

NOVEMBER 2021

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# How Comparing Medicare Plans Could Save You Money

Medicare Open Enrollment is here. Now's the time to review coverage and select a plan that meets your health care needs.

(Family Features) Medicare's Open Enrollment period gives everyone with Medicare the opportunity to make changes to their health plans or prescription drug plans for coverage beginning Jan. 1, 2022. Don't delay, the Open Enrollment period ends Dec. 7.

## Comparing Plans Can Be Easy

Medicare plans can change year to year – even your current plan may be changing. [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) makes it easy to compare coverage options, shop for plans and feel confident about your choices. You can do a side-by-side comparison of plan coverage, costs and quality ratings to help you more easily see the differences between plans. If you choose a new plan for 2022, you can enroll right there. If your current coverage still meets your health care needs, you don't have to do anything.

Open Enrollment (Oct. 15-Dec. 7) is your chance to compare your choices for the year ahead and to see if you could save money all year long.

Here are some things to consider when shopping for Medicare coverage:

Check if your doctors are still in-network and your prescriptions are on the plan's formulary.

The plan with the lowest monthly premium may not always be the best fit for your health needs.

Look at the plan's deductible and other out-of-pocket costs that factor into your total costs.

Some plans offer extra benefits, like vision, hearing or dental coverage, which could help meet your unique health care needs in 2022.

## Medicare is Here to Help

Here are three ways you can compare plans:

Find plans at [Medicare.gov](https://www.Medicare.gov), where you can see estimates for all your prescriptions.

Call 1-800-MEDICARE. Help is available 24 hours a day, including weekends.

Help in your community is also available. You can get personalized health insurance counseling at no cost to you from your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). Visit [shiptacenter.org](https://www.shiptacenter.org), or call 1-800-MEDICARE for your SHIP's phone number. Many SHIPs also have virtual counseling available.

Medicare Open Enrollment ends Dec. 7. Now is the time to act if you want to enroll in or make changes to your Medicare health or prescription drug plans for coverage beginning Jan. 1, 2022. If your current coverage still meets your needs then you don't have to do anything. Remember, if you miss the Dec. 7 deadline, you will likely have to wait a full year before you are able to make changes to your Medicare coverage.

For more information, visit [Medicare.gov/plan-compare](https://www.Medicare.gov/plan-compare) or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048. Help is available 24 hours a day, including weekends. If you need help in a language other than English or Spanish, let the customer service representative know the language.

More information about Medicare is also available on the [Medicare Facebook](https://www.MedicareFacebook.com) page and by following [@MedicareGov](https://www.MedicareGov.com) on Twitter.

Information provided by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

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# Create a Healthier Home Through Smart Updates

(Family Features) Many homeowners looking to improve their living spaces seek out upgrades that can add visual appeal, improve functionality or increase resale value. However, some updates can also benefit the mental and physical health of those who occupy the space.

While making your home healthier can involve simple steps like decluttering, swapping out cleaning products for natural versions and opening windows to let in more fresh air, there are other projects that can be done to create longer-lasting results. Consider these ideas to create spaces that are not only functional and beautiful but also impart a sense of well-being.

## Apply a Fresh Coat of Paint

Changing the color of a room can transform your space while also positively impacting your mood. Bright, warm colors like yellow may be uplifting while cooler shades like beige, pale green and soft blue can be soothing. Repainting can also help prevent mold and mildew growth on walls while repelling dust and allergens. Traditional oil- and latex-based paints give off gases that may cause issues such as eye and respiratory irritation. Look for paints with no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and that are certified not to contain heavy metals, carcinogens and other harmful compounds.

## Upgrade Your Flooring

Made of natural materials, hardwood flooring is not only attractive but is a hygienic, easy-to-clean choice. The organic beauty and grain of the wood creates an intrinsic connection to nature. You can set the foundation for your living spaces with an option like artisan-crafted Carlisle Wide Plank Floors. Each floor is handcrafted, one board at a time, from sustainably sourced timbers. Whether you select each detail - wood species, grade, texture and color - or choose from a collection of popular tried-and-true fin-

ishes, the result is a unique floor with distinctive character. Learn more at [wideplankflooring.com](http://wideplankflooring.com).

## Add Natural Light

If your home lacks adequate natural lighting, adding or replacing windows and skylights can allow more sunlight into your living space. This offers several benefits, including an improved sense of well-being and increased productivity, not to mention the potential cost savings when you install energy-efficient versions. Additionally, light-blocking shades and adjustable light technologies can work with natural circadian rhythms to enhance sleep.

## Modernize the Kitchen

From appliances to countertops, there are a variety of kitchen upgrades that can make your space healthier. Incorporating automated technology like a touchless faucet can reduce the amount of contact with germs while a water filtration system can improve the quality of your drinking water. Updating your countertops with a non-porous material like quartz, which replicates the look of natural stone, provides a contemporary aesthetic, and the antimicrobial surface will not harbor bacteria or viruses.

