

A MEMBERSHIP SERVICE FROM
THE US FAMILY HEALTH PLAN

Fall 2021

healthy Lifestyle



Check Your
Vaccination
Status This Autumn

See Page 6



Check Your Vaccination Status This Autumn

Immunizations are an important way of staying healthy and preventing illness. Perhaps the vaccine we think of most this time of year is the flu vaccine. But autumn is a great time to review your vaccination status and get all of your vaccinations updated.

We hope most of you have been vaccinated against COVID-19. If you have not, it's not too late. And as we head into the cooler months with increasing variants of COVID-19, we recommend US Family Health Plan (USFHP) members receive their vaccination.

For those who have already received their COVID-19 vaccination this year, it's important to keep up to date on the latest developments. You'll perhaps hear talk about a COVID-19 "booster." Getting a booster or annual vaccination against a virus is quite common. Boosters actually boost the immune system, and it also helps train the immune system to recognize and fight new variants of the virus.

Virus variants are not unique to COVID-19. In fact, every year we see new variants of the flu virus. This is one reason why each year there is



a new flu vaccine and why we shouldn't rely on last year's flu shot to cover us during the coming year.

As we head into the autumn, we recommend that USFHP members get a flu shot, stay on top of information about COVID-19 vaccine boosters, and insure that your other vaccinations and boosters are up to date.

We Are Growing

US Family Health Plan recently gained approval to expand its service area, again. We look forward to serving new members in southwest Washington and western Oregon. Military beneficiaries living in these areas can enroll this fall. This will be in time for the TRICARE Open Season.

Earlier in the year, USFHP welcomed new members in parts of Spokane and Stevens counties, WA. We also opened up in northern Idaho. Our service area now extends from the Canadian border in western WA to the California border. We are proud to support our military families.

content

- 3 | Could Your Dog's Diabetes Mean You're in Danger, Too?
- 4 | Can You Recognize the Signs of Breast Cancer?
- 5 | Ch-Ch-Changes: Women's Health Through the Years



- 6 | Pharmacy Corner: Check Your Vaccination Status This Autumn
- 7 | Recipe: Air Fryers: Your New Go-To for Healthy Cooking? Healthy Air Fryer Chicken Strips
- 8 | Ask Member Services



Could Your Dog's Diabetes Mean You're in Danger, Too?

You share a special bond, a household, and miles of walking together. But a new study found there's more you might have in common with your four-legged best friend. A new Swedish study found having a dog with diabetes increases the owner's risk of developing type 2 diabetes, too.

Like Fido, Like Owner

The study authors say there are a few potential reasons for the link. For one thing, canines and their caretakers may share lifestyles and habits.

For instance, you might get similar amounts of physical activity in the form of walks and active play. Plus, there's some evidence heavier humans—at risk for type 2 diabetes—provide more frequent meals, treats, and table scraps to their pooches. This then fuels Fido's risk.

There also may be shared factors in the place you live that influence your diabetes risk—and your dogs'. For instance, air or noise pollution could play a role. So might exposure to chemicals that disrupt



hormone levels, including bisphenol A (BPA) in plastic products.

Take Healthy Steps Together

The findings of this study don't mean your dog causes your diabetes. In fact, for the most part, having a pet is more likely to provide health benefits than risks. Pet owners tend to have lower blood pressure, less stress, and better physical fitness.

But problems in your pet could serve as a sign you might both want to make lifestyle changes. To reduce your risk for type 2 diabetes:

- **Watch your weight.** If you're carrying extra pounds, losing just 5 to 10% of your current weight can help lower your risk.
- **Investigate testing.** Your health care provider can schedule a blood test, as needed. This can reveal if you have prediabetes. With this condition, your blood glucose levels are high, but not high enough for a diabetes diagnosis. Prediabetes can be reversed with healthy changes.
- **Follow a nutritious eating plan.** Get plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Cut back on processed foods and added sugars.
- **Get active.** Each week, aim for two hours and 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, such as biking or fast walking. Moving more can help your dog, too. Just ease in: Both animals and people should start small and increase activity levels over time.

Find out about your risk for diabetes, or how well you are managing the condition if you have it, by getting an A1C blood test. Talk with your provider to schedule it.



Can You Recognize the Signs of Breast Cancer?

Mammograms help find breast cancer early, before it causes obvious symptoms. They're an invaluable tool for women's health. Yet not every breast cancer is discovered this way.

As a woman, you probably hear a lot about mammograms. But it's also crucial to be familiar with how your breasts normally look and feel. That way, you're more likely to notice if a change occurs. Most changes turn out to be something other than cancer. Yet others are indeed signs of breast cancer—and the earlier it's found, the better the chance for successful treatment.

