



# BENEFITS INSIDER

A PUBLICATION OF THE OHIO CONFERENCE OF TEAMSTERS & INDUSTRY HEALTH AND WELFARE FUND

## Inside the Mind & Heart

Inside this newsletter discover insights on mental wellness, self-care, the power of compassion and more!

Read on to grow, heal, and connect.



## What's Inside.

National Cancer Survivor Month

**PAGE 2**

Finding workouts in everyday activities

**PAGE 7**

Steps to take care of yourself while caring for others

**PAGE 13**

SEE Now PAY Later!

**PAGE 19**

Brush Up for Heart Health

**PAGE 3**

Foods to fight inflammation

**PAGE 8**

Lyme Disease What You Should Know to Protect Yourself

**PAGE 14**

There's still time to sign up for your heart health benefit.

**PAGE 20**

How Can I Manage Stress?

**PAGE 4**

Delicious lunch and dinner options

**PAGE 9**

The Connection Between Oral Hygiene and Your Overall Health

**PAGE 15**

Your ticket to a pain-free summer

**PAGE 21**

Healthcare from the break room, living room or anywhere else

**PAGE 5**

Ways to support teens' mental health

**PAGE 11**

Build Balance and Prevent Falls Through Somatic Exercises

**PAGE 16**

Expert tips for summer skin care

**PAGE 6**

How to stay socially connected in a health way

**PAGE 12**

Colorectal Cancer Awareness

**PAGE 17**

# National Cancer Survivor Month

June is National Cancer Survivor Month — #NationalCancerSurvivorMonth — a time to celebrate the more than 18 million, and counting, Americans who have survived cancer. It is also a great time to schedule your regular health cancer screenings.

Our partners at GRAIL have developed the Galleri® test — a groundbreaking multi-cancer early detection test. With just a single blood draw, the Galleri test screens for over 50 types of cancer, including some of the deadliest types, by detecting a shared cancer signal.

The Galleri test, valued at \$949, is available at \$374.50 to OCT participants and dependents who are 50 years old or older or age 40-49 with additional risk factors.

To learn more about the Galleri test, check your eligibility, and review our Important Safety Information, visit [galleri.com/OCT](https://galleri.com/OCT). The Galleri test is by prescription only.

*The Galleri test does not detect a signal for all cancers and not all cancers can be detected in the blood. False positive and false negative results do occur. The Galleri test should be used in addition to healthcare provider recommended screening tests.*



# Brush Up for Heart Health

## Healthy smiles, healthy hearts

How you care for your teeth and gums may play a role in your heart health.

Studies have shown that both periodontal (gum) disease and heart disease have similar underlying causes including age, tobacco use, genetics, stress, medications, poor nutrition and obesity.

However, another factor is the buildup of dental plaque over time. Gingivitis, an early state of gum disease, occurs when bacteria in the mouth grow into plaque, causing inflammation and bleeding in the gums. When left untreated, plaque can spread below the gum line, allowing bacteria to enter the bloodstream. Because of the inflammation and spread of bacteria into the bloodstream, it's believed that there is an increased risk for other systemic diseases such as heart disease.

Although more than 70 percent of Americans ages 65 and older have gum disease, there is good news. You can reduce your risk of heart disease and gum disease by practicing good oral health habits every day. Regular brushing, flossing and dental checkups are important for your smile and your heart.

### **Talk to your dentist if you notice any of these indicators of gum disease:**

- Gums that bleed easily
- Red, swollen, tender gums
- Gums that have pulled away from the teeth
- Persistent bad breath or bad taste in the mouth
- Permanent teeth that are loose or separating
- Any change in the way the teeth fit together when biting
- Any change in the fit of partial dentures







# How Can I Manage Stress?

Stress makes your body release a hormone called adrenaline. This hormone can temporarily speed up your breathing and heart rate and raise your blood pressure. These reactions prepare you to deal with the situation — the “fight or flight” response.

Chronic, or long-term, stress is when stress is constant and your body is in high gear on and off for days or weeks at a time. Chronic stress may lead to high blood pressure, which can increase risk for heart attack and stroke.

It’s important to recognize how stress affects you, learn how to deal with it and develop healthy habits to reduce your stress.

## How can stress affect me?

Stress affects each of us in different ways. What’s stressful to one person may not be for another. Stress can cause poor health behaviors that are linked to heart disease and stroke. It also can have physical signs and emotional effects.

