



arkansas  
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# WHOLE you

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## *Welcome!*

***Welcome to another edition of Whole You, a newsletter from Arkansas Total Care.***

In this issue, Arkansas Total Care is bringing you plenty of useful articles. You'll learn about breast health screenings, flu vaccine facts, Halloween safety tips, and how to stay active during the winter. You'll also get some ideas on how to reduce holiday stress and how to avoid waiting rooms during cold and flu season.

Arkansas Total Care hopes you enjoy our latest edition of Whole You and that it helps you take care of your whole health.



## Checking in on Your Breast Health

### ***Keeping your breasts healthy is important for your overall health.***

Breast cancer screenings help doctors find signs of disease before you feel sick. This makes cancer easier to treat

Here's how you can take care of your breasts:



#### **1 Know what's normal.**

Pay attention to how your breasts usually look and feel. Tell your doctor if you notice any changes.

#### **2 Get screened.**

Depending on your age and family history, it might be helpful to get a breast exam or mammogram, which is an X-ray that is used to check for breast cancer. If you are 50 to 74 years old, you should get one each year.

#### **3 Watch for signs.**

Look for lumps, swelling, or changes in breast size or shape. Check for dimples or redness on your skin. Tell your doctor about anything unusual.

#### **4 Do self-exams.**

Once a month, feel your breasts for any lumps or changes. You can do this in bed or in the shower. Examine anything that looks different in the mirror.

#### **5 Maintain a healthy lifestyle.**

You can lower your chances of getting breast cancer by staying active. This includes eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, and reducing alcohol intake. Ask your doctor any questions you have about your risk.

***Speaking with your doctor about your breast health is important.*** They can be a great resource for you as you get screening results. Get some peace of mind and check your breasts today.

## It's flu season again.

For some, it shows up with mild symptoms. For others, the flu can lead to serious illness or even death. The best way to protect yourself and loved ones from the flu is to get a vaccine every year. Hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received it for decades. Here are some key reasons to get a flu vaccine:

**1. It can save your life.** The flu vaccine helps stop sickness, trips to the doctor, and even going to the hospital.

**2. It is a preventive tool for chronic heart conditions.**

Flu vaccination can help protect people with heart problems from having serious issues.

**3. It reduces the severity of illness.** While people can still get sick even if they have received a vaccine, it can help reduce flu symptoms.

**4. There is a needle-free option.** Many people dislike needles. Chat with your provider to see if you can take the nasal spray flu vaccine.

**5. It helps protect pregnant individuals and their babies.** If pregnant people get the flu vaccine during pregnancy, it can protect their newborn baby for a few months before their baby is able to get the vaccine themselves.

**6. You won't get the flu from the vaccine.** Many people are afraid they will get the flu from the vaccine. The vaccine uses a dead form of the virus, so you will not get the flu from it.

**7. It changes each year.** There are many strains of the flu. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) determines which ones are most likely to occur that year. A flu vaccine prepares our immune system to fight off certain strains more quickly.

**8. Protection doesn't last forever.** Protection from a flu vaccine gets weaker over time. This is why yearly vaccination is important.

**9. Side effects are usually mild.** Soreness or swelling may occur where the vaccine was given. Some people get mild side effects like a headache, stuffy nose, or sore throat. These symptoms usually go away on their own.

**10. It's available almost anywhere.** Flu vaccines are offered in many doctor's offices and clinics. Some pharmacies, urgent care clinics, schools, colleges, and workplaces offer it too.



**Now that you know more about the flu, find out where you can get a flu vaccine by calling Member Services at 1-866-282-6280 (TTY: 711).**



## Safety Tips for Your Tricks and Treats

### *Spooky season is here!*

As you get ready for Halloween, share these tips with your kids. It's important to stay safe when we have fun!

#### **Costume safety**

- Look for flame-resistant costumes. This includes wigs and accessories.
- Make sure shoes fit well and costumes don't drag on the ground. Tripping can be dangerous, especially near firepits or sewers.
- Make sure any makeup or face paint is nontoxic. Test it on small patch of skin first to make sure there are no allergic reactions.
- Avoid sharp weapons like long swords. Make sure all weapons have soft tips.
- Add reflective tape or stripes to costumes to make them more visible.

#### **Trick-or-treating tips**

- Don't let young children walk alone. Make sure there is at least one adult per group of children.
- Plan out a route with your teenagers. Discuss a time they should come home.
- Keep a cellphone

and flashlight on hand. Let light and a GPS guide the way as needed.

- Only go to homes with porch lights on. Decorations and lights are usually an invitation. Don't disturb people who don't celebrate Halloween.
- Never go into a stranger's home or car.
- Stay on well-lit streets. Always use the sidewalk. Make sure you are careful when crossing streets.

#### **Preparing your home**

- Consider offering non-food goodies. Food allergies are more common than you think. Glow sticks, spider rings, vampire fangs, pencils, bouncy balls, and stickers are fun alternatives.
  - Light the area well so your visitors can see.
  - Clear your porch of leaves or anything else trick-or-treaters can trip over.

