

Welcome to the summer 2024 edition of the Keystone Accountable Care Organization (ACO) newsletter!

The Keystone ACO (Accountable Care Organization) is a network of healthcare providers serving about 65,000 traditional Medicare beneficiaries across Pennsylvania. Our mission is to promote wellness and provide person-centered, high-quality healthcare that brings value to both Medicare beneficiaries and CMS (Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services). We hope you enjoy this newsletter offering general ACO, community and healthcare related topics.

## June: Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month

### Mind games could keep your brain sharp

Alzheimer's disease affects 5.4 million people, and as the number of Americans over 65 increases, so will the number of people affected by the disease.

Alzheimer's disease causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior, and while it's normal to occasionally forget things as you get older, Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. *"Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, a general term for memory and thinking problems that are bad enough to impact real world activities, accounting for 60 percent or more of dementia cases,"* said behavioral neurologist Glen R. Finney, MD, director of the Memory and Cognition Program at Geisinger. "It generally affects people older than 65; however, in some cases, it can affect younger people."

Alzheimer's is a progressive disease with no cure, and treatment can't stop Alzheimer's disease from progressing. However, researchers believe there are things most people can do to try and delay the onset of symptoms or stop them from progressing at a fast rate. One-way researchers believe you may be able to delay the start of dementia is through brain training.

*"The idea behind brain training is that just as exercise helps you keep your body in good shape, mental exercises help your brain stay in good shape,"* said Dr. Finney. A study published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: Translational Research & Clinical Interventions* revealed that brain-training activities can reduce the risk of dementia.

The type of training in that study is called "speed-of-processing," where a person quickly identifies and remembers an object in front of them.





During the study, participants were randomly placed in one of three training groups: one for verbal memory skills training, one for reasoning and problem-solving skills and another for speed-of-processing training. During speed-of-processing training, participants identified an object in front of them, as well as objects in their peripheral vision. As the game continues, participants had less time to identify objects and also faced distractions on the screen. The group of participants that received speed-of-processing brain-training sessions saw a 29 percent decreased risk of dementia after 10 years. However, researchers note that more studies need to be done to determine why speed-of-processing brain training is effective, as opposed to other types of brain training.

So, should you focus on brain training to prevent dementia?

*“While it’s unclear if games geared specifically toward dementia and Alzheimer’s prevention actually work, there’s evidence that keeping your mind sharp and taking good care of yourself can help keep your brain healthy, too,” said Dr. Finney.*

Lifestyle habits, such as getting the recommended 150 minutes of exercise per week and eating a diet full of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and dairy, may promote brain health. In addition, staying mentally and socially active as you age may help to keep your brain healthy. You should consider activities such as taking adult education classes, reading a challenging book, doing crossword puzzles or other tasks that expose your mind to new tasks.



*“Staying socially active by volunteering or participating in community activities can also help to keep your mind sharp,” said Dr. Finney.*

Guiding and Improved Dementia Experience (GUIDE)

CMS created a new care model (GUIDE) designed to improve the quality of life for people with dementia living at home and reducing the burden and strain on their caregivers and loved ones. CMS received applications across the country from Medicare Part B enrolled providers/suppliers who can bill Medicare and agree to meet model requirements. Providers/suppliers may contract with other organizations to meet the care delivery needs. CMS will publish a list of model participants on its website in the Summer of 2024.

Dementia takes a toll on not only those people with the disease but also their loved ones and caregivers. About 6.7 million Americans currently live with some form of dementia, including Alzheimer’s Disease. This number is projected to triple by the year 2060.

Many caregivers for people with dementia, who are often Medicare beneficiaries themselves, report high levels of stress and depression, which negatively affects their overall health and increase their risk for serious illness.

The GUIDE model is designed to:

- Improve quality of life for those with dementia by addressing behavioral and functional needs, offering better care coordination for all related healthcare needs, and improving transitions of care between community, hospital and other healthcare organizations.
- Reduce burden and strain on unpaid caregivers of people living with dementia by providing training, referrals to community resources, respite services and access to a 24/7 hotline.
- Prevent or delay long term nursing home care for as long as appropriate by enabling caregivers to support patients with dementia safely in their homes through the supports mentioned above.

Medicare beneficiary enrollment is voluntary. Requirements to be eligible for the program include:

- Confirmed dementia diagnosis
- Medicare is primary payer
- Not enrolled in Medicare Advantage
- Not enrolled in Special Needs Plans (SNPs)/
- Enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B
- Has not elected the Medicare hospice benefit
- Not enrolled in PACE program
- Not a long-term nursing home resident (custodial)



For a Medicare beneficiary to receive services under the model, they will need to speak with a health care provider that is participating in the GUIDE Model in their community. There are three possible means for a Medicare beneficiary to voluntarily enroll in the program:

- The Medicare beneficiary reaches out to a GUIDE-approved Provider.
- The GUIDE-approved Provider reaches out to the beneficiary based upon information from the Medicare claims and/or medical record.
- Medicare reaches out to the beneficiary, based upon information from Medicare claims.

