

HEALTHSTYLES

INDEPENDENTHEALTH.COM

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

5 Must-Have Foods to Boost Nutrition

New free Diabetes
Prevention Program

The benefits of HSAs

We're helping you
stay fit and active

Independent
Health®

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HEALTHSTYLES

The Wellness Magazine for
Independent Health Members

Spring into healthy action with some of the great opportunities packed into this issue. Start by checking out what's happening with local activities. You can take a fitness class, go for a bike ride, join a wellness challenge and more (see page 6).

But, if you've been feeling down lately, you are definitely not alone. We have mental health information for you (see page 11).

It's also important that you don't ignore even minor health problems. Get in touch with Teladoc® for help (see page 7). You may even be able to use an HSA to take care of some medical expenses (see page 5).

Whatever healthy targets you've set and plans you've made, we are here to support your goals!

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Receive our online newsletter, *HealthStyles Monthly*, by registering for your own member account at independenthealth.com.



Now offering a free Diabetes Prevention Program

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), prediabetes affects one in three American adults, but most don't even know they have it. Unfortunately, without action, many will develop type 2 diabetes within three to five years.

Making a change

The good news is you can significantly reduce your risk by making simple, daily lifestyle changes, which is exactly what Diabetes Prevention Programs (DPPs) are designed to help you do. In fact, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases says that joining a DPP can cut your risk in half.

As part of a key priority to address the rising prevalence of type 2 diabetes in Western New York, Independent Health is now offering a CDC-recognized DPP called Brook+. This structured yearlong lifestyle change program is now available as a covered benefit with a \$0 member cost share under all of Independent Health's fully insured commercial plans.

How Brook+ works

- Through fully digital delivery and on-demand content, Brook+ provides members with the tools and personal coaching they need to adopt healthier habits and reduce their risk of developing diabetes.
- The program can be accessed, anytime from anywhere, using a smartphone, tablet or desktop computer. Curriculum is delivered via videos and digital content that focuses on physical activity, eating healthier, and improving problem-solving and coping skills. No classrooms clinic visits are necessary.
- Participants not only receive virtual one-on-one guidance from a CDC-trained health coach, but they also have the ability to connect online with a group of peers for additional support.
- The goal of Brook+ is to help participants make lasting lifestyle changes, including losing 5% of their body weight and increasing their activity level to 150 minutes per week.
- Participants are provided a Bluetooth scale and fitness tracker to keep track of their progress.

You can see if you're eligible for Brook+ by taking a short online assessment at www.brook.health/plus.

BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT

Special message from Independent Health

By Anthony Billittier IV, M.D., Executive Vice President, Chief Medical Officer, Independent Health

The past 15 months has been an extremely difficult and challenging time for all of us. As COVID-19 continues to impact our region and nation, it's imperative that we remain vigilant in protecting ourselves and others from this deadly virus. However, now that the COVID-19 vaccine is widely available, there finally seems to be a beacon of light at the end of this long, dark pandemic tunnel.

COVID-19 vaccine information

Public health experts, and federal and state governments recommend everyone to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine is covered with no cost share, meaning you do not have to pay for it. Vaccination is especially important for people with underlying health problems like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes and obesity. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19.

If you have specific questions or concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine, we encourage you to consult with your primary care physician. For the most up-to-date vaccine eligibility and availability information, visit the New York State website at www.ny.gov or

call the COVID-19 Vaccination Hotline at **1-833-697-4829**. You may also want to check to see if your pharmacy is distributing the vaccine, too.

Please keep in mind that researchers still do not yet know how long protection lasts for those who are vaccinated. And just because you receive the vaccine doesn't mean you still can't get infected. As a result, wearing a mask, washing your hands regularly and social distancing will continue to be common prevention practices for months to come.

Importance of overall preventive care

In addition to taking all necessary steps to protect ourselves from COVID-19, we also have the opportunity to prevent illness and death by following through with our own preventive care. If you have yet to schedule recommended preventive care services for you or a loved one, now is the time to do so.

Annual well visits for adults and children, in person or via telehealth, help people of all ages get the preventive care most appropriate for them. This may include a host of immunizations, as well as screenings for medical conditions such as diabetes,



Anthony Billittier IV, M.D.

high blood pressure and certain types of cancer.

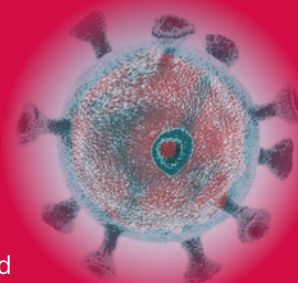
The old sport's adage "the best offense is a good defense" is equally applicable to your health. Therefore, make sure you speak with your primary care physician about what type of preventive care services you may need. Don't wait or procrastinate—reach out to your doctor today!

Stay current on COVID-19 information

New information is being shared every day about COVID-19. It can be a challenge to stay on top of things—especially with changes happening so quickly. That's why we encourage you to visit independenthealth.com/coronavirus, where you will find the latest vaccine updates, common questions about coverage for testing and treatment, educational videos, ways to stay healthy and active at home, and links to community help.

