

SimplyWell

Wellness tips and encouragement from Hally® health.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Hally health: Fill up on fiber! - 2

Your Guide to Measuring
Your Blood Pressure - 6

What to Know About Chronic
Kidney Disease - 14

Eating Healthy with Diabetes - 17

And much more.

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Benefits and coverage may vary from plan to plan. Please review your plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card for specifics.

Hally health

Fill up on fiber!

Did you know that most Americans don't get enough fiber in their diets? Don't be one of them – check out these great tips, from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and its [EatRight.org](https://www.eatright.org)[®] website.

Why is fiber so important?

First off, it's key to know what fiber is and why it's important to your health and well-being. Fiber is a type of carbohydrate found in many foods, and eating enough of it brings lots of benefits. It can help:

- Lower your cholesterol – which can help prevent heart disease.
- Keep your blood sugar in a healthy range – which is especially important if you have diabetes.
- Prevent constipation and other digestive issues.
- Aid you in maintaining a healthy weight – by keeping you full longer after meals.

What to Aim For

You might be wondering – how much fiber should you get daily? In general, aim for these targets:

- **Women:** 25 grams of fiber per day.
- **Men:** 38 grams of fiber per day.

Tips and More

Check out these great tips for boosting the amount of fiber you eat – and ask your doctor for even more helpful advice!

- Veggies, fruits, beans and whole grains all contain fiber. Eat a good variety of each every day.
- More great options include lentils, nuts and seeds.
- The skins and peels of fruits and veggies have an extra-high amount of fiber.
- As a general rule: the more processed or refined a food is, the less fiber it contains. Choose – for example – a whole apple rather than applesauce or juice.
- Pick steel cut oats vs. refined boxed cereals. Select whole-grain breads, tortillas, pastas and crackers. Have brown rice instead of white. And add veggies and fruits to all your meals.

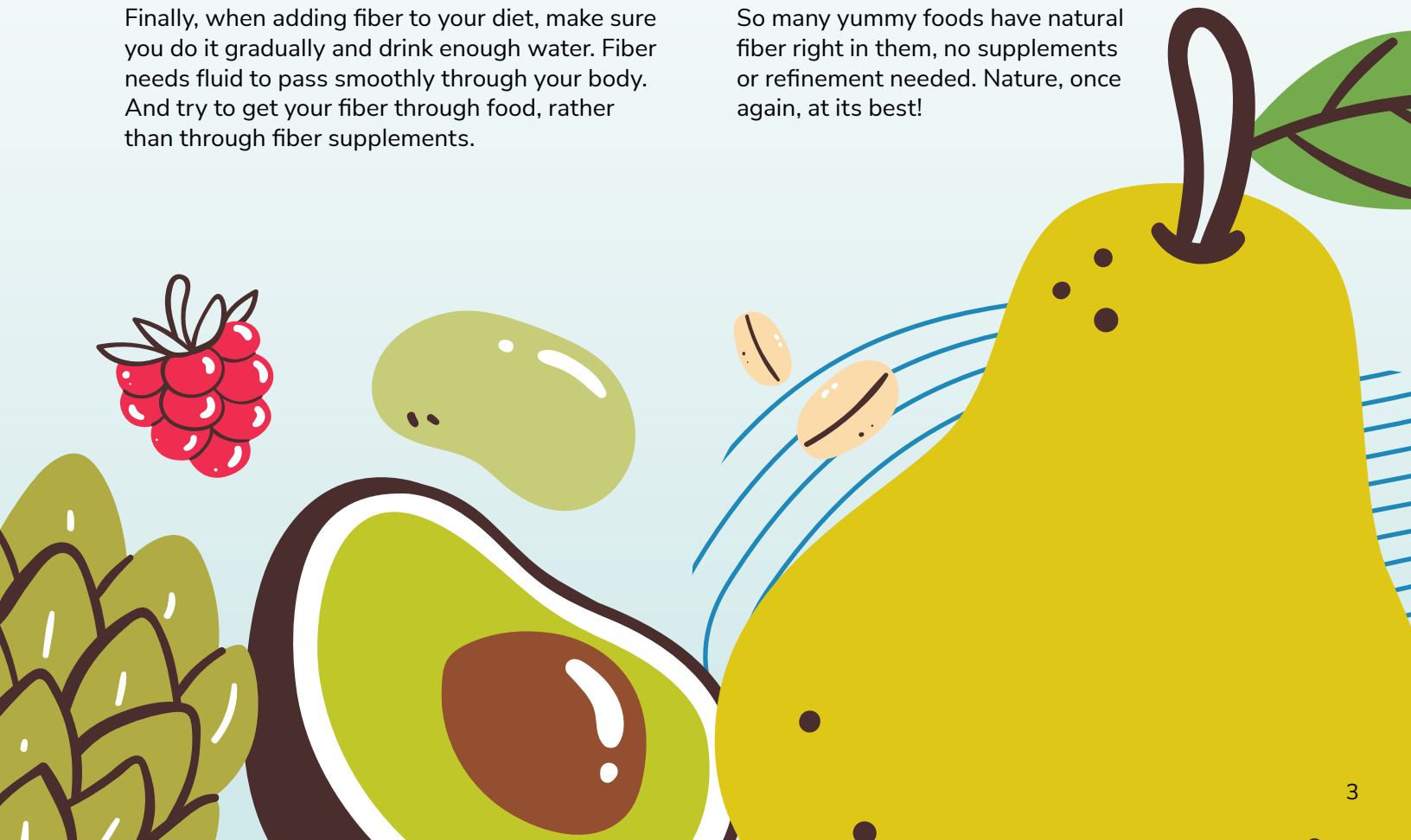


Want some more examples of foods naturally high in fiber?

