

# thrive.

SUMMER 2024

 BlueCross  
BlueShield  
Minnesota

a magazine for health and your best life

## Hooked on Health

How angling enriches  
the mind, body  
and spirit

Page 8

FISHING LEGEND  
**AL LINDNER**, 79,  
SHARES THE  
HEALTH BENEFITS  
OF LIFE ON  
THE WATER

### Also inside

Tips for staying safe  
in the heat

Ways to reduce skin  
cancer risk

Spotting Alzheimer's  
symptoms

# WELCOME



Hello, members. I hope this edition of **thrive.** finds you happy, healthy and enjoying this beautiful Minnesota summer. Now is the perfect time of year to enjoy the great outdoors with your friends and family. From birdwatching to gardening to hiking in one of our state parks or fishing on one of our many lakes, the possibilities are endless.

Before heading out into the heat, though, it's important to be prepared. On page 4, Dr. Michelle Hill shares some information about steps you can take to prevent heat-related illnesses. And in AsWe Age on page 6, you can find advice for protecting your skin from the sun.

You may recognize our cover subject, legendary angler and TV host Al Lindner. At age 79, he's still spending his days out on the water, searching for new fish to catch on Minnesota's lakes. Find out how his passion for fishing has helped keep him in good health.

As always, we encourage your feedback on **thrive.** and the healthcare you are receiving. If you have comments, suggestions or a story you think should be told in the next edition, email us at [thrivemagazine@bluecrossmn.com](mailto:thrivemagazine@bluecrossmn.com).

*Monica R. Engel*

Monica Engel  
Senior Vice President and President  
of Government Markets at Blue Cross  
and Blue Shield of Minnesota



## BEHIND THE SCENES

Al Lindner strikes a pose for photographer Joe Treleven on Gilbert Lake in Brainerd, Minnesota.

Check out the video at [bluecrossmn.com/thrive](https://bluecrossmn.com/thrive).



## ORDER YOUR CALENDAR

As a sign of our appreciation for your membership, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota produces a wall calendar that is exclusively for you. Your calendar offers:

- Important dates and holidays
- Details about your health plan
- Health and wellness tips
- Information about annual health screenings

Next year's calendar is available by order only. To order or decline your 2025 calendar, visit [bluecrossmn.com/memberealendar](https://bluecrossmn.com/memberealendar). Your calendar will be mailed to you at the end of the year.

# CONTENTS

**thrive.**  
SUMMER 2024

ON THE COVER



**8** **COVER FEATURE**  
**Hooked on Health**  
Fishing icon Al Lindner shares how fishing fuels wellness and purpose.

**14**  
**Alzheimer's Awareness**  
Understanding the signs and how to keep your mind sharp.



## DEPARTMENTS

**2** **HEALTH BITES**  
**Summer Reminders**

Tips to keep yourself healthy and safe this season

**4** **ASK THE DOCTOR**  
**Safe in the Summer Heat**

Preventing heat-related illness in the warmest months

**5** **TAKE ACTION**  
**Backyard Bags**

A fun outdoor activity anyone can do

**6** **AS WE AGE**  
**Keep Your Skin Safe**

How to spot skin cancer and tips for prevention

**18** **PLAN PERKS**  
**Understanding Virtual Care**

Gaining the confidence to access telemedicine

**20** **ASK THE PHARMACIST**  
**Medication and the Sun**

The basics of photosensitivity and prevention

**22** **CAREGIVER CORNER**  
**Transitioning Care**

Helping your loved one enter assisted living

**24** **IN OUR COMMUNITY**  
**Finding Food Sovereignty**

Food sovereignty in Indigenous communities

COVER AND TOP PHOTO BY JOE TRELEVEN

# HEALTH BITES



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

## SUMMER REMINDERS

Tips to keep yourself healthy and safe this season

### Healthy Eating

Your fruit and vegetable intake is a key part of your diet. Luckily, summer provides a delicious selection of seasonal produce that you can stock up on for hot days. Some seasonal fruits include strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and tomatoes, while seasonal vegetables vary from sweet corn to beets.

### Water Safety

It's important that before you dive in and spend time in the water this summer, you are practicing water safety. Swim with others and make sure you're staying hydrated and taking breaks from the sun when needed. If you're doing water activities like

swimming in a lake or spending time on a boat, you should wear a life jacket. When walking on pool decks or slippery floors, move slowly and consider wearing swim shoes or other appropriate footwear.

### Beat the Bugs

As Minnesotans, we know that warmer weather means more bugs. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there

are several ways you can protect yourself from tick, mosquito and other bug bites, including:

- Wearing EPA-registered insect repellent
- Wearing long sleeves and long pants when possible
- Checking your body and your clothes for ticks after spending time outside
- Avoiding wooded or brush areas with high grass and leaf litter



## BARBECUE TURKEY BURGER

A healthy spin on a summer classic, this barbecue turkey burger recipe from Mayo Clinic is packed with protein and zesty flavor. Serves two.

### INGREDIENTS

- ½ pound ground turkey breast
- 1 cup chopped onion
- ½ cup dry oats
- ¼ cup ketchup
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 whole-wheat buns

### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the grill or skillet to medium heat.
2. In a medium bowl, mix the turkey breast, onion, oats, ketchup, brown sugar, chili powder, paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, salt, black pepper and cayenne pepper. Form the mixture into two 4-ounce patties.
3. Spray the cooking surface with cooking spray and place the patties on top. Cook for approximately 5 minutes on each side until the patties reach an internal temperature of 160° F. Remove from heat and allow them to rest until reaching 165° F. Serve on buns and add your favorite veggie toppings.

