

thrive

SPRING 2023

 BlueCross
BlueShield
Minnesota

a magazine for healthy choices

Page 8

**MARTHA
STEWART-
ARRADONDO, 76,**
IS CREATING
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR OTHERS.

Diving In

The wellness
benefits of
trying new
activities

Also inside

The importance of
colon cancer screening

Alternatives to
opioids

bluecrossmn.com/thrive

WELCOME

Hello members, and happy spring. We hope you're thawing out from the long winter and looking forward to warm days and exploring ways to get active.

There's no shortage of ways to enjoy this time of year, such as getting out to the parks, paths and other amenities we have available to us. Many of our members are regular walkers, but did you know there are a variety of ways to practice this activity? Some of those are even offered as competitive events at the annual Senior Games, both locally and nationally. Learn how to step up your walking game in Take Action on page 5.

And speaking of the Senior games, our cover feature in this edition, on page 8, features a regular participant and Blue Cross member, Martha Stewart-Arradondo. She leads an active life, from golfing to swimming, and has made it a goal to get other people involved.

As always, we encourage your feedback on **thrive.** and on the healthcare you are receiving. If you have story ideas, comments, or suggestions, email us at **thrivemagazine@bluecrossmn.com**. Thank you for choosing Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota for your health plan needs.

Monica R. Engel

Monica Engel
Senior Vice President
and President of Government Markets



BEHIND THE SCENES

Cover subject Martha Stewart-Arradondo sits down to tell her story at the Ridgedale YMCA in Minnetonka. Do you have a compelling story for the pages of **thrive.**? We'd love to hear it! **thrivemagazine@bluecrossmn.com**.



A new way to **thrive.**

This publication has long been dedicated to improving your experience as a Blue Cross member. From inspirational member stories to health and wellness advice to tips for making the most of your healthcare plan, each edition aims to help you get the most out of life.

In response to the way many members read **thrive.**, we are making some changes. Rather than four print editions, you will receive a larger, more robust edition two times each year. A third edition will appear in the summer on a newly designed **bluecrossmn.com/thrive.** There, you will also be able to find exclusive online content, including articles and videos, published throughout the year.

We hope the new approach adds to an even better experience with **thrive.** and your health plan. Share your feedback at **thrivemagazine@bluecrossmn.com**.

responsibly
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COVER AND TOP PHOTO BY JOE TRELEVEN

HEALTH BITES



Easily digestible tips, recipes and advice to feed your healthy lifestyle.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

The basics of high blood pressure

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a common condition. It happens when the blood vessel walls are under too much pressure from the blood as it circulates throughout the body. When high blood pressure is left untreated, it can increase the risk of heart attack, heart failure, stroke and kidney disease.

Two measures make up your blood pressure reading: systolic and diastolic blood pressure. When you get your blood pressure measured, systolic blood pressure is the number displayed on top and represents the blood pressure on the artery walls when the heart beats. Diastolic blood pressure is the bottom number and represents the pressure on the artery walls between beats.

Normal systolic blood pressure is less than 130. Normal diastolic blood pressure is less than 80.

There are often no symptoms of hypertension. However, some people can experience nosebleeds, headaches, vision changes, irregular heartbeat and pounding in the neck and ears. The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get it checked, and you can accomplish this in multiple ways. First, you can go to your doctor's office or pharmacy and they will check your blood pressure for you. You



can also use your over-the-counter (OTC) dollars to purchase a digital blood pressure monitor.* If you check your blood pressure at home, be sure to report it to your doctor.

If you have hypertension, your doctor may prescribe medication to help control it. There are lifestyle changes that can help:

- Get at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise most days — going on a walk, using a stationary bike or swimming are great low-impact options
- Eat a healthy diet — focus on whole grains, fruits and vegetables and limit salt, sugar and saturated fats
- Get eight hours of sleep each night
- Practice mindfulness or other stress management techniques
- Avoid alcohol
- Quit smoking

**If you incur charges above your quarterly allowance, they need to be paid in-person at a participating CVS.*



CHICKEN & VEGETABLE STIR-FRY

This healthy meal is packed with protein and vegetables, and is perfect for either lunch or dinner. It's as versatile as it is easy—use the vegetables suggested or swap out for what is on hand in your fridge or freezer. Serve with a side of brown rice.

