Your Health ADVANTAGE

TOTAL RECALL: Tips to strengthen your memory

KEEP BONE LOSS AT BAY

INSIDE: SPECIAL Spring Section

BCN Advantage is an HMO-POS and HMO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in BCN Advantage depends on contract renewal.

Health and wellness or prevention information.
Dear Member:

Spring is on its way! This edition of Your Health Advantage is filled with spring veggie recipes, tips to help you manage your diabetes, and other important health and wellness stories. See Pages 6-7 for ideas on how to mix up your fitness routine. Learn about new recommendations on alcohol use for men on Pages 22-23.

Get inspired by member Sally Miller on Pages 4-5. Sally works out regularly at her local gym and recently won an award from SilverSneakers. She was physically fit before but says SilverSneakers has helped with muscle tone, balance and stability.

“Keep your mind open and your muscles moving,” Sally says.

We’ve heard your questions and concerns, so we’ve added a special section in this issue. In it you can read about where to go for care, the best way to find frequently used forms and more. We want to know what you think. We’ve included some feedback questions in the tear-out business reply card. We hope you’ll take the time to fill it out and mail it back to us.

In our last issue, we asked: What is your favorite travel destination? Here are just a few of your responses:

“Hawaii” – Gerald B., Pinckney

“Seattle. I lived there before and would love to go back and show my husband.” – Robbin B., Fenton

“New Zealand and Australia” – Conni R., Spring Lake

As always, we love hearing from you. I hope you’ll enjoy reading this issue of Your Health Advantage.

Happy spring!

Wishing you good health,

Scott Priebe
Director, HMO Senior Health Services
Sally Miller of DeWitt, Michigan, likes to move. Sally, 73, has been working out for the past two years at Snap Fitness in St. Johns, a gym owned by her son Robb. Sally enjoys doing various exercises in SilverSneakers classes two or three days a week. SilverSneakers is a program that encourages older adults to participate in physical activities that will help them stay fit and healthy.

Robb nominated his mom for the 2018 Richard Swanson Inspiration Award from SilverSneakers, which Sally won last May. She received more than 30,000 votes to win the national award. Initially, she had no idea she was even in the running.

The award recognizes Sally as a member who has improved her life through a healthy lifestyle that incorporates physical activity while inspiring and motivating others along the way.
“I was surprised … it’s quite an honor,” Sally says. Retired from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan since 2000, Sally has always been active. “I have to get up and move. I walk three miles almost daily and do some gardening,” she says. As soon as she enters the doors of Snap Fitness, Sally greets everyone, most by name. “If the room is full, we do a rotation of exercises and the time goes by fast,” she says. When Sally isn’t exercising in a SilverSneakers class, she enjoys working out on the treadmill, with weights and other machines. In addition to her award, Sally says her pants are baggy and her health is great.

“I get regular checkups and don’t need to take any prescriptions,” she says. Sally enjoys motivating her fellow fitness pals. “I bring them smiles. I have a very positive attitude,” she says. In addition to sons Robb and Durk, Sally and her husband, Richard, have two grandchildren, Ashley and Brock, who keep them busy. “I’m a very active grandma and I love going to events to watch the kiddos,” she says. Sally has become a local celebrity of sorts. In addition to attending a SilverSneakers awards ceremony last August, she was a featured guest on WLNS-TV Channel 6 in Lansing, and an interviewee for Healthy & Fit magazine, a Michigan-based publication. Recently, she was invited by SilverSneakers to be an ambassador for a new program.

“The SilverSneakers Ambassador program we’re launching will raise awareness about our members, real people whose lives have been personally impacted by SilverSneakers,” says Margie Wojciechowski, senior manager, public relations for Tivity Health Inc. Sally’s husband built a stand for the award, complete with an LED-lit display. He also built her a “she-shed,” a place where she and her friends do scrapbooking – another hobby of Sally’s.

In addition to regular exercise, Sally sticks to a healthy diet of lean protein, salads, no bread and lots of water. Occasionally, she rewards herself with a Klondike bar or potato chips. “Everything in moderation” is her motto.

Next year will mark the 15th Annual Richard Swanson Inspiration Award, one that Sally says should be reserved for another contender. For now, she’s still enjoying her award and meeting up with old and new friends at Snap Fitness. “If you need help with weight loss, lack motivation or just need a family fitness environment, find a local fitness facility,” she says. “I love my fitness family.”
Shake up your workout

Are you tired of the same old workout routine at home? Do you want to up your exercise game? Here are a few tips to help you kick things up from the comfort of your living room, basement or garage.

**MIX IT UP**
If you typically participate in only one type of exercise, try something new. Turn up the intensity with the talk test: If you can talk while you exercise, you’re working at a moderate level. If you can say only a few words before needing to catch your breath, you’re making a vigorous effort.

**FIND A COMPETITIVE OUTLET**
A friendly contest can push you to achieve your fitness goals. Invest in a step tracker that connects to an online fitness program or smartphone app – you can have some fun competition with your friends and family members as you step up your workouts.

**INVITE A FRIEND TO WORK OUT WITH YOU**
Much like friendly competition, a trusted friend can help push you further, too. One study indicates that exercising with a partner helps you plan better than if you work out alone. A partner can also hold you accountable to your fitness goals.
GO FROM BASIC TO ADVANCED
Ready to turn your usual exercise routine into something more advanced? Check with your local senior center, YMCA or recreation department for options. Remember to always consult your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

Are resistance bands right for you?
Resistance bands are small elastic loops or long elastic tubes or bands that vary in color. Each color indicates a different resistance level, from light to very heavy. If you are new to resistance band training, start light and work your way up as exercises start to feel easier. In some exercises, resistance bands can activate your muscles more than standard weights.

TRY THESE EXERCISES TO START FEELING THE BURN:
• **Upper back:** While standing, grasp the band so your hands are slightly wider than your shoulders. With palms facing the floor, lift your arms to chest height. Pull your shoulder blades together as you stretch the band. Return to center and repeat.
• **Bicep curl:** While sitting, place the center of a resistance band under your feet to hold it steady. Hold each end of the band with palms facing inward. Keep elbows at your sides. Bend your elbows and bring your hands toward your shoulders. Lower and repeat.

