

# VIP: Healthy VIEWS

SPRING 2025

[www.amerihhealthcaritasvipcare.com/pa](http://www.amerihhealthcaritasvipcare.com/pa)

## 5 ways to refresh your routine this spring

Spring means new beginnings — prime time to tidy up your wellness routine. Here are tips for a fresh start.



### Schedule your checkup today!

Staying healthy means staying proactive. Book your annual wellness visit with your health care provider today, even if you're feeling great. Use this opportunity to ask whether you need any shots or important cancer screenings for the breast, cervix, colon, prostate, skin, or lungs.

**Bonus!** A \$50 incentive is available when you complete your annual wellness exam.

### Your diet

Start with a food safety check. Scour your cabinets, pantry, and fridge for expired dates and spoiled food. Look for changes in smell, flavor, or texture.

Trash rotten items and restock with seasonal produce. Hit the farmers market or grocery store. Fill your basket with spinach, beets, strawberries, and asparagus.

### Your fitness habits

First, consider how much activity you get now. Experts recommend 150 minutes of moderate activity each week. You should also do two or three days of 20- to 30-minute muscle-strengthening sessions per week.

If you fall short, set goals to help you get active. Working in your garden, riding your bike, or vigorous spring-cleaning all count.

### Your skin care

Go through your bathroom drawers and cabinets to get rid of old products. First, scrap expired sunscreen. It may not work as well.

### Your digital life

Social media keeps us connected. Yet too much time online is bad for your mental health.

Try taking a break. In one study, limiting social media use to 30 minutes daily for two weeks improved mental well-being.

### Your mindset

Another thing to ditch this spring: being hard on yourself.

Instead, embrace “good enough.” Move your body even if you cannot exercise for an entire workout. Eat cookies, but also chop raw veggies to snack on. Each small step forward creates better health in the seasons ahead.



# Boost hydration through food

Staying hydrated isn't just about quenching your thirst — it's **essential for overall health**. It helps your kidneys and other organs work as they should, keeps your blood pressure in a healthy range, and maintains brain function.

The good news is that you can increase your fluid intake by eating water-rich foods. Here are a few ideas:

- **Go for high-water content.** Raw fruits and veggies, like tomatoes, celery, bell peppers, lettuce, berries, melons, and apples, are good examples. Other water-rich foods include yogurt and cottage cheese.
- **Add hydration to every meal.** Top your morning oatmeal with a handful of fresh berries, include lettuce on your sandwich, or add a spoon of plain nonfat Greek yogurt on your chili.
- **Make water-rich foods the star.** Enjoy a big salad or a bowl of vegetable soup as your main course.
- **Trade dry snacks for juicy options.** Swap nuts or crackers with a bowl of grapes or cucumber slices to munch on during the day.

## Healthy foods!

You may use your monthly OTC allowance to purchase healthy food at plan-approved retail locations. You can also shop our online catalog to have food items delivered to your home.

Adding water-rich foods to your day is an easy (and a tasty) way to keep your hydration on track. Although keep in mind that you can't fully replace your fluid needs with food, so drinking water is still a must!

## ➔ Clear away asthma

Spring-cleaning is a great way to freshen up your home after a long winter indoors. By clearing out dust mites and mold, you'll also reduce common triggers for allergic asthma. This can help cut down on asthma attacks.

### To combat dust mites:

Use a damp rag or mop for cleaning. A dry cloth just stirs up dust mite allergens.

- Choose a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter or double-layered microfilter bag.
- Wash bed sheets and blankets in hot water once a week. If bedding can't be washed, put it in the freezer overnight.

### To fight indoor mold:

- Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water. Then dry the area.
- Avoid using chlorine bleach to kill the mold. Dead mold can still cause allergic reactions, so it must always be removed.
- Use dehumidifiers or air conditioners to reduce humidity. Controlling moisture can help control the growth of mold.

If these steps to clear asthma triggers don't help your symptoms, talk with your health care provider. It's important to have professional guidance to manage your asthma effectively.



# Lifesaving truths about hypertension



Because high blood pressure (also called hypertension) may not make you feel sick, you may be shocked to learn that you have it. Nevertheless, it's important to start managing it right away.

Over time, high blood pressure causes serious damage to arteries and organs inside the body — all without telltale signs. It can lead to several problems, such as:

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Kidney disease
- Vision loss

## Get the facts

Knowledge is the key to managing hypertension. Here are three widely believed myths and the truths behind them:

### **Myth: I can't prevent high blood pressure.**

**Truth:** Even if the condition runs in your family, you're not destined to get it too. Avoid it by adopting lifestyle changes. Making healthy choices every day — such as exercising, eating a balanced diet, controlling stress, limiting alcohol, and avoiding tobacco — is a winning strategy.

