

HEALTHY LIVING

Avoid the sugar rush this holiday season

From Halloween to Valentine's Day, this time of year is full of tempting sweets. Learn easy ways to cut sugar without cutting the joy out of eating.

Winter holidays often come with candy, cookies and other rich desserts. It's OK to enjoy your favorite treats. But too much sugar can cause health problems.

Good news: You don't have to skip the sweets entirely. Here are some simple ways to enjoy treats without overdoing it.

1 Keep sweets special

Pick your favorite holiday treats and enjoy them mindfully.

2 Watch your drinks

Soda, juice and other sugary drinks are a top source of added sugar. Swap them for water. It's a quick way to make room for holiday treats.

3 Save some for later

Baking at home? Freeze half the batch right away to save for later. Or, give away some of what you bake to your neighbors, coworkers, mail carrier or others.

4 Eat smaller portions

Split a cookie or slice of pie with your kids. If you bake cookies at home, try making them bite-size.

5 Cut back on sugar elsewhere

Check nutrition labels in your pantry for added sugars. Next time you shop, choose products with less added sugar.

Quick sugar-saving swaps

- **Instead of frosting:** Top sugar cookies or cupcakes with colorful fruit slices or jam.
- **Instead of store-bought candy:** Dip fruit slices or pretzels in dark chocolate.
- **In baked goods:** Replace some or all the sugar with mashed banana or apple-sauce. Or try cutting ¼ cup sugar (or more) from a recipe.
- **Make your own whipped cream:** Whip heavy cream until it's light and fluffy. Add sugar to taste.



Aetna Better Health®
of Maryland

Questions about your health plan?

Call Member Services at **1-866-827-2710 (TTY: 711)**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Or visit [AetnaBetterHealth.com/maryland](https://www.aetna.com/maryland)

Fraud, waste and abuse

We ask members and providers to report Medicaid fraud, waste or abuse.

Fraud: When someone lies to get money or services.

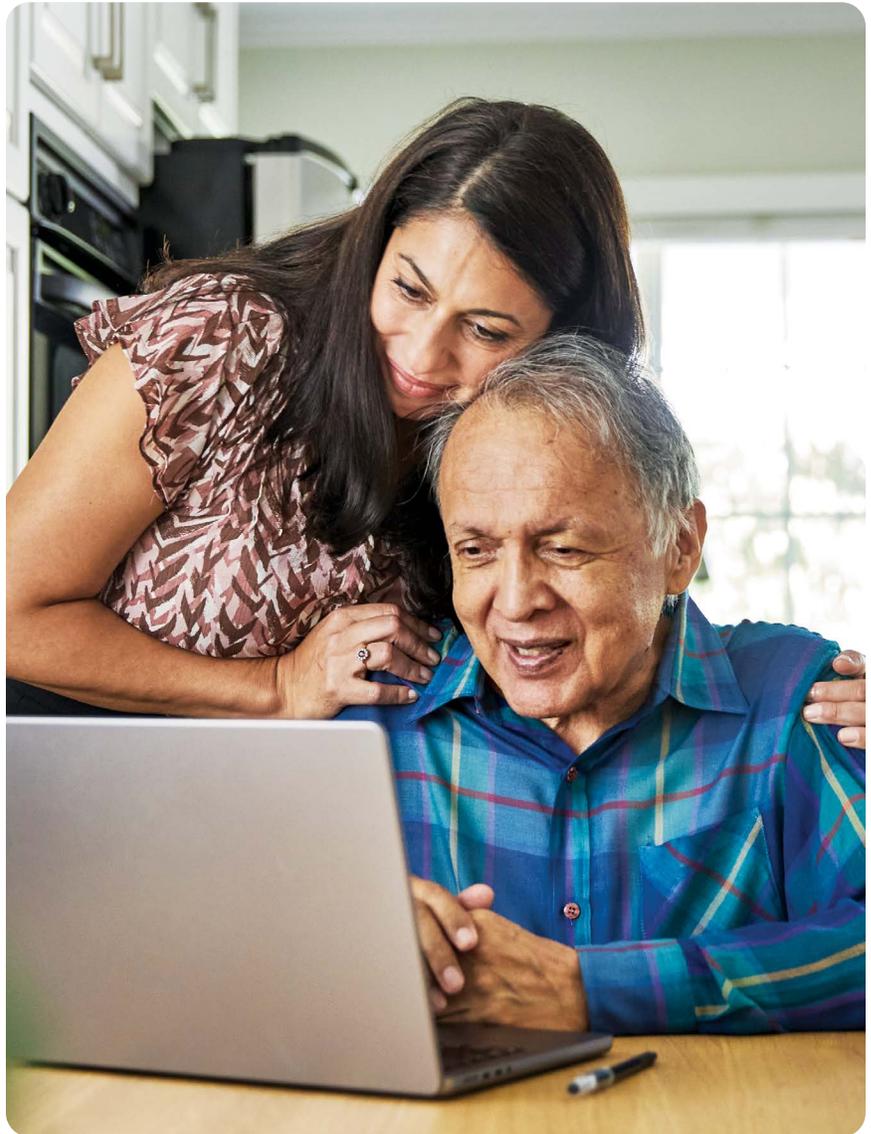
Waste: When someone overuses resources they don't need.

