

For Your Benefit

CERTIFICATED RETIREE BENEFITS

FALL 2024

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HEALTHY HOLIDAYS!

Nobody ever says that!

Perhaps that's because the very idea of a "healthy" holiday during this festive time of year sounds a lot like skipping our favorite holiday foods.

Concerns about weight often become top-of-mind during the holidays. Some people worry that the season's temptations will derail the otherwise healthy choices they make the rest of the year. Others opt for *all* the indulgences, promising to think about it on January 1.

Because carrying excess weight can negatively impact your health and quality of life, it's good to be mindful. But it's possible to navigate the holidays in a happy *and* healthy way.

The tips and recipe on page 8 can help you savor the flavor of the season without the January food hangover. And if you could use some expert guidance on a weight management journey, you have access to a variety of resources. See the next page.

Before you go, remember this: There is no universal healthy weight. What works for your friend may not be right for you. To decide what's best for you, your primary care provider (PCP) is a great place to start. Together, you can discuss where you are, where you want to be and how to get there.

Feel free to share the program information on the next page with your PCP. He or she may have thoughts on which one (or more than one) is right for you.

Weight management resources



Weight management program

This program, offered through the MNPS Health Care Centers, is designed for people with a BMI of 25 or higher who want to lose weight and pursue better health. Eligible enrollees receive 50% reimbursement of membership fees at an approved weight management program/organization. Visit

MNPSHealth.org/weight-management.



One-on-one health coaching

Health coach Bobbi Nickel, RN, MSN, is dedicated solely to MNPS employees, retirees and their families. She provides confidential, personalized health coaching when you want to lose weight, improve your eating habits, manage a chronic health condition (like diabetes or obesity) or make other health improvements. To make a telehealth coaching appointment with Bobbi, call **615-259-8755**.



MNPS fitness center

As we age, our metabolism slows. This can make losing weight difficult since it's harder to burn calories efficiently. The fitness center, located in the MNPS Employee Wellness Center at Berry Hill, offers a variety of options to help you get or stay fit, including a walking track, strength and cardio equipment, and group fitness classes. Visit MNPSHealth.org/fitness or stop by the front desk to get started. Our onsite fitness associates can help create a personalized exercise plan for you. Retirees and their spouses can use the fitness center at no cost.

The CDC says...

Roll up both sleeves!

'Tis the season to catch a bug. But it's not too late to protect yourself. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourage everyone ages six months and older to get their flu and updated COVID-19 shots.

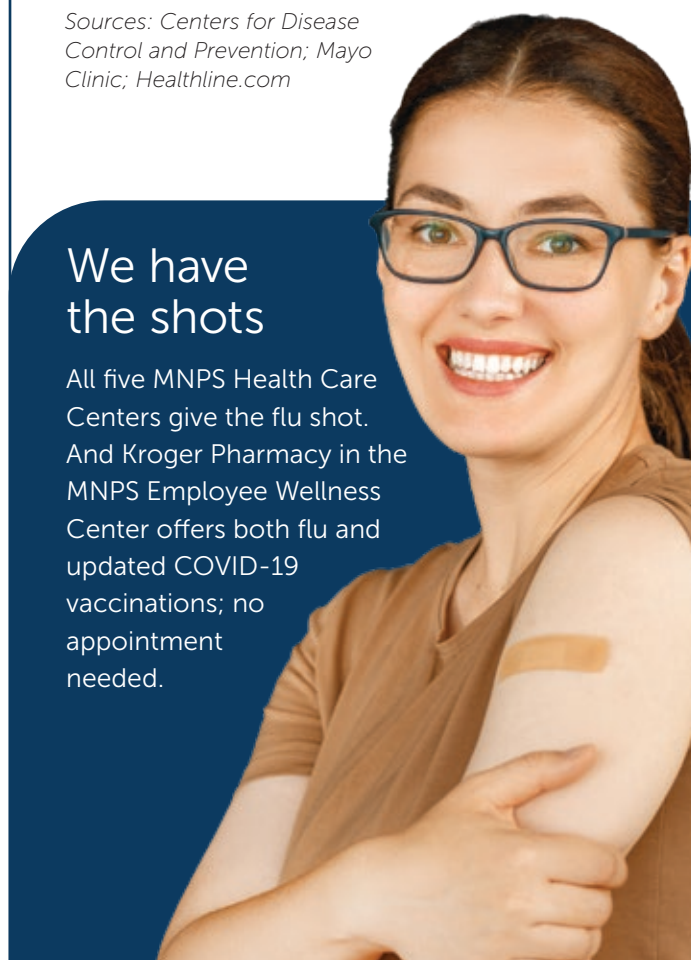
And good news: It's safe to get both the flu and COVID shots at the same time. You can choose whether to get both shots in the same arm or opposite arms.