What to Watch For

Contact your health care provider about:

- A new mass or lump in your breast. This is the most common symptom of breast cancer. Many cancerous breast lumps feel hard and have irregular edges. But some feel soft or round instead. Tell your provider about any new mass in your breast.
- Swelling of part or all of your breast. This may occur even without a lump.
- Skin changes in your breast or nipple. The skin may be red, dry, itchy, flaking, or thickened. Or it may be dimpled, sometimes resembling the texture of an orange peel.

- Breast or nipple pain. Many cancerous lumps in the breast are painless. But some breast cancers cause tenderness or pain.
- Nipple retraction. This refers to a nipple that turns inward rather than outward.
- Nipple discharge. This is fluid other than breast milk that comes from the nipple.
- Swollen lymph nodes. Breast cancer sometimes spreads to lymph nodes under the arm or around the collarbone, causing swelling there. This may be noticeable even before there's a breast lump big enough to feel.

These symptoms can be caused by things other than cancer, too. For example, normal breast tissue sometimes feels lumpy, and certain medications and infections can cause nipple discharge. But to be on the safe side, always tell your provider promptly about any breast change.

Stick to Your Screening Schedule

If you're due for a mammogram, be sure to schedule it—even if you don't have any symptoms. The one-two punch of getting screened with a mammogram and being alert for symptoms is a powerful way to fight breast cancer.

Ch-Ch-Changes: Women's Health Through the Years

Gynecologists are trained to take care of women's health needs at every age. As your body changes, your yearly well-woman visits adjust to your needs. Here's what to expect decade by decade.

Your 20s

You will be screened for cervical cancer using a Pap test. At this age, most women need one every three years. If you missed it, you can get the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine through age 26 to help prevent cervical and other cancers.

You should also discuss family planning with your provider—anything from birth control to prepregnancy care.

Your 30s

During this decade, experts advise adding an HPV test to the Pap test and having both every five years. Your provider will also discuss continued STI prevention and testing.

Discuss your birth control needs as they evolve, too.

Your 40s

Beginning in your 40s, changes in your period flow are called perimenopause, the lead-in to menopause. Talk with your provider about changes you notice.

Your 50s and Beyond

Menopause often occurs in your early 50s. Your periods stop and pregnancy is no longer possible. Your provider can recommend ways to prevent menopause-related symptoms and complications.

After age 65, you may be able to stop your cervical cancer screenings. Your provider will tell you if you can stop or not.



This Fall's Health Observances

This fall presents lots of opportunities to learn more about serious health conditions.

Pain Awareness Month

September is Pain Awareness Month, a time when organizations raise public awareness of issues in pain and pain management.

theacpa.org/pain-awareness/september-is-pain-awareness-month

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

With a goal of increasing awareness and raising funds for those affected by childhood cancer, Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in September recognizes the journey of kids with cancer.

acco.org/childhood-cancer-awareness-month

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month in September recognizes that with 1 in 78 diagnosed with ovarian cancer—and no early detection test for the disease—it is crucial to spread the word about the symptoms and risk factors.

ocrahope.org/2020/09/ovarian-cancer-awareness-month-toolkit

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual campaign to increase awareness of the disease. Join in the cause to help women in need today.

nationalbreastcancer.org/breast-cancer-awareness-month

Lung Cancer Awareness Month

During November, Lung Cancer Awareness Month aims to unite the public against the number one cancer killer of women and men in the U.S.

lung.org/lung-force/about-lung-force/featured-campaigns/lung-cancer-awareness-month

Testing for Colorectal Cancer at Home

A fecal occult blood test (FOBT) is one of several tests your health care provider may use to screen for colorectal cancer. This take-home test looks for blood in the stool that you can't see with the naked eye, often caused by bleeding in the digestive tract. A positive result doesn't mean you have colorectal cancer. Other conditions, such as polyps, hemorrhoids, diverticulitis, and ulcers, can also trigger a positive result.

Three types of FOBTs detect blood in different ways. They include a:

1. Guaiac-based fecal occult blood test (gFOBT)
2. Fecal immunochemical test (FIT)
3. FIT-DNA test

People who take one of these tests need to repeat it every year or every three years, depending on the test.

What You Need to Do

Your provider will give you a test kit along with instructions. The instructions may vary based on the type of kit, but most FOBTs involve:

- Collecting multiple stool samples
- Using a device to swipe the sample onto a test card or slide
- Labeling and sealing the sample
- Sending the samples to your provider or lab

For Best Results

Many people find these take-home tests easier than some other colorectal tests, like a colonoscopy. These tips can help you take your at-home stool test:

- Ask your provider whether you need to prepare for the test. For the guaiac-based test, you may need to avoid certain medicines, supplements, and foods that can affect the test results.
- Make sure you follow the instructions included with your kit.
- Call your provider's office if you have any questions about how to use it.

If your test is positive, meaning it found certain changes or blood, your health care provider likely will order a colonoscopy to identify the cause and site of the bleeding.

Is This Test Right for You?