- 1 cup of fresh raspberries = 8 grams of fiber.
- ½ cup of cooked black beans = 7.5 grams.
- Large pear (with skin) = 7 grams.
- 1 cup of cooked pearled barley = 6 grams.
- Half of a medium-sized avocado = 5 grams.
- 3 cups of air-popped popcorn = 3.6 grams.
- 1 oz of almonds = 3.5 grams.

Finally, when adding fiber to your diet, make sure you do it gradually and drink enough water. Fiber needs fluid to pass smoothly through your body. And try to get your fiber through food, rather than through fiber supplements.

So many yummy foods have natural fiber right in them, no supplements or refinement needed. Nature, once again, at its best!



Totally Worth a Shot

The Many Benefits of the Flu Vaccine

Every year, the flu spreads throughout our communities and makes a lot of people sick – but you have the power to help protect yourself and those around you. How? By getting your yearly flu vaccine. Read on to discover the many benefits of this safe and effective shot, via information from the CDC.

Protection, Prevention and More

Why should you and your loved ones get the flu vaccine? Consider this:

- **It can keep you from getting the flu.** Why be sick if you don't have to? Each year, the vaccine prevents millions of illnesses and visits to the doctor.
- **Even if you do get the flu (because the shot doesn't prevent 100% of cases), the vaccine can help lower the severity of your illness.** In other words, you have a better chance of avoiding serious sickness.
- **It can help keep you out of the hospital.**
- **Flu vaccines are especially important for people with chronic health issues.** If you have heart disease, the shot can help lower your risk of certain cardiac events. For people with diabetes or chronic lung diseases (like COPD), the vaccine can help prevent worsening of these issues.
- **For children, flu vaccines can be lifesaving.** A recent study showed that vaccination lowered children's risk of severe, life-threatening influenza by 75%.
- **Getting the shot during pregnancy helps protect you while you're pregnant and afterward, and your baby in their first months of life.**
- **When you get vaccinated, you're not only protecting yourself – but also those around you.** By helping limit the spread of flu to others, you're helping protect your family, neighbors and those most vulnerable in your community, including babies, young children, older adults and those with chronic health issues.



Remember that you need a new flu shot every year. It's a simple, but powerful, step you can take to help protect your own health and that of your loved ones. Every year, millions of people get sick, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized and tens of thousands die because of the flu. It doesn't have to be this bad – get your shot, make sure your loved ones get theirs, and spread awareness to your friends and neighbors about this lifesaving vaccine.

For information on coverage and costs (if applicable) for specific vaccines and healthcare appointments, please see your health plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card.

Doctor's Orders

Take care of your heart.

When your heart's healthy, you help lower your risk of stroke, heart disease and other major issues. Here are some key tips from the American Heart Association® to help keep your ticker strong and well.

Do...

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Include whole foods, lots of veggies and fruits, lean proteins, nuts, and seeds. Choose olive oil over butter or tropical oils (like coconut or palm oil).
- **Get moving!** Each week, get at least 2.5 hours of moderate (or 75 minutes of vigorous) exercise. And your kids and grandkids? They should get an hour of physical activity – whether through play or structured activities like gym class and sports – every day.
- **Sleep enough.** You need seven to nine hours every night. And children need even more: 10 to 16 hours if they're age 5 or younger (including naps); nine to 12 hours for kids age 6 to 12; and eight to 10 hours for teens.

Don't...