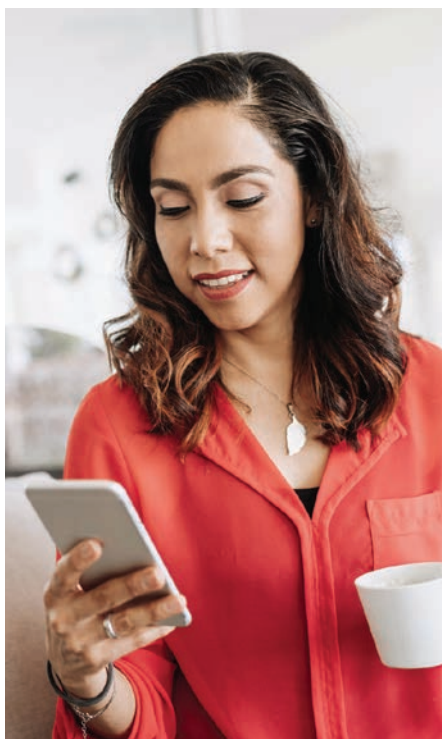
In addition, a library of content pertaining to COVID-19 can be accessed through Healthwise®, our one-stop online resource that features easy-to-use interactive tools, resources and information that can be used to help you

make better health decisions. Simply go to independenthealth.com/healthwise for free articles, infographics and videos on the symptoms, prevention and treatment of COVID-19. While there, you will also find a wide range of health topics, from A to Z, all at your fingertips. Topics include asthma, blood pressure management, diabetes, eating healthy, exercise and medications.



The benefits of using an online member account

To ensure you get the most out of your health care coverage, Independent Health encourages you to create an online member account. Having your own private and secure account allows you to have all your plan information in one convenient place. Plus, since it's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you can access your online account whenever you need to.



Among the things you can do when logged in to your account include:

- Check your plan benefits
- Review all your claims
- Print your member ID card
- Change your primary care physician
- View your Health ExtrasSM balance and Nutrition Benefit reward status*
- Track your deductible if you're enrolled in a high-deductible health plan
- Manage your Health Savings Account (HSA) through HealthEquity*
- Make your premium payments electronically (if applicable)
- Choose to receive your Explanation of Benefit (EOB) statements electronically

Through your online account, you also have access to a variety of tools and resources that can help you take charge of your overall health and well-being.

For example:

- Receive personal health recommendations for each member of your family, including annual checkups, flu shots, preventive screenings and more.
- Find ways to save money by looking up and comparing costs for your prescription medications (see article below).
- Reach your fitness goals with our FitWorks[®] online wellness tool.
- Use the Brook Health Companion to support your daily health decisions with trusted expertise.
- Access Foodsmart (formerly known as Zipongo) to eat healthy at home, at work and on the go.

Get started today. If you have yet to create your online member account, simply visit independenthealth.com/register and then follow the directions.

**Not included with all plans. Check your summary of benefits to see if your plan includes these options and benefits.*

Download the MyIH app!

You can always access your member account through the MyIH mobile app, which is available for free for both Android[™] and iPhone[®] users. In addition, MyIH users now have the ability to chat one-on-one with a LIVE Independent Health RedShirt[®].

Compare, shop and save on your prescriptions

Did you know that the price of medications can vary by pharmacy? By using our "Compare Rx Costs" tool, you can review the cost of your medications at the different pharmacies in your neighborhood to see if you can save some money on them. This tool is easily accessible right from your online member account.

Here's how it works

1. Sign in or create your secure online account at independenthealth.com. Your online account includes a Health Dashboard, helping you view and track personal health recommendations.

2. From your Health Dashboard, look for the "Compare Rx Costs" featured option and click "Search Now."
3. Type the name of the prescription in the search bar.
4. View results. Review drug uses, alternative options, compare real-time costs and see nearby pharmacy information for where to get it—all with pricing and covered options specific to your health plan.



Drug formulary reminder

If you would like to know what medications are covered by Independent Health, please review your plan's drug formulary. All the drugs listed in the formulary have been selected based on a thorough evaluation of safety, effectiveness and costs.

Visit us for online access

Your drug formulary can be accessed by visiting the "Drugs Covered" page under the "Tools, Forms & More" section at independenthealth.com.

How does a Health Savings Account work?

If you are currently enrolled in an Independent Health qualified high-deductible health plan (HDHP), you may be eligible for a Health Savings Account (HSA). An HSA helps individuals save money for their current and future medical care expenses on a tax-free basis.

Approximately 29 million Americans currently have an HSA combined with a qualified HDHP. Here are seven reasons why HSAs are so popular and provide great value:

1. The money you put into your HSA is 100% tax deductible. The IRS establishes maximum contribution limits each year. For 2021, it's \$3,600 for single policyholders and \$7,200 for family coverage. Plus, people 55 and older are allowed to make additional "catch-up" contributions of \$1,000.
2. Even if you are fortunate to have an employer that contributes to your HSA, the money in your account is all yours. If you leave your job or change to a non-qualified HDHP in a future year, your HSA funds stay with you. Although you can't make additional contributions until you enroll again in a qualified HDHP, you can still use the money in your HSA for out-of-pocket medical expenses.
3. As long as you use your HSA money for qualified medical expenses, you never pay taxes on that money. A list of these expenses can be found at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov).
4. Whether you spend or save, there is no "use-it-or-lose-it" stipulation or limits to how much you can rollover from one year to the next.
5. You can use your HSA funds to pay for qualified medical expenses for dependents you claim on your tax return, even if those dependents aren't on your health plan.
6. Many HSAs offer the ability to invest like a 401(k). You might have to reach a certain balance depending on your HSA custodian's rules before you can invest, but it's another way to make your money work for you over time.
7. You can use your HSA funds to pay for Medicare premiums for Part B and Part D, once you've reached age 65.



