

## STAY SAFE THIS WINTER

### Tips for Preventing Falls and Back Injuries

Winter can be a challenging time for staying safe, especially as colder temperatures bring icy sidewalks, slippery steps, and snow-covered driveways. For many, especially seniors, this season presents an increased risk for falls and back injuries. However, with a few simple precautions, you can stay active and protect yourself from winter-related injuries.

1

#### Walk Carefully on Ice & Snow

Wear shoes or boots with good traction and non-slip soles, and consider adding traction devices for extra grip on ice. Avoid icy surfaces when possible and take short, careful steps to maintain balance.

2

#### Warm Up Before Going Outside

Warming up before going outside reduces the risk of strains. Stretch or take a short indoor walk to prepare your muscles, and dress warm to keep joints limber.

3

#### Keep Your Hands Free

Avoid carrying heavy or awkward items that affect balance. Keep hands free and ready to catch yourself if you slip. A backpack can help maintain balance.

4

#### Keep Entryways & Walkways Clear

Shovel snow and salt driveways, sidewalks, and steps regularly. If you can't do it yourself, ask a neighbor or hire help. Be cautious of black ice, which is hard to spot but very slippery.

5

#### Hold Onto Railings & Supportive Surfaces

Use railings or stable surfaces for support, especially on icy stairs or uneven ground. Installing a handrail on outdoor steps adds extra support.

6

#### Be Cautious Indoors, Too

Wet shoes make floors slippery. Take them off indoors, use mats to absorb moisture, and wipe up puddles immediately.

7

#### Avoid Heavy Lifting

Lifting heavy snow in cold weather can strain your back. Shovel slowly, avoid heavy loads, and use an ergonomic shovel. Push snow instead of lifting it, and rest if you feel back pain.



#### When to Seek Help

If you fall or have persistent back pain, contact your Primary Care Provider (PCP). Minor slips may need rest and ice, but some injuries require further evaluation. A specialist can help assess concerns and provide personalized care for a safe recovery.

Take these steps to stay safe and prevent injuries this winter. Be prepared to enjoy the season without unnecessary risks. For more fall prevention advice, contact your PCP for helpful resources.

# Brittle Bones



## Recognizing Osteoporosis Risk and Ensuring Effective Follow-Up Care

Osteoporosis is a condition that weakens bones, making them more susceptible to fractures from minor impacts or falls. Known as a “silent disease,” osteoporosis often progresses without symptoms until a fracture occurs, commonly in the hip, spine, or wrist. Early diagnosis and follow-up care are essential for managing osteoporosis and reducing future fracture risks.

### WHAT IS OSTEOPOROSIS?

Osteoporosis occurs when bone density declines faster than it's replaced, weakening bones. Aging, genetics, medical conditions, and lifestyle factors like low calcium intake increase the risk. Post-menopausal women are especially vulnerable, though men are also at risk with age.

### YOU COULD BE AT RISK

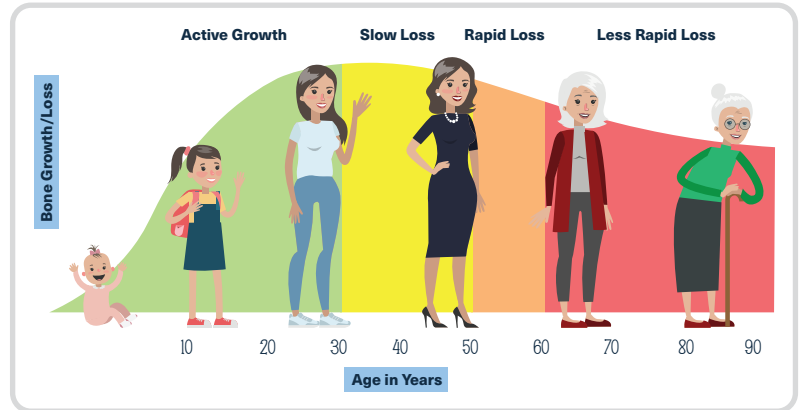
Many assume they're not at risk for bone loss without visible signs, but bone density testing is crucial for early detection, fracture prevention, and mobility preservation as we age.

