

# HEALTH MATTERS

SPRING 2022

## LESS IS MORE



Embrace the simple life



### Find Your Community

A guide to online communities



### Eat Your Way to Healthy Sleep



# STAY CONNECTED

How would you  
like us to  
communicate  
with you?

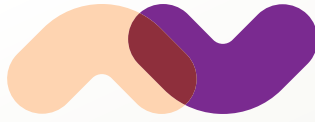


HPN and SHL are adding ways to deliver information electronically. Make sure we have the right contact information for you.

Visit **HealthPlanofNevada.com** or **SierraHealthandLife.com** and sign in to the online member center. Click on the profile icon in the top right corner and select Communication Preferences. Make sure your Contact Information is up to date and pick your Communication Preferences.

Now, when we communicate electronically, such as by email or text, you're ready. If you don't have an online member center account, visit **HealthPlanofNevada.com** or **SierraHealthandLife.com** and create one. If you need help, call Member Services at the toll-free number on the back of your health plan ID card.

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# 24/7



## We're on Call.

If you're unsure about your condition, our 24/7 advice nurse may be able to help. Our nurse is available to answer questions, provide self-care advice and help you decide whether to seek virtual care, urgent care, emergency care, or schedule an appointment with your provider. Just call toll-free **1-800-288-2264**, TTY **711**.



### Questions About Your Health Plan?

Call the number on the back of your health plan ID card to speak with our Member Services team.

Or visit **HealthPlanofNevada.com** or **SierraHealthandLife.com** and sign in.



## Delivering a better member experience!

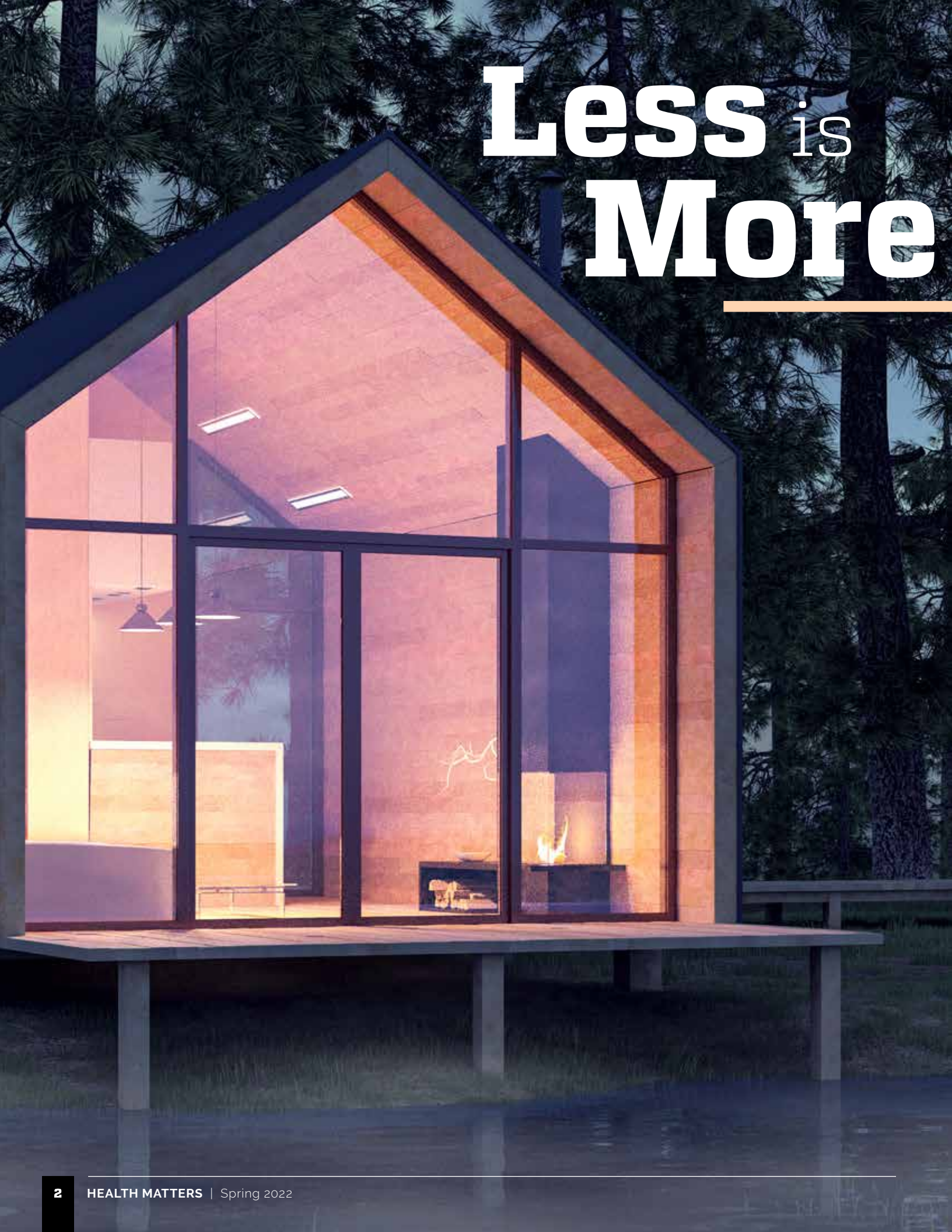
**Visit your health plan's website to explore our online provider directory.**

