

# thrive.

FALL 2024

 BlueCross  
BlueShield  
Minnesota

a magazine about your choices and your best life

Page 8

**MARION PECK  
SHARES HER  
SECRETS TO  
FUN AT 101**

## Keep Movin'

Insights on  
longevity  
& vitality  
from a  
remarkable  
101-year-old

### Also inside

Keep your blood  
pressure in check

Prevent the effects  
of seasonal isolation

Key doctor visits to  
schedule each year

[bluecrossmn.com/thrive](https://bluecrossmn.com/thrive)

# WELCOME

Hello, members, and welcome to the fall edition of **thrive.** magazine.

This is a great season to get out and enjoy our beautiful state. And when it's time to cozy up at home, we hope you'll enjoy the inspiring stories and valuable health tips in this edition.

Our featured member, Marion Peck, is a shining example of living life to the fullest. At 101, she stays active, strong and independent. Her story on page 8 reminds us all that age is just a number.

As winter approaches, managing feelings of social isolation and loneliness becomes more important. On page 14, we offer practical advice and support for staying connected and engaged. For those looking to get outside, we explore the benefits of cross-country skiing in our Take Action section on page 5.

Throughout this edition, you'll notice QR codes that can direct you to important online information. To use a QR code, open the camera on your smartphone, point it at the code, and tap the link on your screen.

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

*Christine Reiten*

Christine Reiten  
Vice President, Medicaid

## BEHIND THE SCENES

Marion Peck shows off her workout routine for photographer Joe Treleven and the Touchpoint team at a park in Le Sueur, Minnesota. Check out the video at [bluecrossmn.com/thrive](https://bluecrossmn.com/thrive).



## WELLNESS AT HOME

Did you know you have access to wellness visits without having to leave your home? Blue Cross is working with Signify Health to provide you with a complete wellness visit from the comfort of your home. At these visits, a licensed, highly-trained clinician will discuss any health questions you have and give you valuable information that helps you and your doctor make informed decisions.

Upon completion of your In-Home Wellness Visit with Signify Health, you'll receive a \$25 gift card redeemable for food items at any restaurant or grocery store where Mastercard is accepted.

To request your appointment, visit **signifyhealth.com** or call 1-844-226-8218 (TTY 711) Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Time.

Questions? Call the Member Services number on the back of your member ID card for help.

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COVER AND TOP PHOTO BY JOE TRELEVEN

# HEALTH BITES



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

## VACCINE REMINDERS

Stay up to date on your shots



**Flu:** Older adults, especially those with chronic conditions, are at a higher risk for serious flu-related illness. The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu shot each year. You can get a flu shot at no cost to you through your health plan.

**COVID-19:** Adults 65 and older should get at least one dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine. For more information, visit [cdc.gov/covid/vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines). You can get a COVID-19 shot at no cost through your health plan.

**Shingles:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends two doses of Shingrix. The doses should be separated by two to six months for adults 50 and older.

**Pneumococcal:** The CDC recommends the PCV15, PCV20 or PCV21 vaccine for adults

50 and older who have never been vaccinated for pneumococcal infections or are unsure. If PCV15 is used, a second dose of PPSV23 is needed one year later or sooner, depending on health conditions.

**Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV):** If you are 75 or older, or between 60 and 74 with a higher risk of severe RSV, the CDC recommends a single dose.

### Schedule & Learn More

- To schedule your vaccinations, contact your healthcare provider.
- To find out more about coverage and where to receive your shots, call Member Services using the phone number on the back of your member ID card

# BAKED ZITI WITH VEGETABLES

As the weather cools, there's nothing quite like enjoying a warm, hearty dish. This baked ziti recipe from the Mayo Clinic is a perfect blend of comfort and nutrition, packed with healthy vegetables and rich flavors. Serves two.

## INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 cup uncooked ziti (about 2 ounces)
- 1 can (14 ounces) low-sodium tomatoes, drained (keep 1/2 cup of the juice)
- 1/2 cup sliced carrots
- 1 cup chopped broccoli
- 1/2 cup diced green bell pepper
- 1/4 cup sliced mushrooms
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup reduced-fat shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

## DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 375° F. Lightly coat a small- to medium-sized baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Fill a large pot 3/4 full with water and bring to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente (tender), 10 to 12 minutes, or use the package directions. Drain the pasta.
3. In a nonstick frying pan over medium heat, add the juice from the canned tomatoes. Stir in the carrots, broccoli and green pepper. Sauté the vegetables until tender, about 5 minutes.
4. Add the mushrooms and garlic, and cook for another 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, basil, oregano and black pepper to the vegetable mixture. Cook over low heat for 3 to 5 minutes. Put the cooked vegetables in a large bowl.
5. Add the cooked pasta and shredded mozzarella cheese. Toss gently to mix. Spoon the mixture into the prepared baking dish.
6. Sprinkle with the grated Parmesan cheese. Cover with aluminum foil and bake until the mixture is hot and bubbly, about 15 minutes.
7. Remove the aluminum foil and bake for 15 more minutes. Put each serving of pasta into a warmed bowl.



SOURCE: MAYO CLINIC



# IS YOUR HEALTH ON TRACK?



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

**Member:** As I get older, I want to take the right steps to stay healthy. How can I be sure I'm following all the different health recommendations without missing anything?  
— Rick, Cold Spring

**Dr. Hill:** It's great that you're prioritizing your health as we approach a new year. Annual wellness visits, available to you at no cost, are the best way to stay on top of your health. These visits help catch issues early and protect you from illnesses.

Your doctor will check your overall health, address any concerns and recommend screenings and vaccines. If you need to find an in-network healthcare provider, you can use our Find a Doctor tool at [bluecrossmn.com/FindADoctor](https://bluecrossmn.com/FindADoctor).

Consider these key screenings and vaccinations for older adults:

## Essential screenings

Regular screenings are crucial for early detection. Annual blood pressure checks help manage hypertension, which often has no symptoms. Cholesterol should be checked each year for adults 65 and older. Blood glucose or A1C tests are recommended every three years for adults with normal blood glucose levels.

Colon cancer screenings should begin at age 45. Women should start breast cancer screenings at age 40. Bone density tests are also recommended every two years for women 65 and older. These screenings are available to you at no cost.

## Important vaccinations

Vaccines help prevent illness. Annual flu shots protect against seasonal flu, and adults age 50 and older should get the shingles vaccine.

Td and Tdap boosters should be updated every 10 years. It's crucial to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters, as older adults are at higher risk for complications. See additional vaccination recommendations on page 2.

## Schedule your annual visit

To manage your health, be sure to schedule your annual wellness visit with your primary doctor. Consider using a calendar to keep track of your appointments. Follow your doctor's recommendations to stay healthy year-round.



# NORDIC ADVENTURES

The health benefits of cross-country skiing

**O**ur state is known for its chilly weather and snowy winters. This makes it the perfect place for a fun Nordic sport that provides a variety of health benefits — cross-country skiing.

Cross-country skiing has a rich history in Minnesota and is a fantastic way to enjoy the outdoors during the colder months. Whether you're gliding along the Gunflint Trail or exploring the Root River State Trail, there's no shortage of ski trails to discover.

## The basics

To get started, you'll need warm clothing, ski boots, poles and, of course, the skis. Unlike downhill skis, cross-country skis are typically thinner and the boots attach at the toes.

There are two main styles of cross-country skiing: classic and skate skiing, each with slightly different equipment. Classic skiing is generally easier for beginners to learn. If you are new to the sport, The Loppet Foundation offers regular lessons for both types of skiing at Theodore Wirth Regional Park in Minneapolis.

## The benefits

Cross-country skiing is more than a fun winter activity. It can provide you with a variety of health benefits. According to the Cleveland Clinic, this full-body workout engages both your upper limbs and major muscle groups, including your core and legs. It is great for heart health, building strength and enhancing overall wellness. And best of all, it is a lifetime sport.

## Find your glide

No skis? No problem. There are several camps, parks and resorts that offer cross-country ski rentals. For a list of places you can rent skis scan this QR code.





# APPETITE & AGING

How to combat loss of appetite

**H**ave you noticed that you're not as hungry as you used to be? Or that the foods you once loved now taste different?

As you grow older, changes in your sense of taste, your appetite and your overall gut health are common. You might find that you feel full more quickly or that you aren't as hungry as you used to be, even at mealtime.

Medication, health conditions, and emotional and physical changes can all cause loss of appetite, according to the Cleveland

Clinic. This can come with additional symptoms like fatigue, nausea, constipation or diarrhea. If you're experiencing chronic loss of appetite or any changes to your digestion, it's important to speak with your doctor.