## Create a Bathroom Oasis

Even a small space like the bathroom can benefit from wellness-focused updates. Soaking tubs and spa showers with hydrotherapy showerheads can help reduce stress and provide a mental respite. Additionally, a heated towel rack not only brings a touch of luxury but can reduce energy usage and keep towels free of mold and mildew between washes. Touchless faucets and toilets can also help reduce the spread of germs while bringing convenience.





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# How Home Healthcare Can Improve Lives and Deliver Better Care

(StatePoint) There is a growing demand for in-home caregivers and there is good reason for that, say experts. November, Home Care & Hospice Month, is an opportunity to learn about the unique advantages that healthcare at home, or in another familiar setting, provides.

“Offering a full continuum of care, home healthcare includes pediatric, adult nursing, senior care, postoperative care, Medicare-approved visits and hospice, allowing for an individualized approach focused on empowerment and the pursuit of possibilities rather than perceived limitations,” says Jennifer Sheets, president and CEO of Interim HealthCare Inc., the nation’s leading franchise network of home healthcare, personal care, healthcare staffing and hospice services. “The home is where care can happen in the most personal way, typically resulting in higher quality care, reduced hospital readmissions, optimization of healthcare dollars, improved outcomes and greater patient satisfaction.”

As part of “The Difference is Home,” a campaign aiming to educate people on the value of home healthcare, Interim HealthCare is sharing the experiences of individuals profoundly impacted by home healthcare:

- Kaitlyn Metro, pediatric care patient. Born with a condition causing seizures and severe developmental delay, Kaitlyn requires a feeding tube and total nursing care. She’s received home healthcare for 16 years. While she doesn’t speak or walk, home healthcare allows her to be surrounded by her loving family and nurses who adore her and closely monitor her condition.



- Louis Klein, COVID-19 recovery patient. After spending four days in the hospital with COVID-19, Louis was discharged into home health services as part of his Medicare benefits. Prior to that, he was an active 85-year-old who played golf every week. The compassionate nursing care, physical therapy and occupational therapy he received helped him improve significantly in a matter of weeks, with the goal of full recovery without the need for rehospitalization.

- Howard and Charlene Russell, hospice patients. Married for 65 years, Howard and Charlene have had many wonderful life experiences and wanted to continue living well as they aged. After receiving home health services, the couple transitioned to hospice due to declining health. The nursing and aide care, social services and chaplain support that hospice at home uniquely provides have allowed them to make the most of their time, while surrounded by loved ones.

To see more stories like these, visit: [differenceishome.com](http://differenceishome.com).

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# Check Your Skin, Save Your Life

(Family Features) While it might not be the first thing on your to-do list, prioritizing regular skin checks could save your life.

Though a trip to the gym wasn't uncommon for John Ahern, the bruising he noticed after a particularly strenuous workout was unusual. Ahern's board-certified dermatologist, Lindsay S. Ackerman, MD, FAAD, made a life-saving observation: the bruises indicated a severe blood issue. After testing, Ahern was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia.

National Healthy Skin Month in November offers an important reminder to pay attention to the body's largest organ. Ahern's story is one of many examples that show how the skin is a window to overall health.

"While bruising can be common, when it appears in unusual areas or in the absence of trauma, it can represent problems with other organ systems," Ackerman said.

Performing regular self-exams can familiarize people with their skin and help identify areas of concern. For example, Yvonne Basil noticed changes to a mole on her toe and quickly scheduled an appointment with her board-certified dermatologist. After a same-day surgical biopsy, Basil's dermatologist, Dr. Seemal R. Desai, MD, FAAD, confirmed it was melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. Because of the early diagnosis and treatment, doctors stopped the spread and Basil is now cancer-free.

"While Yvonne's melanoma was very serious, it could have been much worse had she not found the mole and quickly made an appointment with a board-certified dermatologist," Desai said.

Regularly checking your skin from head to toe can help catch skin cancer and other conditions early when they are most treatable. These simple steps recommended by the experts at the American Academy of Dermatology to perform a skin exam could help you detect a condition early:

- Examine your body in a full-length mirror
- Look at your underarms, forearms and palms
- Look at your legs and soles of your feet and between your toes
- Use a hand mirror to examine your neck and scalp
- Use a hand mirror to check your back and buttocks
- Take note of all the spots on your body, including moles, freckles and age spots

People of all skin tones should perform skin self-checks.

When skin cancer develops

in people of color, it

is often diag-

gnosed in its later

stages, making

it more difficult

to treat. If

you notice

any new or sus-

picious spots on your skin, or any spots that are changing, itching or bleeding,

make an appointment with a board-certified dermatologist.

