

OCTOBER 2023

HOLIDAY HEALTH NEWS

CARE CONNECTION

If you haven't already, consider this your reminder to schedule your annual flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine!

THE BEST GIFT OF ALL: SELF-CARE DURING THE HOLIDAYS

While the holidays are known as being a time of “merry” and “happy”, too often they’re also times of “stressed” or “sad” or “overwhelmed” for many of us! It’s easy to get swept up in the hectic schedules of the holiday season and neglect ourselves and our health. But that’s why the first gift you should give this year is to yourself: the gift of self-care during the holidays.

What exactly is self-care? Well, it’s an all-encompassing phrase that basically means prioritizing your physical, mental, emotional, and financial well-being. (After all, you need to put on your own oxygen mask first before you can help others with theirs, right?) Obviously you want to ensure that your family has the best possible holiday, but you can’t do that at the expense of your own health and wellness.

Here are six ways to focus on your self-care this season.

- 1. Be active.** Between the cold winter weather and a hectic holiday schedule, it can be difficult to get exercise in this time of year. But the most important thing is just to keep moving as much and as often as you can. Park further out from the mall and take the stairs rather than the escalator or elevator when you’re able. Bundling up for a family stroll through the neighborhood to look at holiday decorations also keeps you moving.
- 2. Make healthy choices (most of the time).** The holiday season is known as a time of indulgence, which isn’t great from a health perspective. There’s nothing wrong with enjoying some sweets or savory foods in moderation, though. Keep track of your portion sizes and strive to make healthy food decisions most of the time — then enjoy some fruitcake or eggnog without guilt.
- 3. Respect your budget.** It’s tempting to let our generosity get the better of us during the holidays, but don’t let this season come at the cost of your financial health. Build a budget that accounts for all of your monthly needs as well as savings, if able, before coming up with a gift or decor budget. Remember that thoughtfulness doesn’t have a monetary value. Homemade gifts, experiences, and quality time can be just as special as the latest tech doodad — if not more!
- 4. Say No.** It’s way too easy to find yourself overextended during the holidays, between chores, shopping, decorating, work, family time, events, and everything else that fills your plate. And while it’s great to say ‘yes’ to things that are important and enjoyable to you, you also need to guard your time and let yourself politely decline things that may be too stressful or difficult, if you can.
- 5. Make room for all of your feelings.** They say “it’s the most wonderful time of the year,” but the holidays can stir up all sorts of complicated emotions, like sadness, anxiety, and grief, among others. In fact, 64% of people say they experience a case of the holiday blues during the season, so if you feel that way, you’re not alone. And it’s important to not ignore those feelings in lieu of putting on a happy face. You’ll feel better once you’ve experienced your feelings and worked to process them safely and fully, especially if you’re able to do so with the help of a professional. Remember that Talkspace virtual messaging therapy is free to use for FMCP members and their covered dependents age 13+. With Talkspace, you have access to a private, confidential chatroom with your therapist where you can send unlimited picture, video, and audio messages as well as one thirty-minute video session every thirty days.
- 6. Let go of expectations.** Too often we get hyperfocused on making the holidays “perfect” for our family and friends. We compare our decorations to others’ on social media and in our neighborhoods. We worry about what people will think of the gifts we give and the food we make. We spend so much time focusing on these things that we miss the point of the season altogether! Remember those old sayings: perfection doesn’t exist, and comparison is the thief of joy. Let go of your expectations and the high standards you set for yourself, and focus on just enjoying the holidays!

Bear in mind that self-care isn’t something you should save just for the holiday season. It’s important to make your overall wellbeing a priority throughout the year as well.

Sources: [HealthCoachInstitute.com](https://www.healthcoachinstitute.com), [Headspace.com](https://www.headspace.com)



WELLNESS TIP!

Schedule your appointments!

Visit your dentist twice a year, go for an eye exam, make sure you’re getting those annual checkups at the doctor, and schedule the recommended screenings for your age group. Make your health a top priority.



See your Summary Plan Description for more information about your preventive care coverage.