EXERCISE SAFELY
If you use resistance bands, remember the following:
• Don’t place a resistance band directly over a joint; put it above or below.
• Use resistance bands for 10 to 20 minutes twice a week.
• Complete one or more sets of 20 slow repetitions of each exercise.

Sources include: British Journal of Health Psychology; Journal of Human Kinetics; National Institutes of Health; Preventive Medicine Reports; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Exercise, eat healthy, don’t smoke … you know the basics that make up a heart-healthy lifestyle. But there’s a lesser-known habit that’s also important for protecting your ticker: getting enough fluids. Dehydration can put you at risk for serious conditions, such as heat stroke.

How much water?
There’s no magic number for how much liquid you need to stay hydrated. To be sure you’re getting enough, check the color of your urine. If it’s pale or clear, you’re in a good zone. If it’s dark yellow, you need to up your intake.

Ways to up your fluid intake
Besides water, other foods and drinks are smart sources of fluids, too. These include:

• Fruits and vegetables such as watermelon and tomatoes
• Broth-based soup
• Fat-free or low-fat milk

It’s best to steer clear of fruit juice and soda because they add unnecessary sugar and calories. If you have questions about hydration and your heart, talk with your doctor.

Sources include: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Heart Association; National Institutes of Health
Have you ever wished that you had an online version of Your Health Advantage? If you have, our summer issue is for you. You’ll be able to read a digital version on your computer, tablet or smartphone. We’ll send it to you if you’ve opted in to receive emails from BCN Advantage. No computer? No worries. We’re still going to send you a paper copy of the magazine.

We’re offering the digital issue to accommodate reader requests. If you’d like to try the electronic version, there’s still time to sign up. Here’s how:

Log in to your secure online account at www.bcbsm.com/medicare.
1. Click on Login at the upper right.
2. Under Account Settings, click on Account Overview.
3. Under the Email section, click on Update.
4. Check the Email Subscription checkbox and click Submit.

Not registered? Create an account today at www.bcbsm.com/medicare and click on the Login button at the upper right.
   Remember, you can always change your mind. Just follow the same steps and change your communication preference back to paper mail. It’s that easy.

The deadline to sign up for the digital copy of the summer magazine is May 6, 2019.

Watch for more information about our first-ever digital issue, coming your way soon.
FINDING HOPE AMID THE CLUTTER:
How to help a hoarder
Hoarding is a surprisingly common disorder among older adults, causing serious health and safety risks. Find out how you or a loved one can get help.

Hoarders may be a show on TV, but it’s also a reality for millions of Americans. Hoarding is far more serious than having too much clutter. It’s caused by a mental disorder that can worsen as a person ages. And, research shows, it’s more than twice as common among older adults. In addition, older adults who hoard have high rates of other serious conditions, such as depression.

People with hoarding disorder can’t control their desire to get and keep items. They can’t throw things away and have severe anxiety when trying to get rid of stuff. Because of this, things pile up within their homes. Common items they keep include boxes, newspapers, magazines, household supplies, clothing and food.

OTHER SIGNS OF HOARDING INCLUDE:
- Having a hard time organizing items or deciding where to store things
- Being overwhelmed or ashamed by the clutter but unable to discard any of it
- Not wanting people touching your things
- Obsessively worrying about running out of an item you might need in the future
- Relationship problems, social isolation, debt and more

HOARDING HURTS OTHERS, NOT JUST THE HOARDER
Hoarding affects not only the person who suffers from it, but often the emotional and physical well-being of loved ones, too. Hoarding can make a house unsafe. When a house is jam-packed with stuff, it raises the risk for falls, fires, food contamination and more. As symptoms get worse, the condition can take a toll on the hoarder’s quality of life, and harm those around the individual.

HOARDING ISN’T HOPELESS
If you or someone you know has a hoarding disorder, help is available. You could start by reaching out to a mental health professional. Cognitive behavioral therapy as well as medication, when needed, can help treat people with hoarding disorder.

If a loved one doesn’t want to see a therapist, family members could meet with one and learn more about treatment options or how to stage an intervention, if necessary. With time and treatment, it’s possible for a person with hoarding disorder to make changes that can lead to a safer and healthier life.

Live better without clutter
Here are some steps to create a more organized and peaceful living space:
- Work in small windows of time. Make things easier by cleaning an area for just an hour or a morning at a time.
- Ask for help. A family member or friend can probably better judge what to throw away and what to keep.
- Don’t keep too many of the same thing. Keep one or two you like best and get rid of the rest.

Sources include: American Cleaning Institute; American Psychiatric Association; Anxiety and Depression Association of America
The fresh asparagus you see at the farmers market this spring has been waiting a long time to be put on your plate. An asparagus crop grows for three full years before it can be harvested. And after that, the plant can grow vegetables for 15 to 25 years. Just think, your veggies may come from a plant that's older than your grandkids.

There are plenty of reasons to give this spring favorite a regular place at your kitchen table. One serving (five large spears) has only 20 calories and is packed with nutrients. That one serving provides 8 percent of your daily fiber, 10 percent of your daily vitamin A and 15 percent of your daily vitamin C. Asparagus is also a good source of folate.

Add green, white or even purple asparagus to your plate this spring.