## ABCDEs of Melanoma

Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer. However, when detected early, it is highly treatable. These warning signs can help you identify melanoma:

**Asymmetry:** One half of the spot is unlike the other half.

**Border:** The spot has an irregular, scalloped or poorly defined border.

**Color:** The spot has varying colors from one area to the next.

**Diameter:** While melanomas are usually greater than 6 millimeters, or about the size of a pencil eraser, when diagnosed, they can be smaller.

**Evolving:** The spot looks different from the rest or changes in size, shape or color.

*Photos courtesy of Getty Images*



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# How Medical Technology is Helping Those With Parkinson's Disease

(StatePoint) When Ann Hanley was 49 years old, she noticed that she had persistent stiffness in her shoulders and her arms weren't swinging normally when she walked. This became particularly pronounced when it affected her ability to travel to horse races with her husband, who manages a farm, breeding champion racehorses. After visiting several specialists, a neurologist recognized she had Parkinson's disease (PD). The diagnosis was a shock, as Hanley had previously viewed PD as a disease that mainly affected older men. Initially the idea of living with a progressive disease was overwhelming for Hanley – a self-described social butterfly – and so was maintaining her desire to be active.

PD is the second most common progressive neurodegenerative condition, affecting more than 1 million people nationwide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While it can't be cured, medications are often prescribed to help manage symptoms. Unfortunately, some of these drugs are associated with side effects like involuntary movements and motor fluctuations. And over time, these medications can become less effective.

Now 63, Hanley is a veritable expert on her condition and an advocate for other patients. Seven years ago, she began volunteering at the University of Kentucky Hospital, shadowing a leading neurosurgeon who specialized in a PD treatment called Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS), which helps patients manage the motor symptoms of the disease when medication alone is no longer effective. DBS uses a small medical device implanted in the body and connected to leads that stimulate a portion of the brain to control the motor functions affected by movement disorders, including tremors, slowness and rigidity.

Until recently, physicians have had to rely on older DBS technology. However, the Boston Scientific Vercise Genus DBS System, approved for use in 2021, is designed to customize therapy to match each patient's specific needs and allow for flexible

stimulation therapy delivery as the disease progresses. This is important, because PD advances over time, and no two people experience progressions the same way.

"Ultimately, with early enough intervention, DBS is a tool that can help people with PD reduce tremors, increase mobility, and even reduce the amount of medication needed – offering a reprieve from unpleasant side effects," says Dr. Michele Tagliati, MD, director, Movement Disorders Program, Cedars Sinai (Los Angeles). "In particular, this therapy is designed with patient comfort and convenience in mind and gives physicians the ability to manage the ever-evolving needs of a patient as their Parkinson's advances."

Hanley knew it was time to try DBS herself when her walking had slowed, she was stooped over, her back hurt relentlessly and she was experiencing significant tremor in her right hand and leg. After undergoing the procedure, she was amazed at how DBS had helped her.

"When they turned on the device, I experienced an indescribable moment. My symptoms were suddenly reduced, and I felt more in control of my motion," says Hanley.

With DBS, Hanley was able to completely come off her PD medications and experienced increased mobility. While results vary for different patients, she's now able to walk, cycle and swim regularly, and attend every horse race with ease.

Today, Hanley is an advocate for DBS therapy and volunteers support to other patients, assisting during their appointments and even holding their hands during the DBS procedure. She's also raised \$3.5 million dollars through her fundraising efforts to support PD research at the University of Kentucky Hospital.

To learn more, visit [DBSandMe.com](http://DBSandMe.com), a resource developed by Boston Scientific.

If you or a loved one have PD, consider talking to your doctor about the most appropriate treatment, and if DBS could be an option for you.

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## 5 tips for staying healthy when you return to a ‘new normal’ routine

(BPT) - As work and school routines begin to shift again, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed. After a long time avoiding social activity, everyone’s lives are being upended once more. Without knowing what the “new normal” really means, it’s harder than ever to keep your family’s wellness on the front burner. Beginning to re-enter society, going back into the workplace and into the classroom, and interacting with groups of people as you shift into higher gear can be stressful, which can impact your overall well-being.

Registered dietitian nutritionist and certified yoga teacher Keri Gans, author of “The Small Change Diet” and an EpiCor ambassador, offers practical tips to help you navigate your wellness in the midst of all this change.

“The main thing while you get back to a ‘normal’ routine is to find a balance that keeps your immune system

working at its best,” said Gans. “The key is to support your gut health, which influences your immune system, because the majority of immune cells originate from the gut.”

### 1. Focus on work-life balance

As you begin changing your routines, build in opportunities to relax and center yourself. Whether that means listening to an inspiring podcast during your commute, making time for yoga or meditation or taking a moment to connect with your loved ones, don’t let your to-do list run your life.

“Scheduling time for self-care is really important,” recommended Gans. “Whether it’s first thing in the morning, during your lunch hour or after work, finding a half hour to do whatever you need to feel balanced is crucial, especially during challenging times.”