▶ We offer HSAs through HealthEquity

Independent Health is proud to partner with HealthEquity, the nation's leading HSA administrator. Using an HSA from HealthEquity can help make it easier for you to pay for your current health care costs, while also setting you up for financial wellness in the future. Check with your employer to see if your plan includes an HSA option. You can also visit independenthealth.com to learn more.

Let us make Medicare easier for you

Choosing a Medicare plan can often be complicated and overwhelming. Therefore, if you're approaching retirement or will be turning age 65, Independent Health* is here to guide you through the Medicare process and help you make a well-informed health care decision.

To make it easier for you to understand Medicare, we have developed "The RedShirt's Guide to Medicare," which can be downloaded at RedShirtTreatment.com/Medicare. This comprehensive guide includes

important information you need to know so that you're prepared when the time comes for you to decide on a Medicare plan.

In addition, our locally based Medicare RedShirtsSM are here to answer your questions and provide you with personalized attention every step of the way. You can connect with us by phone, online, a video conference call or even safely in person—whatever way is most comfortable for you. To learn more, visit the "Find a RedShirt" section at independenthealth.com/medicare.



**Independent Health is a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract offering HMO, HMO-SNP, HMO-POS and PPO plans. Enrollment in Independent Health depends on contract renewal.*

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GET PEDALING WITH REDDY BIKESHARE

In partnership with Shared Mobility, Inc., Independent Health has brought the Reddy Bikeshare program back to Buffalo and Niagara Falls.

Approximately 400 GPS-enabled Reddy bikes are currently available for short-term rental at 90 stations throughout the Buffalo-Niagara region. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Reddy Bikeshare's Fleet Team has increased bike cleaning and sanitation procedures. Independent Health members can receive a discounted annual membership by visiting reddybikeshare.com.

Show your member ID card and save!

More than 800 local businesses and community partners—like the Buffalo Bills, Buffalo RiverWorks and the Buffalo Museum of Science—currently offer exclusive discounts for our members on a wide range of goods and health and wellness services. To take advantage of these discounts, all you need to do is show your Independent Health member ID card at the time of purchase. You can view all these discounts at independenthealth.com/discounts.

Enjoy this year's Kids Run at home

The Independent Health Foundation invites Western New York families to take part in this year's Kids Run from their home. Participants will be asked to map out a 1.8-mile route in their neighborhood and walk or run it anytime from June 4 to 6. Simply register online by May 21 to receive a race bib, a medal template, training tips and more. Visit kidsrunbuffalo.com to register today.

All Independent Health Foundation programs are proudly supported by AbbVie, Inc., Gelia, HealthEdge, HM Life Insurance Company of New York, Other Party Liability, Inc., Teladoc® Health, Inc., and the Children's Hospital of Buffalo Foundation.



10 years of Fitness in the Parks

Independent Health and YMCA Buffalo Niagara are celebrating the 10th season of Fitness in the Parks this year. In addition to holding free fitness classes at parks throughout Western New York, virtual classes will also be livestreamed through the YMCA Buffalo Niagara Facebook page. A variety of classes led by YMCA certified instructors will be offered, including Zumba, yoga and other favorites. View the full, expanded schedule at independenthealth.com/fitpark.

OUTER HARBOR BUFFALO

As the official health and wellness partner of Outer Harbor Buffalo, Independent Health invites you to enjoy some fresh air along the waterfront on the 3-mile Independent Health Wellness Trail. Visit Wilkeson Pointe to rent bikes and kayaks at a discounted rate. Or take a spin on the pump track and skills loop at Lakeside Bike Park. Learn more at buffalowaterfront.com/outer-harbor.



Exclusive Guided Nature Experience

Looking to get your steps in this summer? Join us at Tiff Nature Preserve for an Exclusive Guided Nature Experience presented by Independent Health. Private tours are available for up to eight people of the same household and allow you to explore the beautiful trails and boardwalks around the preserve. Choose from eight different themes, including family fishing, tracking the wild, watercolors outdoors and more. Reservations are required. Visit tiff.org to learn more.



A list of all the community programs and events Independent Health offers and supports can be found at independenthealth.com/events.

Teladoc®: Receive non-emergent care anytime from anywhere

At Independent Health, we understand there may be times when you can't reach your primary care physician (PCP). That's why we offer a telemedicine benefit provided through Teladoc®, which has a \$0 copayment or low copayment according to your plan benefits*.



Teladoc can put you in touch with a doctor, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to discuss common medical issues, such as cold and flu symptoms, bronchitis, pink eye, sinus problems and more. In addition, you can receive behavioral health (mental health and substance use) and dermatology consultations** through Teladoc.

How Teladoc works

Using our telemedicine benefit is an easy way for you and your family to feel better, faster.

- Create an account at teladoc.com/IH.
- Request a consultation through your online account, the Teladoc mobile app or by phone at **1 (800) Teladoc (1-800-835-2362)**. Consultations are also available by online video, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week.
- Teladoc connects you to a national network of board certified doctors and pediatricians who average 20 years of experience. The doctor will review your medical profile before contacting you to discuss your health concerns.