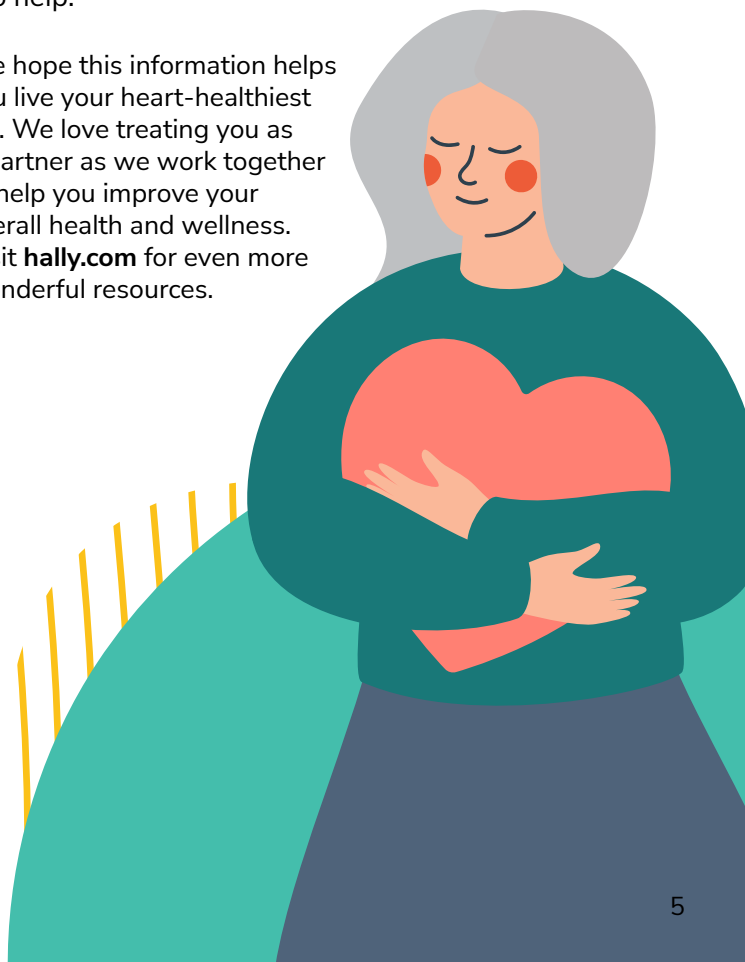
- **Eat foods bad for your heart.** Highly processed foods, and those with high levels of sodium, saturated fat and added sugar, can all be harmful to heart health.
- **Smoke.** It's the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. Avoid not only traditional cigarettes, but also e-cigarettes and vaping. Smoking is linked to about a third of all American deaths from heart disease.
- **Ignore your family history.** Let your doctor know if your parent, grandparent or sibling had heart disease, a heart attack or stroke, or another heart issue. Family history can raise your risk.

Manage your...

- **Cholesterol.** High levels of LDL cholesterol (often called the “bad” cholesterol) can lead to heart disease. Get your numbers checked and ask your doctor for tips on how to best control your cholesterol.

- **Blood pressure.** High blood pressure can raise your risk of heart disease and stroke. See the article in this issue titled “Your Guide to Measuring Your Blood Pressure” for more information.
- **Blood sugar.** If your blood sugar levels are too high, it can damage your heart, kidneys, eyes and nerves. Get your HbA1c (also called A1C) blood testing to track what your average blood sugar has been over the past three months. Ask your doctor what your test-result goal should be and how often you should get this test. They'll also help you find ways to lower and manage your blood sugar.
- **Weight.** Also ask your doctor what your healthy weight should be. If you need to lose weight or have trouble staying at this healthy number, your doctor can give you tips, tools and resources to help.

We hope this information helps you live your heart-healthiest life. We love treating you as a partner as we work together to help you improve your overall health and wellness. Visit [hally.com](https://www.hally.com) for even more wonderful resources.



Your Guide to Measuring Your Blood Pressure

High blood pressure usually has no warning signs – so the only way to know if you have it is by measuring your blood pressure regularly. Here’s a quick guide from the CDC.

How often?

– Ask your doctor how often you should check your blood pressure, based on your health. If you have high blood pressure, you’ll probably need to measure it more often.

Where?

– Get your blood pressure checked during doctor’s visits, but also measure regularly between appointments. Go to a pharmacy with a blood pressure machine or, better yet, get a personal measurement device to use at home.

Tips for Accurate, Error-Free Measurements

- Don’t eat or drink anything for a full 30 minutes before taking your blood pressure reading.
- And don’t smoke, have caffeine or exercise within those 30 minutes either.
- Use the restroom right beforehand.
- Sit in a comfy chair – with your back supported – for five minutes before your reading.

- When taking your blood pressure, put both your feet flat on the ground, legs uncrossed. Rest your arm (that has the cuff on it) on a table at chest height.
- Place the cuff against your bare skin – and make sure it’s snug, but not too tight.
- Don’t talk until the reading is over.
- Also know that being nervous can cause incorrect results or errors in the measurements.

Check your blood pressure at home.

It’s simple and easy to take your blood pressure from the comfort of your home. We created a short video just for you, walking you through every step and exactly what you need. Visit hally.com and search “take your blood pressure at home” for this helpful video. And remember to keep track of your measurements, writing them down in a diary or log to show your doctor.





Know your numbers.

Blood pressure of 130/80 or higher is considered high. Check out this chart for more details,

and remember: your doctor's blood pressure goal for you will depend on your own unique health factors.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (Upper Number)	and/or	DIASTOLIC mm Hg (Lower Number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
<u>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS</u> (Consult your doctor immediately.)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

If your numbers are high, talk to your doctor about the steps you should take to control your blood pressure to help lower your risk of heart disease

and stroke. With your doctor's help, and your commitment to regularly measuring your blood pressure, you can start living your healthiest life!

Diabetes 101

Get the most out of your meds.

We get it – taking medicines can sometimes be confusing, a hassle or easy to forget. But when you have diabetes, taking your drugs correctly is key. Here’s how to get the most out of your meds, via advice from the CDC.

