



Blue Cross
Blue Shield
Blue Care Network
of Michigan

Confidence comes with every card.®

State of Michigan Employees



For Your Benefit

A variety of timely information related to your health care benefits and needs

Preparing your mind and body for a healthy spring

Spring represents renewal and growth, so it's the perfect time to revitalize your health and well-being. Take a moment to review your daily routines and habits from the last few months. What do you want to change before entering a more active season?

There are many ways to prepare for spring mentally and physically. If you're looking for a place to start, the list below can help put you on the right path.

Declutter your space

It's no secret that a tidy space leads to a clearer mind. Spring cleaning and organizing can help improve your focus, boost your mood, and reduce stress and anxiety. For tips on how to tackle spring cleaning, read **Volume 25, Issue 1** of *For Your Benefit* at bcbsm.com/som/employees under the Newsletters tab.

Embrace new hobbies

Hobbies are a great way to express yourself, learn new things and stay socially connected. Explore activities aligned with the season, such as, gardening, hiking or pickleball.

Update your exercise goals

Warmer weather means you can combine your fitness routine with the benefits of spending time in nature. Consider moving your indoor cardio to a nature trail or park. A study published by the National Library of Medicine shows that exposure to nature can help relieve stress, anxiety and depression. Nature can also improve cognitive functions, such as, memory, attention span and creativity.

Eat more seasonal fruits and vegetables

If you want to implement or keep up with healthy eating habits, prioritizing seasonal produce is a great way to add more nutrients to your diet. Increase your fruit and veggie intake with local produce for a fresher taste and higher levels of vitamins and antioxidants. Visit seasonalfoodguide.org to search what's in season this spring.

Connect with others

Social connections are vital for our mental health. If you spent most of winter warm and cozy indoors, spring is an opportunity to reinvigorate your social calendar. Plan time to connect with friends and family, whether reconnecting during a walk in the park, visiting an outdoor café or hosting a dinner filled with seasonal produce from your local farmers market.

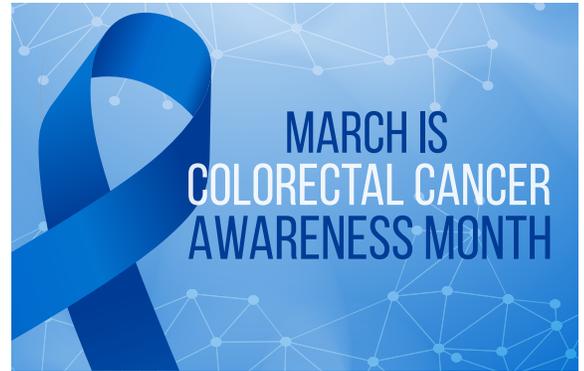


4 ways to lower your risk for colon cancer

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, a time to educate about colorectal cancer, increase screening rates and support those impacted by the disease.

Colorectal cancer is cancer of the large intestines — or colon — and rectum. According to the American Cancer Society, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in men and women in the United States.

More than half of colorectal cancers are linked to physical inactivity, poor nutrition, being overweight and excess alcohol use. This means, with the right habits and lifestyle choices, there are ways to help reduce your risk for colorectal cancer.



Get your screenings

Current guidelines recommend everyone start regular screenings for colorectal cancer at age 45. However, individuals at high risk due to family history or other factors may need to be screened before age 45 or more often.

As a State Health Plan PPO member, your preventive colonoscopy screening is 100% covered. Talk to your provider about when and how often you should be screened for colorectal cancer. It's important to note, if your provider finds and removes a polyp or other tissue during the colonoscopy screening, the screening exam becomes a diagnostic exam, and your out-of-pocket costs will apply. For more information, view your plan documents at bcbsm.com/som.

