

## Taking Control: Understanding Your **Breast** **Cancer RISK**

### Protection

That's Worth a Shot

### Healthy Swaps

For Game Day Favorites

What Happens After A  
**Memory Loss** Diagnosis:  
Alzheimer's Disease and  
What Comes Next

OCTOBER  
**BREAST**  
**CANCER**

AWARENESS  
MONTH



## Here's How We Support Your Health

We believe healthcare should be personal, convenient, and cost-effective. That's why we built a system where your care team communicates, coordinates, and works together on your behalf. Whether you're scheduling a check-up, navigating benefits, or need support after hours, **we've got you covered.**

### 24-Hour Help Nurse

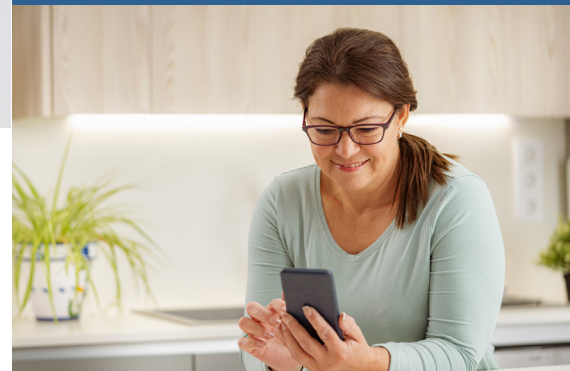
**563-556-4357**  
**800-325-7442**

Call anytime—day or night—for trusted advice on symptoms, medications, and when to seek care.

### Member Services

**563-584-4885**  
**866-821-1365**

Have questions about your plan, benefits, or claims? We're here to help with friendly support.



### My eLink

A secure online portal where you can view benefits, manage your ID card and pharmacy info, check claims, and send secure messages. **Sign up at [mahealthplans.com](https://mahealthplans.com).**

## Know the Difference: In-Network vs. Out-of-Network

When it comes to your healthcare, knowing which providers are **in-network** can make a big difference for your wallet. In-network providers have an agreement with your health plan to provide services at a set rate—so your costs are lower.

If you go **out-of-network**, your care may cost more or might not be covered at all, depending on your plan. You may have to meet a separate deductible or pay more out of pocket. Also, many health plans don't credit out-of-network costs toward your out-of-pocket maximum—that's the most you'd have to pay out of pocket during a plan year—so those bills can really add up.

Before scheduling care—especially with specialists or for surgeries—check that your provider is in-network. You can do this by logging in to your member portal, using our online directory, or calling Member Services.

Taking a few minutes to check your coverage before care—especially for things like imaging, labs, or elective procedures—can help you avoid unexpected costs and billing issues later.

Need help finding an in-network provider? Our Member Services team is here to help—just give us a call or use our online tools to search by specialty, location, or name.



**When in doubt, always ask! It's an easy way to avoid surprise bills and get the most out of your coverage.**

## Health Management



### Health Coaching

Our health coaches are real people here to support your wellness journey with personalized, sustainable guidance tailored to your goals.



### Disease Management

Get support for managing diabetes and hypertension with personalized education, care guidelines, and regular check-ins from our dedicated nurse.



### Case Management

Our nurses are here to guide you through complex conditions, answer questions, and be your advocate—helping you navigate the system with confidence.

If you are a member and feel that you would benefit from any of these programs, please **contact Member Services at 563-584-4885 or 866-821-1365.**

**YOU HAVE US.**

# Taking Control

## Understanding Your Breast Cancer RISK



Every October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month reminds us of the importance of early detection—but awareness also means understanding your personal risk and how to take action. While breast cancer can affect anyone, learning about risk factors and preventive steps puts you in control of your health.

### Risk factors

#### What You Can and Can't Control

Some risks, like age or family history, are out of your control. Others are lifestyle-related—and that's where awareness can lead to action.

#### Uncontrollable risk factors:

- Being female (though men can get breast cancer too)
- Age 50 or older
- Family history of breast or ovarian cancer
- Genetic mutations (like BRCA1 or BRCA2)
- Dense breast tissue
- Personal history of breast conditions or prior radiation therapy to the chest

Knowing your personal risk can help you and your provider make informed decisions about when to begin screenings, whether to consider genetic counseling, or if more frequent monitoring is needed.

### What You Can Do

#### Take a Proactive Role in Your Health

1. Talk to your provider about your personal and family history to assess your risk and create a screening plan.
2. Schedule routine screenings. Most women should begin yearly mammograms at age 40. Higher-risk individuals may need to start earlier or add screening like breast MRI.
3. Do monthly self-exams, report changes, and maintain a healthy lifestyle—exercise, good nutrition, and limited alcohol all support breast and overall health.