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself against nasty winter viruses that can land even the healthiest people in the hospital. And even if the shots don't prevent you from getting sick altogether, they can lessen the impact and reduce your downtime.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Mayo Clinic; Healthline.com

We have the shots

All five MNPS Health Care Centers give the flu shot. And Kroger Pharmacy in the MNPS Employee Wellness Center offers both flu and updated COVID-19 vaccinations; no appointment needed.





The best ears of your life

“Can you hear me now?”

If you said no, you're not alone. That's because age-related hearing loss is common: About a third of 65-year-olds and half of 75-year-olds experience it to some degree.

Hearing loss can creep in so slowly, you might not even notice a difference. And that's the problem: Symptoms can be so subtle that permanent loss can be well underway before you realize it.

To keep your hearing sharp, it's a good idea to have a screening every three years starting at age 50 and follow these tips:

Turn down the volume

Noise-induced hearing loss is common and generally irreversible. But how loud is too loud?

Experts say prolonged exposure to sound above 85 decibels can harm your hearing. To put that in perspective, a normal conversation measures around 60 decibels. A power saw comes in at about 110 decibels, and a rock concert can reach 115. Sounds at or below 70 decibels are considered safe.

Technology can provide automatic protection. Smartphones will notify you if you've listened to audio too loud for too long. And they can be set to auto-reduce volumes that exceed a chosen decibel limit.

Tip: Check your phone settings and make sure volume notifications are enabled. And use ear protection, especially if you spend time in high-noise environments. Options range from in-ear plugs to over-the-ear noise-cancelling headphones.

Monitor your medicines

Some medications list hearing loss and tinnitus (ringing in the ears) as possible side effects. They include:

- Over-the-counter painkillers like aspirin (after prolonged use at high doses) and prescription opioids, including hydrocodone and oxycodone
- Certain antibiotics, like erythromycin and doxycycline
- Some blood pressure drugs
- Chemotherapy drugs
- Diuretics
- Viagra and similar drugs

Tip: If you have tinnitus or a hearing exam finds you've experienced hearing loss, ask your doctor to do a medication review.

Don't put anything smaller than your elbow in your ear.

You may be familiar with this bit of mom wisdom. It simply means your ears are self-cleaning and you should never insert anything into them — not a Q-tip, not a bobby pin, not a fingernail. Objects like these can cause cuts in the ear canal, perforate an ear drum or cause middle ear issues.





Hearing aids help — and they're covered

Nearly half of people with hearing loss don't regularly wear a hearing aid. There are several reasons for this. Hearing aids are often associated with older age and disability. And many people don't want others to know they're wearing one. But with today's technology and design, aids are more discreet and much less visible.

Cost is another barrier. The average price for one hearing aid is around \$2,000, and most people need two.

But there's good news: Your Cigna Medicare Advantage PPO includes a benefit toward the purchase of hearing aids through Hearing Care Solutions. The plan covers:

- One routine hearing exam per year for \$0 copay
- A hearing aid benefit of up to \$1,400 every three years (\$0 copay for fitting)

You can choose from nine major manufacturers and multiple levels of technology. To learn more or get started, visit hearingcaresolutions.com/cigna-healthspring-health-plan or call **1-866-872-1001**.



Eye spy:

Special camera can catch diabetic retinopathy early

Sarah Jones didn't see it coming.* The 48-year-old was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes 15 years ago and currently lives with high blood pressure and high cholesterol — all risk factors for diabetic retinopathy.

During a regular visit to the MNPS Health Care Centers, Sarah's provider recommended a diabetic eye exam, called RetinaVue. Even though she hadn't noticed any vision changes, she agreed to undergo the screening.

Sarah was shocked to learn she had mild diabetic retinopathy. Her provider referred her to an eye specialist where she received treatment, potentially saving her sight.

* Patient's name changed for privacy

What is retinopathy?

Retinopathy is a common complication of diabetes. It can occur when high blood sugar levels damage the blood vessels in the retina — the part of the eye that detects light and sends signals to the brain. Retinopathy develops gradually and can usually be managed if caught early. Untreated, it can lead to vision problems and even blindness.

If you have diabetes, a retinopathy exam is recommended every year.

