

SUMMER 2023

KACO Connections

Welcome note

Janet Comrey,
Operations Director
Keystone ACO



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

I hope you are enjoying the summer and staying safe and healthy, remembering to wear sunscreen and taking precautions in the heat. Summer is often a time for traveling, family gatherings, and vacations for many of us, but don't forget to maintain your health and keep up with your preventive appointments, including cancer screenings and annual wellness visits, as well as regular appointments with your doctor. It's also important to eat healthy foods and exercise regularly.

In this issue, we discuss the SNF 3-day waiver benefit, which may be available to you if needed. We review telehealth visits and offer tips on how to prepare for one. There's also information on taking antibiotics and recognizing the importance of early dementia detection.

Looking for a light lunch? See the recipe on page 6, which is full of vitamins and minerals to keep you energized and add a healthy option to your diet.

If you find yourself needing help with your medication costs, it may benefit you to reach out to Keystone ACO's medication access coordinator. Read on to see how she can provide you with guidance and some resources to help with affording medications.

Enjoy your summer and stay healthy and safe!

Thank you,
Janet Comrey

SNF Three-day Waiver

A skilled nursing facility (SNF) is a facility (meeting specific regulatory certification requirements) which primarily provides inpatient skilled nursing care and related services to patients who require medical, nursing or rehabilitative services, but does not provide the same level of care or treatment available in a hospital. However, some hospitals may provide a few dedicated beds that provide SNF level of care.

Generally, patients who are admitted to skilled nursing facilities are recovering from surgery, injury or acute illness, but a skilled nursing environment may also be appropriate for those with chronic conditions that require constant medical supervision.

Traditional Medicare health insurance allows for SNF services if the Medicare beneficiary meets the following criteria:

- Has been hospitalized for a minimum of three consecutive days and within the last 30 days before being admitted to a SNF
- Has Part A benefit with days left in the benefit period to use
- Has a doctor determining daily skilled care is needed
- Has a Medicare-certified SNF to provide the service

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) allows Accountable Care Organizations (ACO) certain flexibilities, including waiving the three-day stay rule related to SNF coverage. The waiver allows Medicare beneficiaries who are attributed to an ACO to access their Part A SNF benefit without having the required three-day stay at an acute care hospital. The beneficiary still needs to have a skilled need that is medically reasonable and necessary, but no longer requires admission to the hospital to qualify.

The ACO can only use the SNF three-day waiver at facilities that demonstrate high quality of care, have contracted with the ACO and were approved by Medicare. A list of SNFs with a three-star rating or higher in CMS Nursing Home Compare will be provided to each beneficiary at the time of need as part of a Medicare-required letter stating your rights as a Medicare insurance recipient.

If you are a Medicare insurance beneficiary who sees an ACO physician routinely, you may be assigned by Medicare to the ACO and able to use this benefit when needed.

If you receive one of our Keystone ACO newsletters, you are assigned to our ACO by Medicare. Your doctors and other ACO providers and care coordinators will work with you to make arrangements for a SNF three-day waiver admission, if needed and appropriate.

If you have questions, call Keystone ACO or call Medicare at 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TTY users can call 877-486-2048.

Telehealth: Bringing Healthcare to You

Attending in-person and ongoing clinical appointments can be challenging when considering the limitations on your free time and the potential expenses of parking, childcare and travel costs. Telehealth visits may be an option for you to get the care you need without those additional costs and time demands. If your doctor or a medical specialist uses telehealth, they may offer options to you such as a voice or video chat, online messaging or other secure messaging.



Telehealth visits may include virtual urgent care, medication changes, ongoing health conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart conditions), and routine checkups. You might also schedule telehealth visits for nutrition support, behavioral health and mental health support and other specialty care.

Preparing for your telehealth visit:

- Make sure you have an internet or WiFi connection.
- Be prepared to connect to the internet using a device with a speaker and a camera such as a tablet/iPad, smartphone, or laptop/computer.
- Make sure to review any instructions from your doctor about your appointment and if you need to log into any app or online system.
- Verify that you have a phone number or contact to reach for any technical issues during your visit.

During your telehealth visit:

- Just like an in-person appointment, you and your doctor will introduce yourselves and then discuss any symptoms or concerns you have, review your medical history and current medications, and discuss the next steps or potential treatment.

- At the end of the telehealth visit, the doctor will review what you discussed during this visit and answer any questions you have.

Keep in mind that health centers may offer in-clinic options for telehealth visits too. For in-clinic telehealth appointments, you will come to the medical center and a member of the clinical team will set up the equipment to connect you with the telehealth doctor. One of the benefits of being in-clinic for a telehealth visit is that the clinical team can check your vitals; listen to your heart and lungs; and check your ears, nose and throat, if needed, for the appointment.

