

## CONDITION MANAGEMENT



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## How to keep your heart strong

Your heart is one of the most important parts of your body. Here's a guide to some common heart problems. Plus, how to take care of your heart and what to do if something feels off.

### Common heart issues

#### High blood pressure (BP).

This happens when the force of your blood pushing through your blood vessels is too strong. Over time, it can damage your blood vessels and lead to problems like heart disease, kidney disease, stroke and more.

**Heart disease.** This can mean many different problems like:

- Blocked arteries (when cholesterol builds up and blocks blood flow)
- Irregular heartbeat
- Heart attack

**High cholesterol.** Cholesterol is a fat that can build up in your arteries and block blood flow.

#### Heart health screenings

Just like you go to the dentist

to check on your teeth, you need to go to your primary care provider (PCP) to check on your heart. They can make sure your heart is healthy by running tests like a:

- **Blood pressure check:** Measures how hard your blood is pushing in your arteries

*Heart story continued on page 2*

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### Heart story continued

- **Cholesterol test:** Checks how much cholesterol is in your blood
- **Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG):** A diagnostic test that monitors your heart's electrical activity

Get these screenings regularly to catch problems early, before they turn into bigger issues.

### Important heart health medicines

If your heart isn't as healthy as it should be, your provider might prescribe medicine to help. It's really important to take your medicine exactly as your provider tells you to.

Here are two common types of medicines that help keep your heart healthy.

**Statins** (for high cholesterol): These are medicines that help lower the amount of cholesterol in your blood. This can help stop your arteries



from getting clogged.

**Renin-angiotensin system (RAS) antagonists** (for high blood pressure): This medicine helps control your blood pressure by relaxing your blood vessels.

### Signs of an emergency

Sometimes, your heart might give you signs that something isn't right. If you have any of these symptoms, call **911** or go

to the emergency room:

- Chest pain
- Trouble breathing
- Fainting or sudden dizziness

### Heart health tips

Taking care of your heart can be easy if you follow some simple steps.

- Eat nutritious foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean meats. And watch out for salty foods, which can raise blood pressure.
- Stay active by walking or doing any kind of exercise you enjoy.
- Don't smoke and try to stay away from people who are smoking.
- Find ways to manage stress. Try breathing exercises or meditation.
- See your primary care provider for regular checkups and screenings.

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# 5 early signs of hearing loss

Your ears help you hear and experience the world around you. Here are five signs of hearing loss that you shouldn't ignore.

## 1 It's hard to hear in noisy places

As you get older, your ability to hear when there is background noise may get worse. And this can make it hard to understand others in places like restaurants or larger get-togethers. Do you find yourself asking people to repeat themselves or struggling to hear in crowded spaces? It may be time to get your hearing checked.

## 2 You raise the volume of the TV or radio

As your hearing gets worse, you may need louder sounds to hear more clearly. It may not sound loud to you. But maybe your family or friends commented on the volume being too loud?

## 3 You have ringing in your ears

This is known as tinnitus. It's a condition that causes you to hear ringing or sounds that aren't there. This may include whistling and buzzing.

## 4 You have muffled hearing

You might start missing a few words. Or you might have trouble understanding people on the phone. This is because hearing loss often affects certain sounds more than others, making them harder to hear.

## 5 You feel lonely

You may start to avoid social situations because it is hard to hear and talk. This can make you feel alone, which can hurt your overall health.

Hearing loss can come on slowly. Ask your doctor about getting a yearly hearing exam to help catch it early. They can come up with a plan to slow hearing loss. Or offer treatments to improve your hearing.

### Flu season is coming

Protect yourself by getting your flu shot early. You can get your flu shot as early as September. Talk to your doctor about when to get yours.



### Has your phone number or address changed?

Call Member Services and your local Medicaid office to update your contact info. That way we can reach you with important information about your plan.



## Why therapy is good for everyone



In both good times and bad, seeing a therapist can lead to a happier, healthier life. Here are some unexpected ways therapy may help you boost your well-being.

### ✔ It can improve your relationships

We have all sorts of relationships — with our partner, children, parents and coworkers. Misunderstandings and rough patches are a normal part of all of them. Therapy can help you connect more fully with the people in your life. A therapist can help you find ways to understand other's emotions and communicate better.