Stress may contribute to poor health behaviors such as:

- Smoking or smoking more than normal
- Overeating
- Being physically inactive
- Eating an unhealthy diet
- Becoming overweight
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Not taking medications as prescribed

Chronic stress can cause physical and emotional issues, including:

- digestive problems
- anxiety and depression
- headaches trouble sleeping
- weight gain
- memory and concentration issues
- high blood pressure

## How can I manage stress?

Finding ways to manage stress is important for your physical health and mental well-being. Here are some things that can help you manage stress:

- Use positive self-talk. Turn negative thoughts into positive ones. Instead of saying “I can’t do this,” say “I’ll do my best.”
- Exercise regularly. Physical activity can relieve stress, tension, anxiety and depression. Consider a brisk walk, hike or bike ride.
- Make time for friends and family. It’s important to maintain social connections and talk with people you trust.
- Get enough sleep. Adults should aim for an average of seven to nine hours a night.
- Practice relaxation techniques. Try deep breathing while listening to music, meditate or do yoga.
- Do a hobby you enjoy. It can be fun and distract you from negative thoughts or worries.
- Identify sources of stress in your life and look for ways to reduce and manage them.

## How can I reduce the amount of stress in my life?

Everyone gets stressed sometimes, but you can identify effective ways to manage or reduce the amount of stress in your life. Here are some things that may help reduce your daily stress:

- Think ahead about things that might bother you and plan how to deal with them.
- Avoid things that you know cause you stress, such as rushhour traffic.
- Learn to say “no” if you don’t have time to do something.

Don’t promise too much to others.

- Plan your time wisely to get important things done without rushing.
- Stay organized with “to do” lists and tackle big tasks one step at a time.

## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit [heart.org](http://heart.org) to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- Sign up for our monthly Heart Insight e-news for heart patients and their families at [HeartInsight.org](http://HeartInsight.org).
- Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at [heart.org/SupportNetwork](http://heart.org/SupportNetwork).



## Healthcare from the break room, living room or anywhere else

**Teladoc**<sup>®</sup>  
HEALTH

Start using your Teladoc Health benefits.

### **24/7 Care**

Need care for non-urgent and common conditions? Get same-day appointments with a certified provider from wherever you are. Teladoc Health providers diagnose, treat and even prescribe medicine if needed.

- Allergies
- Bronchitis
- Flu
- COVID-19
- Pink eye
- Rashes
- Sinus infections
- Sore throats
- And more

**\$20/visit**

### **Mental Health**

Find support that works best for you. You can connect with a therapist 7 days a week and get a personalized plan and online content designed for you.

- Anxiety and depression
- Sleep issues
- Relationship conflicts
- Trauma and PTSD
- Medication management

**Therapy \$20/visit**

**Psychiatry \$20/first visit**

**Psychiatry \$20/ongoing visits**

***More information coming soon!***

***Visit [TeladocHealth.com](https://TeladocHealth.com)***

***Call 1-800-835-2362***

# Expert tips for summer skin care

Bask in the sun. Take a dip in the pool, Feel the blades of grass between your toes. Summer's long days are here to enjoy. However, some of the season's best outdoor pastimes can wreak havoc on our skin.

## Sunburns

Redness, warmth and tenderness are symptoms of overexposure to the sun's rays. In fact, about 33,000 people seek emergency care for sunburns each year.

### **The best way to protect yourself from the sun, Dr. Zwerner says, is prevention.**

- When shopping for sunscreen, look for those that protect against both UVA and UVB rays. The sun protection factor (SPF) should be 30 or higher.
- Reapply every two hours and more often if you're in or near water.
- Look for shade, especially between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- Wear long-sleeved, protective clothing, including a wide-brimmed hat and large sunglasses.

These protective strategies can help prevent skin cancer from developing too. If you're feeling the burn, take a cool bath and liberally apply a non-comedogenic moisturizer. Drink plenty of water and avoid the sun. Bad sunburns can be painful or cause your skin to blister or peel. You may develop fevers or chills. Talk to a doctor if you have any of these symptoms.

***Preparing for and taking care of these skin issues will help you have a memorable summer for all the right reasons.***

## Rashes

While exploring the outdoors, you may come across dangerous plants. Poison ivy, oak and sumac aren't poisonous. However, they do give off an oil that causes skin to itch badly and blister.

If you know you've been in contact with these plants in wooded or marshy areas, wash your clothes and skin thoroughly. A reaction of red, itchy and swollen skin will appear within one-to-three days if you've been affected.

Rashes can also occur from chlorine in the pool or a new soap you're using while on vacation. It may take some detective work to determine and remove the cause of your irritation.

You can treat rash symptoms with calamine lotion and oatmeal baths. If you get hives, your rash covers the eyes, face, genitals or is severe, talk to a doctor.

## Stings

Bee and wasp stings are a threat during summer months. They can cause swelling, itching, a rash or a more serious reaction. If stung, soothe the area by applying a cold compress or ice. If you have trouble breathing, swelling in your lips or arms, or hives, call 911 immediately. These symptoms signal a severe reaction.

## Bites

Mosquito bites are a common, yet bothersome, side effect of outdoor fun. Most people get a small bump with some redness or swelling within a day of the bite. Calm the itching with an over-the-counter topical cream. Prevention is effective. Cover up skin, wear a hat and gloves and use a bug repellent with DEET before heading outside.

