

Look ahead



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Is it time for a medicine checkup?

Medicines can help us feel better and stay well. But when you need to take more than one, there could be a chance for a problem.

Some medicines can interfere with each other. Or there may be side effects you didn't expect. And it's not just medicines your doctor prescribes that create problems. Over-the-counter drugs can have powerful effects too.

That's why you and your doctor should talk about everything you take at each checkup.

You can bring all of your medicines to your next doctor visit. Or just make a list of the

name and dose of each one you take.

Either way, be sure to include any:

- Prescription drugs
- Over-the-counter products
- Vitamin, herb or mineral supplements

You and your doctor will go over your medicines together. Your doctor can look for drugs that:

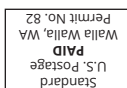
- You may no longer need
- Don't mix well with other medicines you take
- Are causing side effects
- May have a version that costs less

To get the most from your medicines, you also have to know how to take them. A medicine checkup is a good time to ask any questions you have.

Sources: Health in Aging Foundation; National Institute on Aging

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Breast cancer screening.

A mammogram is a low-dose X-ray that allows specialists to look for changes in breast tissue. Breast cancer deaths have declined 39% in the United States from 1989 to 2017.¹

When you get regular mammograms, doctors may find and treat changes in the breast early, before they become more serious. It's one of the most important things you can do for your health — and it usually takes less than 30 minutes.

Based on clinical guidelines,² women age 50 to 74 should have a mammogram at least once every two years. However, if you've recently received a vaccination for COVID-19, wait at least 6 weeks afterward before getting your mammogram.

Plan ahead — contact your doctor today to help you schedule your mammogram appointment. It's good to get your appointment scheduled even if it's not due for a while.

¹*Susan G Komen. Available at: ww5.komen.org/BreastCancer/FactsandStatistics.html.*

²*Screening for breast cancer: U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendation statement, February 2016. Available at: [NCBI .NLM.NIH.gov/pubmed/26757170](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26757170). Accessed June 5, 2018.*



Colorectal cancer screening.

Even if you're feeling good and have no problems, think about getting a colorectal cancer screening. Regular screenings can help prevent cancer or find it early, before it becomes more serious. It could save your life.

Preventive colorectal cancer screenings are covered at no extra cost to you. There are several different types of screenings you can get. An in-home screening can be done without ever leaving your home and needs to be done every year. If you prefer a colonoscopy, you only need it done every 10 years. Talk to your doctor about which screening is right for you. Visit **[CDC.gov/cancer/colorectal](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal)** to learn more about screening.

Plan ahead

Talk to your doctor about a plan for your next screening. And ask when you should schedule it during your next office or telehealth visit.

If you've already received an in-home screening kit and haven't returned a sample, do it today. It only takes a few minutes. And you can use the postage-paid envelope to return your sample to the lab. You and your doctor will get the results. If you have questions about your kit, just call the toll-free number included with your kit.

If you haven't received a screening kit, talk to your doctor about what screening is right for you. Ask for help to get your screening before the end of the year.

September is Healthy Aging Month.

Healthy Aging Month brings focus to the positive aspects of growing older. It provides inspiration and practical ideas for adults, ages 50-plus, to improve their physical, mental, social and financial well-being.

Here are some tips that the aging community can implement during the month of September:

1. **Become an intern.** You are never too old to start anew!
2. **Go back to school.** It's never too late! Take classes to refocus your career or enhance your skills.
3. **Volunteer.** Volunteering gives you the opportunity to possibly travel and give back.

4. **Start walking.** It's good for your health and for seeing your neighbors. Have a dog? You'll be amazed how the dog can be a conversation starter.
5. **Travel.** Go explore new and beautiful places.
6. **Be positive in your conversations and your actions every day.** When you catch yourself complaining, check yourself right there and change the conversation to something positive.
7. **Practice your art skills.** Take art classes and learn to paint a beautiful seascape or still-life portraits.
8. **Get a physical.** Make this month the time to set up your annual physical and other health screenings.

9. **Eat fresh.** Add more fruits and veggies to your life. September is still harvest season, so check out your local farmers market.

Aetna encourages our members to stay active, stay fit, stay healthy and stay connected by using any of these tips to improve your health.

Aveanna Healthcare. (28 Sept 2012). September is healthy aging month. Retrieved from <https://www.aveannaconcierge.com/2012/09/28/september-healthy-aging-month>.

