

HEALTHY LIVING



Give your heart a hug

While you are celebrating love this Valentine's Day, spread a little to your heart by making healthy choices a part of your life. Take these steps to a healthier heart:

- Nutrition plays an essential role in maintaining overall health, so treat yourself and your loved ones to a meal that includes fruits, vegetables, and foods low in saturated fat and salt, and limit sweets.
- Plan an activity that encourages physical fitness. Regular physical activity can help control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease and some cancers, improve mental health and mood, and increase your chance of living longer. Adults need at least two and a half hours of activity each week.
- If you smoke, now is the time to quit. Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the US, accounting for one of every five deaths. (See page 1 for reasons to quit smoking.)
- Learn the most common symptoms of a heart attack. (See page 1.) Call 9-1-1 immediately if symptoms occur.
- Prevent the spread of germs by washing your hands often, getting a flu vaccine and avoiding close contact with anyone who is sick.
- Limit alcohol consumption. Excessive alcohol use has immediate effects that can harm your health.

A wellness newsletter for MercyCare Health Plans members

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DID YOU KNOW?

The five major symptoms of a heart attack include:

- Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck or back
- Feeling weak, light-headed or faint
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Pain or discomfort in arms or shoulder
- Shortness of breath

Other symptoms could include unexplained tiredness and nausea or vomiting. *NOTE: Women are more likely to have these other symptoms.*

Call 9-1-1

If you notice the symptoms of a heart attack in yourself or someone else, call 9-1-1 immediately. The sooner you get to an emergency room, the sooner you can receive treatment to prevent total blockage and heart muscle damage or reduce the amount of damage. At the hospital, health care professionals can run tests to determine whether a heart attack is occurring and decide the best treatment.

In some cases, a heart attack requires cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or electrical shock (defibrillation). Bystanders trained to use CPR or a defibrillator may be able to help until emergency medical personnel arrive.

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.



Reasons to quit smoking

If you are on the fence about quitting smoking, consider the following reasons:

- My chances of having cancer, heart attacks, heart disease, stroke, cataracts and other diseases will go down
- I will be less likely to get sick
- I will breathe easier and cough less
- My blood pressure will go down
- My skin will look healthier
- I will look more youthful
- My teeth and fingernails will not be stained

Although quitting will make you feel better and improve your health, there are other reasons to quit that you should consider:

- I will have more money to spend
- I won't have to worry about when I can smoke next or where I can or can't smoke
- My food will taste better
- My clothes will smell better
- My car, home and kids won't smell smoky

Most importantly, consider your loved ones:

- I will set a great example for my kids; it takes a lot of strength to quit
- I will protect my friends and family from the dangers of secondhand smoke
- I will have more energy to do the things I love with friends and family

QUICK TIP: Make a list of all of the reasons you want to become smoke-free and keep it where you will see it often. When you feel the need to smoke, take a look at the list to remind yourself why you want to quit.



Mercy recognized at “Top Performer”

Javon R. Bea, Mercy Health System President and CEO

Mercy Health System was recently named a Top Performer on Key Quality Measures® by The Joint Commission, the leading accreditor of health care organizations in the nation. Additionally, Mercy was recognized for four specific performance measures, including heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia and surgical care.

We are among other health organizations in the US earning the distinction of Top Performer on Key Quality Measures for attaining and sustaining excellence. These Top Performer organizations represent the best 31.5% of all Joint Commission-accredited hospitals reporting accountability measure performance data, and include general, critical access, children’s, psychiatric, surgical and cardiac specialty hospitals.

This recognition by The Joint Commission reflects the excellence and dedication of our physicians, nurses and staff to provide exceptional care that is recognized as the best in the nation.

We are honored to receive recognition that reflects our diligent focus on providing safe, effective and outstanding care and service to our patients, and members like you, who put your trust in us.

For more information about Mercy, visit MercyHealthSystem.org.



How MercyCare helps you stay healthy

Philip Bedrossian, MD, MercyCare Health Plans Medical Director

MercyCare wants to insure our members live well. One of the many ways we do this is by offering access to preventive services covered at 100%—regardless of copayment, coinsurance or health plan deductible.

This comprehensive package of items and services, known as essential health benefits, includes items and services in the following 10 categories: ambulatory patient services; emergency services; hospitalization; maternity and newborn care; mental health and substance use disorder services, including behavioral health treatment; prescription drugs; rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices; lab services; preventive and wellness services and chronic disease management; and pediatric services, including oral and vision care.

