syrups, so choose canned fruit that is packed in water or in its own juices.
3. **Seek out calcium-rich foods.** Try low-fat and fat-free yogurts without added sugar. These come in a wide variety of flavors and can be a great dessert substitute for those with a sweet tooth.
4. **Try a new twist on an old favorite.** If your favorite recipe calls for frying fish or breaded chicken, try healthier variations that are baked or grilled. You can even try a recipe that uses dry beans in place of higher-fat meats. You might be surprised to find you have a new favorite dish!

# The Scoop on Sunscreen

Love the sun, but want to keep your skin safe from sunburn and skin cancer? Check out these helpful facts about sunscreen that will have you loving your skin and the summer at the same time:

- **Sunscreen protects your skin when used as directed.** Research suggests that sunscreen users get burned frequently, which may be because they use too little, apply it or reapply it too late, or use it to engage in otherwise unsafe sun exposure, such as staying out longer or not wearing protective clothing.
- **You have to use a lot.** That means a shot glass full to cover the full body, a fourth to a half teaspoon for the face. Studies have shown that consumers use much less sunscreen than is needed to effectively protect. So, use more than you think you need.
- **Don't use it solo.** It is important to use a combination of sun safety approaches for effective sun protection. Sunscreen is intended to be combined with other sun-safety approaches, like covering up with clothing, staying in the shade, wearing a hat and scheduling activities to avoid times of day when the sun is most intense (10 am-4 pm).
- **Coconut oil is not a good sunscreen.** Although some sunscreens contain coconut oil, the oil itself is not adequate to prevent skin damage. Coconut oil may extend the time to burn for some individuals, but the level of UV protection is very low and may be highly variable by source.
- **Sunscreen is NOT a "Do-It-Yourself" kind of product.** Commercial sunscreen is a non-prescription drug that is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration to meet safety and effectiveness standards. With homemade sunscreens, you don't know what level SPF you will get, whether it will stay on your skin, if it is effective, or if the active ingredients are dangerous when combined or inhaled.



## Five Things to Know About Alcohol

Most of us are familiar with the link between some lifestyle behaviors and cancer—like smoking or physical inactivity. But some people may be surprised that alcohol consumption is also a risk factor for cancer, and that these lifestyle factors combined contribute to as much as 40% of cancers. Given that half of American adults drink alcohol, it's important to understand how alcohol use increases the risk of cancer:

- 1 Alcohol can affect normal functions of cells in your body causing them to grow out of control into a cancer tumor. Drinking alcohol raises your risk of getting at least six different types of cancer—mouth and throat, voice box (larynx), esophagus, colon and rectum, liver and breast in women.
- 2 The risk of cancer increases with the number of drinks consumed. Even one drink a day increases the risk of developing some cancers. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that if you drink alcohol at all, drink in moderation (one drink a day for women/two drinks a day for men).
- 3 Although consuming even one drink a day increases your cancer risk, binge drinking is particularly risky. Binge drinking is consuming four drinks or more for women and five drinks or more for men on a single occasion. Binge drinking puts people at risk for many short- and long-term outcomes in addition to cancer, such as injuries, violence and stroke.
- 4 All types of alcoholic drinks, including red and white wine, beer, cocktails and liquor, are linked with cancer.
- 5 Some people may not realize how much alcohol they drink. A standard drink is equal to 14 grams (0.6 oz.) of pure alcohol. That is 12 oz. of beer (5% alcohol content), 8 oz. of malt liquor (7% alcohol content), 5 oz. of wine (12% alcohol content), or 1.5 oz. or a “shot” of 80-proof (40% alcohol content) distilled spirits or liquor (such as gin, rum, vodka and whiskey).