



ARBenefits Newsletter

Q2 | 2023

ALLERGY SEASON

The American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology reports that allergies affect more than 50 million Americans and are the sixth leading cause of chronic illness in the United States.



INSIDE

- Keep your windows and doors closed. The best time to open them to air out the house is after a hard rain has washed the pollen out of the air.
- Consider getting a portable HEPA air purifier for your bedroom. If you have more than one, use them in other parts of the house, too. A dehumidifier can also keep the air dry while you sleep.
- Clean your floors often with a vacuum equipped with a HEPA-filter, and get a high-efficiency allergen-reducing air filter for your HVAC system. Clean or replace filters regularly.
- After you've been outside an extended period, take a shower and wash the clothes you were wearing. Don't re-wear clothes that have been exposed to outdoor allergens without washing first. Shower at least daily.
- Indoor/outdoor pets bring in pollen and other allergens. Give them a wipe down with a damp towel when they come inside.

OUTSIDE

- During the height of the spring allergy season, take over-the-counter allergy medicines preventively, daily.
- Use a weather channel, site or app to track high-pollen-count days. Pollen counts are highest in the early morning, so especially avoid outside activities then.
- If you suffer from allergies, avoid outdoor activities like mowing, gardening, hiking and other activities that stir up allergens. If you must engage in these activities, wear a face mask (an allergen-filtering dust mask is best).

EFFECTIVE OVER-THE-COUNTER ALLERGY TREATMENTS:

ANTI-HISTAMINES
NASAL SPRAYS

DECONGESTANTS
NASAL IRRIGATION/SINUS RINSES



MOST COMMON CONDITIONS INCLUDE:

47 10,000 CHILDREN ANAPHYLAXIS severe allergic reaction characterized by a sudden drop in blood pressure and difficulty breathing	500 10,000 CHILDREN DERMATITIS inflamed skin or skin rash	940 10,000 CHILDREN RHINITIS runny, stuffy nose
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BUT ALLERGIES DECREASE AS CHILDREN GET OLDER – ESPECIALLY AMONG BOYS

SEEKING SPECIALTY TREATMENT

If over-the-counter treatments are not providing enough relief from allergies, you may need to schedule a visit with an allergist or your primary care provider. An allergist can test you to determine your allergic triggers and administer allergen immunotherapy via a series of regular allergy shots or oral tablets.



Find a primary care doctor or allergist when you sign in to [Blueprint Portal](#).

Normalize the Conversation

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Know that if you or someone you love has experienced a behavioral or mental health issue, you are not alone. 73 million adults in the U.S. have had a mental health condition or substance use problem in the past year.* Talking about these issues helps break the stigma surrounding these problems.

* Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. SAMHSA.

Here are four tips to help:

1

Behavioral health conditions are common.

There is no shame in getting help. Conditions related to the mind can be treated – should be treated – just like heart-related conditions, diabetes or other illnesses. In fact, one in five adults will experience a diagnosable mental health condition in their lifetime.

2

Get started with a behavioral health screening.

Screening is a self-help tool that looks at the possibility of a mental health or substance-use problem. Mental Health America is an online resource for free screenings at mhanational.org.

4

Mental health affects your overall well-being.

People with depression are 40% more likely to develop heart disease and type 2 diabetes than those without depression. Exercise, healthy eating and being connected to other people can help improve your health and your mood.

3

Speak with someone.

Talk to your doctor or other medical provider for help. You also have access to the Behavioral Health Program, powered by Lucet, by calling 877-801-1159. Crisis resources:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – Call or text to 9-8-8 or go to 988lifeline.org
- National Domestic Violence Hotline – 800-799-SAFE (7233) or 800-787-3224 (TTY)
- National Veterans Crisis Line - 800-273-8255, press 1 or go to veteranscrisisline.net
- Substance Use Hotline - 877-326-2458

Find a doctor or therapist, learn more about your benefits or download the Blueprint Portal app at healthadvantage-hmo.com/blueprintportal.

Health Benefits Advisory Commission Meetings

Our state and public-school health benefits advisory commissions will continue to meet in 2023 to help make important decisions for the ARBenefits plan. You can learn more about these commissions [here](#).

[Sign up](#) to receive emails about the advisory commission meetings.



Close to Retirement?

If you are considering retiring, we are here to ensure a seamless transfer of coverage. To enroll in retiree coverage, you must complete a retirement packet within 30 days of retiring. We will only accept packets submitted up to 30 days before retirement.

You may choose between the Basic, Classic or Premium Plan if you are not yet Medicare eligible. If you are Medicare eligible, you will automatically be opted into the ARBenefits Group Medicare Advantage PPO Plan with the option to opt-out and enroll in the ARBenefits Medicare Primary Plan. Learn more [here!](#)

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