### ✔ It can help you manage medical issues

Depression and anxiety are common in people with chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease. And, poor mental health can make it harder to manage your illness. Talking to a therapist can help you:

- Stay on track with treatment
- Ask for help
- Focus on self-care
- Stay away from unhealthy coping habits like smoking or alcohol

### ✔ It can help you reach your goals

We all have dreams and goals — eating healthier, getting in better shape, finding a new job. If you're feeling stuck, a therapist can help you break old patterns and habits that are holding you back. They can help you create a plan for going after your goals. And they can share tips for staying motivated. That's something we all need at different times in life.

## Know the signs of substance use disorder

Addiction can happen to anyone — teens, young adults, even seniors. And because symptoms can be mistaken for other problems, they're not always easy to spot. Here are some common signs to watch for.

- Changes in hygiene habits or not caring about how they look
- Sleeping more or less than normal
- Withdrawing from friends and family or hanging out with a different group of friends
- Changes in mood or behavior
- Missing classes, getting lower grades or losing interest in activities
- Unexplained money issues, or you notice money or items missing from your home
- Changes in physical health, like sudden weight loss or gain

If you notice some of these signs in a loved one, try talking to them about the problem. Remember to talk to them with compassion and curiosity, not judgment.



### Get more tips for healthy living.

Scan the QR code or go to [aet.na/su25ny-0](https://aet.na/su25ny-0) to browse our health and wellness library. You'll find articles packed with info to help you feel your best.

# What depression looks like in older adults — and how to help

Depression isn't a normal part of aging. But it can affect older adults. And it's more common in people who are hospitalized or require home health care.

The important thing to remember: Depression is a treatable condition. Once you know how to spot the symptoms of depression, you can help yourself

or a loved one take steps to feel better.

## Signs of depression in older adults

Depression can be harder to spot in older adults. People often mistake some depression symptoms, such as fatigue, as a normal part of aging.

Depression can also cause cognitive changes that may look like dementia. Other signs to watch for include:

- Eating more or less than usual
- Feeling hopeless or helpless
- Losing interest in activities they used to enjoy
- Sleep problems
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering things or making decisions

## How you can help

If you suspect your loved one might be depressed, there are ways you can help:

- Encourage them to talk to their doctor. They can diagnose depression and rule out other causes of symptoms. And they can suggest treatments like medication or therapy.
- Talk to them regularly. Loneliness can make depression worse. Make a point to visit or call them on a regular basis. Try planning fun activities to do together. If you can, do something physically active. Movement can help boost mood.
- Help them take care of themselves. Eating well, exercising and getting enough sleep can help ease depression. Ask if you can help them build healthy habits.



**Learn more about your plan with your member handbook.**

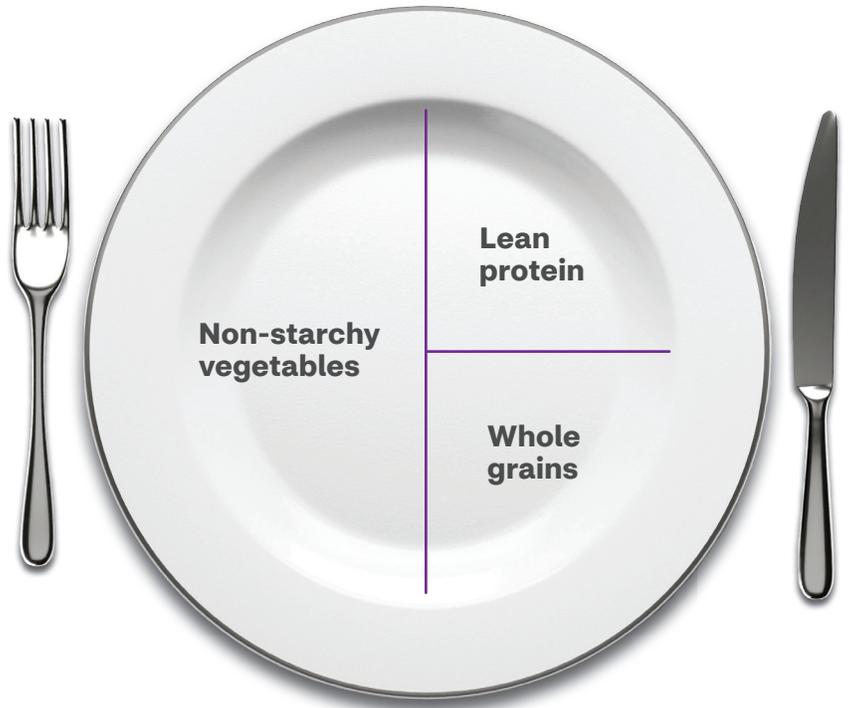
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Or call Member Services to have one mailed to you.

