

Connection

Issue 3, 2023





Thank You for Choosing Braven HealthSM



Luisa Charbonneau
CEO, Braven Health

It's hard to believe that the year is more than halfway over. Now is a great time to think about any preventive screenings or appointments that you've been putting off. Call your doctor today to schedule these important visits. If you have any questions about your benefits, call Member Services at **1-833-272-8360** (TTY 711).

In this issue, you'll learn more about your hearing benefits, what to do after a hospital stay, back pain, kidney health, hypertension risks and much more. We've also included a tasty recipe that's perfect for a quick and easy lunch.

Wishing you good health,

Luisa Charbonneau

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See a Doctor Whenever, Wherever



Through our care online program, you can talk privately with a licensed, board-certified network health care professional via video or chat using a computer or mobile device. You can use it as often as you need, at no cost to you.

Keep in mind

You **do not** need an appointment for urgent medical telehealth visits.

You **do** need to schedule an appointment for behavioral telehealth visits. Appointments are available seven days a week, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., Eastern Time (ET).

An e-Prescription will be provided if you need one, so choose your pharmacy when you register.

Register now so you are ready when you need it. Here's how:

1. Visit patients.amwell.com, and click **See a doctor**.
2. Enter your ZIP code, select **Braven Health** from the drop-down menu, and click **Search**.
3. Click the **Amwell** link below.
4. Fill in your name and email address, and create a password to sign up.
5. Select your location, date of birth and gender.
6. Select **I have insurance**.
7. Confirm your insurance carrier (**Braven Health**) from the drop-down menu. Add your member ID number, which is on your member ID card, and the service key: **BRAVEN**.
8. You can now sign in and use telehealth services.

For help while registering, call **1-855-635-1393** (TTY **711**), or email support@amwell.com.

You can also use telehealth by signing in to your secure member account at BravenHealth.com. Look for the **Telemedicine** option under **Doctors & Care**. Click **Consult with a doctor**, and then follow the steps above starting with #4.



Your Benefits at Your Fingertips



You can find everything you need to know about your Braven Health plan quickly and easily online. Register and sign in at BravenHealth.com to learn about your benefits and claims information, get quick answers to coverage questions, view your Explanation of Benefits (EOB) and more.

To get started:

1. Go to BravenHealth.com/register.
2. Enter and verify your personal information, including your member ID number, which is on your member ID card. Click **Continue**.
3. Follow the steps to verify your email address, and then click **Continue**.
4. Create a username and password, read the disclaimer and check the box.
5. Click **Create Account**.

Your member ID card

Your member ID card is your key to getting the care you need. When you sign in at BravenHealth.com, you can view, download, print and request a new member ID card. You can also call Member Services at **1-833-272-8360** (TTY **711**), weekdays, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., ET, if you need a new one.

Have Questions? We Have Answers



You have 24/7 access to information about claims, benefits and more on our FAQ page. Once you are signed in, go to FAQs at the top of the page next to the notification bell. Click on the drop-down menu to select the topic that interests you. You'll find answers to our most frequently asked questions. We update our FAQs regularly, so check back often.



Your Hearing Aid Coverage



In 2022, the Food and Drug Administration approved the sale and use of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids. OTC hearing aids:

- Do not require a prescription or a visit with a doctor or hearing aid specialist
- Are less expensive than prescription hearing aids
- Can be used for mild to moderate hearing loss

Although you are able to purchase OTC hearing aids out of pocket, it's important to know how your Braven Health plan covers these items.

Most Braven Health plans cover up to \$1,250 per year for hearing aids prescribed by an audiologist. We also cover a visit with an audiologist or hearing aid specialist to help you adjust the hearing aid to your ear. This allowance cannot be used toward OTC hearing aids.

If your Braven Health plan includes a quarterly OTC allowance, you can use the OTC allowance available on your Braven Health Smart Card toward the purchase of OTC hearing aids. Check your Evidence of Coverage for more information about your hearing aid and OTC benefits.