#### Lifestyle-related risk factors:

- Sedentary lifestyle
- Obesity, especially after menopause
- Drinking more than one alcoholic drink per day
- Long-term use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT)
- Smoking
- Poor diet (high in saturated fats, low in fruits and vegetables)
- Delayed or no pregnancies, or not breastfeeding

### The Power of Prevention

While not all cases of breast cancer can be prevented, research shows that **1 in 3 breast cancer cases could be avoided through healthier lifestyle choices**. That's a powerful reminder that small, consistent actions can add up to real change.

Here's how prevention makes a difference:

- **Exercise** helps regulate hormones like estrogen and insulin, which can fuel some breast cancers. Just 150 minutes of moderate activity a week can reduce your risk.
- **Maintaining a healthy weight** lowers inflammation in the body—a contributor to cancer development.
- **Limiting alcohol** reduces exposure to carcinogens. Even small amounts have been linked to increased risk.
- **Breastfeeding** for those who can is associated with a modest protective effect.
- **Smoking cessation** reduces risk for many cancers, including breast cancer, and improves your body's ability to heal and respond to treatment if needed.

Preventive steps not only lower your risk of developing breast cancer but also improve outcomes if cancer is detected—your body is stronger and more resilient when it's cared for consistently.

### Knowledge is Strength

This Breast Cancer Awareness Month, let's move beyond pink ribbons and truly understand what prevention means. By learning your risks, making informed choices, and prioritizing your well-being, you're taking control—and potentially saving your life.

Source: <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/obesity/physical-activity-fact-sheet>

### Schedule Your Mammogram!

NOBODY  
FIGHTS  
ALONE



# Protection That's Worth a Shot



As we head into the fall and winter virus season, it's a great time to talk with your primary care provider (PCP) about staying up to date on important vaccines. Updated COVID-19, flu, and RSV vaccines are available—and they can make a big difference in helping you avoid serious illness.

## Updated COVID-19 Vaccine for 2024-2025

The updated COVID-19 vaccines are designed to better protect against the variants expected to circulate this season. Fully approved for ages 12 and older and authorized under emergency use (EUA) for ages 6 months through 11 years. Getting boosted is especially important for those over 65 and people with underlying health conditions, who remain at higher risk of complications.

## Flu Vaccine: A Yearly Must

Flu viruses change from year to year, which is why getting an annual flu shot is still the best way to protect yourself and your community. Everyone 6 months and older should get vaccinated. Ideally, aim to get the flu shot by the end of October, so you're covered throughout the peak season.

## RSV Vaccine: Newer Protection for Older Adults and Infants

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) can lead to serious illness in older adults and infants. If you're 60 or older, talk to your provider to see if the RSV vaccine is right for you. There are also preventive options available for babies and pregnant people to help protect newborns during RSV season.

## One Appointment, Multiple Protections

In many cases, these vaccines can be given during the same visit. That means you can get protected against multiple illnesses in one trip—just check with your clinic or pharmacy about what's available.

## Planning Holiday Travel or Gatherings?

Vaccines help protect not only you but also your loved ones—especially infants, older adults, or those with chronic health conditions. Being vaccinated before group events can reduce your risk of spreading illness to others during the holidays.

## Questions? We're Here For You

If you're unsure about which vaccines you need or when to get them, your provider can help you make a plan based on your age, health conditions, and lifestyle.

Please call Member Services at 563-584-4885 to see which vaccines are covered under your plan before scheduling your appointment.

## To see the full list of CDC recommended vaccines by age group, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/imz-schedules/adult-age.html>

Staying up to date with vaccines keeps you healthier—and helps protect those around you. You have us for the care and guidance you need this season.

Sources: <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/updated-2024-2025-covid-vaccines>; <https://www.cdc.gov/ncird/whats-new/getting-your-immunizations-for-the-2024-2025-fall-and-winter-virus-season.html#:~:text=What%20CDC%20is%20doing,COVID%2D19%2C%20and%20RSV.>

# FALL/WINTER VACCINE CHECKLIST:

Talk to your primary care provider about what's right for you or your family member.