Health Matters is published as a community service for members of Health Plan of Nevada and Sierra Health and Life. Benefits discussed in this magazine may vary by plan and geographic region. If you have specific questions regarding your coverage, please refer to your plan documents or call Member Services at the number on the back of your health plan ID card.

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# Less <sup>is</sup> More

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# Embrace the simple life

Decades ago, a popular bumper sticker read, “He who dies with the most toys wins.” Times and attitudes have changed. For many people these days, less is definitely more.

This was already a trend before the pandemic. But two years of working and educating children from home was a wake-up call for many families. They simply needed more space. Others, after staring at their stuff for two years, decided it was time to go in another direction.

## Here are three ways to simplify your life.

### Tiny Homes

They are cute, cozy and have a smaller carbon footprint. Tiny homes are generally defined as 500-square-feet or smaller.<sup>1</sup> And if you choose one with wheels, you may tow it almost anywhere or even live off the grid.

More affordable and cheaper to maintain, tiny homes offer cost savings that may quickly add up. In fact, tiny home owners report more savings and less credit card debt.<sup>2</sup> Energy-wise, tiny homes have the clear advantage.

“

If the beginning of the pandemic taught us to slow down, now the focus is on simplifying and making sure our values are top priority,” said **Rebecca Sultan, LMFT**, who manages the employee assistance program at Behavioral Healthcare Options, Inc. “People are reassessing what is most important to them. And many are choosing to spend their time and resources on family and other life-enriching activities instead of things.

”

*Continued on page 4*

Compared with an average-sized house, a tiny home:<sup>2</sup>

- Uses about 7% of the energy,
- Decreases the household's ecological footprint by 45%, and
- Emits an average of 2,000 pounds of greenhouse gas compared to 28,000 pounds.

Of course, there are expenses to consider, such as building or purchasing costs, new furniture, utilities and insurance. And where will it go? You may also need to buy a plot of land or pay rental fees.

## Minimalism

If your mantra is "a place for everything and everything in its place," minimalism may be right for you. Minimalism focuses on simple, clean lines, and avoids clutter. It's not a new trend, but many have embraced it out of concern for the environmental impact of mass production and consumerism.