## Feeling fuller

If you've noticed a reduced appetite or changes in taste, the National Institute on Aging (NIA) offers several tips to keep eating healthy:



- **Quit smoking:** Smoking harms your overall health, including your sense of taste and smell. If you need help quitting, Blue Cross offers a support line for its members. Call the Blue Cross quitting tobacco and vape support line at 1-855-552-2583 (TTY 711), Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Central Time. Or Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- **Manage medications:** The medications you take can have a large impact on your appetite. They can also impact how your food tastes and smells. It's important to discuss these side effects with your doctor. They may recommend different medications or ways to help manage dietary challenges.
- **Boost your mood:** Feelings of unhappiness and depression can also lead to a loss of appetite. If you suspect you may have depression, reach out to your healthcare provider to learn about treatment options.
- **Add more flavor:** While you should avoid adding salt to your meals, fresh herbs, spices, lemon juice and vinegar can all help enhance flavor. Adding variety to your meals can also make them more enjoyable. Consider experimenting with new recipes,

visiting different restaurants and even mixing up the shapes, colors and textures of your dishes.

- **Exercise regularly:** Physical activity offers many health benefits and might help increase your appetite. If you're looking for ways to stay active, SilverSneakers® is a great place to start. Through this program, you have access to gym memberships and fitness classes both in-person and online. Visit **SilverSneakers.com/StartHere** to get started.

### Good Nutrition

Good nutrition is key to your overall health. Even if you experience challenges like a reduced appetite, it's important to continue eating healthy meals regularly.

When selecting foods, the NIA recommends reading labels and nutrition facts. Keeping a food journal can also be beneficial for tracking your daily intake. Make sure your diet includes enough protein, with options such as beans, peas, seafood and dairy. And make sure to include a variety of fruits and vegetables.

If you need help keeping a healthy diet or are concerned about shifts in your appetite, reach out to your doctor for help.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Medications that may cause loss of appetite include, but are not limited to:

- Antibiotics
- Opioids
- Chemotherapy

SOURCE:  
CLEVELAND CLINIC

# LOVING LIFE

by Jake Weyer

**At 101, Marion Peck**  
is staying healthy,  
strong & independent

**A**t 9 a.m. on a Tuesday at Le Sueur Community Center, KrisAnn Krause was working on getting her SliverSneakers® class fired up.

Talking over an upbeat playlist of '60s pop hits, she asked the class of 25 older adults to greet her with a "good morning." Unsatisfied with the response, she turned to a veteran of the class, Marion Peck. Peck pursed her lips and shook her head in disapproval. So Krause asked again, this time getting a much more enthusiastic reaction.

"She brings that energy into the room, that motivation," says Krause, a fitness professional who has led courses and coached in Le Sueur for 14 years. "We'll always look to Marion when something isn't good enough, and she helps us do it better. In class, we try to emphasize that age is just a number, and she really is an amazing example of that."





FIRST  
CATCH

# MAINTAINING MOBILITY

The SilverSneakers Classic class that KrisAnn Krause leads at the Le Sueur Community Center focuses on simple exercises to boost and manage mobility.

Participants use chairs, light weights and resistance bands to help with everyday movements, like getting up from a seated position or avoiding tripping hazards.

SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW TO SEE A VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH MARION ABOUT HER APPROACH TO HEALTHY LIVING.



“We incorporate that reasoning into the class, to explain why we’re lifting our toes — to be able to step over a curb — or why we’re reaching over our head — to be able to pull stuff off the top shelf,” Krause says.

Everyone is welcome and activities can be modified for anyone at any age or ability. It’s an excellent opportunity for members who are just getting started with an exercise routine, or those who want to stay mobile and independent as they get older.

SilverSneakers is included in your health plan.

For Peck, a nominee for SilverSneakers Member of the Year in 2024, that number is a remarkable 101. But you'd never guess it from the way she carries herself and lives her life. Still fully independent, she is committed to staying active and healthy, enjoying each day to the fullest and serving as an inspiration for others to do the same.

### Keys to longevity

When asked about her secret to healthy aging, Peck shrugs and says it's likely a combination of factors. Genetics, regular exercise, eating a balanced diet and staying social, she says.