But don't limit yourself to just asparagus. All year round, make sure to eat vegetables of many different colors, such as dark green, red and orange. Here are some examples of veggies that are good sources of vitamins and minerals:

**Potassium:**
- Potatoes
- Sweet potatoes
- Swiss chard

**Calcium:**
- Dark green leafy vegetables, such as collard greens and kale

**Folate:**
- Dark green leafy vegetables, such as spinach
- Beans and peas

**Vitamin D:**
- Mushrooms

**Vitamin A:**
- Spinach
- Carrots
- Sweet potatoes

**Magnesium:**
- Black beans

Sources include: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; American Cancer Society; *International Journal of Oncology*; National Gardening Association; U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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**READY TO HIT THE FARMERS MARKET?**

Go to [www.ahealthiermichigan.org](http://www.ahealthiermichigan.org) and search for the article “Spring, sprint and salivate for Michigan agriculture” to read about all the homegrown crops you can find at your local farmers market in the warmer months.
Spring Chicken Barley Soup

Servings: 10

1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup finely chopped onion
½ cup finely chopped celery
½ cup finely chopped carrot
2 cloves garlic, divided
6 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
1 large bone-in chicken breast (10-12 oz.), skin removed, trimmed
½ cup pearl barley
1 (15 oz.) can diced tomatoes
1 cup trimmed and diagonally sliced asparagus (¼" thick)
1 cup fresh or thawed frozen peas
½ tsp. coarse salt
Freshly ground pepper, to taste
½ cup lightly packed torn fresh basil leaves
1 strip orange zest (½ by 2”)

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat; add onion, celery and carrots. Cook, stirring, until vegetables begin to soften, 2 to 4 minutes. Grate or finely chop 1 clove garlic; add to the pan and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add broth, chicken and barley. Bring to a gentle simmer. Cover and cook over low heat until the chicken is cooked through, about 20 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a plate with a slotted spoon. Return the broth to a simmer and cook until the barley is tender, 20 to 30 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, shred the chicken or cut into bite-sized pieces; discard the bone.

3. When the barley is done, add the chicken, tomatoes and juice, asparagus, peas, salt and a grinding of pepper; return to a simmer. Cover and cook over low heat until the asparagus is tender, about 5 minutes more.

4. Coarsely chop the remaining garlic clove. Gather basil, orange zest and the garlic, and finely chop together. Ladle the soup into bowls and sprinkle each serving with a generous pinch of the basil mixture.

Nutritional information per serving:
113.8 calories, 2.6 g total fat, 0.6 g saturated fat, 16.3 mg cholesterol, 204.5 mg sodium, 12.1 g total carbohydrate, 2.9 g dietary fiber, 3.3 g sugar and 9.9 g protein.

Source: www.ahealthiermichigan.org
The word arthritis means inflammation of the joints. Rheumatoid arthritis, or RA, is a type of arthritis that causes significant disability and, until recently, has had few effective treatments.
RA involves joint pain and stiffness associated with inflammation in multiple joints, mainly in the hands, wrists, knees and feet. It’s chronic and can last for years. Twenty years ago, RA could result in significant joint damage, but this is no longer the case. It can also affect other organs, such as the skin, eyes, lungs, heart and nerves. The disease can trigger changes in the immune system that can have damaging effects throughout the body. Research has led to the development of numerous medications to manage the damaging effects of the inflammatory response. The causes of RA remain unknown.

Who gets rheumatoid arthritis and what are the symptoms?
RA can occur at any age but most commonly affects women between the ages of 40 and 60. In the United States and Europe, about one person in 100 will have it. Patients first notice pain and stiffness, usually in the small joints of the fingers, wrists and feet, although almost any joint can be involved. The stiffness can last for an hour or more, usually in the morning.

How is it treated?
Although there’s no cure, disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs, or DMARDs, can treat the disease. Research in the past 30 years has led to a dramatic increase in the number of DMARDs to help doctors tailor patient treatments. Physical therapy, splints, anti-inflammatory drugs and pain medications can also help.

Who should I see?
While your primary doctor can diagnose RA, you should see a rheumatologist, a specialist who treats complex arthritis cases. With newer treatments and the potential to make such a positive difference in their patients’ lives, collaboration between the patient’s personal doctor and a rheumatologist can be life-changing.

Sources include: American College of Rheumatology; Arthritis Foundation; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report; National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health
Get care for your body and mind with Blue Cross Online Visits℠

Do you remember when doctors used to make house calls? If so, you're familiar with the concept behind online visits. With online visits, doctors, therapists and psychiatrists come to your home through the internet, mobile app or phone.

Online visits make caring for your health comfortable and convenient. Online doctors are available without an appointment, throughout the U.S., when you can't get to your primary care doctor's office. You can see a doctor anytime for minor illnesses, such as:

- Colds, sinus and respiratory infections
- Painful urination
- Eye irritation or redness
- Sore throats

Blue Cross Online Visits also gives you more choices for visiting with a therapist or psychiatrist. From the comfort of your home, you can confidentially talk through difficult challenges, such as anxiety, depression or grief.

How to get started
There are three ways you can use this service:

- **Mobile**—Download the BCBSM Online Visits℠ app.
- **Phone**—Call 1-844-606-1608 24/7. TTY users dial 711.

Sign up now
Here's how to see a doctor or therapist:

1. Launch the Online Visits app or website and log in to your account.
2. Choose a service: Medical, Therapy or Psychiatry.
3. Pick a doctor or begin a scheduled visit.
4. Meet with the doctor online.
5. Get a prescription sent to a local pharmacy, if appropriate for your health condition.
6. Send a visit summary to your primary care doctor or other health care provider at the end of your online visit. This is an important step to make sure your primary care doctor coordinates your care and knows about any medications or treatment the online doctor or psychiatrist prescribes for you.

Your primary care doctor is still your best option for treatment. Many now have evening, weekend or online appointments. If you can't get in to see your doctor, it's good to know you can get 24/7 online health care for minor illnesses.

With Blue Cross Online Visits, the good old days are back, but with a modern twist.

WE’LL EMAIL YOU ABOUT REFERRALS OR AUTHORIZATIONS
Good news! If you’ve signed up to receive emails from us, we'll now let you know when there’s a change to the status of your authorization or referral requests. The emails will look like the ones you receive when a new Explanation of Benefits is available; they’ll include instructions to view the updates. You’ll also receive a letter from us in the mail. Don’t want to receive emails? Unsubscribe at any time by going to the Communications Preferences tab on www.bcbsm.com/medicare.

Marc D. Keshishian, M.D.,
is senior vice president and chief medical officer of Blue Care Network.
Thank you for your membership

**Dear Member:**

We’d like to thank you for your membership. Whether you’re new to BCN Advantage or a long-time member, we value you as a customer and strive to do our best to serve you.