Abuse: When someone takes money for services when they haven't earned payment.

If you see fraud, waste or abuse, report it right away. You have three options:

- Call Member Services:
1-866-827-2710 (TTY: 711)
or **1-855-877-9735 (TTY: 711)**
- Notify the Maryland Department of Health, Office of the Inspector General: **1-866-770-7175** or **DHMH.Maryland.gov/OIG/Pages/Report_Fraud.aspx**
- Contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General: **1-800-447-8477** or **OIG.HHS.gov/Fraud/Report-Fraud/Index.asp**

Reporting fraud, waste or abuse will not affect the quality of any treatment or services you receive. Everyone can help prevent fraud, waste or abuse. Failure to report such events could result in fines and other criminal penalties.



Need help getting an appointment?

In the United States, it can sometimes take weeks — or even months — to get an appointment with a doctor. This means many people must wait a long time before getting the care they need.

At Aetna Better Health of Maryland, we know waiting so long is hard. We want to help you get care sooner. If you need help finding a doctor or getting an appointment faster, you can call Member Services. We can help you find providers, set up virtual visits, or find other ways to get care more quickly.

Know your rights. You can see a full list of your rights and responsibilities at [AetnaBetterHealth.com/maryland/medicaid-rights-responsibilities.html](https://www.aetna.com/betterhealth/maryland/medicaid-rights-responsibilities.html). You can also check your member handbook.



Winter wellness: Tips for lung health

Winter can take a toll on your lungs. Kids and adults with asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are at an even higher risk. A cold, flu or other lung irritants can cause a flare-up. It can even lead to a trip to the hospital.

The best way to stay healthy? Avoid getting sick in the first place. Here's how.

✔ **Get vaccinated.** Everyone 6 months or older should get a flu shot every year. You can get a flu shot from your provider or at a local pharmacy. Your provider may recommend other vaccines, too, like:

- RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)
- Pneumonia

✔ **Wash your hands often.** Or use hand sanitizer if you don't have access to a sink.

✔ **Keep your distance from people who are sick.** If you can't keep your distance,

a mask may protect you in crowded places. If you're sick, wearing a mask can keep you from spreading it to others.

✔ **Take your medicines as directed** if you have asthma or COPD.

✔ **Stay away from tobacco.** If you smoke or vape, talk to your doctor about quitting. It's one of the best things you can do for your health. Your doctor can recommend tools to help. Steer clear of second-hand smoke, too.

Should I take antibiotics?

Antibiotics can be a powerful treatment for certain illnesses. But using them too often can be harmful. Antibiotics don't treat viruses. Colds and flu are almost always caused by a virus. So, antibiotics won't help.

Antibiotics can only treat bacterial infections. That includes strep throat and some pneumonias. Your provider can help determine the treatment that's right for you. If they prescribe you an antibiotic, be sure to take it exactly as directed.



Get more tips for healthy living.

Go to [AetnaBetterHealth.com/education](https://www.aetna.com/betterhealth/education) to browse our health and wellness library. You'll find articles packed with info to help you feel your best.



Brighten your winter blues

The darker months can take a toll on our mood and energy. But small changes can make a big difference. Here are simple ways to boost your spirits and bring joy to the people around you.

Reach out to friends and family. A simple phone call, text or video chat can make a big difference.

Embrace holiday cheer. Hang twinkle lights, listen to festive music or make a batch of your favorite holiday cookies. Get involved in local activities, too.