### **Myth: I can tell if I have hypertension.**

**Truth:** You may have heard that people with hypertension feel nervous, sweat, can't sleep, and have flushed faces. But you can have it for years without any signs. The only way to know for certain is to get blood pressure checks from your health care provider.

### **Myth: I feel fine. I don't need to take medicine.**

**Truth:** Feeling healthy or maintaining lower readings doesn't mean it's time to stop taking medicine. Work with your provider to reach your goals and find the treatment plan that's right for you.

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## Know your numbers

Checking your blood pressure at home is easy. Digital monitors are listed in our OTC benefit catalog. Be sure to log the date, time, and readings to share with your provider.

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## What's your number?

When you know your number, refer to the chart from the American Heart Association below to find out whether yours is normal.

Blood pressure results	Systolic mmHg (top number)		Diastolic mmHg (bottom number)
Normal	Lower than 120	and	Lower than 80
Elevated	120–129	and	Lower than 80
High blood pressure stage 1	130–139	or	80–89
High blood pressure stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
Hypertensive crisis (Dangerous! Call your provider right away!)	Higher than 180	and/or	Higher than 120



# Get a handle on seasonal allergies

## About a quarter of all U.S. adults say they have seasonal allergies.

Also called hay fever, it can give you a lot of trouble during some of the nicest days of the year.

You may be surprised to learn that pollen itself isn't the root of your problem. Your immune system thinks that pollen is a dangerous invader, and it releases a chemical called histamine to fight pollen. This is what causes symptoms like:

- Sneezing
- Runny nose
- Watery eyes
- Itchy throat

Here are some steps to take if you get seasonal allergies.

## Start taking meds

Ideally, start taking your medicine before you expect symptoms to ramp up. This helps stop your body from releasing histamine. Talk with your provider about the best time to start taking allergy pills.

## Cut exposure to pollen

It's not always easy to keep away from pollen, but you could try these steps:

- Stay inside on days with a high pollen count.
- Keep your windows closed and use air-conditioning with a HEPA filter.
- Shower before going to bed each night to remove pollen from your hair and skin.

- Wash your bedding in hot water once a week.
- Wear sunglasses to keep pollen out of your eyes.

## What to try when nothing else works

If meds don't help your allergies go away, you may need immunotherapy. For this, you're given small amounts of an allergen. The therapy is given through either allergy shots or a tablet you place under your tongue. It helps make your immune system less sensitive to the allergen.

Working with an allergist, you can find out what exactly you're allergic to. Once you know, you can get a care plan to help you feel your best.

## 24/7 Nurse Call Line

If you have any questions about your care, call to speak with a nurse, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The number is **1-855-809-9199**.

# The sobering truth about alcohol



Are you a moderate or heavy drinker? Do you binge drink? When you add up how much you drink each week, you may be surprised at the results.

- **Moderate drinking** is having one drink a day or fewer for women and two drinks or fewer for men.
- **Heavy drinking** is having eight or more drinks a week for women and 15 or more drinks for men.
- **Binge drinking** is having four or more drinks in one day for women and five or more drinks for men.

## The downsides of drinking

Over time, heavy drinking or binge drinking can take a toll on your health. Long-term health problems linked to heavy drinking include:

- Liver disease
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Some types of cancer
- Digestive problems
- Memory issues, including dementia
- Depression and anxiety
- Learning problems

## How to lower your risk

No matter how much you drink, drinking less is always a better choice for your health. By choosing not to drink — or drinking in

moderation — you're doing your body a big favor. Here are some ways to cut back:

- **Plan it out.** Decide ahead of time how many days you will drink and how many drinks you will have.
- **Count your drinks.** Don't let someone "top off" a glass of wine or mixed drink without keeping track.
- **Remove alcohol from your home.** You'll be less likely to drink if it's not readily available.
- **Get support.** Tell friends and family that you're cutting back and encourage them to join you. If you need help quitting, talk with your health care provider.