Find this recipe and full nutrition information at [bluecrossmn.com/thrive](https://bluecrossmn.com/thrive)



SOURCE: MAYO CLINIC

# SAFE IN THE SUMMER HEAT

The Doc is in. Dr. Michelle Hill answers your health, medical and wellness questions



**Member:** I'm a regular walker and love getting outside, but I've been having a harder time handling the heat without feeling a little woozy. Should I be concerned about this?  
— Meredith, Columbia Heights

**Dr. Hill:** Thank you, Meredith. First, it's important that you talk to your doctor right away about your symptoms. However, what you are experiencing is not uncommon. As the temperatures rise, the risk of heat-related illnesses does too, and those age 65 or older are at an even higher risk. This is because, as we get older, our bodies aren't able to regulate body temperature as well. Chronic health conditions like diabetes and heart disease, as well as certain medications, can also leave you prone to heat-related illness.

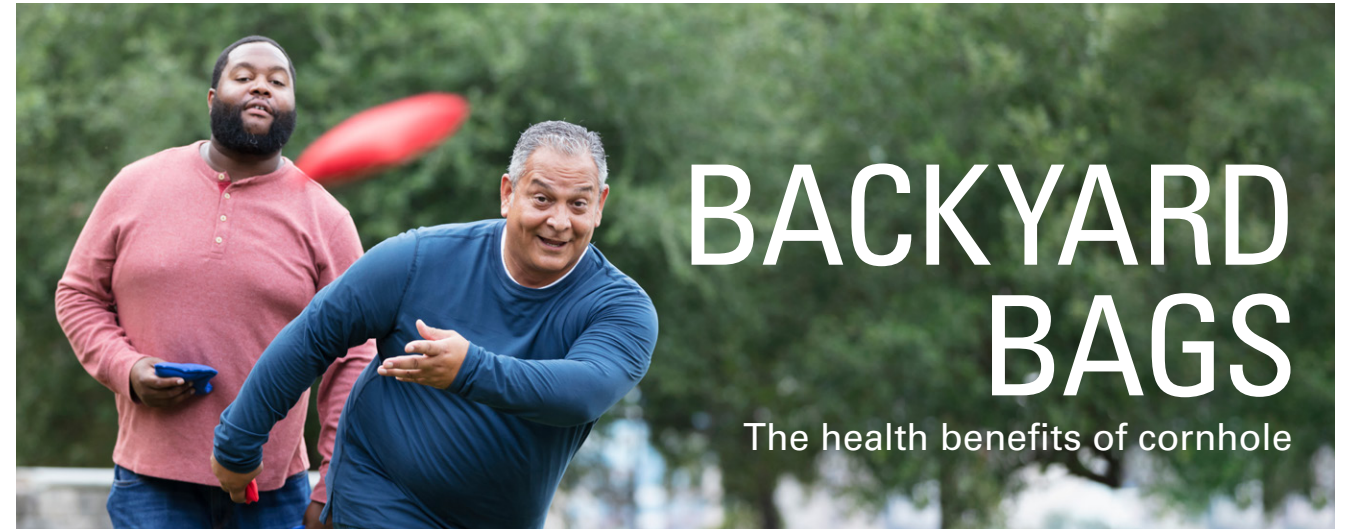
There are several types of heat-related illnesses that range in severity, including sunburn, heat cramping, heat exhaustion and the most severe: heat stroke. Heat stroke happens when your body can no longer regulate its temperature. It can cause severe damage to your body and can even be fatal. Symptoms of heat stroke include high body temperature, confusion, dizziness, nausea, excessive sweating and loss of consciousness.

The good news is that there are precautions you can take to prevent heat-related illnesses while you're having fun outside this summer, including:

- ❑ **Staying hydrated** - Carry a water bottle with you when going out on hot days, and limit your alcohol and caffeine intake.
- ❑ **Checking the weather** - Limit your time outdoors on days of extreme heat and during the hottest time of the day.
- ❑ **Dressing appropriately** - Loose, lightweight clothes can help keep your body temperature regulated.
- ❑ **Monitoring your medications** - Talk to your doctor to see if your medications may leave you more sensitive to heat.



If you find yourself experiencing symptoms of heat-related illness, seek medical attention right away.



Whether you call it bags, beanbag toss or its official name, cornhole, the game is a staple summer activity for many Minnesotans. From backyard barbecues to local breweries, it can be played by people of all ages just about anywhere — as long as you have a set of boards and bags. And while cornhole is typically thought to be a laid back lawn game, it actually is an official sport at the National Senior Games and can provide you with a variety of health benefits.

### How to play

The goal of cornhole is simple — be the first person or team to score 21 points. To play, you'll need a set of two standard cornhole boards and a total of eight bean bags that weigh around one pound. You can typically find cornhole equipment online or at a sporting goods store.

The American Cornhole Association says cornhole boards should be placed around 27 feet apart when playing — although they recommend 12 to 15 feet for seniors,

depending on ability. Using underhand tosses, players take turns throwing cornhole bags to the opposite board. When bags land in the hole, that team earns three points. Bags that land on top of the board are worth one point. Cornhole can be played in a singles or doubles format. To learn more about the rules of cornhole, visit [playcornhole.org/pages/rules](https://playcornhole.org/pages/rules). There are several cornhole leagues throughout the state that you can join as well.

### The benefits

While cornhole is typically a game played at parties or picnics, it can still provide you with some health benefits. It's a low-impact activity that can be played by people of varying abilities and requires hand-eye coordination and balance to be successful. The U.S. Department of Agriculture notes that outdoor recreational activities — like cornhole — can help reduce stress, improve physical fitness and benefit a person's overall health and wellness. Plus, as a social sport, cornhole can help boost your mental health and your sense of community.