"I'm sure it's probably a lot of things," she says. "I've lived most of my life in a small town; I had a good upbringing, good food, no real worries, a good family and I was always busy with something."

Research agrees that many elements influence healthy aging. Though genetics are beyond our control, other factors can help ensure good health and a long life. According to the National Institute on Aging, here are a few core considerations:

**Physical activity** is vital for both feeling well and staying healthy. Whether you engage in short bursts of activity throughout the day or carve out some dedicated time for daily exercise, it's important to get moving.

Many chronic conditions, such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure, are linked to obesity. Both



obesity and being underweight can lead to loss of muscle mass. That can lead to feelings of weakness and fatigue, and increasing risk of falls and fractures.

Peck participates in the SilverSneakers Classic class four times a week. The class focuses on simple, low-impact movements that help with mobility and everyday activities. Examples include standing up from a chair, avoiding tripping hazards, pushing a vacuum cleaner and reaching into cupboards. Several other classes are available at different fitness levels.

"I want to be there. I like being with my friends," Peck says of her participation, which dates back to when Krause started teaching the class 14 years ago. "And I just like to be moving. If I get bored, I'll start walking down the halls."

FITNESS PRO KRISANN KRAUSE, LEFT, SAYS MARION PECK IS AN INSPIRATION TO OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN THE SILVERSNEAKERS CLASSIC CLASS.



### DID YOU KNOW?

The number of Americans ages 100 and older is expected to quadruple during the next three decades.

SOURCE:  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

**Healthy eating** is important not only for maintaining a healthy weight but also for preventing certain conditions and improving brain health. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats and lean proteins like chicken and turkey breast.

Peck starts each day with cereal and juice and eats a banana daily. Her lunch and dinner routines are less consistent, but she always has balanced meals. She makes sure to eat even though she has less of an appetite than she used to.

**Sleep** is also essential for good health. Older adults should aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night. Lack of sleep can lead to irritability, depression, forgetfulness and an increased risk of falls. Factors like pain and medications can impact sleep quality. Be sure to consult your doctor if you're having trouble sleeping.

Peck has this covered. "I sleep like a log from evening to morning," she says, noting that she typically gets 10–12 hours of sleep each night.

**Staying social**, engaged and living with a sense of purpose can help manage mood, stress and depression. Research shows that older adults who are socially isolated are at a higher risk for heart disease, cognitive decline and other conditions.

Staying active and engaged have been important to Peck throughout her life. She served in the U.S. Navy during WWII and stayed in touch with her fellow servicewomen throughout the years. She has traveled with family and friends to 72 different countries, doing volunteer work in many of them. She meets friends for coffee every day. She plays bridge most afternoons and joins a group for Sunday dinners at local restaurants.

A mother of five, Peck is also a grandmother and great-grandmother who loves spending time with each generation. At home, she enjoys reading, particularly books with international intrigue. She also likes movies, with one of her all-time favorites being "Lost Horizon," an action/fantasy film from 1936.

**Seeing your doctor** for annual physicals, annual wellness visits, vaccinations and preventive screenings is another good way to stay ahead of chronic conditions.

Peck has never missed an annual physical and has kept up with her health screenings. She has been fortunate to



## Proud to Serve

Since high school, Marion Peck wanted to serve in the military. So when the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) program was created in the early 1940s, she enlisted. She served stateside in the Navy during WWII and considers it among the greatest honors and periods of her life. Today, Marion is a member of the local American Legion, and plays the bugle during services for area veterans.

# LIFELONG LEARNING

Throughout her life, Marion Peck has pursued her passions and maintained a keen interest in learning new things. She took flying lessons, learned how to paint, traveled the world and attended four different universities before earning a degree in Open Studies from Mankato State University at the age of 77.

“I enjoyed art history the most,” Peck says. “I got a lot more out of my travels because of what I learned in art history.”



live a life free of major health complications. Although she had a knee replacement at age 100, she said she recovered quickly and experienced minimal pain.

## Looking ahead


Even at 101, Peck says she’s still looking ahead and has plans for future adventures. She wants to go to Egypt, one of the few places she hasn’t yet visited. She understands her limits but maintains an adventurous spirit. If the U.S. Navy would accept someone who is 101, she says she’d be on an aircraft carrier tomorrow.