We’re excited to tell you about some new offerings this year, such as Blue Cross Online Visits℠, which allows you to see a U.S. board-certified doctor from the comfort of your home or on the go. You can make an appointment with a doctor 24/7 using your smartphone, tablet or computer. Just download the BCBSM Online Visits℠ app or visit bcbsmonlinevisits.com.

In addition to your regular issue of Your Health Advantage, we’ve included this special section to help you get the most out of your health care plan. We’ve heard your questions and concerns; in response, we’ve focused on some of those areas.

We hope you’ll enjoy reading this special section, and appreciate your honest feedback throughout the year.

Wishing you a healthy and happy year,

Krischa K. Winright  
Senior Vice President, Business Performance and Development  
Senior Health Services
FINDING TIME: Tips to help you manage your care

It seems like there’s never enough time these days. We know you may get frustrated when you have to spend time doing things you don’t want to do, such as managing your health care.

We may not have all the answers, but there are some things you can do right now that will help you manage your care and your time.

Oh, the wait!
You can spend a lot more time in the doctor’s office than you expected. Things happen in the office and your doctors can get backed up seeing their patients. While you can’t control that, here are some tips to help you avoid the wait:

• Watch appointment times. Mornings are usually better than afternoons. The later you wait in the day, the more likely your doctor could be behind schedule. Also, while weekend appointments are convenient, there may not be as many people there in the middle of the week – there may not be as many people there. If your doctor’s running behind schedule, you could also ask to see a nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

• Want to see a specialist? You may not need a referral from your primary care doctor to see a specialist. That means one less appointment or phone call to get the referral. Finding a doctor is easy – just go to bcbsm.com/medicare and select the Find a Doctor tab. Your primary doctor may also recommend a specialist for you.

Other time-saving tips
If you have a simple question or just need a quick check with a medical professional, try our 24/7 nurse line. It offers free, convenient medical advice from registered nurses. They can assess a non-emergency health condition and give you general advice on wellness or preventive care. Best of all, it’s part of your coverage. Call [BCNA – 1-855-624-5214]/[PPO - 1-800-775-BLUE (2583)].

Finally, you can save time by getting the prescriptions you take regularly through the mail. You can even get a three-month supply for many drugs. For more information, go to bcbsm.com/medicare. Under the Help tab, select Forms and Documents. The information for mail order drugs is under the Pharmacy Forms section.

Try these tricks and spend more time doing the fun things.

Finding the forms you need, when you need them

There are so many different health care forms out there – and you may not know where to find them. You can usually find what you’re looking for at bcbsm.com/medicare and selecting Help. There’s a link called Forms and Documents that will take you to the forms you need, plus easy-to-understand explanations of how you would use them.

Don’t use a computer? No worries. Just call the Customer Service number on the back of your member ID card.

Here are some common forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORM TYPE</th>
<th>WHAT IT’S USED FOR</th>
<th>WHERE TO FIND IT ON THE FORMS AND DOCUMENTS PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automatic payment forms</td>
<td>If you want to have your Medicare Advantage payment deducted automatically from your bank account</td>
<td>Under Payment Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim forms</td>
<td>If you want to be reimbursed for services you think we should cover (including flu shots)</td>
<td>Under Claim Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail order drug form</td>
<td>If you want to receive your prescriptions through the mail</td>
<td>Under Pharmacy Forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescription drug coverage determination form</td>
<td>If you want to ask us to add a drug to your current drug plan list</td>
<td>Under Pharmacy Forms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are just a few examples. If you can’t find what you’re looking for, call us. We’re here to help.
Kudos for getting your flu shot

Thank you for getting your flu shot last fall or winter. You helped protect yourself and others from getting the flu, which can cause pneumonia, bronchitis and even death.

Don’t forget to get your flu shot again in October or November, since the vaccine changes each year to match the current strain. (If you can’t get your shot until January or February, it’s still worth doing because flu season can sometimes last into May.)

And remember, your flu shot is free. It’s covered under Medicare Part B, no matter where you choose to get your vaccination. If you go to the doctor for your shot, however, you may be charged for an office visit. If you get your flu shot at the pharmacy, ask the pharmacist to bill <Blue Cross/BlueCare Network> directly.

Thank you again for taking an important step toward good health by getting your flu shot.

Sources include: American Academy of Family Physicians; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institutes of Health

Did this information help?

We compiled this special section in response to some of the most frequently asked questions from our members.

Our goal is to help you stay healthy. We encourage you to keep the special section as a reference.

Your feedback is important to us. Use one of the following methods to share your opinions:

• Fill out and mail the business reply card in this issue.
• Call the Customer Service number on the back of your member ID card.
• Connect with us through Facebook or Twitter.

We hope to hear from you soon.
Why you should take your medicine as prescribed

Your doctor prescribes medicine to help you get better or control a chronic condition. For it to work, you have to take it exactly as prescribed. You should:
• Follow the prescription directions exactly, including how much, how often and when
• Take the medication for the time frame your doctor recommends, even if you feel better. This is called medication adherence.

Too many people don’t take medications as prescribed. And that’s a big problem.

Why is it important?
When treatments for chronic diseases don’t work, about 30 to 50 percent of the time it’s because people didn’t follow the prescription directions. Not taking your medication as prescribed can lead to hospitalization and even death. Consider the following:
• Finishing all antibiotics as prescribed fully treats the infection.
• It could be dangerous for you to stop taking your medication for conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol without your doctor’s OK. Untreated high blood pressure, for example, can cause serious damage to vital organs without any immediate telltale signs.

Following directions
To stay safe, use these tips:
• Take your drugs at the same time every day.
• Get a pillbox to organize your medications.
• Use a medicine calendar and make a note every time you take your medicine.
• Ask your doctor if you should limit the amount of alcohol you drink while taking your medicine. You may need to avoid alcohol altogether.
• Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking over-the-counter medications or dietary supplements. They may change the way your medicine works.
• Keep your doctor informed about every medication you take, including those prescribed by other doctors. This includes everything from prescriptions to vitamins and supplements.

• Even if you have side effects, never stop taking your medication without talking with your doctor first. Your doctor can help by changing your dose or switching you to another type of drug.