On a beautiful sunny day, it feels so good to get outside for a walk or trip to the park with your grandkids. But it's important to keep sun safety top of mind.

Skin cancer risk increases throughout our lives — one in five Americans will develop it by the time they reach 70 years old, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. Ultraviolet rays from sunlight can make you feel warm and happy, but they are the main culprit behind skin cancer. These rays damage DNA in skin cells, which can gradually develop into skin cancer over time.

Skin cancer is divided into two main categories:

**Nonmelanoma skin cancer**

Includes basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma, the top two most common forms of skin cancer that affect more than three million people in the U.S. every year. Cancerous spots start in the top layer of your skin and most often appear on sun-exposed areas, like your face, neck and arms.

**Melanoma skin cancer**

Considered the most serious type of skin cancer. What's worrisome is that the rate of melanoma among adults over age 80 has been on the rise, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. Melanomas most often show up on the chest, back and legs,

but this type of cancer is also more invasive and can spread to other places in the body.

Skin cancer is highly treatable. Most nonmelanoma skin cancers can be cured with treatments like a minor surgery to remove the cancerous spot on the skin. And if melanoma is caught before it spreads, 99% of cases are treatable.

The first step, though, is identifying suspicious spots on your skin — and flagging them with your doctor or dermatologist. Experts recommend paying attention to new or changing spots on your skin and watching for the ABCDEs of skin cancer. If you notice a spot that's in line with the criteria below, contact your provider:

- **Asymmetrical:** An irregular shape
- **Border:** An irregular or jagged border
- **Color:** Uneven color
- **Diameter:** Larger than the size of a pea
- **Evolving:** Has changed over the last weeks or months

**Protect your skin as you age**

The reality is that even though most skin cancers are found in older adults, less than half of people 65 and older protect themselves when they spend time in the sun, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While sunscreen is one of the cornerstones of sun protection, there are actually five

things the CDC recommends doing to safeguard your skin. Choosing a combination of strategies will maximize protection to prevent burns and lessen skin cancer risk. Here's what you can do — starting today:

**Slather on sunscreen**

Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF 30 or higher. This type of sunscreen will protect against UVA and UVB rays, both of which contribute to skin cancer. Reapply as frequently as directed on the sunscreen bottle.

**Seek out shade**

Whether you're sitting under a tree at your grandkid's soccer game, bringing an umbrella to the beach or setting up a chair under a canopy at the backyard BBQ, shade is your friend.

**Wear a wide-brimmed hat**

Baseball caps and bucket hats are nice, but a wide-brimmed hat with at least a 3-inch brim will shield your face, scalp, ears and back of the neck from the sun.

**Wear ankle-length pants or skirts**

Loose, long pants or skirts can keep you cool while helping to filter some UV rays.

**Wear long-sleeved shirts**

Long sleeves safeguard your arms from the sun. You can even look for clothing that's UPF 30 or higher, which means that the fabric is an effective U-blocker. Now get out there and have some fun in the sun!



**DID YOU KNOW?**

One in five Americans will develop skin cancer before they reach age 70.

SOURCE: SKIN CANCER FOUNDATION



by Jake Weyer

# HOOKED ON HEALTH

Fishing legend **Al Lindner** shares how the sport has helped him live a healthy, purposeful life

**F**OR AL LINDNER, there's no better place to be than in a boat on a lake, fishing rod in hand, chasing his next catch. "I love the outdoors. I love walking, exploring new areas," says Lindner. "But I'm at home on the water in a boat. That's my favorite spot to be." Lindner, 79, has felt that way since childhood, when he caught the fishing bug angling for smallmouth bass from a boulder on Grindstone Lake in Hayward, Wisconsin, where his grandparents had a cabin. The Blue Cross member, who today lives in Brainerd, parlayed his passion into an impressive career spanning more than half a century. It started in tackle development with his brother and grew to television, radio, magazines and a long list of other efforts aimed at expanding fishing education, accessibility and enjoyment. A household name in Minnesota and the sport of freshwater fishing, Lindner has been inducted into five different fishing halls of fame.

# LINDY'S LIST

FAVORITE FISH: **Smallmouth bass**

FAVORITE MINNESOTA LAKES: **Leech, Vermilion**

FAVORITE TIME OF YEAR TO FISH: **Fall — the fish bite all day!**

NUMBER OF MINNESOTA LAKES FISHED: **Too many to count**

FAVORITE FISH TO EAT: **Walleye, fried**

MOST MEMORABLE FISH CAUGHT: *"It was November and a few friends and I were below the dam in Brainerd, fishing for Walleye. One of the guys hooked a monster musky and it took an hour and a half to land. It was a world-record fish for many years!"*



Still at it today, Lindner spends about 180 days a year on the water, much of that time producing projects like the show Angling Edge for his business, Lindner's Media Production Company. His days are action-packed, but he wouldn't have it any other way. Still fit as ever and free of any major health problems, he attributes his good health to an active, purposeful life well-lived.