The hardest part of growing older, Peck notes, has been losing many friends and family members along the way. That includes her husband, who she met in the Navy decades ago. Despite these losses, she has

always kept a positive outlook. Plus, she has no shortage of friends and admirers in her community. Earlier this year, Le Sueur Mayor Shawn Kirby went so far as to declare October 3 Marion Peck Day.

“Since we’re such a small town, it is pretty easy to know everyone,” says Jennifer Trimbo, recreation programming specialist at Le Sueur Community Center. She partnered with Krause to nominate Peck for the SilverSneakers award. “When you get to be up in that age and you’re still doing everything on your own, you’re pretty famous. She’s a great motivator for everyone.”

But Peck doesn’t show up to her workouts for fame.

“Oh my gosh, I get up in the morning and there are always things to do and people to see,” she exclaims. “I just love to live.” 



## LIVE WITH PURPOSE

Doing something that provides real meaning to your life can be great for your health.

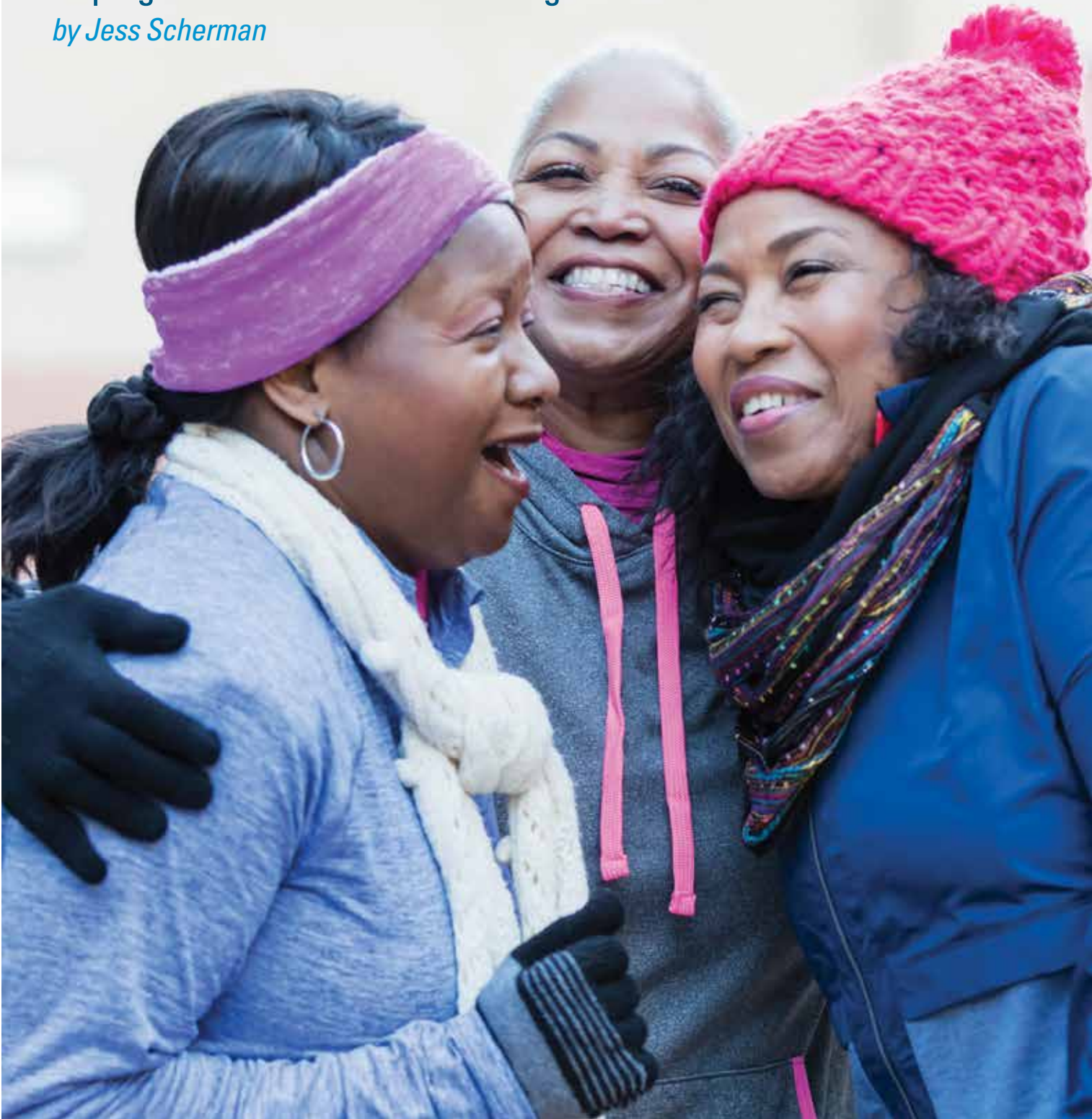
Research has shown that people who live with a strong sense of purpose tend to adopt healthier lifestyles and live longer.

