November is National Diabetes Month.

There isn’t a cure yet for diabetes, but a healthy lifestyle can really reduce its impact on your life. The Living Well with Diabetes program, offered through the Utah Department of Health, helps participants make healthy day-to-day decisions. Register today for a workshop near you!
arthritis.health.utah.gov/workshops/

Our SelectHealth Medicare Advantage® plan has an enhanced routine eye exam benefit for members who have been diagnosed with diabetes by an in-network provider. This enhanced benefit does not apply to exams for known medical conditions and ongoing medical care.

There is no coinsurance, copayment, or deductible for one routine eye exam per year. This is also available for members on our Community Care plan (Medicaid) and some commercial plans.

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DIABETES EYE EXAM FACT SHEET

If you have diabetes, you have a higher risk of certain eye problems. Some of these problems can be serious. Keeping your eyes healthy can delay or prevent serious eye problems. Both your primary care doctor and an eye specialist can help. Your first step is to schedule an eye exam. **WHY DO I NEED AN EYE EXAM?**

If you have diabetes—even if your vision seems fine—you could be at risk for:

- Retinopathy, an eye disease caused by damage to the small blood vessels at the back of the eye. Treating retinopathy early can prevent blindness.
- Cataracts, or cloudiness on the lens of the eye.
- Glaucoma, or increased pressure in the eye.

**WHERE DO I GO?**

There are two types of eye specialists:

- An optometrist specializes in prescriptions for eye glasses, and can also diagnose some eye diseases.
- An ophthalmologist specializes in diseases of the eye.

**HOW OFTEN DO I NEED AN EYE EXAM?**

Most people have an eye exam every one to two years—your doctor will tell you how often you need one. (Most of our plans cover one eye exam per plan year.) The eye specialist or your doctor will compare the health of your eyes from year to year and look for changes.

If you notice changes in your vision, talk with your doctor right away. Your doctor may want you to have an eye exam at that time. Signs your vision has changed can include:

- Floating spots
- Blurred vision
- Double vision

**WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE EXAM?**

It’s easy. The eye specialist will put drops in your eyes. You’ll look into a machine and the eye specialist will take pictures of the backs of your eyes.

**WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO PROTECT MY EYES?**

- Be careful to control your blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure.
- If you smoke, quit smoking.

How’s Your Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure is sneaky. Typically, it doesn’t have warning signs. So while tens of millions of adults nationwide have it, many don’t know it. That matters because over time, undiagnosed high blood pressure might hurt your eyes or kidneys—or even cause a heart attack or stroke.

But here’s the good news: High blood pressure is highly treatable, especially when it’s just starting to creep up. Detecting it early—and making lifestyle changes—can help keep it from seriously hurting your health.

**DON’T GUESS—GET CHECKED**

The National Institutes of Health advises having regular blood pressure checks by a healthcare provider.

Your doctor can help explain what your results mean. What’s good or bad for you doesn’t depend just on the numbers but on your overall heart health.

**BRINGING IT DOWN**

What if you do have high blood pressure? Working on healthier habits is a great place to start, for example:

- **Eat smarter.** Focus on a variety of veggies, fruits, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. Go easy on added sugars and salt. You might also want to ask your doctor about an eating plan called the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet. Studies show it helps lower blood pressure.
- **Move more.** If regular exercise hasn’t been part of your routine, check with your doctor about the safest way to start.

Slim down. If you’re carrying extra pounds, losing just 5 percent of your total weight can help improve your blood pressure.

Make a plan to be a quitter. Smoking causes blood pressure to spike and raises your risk for heart disease or stroke.

If steps like these don’t drop your blood pressure, your doctor may also advise taking medication. But remember: As helpful as it may be, it’s never a substitute for a healthier lifestyle.

Additional sources: American College of Cardiology; American Heart Association; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

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Flu and People with Diabetes

People with diabetes (type 1 or type 2), even when well-managed, are at high risk for serious flu complications, which can result in hospitalization and, sometimes, even death. Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections, and ear infections are examples of flu-related complications. Flu also can make chronic health problems, like diabetes, worse. This is because diabetes can make the immune system less able to fight infections. In addition, illness can make it harder to control your blood sugar. Illness can raise your sugar, but since you might not feel like eating when you’re sick, your blood sugar levels could fall. So it is important to follow the sick day guidelines for people with diabetes.

Diabetes is a chronic (long-lasting) disease that affects how your body turns food into energy. There are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes (diabetes while pregnant). More than 100 million Americans are living with diabetes (30.3 million) or prediabetes (84.1 million).

A Flu Vaccine is the Best Protection Against FLU

Flu vaccination is especially important for people with diabetes because they are at high risk of developing serious flu complications. Flu vaccines are updated each season as needed to keep up with changing viruses. Also, immunity wanes over a year, so annual vaccination is needed to ensure the best possible protection against flu. A flu vaccine protects against the flu viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. The 2019-2020 flu vaccine has been updated from last season’s vaccine to better match circulating viruses. Immunity from vaccination sets in after about two weeks.