Whether your home is tiny or average-sized, try these tips:

- **Less is more** — Keep only what you really need and eliminate duplicate items.
- **Assemble a capsule wardrobe** — Edit your closet down to a few staple items.
- **The 1:2 Rule** — When one item comes into your home, discard or donate two.
- **Wait 24 hours** — Avoid impulse buys by thinking about where the item may go, how long you'll use it, and whether it might eventually end up in the attic or garage.
- **Share with friends or neighbors** — If you don't own it, someone else may. Perhaps you may temporarily borrow a ladder, a tool or a piece of sports equipment. Be sure to reciprocate.

## Downsizing

Moving into a smaller home is not just for retirees. At any stage of life, a smaller home or apartment may reduce your mortgage, rent, utility and insurance costs. Depending on your equity and the local housing market, you may even eliminate your mortgage completely.<sup>3</sup> Those extra funds may help pay down debt or build up your retirement account.

Less time spent on household chores and yardwork means more opportunities to visit friends, attend sporting events, and travel to those places you've always wanted to see.

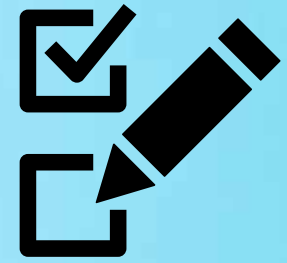
## Letting Go

Regardless of how you choose to simplify, the hardest part may be going through years of clothing, books, collections, photos and family heirlooms. That's because each item is probably loaded with memories.

But Sultan cautions that keeping possessions you no longer need may be energy-draining and keep you from moving forward with your life.

"Keep the things that reflect who you are now, not who you were then," she said. "Focusing on your values is not only the key to living, but to thriving." Like other lifestyle changes, such as diet and exercise, she advises starting slow and giving yourself time to adapt.

# YOUR OPINION MATTERS



Once a year, an external vendor surveys health plan members to determine how well we and your medical providers are performing. The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS®) survey is mailed to a random sample of our members each year between February and May.

Your opinion is anonymous and combined with many other members to come up with a combined score. These scores are compared with other health plans across the country and used by both state and federal government agencies to rate the quality of the service we deliver to our members.

## You may see questions such as:

- How often did you get an appointment for a checkup as soon as you needed?
- How often did your personal doctor spend enough time with you?
- Did you get information or help from your health plan's customer service?

Please consider sharing your very important opinion with us. The survey will only take you about 10 minutes. Health plan department leaders will carefully review the combined results and take action on any areas that need improvement.





# FIND YOUR COMMUNITY

Humans are social beings. Being part of a community provides a sense of belonging. It can be a safe place to go when you need help or advice. And it feels good to support others who need it.

Strong social connections are also important for your physical and mental health.<sup>4</sup> In fact, loneliness may actually increase your risk for heart disease, stroke and dementia. It's now considered a risk factor for premature death from all causes, similar to smoking, obesity and lack of exercise. Loneliness is also associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety and suicide.<sup>5</sup>

If you've been feeling a little isolated lately, here's some good news. Online communities are an effective way to find and build social connections.<sup>6</sup> And all you have to do is log in from your phone, tablet or computer.

## MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

An online community is simply a group of people who share common interests and communicate with each other over the internet. But unlike regular, in-person meetings, online communities are not limited by location. You might find yourself connecting with someone who lives on the next block, another state, or even a different country.

But the social benefits are similar. A recent New York University study of Facebook Groups found that online communication provided a strong sense of community despite the lack of physical closeness. Members from 11 of the 15 countries surveyed said their most meaningful communities were primarily online.<sup>6</sup>



## WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

Online communities are growing in number and diversity.<sup>6</sup> If you are a newbie, Reddit may be a good place to start. You'll find a wide variety of groups alphabetized by interest. Whether your interests are vegan parenting, lazy cats, ghost stories, silent films or Hallmark movies, there is likely a group for you.

Here are some other ideas:

**Start local** — Meet your neighbors, join a cycling or hiking group, and find out what's really going on in your community.

**Dream it** — Check social media and image sharing services for artistic inspiration and tutorials. And if you're working on a novel, follow creative writing influencers on social media or subscribe to their blogs.