### DIAGNOSING OSTEOPOROSIS

A bone density test (DEXA scan) helps diagnose osteoporosis by measuring bone mineral density. Providers may recommend screening based on risk factors to guide prevention and treatment.

### FOLLOW-UP CARE AFTER HOSPITALIZATION

For patients hospitalized due to osteoporosis-related fractures, follow-up care is key to recovery and prevention of future fractures. Here's what that care often includes:



#### Medical Follow-Up

Regular check-ups help monitor recovery and adjust treatments to support bone health, including follow-up bone density tests and progress assessments.



#### Medication Management

Osteoporosis medications strengthen bones and reduce fracture risk, while regular follow-ups help providers monitor effectiveness and adjust dosages as needed.



#### Physical Therapy

Physical therapy improves mobility, balance, and strength to reduce fall risk, with tailored exercise programs designed by a therapist.



#### Nutrition & Lifestyle

A calcium and vitamin D-rich diet is essential, along with lifestyle changes like weight-bearing exercise and limiting smoking and alcohol.

### TAKING STEPS TOWARD BETTER BONE HEALTH

Effective osteoporosis management involves proactive care, from medications and nutrition to physical therapy and home safety. If you're recovering from a fracture or concerned about osteoporosis, speak with your Primary Care Provider (PCP) about steps you can take to maintain strong, healthy bones.

Sources: <https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/surgeon-generals-report-bone-health-and-osteoporosis-what-it-means-you>; <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/osteoporosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20351968>

## FEBRUARY IS HEART MONTH

*know the symptoms*

### HEART ATTACK SYMPTOMS

- ♥ **CHEST DISCOMFORT:** Chest discomfort lasting more than a few minutes or that comes and goes, often feeling like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- ♥ **DISCOMFORT IN THE UPPER BODY:** Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- ♥ **SHORTNESS OF BREATH:** With or without chest discomfort.
- ♥ **OTHER SIGNS:** May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

### STROKE SYMPTOMS

- ♥ **FACE DROOPING:** Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile.
- ♥ **ARM WEAKNESS:** Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- ♥ **SPEECH DIFFICULTY:** Is their speech slurred or unclear? Ask them to say, “The sky is blue.” Do they say it correctly?
- ♥ **TIME TO CALL 911:** If they show any of these symptoms, even briefly, call 911 and get them to the hospital immediately.

Source: <https://www.heart.org>

*New!* **Dietary service**—now available for health plan members.

# SEASON

We are excited to announce a new service available to our health plan members through **Season Health**, a practice of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists offering Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT). This program provides expert guidance to help you manage your health conditions and improve your overall well-being.

## SERVICES

### Virtual Visits

Receive personalized nutritional advice without having to leave your home.

### Expert Guidance

Get help with eating, cooking, and managing specific health conditions like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and more.

### Personalized Menu of Recipes & Pre-Made Meals

Receive customized meal plans and recipes tailored to your health needs.

### Two-Way Text Messaging

Connect with your Season Health team member seven days a week for support and advice.

## COVERAGE

Season Health covers many health conditions including:

- Diabetes
- Chronic Kidney Disease

## SIGN UP

To start your journey towards better health, talk to your Primary Care Provider or our Care Management Coach at 563-584-4754.

YOUR PARTNER  
IN NUTRITION  
CARE

Take advantage of this incredible resource to help you live a healthier, more balanced life—right at your fingertips!