INGREDIENTS

1 raw chicken breast, cut into cubes	1/2 cup mushrooms
1 tablespoon olive oil or vegetable oil	1/2 cup snap peas
1/2 cup sliced bell pepper	For sauce:
1/2 cup diced onion (more or less to taste)	1/4 cup orange juice
	1/4 cup water
	2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
	1 tablespoon honey

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oil in a large frying pan over medium heat.
2. After a few minutes, add in the chicken and continue to stir until all chicken pieces are lightly browned.
3. Add in the vegetables and stir together over medium heat until each vegetable is soft. Then, turn heat down to low.
4. In a small bowl, mix together the ingredients for the sauce.
5. Pour the sauce into a different pan and bring to a simmer for a few minutes until it begins to thicken.
6. Once thickened, pour the sauce over the chicken and vegetables. Increase the heat and stir together for a couple minutes.
7. Serve over cooked rice.



KEEPING A HEALTHY SMILE



The Doc is in. Dr. Amy Fendrich answers your health, medical and wellness questions

Member: A friend told me that dental problems can create other health issues not related to your teeth. Is this true? —*Robert, Maple Grove*

Dr. Fendrich: Thank you for the question, Robert. Your friend is right — our oral health is an extension of our overall health, and how you care for your teeth and gums can impact whether you develop other diseases.

It doesn't matter if you have a full set of your natural teeth or dentures, keeping your mouth clean and healthy is vital. Your mouth is an entry point for all sorts of bacteria. Left unchecked, those bacteria can lead to gum disease, tooth decay and other ailments. Examples include cardiovascular disease, pneumonia and endocarditis, an infection of the heart that can then lead to other infections.

Certain conditions, such as diabetes and osteoporosis, can put you at higher risk for oral health problems. Age, too, increases risk. The best way to avoid dental problems — and the other health issues they can create — is to brush and

floss regularly and see your dentist each year.

Your health plan provides robust dental coverage through Delta Dental. Each year, that includes two routine or periodontal

cleanings. For those who need the periodontal scaling and root planing, this replaces the traditional routine cleanings.

You can also get a free electronic toothbrush and three replacement heads (call your Care Coordinator for details).

It's a good idea to develop a relationship with a primary dentist, just as you would with your doctor. That way, they can get to

know your oral health history and better serve your needs. If you don't have a regular dentist, we can help you find one. Just call the dental number on the back of your member ID card.



DID YOU KNOW?

Blue Cross has the largest Medicare dental network in Minnesota.



To submit a question for Ask the Doctor, email thrivemagazine@bluecrossmn.com.



STEP UP YOUR WALK



RACE WALKER ANITA MACIAS-MATTERS COMPETING AT THE 2022 MINNESOTA SENIOR GAMES.

Enjoy a workout while socializing or competing

Next time you take a walk around the block, consider boosting the intensity of your workout through race walking.

This doesn't mean you need to necessarily speed up the pace. Race walking is a competitive sport that's growing in popularity, but not everyone does it for the competition. It's a sport people of all ages can enjoy, and all you need to get started is a good pair of walking shoes.

Start by going slow and learning the technique, and slowly work your way up to a faster pace.

The rules

In race walking, you must maintain contact with the ground at all times. This means that your back toe can't leave the ground until the heel of your front foot has touched the ground. The technique also requires your leading leg to be straightened when your foot makes contact with the ground, and it must remain straightened until the body passes over it.

The benefits

Race walking utilizes many different muscle groups in your body. It's a fantastic cardiovascular and low-impact exercise, and can vary in intensity based on how fast you go. It's also a great way to get moving and socialize with others — both of which can go a long way in boosting your mental health.

Learn to race walk

Race walking can seem simple to learn, but it's important to know and apply the proper techniques. You can find plenty of helpful videos on **YouTube.com** that illustrate how to race walk, or by visiting **racewalk.com**.

Get involved

If you're looking for ways to get involved with race walking, and live in the Twin Cities area, check out the Twin Cities Race Walkers at **twincitiesracewalkers.org**. They offer race walking clinics, and weekly walks open to individuals of all speeds. Bring your dog, a friend, or go solo and socialize with new friends.



MANAGING URINARY INCONTINENCE

How to get bladder problems under control

For many older adults, it can be a challenge to make it to the bathroom in time. Urinary incontinence — the loss of bladder control — is a common problem. Some people may only occasionally leak urine when they cough or sneeze, or while exercising. And others may experience a more heightened case that has a big impact on their daily lives.