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## 2. Rethink your diet

While creating a healthy diet may seem overwhelming, it doesn't have to be. Gans advises building meals around whole, unprocessed foods like fresh produce, as well as adding fermented foods.

"Fermented foods offer cultures - beneficial live bacteria or microorganisms - as well as metabolites and compounds produced by those cultures during the fermentation process," said Gans. "These metabolites are part of the foundation for a healthy gut microbiome."

Examples of fermented foods that may help support your gut health include:

- \* Yogurt
- \* Kombucha
- \* Kefir
- \* Miso
- \* Sauerkraut
- \* Kimchi
- \* Sourdough bread

## 3. Reach for supplements to support gut health

Fermented foods are a good way to get metabolites as we mentioned above. However, if you want to be sure you're getting those metabolites that are clinically shown to support specific health benefits, look for postbiotics. Postbiotics contain those beneficial metabolites and compounds that have been shown through research to support your health. For immune and gut support, look for supplements containing the leading postbiotic brand EpiCor™. It is a first-of-its-kind, whole food ingredient that taps the natural power of fermented foods to positively modulate the gut microbiome.

"Think of EpiCor Postbiotic as a multivitamin for your immune system, which helps you take care



of your health every day," said Gans. "Clinical studies have shown that it can help support your immune system for coping with everyday challenges."

This postbiotic can be found in a number of vitamin and supplement products, like Healthy Origins EpiCor. For a full list of products, visit [EpiCorImmune.com](http://EpiCorImmune.com).

## 4. Stay hydrated

Make sure you and your family always have water with you, especially when you're active outdoors.

"Drinking water throughout the day is crucial for keeping your body in balance," said Gans. "Fill reusable water bottles for every family member before heading out and encourage water as the first choice of beverages with meals."

Water helps your body function at its best by:

- \* Keeping your digestive system working smoothly
- \* Lubricating and protecting your joints, spinal cord and tissues
- \* Regulating your internal temperature

## 5. Prioritize sleep

Sticking to the same routine for waking and sleeping times, even on weekends and school vacations, can help everyone in your family get the restorative sleep they need for optimal health.

"Make sure everybody has time to wind down and slow down before bedtime," said Gans. "And that goes for parents as well as kids."

Finding balance and prioritizing wellness isn't always easy, especially during stressful times. Focus on the basics, like these tips, to ensure that your body's natural defenses - your immune system - are supporting your overall well-being.

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# How to take action when you see hypoglycemia symptoms

(BPT) - Everyone needs blood sugar (glucose) because it provides essential fuel for the body and mind. However, for people with diabetes, getting the right amount of glucose is critical because low blood sugar, also known as hypoglycemia, can lead to stupor, confusion, loss of consciousness, seizures or other severe complications. If you or a loved one has diabetes, it's important to understand the warning signs of hypoglycemia and what to do during a low blood sugar emergency.

"Hypoglycemia occurs when blood sugar levels fall lower than normal and can lead to life-threatening complications," said Felice A. Caldarella, MD, MBA, FACP, CDCES, FACE, president of The American Association of Clinical Endocrinology (AACE). "Hypoglycemia causes approximately 100,000 emergency room visits per year in the U.S., and diabetics are at the highest risk of experiencing a low blood sugar episode."

In addition to having diabetes, Dr. Caldarella shares other common risk factors for hypoglycemia:

**Age:** Speak with your health care team to find out how this may affect you.

**Diet:** Having irregular eating habits, such as skipping a meal or eating less than usual (if using a sulfonylurea, which is a medication that causes insulin to be secreted from the pancreas regardless of what your blood sugar level is or insulin).

**Activeness:** Increasing your physical activity, especially without enough nutrition.

**Drinking:** Consuming an excessive amount of alcohol.

To spread the word about hypoglycemia, the AACE team created The Lowdown on Low Blood Sugar campaign. For people with diabetes, low blood sugar typically occurs when blood sugar levels fall below 70 mg/dl, though this may differ from person to person.

It's key to understand the symptoms of hypoglycemia and what to do during an episode.

Mild hypoglycemia symptoms:

- \* Nausea and dizziness
- \* Fast heartbeat
- \* Sweating and/or chills
- \* Clamminess
- \* Unusual irritability or moodiness

Actions to take:

If you or a loved one are experiencing mild symptoms of hypoglycemia, act quickly by following the "Rule of 15" by eating 15 grams of high sugar foods, drinks or medications to get your blood sugar back up. Then re-check your blood sugar after 15 minutes. If your blood sugar is still low, consume another 15 grams of carbohydrates and check your blood sugar again after 15 minutes. If your blood sugar fails to return to normal levels after two tries of the Rule of 15, you could experience severe symptoms and may need medical attention.