# Protect Your Lungs This Winter

## TIPS FOR MANAGING RESPIRATORY HEALTH

*Written by Joy Schwobe, PA-C, Pulmonology, Medical Associates Clinic - Dubuque, IA.*

Winter's cold air is often dry, which can irritate the airways of individuals with lung conditions like asthma or COPD. This irritation can lead to wheezing, coughing, and shortness of breath. Staying mindful of respiratory health during the colder months can help reduce symptoms and prevent complications. Below are practical tips to keep your lungs healthy this winter.

### Stay Warm and Humidify the Air



- **Cover your face in the cold:** Use a scarf or ski mask to warm and humidify air before inhaling; breathe through your nose for better results.
- **Use a humidifier:** Use a humidifier to ease congestion, clean it regularly, and try saline sprays or gels for extra relief.

### Get Vaccinated to Prevent Respiratory Illness



Respiratory viruses cause most winter hospitalizations. Stay protected with updated vaccinations:

- **Flu:** Annual vaccine for everyone 6 months and older.
- **COVID-19:** The 2024–2025 vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months and older.
- **RSV: Infants**—Pfizer Abrysvo during pregnancy or nirsevimab at birth; for high-risk kids 8–19 months. **Adults**—One dose for ages 75+ or 60–74 at high risk; not needed if vaccinated last year.

### Avoid Triggers and Practice Prevention



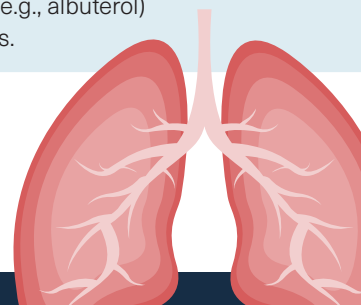
- **Avoid fireplaces:** Smoke can irritate lungs and worsen symptoms.
- **Steer clear of crowded areas:** Skip gatherings during virus season. Stay home when sick and wear a mask to protect others.
- **Wash hands frequently:** Prevent germs from spreading to your eyes, nose, or mouth.

### Follow Your Treatment Plan



- **Take prescribed medications:** Stay consistent with your controller medications to keep symptoms in check.
- **Keep quick-relief medications handy:** If you have asthma or COPD, always carry your quick-relief inhaler (e.g., albuterol) and use it at the first sign of symptoms.

Winter poses challenges for those with lung conditions, but with preparation and care, you can stay healthy and breathe easily. Follow these tips to reduce illness risk and enjoy a safer season.





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# HOW IS YOUR WELL-BEING?

**Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)** are the conditions in which you live, work, and play. They shape daily life, public policies, and social norms, and play a key role in your health, well-being, and quality of life. Examples include:

- Safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods
- Access to healthy foods and exercise options
- Racism, discrimination, and violence
- Polluted air and water
- Education, job opportunities, and income
- Language and literacy skills



**Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)**

- Healthcare Access and Quality
- Neighborhood and Built Environment
- Social and Community Context
- Economic Stability
- Education Access and Quality



To help address potential health disparities, we've created a 2 minute questionnaire to better understand your well-being and provide improved care.

Please scan this code or visit the link below to fill yours out <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MAHP-SDOHsurvey>. An Español version is available.

**FOR YOUR REFERENCE**

Information related to MAHP's quality improvement plan, case management, disease management, member rights, communications, appeals process, after-hours assistance, accreditation/awards, and privacy/confidentiality may be viewed at: [www.mahealthplans.com](http://www.mahealthplans.com). Persons without access to the internet may request paper copies by contacting MAHP at 1-800-747-8900 or 563-556-8070. Please ask to speak with a member of the QI team for assistance.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE?**

Call us at 563-584-4885 or email [memberservices@mahealthcare.com](mailto:memberservices@mahealthcare.com)

**MY eLINK**

Log onto My eLink, our convenient and confidential web portal for easy access to health plan information 24/7. View authorizations, member benefits, eligibility, claims data, accumulators, download forms, search our drug formulary, and more. Sign up today by visiting us online at [www.mahealthplans.com](http://www.mahealthplans.com).

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