Though common, urinary incontinence should not be an accepted part of aging. In most cases, it can often be treated, controlled or stopped.

Why does it happen?

Urinary incontinence occurs when the muscles located around the bladder aren't working properly. According to the National Institute on Aging, this can be due to a variety of reasons, including underlying medical conditions or simply everyday habits. Or, it could be happening because of a

treatable medical condition, like constipation or a urinary tract infection. Women can also be more prone to urinary incontinence if they have experienced childbirth.

Management and prevention

Your doctor can help you determine the severity of your urinary incontinence, and a

solution that fits your lifestyle. They may recommend bladder control training. This can involve a variety of methods, such as timed voiding. In this exercise, you can schedule time to urinate, such as every hour. From there, you can gradually extend the time between your bathroom breaks. Other treatments may include pelvic muscle exercises, or urgency suppression, in which you try to distract your mind from needing to urinate.

There are also certain medications that your doctor may prescribe for your urinary incontinence.

While urinary incontinence may seem to sneak up on older adults, there are ways to help prevent a more serious case. Aim to maintain a healthy weight and avoid bladder irritants, such as acidic foods, alcohol or caffeine. Since constipation can cause urinary incontinence, it can be helpful to prevent that by including more fiber in your diet.

If you're experiencing urinary incontinence, it's important to speak with your doctor. While it may feel embarrassing to discuss, it's often a treatable condition, and your doctor can help.



DID YOU KNOW?

Some medications can cause bladder control problems. Be sure to talk to your doctor about your prescribed medications and whether they might play a role in any incontinence you experience.

Defining Your Bladder Battle

According to the Mayo Clinic, there are different types of urinary incontinence, and some may even experience a combination of these:

Stress incontinence: You leak urine when there is pressure put on your bladder. This could happen by exercising, sneezing, coughing, laughing or lifting heavy objects.

Urge incontinence: This occurs when you feel an intense and urgent need to urinate, and experience an involuntary loss of urine because you cannot make it to the bathroom in time.

Overflow incontinence: Small amounts of urine leak from your bladder, which never completely empties.

Functional incontinence: This is common in individuals who may have normal bladder control, but have a physical or mental impairment that limits them from making it to the toilet in time. For example, you may not be able to walk quickly enough to find a bathroom.







DIVE IN


Martha Stewart-Arradondo lives an active life and creates opportunities for others to do the same

by Kelsey Hanson

FOR MARTHA STEWART-ARRADONDO, it's never too late to learn something new. The 76-year-old St. Louis Park resident is living proof. She has made physical activity and social engagement lifetime priorities. And she seizes every chance she has to compete, something she didn't have an opportunity to do throughout much of her life. By building groups in activities she's passionate about, she has also opened the door for others to get involved.

Prioritizing all forms of activity — physical, social, mental — is Stewart-Arradondo's legacy.

"I hope to set an example and be a role model for my kids, grandkids, and great-grandkids," she says.



“ I hope to set an example and be a role model for my kids, grandkids, and great-grandkids. ”

GET INVOLVED

Black and brown communities have much higher drowning mortalities compared with the white community. V3 Sports is combating this significant health and wellness inequity. This new state of the art, community based, regional-destination for aquatic and sporting events will be home to the 2021 Olympic Trials pool and provide culturally-informed programming. Learn more at v3sports.org.

Driven to overcome

Stewart-Arradondo was born in Des Moines, Iowa, but grew up in Minneapolis. She faced many difficulties in her youth, including living in a series of foster homes until she was an adult. She attributes her motivation to connect and build community with others to her childhood challenges.

“Every bad thing you hear about foster homes probably happened to me,” she says. “And there are some advantages to that. It made me independent, it made me a good judge of character, and, probably, it made me more driven in life.”

Like other women her age, Stewart-Arradondo grew up in a time when women’s athletics were limited. Competitive by nature, she was deprived of the opportunity to compete. She has made up for that as an adult.

She has been involved in many activities in her adulthood — softball, racquetball, golf, swimming, and pickleball, to name a few. She doesn’t just play these sports, she gets immersed in them. She’s currently in a pickleball league at Lifetime Fitness and on the board of Minnesota Masters Swimming.