## Adults (19-64 years old) -----

- Flu Vaccine**  
*Recommended yearly for everyone 6 months and older.*
- Updated COVID-19 Vaccine**  
*Talk to your primary care provider if this vaccine is right for you.*
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (Tdap)**  
*Once every 10 years, or during each pregnancy.*
- Shingles (Zoster) Vaccine (ages 50+)**  
*Two-dose series to protect against shingles and complications.*

## Adults (65 years old and up) -----

- Flu Vaccine**  
*Annual protection is especially important for older adults.*
- Updated COVID-19 Vaccine**  
*Strongly recommended due to higher risk of severe illness.*
- RSV Vaccine**  
*Recommended for adults 60 and older after discussing with your provider.*
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (Tdap)**  
*Once every 10 years.*
- Shingles (Zoster) Vaccine (ages 50+)**  
*Two-dose series to protect against shingles and complications.*

# Healthy Swaps For Game Day Favorites



Whether you're cheering from the stadium or hosting a crowd at home, game day food is part of the tradition. But classic favorites like fried wings, creamy dips, and sugary drinks can weigh you down—especially if football season means several weekends of indulgence. The good news? You can still enjoy the fun without sacrificing flavor or feeling sluggish by halftime.

Here are some smart swaps that let you enjoy the celebration and feel good about what's on your plate:

## Wings — Grilled or Baked Chicken Skewers

Get that game day protein fix with grilled chicken or turkey skewers. Add a dry rub or brush with a tangy, lower-sugar barbecue sauce for bold flavor without the fryer.

## Chips & Dip — Veggies & Hummus or Greek Yogurt Dip

Trade standard chips for colorful bell peppers, cucumber slices, or baby carrots. Pair them with hummus or a Greek yogurt-based ranch for crunch and creaminess—minus the grease.

## Nachos — Loaded Sweet Potato Rounds

Roast thick slices of sweet potato and top with black beans, a sprinkle of shredded cheese, salsa, and avocado for a fun, fiber-filled twist on classic nachos.

## Pizza — Mini Pita Pizzas

Use whole grain pita rounds as a base and let guests build their own pizzas with lighter toppings like marinara, veggies, and part-skim mozzarella. Bake until bubbly for a quick and customizable option.

## Sodas & Punch — Infused Water or Sparkling Water

Cut the sugar without cutting the fun. Offer sparkling water with citrus slices or a splash of 100% juice. It's refreshing, festive, and won't spike your blood sugar.



## Brownies & Cookies — Fruit Kabobs or Dark Chocolate-Covered Strawberries

Craving something sweet? Fruit kabobs are colorful, naturally sweet, and easy to grab during the game. For a touch of indulgence, dip strawberries in a bit of dark chocolate—just enough to satisfy your sweet tooth without overdoing it.

## Creamy Dips — Greek Yogurt-Based Spinach or Buffalo Dip

If you're serving a warm dip, try swapping the cream cheese or sour cream for plain Greek yogurt. You'll keep the creamy texture but add protein and cut the saturated fat.

## Small Changes, Big Wins

Game day gatherings are about connection and fun—and with a few thoughtful substitutions, they can be healthier too. Even if you mix in just one or two of these ideas, your body (and your guests) will thank you.



## Cowboy Caviar

Serves  
10

### Nutrition

**Calories:** 262  
**Total Fat:** 5.3 g  
**Saturated Fat:** 0.9g  
**Cholesterol:** 0 mg  
**Dietary Fiber:** 8.9 g  
**Total Sugars:** 11.7 g  
**Protein:** 10.8 g



### Ingredients

- 2 bell peppers, diced
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- 1 cucumber, diced
- 1 C cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1 C corn
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 C cilantro, chopped
- 1 avocado, diced

### Dressing

- 2 Tbsp white or red wine vinegar
- 1/4 C olive oil
- 1 Tbsp honey
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper

### Directions

Combine bell peppers, cucumber, red onion, tomatoes, corn, beans, cilantro and avocado. In a small bowl, whisk together dressing ingredients until fully combined. Pour dressing over the veggies and toss gently to combine.

Serve with crackers, tortilla or corn chips.

Recipe Source: <https://www.novanthealth.org/healthy-headlines/7-heart-healthy-tailgating-recipes-to-make-for-game-day>

On game day—and every day—**plan your menu with heart health in mind.** The American Heart Association recommends:

- Including a variety of fruits and veggies on your plate.
- Choosing whole grains.
- Picking healthy sources of protein, primarily seafood and plants.
- Cooking with liquid, non-tropical plant oils like olive, canola and avocado oil.
- Choosing minimally processed foods.
- Cutting down on salt and added sugars.
- Limiting alcohol.
- And finally, being active. Balance calories eaten with physical activity.