What is RetinaVue?

RetinaVue is a convenient way to get an annual retinopathy exam — it doesn't require your eyes to be dilated. Instead, you simply look into a special camera that takes a picture of the inside of each eye. Those pictures are then sent to an ophthalmologist for review. If you show signs of retinopathy, the MNPS Health Care Centers will contact you to discuss next steps.

How effective is RetinaVue?

The RetinaVue cameras in the MNPS clinics have detected eye disease in 12 patients in the past two years. Five of those were severe, vision-threatening cases.

How do I schedule a screening?

If you've been diagnosed with diabetes and haven't had a diabetic eye exam in the last year, you're eligible for screening. All five MNPS Health Care Centers offer the RetinaVue exam. Call us at **615-259-8755** or visit **[MNPSHealth.org/schedule](https://mnpshealth.org/schedule)** to schedule an appointment.

Retinopathy screening doesn't replace regular eye exams, provide a glasses/contacts prescription, or test for glaucoma (increased pressure in the eye).

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EXCLUSIVE HEALTH CLINICS

IN DAVIDSON COUNTY

BERRY HILL

Employee Wellness Center
2694 Fessey Court
M-F 7 a.m.-7 p.m. | Sat. 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

MADISON

Taylor Stratton Elementary
306 West Old Hickory Blvd.
M-F 7 a.m.-6 p.m.

NORTHEAST NASHVILLE

Two Rivers Middle
2995 McGavock Pike
M-F 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

ANTIOCH

Mt. View Elementary
3812 Murfreesboro Road
M-F 7 a.m.-5 p.m.

WEST NASHVILLE

Bellevue Middle
651 Colice Jeanne Road
M-F 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS ONLINE

Scan this code or visit
[MNPSHealth.org/schedule](https://mnpshealth.org/schedule).
Or call **615-259-8755**





Baked butternut squash

This quick and easy heart-healthy recipe features seasonal ingredients and is perfect for the holidays.

Ingredients

- 1 butternut squash
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ginger
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F. Line baking sheet with foil and coat foil with vegetable cooking spray. Peel squash and cut in half lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds and strings and discard. Cut squash into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch slices, place in a bowl and drizzle with oil. Add brown sugar, cinnamon and ginger and toss to coat evenly. Place squash on baking sheet. Bake 20–25 minutes or until fork tender.

Makes 4 half-cup servings

Per serving: 140 calories; 7g total fat; 1g saturated fat; 0mg cholesterol; 21g total carbohydrates; 3g fiber; 1g protein

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Service

Savor the flavor of the holidays

...without the January food hangover

There are lots of things to love about the holidays: get-togethers with family and friends, festive decorations — and sweet treats galore. But these tempting goodies can sabotage even the healthiest eating plan.

Food served during the holidays tends to be high in sugar, carbs and calories. Overindulging can lead to weight gain, poor sleep, decreased energy and overall sluggishness.

Avoid a food hangover in January by following these tips:

- **Plan ahead.** Think through the food you'll be eating each day. For example, if your plans include a big dinner, opt for a light, nutrient-rich lunch.
- **Spice is nice.** Instead of reaching for salt — and increasing sodium intake — rely on herbs and spices for flavor.
- **Channel your inner rabbit.** Nibble on fresh fruits and vegetables and cut down on rich, calorie-heavy foods.
- **Then channel your inner turtle.** Slow down while you eat. Enjoy each bite and savor the flavors. That'll make it easier to stop eating when you start feeling full.
- **Wet your whistle.** Include plenty of water in your daily routine to stay hydrated.

It's not hard to enjoy the season's delicious and sometimes decadent offerings — without sacrificing your health and well-being.

Important notices

Each year, MNPS provide important notices about state and federal laws that affect your benefits and your rights and responsibilities as a participant in MNPS benefit plans. You can find the latest notices at [MNPSBenefits.org/notices](https://mnpsbenefits.org/notices).

The information in this newsletter provides highlights of the benefits, programs and extras included in MNPS's certificated benefits program. It's not intended to include all benefit plan details. Complete details about how the plans work are included in the plan documents, which are available upon request. If there are any differences between the information in this material and the plan documents, the plan documents will govern the employee's or retiree's rights to benefits in all cases. This document does not constitute a contract or offer of employment. MNPS reserves the right to change or end any of the plans or programs described in this brochure at any time. If you have any questions about MNPS's benefits program, contact Employee Benefit Services at benefits@mnps.org.