There are 22 covered preventive services for women—including those who are pregnant—like anemia screening, folic acid supplements, osteoporosis screening over age 60, breast cancer mammography screening over 40, and more. For members with families, there are 26 covered preventive services for children, including hearing screenings for all newborns, vision screenings for all children, immunization vaccines from birth to age 18, and more.

The following government health care web link leads you to the lists posted for adults, women and children. It is worth your time to review these: www.healthcare.gov/what-are-my-preventive-care-benefits/.

If you have any questions about these covered preventive screenings, call (800) 895-2421. Live well. We’ll insure you do.

HELPING SENIORS STAY HEALTHY.

Tips for living with arthritis



Did you know that arthritis is the most common cause of disability in the US? The number of adults with doctor-diagnosed arthritis is projected to increase from 46 million now to 67 million by 2030, and more than a third of these adults will have limited activity as a result.

Types of arthritis include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE or lupus) and fibromyalgia.

Can I prevent arthritis?

Maintaining an appropriate body weight has been shown to decrease the risk of developing osteoarthritis and gout. Protecting your joints from injuries or overuse can reduce the risk of osteoarthritis.

Unfortunately, certain arthritis risk factors cannot be controlled, such as:

- **Age:** Chances of developing arthritis increase with age
- **Gender:** 6% of people with arthritis are women. Gout is more common in men.
- **Genetics:** Specific genes are

associated with a higher risk of certain types of arthritis.

What can I do to ease my arthritis?

The goal in managing arthritis is to control pain, minimize joint damage, improve function and maintain quality of life. Engaging in physical activity or participating in self-management education to learn techniques to reduce pain, move more easily and use medicines appropriately are proven ways to help you improve your quality of life.

Many people with arthritis also have other chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, for which physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight are also recommended.

It is especially important that people with arthritis include the recommended amounts of physical activity as a part of their lifestyle. Physical activity is one major, non-pharmacological way to effectively reduce arthritis symptoms such as pain, fatigue and stiffness.



Memories

Catching early signs of Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, or loss of certain brain functions, among older adults. Memory loss is usually its first sign.

Early signs of Alzheimer's disease:

- Finding it hard to remember things
- Asking the same questions over and over
- Having trouble paying bills or solving simple math problems
- Getting lost
- Losing things or putting them in odd places

Later signs of Alzheimer's disease:

- Forgetting how to brush teeth or comb hair
- Being confused about time, people or places
- Forgetting names of common things, such as a desk, house or apple
- Wandering away from home

No one knows how to prevent Alzheimer's disease. There are no pills, foods or brain games that have been proven to prevent dementia,

including Alzheimer's disease.

However, we do have information about factors that may increase risk for Alzheimer's, such as heart disease and diabetes, and you may be able to reduce your risks by living a healthy life.

If you or someone you know has several or even most of the signs listed, it does not mean that you or they have Alzheimer's disease.

It is important to consult a health care provider when you or someone you know has concerns about memory loss, thinking skills or behavioral changes.

Some causes of symptoms, such as depression and drug interactions, are reversible. However, they can be serious and should be identified and treated by a health care provider as soon as possible.

Early and accurate diagnosis provides opportunities for you and your family to consider or review financial planning, develop advance directives, enroll in clinical trials and anticipate care needs.



Going back to work after baby

Planning ahead for your return to work after your maternity leave can help ease the transition. Learn as much as you can before the baby's birth, and talk with your employer about your options. Planning ahead can help you continue to enjoy breastfeeding your baby long after your maternity leave is over.

Breastfeeding is good for your baby—and for you. It provides the best nutrition for your baby and protects your baby against many illnesses.

The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends that babies be breastfed or be given only breast milk for about the first six months of life, and that they continue to receive some breast milk until they are at least one year old.

Before you return to work, you may want to make a breastfeeding plan and checklist to ensure you have everything you need for breastfeeding when you go back to work, including:

- A breast pump and an adapter and/or batteries, if needed
- A small cooler with ice if a work refrigerator is not available for milk storage (note: breast milk can be stored at room temperature for four to eight hours)
- Enough milk storage containers for the number of pumping sessions you will need during your work day
- A shawl or small blanket for privacy if you need to pump in a common area
- A water bottle and nutritious snacks; calorie needs are greater in women who are breastfeeding

>> DID YOU KNOW?

Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, most employers, with exceptions, must offer a breastfeeding employee reasonable break times to pump for up to one year after her baby is born and a place, other than a bathroom, to comfortably, safely and privately express breast milk.

stress symptoms

Q: What are common symptoms of stress?

