

## Welcome!

Thank you for being a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE) Medicare Advantage member. This newsletter is designed to provide you with tools and resources to keep you healthy, update you on plan information and connect with us.

Would you like to receive this communication electronically? Email [GetStarted@NebraskaBlue.com](mailto:GetStarted@NebraskaBlue.com) or call 888-488-9850 to provide your contact information and email address.

Call [888-488-9850](tel:888-488-9850) if you would like to stop receiving member communications.

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# Getting **more** out of your clinic appointments

The doctor-patient relationship is very important; it is built on trust and communication. Good communication with your doctor is necessary whether it is your primary care provider (PCP), a specialist or if you are in the hospital. Here are some tips on how to keep communications open with your provider.

**Ask Questions.** Your questions can help prompt your doctor to talk about what is important to you. Your doctor sincerely cares about your concerns.

**Be Prepared.** Making a list of questions ahead of time can help prepare you to see your doctor. If you are in the hospital, keep a notepad at your bedside. As you think of things, jot them down. If you don't understand your doctor's directions, you can ask them to repeat what was said. Bring someone with you to your appointment so they can listen to what the doctor says, ask questions and help you remember any instructions.

**Know Your Health Condition(s).** It is helpful to understand your health condition so that you can talk about it. You should be able to:

- Spot any unusual symptoms
- Recognize if you are getting better or worse
- Explain to your doctor what you are feeling

Being able to communicate openly and freely with your doctor is very important to managing illness and maintaining your health.

**Changes to your Health.** Tell your doctor about any changes in your health since your last appointment. Take a minute to think about each of these possible topics. Jot down when you first noticed each change and note any additional information that may be helpful for the doctor to know.

**Concerns.** At each visit, your doctor will likely ask about your concerns. It's a good idea to think about what you'd like to talk about before the actual visit. Visits are typically 10-15 minutes, so make sure to prioritize your most important concerns first.

**Medications.** You may be taking many different medicines as well as numerous vitamins and over-the-counter drugs. It can be confusing to keep track of everything. Make a list of your medications, when you take them and for what reason. Try to bring the list to every doctor appointment.

**Screenings and Vaccines.** An important part of keeping you healthy is getting screenings and vaccines. Discuss with your doctor any preventive services you may need to complete to remain up to date.

# Getting Steadier through mobility and balance Treatments

Falls pose a big risk as we age, but you can help prevent them by building up lower-body muscle strength to improve balance and stability. As we get older, staying upright can be a tricky balancing act.

Balance activities are crucial for adults 65 and older as balance naturally declines with age. To help you keep your balance, the CDC recommends regular balance exercises three times a week to maintain balance over time and reduce the risk of falls. These kinds of activities improve the ability to resist forces within or outside of the body that cause falls. Fall prevention programs that include balance training and other exercises to improve activities of daily living significantly reduce the risk of injury, such as bone fractures, if a fall does occur.

Here are simple exercises that help build strength:

- Strength training using bodyweight exercises such as wall pushups, calf raises, shoulder blade squeezes and smaller repeated movements
- Practice standing from a sitting position
- Walking heel-to-toe

If you belong to a fitness center, ask a trainer about other balance training classes or activities you can do there. Before starting any new exercise program, check with your doctor first.

**Already had a fall?** It's important that you talk your doctor about your fall before you start exercising again. Depending on the severity of your injuries, you may need additional treatment.

## Balance

Balance activities are crucial for adults 65 and older as balance naturally declines with age. Balance training includes walking heel-to-toe, practicing standing from sitting, and using a wobble board. The CDC recommends regular balance exercises three times a week to maintain balance over time and reduce the risk of falls.

## Strength Training

Luckily, different types of activities often work together. For example, strengthening the back, abdomen and leg muscles also improves balance. So when you strengthen certain muscles, your balance also improves.

Since most older adults aren't itching to get into the weight room, muscle strength training for seniors can include bodyweight exercises and functional fitness routines, such as wall push-ups, calf raises, shoulder blade squeezes and smaller repeated movements that can be accomplished without additional equipment.