**Find empathy** — Many cancer, autism and other online health groups provide information and support from others who "get it."

**Join the big leagues** — Many major sports networks provide platforms to create fantasy leagues that allow you to compete with fellow sports fans.

**Level up** — If action games are more your gaming style, check out interactive live streaming communities.

**Follow your passion** — Popular fitness, automotive, retail and educational brands host online communities where members connect with each other, attend special events, and participate in contests.



## BEFORE JOINING A GROUP:

- Read the rules for participation to make sure it's a good fit for you.
- See if there are any membership fees.
- Look for communities that support your mental health or positive attitude.
- Stay safe online and be aware of anyone asking for personal information.



The mention of an online community in this article does not imply any endorsement of the material on the community's website or mobile app.

# Be Healthy

Achieve your health goals with the support of registered nurses, dietitians and licensed counselors.



## ▶ **WEIGHT MANAGEMENT**

Open to members age 18+ interested in weight-loss support.

## ▶ **DIABETES PROGRAM**

Open to members age 18+ with Type 1, Type 2 or gestational diabetes.

## ▶ **PREDIABETES PROGRAM**

Open to members age 18+ diagnosed with prediabetes.

### Our **Health Education and Disease Management**

programs are available at no additional cost to eligible Health Plan of Nevada and Sierra Health and Life members.

## ▶ **ASTHMA SUPPORT**

Open to members age 5+ diagnosed with asthma.

## ▶ **KIDNEY HEALTH**

Open to members age 18+ diagnosed with stage 3 chronic kidney disease.

## ▶ **TOBACCO CESSATION PROGRAM**

Open to members who want to quit tobacco/nicotine.

## ▶ **NUTRITION SUPPORT**

Open to all members who want to talk with a registered dietitian for personalized nutrition education.

## ▶ **EXERCISE SUPPORT**

Open to all members who want to participate in a live online exercise program led by a certified personal trainer.

For a complete list of programs and services, visit your health plan's website or call **1-800-720-7253**, TTY **711**. To opt-out of participating in any of these programs, call **1-877-692-2059**, TTY **711**.

# WHAT is an ELECTROLYTE?

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Electrolytes are vital to your body's functioning. These essential minerals regulate and control the balance of fluids in your body. They include sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, chloride and phosphate.<sup>9</sup>

## **Found in your blood, urine, cells and other body fluids, electrolytes:**<sup>10</sup>

- Balance the amount of water in your body
- Balance your body's PH
- Regulate heart rhythm
- Stimulate muscle contraction and relaxation
- Send nerve impulses
- Move nutrients into cells, and
- Remove wastes from cells

Most of the time, you get all the electrolytes you need from eating a healthy diet and drinking enough fluids. But the proportion of these minerals to your body's fluids is very important. A sudden loss of fluids from diarrhea, vomiting or excessive sweating may cause you to become dehydrated and throw your electrolytes off balance. Certain conditions, including kidney and liver problems, and medications may also cause an electrolyte imbalance.<sup>11</sup>

When this happens, the fluids and electrolytes must be replaced in correct proportions. Most adults with mild or moderate dehydration may replenish fluids by drinking water and other beverages, while avoiding caffeinated beverages like coffee, tea and soda. However, babies and young children are more vulnerable to electrolyte imbalances. They may need oral rehydration solutions like Pedialyte<sup>®</sup>, which is specially formulated to restore the electrolyte balance in young children.<sup>11</sup>

For regular physical workouts, water is sufficient. But sports drink supplements containing electrolytes are recommended for athletes who exercise for more than 75 minutes, and for anyone who exercises or works outdoors in extreme heat.<sup>12</sup>

Here's an easy way to tell if you're dehydrated—check your urine. It should be pale yellow. If it's darker than lemonade, drink up. But remember, it is also possible to cause an electrolyte imbalance by drinking too much fluid.<sup>11</sup>

It's all about balance. If you have concerns about your electrolytes, talk to your primary care provider.