Healthy Aging. (2020). September is healthy aging month-ten tips to celebrate. Retrieved from <https://healthyaging.net/healthy-lifestyle/september-is-healthy-aging-month-10-tips-to-celebrate>.

Spot an important way to save your vision.

When you have diabetes, it puts you at higher risk for diseases that can harm your vision. The good news? There's plenty you can do to protect your eyes.

To reveal one key way to protect your sight, rearrange the tiles at the right to spell out a hidden message. The first one is filled in for you.



Hint: Your eyes need this every year.

S	I	G	Y	E	E	I	L	A	T
E	D	E	A	V	E	A	D		
H	T	,	T	O	S	X	A	M	.
Y	O	U	R	H	A	V	E		

T	O	S		



Caring for an aging parent?

How to reduce your risk of caregiving burnout.

Stepping into the role of caregiver for your older parent can be very rewarding. It's heartfelt work — and it's also often stressful work.

Over time, too much stress can wear anyone down. If the stress becomes overwhelming, you could begin to experience a sense of exhaustion and hopelessness that experts call caregiver burnout. And at that point, you can't properly take care of your own health, much less tend to your parent's health and needs.

Am I burned out?

The symptoms of caregiver burnout can include:

- Eating too much or too little or drinking or smoking more
- Feeling tired or run down a lot
- Having trouble concentrating
- Feeling irritable or resentful toward your parent
- Neglecting your own needs

Caregiver stress and burnout can also contribute to mental health problems, like depression, and can even harm your physical health.

Take action

Burnout often happens when caregivers don't take time to care for their own physical and emotional health. Here are some tips from experts that can help reduce your risk for burnout and make you a better, happier caregiver.

Ask for caregiving help.

Other family members or even friends may be willing to help with some daily tasks — like driving your parent to medical appointments or running errands.

Nourish your health. Eat a healthy, balanced diet and get enough exercise and sleep. If you can, take your parent on short walks.

Make time for hobbies or other activities you enjoy.

Try to take at least a few minutes each day to unwind and recharge.

Get relief. Ask a relative or close friend to stay with your parent, or consider using a respite service (such as an adult day center) so you can enjoy a break.

Stay connected. It's important to keep up your friendships. If you can't leave the house, invite a friend over for coffee or lunch.

Join a support group in person or online. Share your feelings with other people who may know what you're going through and who can offer encouragement and possible solutions to ongoing problems.

Schedule checkups with your doctor. Speak up if you feel sad, hopeless or overwhelmed.

Sources: American Heart Association; Family Caregiver Alliance; HelpGuide

Tips for a healthy immune system.

Think of your body like a castle, complete with its own army — your immune system — to defend it.

When germs try to invade your body, your immune system recognizes them as foreign and launches a defense. First, your skin tries to prevent germs from getting inside your body. Your mucous membranes try to trap and fight off the germs. And your body makes white blood cells to repel the invaders.

After the skirmish, your immune system remembers the foreign substance. If it ever attacks again, your immune system will remember how it fought back the first time — even if it didn't completely succeed. That way, most of the time you won't get sick again. You'll have immunity.

Keep a strong immune system

It's important to help keep your immune system healthy so it can continue to fight off invaders.



You can do that in several ways.

Practice good hygiene. Wash your hands often to prevent the spread of germs. Wash produce before eating it. And be sure to thoroughly clean your dishes and utensils to prevent the growth of bacteria.

Reduce stress. Stress can weaken your immune system. Find ways to manage stress, such as practicing deep breathing exercises or listening to music.

Get moving. Exercise can help your body produce immune cells that fight off disease.

Make healthy sleep a priority. Poor sleep can weaken your immune system. Adults should try to get seven to nine hours of sleep a night. Children need as much as 8 to 14 hours of sleep, depending on their age.

Eat well. Go for foods that contain the following nutrients, which help support the immune system:

- **Protein.** It's found in both animal and plant-based foods such as fish, beef, chicken, eggs, beans, lentils, and nuts and seeds.
- **Vitamin A.** It is found in foods like sweet potatoes, carrots, broccoli, spinach and fortified foods.
- **Vitamin C.** Citrus fruits, tomato juice and food fortified with vitamin C are all good sources.
- **Vitamin E.** You'll find this vitamin in fortified cereals, sunflower seeds, vegetable oils and peanut butter.
- **Zinc.** Good sources include lean meat, poultry, fish, whole-grain products, beans, seeds and nuts.
- **Probiotics.** These good bacteria are present in cultured dairy products, like yogurt, and in fermented foods, like kimchi.