## Aquatic stings and scrapes

Consider wearing a wetsuit to protect your skin from scrapes and irritants. For any water activity, water shoes can protect your feet from rocks and other sharp objects.

## Other causes and solutions

If your skin is suffering, don't be too quick to blame summer itself. Irritants can come from foods, dyes, perfumes or even certain medications. Talk to a doctor who can help you work through some of these other causes.

# Finding workouts in everyday activities

There are enormous benefits to staying physically active.

It helps improve your brain health, manage weight and make your body stronger. There are few lifestyle choices that can affect you more positively than moderate physical activity.

Warmer weather means it's enjoyable to spend time outside. For some, that means going for a hike, a run or a long bicycle ride. Enjoy the fresh air and sunny days. The following are great opportunities for physical activity that are less strenuous but will still keep you active.

Please note: Before you start any new exercise routine, talk to your doctor to make sure it's safe.

## Here are 7 “found workouts” in everyday activities.

### Summer Walk

If swimming laps in a pool is not your thing, try walking laps or circles in the shallow end. Grab a friend, and rather than sitting on the side of the pool, add some movement for a resistance workout. If you're at the beach, walk on the sand. The workout is harder than walking on the sidewalk.

### Seasonal Decluttering

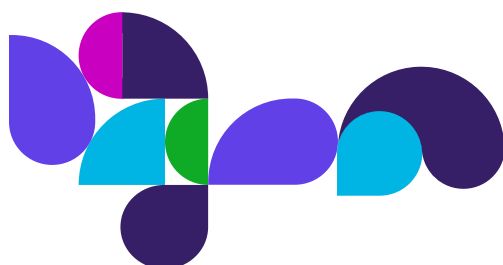
Deep cleaning your home or garage each season is a perfect way to get moving and get your muscles firing.

Who knows, maybe you'll make some room for a new bicycle?

### Gardening

Pushing the lawn mower gets you moving. Moving plants, mulch and topsoil around will strengthen your muscles. Seeing the fruits of your labor blooming is good for your mind.

### A new commute



*Remember to hydrate.  
When exercising, drink water  
before, during and after your  
activity.*

Because the weather is warmer and the daylight is longer, add a walk to your commute. Park your car in the far parking lot. Just a 10-minute walk improves your fitness. The walk can also reset your attitude at the end of the day. If you're ambitious, leave the car at home and commute on your bike if there is a safe route.

### Puppy Playtime

Your pets enjoy nice weather as much as you do. Explore local dog parks and lead your furry friends on off-leash chases.

### Plogging

Plogging is considered Sweden's “green sport.” It's a mashup of jogging and picking up litter. Pack a trash bag and gloves and delitter as you walk at the beach, in a forest or your local park. It's good for your heart, soul and the environment.

### Picking Produce

Visit your local farmers market for what's fresh or in season. Even better, visit berry patches and orchards to pick your own produce.

*Working out doesn't seem so  
daunting when you can incorporate  
it into your daily life.*

# Foods to fight inflammation

Inflammation is an important part of your body's natural healing process. It's your immune system sending out cells to fight bacteria and infections or heal injuries.

## Chronic inflammation is completely different

It can be caused by an autoimmune disorder, an untreated injury or infection, or even overexposure to allergens such as pollen. It can lead to heart disease, diabetes, psoriasis and other illnesses.

Symptoms may include fatigue, body pain, joint stiffness and puffiness in the face, especially under the eyes.

If you suffer from chronic inflammation, there are foods that can make inflammation worse.

Try limiting these types of foods and ingredients:

- **Saturated fats**—Like those found in margarine, shortening and lard, processed meats (hot dogs, sausages), cream and butter.
- **Trans fats**—Fast foods and fried foods.
- **Refined carbohydrates**—Processed foods made with white flour (white bread, pastries) and refined sugar (cane sugar, molasses, brown sugar).
- **Soda** and other sweetened beverages

## Eat this instead

Now that you know what not to eat, here's a list of foods that contain anti-inflammatory benefits:

### Fruits and Vegetables

- Cherries
- Blueberries
- Collard greens
- Kale
- Oranges
- Spinach
- Strawberries
- Tomatoes

### Protein

- Mackerel
- Sardines
- Wild-caught salmon
- Tuna
- Almonds
- Walnuts
- Chia seeds
- Flax seeds

### Other Foods

- Coffee
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Green tea
- Sauerkraut
- Turmeric



# Delicious lunch options that will help you fight inflammation.

## Greek lentil salad

Makes 4 servings | Prep: 45 minutes

### Ingredients

- 1 cup black beluga lentils (dry/uncooked)
- 3 cups water
- 3 cups of baby spinach, chopped
- 1/2 medium red onion, chopped
- 1/3 cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, rinsed
- 1/3 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and quartered
- 1/3 cup basil or flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- Optional: crumbled feta cheese



### Greek dressing

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon tahini
- 2 garlic cloves, pressed or minced
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- • Salt and black pepper to taste

### Preparation

First, pick through the lentils and remove any debris (like tiny rocks). Pour the lentils into a fine-mesh colander and rinse under running water. Dump the lentils into a medium saucepan. Add the water and bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer and cook, stirring occasionally. The lentils will be tender in about 25 to 35 minutes. Drain the lentils and return them to the pot to cool for about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, in a medium serving bowl, combine the spinach, red onion, sun-dried tomatoes, olives and basil. Set aside.