# How to spot Melanoma

Melanoma takes the lives of more than 7,000 Americans every year,<sup>13</sup> but with early detection and treatment, it's almost always curable. That's why it's so important to check your skin often for suspicious lesions or changing moles — even if you always wear sunscreen outdoors.

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month. It's a good time to start routinely checking yourself and your family for possible skin cancer. The Skin Cancer Foundation has developed the ABCDEs of melanoma to help you:<sup>14</sup>

**A: Asymmetry** — Benign moles are symmetrical. If a mole is uneven, it may be melanoma.

**B: Border** — Benign moles have smooth, even borders. If a mole has jagged or notched edges, it may be melanoma.

**C: Color** — Most benign moles are a single

color. Be suspicious of a mole with more than one. A melanoma is usually brown or black, but may be pink, red, blue and white.

**D: Diameter** — If a mole is larger than others, or has a diameter larger than one-fourth of an inch, it may be melanoma.

**E: Evolving** — Benign moles stay the same over the years. If a mole starts changing in size, shape, color, height or some other way, it may be melanoma.

Take pictures of any suspicious moles or spots to help you keep track of potential changes. If you notice any moles or skin discolorations that may be early signs of skin cancer or melanoma, contact your primary care provider as soon as possible.

## Protect Yourself and Your Family

Even if you grew up here and are used to Nevada's hot, dry climate and desert sun, your skin is not resistant to harmful UV rays. Every person is at risk for skin cancer, but those with light skin or a genetic predisposition have a higher risk.<sup>13</sup>

- Use sunscreen
- Take cover with an umbrella
- Wear dark clothing, hats and sunglasses
- Seek some shade.

## Other types of skin cancer

Melanoma may be the deadliest, but check your skin regularly for these other two common forms of skin cancer.<sup>13</sup>

**Basal cell carcinoma** — The most common type of skin cancer, it rarely spreads to other parts of the body and has a very low mortality rate. It often looks like red patches, flesh-colored bumps, pink growths or open sores.

**Squamous cell carcinoma** — The second-most common type of skin cancer, it may spread to other parts of the body and be fatal. It usually looks like scaly, red patches; red, firm bumps; open sores or warts. It also may crust or bleed.

# New Research on Vitamin D

*"Vitamin D is important for many reasons, including bone health, nerve signaling and immune system function. Not sure if you're getting enough? Your doctor may check your levels with a simple blood test."*  
—Carolyn Schut, MS, Registered Dietitian, Health Plan of Nevada/Sierra Health and Life

Vitamins and minerals play critical roles in your health. Deficiencies in any of these nutrients may lead to health problems.<sup>15</sup>

Vitamin D is a nutrient that supports several of your body's systems. Researchers are working hard to understand how vitamin D may impact health and longevity. Recent studies have focused on:<sup>15</sup>

**Heart failure** — While scientists are not sure why, there is evidence that enough levels of vitamin D may offer protection against various heart conditions.

**Cancer** — Both colorectal and breast cancer may be linked to a deficiency in vitamin D.

**Belly fat** — Low vitamin D levels may increase belly fat in both men and women. Belly fat may increase the risk of heart attack, certain types of cancers and diabetes.

Researchers are also looking at whether low vitamin D contributes to Alzheimer's disease, chronic pain syndrome and other illnesses.

## Are you getting enough?

A growing number of U.S. adults and teens need more. Here are three easy ways to increase your vitamin D intake:<sup>15</sup>

1. **Get a little sunshine.** The sun is nature's best source of vitamin D. Get about 20 minutes of sun on your skin each day. Any longer than that, remember to use a sunblock with a SPF 15 or higher and practice sun safety.
2. **Eat the right foods.** Some foods are naturally high in vitamin D, like milk, cooked egg yolks, salmon and beef liver. You may also find this nutrient in fortified cereals, raw portobello and crimini mushrooms, mackerel, tuna and sardines.
3. **Consider supplements.** Multivitamins and vitamin D supplements may be helpful, but talk to your provider first.