SOURCE:  
MAYO CLINIC


# WINTER WELLNESS

Coping with seasonal mood changes

*by Jess Scherman*







*“Sometimes just talking to someone can be incredibly beneficial.”*

As the days shorten and the weather cools, many people feel more lonely and sad. Data has shown that as many as 38% of Americans experience a mood dip during winter.

In some cases, the cause is seasonal affective disorder (SAD). But not all winter blues are linked to this condition. In many cases, small lifestyle changes can go a long way toward brightening your spirits.

We spoke with Kelsey Martin, department manager of Psychiatric and Counseling Services at Winona Health, to learn more about why these feelings happen and how to manage them.

### **Causes**

Martin explains that shorter days are a primary factor for winter's impact on mood.

“The decrease in sunlight during the winter months affects our vitamin D levels,” she says.

Vitamin D regulates mood by influencing our bodies' chemical messengers. With less sunlight, we receive less vitamin D. That can lead to a decline in mood.

People are less active in the winter as well. Spending more time indoors can impact mood.

### **Risk factors**

Older adults are more at risk for these seasonal challenges. National data shows that more than one-third of adults 45 and older feel lonely. Nearly one-fourth of adults 65 and older are considered socially isolated.



## SEASONAL IMPACT

Up to 10 million Americans are affected by seasonal affective disorder (SAD) each year.

SOURCE:  
AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC  
ASSOCIATION

The CDC says older adults face increased risk. That's because of factors like living alone, losing loved ones, chronic illness and conditions like hearing loss.

"As people age, their social circles often diminish," Martin says. "Seniors may find it more difficult to leave their homes. That can limit their social interactions and contribute to a growing sense of loneliness."

### Managing mood

Martin offers several ways to help lift your mood this winter:

- **Stay active:** Engage in activities that match your ability. Regular physical activity, such as yoga or walking, can improve your mood and energy.

- **Get enough sleep:** Sticking to a sleep routine is crucial. Try to avoid napping during the day. It can disrupt your sleep-wake cycle. Good sleep will help regulate your internal clock.
- **Get some sun:** Natural light is beneficial for your mood. By simply opening your curtains and sitting near the window, you can reap the benefits of vitamin D. You can also consider using a light therapy lamp.
- **Eat healthy:** Eating well can have a big impact on how you feel. Eat a balanced diet and avoid too much sugar and processed foods.
- **Stay engaged:** Maintaining social ties can help ward off feelings of isolation. Find ways to stay connected with family, friends and community members.

## Take charge of your wellbeing

If the strategies above don't help, Martin says to talk to your doctor. It's important not to ignore the problem.

"If you've tried improving sleep, increasing sunlight exposure, eating well and staying active, but you still feel persistently sad or unmotivated, it's worth talking to your doctor," she says.

Your doctor can help rule out medical conditions and may recommend further evaluation or treatment, including therapy.

"Therapy doesn't have to be intimidating," Martin adds.

"Sometimes just talking to someone can be beneficial. It's a safe space to share thoughts and feelings without the pressure of immediate solutions."

Remember, she says, reaching out for support is a sign of strength. It is a crucial part of improving your quality of life. [t](#)

**If you are struggling with severe feelings of loneliness, sadness or distress, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available 24/7 by calling or texting 988.**



## DID YOU KNOW?

Social isolation and loneliness are linked to higher rates of:

- Dementia
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Depression
- Anxiety

SOURCE: CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION





# A STEP AHEAD

Annual visits covered at no cost

**P**reventive care is key to your health and wellness. Regular check-ups and screenings provide the care you need for existing conditions. They also help detect other health issues early. Here are several visits covered by your health plan.