A Medicare beneficiary could then visit a model participant, and after consenting to receiving services from the participant, CMS would be able to confirm whether the beneficiary meets the model eligibility requirements before aligning them to the participant.



Simple roasted vegetables

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 1 medium red or green bell pepper
- 1 medium onion
- 1 medium zucchini
- 1/4 pound mushrooms
- Olive oil-flavored cooking spray or 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh or 2 teaspoons dried basil leaves, if desired



Directions:

1. Cut the bell pepper lengthwise in half and cut out seeds and membrane. Cut each half lengthwise into 4 strips.
2. Peel the onion and cut in half. Wrap one half of onion and refrigerate for another use. Cut remaining half into 4 wedges, then separate into pieces.
3. Cut the zucchini crosswise into 1-inch pieces. Cut off and discard the end of each mushroom stem and leave the mushrooms whole.
4. Heat the oven to 425 F. Spray the bottom of a 13 x 9 pan or cookie sheet with cooking spray. Arrange the vegetables in a single layer in the sprayed pan. Lightly coat the vegetables with cooking spray or place in a bowl with olive oil and toss to coat. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and basil.
5. Bake uncovered for 15 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven. Turn vegetables over. Bake uncovered about 10 minutes longer or until vegetables are crisp-tender when pierced with a fork.

**Nutrition information**  
(serving size: ¼ of recipe): Calories 30-40; calories from Fat 0; total fat 0-1g; saturated fat 0g; cholesterol 0mg; sodium 150mg; total carbohydrate 6g; dietary fiber 1g; protein 2g





Challenge your brain:

1. Account	5. Customer	9. Harmonica	13. Nylon
2. Cake	6. Deposit	10. Lake	14. Peanuts
3. Cashier	7. Drum	11. Microwave	15. Socks
4. Clogs	8. Duck	12. Milk	16. Wrench



I M S V B Y R F D I V G S T P Y K C U D L H M  
S D J C J P A B B R V I A C C O U N T I I P H  
C E W U L A K E K M N O L Y N S F H W S E R R  
K P H Y B J C U R P P E O K S N L F B A F E W  
D O O D V S B S O Y F U S O K D N S N F M K R  
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B T O C P Y W A S W K C C R D J U U T S P J S  
J S B Y F F W M K D R H T W R C L L E T I Y A  
L G F Y A O G O I C E E B C F E P T P C M H C  
U M Y P R W B M M E F M N E K A C G A O R K C  
W N G C B Y F U S S E E O C H A R M O N I C A  
R H I R K W G R W W K E R T H A B T O D K K M  
B M Y F P D S D D N P U U T T V V U B K N A O



Selecting a primary care provider

Medicare beneficiaries may select their Primary Care Provider (PCP) on the [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) website. The how-to video is located on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/AZ7h-rqshG4>. The video includes step-by-step instructions for locating and identifying a PCP on a person’s Medicare.gov account. CMS has also completed a Spanish language version of the same video. It is available to use in conjunction with the Spanish language [Medicare.gov](https://es.medicare.gov) site, <https://es.medicare.gov/>. The direct link to the Spanish video is <https://youtu.be/baCO37UqJHU>.



July: Ultraviolet (UV) Safety Awareness Month

Sun safety: Protect your skin from ultraviolet rays Sunny summer days mean more time spent outdoors.

As you enjoy the health benefits of outdoor activities, don’t forget to protect your skin, which can be damaged by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays.

Did you know that UV rays from the sun are actually a form of radiation? It’s not as strong as radiation from an X-ray, but stronger than that of visible light. The two forms of UV rays from the sun include UVA and UVB. Too much exposure to both types is associated with the development of skin cancer. UVA radiation can cause skin to become wrinkled or leathery, while UVB is the type of radiation that causes sunburns. UV levels are highest around mid-day in the summer when the sun is the strongest. Surfaces like water, sand and snow can reflect the sunlight making the UV levels even higher. This explains why you can get a sunburn while skiing in the winter.

Fortunately, skin cancer is largely preventable with proper sun safety and UV protection.

How to protect your skin from radiation:

- Wear protective clothing such as a brimmed hat, sunglasses, and lightweight clothing to protect your skin.
- Stay in the shade and avoid reflective surfaces such as bodies of water, sand, and snow.
- Be active outside in the morning or late afternoon.
- Avoid the sun when it’s strongest, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Use sunscreen with a high SPF and apply often, at least every two hours.
- Avoid tanning booths.
- Check the UV index.
  - The index ranges from 1 to 11.
  - The higher the index the more dangerous.

With just a few simple precautions, you can have a safe summer full of the activities you love.





Don't let the flu stop you!