To access your prescription hearing aid benefits, call HearUSA at **1-800-442-8231**, daily, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., ET, to schedule a visit with an in-network provider.

To purchase OTC hearing aids, order online at [BravenSmartCard.com](https://www.BravenSmartCard.com) or use your Braven Health Smart Card at participating stores.



Don't Forget to Use Your OTC Benefits



Every three months, you get an OTC allowance on your **Braven Health Smart Card** to purchase eligible items like toothbrushes, diabetic socks, thermometers, hot/cold packs and more. Your Smart Card will be automatically loaded with your OTC allowance on the first day of the quarter; unused dollars will not carry over. You have to use your allowance before the end of each three-month period.

Four things to know

1. Activate your Smart Card. You should have received your Smart Card in the mail, and you have to activate your card before you can use it. To activate your card, log in at BravenSmartCard.com or call **1-800-688-9140 (TTY 711)**, weekdays, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., ET. You will need to provide your:
 - Braven Health member ID number (found on your Braven Health member ID card)
 - Date of birthYou will need to create a unique username and password for your account. Once logged in, you can access information about the benefits on your Smart Card online, 24/7. Remember to save your username and password for future orders.
2. Use your Smart Card to buy eligible OTC items by mail, phone or at participating stores. Your OTC balance is refreshed on the first day of the quarter – **January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1.**
3. Find eligible items at BravenSmartCard.com. Create an account online or call Smart Card Member Services at **1-800-688-9140 (TTY 711)**, weekdays, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., ET.
4. Download the **myTotal Benefits app** from the app store on your smart phone. Use it to view your balances, make purchases, manage your account and more.

Diagnostic Services, Labs and Imaging: Know Your Out-of-Pocket Costs



While your plan covers a variety of diagnostic procedures and tests, your out-of-pocket costs can vary due to:

- The type of procedure or test
- The kind of location where it is performed
- Whether or not the location is in or out of network

For example, suppose you need to get an MRI. You will pay a lower copay if you have the test done at an in-network office or freestanding facility. If you visit an in-network outpatient hospital, your copay could be as high as \$150. X-rays are another example. You'll pay \$0 when an X-ray is done at an in-network doctor's office, but pay a higher copay at all other in-network places of service.

It isn't always easy to know if the location where you receive services is considered a doctor's office or part of a hospital. It's essential to speak with the office staff where you will receive the service to know how they bill your health plan for the service(s). You should pay less if they bill your health plan like a doctor's office. If they bill your health plan like an outpatient hospital, your out-of-pocket costs will be higher.

If your Primary Care Physician (PCP) or specialist orders a procedure or test, talk to them about where they are sending you for that procedure or test. Your doctor can also contact Braven Health Provider Services at **1-888-444-0501** to learn more about how much you will pay when you receive services at a particular location.

Want to learn more?

Chapter 4 of your EOC explains the amounts you will pay for certain services depending on where you receive them.

Review these sections in Chapter 4 to learn more:

- Outpatient diagnostic tests and therapeutic services and supplies
- Outpatient hospital services
- Outpatient surgery
- Physician/practitioner services



Visit BravenHealth.com/members/plan-documents for copies of your plan documents. To request a hard copy, visit mydirectory.BravenHealth.com.



Find a Doctor Near You



You have access to a large network of doctors, hospitals and other health care professionals throughout the state of New Jersey, including all Hackensack Meridian Health and RWJBarnabas Health doctors and facilities, plus many more.

To find a doctor, specialist or other health care professional near you, visit BravenHealth.com/find-doctor, or call Member Services at **1-833-272-8360** (TTY 711).

What to Do After a Hospital Stay



If you were hospitalized, treated in an Emergency Room (ER) or visited an Urgent Care Center for an illness or injury, you may be at greater risk for complications. It is important that you follow up with your PCP or specialist within seven days.

If you can't call your doctor, ask a friend or family member to call for you. Your doctor knows your health history and can help you understand what you need to do next. This is important if you want to stay healthy and independent. Talk with your doctor about tests that were ordered for you or any additional testing you might need, as well as your current medicine and any new medicine that may have been prescribed for you.