A: Everyone responds to stress a little differently. Your symptoms may be different from someone else's. Here are some of the signs to look for:

- Not eating or eating too much
- Feeling that you have no control
- Needing to have too much control
- Forgetfulness
- Headaches
- Lack of energy
- Lack of focus
- Trouble getting things done
- Poor self-esteem
- Short temper
- Trouble sleeping
- Upset stomach
- Back pain
- General aches and pains

These symptoms may also be signs of depression or anxiety, which can be caused by long-term stress.



Handling stress on the job

Most everyone deals with stress on the job. There are steps you can take to help you handle stress in a positive way and keep it from making you sick. Try these tips:

- **Be a problem solver.** Make a list of the things that cause you stress. Figure out which problems you can solve now and which are beyond your control for the moment. Learn how to calmly look at a problem, think of possible solutions and take action to solve the problem.
- **Be flexible.** Sometimes, it's not worth the stress to argue. Give in once in awhile or meet people halfway.
- **Get organized.** Think ahead about how you're going to spend your time. Write a to-do list. Figure out what's most important to do and do those things first.
- **Set limits.** There are only so many hours in the day. Set limits for yourself and others. Don't be afraid to say "no" to requests for your time and energy.
- **Take deep breaths.** If you're feeling stressed, taking a few deep breaths makes you breathe slower and helps your muscles relax.
- **Stretch.** Stretching can also help relax your muscles and make you feel less tense and lower your stress level.
- **Take time to do something for you.** Even though it may seem hard to find ways to de-stress with all the things you have to do, it's important to find those ways. Your health depends on it!

Food for families on the go



Daycare, work, school, soccer practice, basketball tryouts, piano lessons ... life's demands keep today's families constantly on the go. With everyone so busy, it is important to get the proper nutrients and fuel you and your family need to stay healthy! You can accomplish this when you:

Cook ahead for the week. Prepare larger portions on the weekends and freeze leftovers for use during the week. If you make a turkey on Saturday, turn it into turkey salad wraps on Tuesday.

Use your slow cooker. Add healthy ingredients such as lean meats and vegetables to the pot before you leave for work and enjoy it in between trips to ballet lessons and hockey practice.

Turn breakfast into an evening meal. Fruit smoothies with yogurt and fresh ingredients, eggs, wheat toast, whole-grain waffles or peanut butter on tortillas with banana slices are easy to make and can be enjoyed any time.

Stock up. For the places where you might grab a snack or have a meal on the go (such as the car or at your desk), make sure you have nutritious snacks available that you can take with you, such as:

- Grab-and-go fruits: Apples, oranges, bananas, canned fruit without added sugars and raisins
- Washed, chopped fresh vegetables: Celery, carrots and cucumbers
- Lowfat and fat-free milk products: Yogurt without added sugars, milk and lowfat cheeses
- Whole-grain crackers and breads
- Protein choices such as almonds and other nuts and seeds

Take time to make a shopping list. Stock your cabinets and fridge with healthy options. It's also a good idea to think about stocking your office cabinet or car glove box with healthy shelf-stable food. You'll find it's easier to make better choices when you have a good variety of nutritious foods available in the places where you eat.

HELPING INDIVIDUALS STAY HEALTHY.

Turning 50? Get screened for colon cancer.

Colorectal, or colon, cancer affects men and women of all racial and ethnic groups. Your risk of getting colon cancer increases as you age. More than 90% of cases occur in people who are 50 years old or older.

Of cancers that affect both men and women, colon cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the US, but it doesn't have to be.

Colorectal cancer screening saves lives. Screening can find precancerous polyps—abnormal growths in the colon or rectum—so that they can be removed before turning into cancer.

Screening also helps find colorectal cancer at an early stage, when treatment often leads to a cure.

About nine out of every 10 people whose colorectal cancers are found early and treated appropriately are still alive five years later.

If you are age 50 or older, get screened now. If you think you may be at higher than average risk for colorectal cancer, speak with your doctor about getting screened early.

Lifestyle factors that may contribute to an increased risk of colorectal cancer include:

- Lack of regular physical activity
- Low fruit and vegetable intake
- A low-fiber and high-fat diet
- Overweight and obesity
- Alcohol consumption
- Tobacco use

LIVE WELL. WE'LL INSURE YOU DO.

