

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®
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Questions about your health plan?

Call Member Services at **1-800-279-1878 (TTY: 711)**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Or visit **AetnaBetterHealth.com/virginia**

Soothe kids' dentist fears

Going to the dentist can be scary for kids. But early checkups are key to having a healthy smile for life. Learn why, plus tips to make the visit less scary.

Did you know that by age 9, about half of kids have had at least one cavity? Even in baby teeth, cavities and tooth decay can lead to long-term problems in adult teeth. Plus, cavities hurt.

Seeing the dentist early — and often — can help stop cavities. Kids should see a dentist within six months of their first tooth coming in, or no later than their first birthday. After that, they should continue to see the dentist every six months.

How to help your child feel comfortable

- **Use positive words.** Instead of saying, “Don’t worry,” try, “You’re going to do great,” or “The dentist helps keep teeth strong.” Avoid words like “hurt” and “pain.”
- **Play dentist at home.** Take turns being the dentist and the patient. Use a toothbrush and mirror. Let kids practice on a stuffed animal to make it fun.
- **Read books or watch videos together.** Choose ones made for kids that show a dentist visit in a friendly way.
- **Bring a favorite toy or blanket for comfort.** Ask your dentist ahead of time if it’s okay to bring something.
- **Share your own good experiences.** Tell your child how the dentist helped you and how you felt better afterward. Help them understand that going to the dentist is a normal and positive experience.



We've got you covered. Your plan covers routine dental care for adults and children. And you don't need a referral to see a dentist in the network. Go to [AetnaBetterHealth.com/virginia/dental-benefits.html](https://www.aetna.com/betterhealth/virginia/dental-benefits.html) or call Member Services for more info.



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. 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 provider about quitting. It's one of the best things you can do for your health. Your provider 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 provider or Care Manager for more help with pain management.</p>



The dangers of opioid use

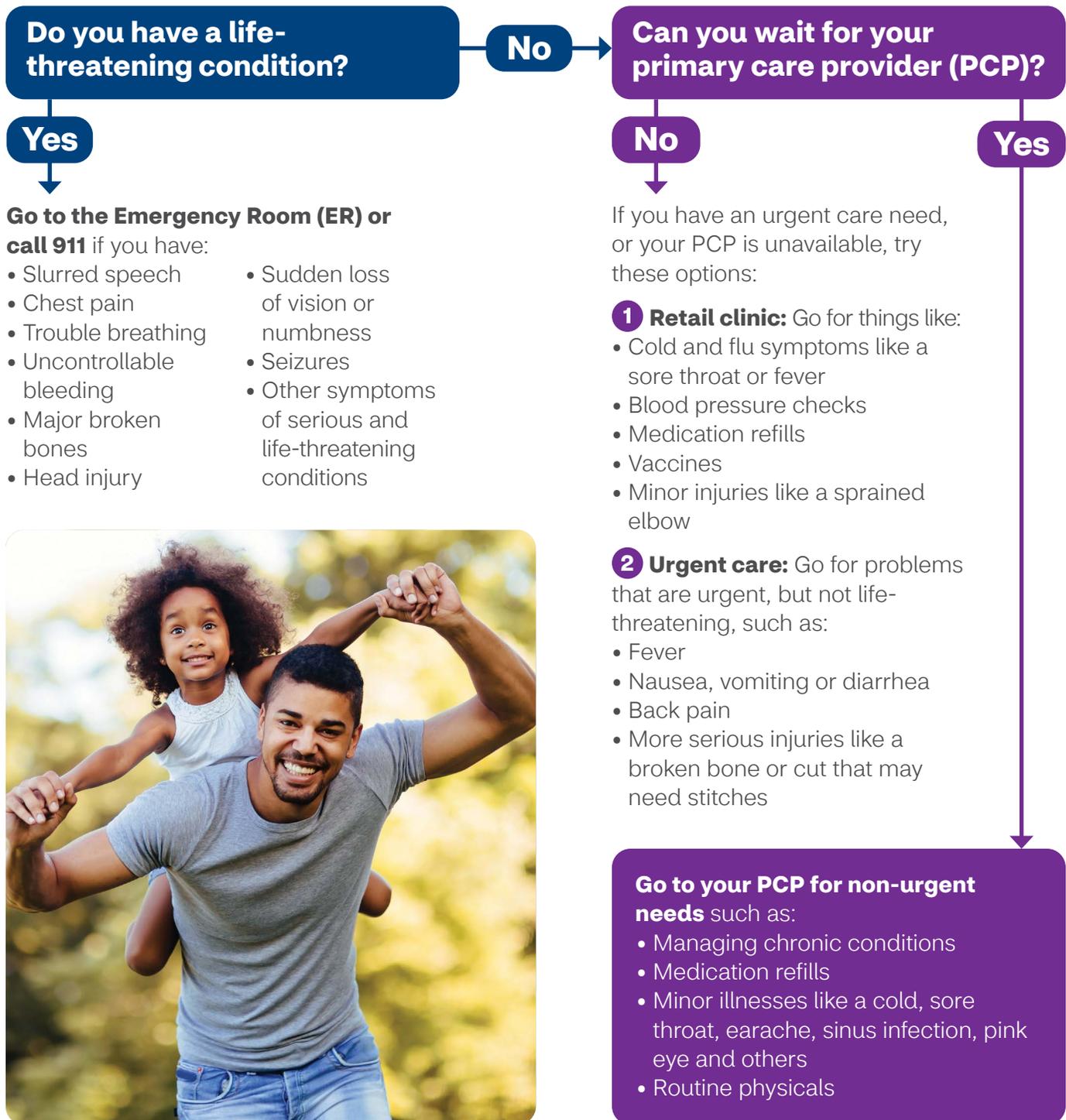
Opioids are powerful painkillers. They're often used for short-term pain relief for things like injuries or surgery recovery. But they're also highly addictive. Take these steps to lower your risk of addiction or overdose:

- 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 a care manager.

Find the right care fast

Not sure where to go for care? Use this flowchart to decide if you should go to your primary care provider, urgent care or emergency room.



Need medical help after hours?

Call our 24-hour nurse line at **1-800-279-1878 (TTY: 711)**. You'll be connected with a nurse who can answer your questions or help you decide where to go for care.

Catch breast cancer early

Getting regular mammograms is one of the best ways to protect your breast health.

A mammogram is a special X-ray of the breast. It can find cancer early, when it's easier to treat. Since 1990, mammograms have helped lower deaths from breast cancer by almost 40%.

Who should get a mammogram?

Experts recommend getting your first mammogram at age 40. And women over 40 should continue getting a mammogram every 2 years.

Your doctor may recommend getting a mammogram earlier or more often. It depends on your risk level for breast cancer. You may have a higher risk if:

- You have a strong family history of breast cancer
- You carry certain genetic changes (like BRCA1 or BRCA2)
- You have a history of breast lumps or radiation to the chest



How to get ready

- Try to schedule your mammogram for the week after your period. It can be more comfortable.
- Don't wear deodorant, lotions or powders on the day of your test.
- Wear a top that's easy to remove from the waist up.

What happens

The test takes less than 30 minutes. Your breast is gently pressed to get clear pictures. It may feel a little uncomfortable, but it's brief. Your results may take a few days or a few weeks. Most findings are normal. Your provider will follow up with you if they found anything to discuss.

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ENGLISH: ATTENTION: If you speak 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)**.

VIETNAMESE: CHÚ Ý: nếu bạn nói tiếng việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Hãy gọi số có ở mặt sau thẻ id của bạn hoặc **1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**.

ARABIC: ملحوظة: إذا كنت تتحدث باللغة العربية، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية تتوافر لك بالمجان. اتصل على الرقم الموجود خلف بطاقتك الشخصية أو على **1-800-385-4104 (للصم والبكم: 711)**

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Aetna Better Health® of Virginia
PO Box 81804
Cleveland, OK 44184-8804

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