You can even ask to schedule your follow-up visit via telehealth, so you can meet with your doctor from the comfort and safety of home.

After you've been in the hospital, expect a call from one of our Registered Nurses who will check to see how you're feeling. This phone call can help you move forward with your recovery.



If you want to talk to a Care Manager, call **1-888-621-5894** (TTY 711), option **2**, then option **1**. We are here to help you, weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., ET.

Annual Wellness Visit vs. Annual Physical Exam: What's the Difference?



You may be wondering – how does an annual wellness visit compare to an annual physical exam? Here are the key differences between the two:

	Annual Wellness Visit	Annual Physical Exam
\$0 copay with an in-network provider	✓	✓
Preventive care	✓	✓
Physical exam	✗	✓
General health advice	✓	✓
Routine measurements	✓	✓
Medical/family history review	✓	✓
Review care from other doctors and prescriptions	✓	✓
Measure height, weight and blood pressure	✓	✓
Discuss risk factors	✓	✓
Advanced care planning	✓	✓
Health screenings/immunizations	✓	✓
Check for signs of dementia and Alzheimer's disease	✓	✓
Vital signs and reflex check	✓	✓
Listen to lungs and heart	✗	✓
Check head, neck and abdomen	✗	✓
Perform eye test	✗	✓
Examine ears, nose and throat	✗	✓
Pain or symptom check	✗	✓
Review blood work	✗	✓
Check for signs of cancer on skin, lymph nodes, breasts or testicles	✗	✓

Costs of Preventive Care Visits

Braven Health members pay \$0 for both an in-network annual wellness visit and an in-network annual physical exam.

But you may have additional cost-sharing if:

- Your doctor or other health care provider performs further tests or services during the same visit.
- These added tests or services aren't covered under preventive health benefits.



Urgent Care: When Is It the Right Choice?



Sometimes you need care right away, but your regular doctor isn't available, like on the weekend or when you're traveling. If your illness or injury is not life threatening, an urgent care center may be the right choice.

Urgent care centers can treat:

- Coughs, colds and sore throats
- Ear infections
- Skin irritations and rashes
- Urinary tract infections
- Cuts that require stitches
- Fever and flu-like symptoms
- Sprains, strains and fractures

Hackensack Meridian *Health* and RWJBarnabas Health have urgent care locations throughout New Jersey. Visit these sites to find a location near you:

- HackensackMeridianHealth.org/UrgentCare
- Rwjbh.org/UrgentCare

Or, visit BravenHealth.com/find-doctor, choose care either in or outside of New Jersey, and select **Lab, urgent care or other health care facility** under **What type of care are you looking for?**

Did you know?

If you were treated in the ER or urgent care, you should see your PCP within seven days for a follow-up visit. Your PCP will make sure you are receiving proper care, help you understand tests that were performed or ordered, review new medicine or medicine changes, and coordinate any necessary follow-up care.

Resources to Help With Your Care at Home



If you were recently discharged from the hospital or are living with a serious illness, you may benefit from the Braven Health Supportive CareSM Program. The extra support services offered through this program are free of charge for eligible Braven Health members. Braven Health works with CareCentrix, Inc. to help you find the support you need.

After your hospital stay

It can be hard to stay on track with your recovery after a hospital stay. That's why we work with CareCentrix to help answer any of your questions as you heal at home. A nurse coach will call you to help with your care plan, talk about symptoms to watch for and provide available community resources.

Living with a serious illness

The Braven Health Supportive Care Program offers care, support and resources to help improve the quality of life for you and your family while living with a serious illness.

Through in-home or video visits and phone calls, a team of nurses and social workers will work closely with you, your family and your doctors to:

- Provide support to help manage the symptoms related to your illness or treatment
- Help you understand medical information and recommended treatment options
- Provide coping tools for feelings and changes related to your health
- Help you complete advance directives
- Educate you about the ways you can optimize your health insurance benefits
- Support caregivers, family members and loved ones
- Refer you to resources and community services

Questions?

