

SPRING 2026

healthylife

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Spring into action



Spring is a time to reset—to declutter the house, start a garden or spend more time outside as the days get longer. As you partake in the

pleasures of springtime, remember to prioritize your health so you can fully enjoy the season.

One of the simplest ways to stay on top of your health is by scheduling your Annual Wellness Visit. This is separate from your routine visits, which are available at no cost to you as a BSW SeniorCare Advantage member. (If this is your first year with Medicare, you will have a Welcome to Medicare Visit instead.)

During an Annual Wellness Visit, you will begin by filling out a questionnaire to help your provider get a better understanding of your health and medical history. Your visit may also include:

- Standard measurements (like height, weight and blood pressure)
- A review of your medical and family history
- A review of your current prescriptions
- Personalized health advice

- Advance care planning
- A screening schedule for appropriate preventive services
- An optional “Social Determinants of Health Risk Assessment” to help your provider understand your social needs and their impact on your treatment
- Additional assessments related to memory and cognitive function, behavioral health, fall risk, and other areas of concern

Your doctor will use this information to create a personalized wellness plan to help you feel your best throughout the year.

Be sure to take advantage of this visit if you haven't already. You can schedule an Annual Wellness Visit by contacting your doctor. If you need to find a provider, visit **BSWHealthPlan.com/Care**.

You'll find even more tips for staying healthy throughout this issue. If gardening is part of your spring itinerary, turn to Page 3 to learn why it counts as a form of exercise. Emergency preparedness is part of wellness, too. With the unpredictability of Texas weather, you'll want to check Page 7 for tips on staying safe during weather-related emergencies.

I hope this season finds you refreshed and renewed as you enjoy all spring has to offer.

With appreciation,

Robert Waterhouse, MD, MBA, HSM
Chief Medical Officer & Senior Vice President
Baylor Scott & White Health Plan



Get growing to get going

When it comes to getting your 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week—as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—your options aren't limited to brisk walking, jogging, cycling or group fitness classes.

Did you know that gardening—yes, gardening!—is actually a really great workout? In fact, the CDC considers gardening and yard work a moderate-intensity activity with muscle-strengthening benefits. And if you work even harder until you're breathing fast and your heart rate is up, then it can be a vigorous workout. Here's how you can get going—and growing.

- **Go at your own pace.** Break down the 150 minutes into as many smaller sessions as needed. Even if you can fit in only a few minutes of activity at a time, it's still beneficial. Whether it's 30 minutes or five minutes, every little bit of digging, planting and weeding in your garden makes a difference.
- **Switch it up.** Variety is key to reaping a wide range of health

benefits from exercise. Alternating your gardening activities will make sure you're getting a well-rounded workout while reducing your risk for injury. For example, rake or mow the yard, seed your lawn, hoe the soil, pull weeds, trim the plants, pick veggies, and so on.

- **Practice safety first.** Making safety a priority prevents injuries that could keep you away from your garden. Wear gloves to avoid blisters and exposure to fertilizers; apply sunscreen and wear sunglasses, long sleeves and wide-brimmed hats; use insect repellent with DEET; stay hydrated, especially on very hot days; and follow instructions on all products and tools.

The best part is—whether biting into a juicy, homegrown tomato or noticing an increase in your stamina—you'll get to enjoy the fruits of your labor all season long. ▽

Think outside the dirt

No yard? No problem. There are many ways to grow fruits, veggies and herbs even if you have little to no land. Here are a few innovative ways to garden:

- **Tower gardens.** A tower garden is a self-contained system that uses aeroponics, in which an internal pump pushes water and nutrients upward to nourish plants that grow vertically, indoors or out.
- **Container gardens.** Many plants, such as herbs, tomatoes and strawberries, grow well in small spaces, such as containers on a patio or window boxes. Just make sure the containers have holes for drainage and plants receive ample sunlight.
- **Urban or community gardens.** Volunteer to work at a garden in your community.



Ready to grow?
Find gardening tips at
AgriLifeExtension.TAMU.edu.



WHEN MEDS DON'T MIX

As you get older, it's common to take multiple medications to manage your health. While these medications are often necessary, some combinations can increase the risk of serious side effects or reduce how well a medicine works. Here are a few examples.

