

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 a friend. 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.



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Questions about your health plan?

Call Member Services at 1-855-456-9126 (TTY: 711), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Or visit [AetnaBetterHealth.com/newyork](https://www.aetnabetterhealth.com/newyork)

4 tips to tackle caregiver burnout

Being a caregiver to a loved one is a big job. It can be fulfilling and meaningful. But it can also leave you feeling tired, stressed and sometimes even sad. Looking after yourself along the way is key. Here are some tips that can help you navigate your caregiving journey.

1 Connect with others

A good support system can make a big difference to your well-being. There are many resources to help caregivers:

- Look for a support group. It's a chance to get advice from others in similar situations.
- Talk to a therapist or counselor. They can provide emotional support and coping tools.
- Make time for family and friends.

2 Prep key forms

Keep important documents in a safe place that's easy to access. That may include:

- Power of attorney
- Medical authorization
- Emergency contacts

3 Get yearly checkups

Don't forget to keep up with your own health, too:

- Schedule regular visits with your provider.
- Take medications as directed.
- Keep up with immunizations and preventive screenings. Ask your doctor what you are due for.

4 Take breaks

Caring for a loved one can be a 24/7 job. But everyone needs a break to recharge. Ask other family or friends if they can help with things like errands, meal prep or rides to appointments.

You can also talk to your loved one's care team about options for professional help, such as adult day care or a home health aide.



Opt in to Healthix. Consenting to Healthix means the members of your care team can easily share information with each other, improving the quality and safety of your care. Visit [AetnaBetterHealth.com/newyork/member-materials-forms.html](https://www.aetna.com/better-health/new-york/member-materials-forms.html) to opt in.



SCHEDULE YOUR FLU SHOT

Your plan covers flu shots at no cost to you. Call your primary care provider to schedule a flu shot. Or, see if your local pharmacy offers flu shots and other vaccines.

Winter wellness: Tips for lung health

Winter can take a toll on your lungs. 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 doctor 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.



Get help in a crisis. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides private, no-cost counseling and emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call or text **988** or chat at **988lifeline.org** for help.



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.

Your care manager can help. Talk to your Care Manager if you're struggling with pain management, substance use or other chronic conditions. They're here to help you get the care you need. Just call Member Services and ask to talk to you care manager.

Get extra support through Social Care Networks

Starting January 1, 2025, your health plan can connect you to Social Care Networks (SCNs). These local groups work with your health plan to help you get extra support at no cost.

When you connect with an SCN, you'll meet with a Social Care Navigator. This person will learn about your needs and check if you qualify for services. They may ask for some documents to confirm eligibility, but they will guide you through the process.

Social Care Network services

Here are some of the ways an SCN may be able to help you:

Home safety and comfort:

Get help with home updates such as:

- Installing ramps, grab bars, handrails, widened doorways or other home updates that make it easier to move around safely.

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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.

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- Mold or pest removal.
- Air conditioners, heaters or small refrigerators for medicine.

Housing support: Assistance with finding safe and stable housing, or help paying for rent and utilities.

Transportation: Get help accessing rides to things like:

- Medical appointments
- Pharmacies
- City or state offices
- Local farmers’ market or grocery store

Care coordination: Help connecting you with programs that provide counseling, crisis support, and other services that support your health and well-being.

How to get started:

- Call Member Services at **1-855-456-9126 (TTY: 711)**
- Contact your county’s SCN directly (see table for contact info)
- Visit your SCN’s website to start a self-screening.

| SCN | COUNTIES | PHONE NUMBER |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Health Equity Alliance of Long Island | Nassau, Suffolk: https://healiny.org/ | 516-505-4434 |
| Public Health Solutions | Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn: https://www.wholeyou.nyc/ | 888-755-5045 |
| Somos Healthcare Providers, Inc. | Bronx: https://www.somoscommunitycare.org/social-care-network/ | 833-SOMOSNY (833-766-6769) |

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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)**。

Learn more about your plan with your member handbook.
Visit [AetnaBetterHealth.com/newyork/member-materials-forms.html](https://www.aetna.com/betterhealth/newyork/member-materials-forms.html) to view it online. Or call Member Services to have one mailed to you.



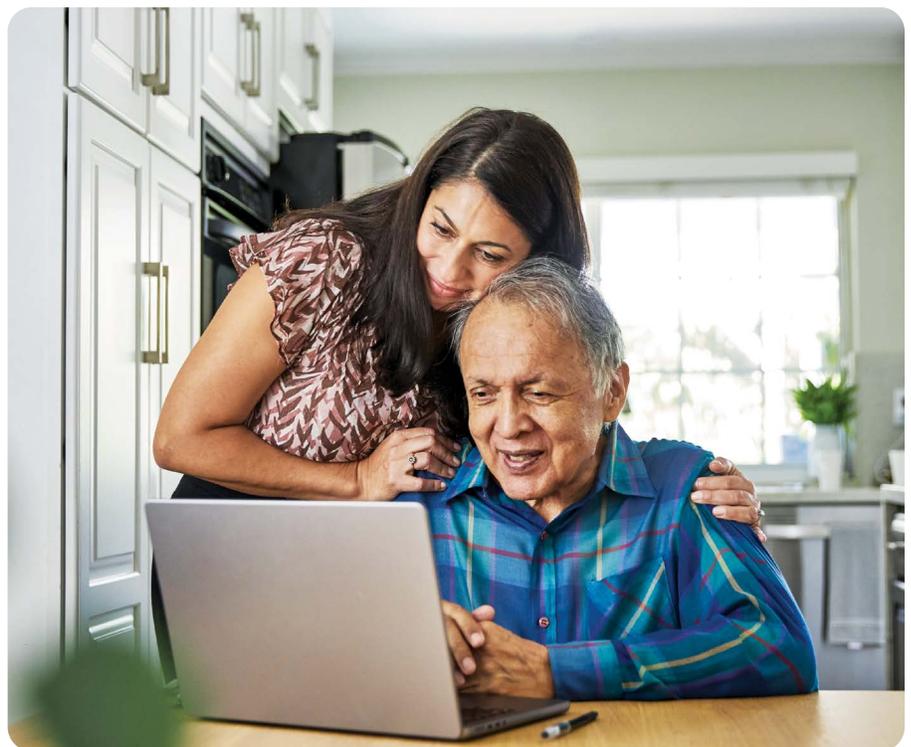
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