Changing your diet and lifestyle may increase your vitamin D intake, help you feel better, and prevent certain health conditions. As always, please consult with your health care provider before beginning any health-related program.

## About Vitamin D

- Vitamin D is synthesized in our skin when we come into contact with sunlight.
- Vitamin D regulates calcium levels in our body and strengthens bones.
- A vitamin D deficiency may lead to joint and muscle pain, severe asthma in children, heart disease and cancer.<sup>15</sup>

**A growing number of U.S. adults and teens aren't getting enough vitamin D.<sup>16</sup>**

# US News Ranks **Mediterranean Diet Best Diet** - Again

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US News and World Report ranks the Mediterranean diet as the best diet for the fifth year in a row. The Mediterranean diet is the traditional diet of Greece, Italy and Spain. It focuses on eating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans and lentils, and healthy fats--found in foods like seafood and olive oil. The diet limits fried foods, alcohol, red meat, added sugars, and refined grains such as white rice and white bread. It can also be beneficial for weight loss, decreasing risk of heart disease and diabetes, and lowering cholesterol levels.



# Mediterranean Meal Ideas

## Breakfast:

- 1 cup unsweetened oatmeal topped with 1/2 cup blueberries, 1/4 cup chopped walnuts and cinnamon to taste
- 2 eggs scrambled with 1 cup spinach and 1/4 cup chopped tomatoes served with 1 slice whole grain toast

## Lunch:

- Chopped salad made with: 2 cups spinach, 1/2 chopped bell pepper, 1/4 cup olives, 4 cherry tomatoes, 1/2 cup chickpeas, topped with 1 tbsp. olive oil and 1 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- Tuna salad sandwich on whole wheat bread with 1 serving of fruit (1 apple, 2 clementines or 1 cup of berries)

## Dinner:

- Grilled chicken tacos made with: grilled chicken, avocado, cilantro, red cabbage, low-fat shredded cheese served on corn tortillas with a lime wedge and salsa to taste (protein swap: try black beans as a vegetarian alternative or salmon to help increase healthy fats)

## Mediterranean diet swaps:

Butter	.....▶	Olive oil
Fried chicken	.....▶	Grilled chicken
White rice	.....▶	Brown rice
Potato chips	.....▶	Almonds
Mayo	.....▶	Avocado
Soda	.....▶	Sparkling water

Ready to eat healthier? Talk with one of our registered dietitians at no additional cost. They can help you explore options based on your health goals. Please call **702-877-5356** or toll-free **1-800-720-7253**, TTY **711**, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Source: <https://health.usnews.com/best-diet/mediterranean-diet>

# Eat your way to **HEALTHY SLEEP**

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*Small changes may  
improve your overall  
sleep and health*



**Sluggish, fatigued, dragging all day? We all know how it feels to suffer through the day after a poor night's sleep. But not getting enough sleep doesn't just make you feel bad—it's harmful for your health. Over time, sleep loss may lead to health issues like weight gain, insulin resistance and depression.<sup>17</sup>**

A restful night's sleep helps you feel your best and protects your health. According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, adults should aim for at least seven hours each night. But the National Sleep Foundation reports about 20% of us get fewer than six. Now that may work for a few people, but most of us need closer to eight hours of shut-eye.

**Did you know that changing your eating habits may help you sleep better? For a more restful night:<sup>14</sup>**

- Eat a light snack before bed if you feel hungry. This may help keep hunger pangs from waking you up later in the night.
- Choose small portions of healthy foods like hard-boiled eggs, cheese, nuts, lean protein and fish. Bananas, cherries, unsweetened oatmeal or white jasmine rice also promote healthy sleep.
- Try a cup of warm milk, herbal tea, or decaffeinated green tea as part of your relaxing bedtime routine.