For more information about this program, please call **1-833-592-1077 (TTY 711)**, Monday through Sunday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., ET, excluding holidays.

Don't forget!

If you're admitted to the hospital, make an appointment to see your PCP within seven days of being discharged. This will ensure you are getting the proper care and reduce your risk of hospital readmission.

You can also expect a phone call from one of our nurses after discharge to help you understand the care you received. If you don't want to wait, you can call the Care Management team at **1-888-621-5894 (TTY 711)**, option **2**, then option **1**. We are here to help you, weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., ET.



Get the Most From Your Health Care



Advocate for yourself and be an active participant in your health care. This can help you get more individualized care, avoid delays and make for a better overall experience.

Here are several important ways:

- Organize your medical information: keep a complete record of your medicine history, diagnoses, medicines, allergies and test results.
- Prepare for appointments: Before your doctor visit, make a list of your symptoms, concerns and questions.
- Communicate openly and honestly with your PCP and be thorough in your explanations. This will provide them with necessary information so they can get a full picture of your health.
- Provide a complete medicine list, including any OTC supplements. This will help prevent potential drug interactions and allow adjustments as needed.
- Talk to your doctor about any side effects of the medicines you take to find the best solution.
- Visit [MyPrime.com](https://www.bravenhealth.com) and check to see if medicines prescribed to you are covered under your health plan and with any cost share.
- Follow care plans and treatment recommendations, including things like dietary restrictions, physical activity and follow-up appointments.
- If you are seeing other health care providers, inform your PCP about the treatments, tests and medicines and provide consent for the release of medical records and reports. This ensures that all of your providers are on the same page and can coordinate your care.
- Take advantage of patient portals through your provider's office, so you can access medical records, schedule appointments, get test results and explore online resources. If you are not comfortable with this technology, see if the office can provide an overview or some written material.
- Get familiar with your health plan and take advantage of the many tools and resources that Braven Health offers to help you better navigate the health care system.

Stomach Cancer Is a Health Priority Among Asian Americans



Haejin In, MD, surgical oncologist at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, has clinical and research expertise in stomach cancer. She shares that the burden of stomach cancer falls disproportionately on ethnic minorities and immigrant communities, especially Asian Americans.

The Facts

According to the 2022 AACR Cancer Disparities Progress Report, cancer is the leading cause of death for the Asian population in the United States. The American Cancer Society reports that, while overall, Asian men and women have lower cancer incidence and mortality than the general population, **they have the highest rates of stomach cancer—about double that of Caucasians and up to five times higher in certain ethnic populations such as Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Vietnamese.** Asian people are disproportionately impacted by cancers that are caused by infectious agents.

H. pylori, a bacterium that grows in the lining of the stomach, is a major cause of stomach cancer. Other risk factors for stomach cancer include older age; a diet high in salted, smoked or poorly preserved foods and low in fruits and vegetables; tobacco smoking; and a family history of stomach cancer.

The Warning Signs

There are few symptoms of early-stage stomach cancer. The symptoms that do occur are nonspecific, making it difficult to detect and diagnose. Patients with more advanced stomach cancer may experience poor appetite, weight loss, upper abdominal pain, fullness after eating a small meal, nausea and anemia. Upper endoscopy (also called EGD) is a test that can screen for stomach cancer.

Addressing Concerns

It is key for Asian Americans to understand the cancers that affect them more than other ethnic groups, and advocate for themselves by getting checkups and routine preventive care. Ask about Asian-specific health care needs, such as testing for H. pylori and screening for stomach cancer. Find providers who understand your specific needs and cultural barriers, including language.

How to Know When Back Pain Is Muscular

If you've ever suffered from aches and pains in your back, you're not alone: According to the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, **75 to 85% of Americans experience back pain** at some point in their lives.



But knowing what's causing your pain can be challenging. "The most common complaint is what we characterize as non-specific low back pain, which means we haven't identified a specific underlying source for why that individual has back pain," says Craig Van Dien, MD, a sports medicine and physical medicine and rehabilitation physician at Hackensack Meridian Health. "In most cases, this is muscle-based pain or a muscle strain."