Severe hypoglycemia symptoms:

- \* Blurred or impaired vision
- \* Coordination problems or clumsiness
- \* Tingling or numbness in the lips, tongue or cheeks
- \* Color draining from the skin
- \* Confusion
- \* Seizures

Actions to take:

If you or a loved one has severe hypoglycemia symptoms and have access, administer hypoglycemic rescue therapy via injected or nasal glucagon as prescribed by your doctor. Do not inject insulin, as this will further lower blood sugar. If you start to feel very sleepy or your blood sugar falls below 70 mg/dL, have someone take you to the hospital immediately or call 911 for medical assistance.

Support for hypoglycemia provided by: Lily Diabetes, Novo Nordisk, Sanofi, Medtronic.

Visit [www.bloodsugarlows.com](http://www.bloodsugarlows.com) to learn more about hypoglycemia.



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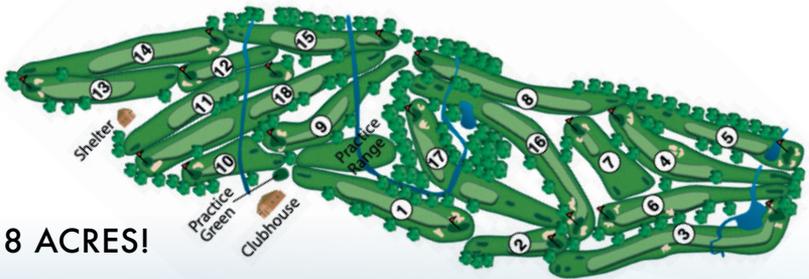


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## Cold weather eczema flareups? These top pediatrician tips provide relief for kids

(BPT) - With cooler weather here for many, it's important to keep in mind that dropping temperatures and drier air can have an impact on your health, especially the health of your skin. People with eczema may experience additional irritation and flareups during the colder seasons. This can be particularly difficult for children, as the itchy red patches of skin can

be bothersome, distracting and even embarrassing.

Eczema - also known as atopic dermatitis - impacts 31.6 million people in the U.S., or roughly one out of 10 people, according to the National Eczema Association. That number includes approximately 9.6 million U.S. children under the age of 18, with one-third having moderate to severe forms

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of the condition. And the prevalence of childhood atopic dermatitis has steadily increased over the past two decades.

“It can be so difficult to watch a child struggle with eczema if you’re a parent or caregiver,” said board certified pediatrician Dr. Mona Amin. “This complex condition is influenced by many factors, and therefore treating it can be quite challenging. Fortunately, there are several steps families can take during cold weather months to help kids with eczema look and feel their best.”

Dr. Amin shares her top eczema care tips:

### **AVOID COMMON TRIGGERS**

Everyone is different, so pay attention to what may trigger your child’s eczema. Fragrances are a common irritant, so be mindful to use fragrance-free soap, shampoo, conditioner and laundry detergent. When washing clothes, you may need to add another rinse cycle to ensure detergents are completely washed away. Additionally, many people use seasonal scented hand soap which smells great but can irritate the hands, especially with the current higher levels of washing.

### **WEAR SOFT, BREATHABLE CLOTHING**

As kids begin to layer on clothing to stave off the chill, they may be unknowingly worsening eczema symptoms. Synthetic fabrics or fabrics with textures are often the culprit of irritation. When possible, choose natural, breathable clothing, especially the layer that is closest to the skin. Cotton, silk and bamboo fabrics are good options. What’s more, remember to have kids wear gloves to protect their hands against cold air that can dry the skin and exacerbate eczema.

### **RELIEVE THE ITCH**

When your child experiences a flareup, it’s important to combat

the dreaded itch-scratch cycle as quickly as possible. Reach for Aquaphor Itch Relief Ointment, formulated with 1% hydrocortisone (anti-itch ointment) along with other soothing ingredients. “I always recommend Aquaphor Itch Relief Ointment to my patients ages 2 and older,” said Dr. Amin. “It is the No. 1 pediatrician recommended brand for eczema, and the Aquaphor Itch Relief Ointment is clinically proven to provide significant itch relief for up to 12 hours. It immediately soothes itchy spots to help skin heal. You can find it in either 1-ounce or 2-ounce sizing at your local Walmart or Walmart.com.”

### **SOOTHE AND NOURISH SKIN**

Cool, dry air can cause dry skin that triggers eczema. A short 5- to 10-minute warm bath (not hot!) can be soothing and even restorative to the skin. Your child may not even need to wash with soap every time if they aren’t dirty or smelly; just let skin soak up the H<sub>2</sub>O. Finish by gently patting water off the skin with a towel so it’s still a bit damp and apply a nourishing lotion or cream to lock in moisture.

### **STAY HYDRATED**

In addition to keeping your child’s skin hydrated externally, remember to have them drink plenty of water so they are hydrated internally as well. This helps the body heal and supports organ health. Make sure kids of all ages have a water bottle filled and accessible throughout the day. To make it more fun, let them choose a style and design that reflects their own personality.