Sources include: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; American Diabetes Association; Journal of the American College of Cardiology; Medical Clinics of North America; National Institutes of Health

Laura Cornish, Pharm.D., is Pharmacy Manager, Medicare Part D, Senior Health Services.
Once upon a time, a handwritten log was the only way to track your blood glucose levels. Now, an increasing number of smartphone apps help you keep tabs on your readings. Some can also track your meals, medications, exercise and weight.

BEFORE YOU TAP, TAKE NOTE
These apps can’t replace your health care provider or manage your disease for you. But research suggests that, as part of an overall care plan, they can help you stick with your diet, exercise and medication management plans.

APPS FOR LIVING WELL WITH DIABETES
Here are just a few of the hundreds of apps available to manage your diabetes. They’re free and available for iPhone and Android devices:

  A study in the Journal of Medical Internet Research says this app helps users follow a diabetes medication regimen. It can track glucose readings, insulin use, carbs and more. It includes fun challenges and helpful feedback to keep your motivation high.

  Developed after the founders’ father accidentally double-dosed on insulin, this app can send you reminders to take your treatments on time and alert a family member or care team member if you forget.

  With this app, you can sync your blood glucose meter, insulin pump, continuous glucose monitoring system and exercise tracker directly to your smartphone. Even if you don’t use an insulin pump or continuous glucose monitoring system, you can use this app to add food, medication and lifestyle information, and then share the full report with your doctor.

Search for various apps and see which features best apply to your situation; ask your doctor to help you select an app that will work best for you.

Sources include: American Association of Diabetes Educators; Columbia University Medical Center; iTunes App Store; National Institutes of Health, U.S. Food and Drug Administration

USE THE BCBSM MOBILE APP
Read an article at www.miblupeerspectives.com to learn how to use the BCBSM mobile app to help track your diabetes information. Search for the article “How to stay on top of your diabetes.”
You ask, Amazon Alexa answers

Do you ever find yourself seeking new ideas for healthy recipes? Feeling motivated but not sure how to squeeze in a quick workout? Thanks to Blue Cross’ new MiBlue Skill for Amazon Alexa, all you need to do is ask.

The MiBlue Skill for Amazon Alexa responds to voice commands. You can use MiBlue Skill to:

• Understand common health plan terms and get answers to commonly asked questions
• Relax with a quick meditation
• Find healthy and delicious dietitian-approved recipes
• Get advice on how to quit smoking
• And much more!

Download the free Amazon Alexa app and enable the MiBlue Skill on your smartphone or simply say, “Alexa, open MiBlue.” It’s fun. It’s helpful. It’s smart!

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Google Play and the Google Play logo are trademarks of Google Inc.

**PUZZLE**

Puzzle over ... rebus

In a rebus puzzle, the letters or words and their placement in relation to one another are clues to a common phrase. Can you solve these?

1. THE ICEBERG
2. walking ice
3. THE OUTCOLD
4. the weather feeling
5. hands heart

Turn to Page 23 for the answers.
Improve your physical health while you age

These tips can help pave the way for a fit and fulfilling future. Year after year, you’ll find that age really is just a number.

MYTH: There’s nothing older people can do about declining health.

FACT: There are several ways to protect — and improve — your physical and mental health as you age.
Commit to fitness
You’ve heard it before — it’s vital to exercise regularly. Physical activity not only lowers your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes, but also improves your brain’s health and allows you to do more of the activities you enjoy. Experts recommend doing moderate aerobic activity (such as walking) for two and a half hours each week. Even if you haven’t been active in the past, it’s not too late to start. If it’s hard for you to be active for extended periods, try 10 minutes of activity a few times a day and work your way up.

Balance exercises are important because they help prevent falls, a leading cause of injuries as we age. Practice balance activities three or more days a week. These can be as simple as standing on one foot at a time or standing up from a sitting position without using your hands.

Get preventive screenings
Getting preventive screenings could mean living a longer, healthier life. These screenings detect problems early when treatments work best. Talk with your primary care doctor about these important screenings:
- Bone density
- Breast cancer
- Colorectal cancer
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Lung cancer

Care for your brain
Studies show that keeping your brain active throughout life is associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer’s disease. Reading, learning a musical instrument or foreign language, playing games or working on puzzles that challenge your mind are all beneficial. Both social engagement and mentally stimulating activities help keep your brain healthy.

Manage chronic conditions
Finding out that you have a chronic disease, such as diabetes, heart disease or high blood pressure, can be scary and overwhelming. While everyone copes differently, here are three steps you can take to better handle a serious diagnosis and still live life to its fullest:

1. Learn about your condition. 
   Researching your chronic disease and asking your health care team lots of questions can give you a greater sense of control.

2. Move your body. First, check with your doctor to make sure it’s OK to exercise. If you get the green light, being active can help you feel better physically and emotionally.

3. Spend time with others. 
   Being around people who care about you can help you feel like you’re not going through this alone.

Sources include: American Heart Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; U.S. Preventive Services Task Force

PLAY BRAIN GAMES
Looking for fun activities to keep your mind in tip-top shape? Search for the article “7 brain games to keep your mind sharp” on www.ahealthiermichigan.org to find brain teasers, riddles, puzzles and more.
Drink recommendation for MEN may be too high
A 2018 international study found that the U.S. recommendation for alcohol is too high for men and could be leading to a shorter life expectancy. The current recommendation allows men up to 14 drinks a week. However, the study says, men should limit their intake to seven drinks a week.

Researchers followed participants for about six years and found that men who had more than seven drinks a week had an increased risk for:

- Stroke
- Heart disease (excluding heart attack)
- Heart failure
- Fatal aortic aneurysm

Men who reduced their alcohol intake to seven or fewer drinks a week could tack on one to two years to their lives.

Despite the widespread belief that alcohol – particularly red wine – is heart-healthy, the facts show that alcohol can raise blood pressure, which can take a toll on your heart. The bottom line? Like most things in life, less is more, and men should try to drink less than the current recommendations suggest.