What Are the Causes of Back Pain?

A muscle strain or pulled muscle is a common cause of back pain and happens when you injure the tendon or ligaments by overusing or misusing your back muscles.

Contributing factors include aging, lack of exercise, excess body weight, bad posture and sitting for long periods of time. Certain health conditions, like a herniated disc or osteoarthritis, can also cause back pain.

Back Pain Symptoms

If you've strained a back muscle, you may experience a dull pain and stiffness in your back, with an overall feeling of aches and pains.

To identify the cause of back pain, Van Dien says that looking at the absence of symptoms can also be helpful. "When patients come in with back pain, and the pain is of muscular origin, generally that exam is void of any findings that would suggest that there's a nerve-based problem or something more significant going on," he explains.

Symptoms that suggest a more serious condition include:

- Fever, chills or night sweats
- Unexplained weight loss
- New bowel or bladder problem
- Pain that spreads down the legs
- Pain that lasts more than a few weeks
- Severe pain that does not go away with rest
- Weakness, numbness or tingling in one or both legs

"We don't want you to ignore these symptoms. It's extremely important to have a doctor evaluate you and rule out anything more serious."

— Craig Van Dien, MD

Prostate: What Every Man Should Know



The prostate gland changes as you age, and it could cause major trouble if it is not checked.

Over time, the prostate gland grows bigger, which is a natural part of aging. However, about 50 percent of men at age 50 will develop an enlarged prostate.

“Symptoms of prostate issues include having a weak urine stream, urinary frequency, burning during urination, pelvic pressure sensation, waking up more than two times a night to urinate, feeling the need to strain or push when urinating, or having blood in the urine,” says Robert Caruso, MD, a urologist with RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group.

Prostate Cancer

- About one in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime.
- Early detection can save your life.

Prostate Cancer Screening

Most men should talk to their doctor about routine prostate cancer screening between the ages of 40 and 45. Check with your doctor about when you should get screened, based on your personal risk factors.

Screenings:

1. Digital rectal exam
2. Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test

Your doctor will determine follow-up screenings based on the results.

If you have any questions about prostate cancer screening or any other preventive screenings, call the *Healthy Journey* line toll free at **1-844-754-2451 (TTY 711)**, weekdays, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., ET.

Sources:

Prostate Cancer Foundation. *Should I Be Screened?* Retrieved **June 2, 2023** from [pcf.org/about-prostate-cancer/what-is-prostate-cancer/the-psa-test/should-i-be-screened](https://www.pcf.org/about-prostate-cancer/what-is-prostate-cancer/the-psa-test/should-i-be-screened).

American Cancer Society. *Prostate Cancer*. Retrieved **June 2, 2023** from [cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer.html](https://www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer.html).

American Cancer Society. *Key Statistics for Prostate Cancer*. Retrieved **June 2, 2023** from [cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/about/key-statistics.html](https://www.cancer.org/cancer/prostate-cancer/about/key-statistics.html).



Three Tips for Kidney Health



Everything we consume passes through our kidneys, which are the two bean-shaped organs located just below the rib cage, one on each side of the spine. Healthy kidneys filter blood to remove waste and extra water to make urine. The most common form of kidney cancer, called renal cell cancer, occurs when malignant tumors form in the filters that clean blood. Kidney health is vital to our well-being. Thomas L. Jang, MD, MPH, FACS, chief of urologic oncology at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, shares tips for keeping your kidneys healthy and preventing kidney cancer.

1. **Don't Smoke**

Smoking increases the risk of developing kidney cancer. Smoking causes damage to your cardiovascular system, which can directly harm your kidneys, affecting their ability to filter your blood. When you decide to stop smoking, you're taking a step that can help preserve the health of your kidneys, lower your risk of diseases and other health problems, and enhance your quality of life.