To prepare the dressing, combine all of the ingredients and whisk until thoroughly blended. Once the lentils have cooled for about 5 minutes, add them to the serving bowl. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss until blended. Taste, and add more salt and pepper if necessary. Serve in individual bowls with a sprinkle of feta cheese on top, if desired.

### Nutrition information | Serving size: 1 cup

Calories: 214 | Total fat: 16 g | Saturated fat: 2 g

Sodium: 215 mg | Cholesterol: 0 mg

Total carbs: 15 g | Fiber: 5 g | Sugars: 3 g

Protein: 6 g | Potassium: 441 mg

# Delicious dinner options that will help you fight inflammation.

## Grilled shrimp tacos with cabbage slaw

Makes 4 servings | Prep: 30 minutes

### Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons nonfat Greek yogurt
- 1/3 cup light mayonnaise
- 1/2 chipotle pepper en adobo, minced into a puree\*
- 1 pound medium peeled and deveined shrimp
- 2 limes, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 medium green cabbage, finely shredded
- 2 medium carrots, coarsely grated
- 3/4 cup roughly chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra, if needed, for brushing
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 8 small whole grain corn tortillas

### Nutrition information | Serving size: 2 tacos

Calories: 389 | Total fat: 11 g | Saturated fat: 2 g  
Sodium: 509 mg | Cholesterol: 229 mg  
Total carbs: 40 g | Fiber: 8 g | Sugars: 10 g  
Protein: 37 g | Potassium: 564 mg



### Preparation

Preheat a grill or grill pan to medium-high heat. In a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, mayonnaise and chipotle pepper; set aside. In a medium bowl, toss together shrimp, juice of 1 lime and chili powder; set aside. In a large bowl, combine shredded cabbage, carrots, cilantro and the juice of the remaining lime; toss well. Add salt and pepper to taste. Thread shrimp on skewers, 3-4 shrimp per skewer. Brush each skewer with olive oil and season to taste with salt and pepper. Coat the grill rack with cooking spray and grill shrimp skewers 2-3 minutes on each side, or until pinkish and opaque in color. Meanwhile, warm tortillas, as desired, on the grill.

To assemble, spread a few teaspoons of the chipotle mayo along the center of a warmed corn tortilla. Lay 3 or 4 shrimp across the mayo. Top with a generous spoonful of the cabbage slaw. Serve additional slaw as a side salad. \*Chipotle peppers en adobo are sold in small cans in the Mexican food section of most supermarkets. One-half of a minced chipotle pepper measures about half of a tablespoon.

# Ways to support teens' mental health

A new school year brings a fresh start for students and families alike. There are new classes and new routines to get used to. And in many cases, there is a need for mental health support.

Academic demands and social pressures can increase the levels of stress and anxiety in teens and young adults. Unfortunately, these are difficult times for young people in America.

**Sadly, in 2023 suicide was the third-leading cause of death among people ages 15 to 19.**

There's hardly a high school in this country that has escaped being touched by this type of tragedy.

## Start talking

If you have a teen in your life, it's important to remain connected. Encourage teens and young adults to reach out when they need support.

## You can provide support by:

- Encouraging healthy sleep, nutrition and exercise habits. A healthy body leads to a healthy mind.
- Celebrating their hobbies and other positive social networks.
- Helping with time management and organization.
- Asking them to practice relaxation and mindfulness exercises with you.
- Setting realistic expectations about academic or sports-related performance.
- Educating them about excessive technology/ social media use and its impact on mental health.

***If you or someone you care about is considering suicide, call 988 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).***

According to the CDC's most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey students who reported feeling 'persistently sad or hopeless' in 2023:

***53% of teen girls compared to 36% in 2011***

***28% of teen boys compared to 21% in 2011.***

***65% of LGBTQ+ teens.***

## Conversation starters

- I've been worried about you. Can we talk about what you are experiencing?
- It seems like you are going through a difficult time. How can I help?
- I'm concerned about your safety. Have you thought about harming yourself or others?

As adults, the more we talk about our feelings and mental health in general, the less of a stigma will be attached to it. We all experience emotions. There's no shame in telling your teens you feel sad or anxious and why. Being a good role model could open the door to their sharing.

