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a PERS Health Insurance Program newsletter | Fall 2022



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Healthy Sleep: Why and How to Make It a Priority

This article takes a look at some of the unique challenges older adults experience in the quest for a good night's sleep and offers some practical, science-based suggestions.

Sleep. It's something we spend about a third of our lives doing. Yet many people underestimate the vital role it plays in our well-being. Our physical and mental health, quality of life, and safety all depend on getting enough good-quality sleep.

Sleep disorders can raise your risk for chronic health problems, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, depression, heart attack, and stroke.

How Aging Affects Sleep

It's a common myth that we need less sleep as we age. In fact, older adults need about the same amount of sleep as all adults: seven to nine hours each night.

Unfortunately, sleep issues are common in older adults. There are many reasons for this, including:

- Changes in the body's internal clock, which can disrupt circadian rhythms, 24-hour cycles that influence when we feel tired and when we feel alert
- Changes in the production of hormones, such as melatonin and cortisol, which play a role in sleep
- Health conditions, such as sleep apnea or restless legs syndrome
- Pain from arthritis or other conditions
- Certain medications that can keep you awake
- Lifestyle changes, such as less work, more napping, or a less structured sleep schedule

In addition, older adults don't recover from lost sleep as easily as when they were younger. But the good news is that there are many things you can do to improve the quality and quantity of your sleep.

Tips for a Better Night's Sleep

Exercise. Better sleep is one of the many health benefits of exercise. Studies show that older people who exercise regularly fall asleep faster, sleep longer, and report better sleep. Just be sure to finish your workout at least three hours before going to bed to give your body and brain a chance to wind down.

Create a restful space. Distractions like TV, cell phones, and bright lights can make it harder to fall asleep. Keep electronics out of your bedroom, and make sure it's dark, quiet, and comfortably cool.

Stick to a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, and try to avoid sudden changes in your schedule. Avoid napping in the late afternoon or evening, and keep naps under 30 minutes.

Create a bedtime routine. Find activities you enjoy that help you unwind before getting into bed. Try a warm bath, reading, meditation, or listening to calm music.

Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine. All can interfere with sleep. If you're not ready to quit these substances, refrain from them four to six hours before bedtime.

Food matters. What and when you eat can affect your sleep. It's best to have dinner at least four hours before bedtime. The occasional late night snack is okay, but choose wisely. Some foods, like cheese and chocolate, can disrupt sleep. Other foods, such as tart cherries, bananas, turkey, or nuts, may actually improve your sleep.

When to Talk to Your Doctor

If you're doing all the right things, and still experiencing poor sleep more than one night a week for several weeks in a row, talk to your doctor. They can help get to the root of your problem and recommend the right treatment options for you.

References:

sleepfoundation.org

nia.nih.gov/health/good-nights-sleep

nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/sleep-deprivation-and-deficiency

Courtesy of PacificSource

Breast Cancer Prevention

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer among women in the United States. Breast cancer is most often found in women; however, men can get breast cancer too. Each year in the United States, about 255,000 cases of breast cancer are diagnosed in women and about 2,300 in men.¹

The earlier breast cancer is detected, the better the chances of successful treatment. That's why it's so important to pay attention to any changes in your breasts that could be signs of breast cancer. Understanding what is normal for your breasts, and what isn't, can be lifesaving.

Breast Cancer Screening

Breast cancer screenings are a way to detect breast cancer before there are signs and symptoms of the disease.² Breast cancer screenings may involve a clinical breast exam or a mammogram. For many women, mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat and before it is big enough to feel or cause symptoms. Mammograms to screen for breast cancer are generally recommended once a year through age 54, and at least once every two years starting at age 55. Your provider can help you decide what is the best frequency for you.

Symptoms of Breast Cancer

In the earliest stages, breast cancer may have no outward symptoms. Sometimes the earliest sign is a tiny lump, or mass, that's detectable only on a mammogram. As the disease progresses, more noticeable changes might appear. These can vary widely—while a lump is

the most common symptom, it is by no means the only one. Any of the following changes could be a warning sign of breast cancer:

- A new lump in the breast or armpit area
- Thickening or swelling in all or part of the breast
- Dimpling, puckering, irritation, or scaliness of the breast skin or nipple
- Pain or tenderness in the breast or nipple
- A nipple that turns inward, flattens out, pulls to one side or changes direction
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk, including blood

What to Do if You Have Symptoms

If you notice any of these symptoms, or if you're concerned about any changes in the way one of your breasts looks or feels, contact your primary care provider or breast care specialist. While these symptoms do not always indicate cancer, sometimes they are signs of something less serious, such as a cyst or an infection. It is important to have a physician evaluate them right away. Do not wait to see if they go away on their own. Treating breast cancer successfully is much easier when it is caught and treated early.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (03/2022), dc.gov/cancer/breast/index.htm

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (9/22/2021), *What Is Breast Cancer Screening?*, cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/screening.htm

Courtesy of Providence Health Assurance

What to Eat (and Avoid) for Better Blood Pressure

Address your diet to prevent or lower your blood pressure.

A healthy diet is your body's first line of defense in preventing and lowering high blood pressure, according to Harvard Medical School. In fact, lifestyle changes—including to your diet—can help lower your numbers in as little as two weeks. They can also help you avoid more serious health issues, like a stroke or heart attack. Here's what to keep in mind:

Embrace fruits and vegetables. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables high in potassium, magnesium, and fiber. For vegetables, try tomatoes, carrots, broccoli, sweet potatoes, or greens. Apples, pears, grapes, bananas, peaches, and oranges are good fruit options.