Tips and More

- Your medicines only work if you take them as directed. Take the right amount at the right time, follow all instructions and never skip a dose.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist any questions you have. Drugs can be confusing – they’re experts who’ll help!
- Make a list of all the medicines you’re taking – don’t forget over-the-counter drugs, vitamins and supplements – and show this to your doctor. They’ll make sure no two drugs interact harmfully with one another. Keep a copy of this list in your wallet and give one to your pharmacist too.
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you:
 - Have any side effects from your medications.
 - Are having trouble paying for your drugs.
 - Have difficulty taking your meds – for example, trouble swallowing them.
- If you become pregnant, start breastfeeding, change your diet or face a new health issue, ask your doctor if you should change anything with regard to the medicines you’re taking. Also share (with your primary care doctor) any new test results you get from your dentist, eye doctor, foot doctor and other healthcare providers.
- If you often forget to take your drugs, set alarms or timers to remind yourself. Or download a medication-reminder app for your phone.
- If you’re having trouble reaching your doctor about a drug-related question, contact your pharmacist. They’re often available longer hours (sometimes even on evenings and weekends) and they’re easy to reach. See them in person or call the phone number on your medicine bottle.



More Questions to Ask Your Doctor or Pharmacist

- What does each of my medicines do? What health issue is it treating, and how does the drug work?
- What side effects should I look out for?
- How often do I need to take each medicine – and do I have to take it at a certain time of day?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- How much do I need to take?
- Should I keep taking the medicine even if I start feeling better?
- Do I have to store my medicine in any special way – for example, in the fridge?
- Should I avoid any other medications because I’m taking this one?
- Are there certain foods, drinks or activities I should avoid while on the drug?
- In addition to these drugs, what else can I do to take control of my health and manage my diabetes?

The two main takeaways? Taking your medications correctly is key to living your healthiest life with diabetes, and your doctor and pharmacist are key partners. Today and every day, they’re eager to help you be and feel your best!

How to Know if You Have COPD

Fifteen million Americans have been diagnosed with COPD – but many more likely have the disease and don't even know it. How can you tell if you're one of them? Read on for information from the American Lung Association® about the most common symptoms of the disease and the tests you can get to see if you have it.

Symptoms

COPD stands for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and it actually refers to a group of different diseases that cause airflow blockage and breathing problems. COPD includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Too many people don't recognize the warning signs for COPD until the disease reaches its later stages. Some think that being regularly short of breath or less able to do their normal activities simply means they're "getting older." But if you're experiencing any of these symptoms or think you might be at risk for COPD, make sure you talk to your doctor:

- Shortness of breath during everyday activities.
- Fatigue.
- Chronic cough.
- Wheezing.
- Large amounts of mucus (also called phlegm or sputum).
- Frequent respiratory infections.
- Blueness in your fingernails or lips.

Early detection of COPD is key to successful treatment of the disease – so don't wait for your symptoms to become severe. Talk to your doctor right away.

How COPD Is Diagnosed

To see if you have COPD, your doctor will probably look at your symptoms, ask about your health history and give you an exam. They'll want to know, for example, if you have a history of smoking, asthma, or long-term exposure to dust, fumes, chemicals, secondhand smoke or other air pollutants. If they think you might have the disease, they'll probably order a simple test called **spirometry**. This tests how well your lungs are working – by measuring how much air you breathe out and how fast you can blow it outward.

By looking at the results of your spirometry test, your doctor can determine if you have COPD – and how severe it is. The test can also help them come up with the best treatment plan for you. Your doctor might also want you to get chest X-rays or other tests, like an arterial blood gas test that also measures how well your lungs are working.

The key is talking to your doctor right away. Too many people are dealing with the symptoms of COPD without even knowing they have the disease. Treatment can help you live your healthiest life – but it can't start until you get with your doctor, take the needed tests and see exactly what fits your needs.

For information on coverage and costs (if applicable) for specific tests, exams, X-rays and healthcare appointments, please see your health plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card.





Help and Hope: Suicide Awareness

It's a difficult subject to talk about, but it's important to raise awareness about suicide – and about the help and support that's out there for those in need. Here's key information from UpToDate® and the CDC.

A Serious Problem

Death by suicide is a large and serious issue in communities big and small. Nearly 45,000 people die by suicide in the U.S. each year, and the number reaches 800,000 worldwide. Many more attempt suicide or struggle with thoughts of it. It's hard to always know what leads to suicide or thoughts of suicide, but some common risk factors include:

- Family history.
- History of previous suicide attempt(s).
- Feelings of extreme hopelessness or depression.
- Psychiatric disorders.
- Medical illnesses that cause chronic pain.
- Substance use/abuse.
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies.

- Current trauma or history of trauma.
- Dealing with difficult financial, legal, social, marital, family or job-related issues.

Help, Hope and Support

If you or a loved one are experiencing thoughts of suicide or are at risk, there's nothing to be embarrassed about. So many people face these difficulties, and getting the help you need has never been easier.

- Talk to your primary care doctor. They can find you information, resources and support groups; set you up with a mental health therapist or psychiatrist; prescribe you helpful medications if needed; and more.
- Reach out to family, friends and loved ones. They might not be medical experts, but they can be a source of needed strength and support. It's important to avoid social isolation when dealing with these issues.