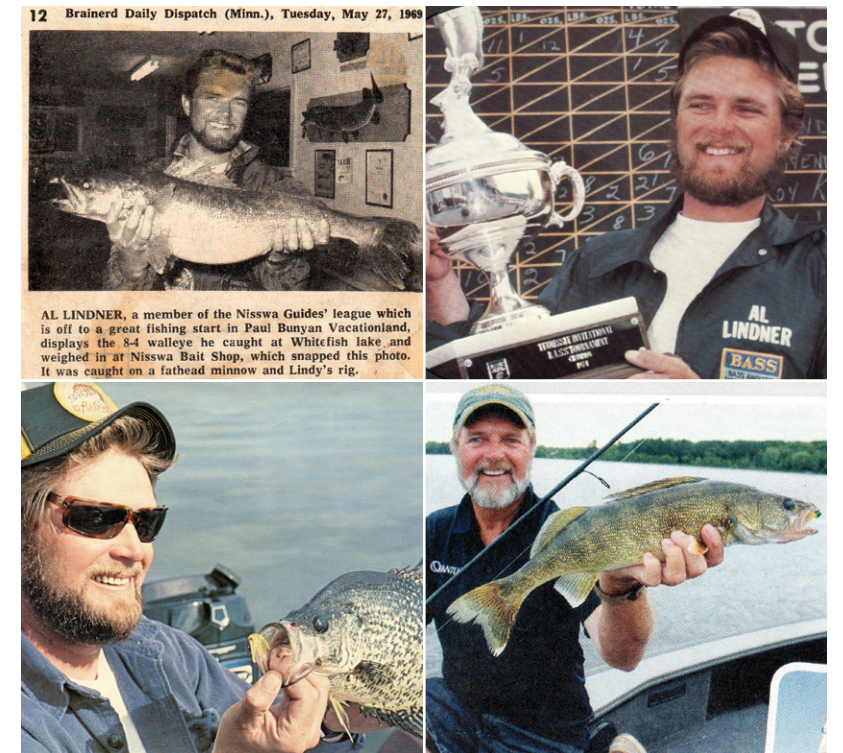
## Fitness through fishing

"Fishing is physical," Lindner says. "You know, you're moving, you're up and down in a boat, moving around, jumping around a lot. And when you're filming, you're active, really active. You get the adrenaline going a little bit. I love it."

For eight months out of the year — April through November — Lindner is at his busiest, filming, writing, participating in tournaments and doing a whole lot of fishing. The sport provides a routine workout that he believes has helped keep him in shape. He also stretches and walks routinely and pays attention to what he eats, doing his best to maintain a balanced diet.

Other than a knee replacement and some shoulder soreness he's experienced more recently, Lindner hasn't developed any significant health concerns. His doctor has encouraged him to continue his lifestyle as long as he feels healthy enough to do it.

"They say to keep doing what I'm doing," Lindner says. "That I'm in



AL LINDNER, a member of the Nisswa Guides' league which is off to a great fishing start in Paul Bunyan Vacationland, displays the 8-4 walleye he caught at Whitfish lake and weighed in at Nisswa Bait Shop, which snapped this photo. It was caught on a fathead minnow and Lindy's rig.

awful good shape for my age, so don't slow down, don't change. And I don't plan to."

It's no exaggerated fish story — fishing can provide a wide range of health benefits. It is a low impact, total body workout that can help you stay physically fit. A few areas the sport can make an improvement:

## Strength and balance

Don't be surprised if you feel a little sore after a day on the water or dock. Actions like casting, reeling, standing and even setting up equipment work different muscle groups, including your arms, shoulders, back, core and legs. All of that muscle strengthening can also help with balance and preventing falls — especially if you're working to stay stable in a boat.

AL'S TV CAREER SPANS MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY, WITH PROGRAMS GEARED TOWARD HELPING OTHERS LEARN HOW TO FISH AND FIND SUCCESS IN THE SPORT.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Minnesota is home to 160 species of fish, 141 of which are native to the state.



“

**Just to be outdoors, outside, being in environments like that, it's healing. It's really a powerful thing.**

— Al Lindner

**Heart health**

Fishing is more often thought of as a relaxing activity, but anyone who has hooked a fish knows it can get your heart going. Research has found that active fishing can burn an average of 200 calories per hour. That elevated heart rate helps you prevent high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease.

**Vitamins and protein**

Spending time on the water is a good way to take in Vitamin D from the sun, which helps your body absorb calcium — essential for strong bones and preventing osteoporosis. It also helps give your immune system a boost. Just remember to apply sunscreen SPF 30 or

higher on any exposed skin to prevent sunburn and reduce skin cancer risk. Eating fish can also be beneficial. They are rich in protein, vitamins and minerals, and fatty fish contain Omega-3 fatty acids that can improve heart health.

**Mind games**

You might think that after decades on the water, fishing comes easy to Lindner, but he says the sport is more complicated than that. The marine environment is always changing, whether because of climate, invasive species, man-made influences and more. As environments change, fish adapt. How they move, how they feed — their patterns are always evolving.



Attempting to solve that increasingly complex puzzle is what fascinates Lindner the most.

“It's trying to figure out how to catch the fish,” he says. “I love fishing in different kinds of lakes, the lakes I've never been on. That's the most exciting thing to me. Going to different water, trying to pattern the fish, figure out how to catch the fish. Once I get through with that and know that I can catch a whole bunch of fish, I'll get bored really quickly and want to go to another lake or try another lure or something.”

Lindner says all the critical thinking helps keep him sharp. There's a lot of medical research to back him up. Challenging your brain through hobbies, games and new activities helps to keep it healthy, according to the Mayo Clinic. So does socialization, which can help specifically with preventing memory loss, stress and depression.

Sharing the experience of fishing with others — grandkids, friends or family — is a great way to benefit your mental health. Lindner has always been a social fisherman who prides himself on sharing the sport and helping others enjoy it as much as he does.

“It's so much fun. You can participate at any level you want,” he says. “And the thing is, no matter what physical condition you're in, you can fish. In fact, it's like medicine for a lot of people. Just to be outdoors, outside, being in environments like that, it's healing. It's really a powerful thing.”



