

MAY NEWSLETTER

Bloom Into Better Health: Tips for Body, Mind, and Medicare

SPOTTING A STROKE: KEY SIGNS YOU CAN 'T IGNORE

Every second counts when it comes to a stroke, and knowing the warning signs can save lives. May is Stroke Awareness Month, a perfect time to learn how to recognize the symptoms and act quickly. Understanding strokes can help protect yourself and your loved ones.



AVOID THESE MEDICARE MISTAKES FOR BETTER COVERAGE

Avoid common Medicare mistakes and make the right choice for your healthcare. Learn five key errors people often make and how to steer clear of them. Take control of your healthcare and feel confident about your coverage choices.



DIG IN: HOW GARDENING BOOSTS YOUR HEALTH

Gardening isn't just about growing flowers — it's a natural way to boost your physical and mental health. From improving your mood to enhancing your strength, gardening is an excellent activity for seniors. Discover how digging in the dirt can be both therapeutic and fun!



MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS: WHY IT 'S CRUCIAL FOR ALL AGES

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and it's a great reminder to take care of our mental well-being as we age. Depression, anxiety, and other mental challenges are common, but there's so much we can do to help. Let's explore why mental health is just as important as physical health.



HAPPY Mother's DAY

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YOUR MEDICARE PLAN EXPERT

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A Note from Me

Hello friends!

As we embrace the warmer days of May, it's the perfect time to focus on your health and well-being. Whether you're gardening, soaking up the sunshine, or exploring new recipes, remember that taking care of yourself is just as important as taking care of your Medicare coverage.

If you have any questions or need help navigating your options, I'm always here to guide you with a personal, compassionate approach.

Wishing you a season full of joy, health, and new beginnings!

STROKE AWARENESS MONTH: KNOW THE SIGNS, SAVE A LIFE

Stroke Strikes Fast — Learn How to Respond and Reduce Your Risk

May is Stroke Awareness Month — a timely reminder that recognizing the signs of a stroke can save lives, including your own. Stroke is a leading cause of serious long-term disability and the fifth leading cause of death in the U.S., but quick action can make a big difference in recovery outcomes.

Time is Brain: Act F.A.S.T.

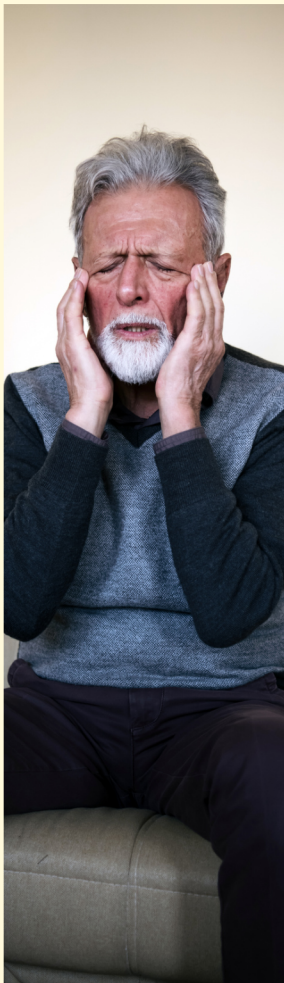
The faster someone receives medical help, the more likely they are to recover. Use the F.A.S.T. acronym to remember the warning signs:

- **F – Face drooping:** Is one side of the face numb or drooping? Ask the person to smile.
- **A – Arm weakness:** Is one arm weak or numb? Ask them to raise both arms — does one drift down?
- **S – Speech difficulty:** Is speech slurred or strange? Ask them to repeat a simple sentence.
- **T – Time to call 911:** If you see any of these signs, even if they go away, call 911 immediately.

Know Your Risk Factors

Age, high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, and a history of heart disease all increase the risk of stroke — many of which are common among older adults. The good news is that lifestyle changes and regular check-ups can lower your risk.

A quick response can save a life. This May, take a moment to learn the signs, share them with a loved one, and talk with your doctor about your risk.



What You Don't Know Could Cost You

Medicare can feel confusing, but avoiding a few common mistakes can save you money and help you get the coverage you need. Here are five things to watch out for — and what to do instead:

5 MEDICARE MISTAKES TO AVOID (AND WHAT TO DO INSTEAD)

1. Missing Your Enrollment Window: If you delay enrolling in Medicare when first eligible, you may face penalties.

Instead: Know your Initial Enrollment Period and ask about delaying if you have employer coverage.

2. Thinking Medicare Covers Everything: Original Medicare doesn't include dental, vision, hearing, or long-term care.

Instead: Consider a Medicare Advantage or Medigap plan to help fill the gaps.

3. Skipping Your Annual Plan Review: Plans change every year — and so do your health needs.


Instead: Review your coverage each fall during Annual Enrollment (Oct. 15–Dec. 7).

4. Overlooking Prescription Drug Plan Options: Part D plans vary widely in cost and coverage.

Instead: Compare plans yearly to find one that covers your medications affordably.

5. Falling for Scams: Scammers may call pretending to be Medicare or offer “free” supplies.

Instead: Don't share your Medicare number with unknown callers. Report scams to 1-800-MEDICARE.



GARDEN THERAPY: BENEFITS OF GARDENING FOR YOUR BODY AND BRAIN

How Spending Time in the Garden Can Improve Physical Health, Mental Well-Being, and Bring Joy to Your Day

As the days grow longer and the sunshine warms the soil, gardening season is in full swing. For many older adults, digging in the dirt isn't just a hobby — it's a powerful form of therapy for both the body and the brain.

Whether you have a large backyard plot or a few pots on the patio, gardening offers a variety of physical and mental health benefits that make it a wonderful activity for people of all ages — especially seniors.