She’s also a co-founder of Black Women on Course (BWOC), a golf league for Black women, and is working with V3 Sports, a planned fitness and swimming facility in North Minneapolis, to bring Ebony Mermaids, a swim club for Black women, to life.

STEWART-ARRADONDO AFTER A GAME OF RACQUETBALL WITH FRIENDS ANN EILBRACHT AND GREG MCMOORE.



Her passion for these activities and many others throughout her life have resulted in lasting friendships.

“I don’t know many people young or old who are as active, curious and open to new things as Martha,” says longtime friend Ann Eilbracht, who met Stewart-Arradondo playing racquetball about 40 years ago.

Healthier, happier

Stewart-Arradondo credits her regular activity, throughout her adulthood, for her strong physical and emotional health. She believes that her athletic and social engagements have helped her avoid experiencing major health issues.

“I do have two torn meniscuses,” she says, “and after a certain age they won’t do surgery. Swimming and the occasional cortisone shot take care of my knee pain when it flares up.”



GET OUT THERE

Staying active as you age can help you live longer. Getting involved in sports like golf or swimming, helps relieve stress, reduce the risk of health issues, and improves your overall well-being.



DID YOU KNOW?

Being socially active combats loneliness, and there are several ways for older adults to continue being engaged with their local community. The National Institute on Aging says that volunteering, calling friends and relatives on the phone, and adopting a pet are examples of ways to positively impact your social and emotional health.

But there is another important reason that she prioritized her physical and social activities throughout her adulthood: “Because I might live longer,” she says.

Science agrees. Mental Health America emphasizes the importance of good relationships. People with strong social connections tend to be happier, and more importantly, social and community ties were shown to increase longevity in study participants.

Of course, physical activity has well documented benefits including better cardiovascular health and improved strength and balance. But social activity, whether that is through physical activity or not, has a holistic, positive impact that improves physical health, mental health and brain function.

A 2020 study from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine shows that older adults who report feeling lonely have an increased risk of heart disease and stroke, in addition to mental and cognitive health issues like depression and dementia.

Stewart-Arradondo says her secret to staying engaged in her social circle is one small word — yes.

“I won’t ski,” she says, “but I’ll do anything else. If a friend calls me up and invites me somewhere, I always say ‘yes.’”

Increasing inclusion

What is most notable about Stewart-Arradondo’s involvement in competitive sports is that she doesn’t just pave the way for her own participation, but she blazes

STEWART-ARRADONDO HAS FOUND SUCCESS COMPETING IN SWIMMING COMPETITIONS ACROSS MINNESOTA AND THE U.S.



**“She just dove in head first
and she’s absolutely fearless.”**

— Tom Hodgson,
Minnesota Masters
Swimming Coach



THE BENEFITS OF SWIMMING

For older adults, swimming is an excellent way to exercise. It works all muscle groups and is considered a complete workout. Other health benefits include:

- Improved cardiovascular health
- Reduced joint pain
- Improved posture and flexibility
- Stress relief



COMING SOON:
SEE A VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH MARTHA AT [BLUECROSSMN.COM/THRIVE](https://bluecrossmn.com/thrive).



“WHEN YOU MEET HER, SHE’S LIKE A LIGHT,” DR. AYANNA RAKHU SAYS. RAKHU, PICTURED HERE, IS WORKING WITH STEWART-ARRADONDO TO DEVELOP THE EBONY MERMAIDS GROUP.

a trail for other Black women to get involved, too. Twenty-five years as a corporate meeting planner helped her to develop the necessary skills to organize people and events — something she still passionately does today through her own company, Stewart-Arradondo Planning Group.

She has been instrumental in creating safe spaces for Black women to participate and compete in sports that have traditionally existed in white spaces, such as golf and swimming. African Americans were long-denied access to golf courses and swimming pools across the U.S. Participants of color are still underrepresented in these sports, something Stewart-Arradondo is trying to change.

When she co-founded BWOC, the vision was to build a community of Black women golfers from all ages and skill levels. She

wanted to create a safe space for women of color to learn and practice golf. Currently, BWOC hosts women between the ages of 30 and 80, and all members participate at various levels of play.

Of course, there are both physical and social benefits of hitting the links. But many of the women joined the golf group because of the potential financial benefits, as well.

“We all know that business deals happen on the golf course,” she says. “Many of the women in BWOC are professionals who want to be able to use golf as a way to network.”