- If medically necessary, a prescription will be sent to a pharmacy of your choice.
- You can also download the Teladoc mobile app for your Apple or Android devices by visiting Teladoc.com/mobile.

Teladoc is not intended to replace your relationship with your PCP. Instead, it offers you and your family members an alternative to seeking care from an urgent care facility or emergency room, or when it is difficult to obtain services from your PCP. To learn more, visit independenthealth.com/telemedicine.

**If your plan is HSA-qualified, by law, you are responsible for paying the full cost of Teladoc services until your deductible is satisfied.*

***If your plan requires you to meet a deductible before your specialist cost share, you are responsible for paying the full cost of Teladoc dermatology services until your deductible is satisfied. If your plan does include a deductible, you are only responsible for your specialist cost share for Teladoc dermatology services.*

Complete a health care proxy form today!



It's never too early to make sure your loved ones know your end-of-life wishes. You can do this by completing a health care proxy form—a legal document that allows you to appoint someone as your health care agent. This person would be responsible for making health care decisions on your behalf if you lose the ability to make decisions yourself.

You can also use your health care proxy to cite what types of treatments you would or would not want (e.g., "If I am in a coma with no hope of recovery, I do not want to receive artificial nutrition provided by feeding tubes"). By doing so, you can prevent confusion and help your family and friends make the right health care decisions for you during an already stressful time.

When choosing your health care agent, be sure to select someone you trust, such as a family member or close friend. Share with them your thoughts, beliefs and preferences about how you would want to be treated for the remainder of your life.

Health care proxy forms are available at most doctor's offices and at hospitals. You can also download a copy of the form by visiting the "Frequently Used Forms" section at independenthealth.com. Once your form is signed, keep the original and give copies to your doctors and your health care agent.

5 must-have foods to boost nutrition

Good nutrition involves a balanced diet that includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and low-fat dairy. Still, some foods pack more disease-fighting nutrients than others. Move some of these “super” nutritious foods to the top of your grocery list.



Kale

Eating kale, and other cruciferous vegetables, has been linked to a lower risk for certain cancers, including breast and colon cancer. The magic ingredient: a rich source of glucosinolates. Other vegetables in the cruciferous family include broccoli, brussels sprouts and cabbage.



Berries

Various berries—including blueberries and raspberries—are packed with antioxidants, fiber, vitamin C, potassium and folate, making them nutritional powerhouses. Some research has found that another nutrient in berries, flavonoids, could play a role in protecting cognitive function as you age.

Beets

Beets are low in calories but high in valuable vitamins and minerals. These root vegetables also contain naturally high levels of nitrates, which are converted to nitric oxide when digested. This compound relaxes and widens blood vessels, thus helping to lower your blood pressure and keep your heart healthy.



Fatty fish

All fish are good sources of protein. And fatty types—such as salmon, herring, mackerel and sardines—contain high amounts of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3s have been shown to reduce the risk for heart disease and stroke. Other sources of omega-3s include fish oil supplements, flaxseed and flaxseed oil, walnuts and canola oil.

Pecans

These nuts offer high levels of antioxidants that have been tied to heart benefits. Pecans are also an excellent source of manganese, which helps manage blood sugar levels and promote healthy bones.



Before taking fish oil supplements, talk with your health care provider to see if they are right for you.

Using nutrition labels for better health

Reading food labels is an important part of making healthy choices. When you know what's in a food, you can decide if it's OK to eat and how much is right for you. Here's a closer look at what the information on food labels means.

- **Serving size.** Start with the serving size and number of servings per container. Ask yourself how many servings you're eating. Then multiply the figures for calories and nutrients by this number. For example, if you eat two servings, multiply the calories and nutrient figures by two.
- **Calories.** Take note of how many calories you consume. To keep from gaining weight, you'll need to use at least as many calories as you take in every day. Avoid foods that are high in calories but low in nutrients.
- **Nutrients to limit.** Look for information about total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium. Aim to keep your intake of saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol low and try to eat less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day.
- **Carbohydrates.** Total carbohydrates, dietary fibers and sugars are also listed. Cut back on foods with added sugars. But increase high-fiber foods, which aid digestion and may lower blood cholesterol. Just be sure to keep track of all the carbohydrates you eat.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 2/3 cup (51g)
Servings Per Container About 9

Amount Per Serving	Cereal with 1/2 cup Cereal Skim Milk	
	Cereal	Skim Milk
Calories	240	280
Calories from Fat	70	70
% Daily Value**		
Total Fat 8g*	12%	12%
Saturated Fat 2.5g	13%	13%
Trans Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	0%
Sodium 50mg	2%	5%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	12%	14%
Dietary Fiber 3g	12%	12%
Sugars 13g		
Protein 4g	8%	16%
Vitamin A	0%	4%
Vitamin C	0%	0%
Calcium	2%	15%
Iron	6%	6%



RECIPE:

Rainbow Chopped Salad

Ingredients

- 6 oz. (about 1 cup) blackberries
- 6 oz. (about 1 cup) blueberries
- 1 cup sliced strawberries
- 1 medium beet, peeled and shredded (about 1 cup)
- 1 medium yellow squash, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 2 medium purple carrots, peeled and shredded (about 1 cup)
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and shredded (about 1 cup)
- 1 medium red bell pepper, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 medium yellow bell pepper, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 medium orange bell pepper, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 medium cucumber, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 cup sliced green onions
- 4 cups finely chopped kale, stems removed

Dressing ingredients

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tbsp. maple syrup
- ¼ tsp. sea salt

Directions

Toss vegetables and fruit in a large bowl. In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, white balsamic vinegar, maple syrup and sea salt. Pour over salad and toss again.