**Beware of foods and beverages that may keep you awake. Avoid the following:<sup>10</sup>**

- Large meals within two or three hours of going to bed.
- Spicy foods that may cause heartburn and/or interrupt your sleep.
- Sugary treats, which may disrupt your body's energy level and keep you awake.
- Caffeinated drinks like coffee, tea or soda within six hours before bedtime.
- Alcoholic drinks, which may make you feel drowsy, but actually reduce sleep quality and worsen the symptoms of sleep apnea.

## More for you

Our health education and wellness programs are available to help you at no additional cost. To schedule a telephonic, virtual, or in person consultation with a registered dietitian to support your health and sleep goals, please call Health Education and Wellness (HEW) at **702-877-5356** or toll-free **1-800-720-7253**, TTY **711**.

**“Getting enough sleep has such a big impact on your health, and the things you're eating and drinking before bed may make a big impact on your sleep quality. When you make sleep a priority, you might be surprised to see how much easier it is to reach some of your other health goals, like controlling blood sugar or weight loss are.”**

**—Carolyn Schut, MS, Registered Dietitian, HEW, Health Plan of Nevada/Sierra Health and Life**

# 12 TIPS TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR HEALTH PLAN

- 1.** Know your rights and learn about the health plan's quality program.
- 2.** Read your benefit information to find out what is and what isn't covered.
- 3.** Learn how to use your pharmacy benefit.
- 4.** Find out about copayments and other charges you may be responsible for and how to submit a claim.
- 5.** Know what to do if you have an issue and how to submit a complaint.
- 6.** Know where to get information, such as how to select a provider and make an appointment, how to get specialty and behavioral healthcare services and find a list of hospitals contracted with your health plan.
- 7.** Know that we research new medical technology.
- 8.** Ask for help if you speak another language.
- 9.** Know that the health plan does not offer incentives for prior authorization denials.
- 10.** Learn about internal and external review for denial of benefits, coverage or your relationship with the plan.
- 11.** Know that we have special programs available for members, including disease management, case management and health education.
- 12.** Find out what to do if you have an emergency, are out of the area, or need care after hours, and if you have any benefit limitations or additional costs.

Get to know more about your health plan. Take a look at the full version of 12 tips on your plan's website. If you would like a printed copy, please call Member Services at the toll-free number on the back of your health plan ID card.



# Get Answers To Your Questions In Our Member Guide

Our member guide provides a comprehensive overview about your health plan, tools and resources, plus tips to help you get the most value from your benefits. To access our member guide, download the **MyHPN** or **MySHL** app from your app store or sign in on your health plan's website.



## **WE PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY**

Your privacy is very important to us. Health Plan of Nevada and Sierra Health and Life have a Notice of Privacy Practices, and you may ask for a copy of this notice at any time by contacting Member Services at the number on the back of your health plan ID card or by visiting us online.

## **YOU'RE COVERED**

Under the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act, also known as "Janet's Law," health plan members are entitled to benefits for medically necessary mastectomy and elective breast reconstruction surgeries. This includes prostheses and treatment for any related conditions, such as lymphedema. For more information, call Member Services at the number on the back of your health plan ID card.

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We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in health programs and activities.

We provide free services to help you communicate with us. Such as, letters in other languages or large print. Or, you can ask for an interpreter. To ask for help, please call the toll-free phone number listed on your health plan ID card or plan documents.

### **Español (Spanish)**

Tiene derecho a recibir ayuda e información en su idioma sin costo. Para solicitar un intérprete, llame al número de teléfono gratuito para miembros que se encuentra en su tarjeta de identificación del plan o los documentos de su plan.

### **Tagalog (Tagalog)**

May karapatan kang makakuha ng tulong at impormasyon sa sinasalita mong wika nang libre. Upang humiling ng interpreter, tawagan ang toll-free na numero ng telepono para sa miyembro na nakalista sa iyong ID card sa planong pangkalusugan o sa mga dokumento ng plano.



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