## Help our teens

There is good news. As a society, we are taking steps to help our children and remove the stigma around asking for mental healthcare. The presence of therapists and social workers in schools has shown a positive impact on teen mental health. Parents and educators are learning how to spot the signs of children who need help.

It's never easy for anyone to talk about feelings of depression, anxiety or any mental health issues. Recognizing symptoms is a step in the right direction toward getting help. Offering to help them can make a difference in both of your lives.

**Let Teladoc Health be a part of your wellness journey.**

**To sign up or learn more, go to [TeladocHealth.com](https://www.TeladocHealth.com).**

# How to stay socially connected in a healthy way



**Humans are social creatures.** We need social relationships and communities to grow, to thrive and to stay physically and emotionally healthy. Even the most introverted people need interaction with others from time to time.

Social isolation and loneliness can result in psychological and physical disintegration. Adults who are lonely or socially isolated are at higher risks for:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Anxiety and depression
- Cognitive decline and more

Older adults are at a higher risk for isolation. Reasons why include limited mobility, hearing, vision and memory loss.

## **Connect with yourself**

Knowing yourself is the first step in finding and establishing new social connections. Ask yourself:

- How much time do you prefer to spend with others?
- Do you prefer to connect with people in person? Via video chats or on the phone? Are text messages enough for you? Do you like a combo of them all?
- What kind of interaction feels best to you? Do you prefer casual chitchat? Deeper conversations? Do you just want to be near another person even if you're not talking?
- Are there people in your life who help you grow? Are there people in your life you think might be holding you back?

## **Connect with others**

Armed with the knowledge of how you like to socialize, create a plan for yourself. Don't be afraid to speak up. If you find yourself in a social situation that makes you uncomfortable, say so.

**Communication is key. Here are some ideas to connect with others:**

### **At work**

- Start a lunch group.
- Schedule virtual coffee chats with coworkers online.
- Create a walking group.
- Give praise freely and often! Tell your colleagues what they do that inspires you or makes you grateful.

### **At home**

- Eat dinner with your family.
- Share about your day.
- Plan a family trip.
- Schedule a recurring date night with your partner.
- Have a screen-free night and do something creative together.
- Tell your kids and/or partner why you're proud of them.

### **With other loved ones**

- Schedule a weekly or monthly phone date with a friend.
- Find a workout buddy to enjoy time together while getting some physical activity.
- Tell a good friend why you value their friendship—it can mean a lot!

There's no right or wrong way to find social balance.

Be respectful of your comfort levels and those of others. In turn, you may connect with them and find the community and companionship you need.

**Let Teladoc Health be a part of your wellness journey.**

**To sign up or learn more, go to [TeladocHealth.com](https://www.TeladocHealth.com).**



# Steps to take care of yourself while caring for others

## We are a population of caregivers.

We take care of children, spouses, our homes and our pets. Increasingly, people in the middle of their lives (those aged 35-55) are being called to provide care for their aging parents and relatives while still caring for their younger family members. As people are living longer and having kids later in life, this group is growing.

Today, caregivers often get stuck in the middle, helping parents and children. Hence the term “sandwich generation.”

## What it takes

Any of these jobs could take all your spare time. Combining the needs of younger and older family members can be overwhelming. Add in trying to balance your professional demands, and it's extra stressful.

You're tasked with organizing on multiple levels. You're often requested to be in more than one place at the same time. No party in this equation wants their needs relegated to second (or third) place. And there is the emotional toll to consider.

## Who takes care of you?

Anyone who has flown on an airplane has heard the instructions: Put on your own oxygen mask before helping others. This one statement is the central tenet of self-care.

Take the time to consider all that you're going through physically and emotionally. Coming to terms with that requires an emotional investment.

Sadly, both jobs only last for a limited time. The reversal of roles with a parent is one part grief, one part gratitude, maybe even one part anger.

Recognizing that you also have needs in this equation starts you on the right path. Like your younger and older family members, you may also need mental and physical support to get through this time.



## Steps to take

- **Self-care is not selfish.** There are ways you can take care of yourself and others by being conscious of your needs.
- **Be self-aware.** Understand your own needs—physical and emotional. Prioritize them.
- **Organize.** Leverage technology to manage calendars, create appointment reminders and store information.
- **Set boundaries.** Don't be available round the clock. Communicate the times you are available and times you need for yourself.
- **Learn coping skills** to manage stress.
- **Stay healthy.** Remember you need sleep, nutrition and exercise. A healthier you is a healthier caregiver.
- **Communicate.** Be open about your own limitations. Practice honest conversations with kids and parents.
- **Practice gratitude.** Be thankful for the chance to serve as a caregiver. Appreciate the small moments.

***The goal is to be the caring, thoughtful family member you know you can be without losing yourself.***

Let Teladoc Health be a part of your wellness journey.