Give back. Volunteering can help you feel connected and needed. Find a cause you care about and look for ways to help.

Finds ways to stay active. If it's too cold outside, take a brisk lap around the mall while you shop or work out at home with a free online video.

Take care of yourself. Make time for things that relax and refresh you. Read a good book, do some gentle stretching or enjoy a quiet moment with a cup of tea.

How to spot signs of loneliness

The holidays can be a lonely time for those who are far from family, coping with loss or feeling left out.

Watch for these signs of loneliness in others:

- Changes in behavior
- Avoiding social activities
- Increased substance use
- Changes in mood or energy
- More physical aches or pains

Reach out if you spot these signs in friends, family, neighbors and other loved ones. Sometimes the smallest act — an invite, a check-in or just sitting together — can help someone feel less alone.

Need help understanding your health? We provide free health education. Call Member Services at **1-866-827-2710 (TTY: 711)** and ask to speak with the Prevention and Wellness Coordinator. Or email **WellnessAndPrevention@Aetna.com**.



How to have less pain all day

Do you wake up stiff and sore? Or does your pain get worse as the day wears on? These tips can help ease and prevent pain from morning to night.

In the morning	During the day	At night
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Do some simple stretches. Try this stretch while you're still in bed: Gently hug your knees to your chest and rock them from side to side. Then straighten your legs upward and bend them back in a few times. ✔ Go for a morning walk. ✔ Take a warm shower. ✔ Eat a good breakfast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Take breaks. Do short breathing or mindfulness exercises to ease stress and tension. ✔ Cut back on high-fat, high-sugar foods. They can cause inflammation, which may make pain worse. ✔ If you sit most of the day, get up at least once an hour. Walk around for a few minutes or do some gentle stretches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Switch up your sleeping position. Try sleeping on your back with a pillow under your knees. Or on your side with a pillow between your knees. ✔ Keep your bedroom cool — around 65 degrees. ✔ Try an over-the-counter topical cream to relieve pain. <p>Talk to your doctor or Care Manager for more help with pain management.</p>



The dangers of opioid use

Opioids are powerful painkillers. They're often used for short-term pain relief for things like injuries or surgery recovery. But they're also highly addictive. Take these steps to lower your risk of addiction or overdose:

- Use the lowest dose for the shortest amount of time.
- Never take more than prescribed.
- Don't take opioids with alcohol.
- Store opioids in a safe and secure place.
- Never share your medicine with others.
- Throw away any unused pills. But don't throw them in your household trash. Ask your pharmacist how to safely dispose of opioids.



Get more from your newsletter. You can get your newsletter delivered directly to your inbox. Enjoy a clear, easy-to-read layout on any device. To sign up for email, call Member Services at **1-866-827-2710 (TTY: 711)**.

How to file a complaint, grievance or appeal

If you're unhappy with the services or care you received from a provider or health plan, it's called a complaint. If your complaint is about a service your provider feels you need but we won't cover, you can ask us to review your request. This is called an appeal. You'll need to file an appeal within 60 days of the date on your denial letter. You can file an appeal by phone **(1-866-827-2710)**, in writing or in person. Your doctor can also file an appeal for you, with your permission.

A complaint that isn't related to a denied service is called a grievance. For example, you may file a grievance for not being treated fairly or having trouble getting an appointment. You can file a grievance by calling Member Services. Check your member handbook to learn more about grievances and appeals.

Utilization Management

What you need to know

Aetna Better Health® of Maryland makes Utilization Management® (UM) decisions based only on appropriateness of care and service and existence of coverage. We do not reward practitioners, employees or "other individuals for issuing denials of coverage. Any financial incentives Aetna Better Health of Maryland may provide to UM decision makers do not encourage them to make decisions that result in underutilization of services. We also do not use employee incentives or disincentives to encourage barriers to care and service.

Need a member handbook or a provider directory?

You can request to have your member handbook and provider directory be mailed to you. Just call Member Services to request a copy.

Understand your pharmacy benefits

Wondering if your medications are covered? Check out your plan's list of covered drugs (also called the formulary). It tells you which medicines are covered at network pharmacies. It also tells you if there are any special rules or restrictions on any covered drugs.