**ATTENTION MEN**

If you currently have more than seven drinks a week, you should be cutting back. Here are some ways to decrease your intake and reduce your risks for alcohol-related problems:

- Measure your drinks at home to make sure you’re not overpouring.
- Don’t top off your glass.
- Alternate alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks.
- Eat food when you drink so the alcohol is absorbed into your system more slowly.
- Substitute another activity during the time you habitually consume alcohol to break the habit.
- Go for a walk.
- Call a friend to discuss the day.
- Go to a movie or community event.

If you have any concerns about your alcohol intake or about that of someone close to you, call BCN Behavioral Health Services at 1-800-482-5982, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday. Weekend hours from Oct. 1 through March 31. TTY users call 711. You don’t need a referral from your primary care physician, and all calls are confidential.

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**REBUS SOLUTION FROM PAGE 19**

1. Tip of the iceberg
2. Walking on thin ice
3. Out in the cold
4. Feeling under the weather
5. Cold hands, warm heart
What causes hypertension?
Hypertension, or high blood pressure, isn’t about feeling tense or anxious. Tension refers to the sense of power or force, such as high-tension electrical wires. Some calm people have high blood pressure, while some anxious people have low blood pressure. Hypertension is diagnosed by using a blood pressure cuff to measure pressure levels.

Why are there two numbers in a blood pressure measurement?
Blood pressure isn’t a continuous pressure like water running out of a faucet. It changes as your heart relaxes, fills with blood and contracts, forcing blood through your body. The higher number (systolic) is the greater pressure your heart makes when it contracts. The lower number (diastolic) occurs when your heart relaxes and fills with blood. The way it’s reported is systolic/diastolic, such as 120/80.

So, what is hypertension?
As blood moves through your arteries, it puts pressure on the artery walls. Your blood pressure will change throughout the day depending on your activity. When this pressure is regularly higher than normal, it’s called hypertension.

When is it too high? According to American Heart Association guidelines, a reading of 130/80 mmHg signals high blood pressure.

Why does it matter?
Hypertension increases the risk for heart disease, stroke, vascular disease and kidney disease. Early on, people with high blood pressure don’t know they have a problem. The goal is to diagnose and treat high blood pressure before the person has a stroke, heart attack or kidney failure.

How is it treated?
Exercising, decreasing salt and alcohol in your diet, and losing weight are natural ways to lower blood pressure. Weight loss is especially helpful. Even a loss of 10 pounds may lower blood pressure to healthier levels.

There are many medications and ways to treat high blood pressure. Your doctor will create the best plan for you. Always take blood pressure medicine exactly as prescribed; don’t stop taking it unless your doctor says it’s OK. Ask your doctor if you should avoid certain foods or beverages while taking the medication.

Keep it in check
Measuring your blood pressure regularly at home can be more accurate than one measurement in the doctor’s office. There are inexpensive machines that can easily record your blood pressure. Take your blood pressure at the same time daily. Keep a record and bring it to your doctor appointments. These home readings will help your doctor decide on your best treatment.

Sources include: American College of Cardiology; American Heart Association; National Institutes of Health; New England Journal of Medicine;
If you’ve had chickenpox, you’re at risk for developing shingles. In fact, one in three people in the United States will develop shingles at some point in his or her life.

**CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS**
The varicella zoster virus causes both chickenpox and shingles.
- Chickenpox is more common in children, although it may occur in adults.
- Shingles is caused by the same virus but occurs almost exclusively in adults. Shingles has a different rash and develops in a different manner.

After you recover from chickenpox, the virus stays in your body. Years later, it can become active again and cause shingles.

Shingles appears as a painful rash on one side of your face or elsewhere on your body. It involves an underlying nerve, which is why it can be so painful. Initially, you feel pain without the rash, but within a day or so, the rash will develop. It may be a stripe that wraps around the left or right side of your body or covers one side of your face. Once the rash appears, it blisters. The blisters scab over within about seven to 10 days. It can take two to four weeks for the rash to go away.

Other signs of shingles include:
- Fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Upset stomach

Some people have a higher risk of getting shingles. Your risk increases as you age or if you have a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or medicine that suppresses it.

**TREATMENT**
Antiviral medicines reduce the amount of time your symptoms last and decrease your risk of developing persistent pain. These medicines work best when you start them when the rash appears. If one of your eyes is affected, you need to see an eye specialist, or ophthalmologist, because of the risk of blindness.

Pain medicine can help reduce the discomfort. You can also try soothing measures, such as wet compresses, calamine lotion and baths with colloidal oatmeal, to help control the itching.

If you think you may have shingles, contact your doctor right away.

**Source:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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**New shingles vaccine**
The most common complication that can occur from shingles is postherpetic neuralgia, or PHN. Ten to 13 percent of people with shingles develop PHN, which causes severe pain in the area where the rash occurred, even after the rash goes away.

There are two shingles vaccines – Shingrix®, the new vaccine, and Zostavax®. Studies have shown that Shingrix is more effective. Shingrix is approved for adults ages 50 and older with a healthy immune system. It’s given in two doses, two to six months apart. Ask your doctor if the vaccine is right for you.
Well-being means being comfortable, healthy and happy, and Blue Care Network wants all those things for you. That’s why we’re now offering Blue Cross® Virtual Well-Being to support your journey to a happy, healthy, balanced and fulfilled life.

Set aside 15 minutes once a week to join our live well-being webinars. Weekly topics include mindfulness, resiliency, social connectedness, emotional health, financial wellness, physical health, gratitude, meditation and more, and provide helpful information that can affect your life and the lives of those around you. Webinars are on Thursdays at noon and can be conveniently viewed on any device, including your computer, tablet or mobile phone. During each webinar, you can download materials to read later or share with others.

Virtual Well-Being Coordinator Matt Wozny will host webinars with a variety of visual backgrounds, including a forest, mountains and a beach, that will help improve your state of well-being.

Can’t attend a live webinar? Past webinars and handouts will be available on the Virtual Well-Being website [www.bluecrossvirtualwellbeing.com](http://www.bluecrossvirtualwellbeing.com).