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; American Heart Association; National Institutes of Health

Women: Understand your risk for osteoporosis.

It's never too late to take care of your bones, especially when osteoporosis is a risk, which it is for many women.

Osteoporosis weakens bones. But you can start right now to avoid it or help prevent it from getting worse.

About 8 million women in the U.S. have osteoporosis. It occurs when the body loses too much bone material, makes too little new bone, or both. When bone becomes less dense, it can break more easily than healthy bone. These breaks often come as a surprise because the disease has no outward symptoms. A fall or a simple bump can lead to a broken hip, spine, wrist or other bone.

Why women are at high risk

Older women are most vulnerable to osteoporosis. Their estrogen levels decline after menopause. Estrogen helps protect bone density. That's why it's recommended that women 65 and older get bone density tests to see if they already have the disease or are at risk for it. In particular, white and Asian women have the highest chance of developing the disease.

Other key factors include:

- A family history of osteoporosis
- Broken bones after age 50



- Having early menopause or having ovaries removed before menopause
- Not getting enough calcium or vitamin D throughout life
- Not exercising
- Being on extended bed rest
- Smoking
- Taking certain medications, including medicines for arthritis and asthma or some cancer drugs
- Having a small body frame
- Stop smoking, if you smoke, and know the risks of alcohol. Both can reduce bone mass.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Being underweight can increase the risk of fracture and bone loss.
- Work with your doctor to assess your risk. Your doctor can offer treatment options for rebuilding bone or slowing bone loss. Also, you can discuss what to do if you take medicines that put you at risk for bone loss.

How to prevent or stop osteoporosis

You can do a lot to help protect your bones:

- Eat a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D.
- Stay active with weight-bearing activities such as weight training, walking and climbing stairs.

Do these things, and your bones will thank you.

Sources: National Institutes of Health; National Osteoporosis Foundation

Make a plan to quit smoking.

If you've ever tried to quit smoking, you know how hard it can be. But it's a goal worth fighting for. And you can make it a little easier if you go into your next attempt with a plan.

Start with these five steps:

1. **Pick a quit date.** A good date gives you some time to prepare but isn't too far off. Choose a date that is no more than a week or two away.
2. **Write down all your reasons for quitting.** Maybe it's to improve your health. Or you want to be a good role model for your children. Or maybe you're just tired of smelling like smoke — or spending money on cigarettes. Review your reasons any time you feel like lighting up.
3. **Know your triggers.** Triggers are things that make you crave a smoke. They can be objects, like a cup of coffee. Or they can be people, like friends who smoke. Or they might be situations, like your commute home. Start thinking about ways you can change your routine to avoid your triggers.

4. **Plan how you'll cope with cravings.** Cravings are powerful, but they only last a short time. Plan ways to outlast them, like taking a walk, sucking on a mint or chewing a piece of nicotine gum.

5. **Gather support.** Ask your doctor for help to quit. That could include medicines, support groups or other resources. Also let your friends and family know your plans and your quit date. Ask them not to smoke around you or offer you a cigarette.

Source: *Smokefree.gov*



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AetnaBetterHealth.com/Ohio

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National Coverage Determinations: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) sometimes changes coverage rules for a benefit or service. When this happens, CMS issues a National Coverage Determination (NCD). NCDs tell us what's covered, what's changing and what Medicare pays. We post NCDs on our website at least 30 days prior to the effective date. To view them, visit **AetnaBetterHealth.com/Ohio**. Then go to For Members > Aetna Better Health of Ohio (Medicare-Medicaid) > Member Materials and Benefits. You can also visit **CMS.gov** for more information. Once on the website, click on "Medicare," then type "National Coverage Determination" in the search box. Or call us at the number on your member ID card.

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If you believe that we have failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with our Grievance Department (write to the address listed in your Evidence of Coverage). You can also file a grievance by phone by calling the Customer Service phone number listed on your benefit ID card (TTY: 711). If you need help filing a grievance, call Customer Service Department at the phone number on your benefit ID card.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights at https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/cp/complaint_frontpage.jsf.

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