How much? For fruits and veggies, aim for 4-5 daily servings of each.

Snack on nuts, seeds, and legumes. Almonds, sunflower seeds, kidney beans, peas, and lentils are good sources of magnesium, potassium, and protein.

How much? These foods are high in calories, so keep it to 4-5 servings each week.

Focus on lean meat, poultry, and fish.

When eating meat or poultry, choose lean varieties, and trim away the skin and fat. For fish, try to eat heart-healthy fish, including salmon, herring, and tuna.

How much? Stick to just 6 ounces or less per day (about the size of two decks of cards).

Cut back on sodium. Make sure canned foods are low-sodium, and replace salt with herbs and spices when cooking.

How much? Consume no more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium daily.

Switch to low-fat dairy products. Milk, yogurt, and cheese are great sources of calcium and protein, but they're also high in saturated fat, which is not recommended for those with blood pressure concerns. Try to stick to low-fat and fat-free products.

How much? Limit your low- and no-fat dairy intake to 2-3 servings each day.

Source: Renew Magazine, Winter 2020/2021

Courtesy of UnitedHealthcare®

2023 Plan Information Is Here!

Watch your mailbox in September for the 2023 benefit and rate information. Also, we're excited to see you in person again! Check out the schedule for plan change presentations at pershealth.com/presentations/.

Stay Healthy This Flu Season

The flu vaccination prevents millions of illnesses and flu-related doctor's visits each year.

Getting a flu vaccine is your best chance at fighting the flu, especially if you are at a higher risk of complications from it. The flu shot can also lessen the severity of your symptoms, illnesses related to the flu, and the risk of serious complications that can result in hospitalization or even death.

If you have a chronic health condition, you're at a higher risk for developing complications from the flu. Don't delay in scheduling your flu shot. Check with your doctor about when you should receive your flu shot.

You can also stay healthy with these additional tips:

- **Avoid close contact with others**, especially those who are sick.
- **Stay home if you are sick** to prevent spreading the flu to others.
- **Cover your mouth and nose** if you cough or sneeze.
- **Wash your hands** to protect yourself from germs.
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Clean and disinfect surfaces** at home, school, and work.



Wild Rice with Salmon Stew

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup diced onion
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped, or ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¾ cup chopped carrot
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 cups bite-sized cubed sweet potato, white potato, or winter squash
- 4 to 5 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- ¾ cup corn, fresh, frozen or canned (drained and rinsed)
- 1 can (16 ounces) pink salmon, drained (mash bones and skin)
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¾ teaspoon dried dill
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 to 3 cups cooked wild rice or wild rice mix, heated
- Chopped parsley (optional)
- Lemon slices (optional)

Directions

1. In a saucepan over medium heat, cook the onion in oil for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the garlic, carrots, and celery, and cook until the vegetables are soft.
2. Add the potato and vegetable broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes until the potato is tender.
3. Add the corn, salmon, pepper, dill, and lemon juice. Return to simmer until heated through.

4. Place ¼ to ½ cup cooked wild rice in the bottom of a bowl, and ladle stew over the rice. Top with chopped parsley and lemon slice, if desired.
5. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Notes

Serve stew over other cooked whole grains, such as brown rice or quinoa.

Try other fresh or dried herbs, such as basil, oregano, sage, or rosemary.

Including the bones and skin of the salmon adds calcium and healthy oil (omega-3 fatty acids).

Source: Food Hero Indigenous Peoples Work Group, FoodHero.org

Courtesy of PacificSource

Nutritional information (per serving)

Serving size: 1 cup (stew + rice)

Number of servings: 8

Calories	190
Total fat	5 g
Saturated fat	1 g
Cholesterol	40 mg
Sodium	280 mg
Total carbohydrates	20 g
Dietary fiber	3 g
Sugars	4 g
Protein	16 g

Crispy Ham and Swiss-Stuffed Chicken Breast

Golden brown and crunchy on the outside, gooey and cheesy on the inside, you'll be surprised at how something so easy can taste so good.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon breadcrumbs
- ½ teaspoon olive oil
- 4-ounce boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 1 thin slice low-sodium deli ham
- 1 tablespoon shredded Swiss or Gruyère cheese
- ½ teaspoon Dijon mustard

Directions

1. Heat oven to 375°F
2. Place the breadcrumbs and oil in a small bowl
3. Stir to combine and microwave for 15 seconds at a time – stirring each time – until golden brown, about 45 seconds' total. Set aside
4. Place the cheese in the middle of the slice of ham. Roll up the ham, enclosing the cheese
5. Cut a pocket into each chicken breast by making a horizontal slit along the thin long edge. Do not cut through to opposite side
6. Stuff the ham and cheese into the chicken pocket. Press edges of chicken together to seal. Use a toothpick if needed
7. Place chicken breast on a rimmed baking sheet. Brush the top of the chicken with mustard. Sprinkle the browned breadcrumbs over the top
8. Bake for 15-20 minutes, until completely cooked through

Source: *Renew Magazine, Winter, 2021*
 Courtesy of *UnitedHealthcare®*

Nutritional information (per serving)

Number of servings: 1

Serving size: 4-ounce boneless, skinless chicken breast plus ingredients

Calories	262
Total fat	8g
Saturated fat	3g
Cholesterol	101mg
Sodium	386mg
Total carbohydrates	6g
Dietary fiber	0g
Sugars	1g
Protein	37g



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