- Join a support group in your community or online.
- Call 988 – the new suicide and crisis lifeline. The federal government created this new help line so people across all 50 states can get the help they need. Call from anywhere, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Simply dial 988 and you'll be connected to kind and caring counselors who are experts in helping people deal with thoughts of suicide and mental health crises. All calls are free and confidential.

The lifeline provides live support in English and Spanish, and also provides translation services in over 240 additional languages.

Suicide is a serious issue, but there's lots of support that can help turn hardship into hope. Please spread awareness about the information and resources in this article – together we can bring renewed healing, wellness and strength.



hally®

Let's cook
something
delish!

Whole-Wheat Cranberry Muffins

Serving Size: 1 Muffin
Makes 12 Servings

Ingredients

- Cooking spray (optional)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup uncooked, quick-cooking oatmeal
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole-wheat flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried, unsweetened cranberries
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup toasted wheat germ
- 2 tsp baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp baking soda
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup 100% pineapple juice
- Egg substitute equivalent to 1 egg, or 1 large egg
- 1 Tbsp canola oil OR 1 Tbsp corn oil
- 2 Tbsp unsalted sunflower seeds

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Lightly spray a 12-cup muffin pan with cooking spray or put paper muffin cups in the pan.
2. In a medium bowl, stir together the oatmeal, flours, brown sugar, cranberries, wheat germ, baking powder and baking soda. Make a well in the center. Pour the pineapple juice, egg substitute and oil into the well, stirring until just moistened. Do not overmix. The batter should be slightly lumpy.
3. Spoon the batter evenly into the muffin cups. Sprinkle with the sunflower seeds.
4. Bake for 11 to 12 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted in the center of a muffin comes out clean. These muffins don't need a cooling time before removing from the pan.

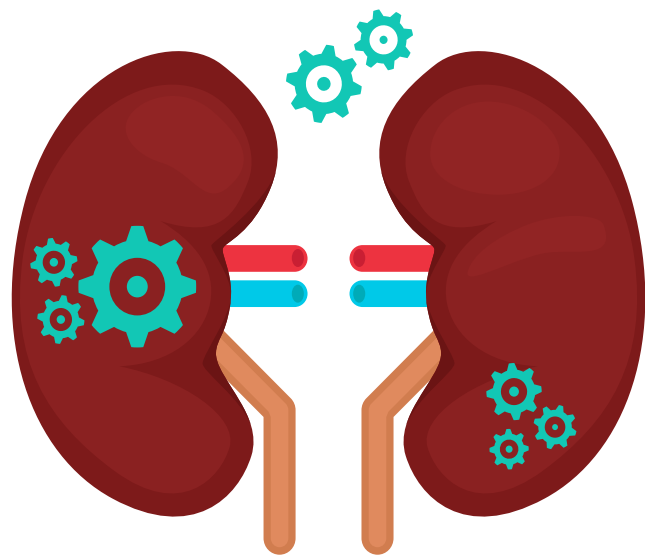
Find more delicious recipes at hally.com/category/food-cooking. Yum!

Nutrition Facts: Calories: 143, Total Fat: 3 g, Saturated Fat: 1 g, Cholesterol: 0 mg, Sodium: 108 mg, Total Carbohydrate: 28 g, Fiber: 2 g, Total Sugars: 15 g, Protein: 3 g | American Heart Association®

Photo may include foods and ingredients that aren't a part of this recipe or included in the nutrition analysis.

What to Know About Chronic Kidney Disease

No kidding – your kidneys are important. Keep them healthy with this information and advice from the U.S. National Library of Medicine’s online information service, MedlinePlus.



Chronic Kidney Disease

You have two kidneys. These bean-shaped organs, each about the size of your fist, remove waste and extra water from your blood. This waste and water becomes urine. Your kidneys also help control your blood pressure, make hormones and keep your body’s chemicals in balance.

If you have chronic kidney disease (CKD), it means your kidneys are damaged and they can’t remove the waste from your blood as they should. Waste can build up in your body and other health issues can arise as well. The damage usually occurs over many years – and many people don’t have any symptoms or even realize they have CKD until the disease is very far advanced. That’s why blood and urine tests are so important even if you don’t have symptoms. They’re the only way to know if you have CKD before it becomes too advanced. Diabetes and high blood pressure are the most common causes of CKD – if you have these or other risk factors, ask your doctor about getting tested.

There’s no cure for CKD, but treatments – including medicines that lower blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar – can help slow the disease. Even with treatments, CKD may still get worse over time and can lead to kidney failure and the need for dialysis or a transplant.

The Good News

But it’s not all bad news – you can start taking steps today to keep your kidneys healthier over the long term:

- Control your blood pressure. Ask your doctor for help, and see the article in this issue titled “Your Guide to Measuring Your Blood Pressure.”
- Ask your doctor what your ideal blood sugar levels should be – and keep your levels within this range.
- Choose foods with less salt (sodium). And pick veggies, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products and other foods that are healthy for your heart and kidneys.
- Get enough exercise.
- Don’t smoke. And limit how much alcohol you drink.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

Ask your doctor for even more advice. They’ll have tips and resources to fit your unique health needs. Together, you’ll come up with a plan to help keep your kidneys healthier now and into the future.