With an increasing number of telehealth options available throughout Pennsylvania, you may find yourself interested in trying out a telehealth visit. Make sure to contact your doctor and your insurance so you can learn about what telehealth options are available and a good fit for you.

Rachel Dumont, MS, O TR/L,
Program Manager
Center for Telehealth
Geisinger

What Every Patient Should Know About Antibiotics

Antibiotics are drugs used to treat infections caused by bacteria. They are not effective against viruses.

Using antibiotics when you don't need them — such as when you have a virus — can make antibiotics not work when you do need them. This is because bacteria gradually develop resistance to antibiotics. Resistant bacteria then grow and cause more harm.



Steps to reduce antibiotic resistance:

- Don't insist that your doctor prescribe an antibiotic for you.
- Practice good handwashing techniques or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers to reduce your risk of getting and spreading infections.
- Never take antibiotics for viral infections.
- Never take antibiotics that were prescribed for someone else.
- Never take antibiotics that were left over from a previous prescription.

Viral infections do not require an antibiotic. The following conditions may be viral in nature:

- Colds and flu
- Coughs and bronchitis
- Ear infections in adults
- Sinus infections
- Sore throats



Another reason to avoid unnecessary antibiotics is that they can have bad side effects.

Possible side effects of antibiotics:

- Allergic reactions, including rash, wheezing and difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea, including a severe infection of the bowel called C. diff
- Interference or interaction with other medications, such as birth control pills
- Nausea, vomiting, bloating and indigestion
- Yeast infections

The right way to use antibiotics

If you are prescribed an antibiotic, tell your doctor about any allergies you have, and inform your doctor if you are or could be pregnant. Ask about side effects.

If you miss a dose, don't double the next one.

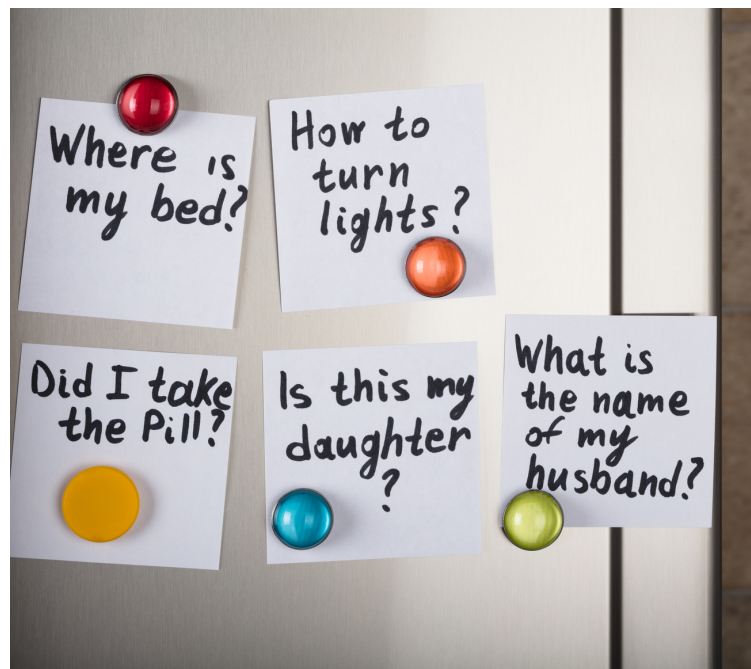
Just take your next dose as usual. Always complete the entire course of therapy.

Some antibiotics interact with foods, so ask your pharmacist if you should take them on an empty or a full stomach.

Used properly, antibiotics can be powerful in treating bacterial infections. Taking them only when necessary helps them stay effective. The best way to combat infections is to educate yourself and those around you.

Early Dementia Detection

Dementia is a problem that we all face if we live long enough. It's a significant concern for many people as they age. This progressive condition affects memory, thinking and behavior, and can have a significant impact on people and their loved ones. While not everyone will develop dementia, the risk does increase with age. However, it's important to note that lifestyle factors such as maintaining a healthy diet, engaging in regular exercise, and staying mentally and socially active, can potentially reduce the risk or delay the onset of dementia. Ongoing research aims to better understand dementia and develop effective treatments or preventive measures.



Several medications that have been in use for a number of years have been shown to slow the progression of brain decline, but these medications need to be started in the early stages. Therefore, it is wise starting at age 65 to have a cognitive screening test performed at least annually. If family members or loved ones notice a change in a person's memory, behaviors or activities, they should bring it to the attention of the primary care physician (PCP) for further evaluation.