Experts share how balance training helps you prevent falls and stay strong on your feet—for life.

When we're young, we take staying upright for granted. We don't really worry about doing exercises to improve balance. It might not even cross our minds that falling is a risk.

But over the years, things change. The vestibular system, which is the body's sensory system that maintains balance, weakens with age. The body's ability to detect gravity, identify exact body positioning at any moment, and promote balance and stability become less effective, says Caroline DeGroot, M.P.T., a physical therapist at Illinois Bone and Joint Institute in Bannockburn, Illinois.

On their own, these declines can make you feel unsteady and increase your risk of falling, but they often occur alongside losses in muscle strength and mobility, says Barbara Bergin, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon in Austin. She adds that type 2 diabetes, which

affects about 25% of older adults, is one of the most common causes of peripheral neuropathy, or nerve damage that can result in numbness in the hands, feet and other parts of the body.

High blood pressure, a condition that affects more than 63% of adults over the age of 60, can also throw you off balance. People with hypertension tend to react slower and have more trouble staying steady on their feet compared to people with normal blood pressure, according to research published in the Brazilian Journal of Physical Therapy.

Put all of that together, and it's easy to see why falls are the #1 cause of injuries and death from injuries among older Americans.

In fact, according to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an older adult falls every single second of each day in the United States.

It's never too early to start thinking about improving your balance and preventing falls. Performing these bodyweight moves as often as possible can help with improving your overall balance.

**Already had a fall?** Start by telling your doctor and asking these important questions to recover from a fall injury.



## Tips for Successful Telehealth Visits

As technology continues to shape our world, it's making its mark on how we access medical care. With BCBSNE Medicare Advantage plans, you have many options to get questions answered, get medications and stay healthy—all from the comfort of your own home. Options include:

- **Telehealth visits with your provider:** If your primary care doctor or specialist has telehealth options, you pay the same copay as you would to visit the doctor in person.
- **24/7 Nurse line:** If you have a question for a nurse, call 833-968-1764 any time to speak with a registered nurse.

### Tips for Successful Telehealth Visits

To make sure you have the best telehealth experience possible, here are some helpful tips for a successful telemedicine visit.

- 1 Ask your doctor if telehealth visits are an option.** If they are, get more information from them or their staff on the best way to have a successful telehealth visit.
- 2 Test Your Tech:** Before your scheduled telehealth visit, make sure your device (phone, tablet or computer) is working correctly and fully charged or plugged in. Check your internet connection and ensure your camera and microphone are functional.
- 3 Choose a Quiet Space:** Find a quiet and well-lit area for your telehealth visit. This ensures that you can communicate effectively with your health care provider without interruptions.
- 4 Prepare your Questions:** Just like an in-person visit, prepare a list of questions or concerns in advance. This will help you make the most of your time.
- 5 Be Patient:** Sometimes technology has a mindset of its own. If there are any technical glitches, stay calm and be patient. Your health care provider will help guide you through any issues that arise.
- 6 Stay Engaged:** Approach your telehealth visit like you would an in-person appointment. Make sure you speak clearly, listen carefully and let your provider know of any questions or concerns.

Important BCBSNE MA information. Health and wellness or prevention information.



## Important **RESOURCES**

### **Member Services**

Update your contact information and ask questions about your plan

**888-488-9850 (TTY users call 711)**

**Oct. 1 – March 31:** seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. CT

**April 1 – Sept. 30:** Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. CT

### **Prime Customer Care**

Call for questions related to prescription drug coverage or to set up home delivery for your prescriptions

**855-457-1349**

24 hours per day / 7 days per week

### **24/7 Nurse Line**

**833-968-1764**

### **OTC Card Questions**

To ask questions about benefits related to the over-the-counter (OTC) pharmacy card

**800-706-5058**

### **Learn More Online**

**Medicare.NebraskaBlue.com/  
MedicareAdvantage**