Per serving

Makes eight 2-cup servings. Each serving contains about 167 calories, 8 g fat (1 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat), 0 mg cholesterol, 130 mg sodium, 24 g carbohydrates, 14 g sugars, 5 g fiber, 3 g protein.

Enjoy other healthy and delicious recipes at healthyoptionsbuffalo.com.



AN INDEPENDENT HEALTH FOUNDATION PROGRAM

FOR YOUR NEXT DOCTOR'S VISIT A PATIENT CHECKLIST

You may be worried about visiting a hospital, clinic or doctor's office at this time. But some tests and treatments need to be done in person. Here's how you can get ready for your next visit and what to expect when you arrive.

Prepare for your visit

Make a list of any questions or concerns you want to discuss. If you'd like to bring a family member along, ask your health care provider first if visitors are allowed at this time.



To make the most of your visit, make sure you also bring:

- Mask or cloth face covering to wear inside
- Hand sanitizer to keep your hands clean
- Your insurance card
- The names and phone numbers of other health care providers
- All the medicines you take—prescription and over-the-counter ones
- A list of all the vitamins and supplements you take
- Pen and paper to take notes



Safety precautions: What to expect

We are taking steps to protect you from COVID-19. You may notice some of these changes during your visit:

- Health care providers wearing safety equipment like masks and gloves
- Patients checking in for their visits from their cars
- People being screened for symptoms of an infection before they can go inside
- Separate care rooms for people who may have COVID-19
- Frequent cleaning of surfaces like door handles, elevator buttons and chairs
- Waiting rooms and patient rooms set up to help with social distancing

If you have questions or concerns about your upcoming visit, call your provider's office to discuss them. Don't put off the care you need to stay healthy.

Mental health issues are still a growing concern

Mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being at every stage of life. Unfortunately, a person's mental health can change over time, depending on many factors. When the demands placed on a person exceed their resources and coping abilities, it can lead to a wide range of mental and behavioral health conditions that affect one's mood, thinking and behavior.

COVID-19 and mental health

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, about one in five adults experiences mental illness each year. Examples of mental illness include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviors.

To complicate matters further, a recent survey conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that about 41%

of respondents "reported an adverse mental or behavioral health condition" as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges we currently face as a nation have created new barriers for people already suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders. Fear, frustration, sadness and social isolation have also led to increasing rates of depression and anxiety over the past year.

The good news is mental illness is treatable. Treatment depends on the type of mental illness you have, its severity and what works best for you. If you have a mild mental illness with well-controlled symptoms, treatment from your primary care provider may be sufficient. However, often a team approach is appropriate to make sure all your psychiatric, medical and social needs are met.

It's OK not to be OK

If mental health issues are disrupting your life, reach out for help. That might mean calling a family member for emotional support or contacting your health care provider. Another useful resource is the Disaster Distress Hotline,



a 24/7 service that provides crisis counseling. Call **1 (800) 985-5990** or text TalkWithUs to **66746** to connect with a trained counselor.

In addition, Independent Health has a comprehensive team of behavioral health case managers that is dedicated to helping our members obtain care and treatment for mental health issues. You can speak with one of our case managers by calling **(716) 529-3945**, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

A painful crisis: Opioid misuse and addiction

When they're recommended by a health care provider for a serious health problem, prescription pain medicines serve a valuable purpose. But right now, the U.S. is struggling with an epidemic related to one key class of painkiller: opioids.

Misuse and abuse of prescription drugs like oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®) and fentanyl have run rampant—and also led to increased use of illegal opioids, including heroin and illicit fentanyl.

The statistics paint a troubling picture:

- About 21 to 29% of people who receive an opioid prescription misuse the drugs.
- Nearly 80% of heroin users have also misused prescription opioids.

- An average of 130 Americans die of an opioid overdose each day.

Explore your alternatives

Before you start taking opioids, have an open, honest conversation with your provider. Discuss the benefits and risks. Disclose if you have a personal or family history of substance misuse or addiction.

Depending on the cause of your pain, you may have other options, including:

- Over-the-counter medications, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®)
- Physical therapy or other types of exercise
- Therapies like acupuncture and massage

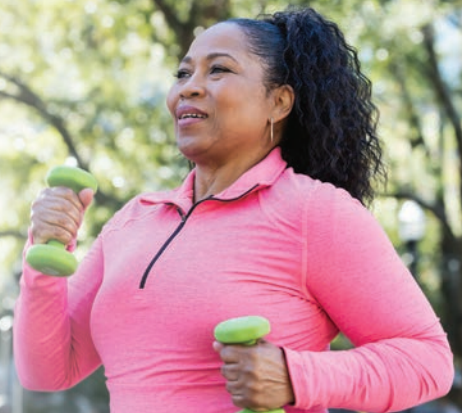
- If your provider decides to prescribe you an opioid, ask about naloxone (also known as Narcan®). This medication can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose when administered quickly. It is available at most pharmacies without a prescription.