Eat foods high in fiber

Increasing your dietary fiber is an effective way to support a healthy colon. The beneficial bacteria from fiber-rich foods reduces inflammation and boosts overall gut health. Try setting a goal to hit your recommended daily total shown below:

- **Age 50 and younger**
Women: 25 grams a day
Men: 38 grams a day
- **Age 51 and older**
Women: 21 grams a day
Men: 30 grams a day

To add more fiber to your diet, incorporate five or more daily servings of fresh fruits and vegetables, such as, apples, pears, raspberries, broccoli, lentils and dark leafy greens.

Maintain a healthy weight

Being overweight is associated with higher levels of gut inflammation which increases your risk for colorectal cancer, according to a study in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. A nutritious diet low in red meat and processed foods and 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight.

Limit alcohol

Regular alcohol consumption significantly increases your risk for colorectal cancer by damaging your intestinal lining, reducing beneficial gut bacteria and increasing chronic inflammation. Limit alcohol to one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men. To further lower your cancer risk, try completely cutting alcohol consumption.



Good sleep hygiene can improve your mental and physical health

Daylight saving time is a shift we experience every year. Clocks “spring forward” to give us an extra hour of sunlight, but we lose an hour of sleep. This abrupt change can negatively affect your sleep quality and quantity.

Practicing good sleep hygiene — a set of behavioral and environmental habits that help you get better sleep — is one of the best ways to help yourself adjust to daylight saving time.

What are the benefits of good sleep hygiene?

According to Harvard Health, deep sleep allows your body to perform physical maintenance and repair, immune system strengthening and the brain detoxification necessary for healthy cognitive function.

Good sleep hygiene helps you spend more time in deep sleep by falling asleep faster and staying asleep longer. When you’re consistent with good sleep hygiene, the major benefits include:

- Better mood, focus and energy
- Enhanced memory, problem solving and decision making
- Hormone balance, tissue repair and cell regeneration
- Improved weight management
- Lower risk for chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes

Implementing the sleep hygiene practices below can help you improve and maintain your sleep quality so you can feel the advantages of more restorative sleep.

Upgrade your night routine and bedroom environment

Getting good sleep is easier when you have habits in place that tell your brain and body it’s time for bed. Consider adding these elements to your nightly routine:

- Maintain a fixed sleep schedule on weekdays *and* weekends that allows for at least seven hours of sleep.
- Incorporate a cozy wind-down routine, such as a warm bath or shower, gentle stretching and swapping screentime for reading.
- Block out light and unwanted noise using curtains, sleep masks and earplugs if necessary.



Prioritize daylight exposure

Natural light has a powerful effect on your circadian rhythm, even on cloudy days. Plan to get sun exposure first thing in the morning to help decrease sleep disruptions at night, whether that’s going outside for a walk or opening the blinds to let the light in.

Prevent food-related sleep disruptions

Food-related habits can make it difficult to fall and stay asleep. Try to be mindful of these common sleep disruptors so you don’t miss out on feeling rested the next morning:

- Eat dinner at least three hours before bedtime to prevent digestion discomfort.
- Avoid spicy and acidic foods in the evening to keep body temperature regulated.
- Stop consuming caffeine at least six to eight hours before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol in the evenings so it doesn’t impact your ability to reach deep sleep.

It’s important to note, good sleep hygiene may not resolve more serious sleep issues, such as insomnia and sleep apnea. If you’re concerned you have a sleep disorder, discuss your symptoms with your provider who can recommend the appropriate treatment options.

For Your Benefit

State of Michigan Employees

MC L04A — Newsletter return only
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
600 E. Lafayette Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48226-2998

How to reach us

For benefit information or claim inquiries, call or write the Blue Cross Customer Service Center.

To call

1-800-843-4876

Our customer service representatives are available from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

To write

Please send all correspondence to:
State of Michigan Customer Service Center
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan
232 S. Capitol Avenue L04A
Lansing, MI 48933-1504

For Your Benefit is published by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. It is meant to complement the advice of health care professionals and is not intended to take the place of professional medical care.

■ **Editor:** Kiara Murphy, State of Michigan Communications