

# LiveWell

CareFirst.   
Medicare Advantage

HELPING YOU LEAD A HEALTHY LIFE // SUMMER 2024

## Body & Mind

THE HEALTH AND  
WELLNESS BENEFITS  
OF AN ACTIVE  
LIFESTYLE

**PLUS**

Tips for  
sun safety

Key benefits to  
use this season

[carefirst.com/learn/groupma](https://carefirst.com/learn/groupma)



## Partner with your PCP

Your relationship with your Primary Care Provider (PCP) is important to your overall health and wellness. Working with the same doctor, physician assistant, nurse practitioner or care team can make managing your health and your needs easier.

Right now is a great time to connect with your PCP by scheduling your Annual Wellness Visit (AWV). The goal for this visit is to update your PCP on any health concerns you may have, so they can help address them. Some topics that are covered at an AWV may include:

- A comprehensive medication review
- Health risk and family medical history assessment
- Education on necessary health screenings
- Advanced directive and care planning

If you don't have a PCP or would like to find a new one, you can use our Find a Doctor tool at [carefirst.com/learn/groupma](https://carefirst.com/learn/groupma).

# Welcome

Dear members,

Happy summer! I hope this edition of *LiveWell* finds you in good health, getting outdoors and enjoying all the benefits our region has to offer this season.



From hiking in one of our state parks to spending time with your family at the beach to birdwatching outside your home, there's no shortage of ways you can stay active in our beautiful state.

It's important, though, that before you leave your home, you are taking steps to keep yourself safe from the sun and heat. On page 2, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield's (CareFirst) Dr. Seiji Hayashi discusses the dangers of heat-related illness and how you can protect yourself from the summer sun.

Our cover feature focuses on how an active lifestyle can keep you healthy. Getting active can boost your heart health, prevent and manage diabetes, improve your mental health and so much more. You can read the full story on page 4.

You'll also find important health reminders in News & Notes and a delicious summer smoothie recipe from the American Diabetes Association on page 5 that's sure to keep you refreshed all season long.

As always, thank you for choosing CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield Group Medicare Advantage (PPO) as your health plan. We look forward to continuing to serve you.

Mike Rapach  
CEO of Medicare and Medicaid



## NEWS & NOTES

# HEALTHY DAYS AHEAD

Key health reminders for the coming months



### Refill your Rx

Before you head out on summer vacations, you should refill your prescriptions. You have the option to receive a 90-day supply of your prescriptions, ensuring you'll have what you need before traveling.\*

*\*Applies to members with CareFirst prescription drug plans only.*

### Explore virtual care

Virtual care can help you get the care you need, when you need it. You can access a 24-Hour Nurse Advice Line through the number on the back of your ID card. You can also find primary care, urgent care, behavioral health services, and diet and nutrition support through CloseKnit. Learn more and register at [closeknithealth.com](https://closeknithealth.com).

### Screenings delivered to your door

As a CareFirst member, you have access to free A1C and colon cancer screenings that can be delivered right to your door. These screenings are available as in-home testing kits that are easy to use. To order your screening, call **410-921-3203** for an A1C test and **844-870-8870** for a colon cancer screening kit.

### Men's health awareness

June was National Men's Health Awareness Month, a good reminder for men to take charge of their well-being. Be sure to schedule preventive screenings, connect with your PCP and find new ways to become more healthy and active.

# The Power of Movement

Staying active can boost your mental and physical health



**W**hether you enjoy playing pickleball in the park or going on daily walks with friends, it's important to find ways to lead an active lifestyle.

One of the most important benefits regular exercise provides is preventing and managing chronic conditions, including diabetes and heart disease. Our bodies are meant to move,

says Dr. Seiji Hayashi, Lead Medical Director of Government Programs at CareFirst. Maintaining physical fitness can mean a longer, healthier life.

"Any exercise is better than none," Dr. Hayashi says. "The more we move, the better. It's better for not just diabetes and heart disease, but also for your mental health, your digestion, for your skin. It's all interrelated."

## Managing diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic condition that, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), impacts 38 million Americans. The vast majority of those have type 2 diabetes. Most common in individuals who are 45 or older, being overweight and low physical activity can increase your risk for type 2 diabetes.

Dr. Hayashi says that physical activity can help prevent and manage diabetes. When you're active, your body is more sensitive to insulin and, as a result, it's easier for you to manage diabetes.

"When you exercise, you improve your body's ability to use sugar," he says. "It can also help improve your metabolism and keep your body weight down."

According to the CDC, moderate-intensity physical activity is beneficial for all people, but especially those with diabetes. These activities can range from doing housework and mowing the lawn to dancing or playing golf with friends.

## Protecting your heart

The American Heart Association estimates that nearly 128 million Americans have Cardiovascular Disease (CVD). Types of CVD include hypertension, coronary heart disease and peripheral artery disease. While CVDs can be deadly, many risk factors can be lowered through lifestyle changes, including regular physical activity.

Exercise improves circulation throughout your body, which can reduce your risk for heart attacks and lower your blood pressure. Physical activity can also strengthen the heart muscle, improve cholesterol and help you maintain a healthy body weight, all of which are good for your heart.