**FIND YOUR FISH**

To learn more about fishing opportunities in Minnesota, visit [dnr.state.mn.us/gofishing/learn-fish.html](https://dnr.state.mn.us/gofishing/learn-fish.html).



SEE AL IN ACTION AND LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW FISHING HAS IMPROVED HIS LIFE AND CAN DO THE SAME FOR YOU. VISIT [BLUECROSSMN.COM/THRIVE](https://bluecrossmn.com/thrive).



# ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS

Understanding the signs of Alzheimer's disease, how to get help and ways to keep your mind sharp *by Jessica Migala*



**S**even million. That's the number of Americans who are living with Alzheimer's disease, according to the Alzheimer's Association. Although Alzheimer's may have touched your own life — maybe a relative had it, maybe your neighbor moved into memory care, maybe you chat with friends about your own forgetfulness, worrying about what it could mean — it's important to understand exactly what Alzheimer's is and how it differs from other forms of dementia.

"Dementia is an umbrella term for loss of memory and other mental abilities that is severe enough to interfere with daily living," says Jenna Fink, LSW, associate director of community services for the Alzheimer's Association's Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. It is associated with physical changes in the brain that form and cause the death of brain cells, leading to symptoms of the disease. Those include memory problems, changes in mood and trouble with communication, explains Dr. Dongming Cai, MD, Ph.D., professor of neurology at the University of Minnesota.

## On the lookout for Alzheimer's symptoms

How can you tell if everyday brain blips — forgetting where you put your keys, blanking on the name of your table mate at bridge, not knowing what you walked into a room for — are a sign of something more? Let's look at some scenarios:

### Forgetfulness happens frequently

"If you're constantly looking for the right words in conversation or struggle with directions all the time, that's more worrisome compared to when you forget a word once in a blue moon or get lost in an unfamiliar place when your GPS doesn't work," says Dr. Cai. It's especially worrisome if forgetfulness also causes problems with day-to-day functioning, such as not remembering how to get to the grocery store.

## Things you excelled at before, you struggle with now

We're not talking about how you could play basketball in high school. Think about more cognitively challenging things. For instance, says Dr. Cai, maybe you've been preparing your tax return for decades, but this year you weren't able to figure it out. Or maybe balancing your checkbook or determining the tip on a restaurant bill has always been easy, but it's proven to be too difficult to even try now.

## You have sticky notes all over the place

With Alzheimer's, people often retain their long-term memories, sharing stories of childhood with ease. "It's the short-term things that we tend to start to forget in Alzheimer's," says Fink. That can look like forgetting important dates



## DID YOU KNOW?

Women are disproportionately affected by Alzheimer's disease.


SOURCE: ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION



Healthy lifestyle habits go a long way toward protecting your brain, says Dr. Cai. In fact, research shows that participating in at least four of the five habits below help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's by 60 percent:

- **Moderate-to-vigorous-intensity exercise for 150 minutes per week:** This can include brisk walking, jogging, water aerobics, biking, ballroom dancing and gardening.
- **Not smoking:** It's never too late for older adults to improve their health by quitting tobacco. If you need help quitting, Blue Cross members can receive extra support. To reach the Blue Cross quitting tobacco and vape support line, call 1-888-662-2583 TTY 711

Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. CT or Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

- **Limiting alcohol:** Moderate drinking is considered no more than one drink per day for women and two for men.
- **Following the MIND diet:** This is a plant-based diet similar to the Mediterranean diet that focuses on brain-boosting foods, such as berries and leafy green vegetables.
- **Keeping your mind active:** Learning something new, participating in music, doing puzzles and socializing with friends all keep your brain engaged, says Dr. Cai. "Your brain is like a muscle. If you don't work it out, you lose it," she says. 

## A Word for Caregivers

If you're caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease, you are in good company. More than 16 million Americans act as caregivers for friends and family with dementias, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The reality is, even though this time with your loved one is precious, it can also be emotionally and mentally draining, says Fink. "Caregiving is a 24/7 job," she adds.

That's why finding time to care for yourself is so important. Asking someone in your support network to come over for an hour while you go to a hair appointment or have coffee with a friend can help you get out and have a needed break. Looking into in-home services available in your area and budget can also help relieve some of the tasks of personal care, visiting and supervision, or skilled care.

Finding a support group can also be a really powerful way to spend time with others who are in a similar situation as yourself, says Fink. Educational programs provided through the Alzheimer's Association can also help you learn more about the disease and caring for someone with it. Their 24/7 Helpline at 1-800-272-3900 can connect you with resources in your area. You can also find a wide range of helpful services and resources on the Blue Cross Caregiver Corner website at [caregivercornermn.com](http://caregivercornermn.com).



### PREVENTION

Exercise, a healthy diet and keeping your mind active may help prevent Alzheimer's disease.

SOURCE: ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

or events, asking for the same information over and over, or relying heavily on memory aids, like sticky notes, around the house to help you remember basic things, such as names on a photo.

#### **Your mood, personality and behavior are changing**

Becoming more easily upset about situations or things that normally wouldn't give you pause may be another warning sign, says Fink. You may hide things, be suspicious of others, imagine things that aren't there, wander, or generally be upset or depressed. Any change in personality is a sign that something is going on, whether it's Alzheimer's or something else, such as a mental health problem like depression.

#### **How to find help**

One good place to start is the Alzheimer's Association's 24/7 Helpline at 1-800-272-3900. A person will answer any day or any time to provide help for those with dementia or their caregivers and loved ones. If you are concerned about cognitive changes you or a loved one are experiencing, start by opening up the conversation with a primary care provider who can properly evaluate you, advises Dr. Cai.