We're here to assist

If you are struggling with opioid misuse or addiction, Independent Health can help you find the support and treatment you may need. To learn more, call **(716) 529-3945**, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. All calls are confidential. To learn more about this benefit, visit [independenthealth.com/telemedicine](https://www.independenthealth.com/telemedicine).

Take action to control type 2 diabetes

Recent estimates project that as many as one in three American adults will have diabetes in 2050. The most prevalent form of the disease, type 2, can lead to additional problems—heart disease, stroke, nerve damage, and kidney or eye problems—if left untreated.



What is type 2?

Type 2 means that your body doesn't use insulin properly. Insulin is a hormone that helps the body's cells use sugar (glucose) for energy. It also helps the body store extra sugar in muscle, fat and liver cells. Without insulin, this sugar can't get into your cells to do its work. It stays in your blood instead. As a result, your blood sugar level gets too high, which can damage your blood vessels and lead to various complications.

Although type 2 diabetes cannot be cured, it can be controlled with proper management.

Managing diabetes

If you've been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, make sure you follow your diabetes management plan. Things you do between doctor's appointments are very important:

- If your primary care physician (PCP) advises you to check your blood sugar, blood pressure or weight, do so consistently.

- Know and strive to meet your A1c (average blood sugar), cholesterol and blood pressure goals.
- Help keep your blood sugar at a safe level by receiving personalized health coaching through the Brook health companion. This mobile app can be downloaded for free at independenthealth.com/brook.

Healthy eating and physical activity are key to managing your diabetes:

- Choose foods low in saturated fats, increase your fiber intake, lower your portion sizes and be aware of the carbohydrates in your foods (see infographic below).
- Regular physical activity, including aerobic exercise and strength training, can help lower blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol, in addition to strengthening your heart.
- If you're overweight, losing even just a few pounds can help get your blood sugar levels more in check and make you feel better overall.

Taking oral medications or insulin may help you meet your target blood sugar levels:

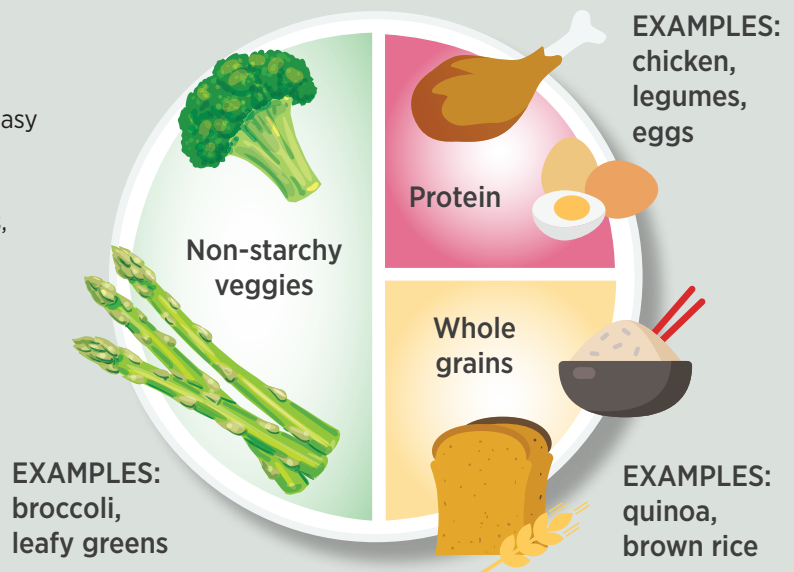
- The number one drug of choice for those with type 2 diabetes is metformin, which lowers blood sugar levels by improving the way the body handles insulin. Metformin does not cause weight gain and can significantly reduce the risk for heart disease.
- The American Diabetes Association recommends moderate- to high-intensity statin therapy be part of most diabetes management plans. Statins are cholesterol-lowering drugs that help prevent heart attack and stroke.
- Take ALL your medications as prescribed to help prevent diabetes complications.

Although diabetes is a common disease, every individual's care needs are unique. Therefore, speak with your PCP about your best treatment options.

A healthy plate for diabetes

The American Diabetes Association recommends the "Create Your Plate" formula to make meal planning easy for people with diabetes.

1. Fill half of a 9-inch plate with non-starchy veggies, like steamed broccoli or sautéed spinach.
2. Fill a quarter of the plate with a lean protein, like fish or chicken. Beans and legumes are good vegetarian options.
3. Fill the remaining quarter of the plate with a whole grain, such as barley, brown rice or whole wheat pasta. Try to avoid refined grains like white rice or pasta.



What expectant mothers can expect

Preparing to welcome a new baby is an exciting time. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, you might be wondering what extra precautions your health care provider is taking to keep you and your little one safe.

Your obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-GYN) will let you know how your prenatal care experience might change. For instance, some visits might be handled by phone or video, while others might be combined into one.

Here's what you can expect when it comes to seeing your OB-GYN over the next nine months:

Your first contact will be early on.

Let your OB-GYN know as soon as you think you're pregnant. Your first visit will likely then be scheduled sometime after your eighth week of pregnancy. During your first visit, your doctor may:

- Have you provide a urine sample to confirm you're pregnant and check for signs of infection
- Take your blood pressure
- Check your weight and height
- Calculate your due date
- Do an ultrasound
- Draw some blood
- Perform a physical exam, including a pelvic exam, a Pap test and a gonorrhea and chlamydia screening

Contact with your OB-GYN will increase as your pregnancy progresses.