To sign up or learn more, go to [TeladocHealth.com](https://www.TeladocHealth.com).

# Lyme Disease

## What You Should Know to Protect Yourself



Spring and summer bring sunshine and warm weather, but they also mark the start of tick season.

Some tick bites spread Lyme disease, an illness that can cause serious and long-term health issues if left untreated. Reports from the Ohio Department of Health show Lyme disease cases have jumped from 37 in 2010 to over 1,700 in 2024.

### What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that progresses through stages lasting weeks, months or years.

Lyme disease cases are tracked by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify high-risk areas, allowing for better interventions and prevention.

### Signs and symptoms of Lyme disease

The earliest sign of Lyme disease is a bull's-eye rash that expands over time.

"People can develop a headache, fatigue, joint and muscle pain, fever and chills," said Dr. Dwight McFadden, Assistant Medical Director at Medical Mutual.

He notes that symptoms can progress to nerve weakness and pain, dizziness or shortness of breath, numbness or tingling in the extremities, irregular heartbeats and chest pain.

### How to stay safe

Ticks inhabit wooded and grassy areas, transferring to people through direct contact with tall shrubbery.

To avoid tick bites, wear long clothing and enclosed shoes. Check yourself and pets for ticks while outdoors and once again indoors.

If you find a tick, promptly and carefully remove it by following these steps:

- Avoid touching the tick with bare fingers by using tweezers to grasp it as close to the skin as possible, using a steady upward motion until it releases.
- Avoid using products like petroleum jelly, nail polish, kerosene, alcohol or heat for removal.
- Wash your hands and the bite area thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- If possible, secure the tick and take a picture to show your provider.

### When to see your provider

"Lyme disease is curable if identified and treated early, but if it remains undiagnosed until later stages, it can result in chronic health problems," Dr. McFadden said.

Contact your primary care provider (PCP) if you notice a small bug bite developing into a larger rash, you develop flu-like symptoms after spending time in tick-prone areas or you can't fully remove a tick.

Medical Mutual can help you find a PCP. Use our provider search tool at [MedMutual.com/FindAProvider](https://www.MedMutual.com/FindAProvider) or call the Customer Care phone number listed on your member ID card to speak to a representative.



# The Connection Between Oral Hygiene and Your Overall Health

Brushing your teeth might seem like preventive care, but it's closely tied to your overall wellness.

Good oral hygiene isn't just about having a bright smile and fresh breath. It can protect you from health issues caused by harmful bacteria.

This connection highlights the importance of regular dental visits and how consistent oral hygiene practices keep your teeth and gums healthy.

Your mouth is the gateway to your body. When food and drink residue is left on your teeth, it can grow harmful germs and bacteria that may enter your bloodstream.

Poor oral health can lead to an increased risk of infection and cause serious health issues like cardiovascular disease, endocarditis, respiratory infections and pregnancy complications.

Good oral health practices and regular dental checkups not only control germs and bacteria, but they can prevent and identify serious dental issues early.



## Maintaining good oral hygiene

You can protect your teeth and gums by following these general tips:

- **Brush your teeth regularly:** At least two times per day for at least two minutes each time with a fluoride toothpaste and soft-bristle brush. Replace your toothbrush every three to four months, or after being sick.
- **Use floss and antibacterial mouthwash daily:** Use at least once to help remove food pieces and reduce plaque and bacteria buildup. Choose alcohol-free mouthwash to prevent dry mouth.
- **Avoid tobacco products:** Smoking causes lung disease and oral cancers. The American Dental Association advocates for smoking and tobacco cessation initiatives. Medical Mutual members have access to Pivot Breathe, a digital-based tobacco cessation program that helps members track, reduce and ultimately quit smoking and other tobacco products.
- **Eat and drink nutritiously:** Limit sugary food intake and choose water over acidic beverages, soft drinks and alcohol.

## How often you should see your dentist

While certain medical conditions, medications and lifestyle factors can affect your oral health, regular dental checkups can help detect and treat issues early.

Exams and teeth cleanings should be done every six months, but those prone to cavities, gum disease or other oral health issues may need more frequent visits.

Let your dentist know if you have non-healing mouth sores, discolorations or persistent lumps, which can be signs of oral cancer. Warning signs like tooth pain, bleeding gums, loose teeth or chronic bad breath should also be discussed.



# Build Balance and Prevent Falls Through Somatic Exercises

As you age, the risk of experiencing a fall that causes significant health problems increases.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that over 14 million adults aged 65 and older fall every year from factors like surroundings, muscle weakness, health conditions or medications. Exercises focused on improving your balance, stability and coordination can lower that risk.

## What are somatic exercises?

Somatic exercises, meaning “relating to the body,” involve subtle, mindful movements that focus attention on internal sensations.