For information on coverage and costs (if applicable) for specific tests and healthcare appointments, please see your health plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card.

Right Care, Right Place

Know where to go for care.

When you need a healthcare service, where should you go? Should you call your primary care provider? Visit the hospital or urgent care clinic? It all depends, based on what your illness, injury or need is; how severe it is; how soon you need care; your location; and more. Use this guide to help – and cut it out and put it on your fridge for easy reference.



Where to Go	When to Go	Typical Costs	Appointment Needed?
Primary Care Provider (PCP)	Non-emergency care. Physicals and wellness checks, vaccines, routine care and illness. Available in person and (often) by phone/video.	\$-\$\$	Yes. Available during usual business hours. Same-day often available.
Virtual Visits*	Non-emergency care. Illness, injury, behavioral health and more. Available from home or anywhere, by phone or video through hally.com.*	\$ Free with some plans.	No. Available 24/7, 365. Wait Time: ~15 mins.
Urgent Care Clinic	Non-emergency care. Illnesses and injuries that need care right away. Available in person.	\$-\$\$	No. Available for extended hours. Often open seven days a week.
Emergency Department	Emergency care. Immediate treatment for serious or life-threatening illnesses, injuries and issues.	\$\$\$\$	No. Available 24/7, 365. Potentially longer wait times.

For coverage information – or if you have any questions – call the number on the back of your health plan ID card. **And remember, always call 911 right away if you have a life-threatening medical or mental health emergency.**

Have you tried out virtual visits?*

Getting expert, trusted help for your physical, emotional and behavioral health needs has never been easier. Many plans offer **virtual visits**, which let you connect with board certified doctors and psychiatrists, as well as licensed therapists, by phone or secure video 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – all through your phone, tablet or computer.

Physical Health Needs – Get help for your allergies, insect bites, rashes, cold and flu

symptoms, ear problems, pink eye, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and many other common conditions.

Emotional and Behavioral Health Needs – Get help for anxiety, stress, depression, grief, PTSD, trauma, bipolar disorder, addictions and substance issues, and more.

Easily set up a virtual visit online from **hally.com**.* Simply log in and get started today.

**Virtual visits aren't available on all plans. Also, some plans feature virtual visits through a source other than hally.com. To see if virtual visits are available on your plan (and to see if they're offered through hally.com), please see your health plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card.*

For more information about virtual visits, or help getting started, call the number on the back of your health plan ID card.

Virtual care isn't meant to treat all medical conditions – please remember to always visit the emergency department or call 911 for emergencies.

You'll need to have an online member account (for your health plan) before you're able to access virtual visits. If you haven't already created an account, visit login.hally.com.

For more specific details and information about coverage and costs for virtual offerings, please see your health plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card.

Spread the word – mammograms save lives.

Spreading awareness about breast cancer can truly save lives. What can you do to help this important cause? Perhaps most important of all, make sure you and all your loved ones stay up to date with your mammograms.

Why are they so important?

Mammograms are X-rays of the breast. They detect cancer and other issues early, when they're easiest to treat. According to a study funded by the American Cancer Society® (ACS), women who stay up to date on their mammograms have a significantly lower risk of dying of breast cancer if they end up getting the disease. In fact, even missing one mammogram can raise your chances of death. We don't want to scare you – but this information is key for spreading the word about how important these screenings are.

Who should get mammograms – and how often?

According to the ACS, women age 45 to 54 should get mammograms every year, while those 55 and older can switch to every two years or continue yearly screenings. Women at higher risk of breast cancer should start getting mammograms before age 45. You can reach out to your doctor for more specifics.

Spread the word.

This article really has two messages. First, get your regular mammograms. Second, make sure your loved ones do too. For various reasons, many women skip their mammograms on certain years – or never get them altogether. Both can be harmful. Be open and talk with your loved ones, reminding them to stay up to date on these important screenings. Here are some tips and conversation starters:

- Some people simply don't know how important mammograms are. Share facts and articles (like this one) to give them the education they need.
- Others simply forget to schedule it every year. Let's face it – there's a lot on our calendars to remember. Be that "calendar reminder" for your loved ones. A mammogram is one yearly event they should definitely not miss.

- For those without a primary care doctor – and those who don't keep up on their annual checkups – it's even easier to forget or skip mammograms. Help your loved ones get set up with a primary care doctor.
- Many people get anxious or worried about medical tests. Let them know how easy it is to schedule and get a mammogram, and how the benefits greatly outweigh any discomfort or hassle.
- Some people think they don't need mammograms unless they have symptoms or a history of cancer in the family. Let them know that mammograms are important for catching cancer in its early stages (before symptoms can be felt or seen), and that all women are at risk for the disease.
- Many people worry about the cost of medical tests. You can point them to possible financial help – for example, many hospitals offer cost assistance for those who need it, and you often only need to call the hospital and fill out some paperwork.
- Finally, if you're a woman, share your own experience about getting your regular mammograms and why it's important to you. Firsthand advice is always valued.