Take time to get on the path to well-being. Register for a webinar today.
2. Click on Webinars for Members.
3. To register for the next webinar, click on Register Now.
4. To learn more about and register for upcoming webinars, click on the photos at the bottom of the screen under the Upcoming Webinars tab.
5. You’ll receive confirmation and reminder emails once you register.
An emergency room for older patients

Going to the ER for care can be stressful for anyone. But it can be especially hard for older adults. That’s why some hospitals have created ERs designed for older patients. These ERs typically include a team of health care professionals trained in evaluating physical and mental health issues common among older patients. In addition, these ERs often have the following features to make them safer and more comfortable for older adults:

- Nonslip flooring
- Thicker mattresses and equipment with padding
- More handrails
- Portable lab equipment

Ask your doctor if he or she knows of any senior ERs in your area.

Sources include: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; Alzheimer’s Association; Journal of Health Services Research & Policy; Journal of Rural Health

Think you know how long food is still ok to eat?

The “sell by” and “use by” dates on food packaging don’t relate to safety — they’re meant to help determine when food is at its best quality. So how do you know if food is safe? Here are a few tips:

- Keep deli meat three to five days. If it’s in a vacuum-sealed, unopened package, it should be safe for up to two weeks.
- Eggs are safe for three to five weeks. Don’t store them in your refrigerator door — the temperature varies too much.
- Cook fish soon after buying it. It only keeps for one or two days.
- Pitch leftovers within four days. Put them in the fridge within two hours after cooking to prevent bacteria growth.
- Mayonnaise can be stored in the refrigerator for two months.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Dispose of your medication safely

On National Drug Take Back Day — April 27 — you can dispose of medicine that’s expired or no longer needed. To learn more, visit www.takebackday.dea.gov.

Evaluating medical technology

Did you know? The Medical Policy Administration of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the Care Management Department of Blue Care Network of Michigan are responsible for evaluating new technologies and the new applications of existing technologies, the development of medical policies related to these technologies and the development of coverage recommendations. This process includes, but is not limited to, the following areas for potential new technologies: medical procedures and services, medical devices, surgical procedures, behavioral health procedures and pharmaceuticals.
We all misplace the keys or forget a name now and then. But as you get older, you may wonder: Is your memory starting to go? Fortunately, such lapses are usually signs of slight forgetfulness – not serious memory problems. Most don’t limit your daily life. But they can still be irritating, so it pays to learn some strategies that help support and strengthen your memory. The tips that follow can help.
MAKE A LIST
One of the best memory aids is simply writing down the things you want to remember. Create a daily to-do list every morning. Put the list someplace where you’ll see it frequently; for example, on the refrigerator. Then check off tasks as you complete them.

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN
To learn and recall new information, relate it to something familiar. Let’s say you want to pick up three items from the store: socks, tissues and toothpaste. Mentally picture each item resting on a different piece of furniture in your living room: socks on the sofa, tissues on the coffee table and toothpaste on the TV stand. Once you get to the store, call up this mental image to help you remember the items. (Of course, a shopping list also works!)

BUILD MEMORY-FRIENDLY HABITS
There’s growing evidence that these habits help keep your memory and thinking skills sharp as you age:
• Fuel up your brain. Eat a healthy, balanced diet. Aim for more fruits and vegetables and less saturated fat.
• Move your muscles. According to the latest guidelines from the American Academy of Neurology, getting physical exercise twice a week may improve memory and thinking ability in people who have mild problems in these areas.
• Exercise your mind. Sign up for a class. Or get your mental workout through hobbies such as reading, writing, playing bridge and doing puzzles.
• Connect with others. Make plans with family and friends. Find ways to get involved in your community, such as volunteering for a cause you care about.

Don’t forget: Memory problems that seriously interfere with your everyday activities aren’t a normal part of aging. Talk with your doctor if you have concerns.

ORGANIZE YOUR HOME
“A place for everything and everything in its place” is a smart policy. Keep frequently used items where you typically use them. For example, put your keys near the front door and the TV remote by your favorite chair. Then always return items to their designated spot so they’re easy to find the next time you need them.

SAVE THE DATE
Record all your upcoming activities, events and appointments on a paper or electronic calendar. Then make a habit of checking your calendar often throughout the day. Or set reminder alarms on your mobile phone or watch.

Sources include: American Psychological Association; Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience; National Institute on Aging; U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Osteoporosis is a common disease where certain bones, such as the spine, forearm and hip, become weaker and are more likely to break. It’s more common in white and Asian people, women and those who are short in stature. Smoking, alcohol use and lack of exercise can make it worse. The risk increases with age and after menopause in women. It’s the leading cause of fractures in older adults.

**SYMPTOMS OF OSTEOPOROSIS**
People with osteoporosis typically have no symptoms at first. Problems arise after a fracture occurs. Fractures of the spine cause the collapse of the vertebrae (compression fractures) with pain and loss of height. People with severe compression fractures lose several inches in height.

The bones of the wrist and hip are also more likely to simply break, resulting in deformity and pain. The best way to treat osteoporosis is to diagnose it early, when it's easier to treat.

**IS THERE AN OSTEOPOROSIS SCREENING TEST?**
A bone mineral density test is used to diagnose osteoporosis. It’s a simple, painless test that measures your bone density at your hip and spine. The results show whether you have osteoporosis and your risk of breaking a bone.

Women ages 65 and older should have a bone density test every two years. If you’re a woman younger than 65 and have a high risk for fractures, ask your doctor when you should begin screenings. Men ages 70 and older should also be screened.

**HOW CAN I REDUCE MY RISK FOR OSTEOPOROSIS AND FRACTURES?**
Some lifestyle changes can help protect your bones, including eating a healthy diet that’s high in calcium and vitamin D, increasing your physical activity (weight-bearing and high-impact exercises are helpful for strengthening bones), limiting your alcohol intake and quitting smoking. Calcium and vitamin D supplements can also help strengthen and build bone.

**WHAT ABOUT MEDICATIONS?**
Several medications treat osteoporosis. Your doctor will first check for osteoporosis and ensure you’re getting enough calcium and vitamin D. He or she will then determine if you need medication.