2. **Maintain a Healthy Weight**

Obese individuals are at increased risk for kidney cancer compared with those of normal weight. Excess body fat can lead to changes in hormones such as insulin, causing blood sugar levels to rise and possibly damage the kidneys. The best way to reach or maintain a healthy weight is with a well-balanced diet and regular physical activity, according to the American Cancer Society Guideline for Diet and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention.

3. **See a Physician Regularly**

Other risk factors for kidney cancer include high blood pressure, family history and people who receive long-term dialysis to treat chronic kidney failure. Checkups with your doctor can help detect and address these risk factors. In addition, your doctor may order annual tests to find out more about your kidney function.

How Much Water You Should Drink



Staying hydrated is vital to your health and wellness. It moves oxygen throughout the body, helps you maintain a healthy blood pressure and digestive health, and increases energy levels, among other benefits.

Are You Getting Enough Water?

The most commonly suggested average water intake is about eight glasses a day — 2 liters or 64 ounces. “But there is no one-size-fits-all amount,” says Dalia Hanna, MD, family medicine doctor at Hackensack Meridian *Health*. “Your need for hydration will vary based on your weight, how frequently you exercise and sweat, your location and its temperature, your health status and more.”

Your doctor can help you understand exactly how much water you personally need, but the goal is to consistently take in water.

It’s also important to be aware of signs of dehydration:

- Confusion
- Dark urine
- Body weakness
- Headaches
- Lightheadedness
- Dry mouth
- Low blood pressure

6 Tips to Stay Hydrated

1. **Set a daily goal.** It is easy to overlook drinking water when you are busy with day-to-day life. Setting a goal will make you more mindful of how much water you need to consume.
2. **Keep a reusable water bottle.** Sometimes when we get thirsty, we don’t have direct access to water, so it helps to keep a reusable water bottle on hand. Look for a bottle with hydration markers or milestones to keep you motivated. Using a straw also helps you drink water more readily.
3. **Set reminders.** Reminders and timers are excellent tools to stay on target with your hydration goals. Do this with your phone or watch, or with sticky notes strategically placed throughout your home or at work.
4. **Flavor your water.** Add flavoring and fruit to your water, or buy fruit-infused water.
5. **Eat foods with high water content.** Water also can be consumed through foods with high water content like cabbage, cantaloupe, celery, melon, lettuce and zucchini.
6. **Hydrate instead of overeating.** Some people may eat out of boredom or because they feel hungry when they actually may just be thirsty. If you’re reaching for snacks too often, use this as a signal to grab your water instead. Your brain can confuse thirst for hunger, and this often manifests as a craving for refined carbohydrates and sugar-rich snacks. Have a glass of water first, then reevaluate your true hunger.

5 Ways to Stay Safe in Extreme Heat



When the temperatures rise in the summer, heat-related illnesses, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke, are a real danger. Keep these five important tips in mind when considering your activities for a hot summer day.

1. **Look out for signs or symptoms.** If the symptoms of heat exhaustion set in (headache, nausea, flushed skin), “you should get out of the heat and find an immediate way to cool down – a cold bath or shower,” says Daniel Yu, MD, assistant director of Bayshore Medical Center’s Department of Emergency Medicine.
2. **Take breaks.** Be careful when you go outside, as the initial effects of heat-related illness often go unnoticed. Kristy Ziontz, DO, chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Riverview Medical Center, says to take breaks from the heat, especially if you’re continuously sweating.
3. **Drink water.** Drink six to eight glasses of water a day. Aim to drink even more if you’re outside in the summer. To ensure you’re hydrated, try drinking a glass – about 8 ounces – of water every hour.
4. **Alter your fitness routine.** Do you love going for long walks outdoors during your lunch break? “Plan to get out there either early in the morning, or after dinner, when the weather is cooler,” says Lisa Sussman, PsyD, a health psychologist with Hackensack Meridian Integrative Health and Medicine.
5. **Stay in the shade or indoors.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends staying in the shade, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., to avoid too much sun exposure.