If your pregnancy is progressing normally, you'll likely visit your doctor monthly up to 28 weeks, every two weeks between weeks 28 to 36 and weekly from 36 weeks to delivery.

At most visits, your OB-GYN will perform routine tests. For example, you will provide a urine sample at every visit to check for signs of diabetes, infections and preeclampsia. Other routine tests will include taking your blood pressure, tracking your weight, measuring your belly to check your baby's growth and listening to your baby's heart rate. Depending on a number of factors (e.g.,



age and family history), you may also receive some special tests along the way, such as a glucose test and chromosomal screenings.

We're here to help, too. Connecting with your OB-GYN regularly throughout your pregnancy is important for both your health and your baby's health. Plus, Independent Health can provide you with extra support through our "First Step Maternal Child" program, which is focused on helping our members reach their pregnancy goals. Whether your pregnancy is high-risk, or you have general pregnancy concerns, our nurses and case managers can assist you during and after your pregnancy by:

- Helping you understand prenatal testing and any medications you may be taking
- Coordinating your care with your OB-GYN and primary care physician
- Identifying and linking you with community resources and services
- Screening you for depression or other mood disorders
- Educating you about newborn care, breastfeeding and immunizations

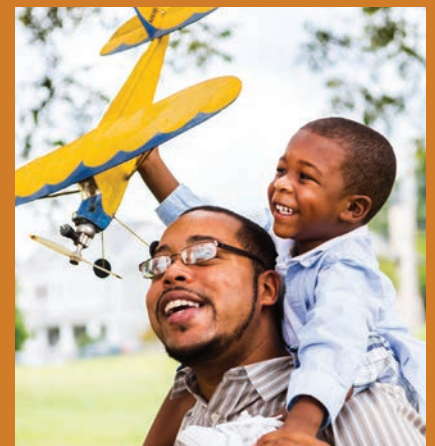
▶ To learn more about this program, please call our Case Management Department at (716) 635-7822, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

We're committed to keeping you safe and healthy

Independent Health has an organization-wide approach to member safety. Member safety is improved by creating and maintaining processes and structures whose application reduces the probability of adverse events resulting from exposure to the health care system.

Independent Health's Patient Safety Subcommittee is a clearinghouse for the collection of safety activities across the organization. This committee has responsibilities to organize reporting on existing patient safety activities and to screen for and report opportunities/initiatives to support members, providers and internal staff with member safety efforts.

Make sure you're also taking the steps to stay healthy. Visit the "Healthy Living Tips and Guidelines" page under the "My Health" section at [independenthealth.com](https://www.independenthealth.com) to learn how you can protect the health of you and your loved ones. There you will find a variety of resources on preventive health, immunizations, chronic diseases, behavioral health, smoking cessation and more.



SIT LESS, LIVE LONGER: WAYS TO FIT MORE MOTION INTO YOUR DAY



THE HUMAN BODY'S 640 MUSCLES suggest it was made to move. But many people spend up to eight or nine hours a day sedentary.



BEING SEDENTARY may add extra pounds and also contribute to clogged arteries. Too much sitting impairs your body's ability to clear fat from your bloodstream.



SITTING TOO MUCH CAN:

- Almost double your risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Increase your risk for heart disease, obesity and cancer
- Decrease your life expectancy



TRY KEEPING A LOG OF TV TIME. You might be shocked to add up how many hours you lose in front of the tube. For the average American, it's more than 19 hours each week.



WHILE WATCHING YOUR FAVORITE TV SHOW, lift dumbbells, stretch resistance bands or pace around the room during commercials.



PARKED AT A DESK ALL DAY?

Try setting a phone or computer alarm each hour. When it goes off, take a short walk down the hall or a staircase.



What you can do to reduce low back pain

Low back pain is very common among adults and is often caused by overuse and muscle strain or injury.

This type of pain usually gets better if you stay active, avoid positions and activities that may increase or cause back pain, use ice, and take non-prescription pain relievers when you need them.

When you no longer have acute pain, you may be ready for gentle strengthening exercises for your

stomach, back and legs, and perhaps for some stretching exercises. Exercise may not only help decrease low back pain, but it may also help you recover faster, prevent reinjury to your back and reduce the risk of disability from back pain.

It's important that you don't let fear of pain keep you from trying gentle activity. You should try to be active soon after noticing pain and gradually increase your activity level.

Too little activity can lead to loss of flexibility, strength and endurance, and then to more pain.

Visit [independenthealth.com/healthwise](https://www.independenthealth.com/healthwise) to find a variety of simple exercises you can do at home to reduce low back pain. As always, talk with your doctor before you start an exercise program, and only do exercises that do not increase your symptoms.

Q&A: What you need to know about osteoporosis

Millions of Americans currently live with osteoporosis, which means they have bones that are thin and brittle with lots of holes inside them like a sponge. This makes them easy to break. Osteoporosis can lead to broken bones in the hip, spine and wrist. These fractures can be disabling and may make it hard to live on your own, especially as you get older.

Q: What causes osteoporosis?

A. It's caused by a lack of bone mass. The risk of getting osteoporosis increases with age, as bones naturally become thinner. Around age 30, the rate at which bone tissue dissolves and is absorbed by the body slowly increases, while the rate of bone building decreases. Overall, many people lose a little bone mass each year after age 30.