## Welcome to Medicare Visit

During your first 12 months of Medicare Part B, you should attend a Welcome to Medicare visit. This visit sets a baseline to track any changes in your health. During the visit, your doctor will review your medical and family history, current conditions and medications. They will also check your blood pressure, vision, height and weight. They might order other tests or screenings. To schedule your Welcome to Medicare visit, contact your doctor.

- A discussion about advanced care planning
  - Making a list of risk factors and treatment options for any medical conditions
  - Developing a personalized prevention plan
- This appointment should take place a full 12 months after your Welcome to Medicare visit or your last Wellness Visit.

## Annual Wellness Visit

Each year, you are covered for an Annual Wellness Visit. Unlike your Annual Physical Exam, the purpose of this visit is to develop a prevention plan for you to stay healthy.

The Annual Wellness Visit usually includes:

- A review of your medical and family history
- Updating your current list of medications
- Taking key measurements and vitals

## Physical Exam

A Physical Exam provides a detailed checkup of your health. In addition to reviewing your medical and family history, your doctor will perform a variety of tests. A Physical Exam typically includes:

- Checking your height, weight and blood pressure
- Checking key vitals like your heart rate, breathing and temperature
- Scheduling screenings and vaccinations
- Examining your eyes, ears, throat, skin, etc.
- Determining treatment options for conditions

**In-Home Wellness Visit**

Your health plan also provides access to an In-Home Wellness Visit through Signify Health. A healthcare provider will visit your

home to review your health and medications.

You will receive a \$25 gift card from Signify Health for completing the visit. See the Welcome section for more information.

# Screenings

The types of preventive screenings you need and the frequency of these visits are dependent on several factors, including your medical and family health history. Here are several general guidelines for important screenings:

SCREENING	WHAT IT CHECKS FOR	FREQUENCY
Blood glucose and A1C test	Diabetes	Every three years for adults with normal blood glucose levels
Bone density test*	Osteoporosis	Every two years
Cholesterol test	High cholesterol, which can lead to disease	Every five years or more with risk factors
Colonoscopy	Colon cancer	Every 10 years. Frequency depends on type of screening test and risk factors. Discuss your risk with your doctor.
Depression assessment	Depression	Yearly
Eye exam	Vision issues	Every three years or more with risk factors
Hearing test	Hearing loss	Periodically
Mammogram*	Breast cancer	Every two years depending on risk. Discuss your risk with your doctor.
Prostate test**	Prostate cancer	Discuss with your doctor

\*For women

\*\*For men

These are just some of the screenings you may need.

For additional screenings, go to

[bluecrossmn.com/medicare-preventive](http://bluecrossmn.com/medicare-preventive)



# MANAGING BLOOD PRESSURE

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



**Member:** My blood pressure has been normal for a while. Is it still important to monitor it? How long do I need to keep track of it? — *Janis, Golden Valley*

**Anita:** It's good to hear that your blood pressure is under control. But it is essential to keep monitoring it regularly.

High blood pressure often doesn't present noticeable symptoms. Ongoing checks are needed to ensure your health is stable and your treatment plan remains effective. Continued monitoring helps confirm that your blood pressure stays within the desired range. It also allows for early detection of any potential changes.

Regular monitoring is important due to the influence of lifestyle factors. Diet, exercise, alcohol use, stress and smoking can all impact blood pressure. By keeping track of your readings, you can better manage these elements.

When monitoring at home, keep these tips in mind:

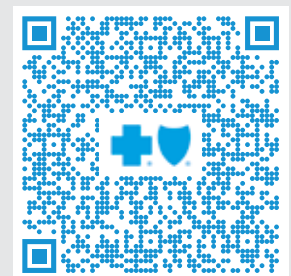
**Preparation** – Avoid smoking, caffeine and exercise at least 30 minutes before taking a reading. Rest quietly for five minutes prior to measurement.

**Proper Technique** – Sit with your back supported, feet flat on the ground and arm at heart level. Use the correct size cuff for accurate readings.

**Consistency** – Take your blood pressure at the same time each day. Keep a log of your readings.

**Share with Your Doctor** – Report your readings to your doctor at least once a year, even if they're normal. This ensures your treatment plan is on track.

Members with a Part D plan through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota can reach out to our Medication Therapy Management (MTM) team at 1-866-873-5941, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time for more information, or you can scan the QR code here.