2024-25 Influenza Vaccination season will soon be here.  
Plan to get your flu shot and protect more than yourself.

August: National Immunization Awareness Month

Getting a flu shot is the best way to prevent the flu – this year and every year.

Getting a flu shot is one of the most effective ways to ward off the flu. Other ways to prevent the flu:

- Wear a face mask and keep your distance from others in public places
- Wash your hands often with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds
- Use hand sanitizer when handwashing isn't an option
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, and mouth (until you've washed your hands)
- Avoid crowds and close contact with those who are sick

Flu symptoms include fever, chills, headache, sore throat, muscle aches and runny nose, which can result in missing work or school.

Flu season begins in the fall and ends in the spring, peaking between December and February. Experts highly recommend getting your flu shot by the end of October, but it's never too late to get a flu shot.

A few myths about the flu shot:

- **The flu shot will give me the flu.**  
The flu vaccine is made from a dead virus that can't make you sick. Instead, it builds your immunity to help you stay healthy.  
If you feel under the weather after getting the flu shot, it's because it activates your immune system, not because it gave you the flu. One may develop some mild side effects, like a headache or muscle aches, which are normal and should resolve within a day.
- **If I get the flu, antibiotics will cure it.**  
Antibiotics are only effective against bacteria — and the flu is a virus.  
No medication can completely stop or prevent the flu. However, doctors can prescribe an antiviral, such as Tamiflu, medications to lessen the symptoms.

For most people, the best (and most recommended) way to recover from the flu is by resting, drinking plenty of fluids and treating the symptoms. And if you're sick, be sure to stay home to prevent getting others sick.

Geisinger Wellness Events					
Event	Start Date	End Date	Event Location	Day	Time
Chronic Disease Self-Management Program	7/15	8/26	Virtual	Monday	1-3:30
A Matter of Balance	7/19	9/6	65F Scranton*	Friday	10-12
A Matter of Balance	8/7	9/25	65F Buckhorn*	Wednesday	1-3
A Matter of Balance	9/9	10/28	65F Kingston*	Monday	1-3

To register for these free programs, visit [events.geisinger.org](https://events.geisinger.org) or call 866-415-7138 (PA relay 711).  
\*Must be 65 years of age and older to attend

Annual depression screenings

Early detection of depression allows for timely intervention and treatment that prevents the condition from worsening. Depression screening tools are an effective method to identify people who may have symptoms of depression. Common standardized depression screening tools are called Patient Health Questionnaires (PHQ). The PHQ-2 will ask two questions to evaluate the likelihood of depressed mood, while the PHQ-9 will ask nine more specific questions to evaluate the likelihood of major depression. The response to each question is assigned a score. The overall score of the PHQ will help the clinician in determining if depression exists and, if so, the severity of a potential depression diagnosis. The score will help in the discussion between the clinician and individual in creating a treatment plan that is tailored to the patient.

As mentioned, early detection of depression is important. Therefore, many clinician offices have put in place a protocol to have patients answer the questions on a PHQ-2 or PHQ-9 on a yearly basis. The questions may be asked verbally, on paper, an iPad or through a patient portal. If you are asked to take part in a PHQ survey, complete the questionnaire honestly and completely.

As you think back over the past two weeks, if you find yourself bothered by any of the following areas, please reach out to your primary care provider for evaluation of possible depression:

- Little interest or pleasure in doing things
- Feeling down, depressed or hopeless
- Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
- Feeling tired or having little energy
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Feeling bad about yourself or that you have let yourself or your family down
- Trouble concentrating on this such as reading the newspaper or watching TV
- Moving or speaking so slowly that other people have noticed or feeling fidgety or restless
- Thoughts of hurting yourself in some way

Hands Only CPR

When seconds matter, you can help save a life!

Heart disease is the number one killer in the United States. You can be part of the solution. Knowing how to do Hands Only CPR can help save lives.



Evangelical Community Health and Wellness offers a FREE presentation to assist community members in learning the importance of CPR – cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

For small groups or organizations, the Community Health and Wellness Team can work to give you the tools you need to be confident in providing Hands Only CPR.

Participants will learn:

- Signs of a cardiac arrest
- What to do in an emergency
- Skills to perform Hands Only CPR

To schedule a presentation for your group or organization, call Evangelical Community Health and Wellness at 570-768-3200





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## Need help affording your medications?

Programs are available for those who meet certain financial requirements, and some pharmaceutical companies offer reduced pricing on certain drugs based on financial need. Call 570-808-4704 for help.

If you or someone you know needs more information about social resources available in your community, Neighborly is here to help. Neighborly is available as an easy-to-use online network that helps you connect to free and reduced-cost programs and services, including food, housing, childcare, transportation, utility assistance, education, health care, legal services, and financial assistance. If you or someone you know needs more information about resources available in your neighborhood, go to [www.NeighborlyPA.com](http://www.NeighborlyPA.com).