When to Seek Medical Help

If you experience any of these symptoms after being in the heat, get medical help right away. Many of these symptoms are signs that heat exhaustion has escalated to a heat stroke, which is very dangerous.

- Vomiting
- You have a temperature of 103 degrees or higher
- Skin becomes hot, red, dry or damp
- Pulse becomes very fast and strong
- You’re dizzy, confused or pass out
- Symptoms are getting worse, and lasting longer than an hour, even after attempts to cool down

Who Is at Risk?

The CDC urges you to frequently check on those who are at highest risk for heat-related death, such as elderly, disabled or homebound people. Children and pets should also be checked on frequently, as they often can’t communicate when something is wrong or identify that there’s a problem.

Diabetes Screenings You Should Never Skip



Diabetes can have serious effects on your health over time. Uncontrolled diabetes can cause issues with your heart, blood vessels, nerves, eyes and kidneys. It is important to stay up to date with your diabetes screenings so you can avoid issues.

Ask Your Doctor About These Important Screenings

Test	What It Does	How Often You Need It
Hemoglobin A1c	Measures blood sugar control over the last 3 months	Every 3 to 6 months
Kidney Function Test	Checks for protein in urine to see how well the kidneys are working	Once a year
Diabetic Retinal Eye Exam	Looks for damage to the eye caused by high blood sugar - this is different than a routine eye exam	Once a year
Foot Exam	Tests for nerve damage	Every 6 months
Dental Exam	Cleaning and exam to reduce your risk for gum disease	Every 6 months
Blood Pressure Check	Checks the pressure of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries	Ask your health care team
Cholesterol Check	Measures the amount of fat in your blood with a test called a "lipid profile"	Once a year

Don't Forget Your Rewards

You get rewarded through our *Healthy Journey* Rewards Program when you complete the following health screenings/activities:

- Diabetic HbA1c Test - **\$25**
- Diabetic Retinal Eye Exam - **\$25**
- Diabetic Kidney Function Test - **\$25**
- Diabetic Self-Management Training - **\$25**

To get your rewards, visit BravenSmartCard.com to fill out and submit a Health Screening Attestation Form. Once confirmed, your rewards will be loaded onto your **Braven Health Smart Card**. If you need help, call Braven Health Smart Card Member Services at **1-800-688-9140** (TTY **711**), weekdays, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., ET.

Source:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Your Diabetes Care Schedule*. Retrieved **June 2, 2023** from cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/care-schedule.html.

Beyond Salt: The Other Hypertension Risks



Too much salt can lead to hypertension (high blood pressure), but other factors—some avoidable, some not—can also contribute to the condition. According to Delphine Tang, DO, an interventional cardiologist at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Rahway and a member of RWJBarnabas Health Medical Group, there are risk factors that we can and cannot change.

Risk factors we can't change include age, gender, race and family history. Risk factors we can change include weight, smoking, alcohol, diet, physical activity, stress, herbal supplements and medicines.

It's important to get high blood pressure under control because it can damage the heart, brain, kidneys and eyes if left untreated. If you've been diagnosed with high blood pressure, talk to your doctor about which of these factors might be contributing to it and what you can do to make changes that will help lower the pressure. At-home blood pressure monitors may be useful, and prescription medicine can also help.

Blood pressure

Numbers at or below 120/80 are considered in the normal range. If either the top or bottom number is above the normal range, a person's blood pressure is considered elevated.

What Do The Numbers Mean?

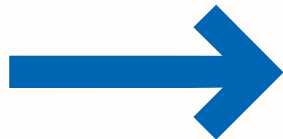
120



Systolic blood pressure

The top number indicates how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls when the heart beats.

80



Diastolic blood pressure

The second number indicates how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls while the heart is resting between beats.



Taking Antipsychotic Medicine? Know Your Potential Health Risks



If an antipsychotic medicine is part of your treatment plan, it is important to know that you may be at a higher risk for heart disease and diabetes. According to the CDC, heart disease and diabetes are among the top 10 leading causes of death in the United States.