Unlike traditional exercises that build strength, somatic exercises train your brain to control muscles, enhance balance and increase awareness through slow, deliberate movements.

These activities help you stay coordinated, build core strength and keep your joints mobile, so you can keep enjoying the things you love as you age.

You may be aware of some popular somatic exercises, including:

- Yoga
- Dance
- Pilates
- Tai Chi

## Are there additional health benefits?

Somatic exercises are suitable for older adults and those with mobility issues.

“They don’t require special equipment and can be done in a variety of positions and settings, like the comfort of your home,” said Dr. Linda Patterson, Utilization Management Medical Director at Medical Mutual.

Somatic exercises use relaxed muscles and slow, gentle movements, making them easier on the body.

For those with chronic pain and muscle tension, these exercises can address difficult movements and how to manage them.



Somatic exercises can also serve as a therapeutic way to address mental health through:

- Meditation
- Stretching
- Breath work

Strengthening this mind-body connection increases awareness of thoughts and emotions, reduces stress and anxiety, improves emotional well-being and helps heal past trauma.

## Other ways to improve your balance

Consider supportive footwear, since over 50% of older adults who fall at home admit to wearing slippers, socks or no shoes. Other tips include installing grab bars, using non-slip mats in bathtubs and showers, and reducing home clutter.

Talk to your primary care provider (PCP) about testing for bone loss conditions like osteoporosis. Women should test every two years starting at age 65, or earlier if post-menopausal with risk factors.

If you do not have a PCP, Medical Mutual can help.

Use our provider search tool at [MedMutual.com/FindAProvider](https://www.medmutual.com/FindAProvider) or call the Customer Care phone number listed on your member ID card.



# Colorectal Cancer Awareness



Regular screenings for colorectal (colon) cancer are highly recommended once you reach age 45 — or earlier if you have a personal/family history or other risk factors.

Learn more about colorectal cancer, including risk factors, symptoms and screening options that are available to you.

## Risk Factors

- Age — your risk increases as you get older
- Personal health history of colorectal polyps, colorectal cancer, or inflammatory bowel disease (e.g., Crohn's Disease or ulcerative colitis)
- Family history of colorectal cancer and/or colorectal polyps or certain inherited genetic syndromes

Other factors that also play a role in increasing your risk include being overweight or obese, eating a diet high in red and/or processed meats, tobacco use, and alcohol use. For more information on reducing your risk, please visit the resources below.

***Medical Mutual's Customer Care Specialists are available to answer any questions you may have.***

***Call us at the number on your member ID card.***

## Symptoms

Colorectal cancer and colorectal polyps (abnormal growths in the rectum or colon that can turn into cancer if not removed) don't always cause symptoms, which is why you should get screened regularly.

Symptoms may include:

- A change in bowel habits (diarrhea, constipation, or narrowing of the stool) that lasts more than a few days
- Rectal bleeding with bright red blood, or blood in the stool that might make the stool look dark brown or black
- Feeling that the bowel doesn't empty fully, or abdominal pain, aches, or cramps that won't go away
- Weakness/fatigue, or unintended weight loss
- For a list of possible symptoms, visit [CDC.gov/colorectal-cancer/symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/colorectal-cancer/symptoms)

Many of these symptoms can be caused by something other than cancer, but if you have any of these problems, make sure to see your doctor right away.

Talk to Your Primary Care Provider (PCP) About Your Risks

Schedule an appointment with your PCP at least once per year, or sooner, if you have any concerns or symptoms of colorectal cancer. Many providers offer telehealth visits as an alternative to a face-to-face visit. Ask your provider about your options. If you don't have a PCP, log in to My Health Plan at [MedMutual.com/Member](https://www.MedMutual.com/Member) and use the Find a Provider tool found under the Resources & Tools tab.

## Colorectal Cancer Screenings and Tests Available to You

Your personal and family health history will determine what type of test and the frequency of testing that is right for you.

All of the tests listed below are covered by your Medical Mutual plan when using in network providers:

Test Type	Test Description and Preparation	Where Test is Performed	Test Frequency
<b>Stool Test</b> Guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (gFOBT)	Uses a chemical to detect blood in the stool. Ask your doctor how to prepare for the test. You may need to avoid certain medications and foods prior to the test.	Stool collected at home and returned as instructed by your doctor	Yearly
<b>Stool Test</b> Fecal immunochemical test (FIT)	Uses antibodies to detect blood in the stool. No bowel preparation is needed prior to the test.	Stool collected at home and returned as instructed by your doctor	Yearly
<b>Stool Test</b> Stool DNA test (FIT DNA Test / Cologuard)	Detects altered DNA and the presence of blood in the stool. No bowel preparation is needed prior to the test.	Stool collected at home and returned as instructed by your doctor	Every 3 years
<b>Procedural exams</b> Computed Tomography (CT) Colonography	A small tube is inserted into the rectum. X-rays and computers are used to produce pictures of the inside of the colon or rectum. Your doctor will advise you on how to prepare for the test.	In a hospital or outpatient setting	Every 5 years
<b>Procedural exams</b> Flexible Sigmoidoscopy*	A doctor inserts a short, thin, flexible, lighted tube into your rectum to check for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and lower third of the colon. Your doctor will advise you on how to prepare for the test.	In a hospital or outpatient setting	Every 5 years
<b>Procedural exams</b> Colonoscopy *	A doctor inserts a longer, thin, flexible, lighted tube into your rectum to check for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and the entire colon. Your doctor will advise you on how to prepare for the test.	In a hospital or outpatient setting	Every 10 years or as determined by your doctor