**Theme 1:** Spring flowers. Answers: Crocus, daffodil, hyacinth, tulip  
**Theme 2:** Things exercise can improve. Answers: Flexibility, heart health, mood, strength  
**Theme 3:** Allergy triggers. Answers: Dust mites, mold, pet dander, pollen  
**Theme 4:** Healthy spring produce. Answers: Asparagus, artichokes, peas, strawberries

Spring Links answer key



# What to do if you can't get your meds

## **If you're living with diabetes, you work hard to take care of yourself.**

Keeping your blood sugar in check is a full-time job. When you start taking pills for high blood pressure or cholesterol, you may not be able to fill them regularly.

This may be due to money issues or supply shortages.

Whatever the reason is, knowing how to navigate these problems is vital. Here's how you can make sure you don't miss a dose and stay on track with your health.

## **Consistency is key**

If you're running low, you shouldn't skip a dose or stretch your supply by rationing. This can lead to serious health issues. For example, missed insulin shots can lead to very high blood sugar and low insulin levels. This can cause diabetic ketoacidosis — a life-threatening health problem. Also, unmanaged high blood pressure could result in stroke and kidney failure.

## **Tackling money barriers**

In the past few years, the cost of medicines has soared. But there are ways to ease the money burden:

- **Talk with your provider.** Ask if you can switch to lower-cost or generic drugs.
- **Check for savings.** Visit your drug manufacturer's website for copay savings and coupon offers that can cut out-of-pocket costs.

- **Search for a support program.**

You might qualify for drug-assistance programs that have free- or low-cost medicines. Your pharmacist or health care provider should have more information, or you can go to [www.insulinhelp.org](http://www.insulinhelp.org).

## **Dealing with shortages**

Drug shortages can happen because of production problems or more demand. If your pharmacist tells you they're out of a drug, here's what to do:

- **Contact your health care provider.** They might change your treatment plan or suggest a different medicine.

- **Call other locations.** Contact other pharmacies to see if they have your drugs in stock. But avoid unlicensed online pharmacies. They might sell counterfeit products.

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## **\$0 copay prescriptions**

Your plan covers a wide range of prescription drugs. They can include medicines you take every day to keep you healthy.

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# Your thoughts matter

You may receive a survey by mail in the next few weeks. We value your membership and want to hear from you.

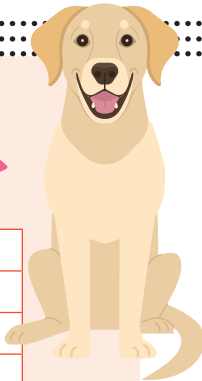
- The survey will ask questions about the health services you get.
- You may get a survey in the mail or receive a phone call.
- Your answers are very important — they will help us to help you.
- Your answers will be kept private.
- If you receive a survey in the mail, we hope you will take time to complete it.

Thank you for taking the time to tell us how we are doing. If you have any questions about the survey or want to know more about it, please call Member Services at **1-866-533-5490 (TTY 711)**, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, from **April 1 to September 30**. From **October 1 to March 31**, call 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., seven days a week.



## Puzzle: Spring Links

Group the words below into four sets of four. Each group shares a common spring or health-related theme. Review the puzzle key on page 5 to see whether you got the themes correct.



ARTICHOKES	PET DANDER	HEART HEALTH	CROCUS
DAFFODIL	DUST MITES	FLEXIBILITY	HYACINTH
MOOD	PEAS	MOLD	POLLEN
STRAWBERRIES	STRENGTH	TULIP	ASPARAGUS

Theme 1: \_\_\_\_\_. Answers: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Contact us

We're here to answer questions and provide the information you need. Contact us to check your membership status, check a claim, or ask a question.

### By phone:

Call **1-866-533-5490**

Member services for deaf and hard of hearing members

TTY: **711**

### Hours of service

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (April 1 to September 30)  
Seven days a week, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (October 1 to March 31)

### By mail:

AmeriHealth Caritas VIP Care  
Member Services  
P.O. Box 7139  
London, KY 40742-7139

AmeriHealth Caritas VIP Care is an HMO-SNP plan with a Medicare contract and a contract with the Pennsylvania Medicaid program. Enrollment in AmeriHealth Caritas VIP Care depends on contract renewal.

# Know your diabetes **ABCs**

When you have diabetes, it's vital to manage your ABCs numbers.



Get a regular **A1c** test to measure your average blood sugar over 2 to 3 months. Ask your health care team what your goal should be.



Try to keep your **blood pressure** lower than 140/90 mmHg (or the target your provider sets).



Control your **cholesterol** levels.



Stop **smoking** or don't start.

These actions can help lower your chance of having a heart attack, stroke, or other serious complications of diabetes.