OPIOIDS AND BENZODIAZEPINES

Opioids are often prescribed to treat pain, while benzodiazepines are commonly used to help manage anxiety and other mental conditions. When taken together, these medications can slow the central nervous system, increasing the risk of dangerous side effects like:

- Very slow or shallow breathing and slower heart rate
- Feeling unsteady or off-balance
- Increased risk of being dependent on the medications
- Serious medical emergencies, including death

Your provider may prescribe these medications together if the benefits outweigh the risks, but close monitoring is important.

If you are prescribed both:

- Take the medications exactly as prescribed and do not take extra doses
- Avoid alcohol
- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery unless your provider says it is safe
- Store medications securely to prevent misuse

Get emergency help right away if you experience:

- Extreme sleepiness or inability to awaken
- Slow, shallow or difficult breathing
- Choking sounds or gurgling
- Bluish or purplish lips or fingernails

Caregivers should also be trained on how to administer naloxone (Narcan) if it has been prescribed.

ANTICHOLINERGICS

Some medications have anticholinergic effects, meaning they block a chemical in the body that helps control muscles, memory and digestion.

Taking more than one anticholinergic medication can increase side effects, particularly in older adults. Anticholinergic properties may be present in medicines that treat:

- Allergies and colds (diphenhydramine/Benadryl)
- Muscle pain
- Urinary incontinence
- Depression
- Sleep problems
- Nausea
- Stomach and intestinal cramps
- Parkinson's disease

If you are taking medications for any of these conditions, whether prescribed or over the counter, let your doctor or pharmacist know—your provider can help you determine which medicines have anticholinergic properties and whether they're safe to take together.

Possible side effects to watch for:

- Confusion or memory problems
- Drowsiness or dizziness
- Dry mouth or eyes
- Blurred vision
- Constipation or difficulty urinating
- Dizziness or increased risk of falls
- Fast heartbeat
- Overheating

HOW TO STAY SAFE

No matter what medicines you're taking, it's important to keep safety top of mind.

- **Keep your care team informed.** Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the medications you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines and supplements. This helps them choose the best treatment and keep you safe.
- **Use a single pharmacy for all your prescriptions.** Pharmacists can review your full medication list and alert you to potential issues.
- **Consider non-drug alternatives.** Ask your doctor if treatments are available without the use of drugs, like physical therapy or behavioral techniques.
- **Don't stop medications suddenly.** If your doctor decides to lower or stop a medication, they will guide you to do it slowly and safely to avoid side effects or withdrawal symptoms.▶

Medication safety check

Curious if your medications shouldn't mix? Check your meds against this list of common opioids, benzodiazepines and anticholinergics. *Note: This list is not comprehensive. Talk with your doctor if you have concerns about multiple medications you're taking.*

Opioids

- Morphine
- Hydrocodone

Benzodiazepines

- Alprazolam
- Lorazepam

Anticholinergics

- **Allergies and colds:** Diphenhydramine (Benadryl), chlorpheniramine
- **Urinary incontinence:** Oxybutynin (Ditropan), tolterodine (Detrol)
- **Depression:** Tricyclic antidepressants like amitriptyline
- **Sleep problems:** Over-the-counter sleep aids containing diphenhydramine or doxylamine
- **Nausea:** Meclizine (Dramamine II), promethazine
- **Stomach and intestinal cramps:** Dicyclomine (Bentyl)
- **Parkinson's disease:** Bzotropine
- **Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD):** Ipratropium, tiotropium

Sign up for automatic refills

If you receive prescriptions by mail, you can now enroll in automatic refills. Costco's Mail Order Pharmacy will ship eligible medications to your home when they're due. To enroll:

1. Log in to your Costco Mail Order online account and open your prescription profile.
2. Enable the auto refill option for each eligible prescription.
3. Confirm your shipping address and payment method.
4. Digitally acknowledge your enrollment in the program.

Scan the QR code to learn more.



SURVEY SAYS ...

Two opportunities to let your voice be heard



Medicare survey season is here. Between the spring and summer, you may be selected to participate in two surveys: the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) survey and/or the Health Outcomes Survey (HOS). The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) uses feedback from these surveys to help improve your health plan and overall healthcare experience.

If you're selected, it's important to participate—this is your opportunity to let your voice be heard.