Antipsychotic medicines increase the risk of type 2 diabetes. Other risk factors for diabetes and heart disease include poor compliance with medical care, smoking and sedentary lifestyles.

Recommendations:

- Don't stop taking your antipsychotic medicines or change the way you take them without discussing it with your prescribing provider.
- Schedule a yearly cholesterol and glucose screening test and discuss the results with your provider. Scheduling these tests around your birthday every year is a good way to remember.
- If you must cancel an appointment, reschedule as soon as possible.
- Make sure your doctor is aware of other providers that you may see. Sign consent forms so that they can collaborate and provide you with the best care.
- A trusted person in your life may be included in your care and decision-making by assigning them as a personal representative. More information can be found at: [BravenHealth.com/blog/detail/getting-help-your-care-if-you-need-it](https://bravenhealth.com/blog/detail/getting-help-your-care-if-you-need-it).

For more information, or if you'd like assistance finding a Behavioral Health provider, call **1-888-444-0422** (TTY 711) or use our *Doctor & Hospital Finder* at [BravenHealth.com/findadoctor](https://bravenhealth.com/findadoctor).



Get Screened for Colorectal Cancer



Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer for men and women in the United States. Preventive screening is the only way to find it early.

The recommended age to start colorectal cancer screening was lowered from 50 to 45 years old. All adults ages 45 to 75 should be screened.

Screening type	Frequency
Stool sample	Every 1-3 years
Visual exams like a colonoscopy or CT scan	Every 5-10 years

Your doctor can help you choose the right one for you, and tell you how often it should be repeated. Talk to your doctor about your options.

Sources:

American Cancer Society. *Colorectal Cancer*. Retrieved **June 2, 2023** from cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer.html.

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. *Colorectal Cancer: Screening*. Retrieved **June 2, 2023** from uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/colorectal-cancer-screening.



“While one in nine women will develop breast cancer during their lifetime, it is more treatable and easiest to manage when detected on a mammogram.”

– Debra Camal, MD, breast surgeon at Hackensack Meridian *Health*

Breast Cancer Myths Debunked

Breast cancer is more treatable if it is caught early, but myths and misconceptions can delay screening. Early detection can save your life.

When it's time to get a mammogram, remember:

1. **Mammogram screenings are safe.** One misconception that keeps people from getting mammogram screenings is that, over time, the radiation used can lead to breast cancer. “Mammography is a safe screening tool that uses low-dose X-ray,” says Bokran Won, MD, a breast radiologist at Hackensack Meridian *Health*. “The benefits of breast cancer detection far outweigh the very small risk of potential harm from the low dose of radiation of a mammogram.”
2. **There are no silly questions.** Camal says many of her patients are afraid to ask questions that may feel very personal and intimate. But, your doctor is there to answer all of your questions.
3. **A support network is available.** Support is available to help with financial, transportation and other support needs.
4. **Mastectomies have come a long way.** Lumpectomy (removing a portion of breast tissue) is the most common surgical method to treat breast cancer. But there are times when a mastectomy is required. Advances in surgical techniques have made today's mastectomies less physically traumatic.
5. **Reconstructive surgeries have come a long way, too.** Reconstructive surgeries have also improved, like the newer reconstruction technique that uses tissue from a woman's lower abdomen to recreate her breasts.



Try This Light and Easy Recipe

This recipe is simple to make, even for novice cooks. These pitas are perfect for those who need a quick and satisfying meal on the go.

Mediterranean Chicken Pitas

½ cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt
1 Tbsp. minced fresh dill
½ tsp. ground black pepper
2 cups chicken, cut into 1-inch cubes
4 whole-wheat pita pockets
1 cup diced cucumber
1 cup diced tomato
½ cup sliced almonds

In a small bowl, mix together yogurt, dill and pepper. Add chicken and stir to combine. Stuff ½ cup of the chicken mixture into each pita pocket. Top each pita pocket with ¼ cup cucumbers, ¼ cup tomatoes and 2 Tbsp. sliced almonds.

Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional information per serving:
Calories: **310** Protein: **26g** Fiber: **4g**

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