The Drug List is updated regularly. Find the latest list at **[AetnaBetterHealth.com/maryland/pharmacy-prescription-drug-benefits.html](https://www.aetna.com/maryland/pharmacy-prescription-drug-benefits.html)**. Or call Member Services to ask for a printed copy. You can find more info about all your pharmacy benefits in the member handbook.





Get pregnancy support

If you're expecting a child, we're here for you!

Our Maternity Matters Program can help you and your child stay healthy during pregnancy. And we'll take care of you after your child is born. Whether you need help choosing a provider, learning about childbirth classes or getting healthy food, we're here. You can even earn gift cards for going to appointments.

If you're pregnant, you'll want to share the news with us. Just call us at **1-866-827-2710 (TTY: 711)**. That way, we can help connect you to the care and services you need. So you and your baby can be as healthy as you can be.

You're invited!

Are you an expecting mom in your third trimester or a newly postpartum mom?

Join us for a Virtual Baby Shower on Thursday, December 11, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM.

We'll celebrate with fun activities, helpful resources for new parents, and exciting giveaways—all from the comfort of your home.

To learn more about Maternity Matters, or register for our next virtual baby shower, go to **[AetnaBetterHealth.com/maryland/pregnancy-care.html](https://www.aetna.com/maryland/pregnancy-care.html)**.

Aetna complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

ENGLISH: ATTENTION: If you speak a language other than English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call the number on the back of your ID card or **1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**.

SPANISH: ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al número que aparece en el reverso de su tarjeta de identificación o al **1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**.

CHINESE: 注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電您的 ID 卡背面的電話號碼或 **1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**。



Help us take better care of you.

Tell us what you need by taking a short survey. Your answers help us improve your care. Scan the QR code to take the survey.



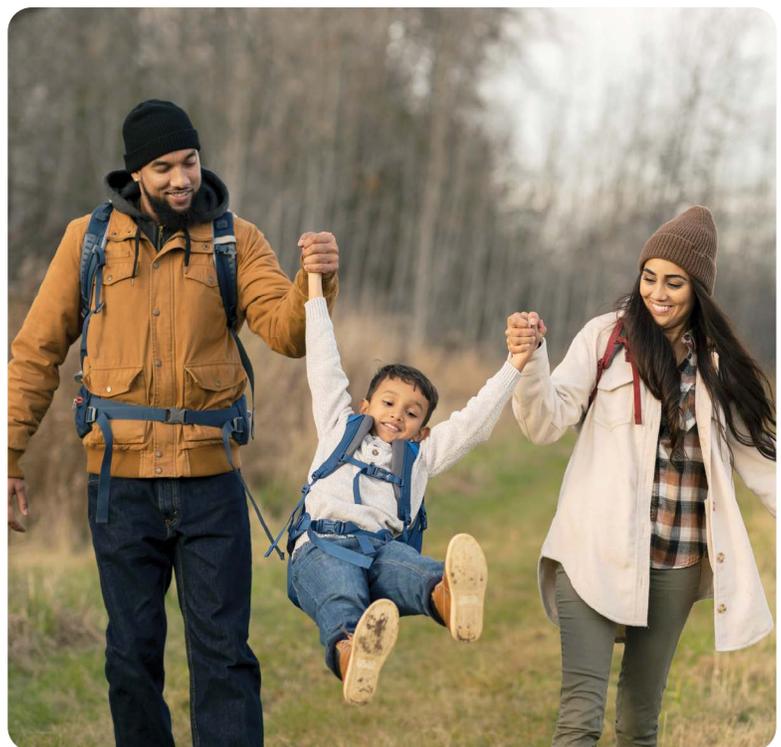
Aetna Better Health® of Maryland
10490 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 600
Columbia, MD 21044

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Our Care Managers are here for you

Care Managers are nurses and social workers who understand your health conditions and help connect you to the right care. A Care Manager can teach you more about your health, get you services and care that you need like helping you find rides to your appointments, and more.

If you have questions or if you would like to speak to a care manager, call us at **1-866-827-2710 (TTY: 711)**. You can also email us at **AetnaBetterHealthMDCM@Aetna.com**. Members may disenroll from the program at any time.



Need to renew your coverage?

You must renew your coverage every year. Look for your renewal notice in the mail. Visit [AetnaBetterHealth.com/maryland/member-materials-forms.html](https://www.aetna.com/maryland/member-materials-forms.html) to learn more.