Perhaps the best advice of all? Simply speak from the heart. Tell them how much you love them and care about them. Spread the word – your voice can truly save lives.

For information on coverage and costs (if applicable) for specific screenings and healthcare appointments, please see your health plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card.

Eating Healthy with Diabetes

A healthy diet is important for everyone – but even more so if you have diabetes. While there’s no one “diabetes diet” that’s right for everyone, there are common tips to follow. Here’s what you should know, from the experts at the CDC.


Tips and Advice

- Eat foods low in added sugar, saturated fat and salt (sodium).
- Have plenty of veggies, fruits, whole grains, beans and nuts. Yum!
- Limit red meat, high-fat dairy products, sweets and highly processed foods.
- Instead of butter or other oils, use extra virgin olive oil.
- Pick whole-grain options for bread, pasta, rice and crackers. Noodles made from veggies are great choices too!
- Pay attention to portion sizes, especially to limit the amount of carbs you eat.

The Many Benefits of a Healthy Diet

Why is healthier eating so important if you have diabetes? For all these reasons and more:

- When you have diabetes, your body has trouble keeping your blood sugar at normal levels on its own. But a healthy diet can help you better manage these blood sugar levels.
- It also helps you control your cholesterol and blood pressure.
- Limiting saturated fat and salt (sodium) also helps improve your overall heart health – and can lower your risk for heart disease and stroke.
- Following these tips can also help you reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Leafy green veggies, fruits, olive oil and certain fish can also strengthen your immune system and help reduce inflammation.



Don't forget to stay physically active too, and ask your doctor for even more advice about lifestyle changes you can make to help control your diabetes. You have the power to start living your best life!

Take action against shingles.

Shingles is a disease caused by the same virus as chickenpox. But unlike chickenpox, it's adults – especially those over age 50 – who are most at risk. The disease is characterized by a painful rash or stripe of blisters, and the CDC estimates that up to 33% of adults will get it at some point in their life.

Shingles itself isn't life-threatening, but it can be incredibly painful. Many people also develop nerve pain that lasts for months or even years after the rash heals. And there's also an increased risk of stroke for up to three months after the shingles episode. The disease is serious – but you have the power to prevent it.

Who's at risk?

Anyone who's had chickenpox in their life can get shingles. Your risk increases sharply with age – it's more common in those over 50 and affects up to 50% of people 85 and older. **Having diabetes or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) also increases your risk of developing shingles.**

Prevention

But there's good news – you can prevent shingles with a simple two-dose vaccine. The vaccine is called SHINGRIX, and here's the key information to know.

For adults **50 and older who have healthy immune systems**, the CDC recommends two doses of the vaccine, separated by two to six months. For adults **19 and older who are immunocompromised (have weakened immune systems)**, the CDC recommends two doses of the vaccine, with the second dose typically given two to six months after the first. However, if your doctor thinks you'd benefit from getting the second dose sooner, it can be given one to two months after the first.

It's important to know that **you can still get the vaccine even if you:**

- Had shingles in the past.
- Had a prior dose of ZOSTAVAX® (a different shingles vaccine that's no longer available in the U.S.).

- Have chronic medical conditions – such as chronic renal failure, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) – unless your doctor advises otherwise.
- Are taking low-dose immunosuppressive therapy, are anticipating immunosuppression or have recovered from an immunocompromising illness.
- Are getting other adult vaccines – such as flu and pneumonia shots – in the same doctor visit.

Finally, **you should not get the vaccine** if you have a history of severe allergic reactions to any ingredients in the vaccine, or if you currently have shingles. If you're pregnant, you should consider waiting until after pregnancy to get vaccinated. Likewise, if you're feeling moderately or severely ill (more than just a cold or minor illness), you should usually wait until you're feeling better to get your vaccine.

If you have any questions at all, ask your doctor – they'll be more than glad to help. Shingles is a common and painful disease, but it's one that's preventable. Talk with your doctor today about scheduling your vaccine.

For information on coverage and costs (if applicable) for specific vaccines and healthcare appointments, please see your health plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card.





Closing Gaps in Care

Get your preventive screenings.

You shouldn't see your doctor just when you're sick. Going in for your annual physical or wellness visit – and getting your preventive screenings and shots – is also key to staying healthy. As your trusted partner working to help you improve your overall health and wellness, we've listed some of the most important screenings that can help you catch health problems early. Read on – and reach out to your doctor for more information and to schedule your screenings today.

Breast Cancer Screening

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) guidelines recommend that women age 50 to 74 get a mammogram every two years. If you're over 74, talk to your doctor for recommendations. Call your doctor to get your referral for your mammogram.

Colorectal Cancer Screening

The USPSTF recommends people age 45 to 75 get screened for colorectal cancer regularly. And if you're younger than 45 and think you may be at high risk, or if you're older than 75, ask your doctor if you should be screened. A colonoscopy is the preferred screening method, but you can talk to your doctor to see if other options are right for you.

Options include: fecal occult blood test (gFOBT) or FIT (fecal immunochemical test) annually; Cologuard® every three years; a flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years; or a colonoscopy every 10 years.