Sources: [Centrum](https://www.centrum.com)

DID YOU KNOW?

MOST PROVIDERS HAVE A PATIENT PORTAL

Be sure to sign up with your healthcare provider’s patient portal for the most convenient way to access your health information. Patient portals make it easier to message your provider, view lab test results, make appointments, and more. Scan the QR code below to learn more about patient portals!

Check with your provider’s office to learn how to register for their patient portal.



THE WHEN & WHAT OF PREVENTIVE CARE:

SCREENINGS & VACCINATIONS

You know that you ought to go to the doctor for an annual checkup to help keep yourself healthy, but there’s so much more to preventive care than just one doctor’s visit — like vaccinations, screenings for certain diseases and conditions, and screenings for cancers. It can feel like a lot, which might make it seem confusing. But the Plan covers a wide range of preventive and wellness services designed to keep you healthy. Below is a summary of some of the most common preventive care vaccinations and screenings to mark down on your calendar.

<div> <div></div> <div>VACCINATIONS</div> <div></div> <div>DISEASE SCREENINGS</div> <div></div> <div>CANCER SCREENINGS</div> </div>	AGE TO ADMINISTER	RECOMMENDED FREQUENCY
FLU VACCINE	6 months old – 80+ years old	Everyone age 6 months and older should receive one dose annually.
HPV VACCINE	11 – 26 years old	Two doses are recommended for people 11 to 15 years old and three doses for people 15 to 26.
SHINGLES VACCINE	50 – 80+ years old	Shingrix should be given in two doses, 2 to 6 months apart, even if the patient already received Zostavax.
COVID-19 VACCINE	12 – 80+ years old	One or two doses depending on the vaccine type.
HEPATITIS C SCREENING	18 – 79 years old	Adults age 18 to 79 should have a one-time blood test.
HIV SCREENING	15 – 65 years old	Persons age 15 to 75 years old and those at increased risk of infection are entitled to one HIV screening per lifetime. Please Note: This benefit is subject to reasonable medical management techniques.
STD SCREENING (CHLAMYDIA & GONORRHEA)	Under 25 years old or at increased risk	Women under age 25 or who are at increased risk of infection should be tested annually for gonorrhea and chlamydia infection.
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING	18+ years old	Adults should have their blood pressure screened annually.
SCREENING FOR CHOLESTEROL ABNORMALITIES	Men: 35+ years old Women: 45+ years old	Men age 35 or older and women age 45 or older should have their cholesterol levels checked annually. If at increased risk, men and women should begin annual screening at age 20.
DIABETES SCREENING	20 – 80+ years old	Hemoglobin A1c, which measures blood sugar control over three months, should be checked regularly.
OSTEOPOROSIS SCREENING	66 – 80+ years	Women should have their first DEXA bone scan at 65, repeated as determined by their physician.
ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM SCREENING	66 – 75 years	Men between 65 and 75 years old who have ever smoked should have a one-time screening.
CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING	21 – 65 years old	Women should be screened every 3 years from 21 to 30 years old, and every 5 years from 30 to 65.
BREAST CANCER SCREENING	40 – 74 years old	Women should have their first mammogram between age 40 and 50, repeated every year until age 74.
COLON CANCER SCREENING	45 – 85 years old	Currently recommend persons at average risk consult with their primary care provider to discuss colorectal screening with stool-based testing beginning at age 45, and from age 75 through 85, the primary care provider should advise on whether continued screening is beneficial. Please Note: The Plan will only cover generic bowel preps and bowel prep brands with no generic equivalent, subject to reasonable medical management techniques.
LUNG CANCER SCREENING	50 – 80 years old	Anyone between 50 and 80 years old who has a history of smoking within the last 15 years should have an annual low-dose chest CT scan.

Your Summary Plan Description outlines the coverage the Plan provides for each of these screenings or vaccinations. You can find the [Notice of Preventive Care Coverage for 2023](#) on the Plan Notices page of the Plan’s website at www.nifmcp.com.

Please consult your medical care provider if you have any questions about these vaccinations and screenings.