# What Happens After A Memory Loss Diagnosis

## Alzheimer's Disease and What Comes Next

Written By: Connor Golden, PA-C, Neurology at Medical Associates Clinic.

As the population continues to live longer, more and more people are being diagnosed with "dementia." Think of dementia as a broad term used to describe change or loss of cognitive function. The most common form of dementia is Alzheimer's Disease, accounting for 60-80 % of all patients diagnosed with dementia. Early in the disease, patients with Alzheimer's Disease struggle with memory impairment.

### Patients or family members may notice more difficulty recalling recent events.

This is often mentioned at a visit with their primary care provider (PCP) during a routine visit, such as an annual physical. Brief cognitive testing may be performed at that visit, along with basic labs to check for causes of poor cognitive function.

Patients are then often referred to a neurology provider to have further discussions. The discussions during neurology appointments are focused on how the patient is doing at home, are they safe to be living on their own, are they safe to be able to drive, make decisions on their finances, etc. This is not to start taking away the patient's independence, but to ensure they are safe. **Many patients are unaware of the fact they may be struggling to recall information**

### that could be detrimental to their health or safety.

Imaging of the patient's brain will be performed either by their PCP or the Neurology provider to assess the physical health of the brain. The result of the imaging does not confirm the diagnosis of Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. Instead, it is used to make sure there is not a reversible cause of memory loss, think a tumor or stroke. In some patients, atrophy, or shrinkage of the brain, does help support the diagnosis of Alzheimer's, but this may not be present early in the disease process.

After a neurology provider informs a patient that they are likely to have Alzheimer's Disease, there is obviously a flood of worry and emotions. Patients and family members

have questions about what their future holds and what they can do to help slow down progression.

**To date, there is no cure for Alzheimer's Disease or other forms of dementia.** Medications prescribed by healthcare providers have been shown to slow down the rate of cognitive decline. This is nearly impossible to test to determine if the medications are working, as the patient's memory is not expected to improve with the medications.



Future visits continue to focus on safety and improving the quality of life of the patient and their caretakers. Often, a care team assembled of a Neurology provider, the patient's PCP, and a Psychiatry/Psychology provider work with patients and families to meet goals and treat symptoms or concerns that can arise, i.e., mood changes, sleep issues, etc. Social workers and outside facilities may help navigate how to get the patient more help at home performing

household chores, dressing, bathing, taking medications, etc.

Receiving the diagnosis of memory loss can be scary, but we are here to help you and your loved ones navigate this scary time. If you or a loved one is concerned about possible memory loss, please talk with your primary care provider. They can guide the next steps, including testing, referrals, and connecting you with resources for support.

## Symptoms of Early Memory Loss

### 1 Memory loss that disrupts daily life.

Early Alzheimer's often shows up as forgetting recently learned information, important dates, or asking the same questions repeatedly. Many people start relying on notes, devices, or family for things they once managed alone. **What's a typical age-related change?** Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

### 2 Challenges in planning or solving problems.

Trouble following a plan, working with numbers, or concentrating. Tasks like recipes or paying bills may take longer than before. **What's a typical age-related change?** Making occasional errors when managing finances or household bills.

### 3 Difficulty completing familiar tasks.

Daily activities can become harder, such as driving to a familiar place, making a grocery list, or remembering game rules. **What's a typical age-related change?** Occasionally needing help to use microwave settings or to record a TV show.

### 4 Confusion with time or place.

Lose track of dates, seasons, or how they arrived somewhere, especially if it isn't happening right away. **What's a typical age-related change?** Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

### 5 Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.

Vision changes can affect balance, reading, judging distance, or seeing contrast, making driving difficult. **What's a typical age-related change?** Vision changes related to cataracts.

### 6 New problems with words in speaking or writing.

Conversations may be hard to follow, with repeated questions, trouble finding words, or using incorrect names for familiar items. **What's a typical age-related change?** Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

### 7 Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.

May put items in unusual places, lose them, or even accuse others of stealing as the disease progresses. **What's a typical age-related change?** Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them.

Source: [https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/10\\_signs](https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/10_signs)

# Help Loved Ones With Medicare Decisions



**Medicare Annual Enrollment  
October 15–December 7**

This is a great opportunity for family and friends to enroll in or adjust their Medicare coverage.



If someone you know is approaching Medicare age or already enrolled, they may need help reviewing options, comparing costs, or understanding deadlines. Reviewing coverage now can prevent unexpected gaps or higher out-of-pocket costs later.

Our team can simplify the process, answer questions, and guide your loved ones to the plan that best fits their needs.

**Medicare Questions? Call 563-584-4796**

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## MY eLINK

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