Cold weather and eczema flare-ups often go hand in hand, but a few proactive steps and mindful measures can help you treat the itch and prevent future irritation.

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## 5 Things to Know About HER2-Positive Metastatic Breast Cancer

(BPT) - The breast cancer treatment journey - something nearly one in eight women will experience sometime in their lifetime<sup>[1]</sup> - can be overwhelming and filled with uncertainty. To hear “you have breast cancer,” or “your breast cancer is progressing” can be incredibly jarring. Often, one of the first things people want to know about their breast cancer is its stage, meaning how extensive the breast cancer is based on tumor size, its location and whether it has spread to nearby lymph nodes or other parts of the body.<sup>[2]</sup>

While stage is certainly important in

helping determine how to treat breast cancer, there are a number of other factors patients should consider with their healthcare team. One such consideration is their breast cancer type, which can be determined by the presence of certain proteins or other substances that can lead to the presence of cancer, also known as cancer biomarkers. These biomarkers can provide valuable information about the cancer, including how aggressive it is and whether it may help inform treatment options.<sup>[3]</sup>

Here are five things to know about human epidermal growth factor recep-

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tor 2 (HER2), one of the commonly seen breast cancer biomarkers.<sup>[4]</sup>

1. You too should think about HER2.

BRCA genes are the most well-known genes linked to breast cancer,<sup>[5]</sup> and might be among the first things that come to your mind when you hear “breast cancer biomarker.” But if you receive a breast cancer diagnosis or learn your cancer has returned or is spreading, you should also think about HER2. HER2 is a protein found on the surface of all breast cells, and when an individual with breast cancer has higher-than-normal levels of the HER2 protein, among other factors, their cancer can be considered HER2-positive.<sup>[6]</sup> This form of breast cancer, which accounts for about one in five cases of breast cancer in the US, tends to grow faster and is more likely to spread and come back compared to HER2-negative breast cancers.

2. There are a number of tests available to detect the presence of HER2.

Testing for HER2 is a routine process that can help patients receive an appropriate diagnosis and treatment plan. It’s important to speak with your physician regarding available testing options and what the results may mean for you.

Two of the most common tests to find out if a person’s breast cancer is HER2-positive are:<sup>[7]</sup>

\* IHC (Immunohistochemistry): IHC test works by identifying the level of HER2 proteins on the surface of cells. In breast cancer, a score of 3+ means that the cancer has a lot of this protein and is considered “HER2-positive,” while a score of 0 or 1+ means that the cancer has low levels or no detected levels of HER2, or “HER2-negative.” A score of 2+ means that the levels are in-between and other tests, such as ISH, will be performed.

\* ISH (In Situ Hybridization): ISH test is used to find specific pieces of a cell’s DNA. Based on the signal, can inform whether the cell has abnormalities such as extra or fewer than expected copies. A tissue sample with abnormalities will be scored ISH-positive.

3. Your HER2 status can change.<sup>[7]</sup>

It is important to note that HER2 status can change over time. The change

may happen due to certain treatments, or due to cells evolving as the cancer progresses. If your breast cancer returns or spreads to other organs, you and your doctor may have a discussion to see if it would make sense to do a biopsy to retest your tissue.

4. Great strides have been made in research and treatments for HER2-positive breast cancer.<sup>[7]</sup>

Thanks to ongoing research, doctors have a much better understanding of various types of metastatic breast cancer, and today there are a number of treatments available or in development, specifically for HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer. Historically, patients had chemotherapy and hormonal therapy as treatment options. Today, there are also targeted treatment options available to patients living with this disease.

5. It starts with a conversation.

It is important to speak with your healthcare team about biomarker testing and from there, develop a plan together that best suits your diagnosis and your needs. Breast cancer management is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Having an open dialogue with your healthcare team about the characteristics of your cancer, including its subtype, can help empower you to chart your journey forward.

For more information, you can also visit Beyond Pink for helpful resources and support on navigating your journey with metastatic breast cancer.

[1] American Cancer Society. How Common Is Breast Cancer? May 2021. Accessed October 2021.

[2] National Breast Cancer Foundation. Breast Cancer Stages. Accessed October 2021.

[3] National Cancer Institute. Tumor Markers. May 2021. Accessed October 2021.

[4] Ahn S, et al. *J Pathol Transl Med.* 2019; 54(1): 34-44.

[5] Komen.org. BRCA1 and BRCA2. June 2021. Accessed October 2021.

[6] American Cancer Society. Breast Cancer HER2 Status. September 2019. Accessed October 2021.

[7] Breastcancer.org. Breast Cancer’s Hormone Receptor and HER2 Status Can Change After Diagnosis. June 2012. Accessed October 2021.