#### **Keeping your brain sharp as you age**

Your age is the biggest risk factor for Alzheimer's, but it's important to remember that Alzheimer's is not inevitable. This disease doesn't have to be a normal part of aging.



# UNDERSTANDING VIRTUAL CARE

Gaining the confidence to access digital health resources

**S**ometimes the best way to receive care is from the comfort of your own home. Virtual care is convenient and flexible, providing high-quality care without needing to travel. However, many older adults face barriers when accessing virtual care.

Limited access to technology can prevent many people from using telemedicine — accessing care online can feel stressful and overwhelming, especially if you don't have a lot of experience using the internet. The good news is that there is support and resources that can help you feel more comfortable and confident to take full advantage of this type of care.

## Convenient care

Today, most non-emergency health conditions can be treated, at least in part, via virtual care. This includes mental healthcare, primary care and even urgent care. It's important to talk to your healthcare provider about what virtual care options they offer, and they can walk you through how to access those services. Depending on your provider or health system, virtual care is typically offered in the form of video calls through an online portal and can sometimes even be done through a phone app.

One way you can use telemedicine is through Doctor On Demand®, which is available to you through your health plan. When using Doctor On Demand, you can receive care and services you would typically receive at an urgent care facility via video chat with a healthcare provider. Urgent care services are available 24/7 and can treat a variety of health issues, from cold and flu to urinary tract infections to skin rashes and hives. Doctor On Demand providers can also treat mental health conditions. You can access their services on your smartphone, tablet or computer. Remember that if you're suffering from a medical emergency, call 911. To learn more, visit [doctorondemand.com](https://www.doctorondemand.com).

## Breaking the barriers

One common concern about telemedicine is privacy. It's important to remember that when you're receiving virtual care, your provider's telehealth portal is secure. Healthcare providers follow strict regulations like HIPAA to safeguard your information, and these virtual care services use secure platforms so that information remains confidential and protected.



If you don't have access to the internet, you can stop by your local library or community center. The majority of these spaces offer Wi-Fi and computer access for free, and staff can help if you have questions.

A lack of confidence using the internet stops many older adults from accessing virtual care, but there are plenty of resources out there that can help you improve your digital literacy and feel more comfortable. One of these resources is Cyber-Seniors, a nonprofit organization that provides tech training to older adults. When you use Cyber-Seniors, you'll work with a volunteer who will serve as your digital mentor. These mentors can provide you with technology training and lessons that will make it easier for you to access your virtual care options. To learn more, visit [cyberseniors.org](https://www.cyberseniors.org).

Many libraries and community centers also offer tutorials and classes to help you feel more comfortable using the internet and your devices. Ultimately, when everyone, regardless of age or background, feels confident accessing virtual care, our communities become healthier and more equitable.



# MEDICATION AND THE SUN



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

**Member:** I was recently prescribed antibiotics for bronchitis. My doctor said one of the side effects is photosensitivity and that I should be careful when spending time outside in the sun. What is that and how concerned should I be? — *Danny, Princeton*

**Anita:** Hi Danny, thank you so much for your question. Photosensitivity occurs when your skin becomes highly sensitive or has an abnormal reaction to UV or sunlight.

Drug-induced phototoxicity — the most common type of photosensitivity reaction — can be caused by oral or topical medication. When you have a phototoxic reaction, your skin may start developing a rash or look red like you have a sunburn. Photosensitive reactions can occur within minutes or hours of sun exposure.

It's true that certain medications may cause you to be more prone to photosensitivity.

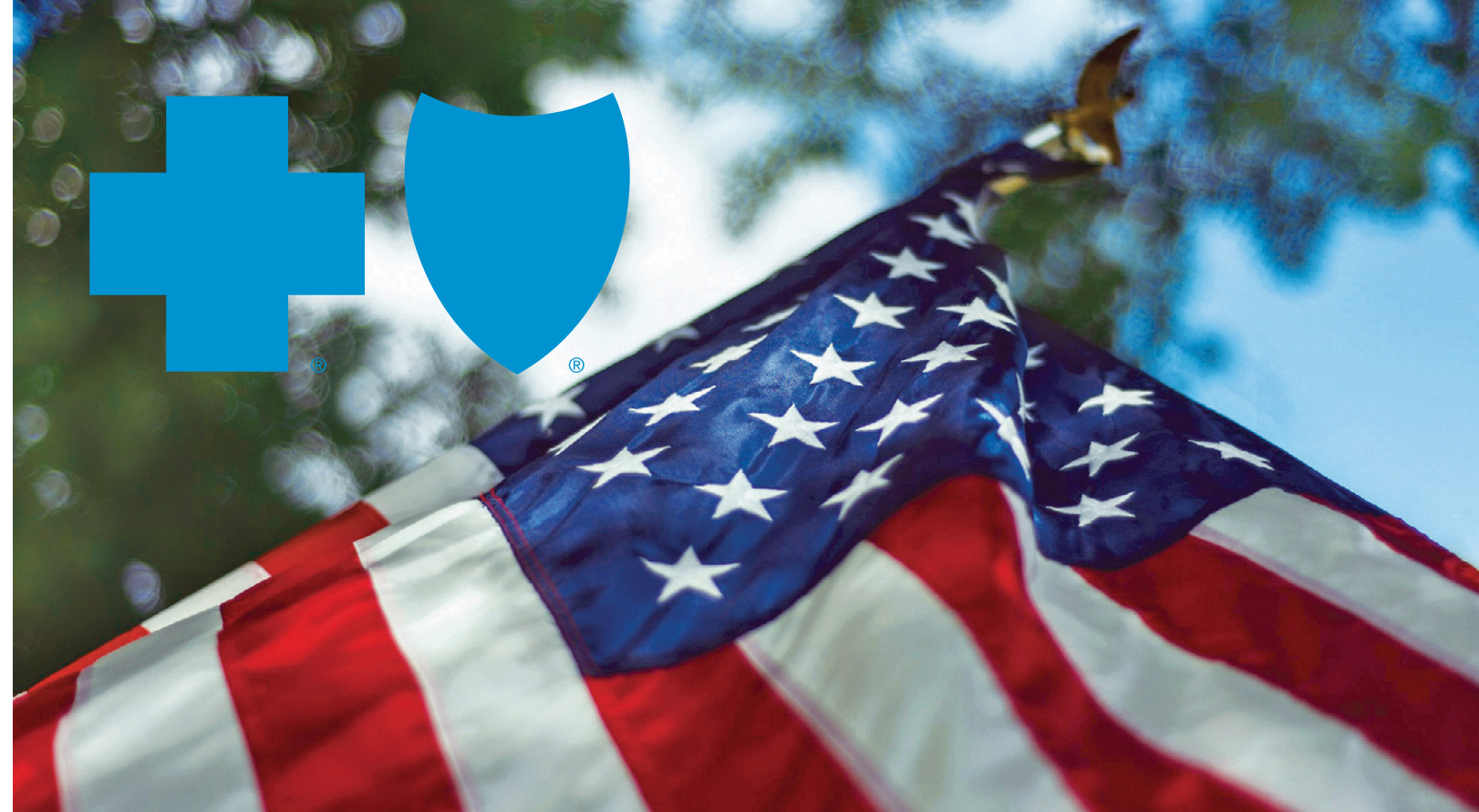
Some of these medications include:

- NSAIDs like ibuprofen or aspirin
- Tetracycline antibiotics and fluoroquinolone antibiotics (used to treat a variety of bacterial infections)
- Retinoids
- Antidepressants

- Chemotherapy drugs
- Hydrochlorothiazide (commonly used to treat hypertension)

When taking medications that could increase your risk of photosensitivity, it's important to take precautions. Photosensitivity reactions can cause long-term damage to your skin and even increase your risk for skin cancer. Before you start taking a new medication, have a conversation with your healthcare provider about potential side effects like photosensitivity and phototoxicity.

There are several steps you can take to lower your risk. Limit your time in the sun during peak hours and seek shade when possible. It's also important to use broad spectrum sunscreen. While SPF 15 works, SPF 30 or higher is preferred. Finally, consider wearing a wide brimmed hat and long sleeves that can protect your skin from the sun.



**LEARN MORE NOW** Call 1-844-926-3280, TTY 711 or visit [bluecrossmn.com/FreedomTM](https://bluecrossmn.com/FreedomTM)

## FREEDOM BLUE<sup>SM</sup>

A **\$0 premium** medical-only Medicare Advantage (PPO) plan built for Veterans

Meet with a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Medicare Advisor to learn how Freedom Blue can complement your current VA or TRICARE benefits.

- Access to 97 percent of doctors in Minnesota<sup>1</sup>
- Up to \$100 monthly Medicare Part B premium giveback
- \$100 per quarter<sup>2</sup> flex card for eligible over-the-counter purchases
- Dental, vision, hearing benefits and a fitness program
- 12 months of travel with access to a nationwide network



<sup>1</sup>Medicare-contracted doctors compared to internal Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota data, April 2024. Some network limitations may apply. <sup>2</sup>Quarterly balance does not carry over. Blue Cross Medicare Advantage is a PPO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in Blue Cross Medicare Advantage depends on contract renewal. Each healthcare provider is an independent contractor and not our agent.



- **Speak to staff:** It's important you make connections with the staff that will be caring for your loved one, as they are essentially taking over your former role. Forging a strong relationship with staff can make it easier for them to come to you if there is an issue or concern with your loved one.

# TRANSITIONING CARE

Helping your loved one enter assisted living

The decision to transition your loved one into a memory care facility or assisted living is a difficult one. If you're experiencing caregiver burnout, your loved one's care needs are increasing or the relationship with your loved one is deteriorating, transitioning care is likely the best decision to make for everyone.

This is a challenging change for many, but there are several ways you can make this transition easier:

- **Bring items from home:** When moving your loved one into a new place, bring items from home that are important to them or have sentimental value, as these items can help them feel more comfortable. Avoid packing valuable or expensive things that can't be replaced.
- **Make consistent visits:** Before moving your loved one, bring them to the facility for a visit so they can start familiarizing themselves with their new environment. Once they have settled in, schedule times during the week when you can visit. The best time to visit is typically during meal times or activity times so you can participate with them.

## RESOURCES

These transitions can bring up a lot of intense emotions for your loved one and your family, but remember you're not alone. Here are several additional resources you can check out:

AssistedLiving.org — [assistedliving.org](https://www.assistedliving.org)

Senior LinkAge Line — [mn.gov/senior-linkage-line](https://mn.gov/senior-linkage-line)

Medicare — [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov)

Blue Cross Caregiver Corner — [caregivercornermn.com](https://www.caregivercornermn.com)

Minnesota Nursing Home and Assisted Living Report Card — [alreportcard.dhs.mn.gov](https://www.alreportcard.dhs.mn.gov)



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# FINDING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Blue Cross initiative funds food sovereignty in Indigenous communities

Every person deserves to have access to fresh, affordable food. Yet that isn't the reality for many Minnesotans.

According to the Food Empowerment Project, food deserts are geographic areas where access to affordable and nutritious food options are limited or non-existent. In the U.S., food insecurity disproportionately impacts Indigenous communities — nearly every reservation meets the U.S. Department of Agriculture's definition of a "food desert."