While swimming may not have the same business benefits as golf, Stewart-Arradondo thinks it’s equally important for everyone to learn to swim. Stewart-Arradondo began swimming later in life as a way to maintain her weight. Shortly after she learned how to swim, she joined the Minnesota Masters Swimming


and began competing. She also became a certified swim instructor because she was motivated to help adults learn to swim.

“Everyone over 30 who doesn’t swim has their own story,” she says. “Whether they almost drowned once or were thrown into the water. I am excited to get Ebony Mermaids started because I know there is a need for this kind of group.”

Her swim club is currently in the planning stages. She is working together with V3 Sports to build a structured program.

“She just dove in head first and she’s absolutely fearless,” Tom Hodgson, a coach at Minnesota Masters Swimming, says. “When that V3 facility is open, I just see Martha taking a whole bunch of people by the hand, probably starting with women of color, and getting them involved.”

Stewart-Arradondo might be a role model for her family, but she is also an example of what older adults can achieve, and how they can feel, regardless of their age.

“Staying active is how I feel healthy and youthful,” she says. “I think staying active should be everyone’s priority, and it’s never too late to start.” 



USE YOUR BENEFITS

Using your SilverSneakers® membership is a great way to connect with others and to be a lifelong learner, like Stewart-Arradondo. You can use SilverSneakers to access group fitness classes at your local gym or through their digital platform.



HITTING THE LINKS: STEWART-ARRADONDO TEES OFF AT A LOCAL GOLF COURSE. SHE STRIVES TO MAKE GOLF A MORE INCLUSIVE SPORT THROUGH HER GROUP, BWOC.



STAY AHEAD OF COLON CANCER

Screening early and regularly can help reduce risk *by Jake Weyer*



Darwin Demeny has always lived an active lifestyle. He spent 30 years as a baseball, softball and soccer coach, and at 72 years-old he still enjoys completing home improvement projects of all sizes. But last fall his life changed when his first colonoscopy, prompted by unusual bowel movements, led to a Stage 4 Colon Cancer diagnosis.

"I had no signs of anything until I went in to get the screening," Demeny says. "I probably should have gone in previously and had some screening done, but I've been healthy, I've been active, and I do a lot of physical stuff."

This year brings a change to preventive screenings for colon cancer, the fourth most common cancer among men and women in the U.S.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recommended age for starting regular colon screening is now age 45, instead of age 50. And, if a non-invasive test shows a positive result, Medicare will now cover a follow-up colonoscopy, meaning no out-of-pocket costs for either test.

The move follows changes to screening guidelines from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force aimed at finding and treating the cancer earlier, in the hope of saving more lives. About one in 23 men and one in 25 women will be diagnosed with colon cancer in their lifetime, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS). But caught early, it is highly treatable and often curable.

"The reason behind the screening is to catch polyps early where they can be removed, before they turn into an invasive cancer that needs more extensive therapy or surgery," said Dr. Robert Delaune, an oncologist and hematologist with Minnesota Oncology, where he serves as medical director for the East Metro. "A lot of patients can be screened, have polyps removed, and reduce their risk of cancer."

Though colon cancer is being seen at younger ages, it can also show up later in life, making screenings important all the way through age 75 and sometime beyond, depending on your risk factors. Delaune outlines those risks, colon cancer symptoms and screening options.

Know your risk

Some of the primary risk factors for colon cancer include:

- Family history — if you have an immediate family member — a parent or sibling — who had colon cancer.
- Other ailments — if you have any kind of inflammatory bowel disease, such as Crohn's disease.
- Poor diet — eating a diet high in red meat and low in vegetables.
- Lack of exercise — little or no regular physical activity.
- Alcohol use — having more than three alcoholic beverages a week.
- Smoking — particularly people who have smoked for a long time, are more likely to develop colon cancer.



DID YOU KNOW?

About 7 in 10 U.S. adults are up to date on colon cancer screenings.



DID YOU KNOW?

About one in 23 men and one in 25 women will be diagnosed with colon cancer in their lifetime.

Common symptoms

“The symptoms you’d be looking for are mainly a change in bowel habits,” Delaune says.

For example, signs might include a significant increase in constipation. Or, if you are experiencing lingering abdominal pain, or any type of rectal bleeding. Patients will sometimes mistake bleeding from colon cancer for hemorrhoidal bleeding. What’s most important is to look for anything that is out of the ordinary, and if you are unsure, it’s best to talk to your doctor.