# REST EASY: NEW INSURANCE COVERED SLEEP APNEA CARE OPTION – NO CLINICS REQUIRED

You now have access to virtual sleep apnea care through:



## SLEEP EVALUATION

GEM has removed the starts, stops and hidden costs in getting a sleep apnea diagnosis. Order a home sleep test to evaluate your sleep from the comfort of your own bed.

GEM sleep test includes:

- Testing
- Clinician review
- Diagnosis
- Treatment recommendation & prescription (if needed)

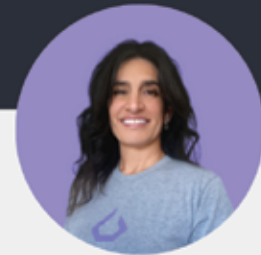


## SLEEP APNEA TREATMENT

Based on your sleep test evaluation, you'll receive recommendations from GEM clinicians.

GEM makes it easy to get the right treatment:

- Virtual mask fitting
- Multiple treatment options
- Mask & machine guarantee
- CPAPs ready to ship



## FOLLOW UP SUPPORT

GEM's team of experts will help you track your progress and provide guidance to make your transition smooth.

- 1:1 Support
- Live virtual visits available

### How to get started with GEM:

1. Take a quick assessment at [mygemsleep.com](https://mygemsleep.com)
2. Add the home sleep test to your cart.
3. Enter your insurance information at checkout.





# IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

The role of durable medical equipment in caregiver support

**B**eing a caregiver is a complex job. Having the right tools makes it easier.

Durable medical equipment (DME) offers a range of devices designed to boost independence, comfort and safety for loved ones. It also eases the physical and emotional burden on caregivers.

## What is DME?

DME includes items that help with daily living and medical needs. Walkers and canes improve mobility. Patient lifts ease physical strain. Home infusion pumps allow medication to be given in a comfortable setting. And mobility aids like wheelchairs help loved ones get around more easily.

## How do I choose DME?

When choosing DME, it's important to consider quality, safety and accessibility. Opt for high-quality, durable items that will last. Also be mindful of accessibility challenges and doctor input.

Your loved one's health plan covers medically necessary DME that Medicare and Medicaid cover. For details on equipment and coverage, contact Member Services.

With the right DME, caregivers can improve life for themselves and their loved ones.



SecureBlue<sup>SM</sup> 1-888-740-6013, TTY 711

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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請注意，如果您需要免費協助傳譯這份文件，請撥打上面的電話號碼。

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# SUPPORTING VETERANS

A Blue Cross group works to help area Veterans



*“The most rewarding part of this project is being able to talk with the Veterans every year...”*

**H**elping our community is at the heart of what our Associate Resource Groups (ARGs) do. ARGs are volunteer groups led by Blue Cross employees. They connect with others based on shared interests.

Since 2018, the Allies of the Military ARG (Allies) has volunteered at Hastings Veterans Home to help with their spring cleanup. Allies volunteers landscaped and built raised garden beds for residents to grow vegetables. In 2023, the Hastings Veterans Home harvested about 800 pounds of food. That helped in meal prep and saved \$2,000 in food costs.

“These Veterans have sacrificed so much serving our country,” says Nelson Schmidt, an Allies volunteer. “The most rewarding part of this project is being able to talk with the Veterans every year and hear how excited they are to get planting, and how the planting and growing process is beneficial to both their physical and mental wellbeing.”

Schmidt says that over six years, they have developed a great group of volunteers who are passionate about helping Veterans.

“We have loved partnering with the Hastings Veterans Home,” he says. “It’s an amazing feeling to be able to give back and provide them with something that brings joy and healing.”



# WORD FIND

ACTIVITY  
BLOOD PRESSURE  
CROSS COUNTRY

DIGESTION  
EQUIPMENT  
INDEPENDENCE

ISOLATION  
LONELINESS  
MOBILITY

NUTRITION  
WELLNESS  
WINTER

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

SecureBlue<sup>SM</sup> (HMO SNP) is a health plan that contracts with both Medicare and the Minnesota Medical Assistance (Medicaid) program to provide benefits of both programs to enrollees. Enrollment in SecureBlue depends on contract renewal.

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## Need help navigating your health plan?

Our experienced MSHO specialists can assist with:

- Eligibility
- Enrollment
- Plan details

Reach out by phone or email for expert guidance.



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