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## Under Pressure: Facing Serious Challenges, America's Nurses Continue to Make a Difference

(BPT) - Numbering at over 4 million, nurses are the largest group of health care professionals in the United States. It's estimated that one in every 100 people is a registered nurse. And for 19 years straight, Americans have ranked nursing the most honest and ethical professional in an annual Gallup poll. According to the American Nurses Association, nurses are leading the response to the most challenging issues facing our health care system from ending the COVID-19 pandemic, to alleviating health inequities, improving access to care, developing technologies to improve patient outcomes and more.

### Serving all patients and communities

In an era of increasing public health challenges and the persistent COVID-19 pandemic, the nursing workforce is making a dramatic difference from the bedside to the boardroom, providing 24/7 expert clinical care, promoting public health and protecting our well-being. Nurses directly influence the health of communities by providing care and education to reduce the incidence of and to help patients effectively manage chronic health issues such as heart disease and diabetes. Nurses are providing direct clinical services, collaborating with community members, and leading care in

# Signs of Hearing Loss

- Inability to hear clearly, especially in noisy environments
- Frequent misunderstandings in conversation
- Frequent requests for clarification or repetition
- Need to see people talk
- Fatigue from straining to hear
- Dizziness, pain or ringing in the ears
- Avoidance of social situations
- Volume turned up on TVs and radios

If you or a loved one is experiencing the signs of hearing loss, seek help. Don't wait until it is too late. Have your hearing tested and take whatever steps are necessary to ensure you can hear the world around you.



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local health departments and community-based clinics. Some nurses, like advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), are primary care providers, caring for patients and families in metropolitan and rural areas.

### **Advocating for health care**

Nurses are considered one of the most trusted voices in health care because they know that where people live, work and play affects their health and quality of life. Because of their deep understanding and unmatched perspective on what works in our health care system and what doesn't work, nurses are influencing important health policy. Nurses serving in the U.S. House of Representatives address longstanding health inequities, access to affordable care, and issues impacting the nursing profession. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses' leadership and advocacy for wider availability of COVID-19 testing, steady supplies of critical personal protective equipment (PPE) and increased public education about COVID-19 vaccines as well as equitable distribution helped save the lives of millions of Americans.

### **Responding to public health crises**

The nursing profession has a track record of responding to public health crises and is a driving force behind the colossal COVID-19 response efforts currently underway. Nurses are educating communities about the importance of getting vaccinated against COVID-19, administering COVID-19 vaccines, advocating for relief and aid, and more. For nearly two years, nurses have provided lifesaving treatment and high-quality care, showing unwavering commitment to their patients and communities during this unprecedented pandemic. Nurses were also at the vanguard of combatting many other public health crises such as the HIV and AIDS epidemic, the H1N1 pandemic, the Ebola outbreak and countless others.

### **Leading scientific research and development**

In an ever-changing landscape, nurses are solving today's complex health care issues and exchanging ideas throughout the health care system. Nurses work as scientists, conducting research and forging innovative solutions to make care accessible and improve patient outcomes. They are developing technologies to reduce the risk of infections during hospital stays and a group of nurses built one of the largest contact tracing endeavors in modern history to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

### **We can all support nurses**

Nurses are demonstrating how their immeasurable contributions extend beyond the crucial role of caring for patients in hospitals and clinics, to community health service and the halls of Congress.

But the pandemic strained a nursing workforce that was already struggling with staffing issues. American's health will be at risk without a concerted effort to address decades of underlying, chronic challenges. The American Nurses Association is calling on Congress to increase the investment of federal and state resources to support nurses and take immediate action through policy to ensure we have a strong nursing workforce today and in the future.

Today, we can all support nurses by getting vaccinated against COVID-19, encouraging our friends and family to get vaccinated, and following the guidance of public health officials regarding wearing masks and physical distancing. COVID-19 vaccinations are available from your health care provider, at pharmacies and other locations nationwide. Ending the suffering of the pandemic by getting vaccinated is the most effective way to support and relieve nurses during these challenging times.

To learn more about the nursing profession, visit [NursingWorld.org](https://www.nursingworld.org).

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# Keep Healthy for the Holidays

(Family Features) During this year's holidays, many families are looking forward to celebrating a closer-to-normal season. However, that means staying healthy and keeping all kinds of germs at bay, including seasonal cold and flu bugs.

"With life getting back to normal, we are expecting a more severe cold and flu season than we encountered last year," said Dr. Jennifer Caudle, family physician. "It's important to both take preventative measures and stay prepared for keeping symptoms at bay. I recommend looking for over-the-counter medicines with active ingredients like dextromethorphan and guaifenesin, which help relieve both cough and chest congestion."

**Practice good hygiene.** Washing your hands has become a common refrain throughout the pandemic because it's a simple and effective way to keep germs away, whether they're of the global pandemic variety or a common cold. As you're out shopping and mingling this holiday season, you're likely to come into contact with more germ-laden surfaces than usual. Shopping carts, doors and public restrooms are major culprits, so carry sanitizer and be sure to give your hands a thorough wash when you get home.