# Make meals easy with the diabetes plate method

Living with diabetes doesn't have to stop you from enjoying tasty meals! This simple trick for filling your plate can help keep your blood sugar levels steady:

- ✓ Fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables like leafy greens, peppers, broccoli, summer squash, carrots, cabbage and more.
- ✓ Fill a quarter of your plate with lean protein like chicken, fish, tofu or eggs.
- ✓ Fill the last quarter of your plate with carb-rich foods, like:
  - Whole grains
  - Starchy vegetables (like potatoes, corn or peas)
  - Fruit
  - Beans



The plate method is an easy way to keep carbs in check while getting plenty of protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals. Try it out with these simple recipes.

## VEGETABLE STIR-FRY

(serves 2)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1 tablespoon oil</b>  | <b>2 tablespoons teriyaki sauce (look for low-sodium options)</b> |
| <b>3 cups fresh or frozen mixed vegetables (such as carrots, bell peppers, broccoli)</b> | <b>1 cup cooked brown rice</b>                                    |
| <b>2 eggs</b>  | <b>Optional: Chicken, tofu or other lean protein</b>              |

Heat the oil in a large skillet over high heat. Add the mixed vegetables and cook for 5-7 minutes. Move the vegetables to one side of the pan and crack the eggs into the other side. Stir quickly to scramble, mixing into the vegetables. Stir in the teriyaki sauce and protein, if desired. Serve over cooked brown rice.

## GRILLED CHICKEN AND VEGETABLE SKEWERS

(serves 2)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into cubes</b> | <b>1 red onion, cut into chunks</b>                      |
| <b>1 bell pepper, cut into chunks</b>                       | <b>2 tablespoons olive oil</b>                           |
| <b>1 zucchini, cut into rounds</b>                          | <b>1 teaspoon of your favorite spice or herb blend</b>   |
|   | <b>Optional: whole grain pita and yogurt for serving</b> |

Heat your grill or pan over medium-high heat. Thread the chicken and vegetables onto skewers. In a small bowl, mix the olive oil and spice or herb blend. Brush the skewers with the oil mixture. Grill the skewers for 10-12 minutes, turning occasionally. Serve with whole grain pita and a dollop of yogurt.



# How high is your health literacy?

Health literacy means being able to find, understand and use basic health info. Good health literacy can help you get the care you need, when you need it. Find out how you did on our quiz below

## 1 What is the best way to prevent the flu?

**Answer:** © Getting a flu shot

Flu vaccines help your body build immunity to flu viruses. And, yes, you need to get a shot every year. The flu shot is custom made to fight the most common strain of the virus each year. It's best to get it your flu shot in the early fall, before flu season starts.

## 2 How often should adults get a checkup with their primary care provider (PCP)?

**Answer:** Ⓐ At least once a year

Regular checkups can help catch health issues early and stay up to date with needed tests and shots. And don't forget to let your PCP know if you go to urgent care, emergency room, or other providers. That way they have a complete picture of your health.

## 3 Which of these can an urgent care center treat?

**Answer:** Ⓓ All of the above

Urgent care centers are a great place to go for problems that are too urgent to wait for a PCP visit, but not life-threatening. They can treat minor injuries, mild illnesses and more. If you're not sure where to go for care, call your plan's 24-hour nurse line. They can help you make the best choice.

## 4 What should you do if you miss a dose of medicine?

**Answer:** Ⓓ Ask your provider

Every medicine is different. It's best to check with your provider if you ever miss a dose. Remember, you need to take all your medicines correctly to get the best outcome. This includes following instructions like time of day or whether to take it with food or not. Talk to your provider or pharmacist if you have questions.

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# Test your health literacy

Think you know how to take care of your health? Take this quick quiz to test your health smarts. Find the answers inside on page 7.

← Find the answers inside!

1

## What is the best way to prevent the flu?

- (A) Taking antibiotics
- (B) Eating more fruits and vegetables
- (C) Getting a flu shot
- (D) Staying inside all the time

2

## How often should adults get a checkup with their primary care provider (PCP)?

- (A) At least once a year
- (B) Only if they have a specific health concern
- (C) Only when they feel sick
- (D) Only if they are over 65

3

## Which of the following can an urgent care center treat?

- (A) Urinary tract infection
- (B) A cut that may need stitches
- (C) Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea
- (D) All of the above

4

## What should you do if you miss a dose of medicine?

- (A) Don't worry about it. It's not a big deal if you miss a dose
- (B) Take the dose as soon as you remember
- (C) Take 2 doses the next time you're scheduled to take it
- (D) Ask your provider