Source: [UCTA](https://www.ucta.com)

SAVE YOUR BACK: OSHA GUIDELINES FOR SAFE LIFTING PRACTICES



Back injuries account for one in five workplace injuries, and 75% of workplace-related back injuries occur during a lifting task. In fact, every year, two million back injuries occur across the U.S.; roughly half of them — one million — are back injuries sustained in the workplace.

Back pain becomes chronic and disabling in roughly 5% of cases, and up to 44% of people who initially recover have a recurrence within a year. Then once you’ve had two episodes of back pain in a year, you’re three times more likely to experience the third episode.

Put all that together, back injuries are a significant source of disability. After all, 5% of a million is 50,000 chronic and disabling cases of back pain.

HOW TO LIFT HEAVY OBJECTS SAFELY

Before you can safely lift heavy things, there are four stages to consider:

- Preparation
- Lifting
- Carrying
- Setting Down

Before You Lift Heavy Things

Preparation and planning are critical aspects of ergonomic lifting. Know how much you can safely lift and ensure the load doesn’t exceed it. Assess whether the object is too large or awkward to lift and carry safely. You’ll also need to know where you’re putting the object ahead of time. Ensure the path is unobstructed, the floor is dry, and the distance isn’t too great for safety.

If the load is too heavy or ungainly, will obstruct your vision, and needs to be carried too far or lifted overhead, you’ll need to find a safe alternative, like a second person or a hand truck or pushcart.

Once you have a plan for lifting ergonomics, you should stretch and warm up your muscles before lifting. Loosen up your back with lower-back rotations. Stretch your hamstrings and get the blood flowing — these measures will reduce your risk of injury.

Proper Lifting Techniques

You’ve probably heard, “lift with your knees, not with your back.” But what does it mean?

It means you should never bend forward to lift a heavy object. Instead, you should squat, secure the load, and stand by straightening your legs while keeping your back straight or slightly arched. Safe lifting involves:

- Standing as close to the load as possible
- Planting your feet shoulder-width apart with one foot slightly ahead of the other
- Bending at the hips and knees only until you’re deep in a squatting position
- Keeping your head up and straight with your shoulders back to keep your back straight
- Holding the load close to your body at waist height
- Engaging your core muscles as you push against the ground and straighten your legs

Carrying Heavy Things Safely

As you carry the load to its destination, you want to maintain good ergonomics. That means:

- Holding the load as close to your body as possible, level with your belly button
- Keeping your shoulders in line with your hips as you move — don’t twist your trunk
- Changing direction with your feet and walking with your hips
- Taking small steps and keeping a good grip with all your fingers

Setting Down Heavy Things Safely

Setting down a heavy object is just as dangerous as picking it up. You’ll want to reverse the lifting process, following the same ergonomic lifting principles:

- Keep the load close to the knees and your back straight or slightly arched
- Squat down, bending only at the knees and hips
- Tighten your stomach muscles (engage your core) as you lower yourself
- Kneel on one knee if necessary

Remember not to rush the lifting process to carry a heavy load. Also, keep in mind that the most dangerous lifting tasks are repetitive and for sustained periods. You need to monitor your exertion level and take breaks. Stop before you become too tired to lift safely.

Sources: [OSHA](https://www.osha-slc.com), [AIRROSCI](https://www.airrosci.com)

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

NECA/IBEW Family Medical Care Plan
410 Chickamauga Avenue, Suite 301
Rossville, GA 30741

PPO - Anthem
1-800-810-BLUE
(Provider locator services)
www.anthem.com

Rx Drugs - SavRx
1-866-233-4239
www.savrx.com

Teladoc Health
1-800-TELODOC
www.teladoc.com/FMCP
(if applicable)

Dental - MetLife
1-800-942-0854
www.metlife.com/mybenefits
(if applicable)

Vision - VSP
1-800-877-7195
www.vsp.com
(if applicable)

NECA/IBEW Family Medical Care Plan
410 Chickamauga Avenue, Suite 301
Rossville, GA 30741
1-877-937-9602
www.nifmcp.com