**Treat symptoms.** While addressing the symptoms of an illness won't necessarily make it go away, it can ease your discomfort while it runs its course. An option like Mucinex 12 HR Extended Release Tablets provides relief for 12 hours by helping thin and loosen mucus to relieve chest congestion. The tablets are also available in a DM formula, which provides relief for both wet and dry coughs.

**Protect your immune system.** A healthy immune system helps your body fight off germs so you don't get

sick, or if you do come down with a cold or the flu, you may have a milder, shorter illness. Getting plenty of rest, staying well hydrated, eating well-balanced and nutrient-rich meals and getting plenty of regular physical activity can all help keep your body in good condition to fight off seasonal germs.

**Keep your medicine cabinet stocked.** There's hardly anything worse than waking in the middle of the night with a cough or sinus trouble and discovering your medicine cabinet is empty. Be proactive by restocking on over-the-counter basics to help keep your symptoms in check. It's also a good idea to check the expiration dates of any medications you do have on hand and replace anything that is out of date.

**Be mindful of spreading germs.** If you do get sick, you can take steps to protect your loved ones. If possible, stay home until your symptoms have passed and you're less likely to be contagious. Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or sneezing into your elbow if you don't have a tissue, can be effective in preventing the spread of germs.

**Know when to consult a doctor.** In most cases, minor cold symptoms don't require a visit to the doctor (unless you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19 and need to arrange for testing). However, if symptoms don't resolve within a week, grow worse in a short period of time or aren't responding to over-the-counter medicines to ease your symptoms, it's a good idea to schedule an appointment with your doctor or at least speak with a triage nurse for advice.

Find more resources to help you prepare stay healthy for the holidays at [Mucinex.com](https://www.mucinex.com).

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# Wake Up Refreshed

Simple ways to begin your morning (Family Features) Ready, set, go. Just as you would set off at the starting line of a race, this hectic pace is how mornings begin for many men and women.

Instead of waking with dread to face another hectic morning, consider these tips for a healthier way to ease into your daily rituals. While these activities may require you to allow extra time, you may be pleased with the productive results.

**Meditate.** A practice that has been around for thousands of years may still be one of the best stress busters for hurried mornings. To start, find a place in your home that is free of noise and distraction. Practice sitting still, with eyes closed, and focus only on your breathing. Using deep, controlled breaths, try to steer your thoughts away from negative and stress-inducing thoughts.

**Stretch.** While the most health-con-

scious person may opt for a morning sweat-a-thon, working in some stretches can also be beneficial. When you awake, think about oft-used muscles and extend each one for 15-30 seconds.

**Activate.** Give your brain some fuel in the morning while also doing something nice for your mind. For example, journaling is a gentle way to ease into your morning and get your brain firing. If you can't think of a topic, simply write down a few affirmations for the day, revisit a pleasant memory from your past or scribble down a goal for the week. Journaling can be an uplifting way to engage the mind and express gratitude for the day ahead.

Find more tips for starting your day on the right foot at [eLivingToday.com](http://eLivingToday.com).

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# Top Tips to Get Ready to Run

(Family Features) You've made the decision to get in shape, and whether your goal is a full marathon or simply a few laps around the neighborhood, there are a few steps to consider taking before you strap on those shoes and head toward the finish line.

Here are a few tips to help get you ready for the big race:

**Seek Quality Sneakers** - Feet come in a variety of widths and sizes, so visit a specialty running store to find perfect-fitting sneakers. These may come with a hefty price tag, but there are no shortcuts for comfort and support while running long distances.

**Make a Schedule** - Try to aim for at least 10 hours of training per week, including three days where you run and two or three days of other physical activity such as cycling or strength training. To avoid exhaustion, be sure to include at least 1-2 "rest" days per week.

**Stick with Water** - Avoid sports drinks that are loaded with preservatives and sugars. You can't go wrong with the hydrating power of water. As a rule, try to

consume at least 6-8 ounces of water for every 20 minutes you run. Proper hydration after the run is also vital.

**Go Online** - Many websites have training guides for various skill levels or different types of races. If you have a smartphone, look for apps that can take you through day-by-day workouts to get you marathon-ready.

**Nutrition** - Filling your body with the proper amount of fuel can help ensure finish-line success. Load up on quality carbohydrates, such as beans, peas, whole-wheat pastas, whole-grain cereals, apples, brown rice and root vegetables. Protein also plays an important role in a runner's nutrition, so fill up on lean meats, fish, eggs, low-fat dairy, peanut butter and soy protein sources, as well.

By following these general rules, you'll be able to focus on achieving your goal and enjoy the thrill of finishing the race. Find more tips for a healthier lifestyle at [eLivingToday.com](http://eLivingToday.com).

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