Here's what you need to know.

CAHPS

The CAHPS survey lets you share how you feel about your overall healthcare experience—including how easily you can access services, how well healthcare providers communicate with you and how satisfied you are with your care overall. The data collected from this survey helps improve healthcare quality and informs Medicare policy decisions.

The CAHPS survey window is March through May. Participants

are randomly selected. If you were selected, you should have already received an email or mail notification from the survey company, Press Ganey. Email notices will include a link to the survey; mail notices will include a paper survey.

HOS

The HOS measures the physical and mental health and well-being of our members over time. Unlike other surveys that focus on service, the HOS evaluates health outcomes to help us understand how effective your care and treatments are at maintaining or improving your quality of life.

The HOS window is July through November. Like the CAHPS survey,

members are randomly chosen to participate. If you're chosen for the HOS, you'll receive an email or letter from Press Ganey in July. To learn more about the survey, visit [HOSOnline.org](https://www.hosonline.org).

Why participate?

CMS uses the CAHPS survey and the HOS to help improve your overall healthcare experience.

Your feedback is vital. It allows us to improve clinical programs, enhance member support and ensure the continuous improvement of the Medicare program. By participating in the surveys, you can directly influence the quality of your healthcare and the benefits you receive. ▼

WEATHERING THE WEATHER:

How to prepare for storms

Springtime in Texas can be both beautiful and unstable. Between sunny skies and breezy temperatures, tornadoes and heavy rains can pose a threat during this time of the year.

That's why it's important to prepare for any kind of storm that might come your way.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security recommends that all households have an emergency kit. Make sure your kit contains the following, stored in an airtight plastic container:

- Water
- Nonperishable food (plus can opener, if needed)
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio

You may also need other supplies, such as medications or pet food, depending on your situation. See the full list of recommendations for an emergency kit at [Ready.gov/Kit](https://www.ready.gov/kit). If you have diabetes, you can find more tips and resources at [DiabetesDisasterResponse.org](https://www.DiabetesDisasterResponse.org) ▶

In case of a tornado

Tornadoes can strike before meteorologists have a chance to issue a warning. Know the signs, which include:

- A dark or green-colored sky
- A rotating funnel-shaped cloud or a low-lying dark cloud
- Large hail
- A roaring sound that resembles a train

The safest place to be in a tornado is in a basement or storm cellar. Otherwise, you want to be on the lowest floor possible. Try not to shelter in a room with windows. If you can, get under something sturdy and use your arms to protect your head and neck.



Have you signed up for MyBSWHealth?

MyBSWHealth is a secure, online member portal where you can view claims, find important documents and more—all in one place. Visit [MyBSWHealth.com](https://www.mybswhealth.com) or download the app from the App Store or Google Play.

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Recipe ▶

Spring vegetable pasta

Ingredients

- 4 servings whole-wheat pasta (½ cup cooked per serving)
- 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large shallot, minced (about 1 cup)
- 1 lb. fresh asparagus, woody ends discarded, cut into ½-inch pieces (about 4 cups)
- 2 cups fresh or frozen peas
- 2 tbsp. fresh parsley
- 1 tbsp. fresh chives
- 1 tbsp. lemon zest (from about 1 lemon)
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice (from about ½ lemon)
- 1½ tsp. honey
- 1 tsp. sea salt
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup reduced fat, crumbled feta cheese

Directions

1. Cook pasta according to directions.
2. Heat a large, nonstick sauté pan over high heat for one minute. Reduce to medium, add olive oil and heat for one minute.
3. Add minced shallots and sauté for two to four minutes until soft and just starting to brown.
4. Add asparagus and peas. Sauté for six to eight minutes, stirring frequently until thoroughly cooked.
5. Add parsley, chives, lemon zest, lemon juice, honey, sea salt and black pepper. Stir frequently for two minutes until cooked.
6. Toss with cooked pasta then top with feta cheese. Serve immediately.



Per serving: Serves four; serving size is 1 cup of vegetables and ½ cup of pasta. Each serving provides 251 calories, 4 g total fat (1 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat), 5 mg cholesterol, 772 mg sodium, 45 g total carbohydrate, 10 g dietary fiber, 11 g sugar and 14 g protein.