*\*If a polyp is found during your procedure, it may be removed. Your doctor will discuss your options for medications to relieve any discomfort you may have during your procedure, and provide any instructions for follow up care.*

# SEE Now PAY Later!

No interest if paid in full within 24 months\*\*

Our featured providers have locations nationwide that offer extra value to you, such as:

- Free LASIK exam (over \$100 value)
- All LASIK procedures are 100% bladeless
- Guaranteed Financing‡

All other in-network providers extend 15% off standard price or 5% off promotional price.



**\$1,100\***  
**OFF LASIK**  
**\$550 OFF PER EYE**

TO SCHEDULE YOUR  
FREE LASIK EXAM,  
Call 1-877-295-8599 or  
visit [www.e-nvalasik.com](http://www.e-nvalasik.com)

Lasik**Plus+**

The **LASIK** Vision  
INSTITUTE

**TLC**  
Laser Eye Centers®



National Vision Administrators, L.L.C.

**Vision Benefits.  
Smarter.®**

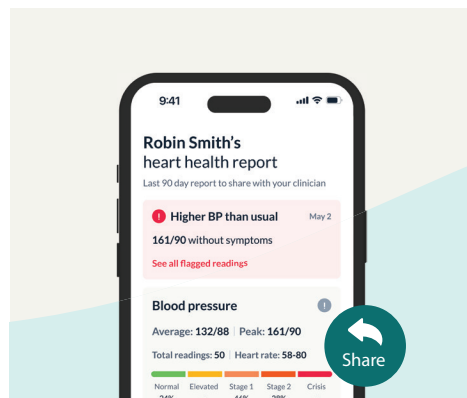
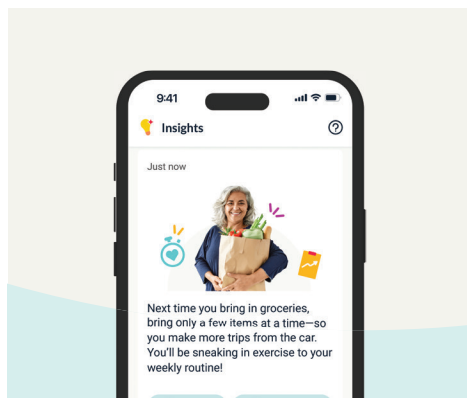
[www.e-nva.com](http://www.e-nva.com)



There's still time to sign up for your heart health benefit.



Why wait to give your heart amazing care? Ohio Conference of Teamsters & Industry Health & Welfare Fund offers Hello Heart as part of your benefits plan, making it easy to manage and understand your heart health.



*Track your blood pressure with a free monitor.*

*Get insights by tracking your cholesterol, medication, and activity.*

*Share private reports with your doctor.*



***Take control of your heart health.***

Scan the QR code or visit [join.helloheart.com](https://join.helloheart.com) and enter Ohio Conference of Teamsters & Industry Health & Welfare Fund to create an account.







## Your ticket to a pain-free summer

### **Make plans, not appointments.**

Nagging pain after a long car ride? Elbow flaring up during your tennis match? Don't let discomfort keep you from making the most of your favorite season. With Thrive - your no-cost holistic pain care benefit - you can take control of pain and get ahead of it, so nothing slows you down.

Thrive targets persistent pain with easy-to-follow digital physical therapy sessions you can do anywhere (yes, even in your hotel room).

Your Thrive Pad - a complimentary tablet with built-in motion tracking - includes a personalized program with exercises tailored to your goals and is light enough to travel wherever summer takes you.

### **Here's how to get started:**

#### **Enroll in Thrive**

In 10 minutes or less. Make plans, not appointments.

#### **Get your personalized program**

Based on your pain levels and goals - bring on the surfing!

#### **Receive your Thrive Kit**

Including a complimentary Thrive Pad, so you can save your money for the arcade.

#### **Don't let pain dictate your summer**

Start your journey to a pain-free summer today.

### **Get started today**

**Activate your Thrive benefit today  
at \$0-cost**

[sword.health/campaign/ticket/summer\\_tk](https://sword.health/campaign/ticket/summer_tk)