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Medicare Resources

To contact Medicare for more information on accountable care organizations, call 800-Medicare (800-633-4227) and ask for the Medicare ACO Department. TTY users should call 877-486-2048. You may also visit [medicare.gov/acos.html](https://www.medicare.gov/acos.html).

To contact Keystone ACO, call 570-271-6403. You'll be offered options to connect you to the appropriate person. You can also email us at KeystoneACO@KeystoneACO.org

Headline?

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Janet Comrey,
Operations Director
Keystone ACO

Welcome to the fall, 2023 edition of the Keystone Accountable Care Organization (ACO) newsletter!

Fall is approaching quickly. Hopefully you had an enjoyable summer and are looking forward to the change in season. The Autumn season brings many changes as leaves of trees turn to bright yellow, orange, red and brown colors, the daylight hours shorten bringing cooler and crisp air, new crops of apples, squash, pumpkins arrive, and fall festivals commence. Fall is also the time to schedule your flu vaccinations as the flu is most common in the fall and winter months. We are also seeing an increase in Covid cases again. Be sure to work with your doctor to keep up on your healthcare needs, including vaccinations, annual wellness visits, and health-related screenings.

In this issue we discuss the importance of breast cancer screening as October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. You will also find information on influenza vaccines and healthy habits for seniors. It's survey time again and we value your opinion. See our survey article for the importance of completing surveys.

What would fall be without a little pumpkin spice? See the many health benefits in the pumpkin muffin recipe on page 5.

Affording medications can be a challenge — so check out our feature that explains how our Keystone ACO's medication access coordinator can provide you with guidance and some resources to help.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy and safe fall season!

Thank you,
Janet Comrey



Breast cancer screening

Breast cancer screening through mammography is the single best way to detect breast cancer and, together with improved treatment, has led to a steady decline in deaths from breast cancer over the last 30 years.

Screening tests are useful when they are sensitive and specific. Sensitivity is the ability to give a positive result when someone has the disease and specificity is the ability to give a negative result when someone doesn't have it. There must be a benefit to detecting the disease early or screening is not helpful.

Mammograms have changed since they were first developed in the 1930s. Digital images were introduced in 2000 and breast tomosynthesis (3D-mammograms) was introduced in 2011. Each refinement has improved the ability of the study to detect breast cancer — improving both the sensitivity and specificity of the test.

Guidelines for mammographic screening can differ between organizations, but earlier this year, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPTF) joined multiple other national groups in recommending that average risk women start screening at age 40 rather than their previous recommendation to start at 50. The USPTF continues to recommend mammograms every other year from age 40 to age 74 although many organizations recommend annual mammograms. Some women should start screening even earlier if they have risk factors such as a close family history of breast cancer or certain high-risk findings on biopsy. We typically recommend starting ten years prior to when a close relative was diagnosed.

If you're unsure about when you should start screening, or how often, talk to your doctor. Together, you can come up with the best plan based on your own personal risks.

Rosemary Leeming, MD
Geisinger Medical Center



Having difficulty affording your medications?

Your doctor wants to make sure you're taking your medications in the correct dose and at the frequency prescribed to you. And they want to know if you're having difficulty paying for your medications.

There are programs available to those that meet certain financial requirements, and some pharmaceutical companies offer reduced pricing on certain drugs based on financial need.

But you need to know where to find help. Fortunately, Keystone ACO has a resource that can lead you to possible options for paying for your medications. Angela Carl is a medication access coordinator who is knowledgeable regarding programs that are available for financial assistance.

As a Keystone ACO beneficiary, you can talk with Angela about your specific situation. To determine if you qualify for assistance, Angela will need to discuss financial information. She's employed by Geisinger, but she can help all Keystone ACO beneficiaries. Call her at 570-808-4704.

Reminders

Schedule appropriate preventative screenings:

- Mammograms
- Eye exam
- Annual wellness visit
- Colonoscopies
- Dental visit
- Updated annual vaccines including flu/COVID

Upcoming events

We'd love to meet you at one of the following events:

2023 Luzerne County Senior Expo –

Oct. 12, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

at the Friedman Jewish Community Center,
400 Third Ave. (613 S. J. Strauss Lane),
Kingston

13th Annual Diakon Living & Learning after 50

Senior Expo – Oct. 17, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
at Fairlane Village Mall, Pottsville



Nutritious pumpkin muffins

When cooler fall weather arrives, so do the pumpkin spice cravings.

The good news? Pumpkin is particularly rich in vitamin A, which can help lower your risk of eye-related conditions. Pumpkin also contains a high antioxidant content and is rich in vitamin C, which can help boost your immune system.

Many favorite fall spices can have beneficial effects on your health also. Cinnamon, which has been studied for numerous health benefits, is shown to be full of antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties. It has also been linked to a reduced risk of heart disease by lowering levels of LDL and total cholesterol and triglycerides. Ongoing studies reveal cinnamon may help reduce insulin resistance and help to lower blood sugar levels. Ginger has been found to help aid digestion and reduce nausea, while cloves and nutmeg contain powerful antioxidants.



Yields: 15 muffins

Ingredients:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ whole wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- ½ cup honey
- 2 large eggs
- 6 tablespoon butter, melted and cooled
- ¼ cup Greek yogurt
- 2 cup toasted and chopped pecans
- 2 tablespoon brown sugar

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F and line muffin tin with liners.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together flours, baking powder, baking soda, salt and pumpkin pie spice.
3. Add pumpkin, honey, eggs, butter and yogurt, and mix until combined. Fold in ¾ cup pecans.
4. Divide batter into muffin liners, then top with remaining pecans and brown sugar. Bake until muffins are golden brown and a toothpick comes out clean, about 30 minutes. Let muffins cool in pan, then serve.