- Always examine collected candy when your child comes home. Throw out anything that isn't sealed, has holes, or looks spoiled.

Now it sounds like your ghouls and goblins are ready for a fun night of Halloween traditions. Enjoy!



## Waiting Rooms — Where Germs Spread Like Wildfire

### *Sniffles, coughs, and fevers are all around us this time of year.*

An annual flu vaccine helps keep you and your family healthy. It's available at no cost and is the best way to fight the flu this season. If you do find yourself sick, you can get the care you need in no time. You have options, and you don't even need to leave your house. No more sitting in a waiting room to see your primary care provider (PCP). Talk to a nurse or a doctor right away.

**24/7 Nurse Advice Line** As an Arkansas Total Care member, you have access to a nurse every day of the year. The Nurse Advice Line is a covered benefit at no cost to you. When you call, you will speak with an experienced nurse within minutes. The nurse will listen to your concerns and symptoms and help you decide what to do next. You might be told to wait to see your provider.

Or you might need to go somewhere to be looked at in person. Call 1-866-282-6280 (TTY: 711) to get connected to our Nurse Advice Line. Nurses are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

**Telehealth** Another Arkansas Total Care benefit is telehealth. You can see a doctor from the comfort of your home using your computer, smartphone, or tablet. Just like an in-person visit, the provider will ask you questions about your medical history and discuss your symptoms. They will give you next steps. If you need medicine, they can send the prescription to your pharmacy. The best part is how quickly you can speak with someone without an appointment! You get all the benefits of a provider without sitting in a waiting room. When you need care fast, this option is quick, easy, and available 24/7.

***Learn more about your telehealth provider options and how to create an account by calling Member Services at 1-866-282-6280 (TTY: 711).***



## ***The days are getting shorter.***

The weather is getting colder. And the holidays are upon us. It's really easy to fall into a routine of staying indoors, snoozing your alarm, or increasing your screen time from the comfort of your bed. Here are some ways to stay active this season.

**Walk the walk.** As the autumn leaves change colors, we are blessed with a colorful shift of the world around us. The first snowfall of the season is another beautiful moment. These are great excuses to go on a nature walk and enjoy the scenery.

**Find an activity buddy.** Pair up with a friend or family member for weekly exercise. Hold each other accountable. Routines give your week a new, fun structure.

**Pay attention to the weather.** Some activities depend on the weather. Build a snowman with your friends after a night of fresh snow. Is there a rare afternoon of sunshine coming up? Enjoy it at a park or nature preserve.

**Open the doors to household chores.** It's a great time to get to those tasks you've been putting off. Maybe you can rearrange furniture to switch things up a bit. Use this opportunity for a deep clean behind those beds and dressers.

**Follow along online.** There are plenty of online workout classes, such as Jazzercise or yoga. Hundreds of these videos can be watched for free.

**Volunteer.** You can lend a helping hand to your elderly neighbors by shoveling their driveways or walking their dogs.

**Try something new.** There are plenty of activities that

are more accessible in the winter, like ice skating, skiing, sledding, and snowshoeing, just to name a few.

**Join the club.** Colder weather means it's time to join a club. Bowling, yoga, and indoor rock climbing are some activities that are more fun in groups.

Your body and mental health will thank you for staying active this season. You can strengthen bones and muscles, lower blood pressure, and sleep better. Exercise also boosts your immunity during cold and flu season. Even a few minutes of activity each day can go a long way. And don't forget to stay hydrated!





## Five Ways to Reduce Holiday Stress

This time of year is supposed to be joyful — but for many of us, anxiety can take over. To help you cope with added stresses during this time of year, try these five tips:

### 1 Cook up some joy

Creative tasks like cooking or baking can help improve your mood. Try a new recipe and include some seasonal flavors. You could simply add some vanilla extract to cinnamon tea — or add dried cranberries and toasted walnuts to coleslaw.

### 2 Green up the gift wrap

Get creative wrapping presents. It's fun and can be cheaper and greener than store-bought wrapping paper. Use newspaper, brown paper grocery bags, old maps, or leftover fabric. You can even make the gift part of the packaging by putting small gifts into a bucket, basket, or purse.

### 3 Lend a hand

When you volunteer, it can lower stress and help you feel a sense of purpose. You can even meet others with similar interests. That can also boost your mood and decrease feelings of stress or anger. Giving back your time and talents can help you spread some joy this season and feel good about yourself.

### 4 Give yourself a break

It's a busy season, so be sure to schedule some time for yourself. Curl up with a book, listen to music, or go for a nature walk. Exercise, nature, and music have all been shown to lower anxiety.



### 5 Make it by hand

You don't have to spend money on the latest gadget for your loved ones. The most meaningful gifts are handmade. Plus, the process of making them can help reduce stress. If you're a knitter, a cozy hand-knit scarf makes a beautiful gift. Try painting a mug or picture frame. Or visit your local arts and crafts store for inspiration.