Bone Mineral Density (DEXA) Screening

If you're 45 or older and have recently broken a bone, ask your doctor if you should have a DEXA scan – a simple test that can help identify whether you have osteoporosis (thinning bones). It can also help you and your doctor create a plan to prevent broken bones in the future.

Tests for High Blood Pressure

When your blood pressure (the force of your blood pushing against your vessels) is consistently too high, it can lower life expectancy and lead to serious (and possibly deadly) health conditions. Blood pressure of 130/80 or higher is considered high (hypertension). Your doctor's blood pressure goal for you will depend on your personal factors.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (Upper Number)	and/or	DIASTOLIC mm Hg (Lower Number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130 – 139	or	80 – 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
<u>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS</u> (Consult your doctor immediately.)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

If you have diabetes, your doctor will probably have you get these preventive screenings too:

Diabetic Retinal Exam – With diabetes, you're at higher risk for glaucoma, cataracts and diabetic retinopathy. Since many eye problems occur before you notice any symptoms, the American Diabetes Association® (ADA) recommends a yearly diabetic retinal eye exam to find issues early. If your exam's normal, you can wait two years, rather than one, for your next exam. Make sure your exam results are sent to your primary care doctor.

Nephropathy (Kidney) Screening – This yearly urine test measures level of kidney function and looks for early signs of damage. Diabetes can cause kidney damage and potential failure. The ADA also recommends keeping your blood sugar and blood pressure under control to help protect your kidneys.

HbA1c Testing – A1C blood testing shows what your average blood sugar has been over the past three months. Get this test at least twice a year. If you have medication changes or are still working to meet your blood sugar goals, you may need to get the test more often. The goal for most adults with diabetes is an A1C under 7%. However, some people with other health issues may have a different goal – ask your doctor what yours should be.

For information on coverage and costs (if applicable) for specific screenings, tests, exams, vaccines and healthcare appointments, please see your health plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card.

Pharmacy Corner

What do drugs have to do with falls?

As we get older, falls become more of a risk. Did you know that some medicines increase your risk of falling? It's true – read on to learn more.

What to Know

Medicines are a great tool in helping us feel well, but they sometimes have harmful effects too. In some cases, a medication simply affects your body in a bad way. Other times, one medicine may interact with another drug or drugs you're taking at the same time, leading to possible harm. **Some medications, and combinations of medications, can raise your risk of falls.**

Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) are one kind of drug that can be problematic. TCAs are drugs used to treat depression, and they include amitriptyline, amoxapine, clomipramine, desipramine, doxepin, imipramine, nortriptyline, protriptyline and trimipramine. TCAs are a type of **CNS-active drug** (which means they affect the central nervous system, which includes your brain and spinal cord). Other types of CNS-active drugs include benzodiazepines, opioids, antipsychotics, sedatives, tranquilizers and hypnotics, among others. CNS-active drugs are used to treat depression, anxiety, panic, sleep disorders and more.

CNS-active drugs like TCAs can increase your risk of falls – whether taken on their own or, often even more problematically, when you're prescribed **multiple** CNS-active drugs. **These medicines can cause side effects like drowsiness, confusion, delirium, thinking impairment, light-headedness, dizziness, muscle weakness, unsteady gait (walking), poor coordination and problems with movement – all which can lead to falls.** If you're taking a TCA or other type of CNS-active drug (and especially if you're taking more than one), ask your doctor if they think you should consider switching to a different type of drug or treatment option.





More Key Information

- If you have osteoporosis or a history of falls, it's extra important to talk to your doctor if you're on these meds.
- As we age, falls usually become more dangerous. Sometimes medicines we used as younger adults are no longer the best solution.
- Older adults are also often more at risk for medication-related side effects than younger adults.
- Fall risk is often the highest during your first weeks on a new medicine (or on an increased dose).
- Taking a CNS-active depressant along with a TCA especially increases your risks.
- Taking an antidepressant alongside a benzodiazepine, opioid or alcohol also raises your fall risk.

- For some drugs – but not all – a lower dose may help against some of the side effects.
- Stopping medications can be hard – so if your doctor thinks you should stop taking one of these drugs, always work closely with them. They'll give you the help and support you need – along with the specific steps and timeline you should follow to ease off the medication.

Falls are a serious health issue and not something to take lightly. In addition to following the usual fall-prevention steps – like decluttering your home, wearing nonskid slippers around the house, installing handrails and better lighting, removing tripping hazards like loose flooring and cords, and more – **talk to your doctor about the medicines you're taking and if any of them are cause for concern.** Together with your doctor, you can create the best all-around plan to help you stay healthy, steady and on your feet.



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HEALTH AND WELLNESS OR
PREVENTION INFORMATION

Want to make a difference?

We are looking for members who are comfortable sharing their perspectives and feedback on how we, as a health plan, can improve for the greater good of our plan participants. If you are interested in learning more, please email Gregg.Mottola@HealthAlliance.org. Meetings are typically held on a quarterly basis, so you would be asked to share your perspective three to four times a year. As always, our goal is to represent our plan participants' diverse geographic, cultural and medical backgrounds.

Benefits and coverage may vary from plan to plan. Please review your plan materials or call the number on the back of your health plan ID card for specifics.