Nutrition information (1 muffin):

194Kcal, 11gm fat, 4gm saturated fat, 156mg sodium, 21gm carbohydrate, 2gm fiber, 12gm sugar, 4gm protein

Pumpkin pie spice

- 4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for up to 6 months

Fight back against respiratory illnesses

The flu, COVID and RSV can stop with you. And it's as easy as rolling up your sleeve.

Even healthy adults should protect themselves from flu and other respiratory illnesses. But getting vaccinated is especially important for older people, young children, pregnant people and anyone with a condition that makes complications from flu or similar illnesses more likely.

The flu vaccination has been shown to be up to 60% effective in preventing the flu. Timing of the vaccination is important as its immunity tends to wane over time. Those with poor immune systems tend to have immunity that wanes earlier. That's why vaccinations are encouraged before the end of October, since fall and winter are usually the start of flu season.

But if you miss that window of time, don't worry. It's not too late. Getting the flu shot, COVID vaccine or RSV vaccine any time is better than skipping protection altogether.

Benefits of flu vaccination include:

1. It's easy to get and usually at no cost.
2. It reduces your chances of getting the flu which can exacerbate existing health issues like asthma or COPD. The flu is highly contagious and would place your family and loved ones at risk too.
3. It's been shown to reduce severity of illness in people who get vaccinated but still get sick.

Worried about side effects? The flu vaccine rarely causes serious adverse effects. You may notice mild soreness at the site of injection. Flu-like symptoms, such as fever and muscle aches, occasionally occur six to 12 hours after receiving the flu shot and last one to two days. However, these symptoms are rare.

Getting your flu, COVID and RSV vaccines is part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, like eating right, exercising, and getting enough rest (all good strategies to combat the flu, too). Contact your medical provider to schedule your shots or plan to attend a flu shot clinic in your area.



Check those boxes!

Completing surveys helps you get better service.

Beginning in October of each year, randomly selected Medicare beneficiaries receive a questionnaire in the mail titled “Medicare Provider Experience Survey.” If you receive one of these surveys, take the time to fill out the questionnaire.

As a person with Medicare, you deserve to get the highest quality medical care when you need it, from doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers you trust. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is the federal agency that administers the Medicare program, and our responsibility is to make sure you get high-quality care. One of the ways we can fulfill this responsibility is to find out directly from you about the care you are receiving under the Medicare program.

The accuracy of the results depends on getting answers from you and others selected for this survey. This is your opportunity to help us serve you better. Information you provide will be held in confidence by CMS and is protected by the Privacy Act. Your responses won’t be shared with the health care provider named in the survey. Your help is voluntary, and your decision to participate or not to participate has no effect on your Medicare benefits.

Thanks for your help with this important survey!

Seniors: Get in the habit of better health

Just because you’re getting older doesn’t mean you have to stop living! By keeping these healthy tips in mind, aging doesn’t need to translate to “getting old.”

As we age, our lives and bodies change. That’s why maintaining good habits is a crucial part of staying healthy and independent.

Whether you are a senior yourself or care for an older loved one, these tips can help you get started:

- **Proper nutrition:** If you want to live longer, eating healthy is key. A good place to start is by eliminating processed foods from your diet. Processed food includes those that have been cooked, canned, packaged, frozen or modified in some way. Some examples of processed foods are “convenience foods” such as cereals, chips, cookies, frozen dinners, and deli meats. Start adding more leafy greens, lean meats, and plant-based protein to your diet, including plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy.
- **Exercise regularly:** Exercise offers many physical benefits, as well as mental ones. Not only does exercise reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease and chronic health conditions such as diabetes, but it can also improve your emotional outlook as well. Regular exercise can even reduce chronic pain and boost immunity. Just 30 minutes of exercise 3 to 4 times a week can have you feeling better. Gardening, dancing and swimming are all great ways to get moving! Add in a few minutes of light weight training to improve your stamina and build lean muscle mass.
- **Get enough rest:** You don’t feel at your best when you’re tired. Aim for between 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night and rest throughout the day if you’re feeling tired. Studies reveal that sleep deprivation, or sleeping less than five hours a night, can contribute to major health problems, including high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity and cancer.
- **Spend time with family:** As you age, you may find it’s harder to connect with people as you once did. Reach out to friends and family—spend time nurturing those relationships as best you can. Physical, face-to-face interactions can ward off depression and are much more beneficial than sending texts or emails.
- If you have grandchildren or great-grandchildren, spend time with them when you can. A recent study finds that women who spend time taking care of grandkids lower their risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease.
- Staying socially, mentally, and physically active can help reduce the amount of brain cell damage that’s linked to Alzheimer’s and even promote the growth of new, healthy brain cells. Stay connected to others. Find activities to do with other people, such as volunteering or going for a walk.
- **Manage stress:** With age can come new stresses, from health issues to finances. Increased stress has been linked to health issues including heart attack, stroke and other medical conditions. Find ways to control your stress levels through exercise, meditation and by having a strong support network.
- **Keep your mind sharp:** Brain health is as important as any other healthy habit, especially as you age. Learning a new skill, practicing word or number puzzles, or reading an interesting book can all help keep your mind sharp.

Healthy living matters more than you know. By getting yourself or your loved ones into the practice of good habits now, you’ll help these habits become routine.