Baked Salmon Dijon

Serves 6

1 cup fat-free sour cream

2 tsp dried dill

3 Tbsp scallions, finely chopped

2 Tbsp Dijon mustard

2 Tbsp lemon juice

1 1/2 lbs salmon fillet with skin, cut in center

1/2 tsp garlic powder

1/2 tsp black pepper

Directions: Whisk sour cream, dill, scallions, mustard and lemon juice in small bowl to blend. Preheat oven to 400° F. Lightly oil baking sheet with cooking spray. Place salmon, skin side down, on prepared sheet. Sprinkle with garlic powder and pepper. Spread with the sauce. Bake salmon until opaque in center, about 20 minutes.





Help your young driver avoid common dangers

Did you know six teens are killed in car crashes every day in the US? Put rules in place to help your teen stay safe and avoid these common dangers:

Danger 1: Driver inexperience

What parents can do:

- Provide at least 30 to 50 hours of supervised driving practice over at least six months
- Practice on a variety of roads, at different times of day and in varied weather and traffic conditions
- Stress the importance of continually scanning for potential hazards including other vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians

Danger 2: Driving with passengers

What parents can do:

- Follow the law and limit the number of passengers your teen can have to one for at least the first six months that your teen is driving

Danger 3: Nighttime driving

What parents can do:

- Make sure your teen is off the road by 9 or 10 pm for at least the first six months of licensed driving
- Practice nighttime driving with your

teen when you think he/she is ready

Danger 4: Not wearing a seat belt

What parents can do:

- Require your teen to wear a seat belt on every trip to reduce his/her risk of dying or being badly injured in a crash by half

Danger 5: Distracted driving

What parents can do:

- Don't allow activities that may take your teen's attention away from driving, such as talking on a cell phone, texting, eating or playing with the radio

Danger 6: Drowsy driving

What parents can do:

- Know your teen's schedule so you can be sure he or she is well rested before getting behind the wheel

Danger 7: Reckless driving

What parents can do:

- Make sure your teen knows to follow the speed limit and adjust his/her speed to match road conditions
- Tell your teen to maintain enough space behind a vehicle ahead of him/her to avoid a crash in case of a sudden stop



When college becomes overwhelming

College students face many challenges. For the first time, many learn to live away from home, manage their time and money, study for classes, meet new people and more. Anxiety and depression may factor into your life while learning to adjust to your new environment. Anxiety is often a normal reaction to stress, and can help you deal with a tense situation or keep your focus. But, if you cannot shake your worries and concerns, or if the feelings make you want to avoid everyday activities, you may have an anxiety disorder.

It is normal for you to feel anxious, get stressed or have the blues at times. But depression is more than just a bad day. Depression often goes unrecognized and untreated and may lead to tragic results, such as suicide. Suicide can have lasting harmful effects on individuals, families and communities.

Tips for avoiding stress and depression include:

- Develop a support network of friends. Campus and extracurricular activities such as athletics and student clubs are great ways to meet new friends.
- If you have concerns about your study habits or coursework load, talk with teachers, counselors, family members and friends for advice and support.
- Stay active. Regular physical activity can help keep your thinking, learning, and judgment skills sharp. It can also reduce your risk for depression, and it may help you sleep better.
- Visit your school or local health clinic, and discuss your concerns with a health professional. If the health professional advises treatment, follow instructions. Attend follow-up appointments to track your progress, and watch for side effects from any medications that may be prescribed.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, get help from a counselor or health care provider. Call the National Suicide Hotline at (800) 273-8255.

Go to bed, sleepy head

It's a challenge to pull late-nighters studying in college and still get enough sleep to function.

Lack of sleep can be a risk factor for many chronic diseases and conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and depression.

Students who work or study long hours may not get enough sleep at night. As a result, they may be sleepy and sluggish during the day and have trouble concentrating, participating in class, taking tests or making decisions.

Sleep deprivation can result in lower grade-point averages, increased risk of academic failure, impaired mood and increased risk of motor vehicle accidents.

Adults should get seven to nine hours of sleep a day, although individual needs vary.

The best way to determine if you are getting enough sleep is by how you feel the next day.

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MercyCare Health Plans is a Qualified Health
Plan issuer in the Health Insurance Marketplace.



February is American Heart Month

Know the facts about heart disease:

- About 610,000 people die of heart disease in the US every year—that's one in every four deaths!
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women.
- Every year about 735,000 Americans have a heart attack. Of these, 525,000 are a first heart attack and 210,000 happen in people who have already had a heart attack.

Get a jump start on a healthier heart; eat healthy, exercise regularly, quit smoking and limit alcohol.