Early detection and intervention are crucial when it comes to managing dementia. Several medications, such as cholinesterase inhibitors and Memantine, have shown potential in slowing the rate of cognitive decline in certain types of dementia. Regular cognitive screening tests, especially for people age 65 and older, can help identify any changes in memory or cognition and allow for timely interventions. Many PCPs will arrange annual wellness visits where memory screenings can be completed for early detection.

It is essential for family members or loved ones to be vigilant and report any noticeable changes in memory, behavior or daily activities to their PCP. This can lead to further evaluation, proper diagnosis and appropriate management strategies to support the person's cognitive health. Regular communication with healthcare professionals is key to addressing concerns and ensuring the best possible care for those at risk of or affected by dementia.

Richard Martin, MD, FAAFP
Senior Clinical Advisor
Keystone ACO

Tuna Pasta Salad

Recipe Courtesy of: www.allrecipes.com by: Dianne VanHuss



Ingredients:

- 1 cup seashell pasta
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1/2 cup iceberg lettuce, rinsed and chopped
- 1 (5-ounce) can tuna, drained
- 1 (15-ounce) can peas, drained
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup creamy Italian salad dressing, or more to taste

Directions:

Step 1

Fill a large pot with lightly salted water and bring to a boil. Stir in seashell pasta, and return to a boil. Cook pasta uncovered, stirring occasionally, until cooked through, but still firm to the bite, about 11 minutes; drain.

Step 2

Place green onions and lettuce in a large bowl, Add pasta, tuna, peas and grated cheddar cheese; mix well. Stir in dressing; toss to coat.

Cook's note:

Substitute your favorite creamy salad dressing for the creamy Italian dressing if you wish.

Nutritional facts:

Serving size: 6

Calories 260

Total fat - 12g

Total carbohydrate - 25g

Protein - 13g

Tips:

Did you know tuna is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, Vitamin B12, potassium, magnesium, iron and many other vitamins and minerals? Tuna is a nutritious food with many health benefits:

- Helps reduce blood pressure; improves heart health
- Improves blood circulation
- Helps reduce inflammation
- Reduces risk of certain cancers: breast, colon, kidney
- Boosts immune system

Keystone ACO Medication Access Coordinator

Taking your prescription medication in the correct dose at the frequency prescribed by your physician is important to your overall health. Because people sometimes need help paying for their medications, programs are available to those who meet certain financial requirements, and some pharmaceutical companies offer reduced pricing on certain drugs based on financial need. However, you need to know where to reach out for assistance.

If you are not sure where to turn for help in paying for your prescription medications, Keystone ACO has a resource that can talk with you about possible options. Angela Carl is a medication access coordinator who is knowledgeable about programs that are available to offer financial assistance. As a Keystone ACO beneficiary, you can talk with Angela about your specific situation. In order to determine if you qualify for assistance, she will need to discuss your financial information. Angela is employed by Geisinger, but her services to help with medication affordability are available to all Keystone ACO beneficiaries. Call Angela at 570-808-4704.

Reminders

Schedule appropriate preventative screenings.

mammograms colonoscopies eye exam
dental visit annual wellness visit



SILVER SNEAKERS

Age is just a number. It's never too late to get fit, build strength and balance, and feel better every day. SilverSneakers™ is a community that will help you not just become more active, but more confident and social as well. Many of our SilverSneakers™ participants pay reduced or no membership fees so make plans to join us today!

Lewisburg YMCA | 120 Hardwood Drive | Lewisburg, PA



WELLNESS 360

Evangelical's New Active Aging Network

Wellness 360 is Evangelical's active aging network that helps people 55+ to connect, learn, and live their healthiest lives. Membership is free and includes many perks, such as early notification of upcoming events, free health screenings, educational opportunities, and discounts at local businesses.

Sign up for FREE today:
www.EvanHospital.com/wellness360

 WELLNESS 360

Medicare Resources

To contact Medicare

For additional information on accountable care organizations, contact Medicare at 1-800-Medicare (1-800-633-4227) and ask for the Medicare ACO Department.

TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048. You may also visit medicare.gov/acos.html.

To contact Keystone ACO

Dial 570-271-6403. You will then be offered a few options to help you get connected to the appropriate person. Select option 1 for newsletter/website related questions or issues, 2 to talk with our operations director, or remain on the line to speak with our administrative assistant. You may also email us at KeystoneACO@KeystoneACO.org



PAEB

Keystone Accountable Care Organization, LLC

100 N. Academy Ave.

Danville, PA 17822

Mail Code 30-55

Phone: 570-271-6403

Fax: 570-214-1314

Email: KeystoneACO@KeystoneACO.org

Website: KeystoneACO.org

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You can access our website at KeystoneACO.org.