Gentle Exercise That Makes a Difference

Gardening involves a variety of low-impact movements like stretching, bending, digging, and walking — all of which can help improve strength, flexibility, and balance. These movements support joint health and can be especially helpful for managing conditions like arthritis. Plus, spending just 30 minutes a day tending to plants can burn calories and keep you moving without feeling like exercise.

A Workout for Your Brain, Too

Planning a garden, remembering to water and prune, and tracking the growth of your plants all help stimulate cognitive function. Studies have shown that gardening can improve memory, reduce the risk of dementia, and increase feelings of accomplishment. It's a mindful activity that keeps the brain engaged while also reducing stress and anxiety.

Mental Health in Full Bloom

Time spent in nature has been linked to lower levels of depression and anxiety. Gardening allows you to slow down, breathe deeply, and enjoy the beauty of your surroundings. The satisfaction of watching something grow — especially something you've nurtured — can lift your mood and boost your sense of purpose. For those feeling isolated or lonely, community gardens or gardening clubs offer a great way to connect with others.

Vitamin D and Fresh Air

Just a little bit of sun exposure each day helps your body produce vitamin D, which is essential for bone health and immune support. Be sure to wear a hat and sunscreen, and avoid gardening during peak midday hours when the sun is strongest.

Fresh Food, Better Nutrition

Growing your own herbs, vegetables, or fruit means easy access to fresh, healthy food. Even a small container garden can yield ingredients that support heart health, digestion, and a strong immune system — all important as we age.

No matter your skill level or space, gardening is a joyful and healthful way to stay active and connected. So grab your gloves, breathe in the fresh air, and let nature be your guide to better health this spring.

MENTAL WELLNESS MATTERS: PRIORITIZING EMOTIONAL HEALTH AS WE AGE

Breaking the Silence: Why Mental Health Deserves Attention at Every Age

May is Mental Health Awareness Month — a time to shine a light on the importance of emotional well-being at every stage of life. While mental health often gets more attention among younger generations, it's just as vital for older adults. In fact, seniors face unique challenges that make staying mentally healthy especially important.

Let's Talk About It

Mental health affects how we think, feel, and function day to day. Yet, emotional struggles in older adults are often overlooked or dismissed as a "normal part of aging." They're not. Conditions like depression and anxiety are common among seniors, especially those experiencing chronic health issues, the loss of loved ones, or social isolation — and they deserve attention and care.

Talking about mental health helps reduce the stigma and opens the door to support and healing. If you've been feeling down, anxious, or disconnected for more than a couple of weeks, it's worth bringing up with your doctor.

The Benefits of Staying Mentally Well

Good mental health can improve sleep, energy levels, memory, and even physical health. People who feel emotionally balanced are more likely to engage in healthy habits, maintain strong social connections, and recover more easily from illness or injury.

Simple daily activities — like walking, gardening, talking with a friend, or practicing gratitude — can have a big impact on mood and resilience. Seeking purpose and staying engaged with hobbies or volunteer work also strengthens mental well-being.

How Medicare Can Help

Medicare covers annual depression screenings as part of your wellness visit. It also includes outpatient mental health care, such as visits with therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists. If you're enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, you may have access to additional mental health resources or virtual counseling options.

This May, give yourself or a loved one the gift of compassion and care. Mental health is just as important as physical health — and support is always within reach.



SUN SAFETY FOR AGING SKIN

Protect your skin and stay safe while enjoying the sunshine!

Stay sun smart and keep your skin healthy all year long with these tips:

- ☐ **Apply SPF 30+ sunscreen daily** – even on cloudy days.
- ☐ **Reapply every 2 hours** – or more often if sweating or swimming.
- ☐ **Wear a wide-brimmed hat** – to shield your face, ears, and neck.
- ☐ **Choose lightweight, long-sleeved clothing** – for added protection.
- ☐ **Avoid peak sun hours** – between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- ☐ **Use sunglasses with UV protection** – to guard your eyes and delicate skin.
- ☐ **Check your skin regularly** – look for new spots or changes and report them.
- ☐ **Schedule an annual skin check** – Medicare covers preventive visits that include skin health screenings.



PEACH & BERRY CRISP (INDIVIDUAL SERVINGS)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup fresh or frozen peaches (sliced)
- ½ cup fresh or frozen berries
- ¼ cup rolled oats
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 tbsp butter (softened)
- ¼ tsp cinnamon

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a small bowl, toss fruit with cinnamon.
3. Divide fruit evenly between 2 ramekins or small baking dishes.
4. In another bowl, mix oats, brown sugar, and butter until crumbly.
5. Spoon topping over fruit.
6. Bake for 25-30 minutes, until fruit is bubbly and topping is golden.
7. Let cool slightly before serving. Enjoy warm or chilled!

Tried to catch a runaway grocery cart in the parking lot.
Turns out my knees don't move as fast as they used to.

Cart: 1, My Dignity: 0.

I bent down to tie my shoe and realized too late that I
should've stretched before trying to touch my toes.

On the bright side, I met a nice EMT.

I tried to shoo a squirrel off my bird feeder. I shook the
pole — the squirrel didn't move. But the birdseed? Right in
my face. The squirrel is now the landlord.

I was weeding the flower bed when I lost my balance
and fell backwards — right into the birdbath, launching
two cardinals over the fence. The birds haven't trusted
me since.

I tried to impress my grandkids by showing them how I
used to roller skate. I made it 10 feet, then made a full-
body impression in the driveway. They clapped. I iced.

LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE: GRINS & GROANS (OOF!)