"We talk about heart health and exercise, because a healthy heart is necessary for life,"

Dr. Hayashi says. "Exercise is important for your heart and even just standing more has been shown to actually help with heart health."

All types of physical activity can promote cardiovascular health. Johns Hopkins Medicine suggests you get a minimum of 30 minutes of aerobic exercise a day. Aerobic exercises can include walking, dancing, biking, skiing or any exercise that increases your heart rate.

Dr. Hayashi says it's important to talk to your doctor about your current medications and how they could potentially impact your exercise routine. Start slow and find activities that work best for you, your abilities and your lifestyle.

"When it comes to staying active, working up to a goal is always good," he says. "If you fail to achieve your goals, it's okay, we all do. Don't get discouraged, because it is hard—just try again."



## Care You Can Count On

There are several benefits through your health plan that can help manage or prevent diabetes, including:

### Care Coordination

Through your plan, you have access to registered nurses, social workers and care coordinators to assist you with any care needs you may have. This benefit is available at no additional cost. Call the number on the back of your member ID card for more information.

### SilverSneakers

As a CareFirst member, you have access to thousands of on-demand fitness classes and local gyms through Silver Sneakers. To sign up today, visit [silversneakers.com/starthere](https://silversneakers.com/starthere).



## ASK THE DOCTOR

# Staying Safe in the Sun

Your CareFirst providers share information you need to optimize your health and wellness



Seiji Hayashi, Lead Medical Director,  
Government Programs (Medicaid, Medicare)

**Member:** I'm excited to spend time outside this summer, but I've noticed that I get more tired in the sun than I used to. Should I be concerned about that?

**Dr. Hayashi:** Heat-related illnesses are common, but they are preventable when you take the right precautions. As you get older, your body begins to lose its ability to regulate temperature properly, which can leave you at risk for heat-related illness. Other factors such as chronic conditions and the types of medications you take can also increase risk.



There are several types of conditions that are classified as heat-related illnesses, but heat stroke is the most severe. When you suffer from heat stroke, your body isn't able to cool itself down. Initial symptoms include headaches, nausea and cramping, but heat stroke can eventually lead to organ failure and even death, so it's crucial that you take the necessary precautions to prevent it. Some tips:

### Staying hydrated

Hydration is the best way to prevent heat-related illness. When you're planning to spend time outside this summer, bring a water bottle along with you and avoid drinking alcohol or caffeine when it's extremely hot. There's no "right" amount of water to drink to achieve hydration, because every body is different. Concentrated urine, headache and dizziness are signs that you're likely dehydrated.

### Wearing appropriate clothing

Light-colored, loose fitting clothing is best at keeping you cool. Clothing is also a great sunscreen. If you're going to the beach, for example, consider wearing a T-shirt and a wide brimmed hat. It's also important to remember that no matter your age or skin tone, you should be applying sunscreen to every part of your body that's exposed to sunlight.

### Being prepared

Before you leave the house, check the temperature. On days when extreme heat is expected, it's best to stay indoors if possible. If you do have to go out, identify cool places where you can take shelter if you begin to get too hot. If you start showing early signs of heat-related illness, such as confusion or a severe headache, get out of the sun as soon as possible and seek medical attention.



TAKE ACTION

# Summer Smoothie

There's no better time of year to eat fruit than the summer. Check out this flavorful and fun summer fruit smoothie from the American Diabetes Association.

## Ingredients

- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- 1 cup chopped fresh strawberries
- 2 peaches (peeled, seeded and chopped)
- 6 oz peach flavored Greek style yogurt
- 1 cup almond milk (unsweetened)
- 2 tbsp ground flax seed
- ½ cup ice

## Directions

Combine all ingredients in a blender and puree until smooth

You can find the recipe and nutritional information [here](#).



## Healthcare Made Simple

Porter Cares—CareFirst's care coordination partner—can help simplify and improve your health journey. Hear what our members have to say:

"My daughter and I had a wonderful experience with my Porter Cares guide. I finally had a provider who I felt was truly interested in me physically as well as emotionally. She listened, appeared to be understanding and had time to answer questions."  
—CareFirst member



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# Important Reminders

## SILVERSNEAKERS

Through your healthcare plan, you have access to thousands of SilverSneakers fitness classes—both in-person and online—at no additional cost to you. To learn more, visit [silversneakers.com/blue-cross-blue-shield/](https://silversneakers.com/blue-cross-blue-shield/).

## BLUE365

The Blue365 discount program offers exclusive health and wellness deals on gym memberships, fitness equipment, healthy meals and more. To explore Blue365 offerings, visit [carefirst.com/wellnessdiscounts](https://carefirst.com/wellnessdiscounts).

## 24-HOUR NURSE ADVICE LINE: 833-968-1773

The 24-Hour Nurse Advice Line provides you with guidance and support in non-emergency situations.\* Call anytime to speak confidentially with a registered nurse.

*\*If you have a life threatening injury, illness or emergency, call 911 or go straight to the Emergency Room.*