A lack of access to nutritional food leads to a higher risk of food insecurity and chronic conditions like diabetes in these communities.

To combat food insecurity and diet related illnesses, tribes and Indigenous-led organizations across the state are working to fund food sovereignty — the rights of Indigenous communities to create their own food systems that are rooted in cultural values and rebuild relationships between people and the land.

To help with this effort, the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota has launched The Food Sovereignty Funding Initiative. The initiative supports local organizations to strengthen food systems within tribal nations and increase access to Indigenous foods. The Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and White Earth Nation



were the first recipients of the Food Sovereignty Funding.

"Food is medicine, and when people have access to food that is not just healthy but also deeply connected to their culture and lifeways, they are giving their bodies nutrition and healing," says Jill Chamberlain, community health and health equity senior manager at The Center for Prevention. "We recognize the importance of investing in Indigenous community-led solutions and that food sovereignty is essential to improving community health outcomes."

To learn more about this initiative and other ways the Center for Prevention is supporting communities throughout the state, visit [centerforpreventionmn.com](http://centerforpreventionmn.com).



# BOOST YOUR BRAIN

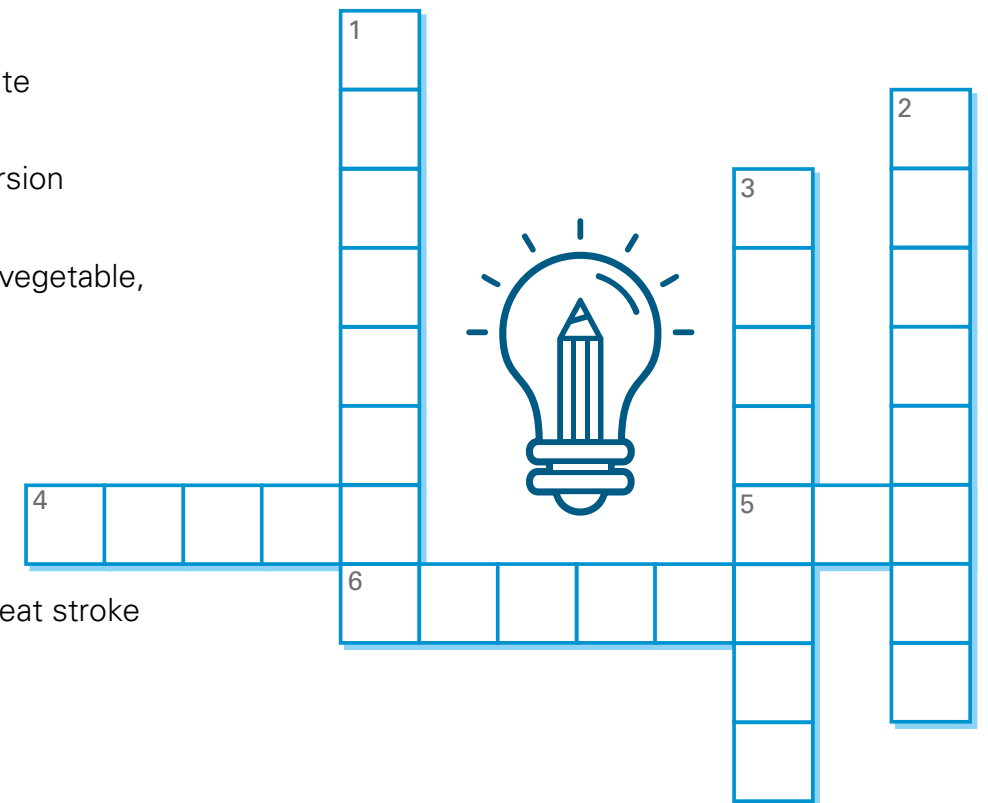
Crossword puzzles can help keep yourself focused and your memory sharp. Here's a short crossword based on the content of this edition of *thrive*.

### ACROSS

- 4. One of Al Lindner's favorite Minnesota lakes
- 5. Wear a long-brimmed version of this in the summer
- 6. Popular summer fruit (or vegetable, depending who you ask)

### DOWN

- 1. This can cause a photosensitive reaction
- 2. It's important to stay \_\_\_ in order to prevent heat stroke
- 3. Sport played with bags and boards



Answers on back cover.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Blue Plus (Blue Cross) complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or gender.

Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia con el idioma. Llame al 1-855-903-2583. Para TTY, llame al 711.

Yog tias koj hais lus Hmoob, muaj kev pab txhais lus pub dawb rau koj. Hu rau 1-800-793-6931. Rau TTY, hu rau 711.

Haddii aad ku hadasho Soomaali, adigu waxaad heli kartaa caawimo luqad lacag la'aan ah. Wac 1-866-251-6736.

Markay tahay dad maqalku ku adag yahay (TTY), wac 711.

Blue Cross Medicare Advantage is a PPO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in Medicare Advantage depends on contract renewal.

Medicare Advantage customer service, 1-800-711-9865 (TTY 711), 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Central Time, daily.

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## HEALTHIER DAYS AT HOME

Blue Cross works together with Signify Health to offer an In-Home Wellness Visit at no additional cost to you. Assessing your health every year can help ensure you enjoy more healthy days at home. Members are eligible for one gift card for an In-Home or Virtual Wellness Visit with a Signify clinician completed within the calendar year. 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 Mastercard is accepted.

**Call toll-free 1-844-226-8218 (TTY 711), Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time, Saturday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Time. Or, visit [schedule.signifyhealth.com](https://schedule.signifyhealth.com) to schedule your visit today.**