Q: Who is at high risk for this disease?

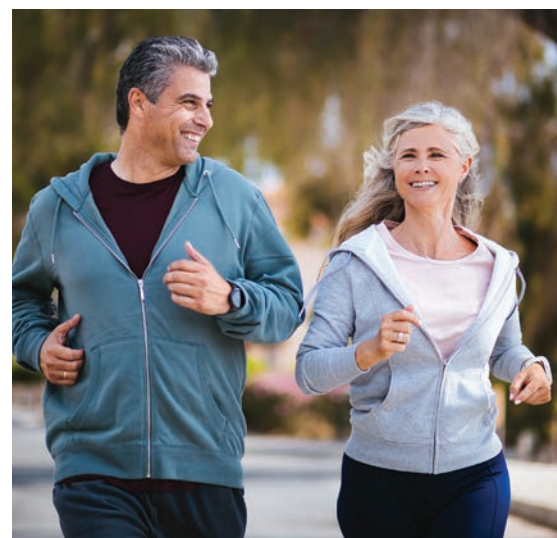
A. There are certain risk factors that make you more likely to have the severe bone thinning of osteoporosis. This includes:

- Age. Your risk goes up as you get older.
- Being a woman—especially after menopause.
- Body type—having a slender body frame.
- Your family background. Osteoporosis tends to run in families.

The good news is that you can slow osteoporosis by adopting healthy lifestyle habits. If you smoke, quit. Avoid heavy alcohol use. Get plenty of exercise. Walking, jogging, dancing and lifting weights can make your bones stronger. Eat a healthy mix of foods that include calcium and vitamin D, such as yogurt, cheese, milk, eggs and fatty fish.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A. Osteoporosis can be very far along before you notice it. Sometimes the first sign is a broken bone in your hip, spine or wrist after a bump or fall. As the disease gets worse, you may have other signs, such as pain in your back. You might notice that you are not as tall as you used to be and that you have a curved backbone.



Q: How is osteoporosis diagnosed?

A. It's important to find and treat osteoporosis early to prevent bone fractures. A bone density test is used to determine if someone has osteoporosis. Screening is recommended starting at age 65 for women at average risk for osteoporosis. Women with a higher-than-average risk may need screening earlier. If necessary, your doctor can complete a risk assessment and answer any questions you may have about osteoporosis screening and treatment.

English

If you, or someone you're helping, has questions about Independent Health, you have the right to get help and information in your language at no cost. To talk to an interpreter, call 1-800-501-3439.

Independent Health complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Spanish

Si usted, o alguien a quien usted está ayudando, tiene preguntas acerca de Independent Health, tiene derecho a obtener ayuda e información en su idioma sin costo alguno. Para hablar con un intérprete, llame al 1-800-501-3439.

Independent Health cumple con las leyes federales de derechos civiles aplicables y no discrimina por motivos de raza, color, nacionalidad, edad, discapacidad o sexo.

Chinese

如果您，或是您正在協助的對象，有關於[插入 Independent Health 項目的名稱 Independent Health 方面的問題，您有權利免費以您的母語得到幫助和訊息。洽詢一位翻譯員，請撥電話 [在此插入數字 1-800-501-3439。

Independent Health 遵守適用的聯邦民權法律規定，不因種族、膚色、民族血統、年齡、殘障或性別而歧視任何人。

KEITH PAGE

Editor

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For more ways to keep yourself healthy, follow us on Facebook or Twitter!

Being grateful and happy is good for your heart

As we all know, making smart lifestyles choices, like eating healthy, being physically active and not smoking, can go a long way in helping you maintain a healthy heart. Managing your stress level is also important. Since chronic stress, anger and anxiety can raise your chances of developing heart disease and stroke, try meditation, yoga or slow, deep breathing to help keep you calm and relaxed.

However, did you know that how you feel emotionally can also help keep your ticker in good shape? Science tells us that emotion impacts not only our mental health but also our physical well-being, especially that of the heart.

Gratitude is a strong emotion linked to happiness. Expressing gratitude can trigger the release of hormones that promote positive feelings, including happiness and pleasure. To help make your heart strong and healthy, add some of these ideas into your daily routine:

- **Smile more.** While feelings of sadness and depression can weaken our immune systems, happiness can boost our resiliency. Research has shown that smiling can be contagious. The simple act of turning up the corners of your mouth can make challenging tasks seem less difficult and increase feelings of well-being. That's because some of the brain's natural feel-good chemicals (e.g., endorphins, serotonin and dopamine) are released when we smile.

- **Give thanks.** According to multiple studies, recognizing and giving thanks may result in better mood, better sleep, less fatigue and even lower levels of inflammation, which can impact cardiac health. Little gestures like sending a thank-you note or calling a loved one can make a difference—not only for you, but to the recipient as well.
- **Write in a gratitude journal.** This is an easy way to note all the things in your life you are blessed with.
- **Go to bed happy.** Those who lead a happy, grateful life tend to get better quality sleep, which in turn is great for your heart and emotional health. Before you lay your head down each night, think about the things you are grateful for or a positive event that you experienced in your life. Ending your day with a positive mindset can help you sleep better and wake up with that same positivity.

Make sure you show your heart some love by being more grateful and feeling great!