It’s common for people with early-stage colon cancer to have no

symptoms, which is why screening is important.

Getting screened

Though colon cancer is still a leading cause of death in the U.S., those rates have been dropping for years, largely because of the success of screenings. There are several ways to be screened for colon cancer. It’s best to talk with your doctor about your risks and what test is best for you.

The ACS breaks screenings into two categories: non-invasive stool-based tests and visual exams that use a scope or X-ray. Examples of



Colon Cancer Screenings

The following procedures can help you detect colon cancer early. Talk to your doctor about what screenings are best for you.

PROCEDURE	FREQUENCY
Colonoscopy	Every 10 years
Flexible sigmoidoscopy	Every 5 years
Cologuard®	Every 3 years
Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)	Annually



stool-based tests include Cologuard® and the fecal occult blood test (FOBT), which can be done in the privacy of your home. The most common form of a visual test is the colonoscopy, an in-clinic procedure that uses a scope to look for polyps. Another example is the flexible sigmoidoscopy, which is similar to a colonoscopy, but does not examine the entire colon.

There are pros and cons to each test and frequency recommendations differ for each. Though the invasive nature of colonoscopies make some people uneasy, Delaune says the process has become easier, particularly the preparation and recovery.


“What’s most important is that you get screened,” he says.

Treatment

Cancerous polyps can often be removed during a colonoscopy. In other cases, surgery might be required, as well as a combination of chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or drug treatments. Delaune says treatments are advancing all the time, with some immunotherapy drugs showing the possibility of eliminating cancer without surgery.

“These are exciting times for treatment,” he says. “There are many options available.”

After three rounds of treatment, Demeny’s vitals and blood work are promising.

“If I was doing it over,” Demeny says, “I would’ve gotten checked earlier when I didn’t have any signs.” 



OPIOID ALTERNATIVES



Dr. Anita Sharma provides professional insight and practical tips to answer your medication questions

Member: I have a surgery coming up and my doctor said he would prescribe me Vicodin or Morphine for pain management. I will be using it for a long period of time and am concerned about dependency or side effects. Should I request an alternative? —*Deb, St. Louis Park*

Anita: Thank you for this important question, Deborah. Vicodin and Morphine are in a class of drugs called Opioids that are frequently prescribed to manage pain. They are usually prescribed for short-term use, but can be prescribed for longer periods of time for certain conditions. Opioids were common in the past, but doctors have tried to prescribe them less in recent years because of widespread problems with misuse and addiction. Using opioids with other classes of medications (like benzodiazepines) can increase the risk of dizziness and falls, especially in the Medicare population.

If you have been prescribed an opioid for long-term pain management, it is important to discuss with your doctor how to safely wean off of the drug. Other side effects should also be discussed. Those include dependency, irregular heartbeat, increased

heart attack risk, depression, constipation, abdominal pain, tolerance increases, weak bones and overdose risk.

Many alternative medications are available. Those include acetaminophen, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen, and topical products, such as a lidocaine patch. Your healthcare plan covers many over-the-counter medications. Additionally, you may use your quarterly over-the-counter allowance to help you obtain other wellness products.

If you have a Part D prescription drug plan, there are several prescription options depending on your needs. Talk to your doctor about finding the right alternative that is covered by your plan. Alternatives to medicine — talking to a mental health professional, acupuncture, or chiropractic services — might also be covered by your plan. Call the number on the back of your member ID card to learn more.



To submit a question for Ask the Pharmacist, email thrivemagazine@bluecrossmn.com.



HEALTHIER DAYS AT HOME

Last year, many Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Secure BlueSM members enjoyed the In-Home Wellness Visit without ever leaving their home. Blue Cross works together with Signify Health to offer this important benefit at no cost to you. We are offering this program again this year. Assessing your health every year can help ensure you enjoy more healthy days at home. Upon completion of your In-Home Wellness Visit with Signify Health, we'll send you a \$25 gift card redeemable for food items at any restaurant or grocery store where Visa is accepted.

Call toll-free 1-844-226-8218 (TTY 711), Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time. Or, visit schedule.signifyhealth.com to schedule your visit today.



FINDING RELIEF

Respite care offers necessary time off for primary caregivers

Being a primary caregiver is a full-time job. But the reality is that most caregivers aren't able to dedicate every minute to the care of their loved one. The work is demanding physically, emotionally and financially. Without relief, there's a risk of burnout, which can negatively impact care, as well as the lives of both the caregiver and recipient.