Flu vaccination has been shown to reduce the risk of getting sick with flu as well as reduce the risk of having a serious flu outcome like a stay in the hospital or even being admitted to the intensive care unit. Flu vaccination also has been associated with reduced hospitalizations among people with diabetes (79%).

CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a seasonal flu vaccine each year by the end of October.

TYPES OF FLU VACCINES

- Injectable influenza vaccines (or flu shots) are recommended for use in people with diabetes and other health conditions. The flu shot has a long, established safety record in people with diabetes.
- The live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), also known as the nasal spray vaccine, is recommended as an option for use in individuals 2 through 49 years of age. However, there is a precaution against the use of nasal spray flu vaccine (LAIV) in people with certain underlying medical conditions, including diabetes. Your doctor or other healthcare professional can answer any questions you might have about flu vaccine.

PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINES

- Having the flu increases your risk of getting pneumococcal disease (pneumonia is an example of a serious flu-related complication that can cause death).
- People who have diabetes should also be up to date with pneumococcal vaccination (a vaccine for pneumonia) to help protect against pneumonia. Pneumococcal vaccination should be part of a diabetes management plan. Talk to your healthcare provider to find out which pneumococcal vaccines are recommended for you.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Remembering Your Medications

You are prescribed medications to help you feel better and help your body work better. They work best when you to take them exactly as prescribed. But it can be hard to remember when and how to take them. The tips below can help.

Use a weekly pill box. If you take medications at different times of the day, make sure the pill box has multiple spots for each day.

Get your medications packaged at a pharmacy. Ask your pharmacy to group your medications together based on the time of day you take them.

Ask your pharmacy to sync your prescriptions so they are refilled at the same time. This can save you trips to the pharmacy.

Use a calendar and write down the day, time and dose of each medication. This can help you keep track of medications you take once a week, once a month, or for a short time (such as an antibiotic). Put a reminder note to refill your prescription on your calendar 1 week before the medication is due to run out.

Ask your family or friends for help with making a schedule and reminders.

Manage the cost of your medications

Always let your healthcare professional know if you have trouble paying for your medications. They can see if there are generic versions, which are usually cheaper. Ask your pharmacist if there are any discount cards or programs that will help you pay for them.

NEVER stop taking any of your medications on your own. Don’t be afraid to speak to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions or problems with your medications. They want to make sure the medications you are taking are best for you and your situation.
Questions to ask your doctor or pharmacist about your medications

Don’t be shy about asking questions. Your doctor and pharmacist want to know that you understand exactly what you need to do to take care of yourself or a loved one. Some common questions are listed below. If you have others, be sure to write them in the space provided on the right and take them to your next appointment.

- What time of day do I need to take my medication?
- Should I take it with food, or on an empty stomach?
- What are the possible side effects?
  - How long will the side effects last? (Some side effects go away after you have been taking the medication for a few weeks.)
  - What can I do to help prevent or lessen the side effects?
- Can I take my medications at the same time?
- For medications that need to be taken several times a day, is there an alternative medication that can be taken once a day?
- Are there any cheaper medications available that will do the same thing?

**Other questions for my doctor or pharmacist**

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Our goal is to help you reach your health goals!
If you have questions about your medications or insurance benefits, please call Member Services at the number below, weekdays, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. TTY users, please call 711.

> Medicaid- 855-442-3234
> Commercial- 800-538-5038
> Medicare- 855-442-9900

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INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. Drizzle lemon juice over apples.
3. In a small bowl, mix together remaining ingredients. Stuff each apple with approximately 1/4 cup oat mixture.
4. Place apples in an oven-safe baking dish and bake for 25-30 minutes.

Source: diabetesfoodhub.org

Baked Cinnamon Stuffed Apples

Serves 8
Prep time 10 minutes
Cook time 30 minutes

Fruit dishes like these Baked Cinnamon Stuffed Apples can make a wonderful, healthy dessert. The smell of these apples baking in the oven will have your mouth watering.

INGREDIENTS

4 large McIntosh or Golden Delicious apples (cored)
½ lemon (juiced)
6 tbsp Splenda brown sugar blend
½ cup oatmeal
1 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tbsp margarine (trans-fat-free)
½ cup pecans (finely chopped)

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving Size: ½ apple
Calories: 145
Carbohydrates: 26 g
Protein: 1 g
Fat: 5 g
Trans Fat: 1 g
Dietary Fiber: 3 g
Cholesterol: 0 mg
Sodium: 25 mg

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If you have a Medicare Advantage® plan, call us toll-free at 855-442-9900, weekdays 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., closed Sunday. Outside of these hours of operation, please leave a message and your call will be returned within one business day. TTY users, please call 711. SelectHealth is an HMO, HMO-SNP plan sponsor with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in SelectHealth Advantage depends on contract renewal.

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The SelectHealth® mobile app is your go-to resource for on-demand information about your health plan. Take advantage of features like:

> Plan details and member profile pages
> Medical cost estimates for specific services and procedures
> Premium payments through the app (Individual plans only)
> Claims information for medical, dental, and pharmacy
> Helpful plan documents
> Wellness tips and resources

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