The American Cancer Society recommends that people who are at average risk for colorectal cancer start screenings at age 45. In addition to stool-based testing, your provider may recommend other screening methods, such as colonoscopy, virtual colonoscopy, or flexible sigmoidoscopy, that visualize the colon and rectum.

Talk with your provider about which tests are best for you and how often you should be tested.

TRICARE Open Season for 2022: November 8–December 13, 2021

If you are a retiree under the age of 65, now is the time to start thinking about your health care needs for 2022. TRICARE Open Season is an annual period when you can enroll in a health insurance plan for the next year. Open Season takes place each fall. It starts on the Monday of the second full week in November. It ends on the Monday of the second full week in December. During Open Season, you can:

- Enroll in a new TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select plan
- Change your enrollment (for example, switch from individual to family enrollment)
- Enroll in a FEDVIP vision or dental plan (available to certain categories of beneficiaries)

If you are satisfied with your current health care and service, you do not need to act. Your current enrollment with USFHP will be continued automatically.

If you feel that USFHP is a great fit for you, why not refer a friend? We love meeting our members' friends and sharing how USFHP works for military families. To learn more, they can call us at **1-800-585-5883, option 1**. Or visit **usfhpnw.org**.

Thank you for choosing US Family Health Plan for your TRICARE coverage.

Air Fryers: Your New Go-To for Healthy Cooking?

Move over slow cookers and toaster ovens. There's a newer tool for your countertop that makes healthier versions of your favorite foods. Air fryers promise crispy french fries, juicy fried chicken, kid-pleasing fish sticks, and so much more, all with less fat and oil. They're also faster than the oven.

Air fryers don't fry your food. Instead, they work like a convection oven, circling hot air around food. An exhaust fan also blows when cooking, keeping food surfaces dry.

The result is a crisp, crunchy exterior and browned color. Air fryers use only about a tablespoon of oil in most cases compared with traditional deep-fried dishes which often require up to 3 cups.

Less oil is a good thing, because higher fat intake can contribute to inflammation, high cholesterol, and other health problems. Studies have linked eating fried foods to heart disease, clogged arteries, and even an early death.



Healthy Air Fryer Chicken Strips

Ingredients

1 lb. chicken breast strips (about 6 to 8; if chicken breast strips are very large, cut them in half)
 1/4 cup non-dairy milk (like almond milk) or skim milk
 1 tsp. apple cider vinegar
 3 tbsp. cornmeal (polenta)
 1 tbsp. ground flaxseeds
 1 tsp. onion powder
 1 tsp. garlic powder
 1/8 tsp. salt
 1/8 tsp. black pepper
 2 egg whites
 2 tbsp. flour (whole wheat flour or gluten-free flour blend)
 Olive oil spray

Directions

Preheat air fryer to 400 degrees. Place chicken tenders, non-dairy or skim milk, and apple cider vinegar in a bag. Shake to coat. Combine cornmeal, flaxseeds, onion powder, garlic powder, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Place egg whites in another small bowl, and place flour in another small bowl. Dredge each chicken breast strip in flour, then dip in egg whites and roll in cornmeal mixture. Repeat until each chicken breast strip is coated.

If using an air fryer with two fryer pans, place coated chicken strips into both pans, spread out. Spray with olive oil spray. Air fry for five minutes, remove, and use tongs to flip over. Spray again with olive oil spray. Bake another five minutes.

If using an air fryer with only one basket or pan, place coated chicken strips into pan or basket, spread out. Spray with olive oil spray. Air fry for five minutes, remove, and use tongs to flip over. Spray again with olive oil spray. Bake another 10 minutes.

Serves four; serving size is about two strips or 4 oz. of chicken.

PER SERVING: Calories—200, total fat—4 g (saturated fat—1 g, trans fat—0 g), cholesterol—85 mg, sodium—170 mg, total carbohydrate—9 g, dietary fiber—2 g, sugars—0 g, protein—29 g.





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Ask Member Services

Q: Am I required to get my maintenance medications through the mail order program? I read that US Family Health Plan has added more options for where I can fill my prescriptions.

A: US Family Health Plan does not require members to fill medications through mail order. But it is the most cost-effective option for refills, and it's convenient. With mail order, members can refill a 90-day supply for one copayment. To get a new prescription filled for the first time, the USFHP retail network works best. The USFHP retail network is also useful for members who have unreliable mail service. We have expanded our retail network for your convenience. Finally, members can also get a 90-day supply for one copayment at any PacMed clinic pharmacy.

Q: Whom do I speak with if I have a complaint?

A: If you have a complaint about quality of care, service or plan benefits, contact Member Services at 1-800-585-5883, option 2. A Member Services representative will work to resolve your complaint so that you are satisfied. You may also submit a formal grievance in writing to the

Plan. This initiates the grievance process. All grievances will be resolved within 30 business days. If the Plan requires more time, you will receive a letter. It will explain the delay and when to expect the process to be completed. Written grievances should be sent to:

US Family Health Plan
Member Services
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