Respite care provides a much-needed break for caregivers for a specified period of time. That could be during a 30-minute trip to the grocery store or on a long vacation. Respite care is a temporary service, provided by qualified professionals, that allows caregivers to rest, recharge, or take care of other business.

Though there are many options available, the challenge many caregivers face is where to start in finding respite care for their loved one. Here are some key considerations to help you find the right fit:

- What is your primary respite need? Do you need extended time away for self-care? Do you need a timeslot each week for errands? Do you need help with a specific aspect of care, such as personal care (bathing or nail trimming, for example) for your loved one?
- In what setting do you need respite services? You can find services to help at your home, in an assisted living community, or elsewhere.



- What is your budget? Medicare does not cover respite costs, but is a benefit available to members who qualify for Elderly Waiver. A caregiver should contact the member's Care Coordinator to discuss this option.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs does offer some respite benefits, depending on coverage. If your loved one is a veteran, call 1-888-546-5838.

Once you have a good handle on the scope of services you are looking for, you can begin searching for help. Contacting your Care Coordinator, using the number on the back of your member ID card, is a good place to start. The Minnesota Senior LinkAge Line, which offers a wide range of resources for older adults, is another good place to find help. You can find it online at mn.gov/senior-linkage-line or call 1-800-333-2433. They are open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Another organization, the ARCH National Respite Network, offers a service locator on its website, archrespite.org.

The benefits of having a break, even a small one, when you need it are important for both you and the loved one you care for.

Attention. If you need free help interpreting this document, call the above number.

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ملاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية لترجمة هذه الوثيقة، اتصل على الرقم أعلاه.

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BUILDING HEALTHY GENERATIONS

Our Foundation aims to improve health for all Minnesotans

Blue Cross believes everyone should be able to live their healthiest life. Unfortunately, there are many individuals, families and communities across the state who experience unfair and unjust barriers that keep them from achieving their best health. That's why the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation partners with community organizations to build healthy generations, with an intentional focus on addressing the root issues of health inequities — namely racism, discrimination and marginalization of communities.

The Foundation's mission is to build community partnerships to advance racial and health equity. It does this through strategically focusing on key social drivers of health where it has strong partners, momentum, and history.

Every four years, the Foundation reviews the current state of health in Minnesota, by listening to community partners, and reflecting on its strengths and areas of growth. This process informs the Foundation's strategic plan to continue addressing the root causes of racial and health inequities.

Since the Foundation's last strategic plan in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic and the reckoning for racial justice made these inequities even more apparent.

The Foundation's new strategic plan intentionally addresses health inequity through three focus areas.



First, the Equitable Care and Coverage program seeks to increase healthcare coverage across Minnesota, support community solutions to accessing equitable care, and increase awareness about communities most impacted by a lack of healthcare access.

The Healthy Start Program is focused on early childhood care and education, particularly for vulnerable young children and their caregivers. The strong connection between health and quality early childhood care and education is well-established, with research showing that what happens in the first five years of life sets the stage for lifelong health.

Lastly, through the Healthy Connections program, the Foundation's grantee partners work within and across communities to increase connection, decrease social isolation and address community trauma. This work seeks to generate a deep sense of belonging within all communities, since people who feel a sense of connection generally experience better health outcomes.



CODE MODE

Finding time each day to do brain teasers can positively impact your mental and emotional health. Puzzles are a simple and effective way to increase your clarity of thought, reduce stress, and improve your mood and memory.

A cryptogram is a type of puzzle in which each letter of a phrase is replaced by a different letter or number. This cryptogram uses numbers. For example, in this puzzle, the number 22 represents the letter A in the answer. Use the key and your knowledge of words and sentences to solve this spring-themed riddle.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
22				21										19				20		9					

_____ A _____ O E S _____ U _____ E _____
 10 26 22 12 7 19 21 20 9 18 10 26 21 14
 _____ E _____ A _____ O _____ E S _____ O _____ ?
 12 26 21 15 22 16 14 17 19 8 21 20 24 19 10 14
 _____ U _____ E _____ A S _____
 9 8 5 15 21 6 6 22 20

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WHAT GOES UP WHEN THE RAIN COMES DOWN? UMBRELLAS

ANSWER:

thrive.

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