**Sources include:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institutes of Health; National Osteoporosis Foundation
Everyone wants quality health care, but how do you know you’re getting it? BCN Advantage has a quality improvement program that provides a comprehensive, standard way for us to measure, evaluate and improve clinical care and services. The program identifies the important aspects of health care, and continuously improves the quality and safety of the care and services we provide you. Two of the measurements used by BCN Advantage are the Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (also known as HEDIS®) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services star rating.

HEDIS is the most widely used set of performance measures in the managed care industry, and is just one of the tools BCN Advantage uses to improve the quality of patient care. HEDIS makes it possible to compare the performance of health plans throughout the nation.

Medicare evaluates plans based on a 5-star rating system. Star ratings are calculated each year and may change from one year to the next. The star rating system uses quality measurements that are widely recognized within the health care industry to provide an objective method for evaluating health plan quality.

BCN Advantage received an overall 3.5-star rating from CMS for the 2019 star rating (2017 measurement year). Clinical HEDIS measures finished with a star rating of 4.5, which demonstrates BCN Advantage’s commitment to strong clinical quality for our members. BCN Advantage’s clinical HEDIS star performance ranked first in the state of Michigan, and 44th nationally.

The following clinical measures received a 4-star rating or higher (2017 measurement year):
- Adult BMI assessment
- Breast cancer screening
- Colorectal cancer screening
- Comprehensive diabetes care – blood sugar controlled, eye exams and testing for kidney disease
- Medication reconciliation post-discharge
- Controlling high blood pressure
- Plan all-cause readmissions

BCN Advantage will continue to focus on improving clinical HEDIS measures. Focus measures for 2019 include:
- Medication reconciliation post-discharge
- Comprehensive diabetes care
- Osteoporosis management in women who had a fracture
- Statin therapy for patients with cardiovascular disease
- Persistence of beta blocker treatment after a heart attack

Our quality improvement programs help doctors measure and improve care. Your Health Advantage and www.bcbsm.com/medicare give you information about these programs. For information about our quality improvement programs or guidelines, please contact our Quality Management department:
- By email at BCNQIQuestions@bcbsm.com
- By phone at 248-455-2808, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. TTY users should call 711.

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

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-800-450-3680 (TTY: 711).

ملحوظة: إذا كنت تتحدث العربية، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية تتوافر لك بالمجان. اتصل بقم 1-800-450-3680 (TTY: 711).
**STAY HEALTHY:** Schedule your yearly checkups today

You may only think about seeing your doctor when something goes wrong, but having a yearly preventive checkup, along with a physical exam, helps keep things going right. Try to schedule these visits (described below) early in the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF VISIT</th>
<th>PURPOSE OF VISIT</th>
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</table>
| Welcome to Medicare preventive visit | This one-time visit occurs during the first year you have Medicare, with no additional cost to you. It’s not a physical, but a special visit where you and your doctor may:  
  • Go over your personal and family health history  
  • Discuss your current health and medications  
  • Check your height, weight, blood pressure and vision  
  • Make sure you’re up to date on vaccines and screenings  |
| Yearly wellness visit                | Once you’ve had Medicare for more than 12 months, you can schedule a wellness visit every year with no additional cost to you. You and your doctor will develop a personalized plan to help you prevent disease and disability. Your doctor may:  
  • Review all your medications and health care providers  
  • Check your height, weight and blood pressure  
  • Discuss your risk factors and health concerns  
  • Provide a schedule for screenings and preventive services  |
| Physical exam                        | Yearly wellness visits are important, but they don’t include a physical exam. This type of hands-on exam may be covered under your Medicare Advantage plan – check your *Evidence of Coverage*. If it’s covered under your plan, you may have a copay. |

The combination of a wellness visit and physical exam lets you know how healthy you are today and gives you a plan for maintaining or improving your health.

**Sources include:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; *Clinical Liver Disease*; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Get the most from your next doctor visit

Write down your main concerns below and take this to your next appointment. This will help you get your concerns addressed by your doctor.

Doctor’s name: __________________________

Doctor’s phone number: ____________________

Appointment date/time: ____________________

(Please remember that you may have to wait before you see the doctor. He or she may be seeing another patient or dealing with an emergency. Your doctor will provide you with the same attention and care when it’s your turn to be seen.)

My first health issue is: ____________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

My second health issue is: ____________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

For each health issue, ask your doctor: “What do I need to do and why?” Use the other side of this card to take notes during your appointment.

Your plan is always with you.

No matter where you go, your Blue Cross plan information is always there with the Blue Cross mobile app. It’s a safe, secure way to carry your ID card and check your plan information. Download it today at the App Store or on Google Play.

You can also see your plan information on your computer by logging in to the members-only section of www.bcbsm.com/medicare. Click on the LOGIN tab at the upper right to sign in. Once registered, you can review your claims, see your out-of-pocket balances and read your plan documents, such as your Evidence of Coverage.

While you’re online, sign up to receive paperless plan documents and avoid paper clutter. We'll send you an email when new documents are ready to view.

With Blue Cross, we have you covered, no matter where you are.

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Now flip this card over for a chance to share your feedback on Your Health Advantage magazine.
Reader review: Tell us what you think

Fill out and return this card to us. Your comments and suggestions help ensure that Your Health Advantage magazine continues to meet your needs. Thank you!

1. The articles are clear and easy to understand.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ Neutral □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

2. The articles in this issue are helpful and interesting.
   □ Strongly agree □ Agree □ Neutral □ Disagree □ Strongly disagree

3. What other health topics would you like to read about?

4. What is your favorite healthy snack?

5. In the future, how would you like to receive your magazine?
   □ A paper copy by mail □ A link to an electronic copy by email
   □ Both paper and electronic

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Take your survey

TAKE OUR SURVEY
Please respond!

HELPFUL TIPS
1. Take notes or have someone come with you to take notes for you.
2. Bring a list of all medications, vitamins and supplements you’re currently taking.
3. If you’re on a tight schedule, call ahead to see if your doctor is running on time.
4. Bring a book or crossword puzzle to help pass the time if you have to wait.