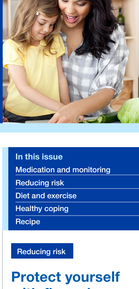
UnitedHealthcare

TAKING CHARGE of your diabetes

FALL/WINTER 2018



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Medication and monitoring

Take steps to keep your eyes healthy with diabetes

There are so many reasons why managing your diabetes is important. Among these is the potential for eye damage. This is called diabetic eye disease. Diabetic eye disease includes several conditions. People with diabetes do have a higher risk of blindness than people who don't have diabetes. But, according to the American Diabetes Association, most people with diabetes have only minor eye problems.

Even if your vision seems fine now, it's crucial that you see an eye doctor regularly. You should have a complete dilated eye exam so that the doctor can look for any potential problems. Early treatment is important to prevent vision loss. You should see an eye doctor at least once a year.

Having high blood glucose over a prolonged amount of time can cause damage to tiny blood vessels in the back of your eyes. Most serious diabetic eye diseases start with this blood vessel damage. These damaged blood vessels can harm the retina, the lining at the back of the eye. This disease is called diabetic retinopathy. It's the most common cause of vision loss for people with diabetes.

About a third of people over 40 with diabetes already have signs of the condition. But when treated early, the risk of blindness falls by 95 percent.

Other serious eye problems include:

- **Diabetic macular edema (DME)** – DME is caused by diabetic retinopathy. It affects an area of the retina called the macula, a part of the eye responsible for focusing. There is treatment for DME, and treatment can often stop or reverse any loss of vision.
- **Glaucoma** – Glaucoma causes pressure in the eye, damaging the retina and optic nerve.
- **Cataract** – Adults with diabetes are two to five times more likely to develop a cataract, or clouding of the lens, than those without diabetes.

What you can do

To help keep your eyes healthy, follow the ABCs of diabetes: manage your A1C, blood pressure and cholesterol. In addition, if you smoke, stop. And remember to take any medicines as directed, stay physically active and eat a healthy diet. Staying in charge of your diabetes is the very best way to protect yourself and can help delay vision loss or prevent it altogether.

Remember, diabetic eye disease often goes undetected because there are often no symptoms. However, if you experience any of the following, see an eye doctor right away:

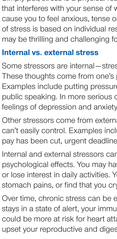
- Your vision changes frequently
- You have poor color vision
- Your vision is blurry or wavy or if you see spots or strings (floaters)
- You see flashes of light or dark areas, or have vision loss

Remember, most diabetic eye disease is treatable, especially when it's discovered early. So see your eye doctor at least once a year. See your way clear to managing your diabetes and protecting your vision.

Diet and exercise

Tai Chi: A gentle way to move, meditate and de-stress

Learn more about this "moving meditation"



Tai chi is a mind-body exercise that was first used by Chinese monks to improve concentration and physical well-being. Today, some people may turn to it to help manage stress.

Sometimes called "moving meditation," tai chi's graceful and precise body movements can enhance balance, strength and coordination while helping you achieve better body awareness. Tai chi's movements are said to align the body, improve flexibility and increase energy flow called qi. It may also increase inner peace.

Combining breathing exercises with slow, gentle movements, tai chi is an activity for all age groups and all levels of fitness. It is ideal for just about anyone—children, adults of all ages or people with disabilities. Many of the movements can be adapted and performed in a sitting position.

Benefits of tai chi

Researchers have studied the benefits of tai chi. They may include:

- Increased bone health
- Cardiopulmonary fitness
- Increased quality of life
- Improved self-confidence
- Improved balance and fall prevention
- Improved strength, movement and flexibility

Another advantage of tai chi is that injuries from this activity are few. The movements are performed very slowly and are not strenuous if done correctly. Like any activity, your muscles may be sore when you first start tai chi. You may need to change or stay away from some of the movements if you are pregnant or have certain health conditions. Contact your doctor to discuss whether you should take a tai chi class.

If you are physically inactive or have a chronic health condition such as arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, pregnancy or other symptoms, check with your doctor before starting an exercise program. He or she can tell you what types of activities are safe and suitable for you.

Healthy coping

Stress management: Understanding your triggers is the first step

Can you identify some internal pressures and some outside factors that can cause you to feel stressed?

For most people, stress is a part of life. We feel it, complain about it and think about how we can get rid of it. But do we really understand what stress is and what we should do about it?

What is stress?

Simply put, stress is a physical response to a feeling, situation or event that interferes with your sense of well-being. The factors or emotions that cause you to feel anxious, tense or afraid are called stressors. Perception of stress is based on individual response. What may be stressful for one may be thrilling and challenging for another.

Internal vs. external stress

Some stressors are internal—stress-inducing thoughts or behaviors. These thoughts come from one's psychological mindset or expectations. Examples include putting pressure on yourself to be perfect or fear of public speaking. In some serious cases, internal stressors may lead to feelings of depression and anxiety.

Other stressors come from external factors, which are forces that you can't easily control. Examples include major life events, discovering your pay has been cut, urgent deadlines or an upcoming exam.

Internal and external stressors can have the same physical and psychological effects. You may have trouble sleeping, lose your appetite or lose interest in daily activities. You may be irritable, have headaches or stomach pains, or find that you cry easily.

Over time, chronic stress can be even more damaging. As your body stays in a state of alert, your immune system may be weakened. You could be more at risk for heart attack and stroke. Chronic stress may upset your reproductive and digestive systems.

As you can see, it's important to figure out the sources of your stress so you can start working toward a more healthy and relaxed mental state. It is helpful to learn coping skills to deal with stress—as stress is part of life.

Some examples of internal stressors

According to mental health experts at HelpGuide.org, here are some common internal stressors:

- Inability to accept uncertainty
- Pessimism
- Negative self-talk
- Unrealistic expectations
- Rigid thinking, lack of flexibility
- All-or-nothing attitude
- Needing to always be perfect

Some examples of external stressors

Here are some examples of external stressors, HelpGuide.org says:

- Major life changes, such as death of a loved one, divorce, military deployment, career that requires one to be away from home frequently
- Work or school
- Relationship difficulties
- Financial worries
- Being too busy
- Children and family

Left untreated, everyday stresses can lead to chronic stress. If you feel depressed or hopeless, seek help from your doctor or a mental health professional right away. The earlier you seek treatment, the greater the chances of successfully coping with stress.

Recipe

Apple raisin coffee cake

Makes 20 servings

Ingredients:

- 5 cups tart apples, cored, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup pecans, chopped
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ cups whole-wheat pastry flour
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking soda
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly spray a 13 x 9 x 2-inch pan with cooking spray.

In a large mixing bowl, combine apples with sugar, raisins and pecans; mix well. Let stand 30 minutes.

Stir in oil, vanilla and egg. Sift together flours, soda and cinnamon; stir into apple mixture about ½ at a time, just enough to moisten dry ingredients. Turn batter into pan. Bake 35 to 40 minutes. Cool cake slightly before serving.

Reducing risk

Protect yourself with flu and pneumococcal vaccines

Influenza ("the flu") can be a serious illness, especially for young children, older adults, pregnant women and people with certain chronic conditions. It can even cause hospitalization and death.

Fortunately, there is a vaccine to help protect against this virus. The vaccine can be given once a year and is the best way to reduce the risk of getting and spreading the flu.

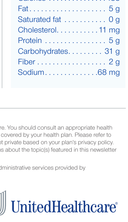
Key facts about the flu vaccine

- Young children, especially those under 2 years old, adults 65 and older, pregnant women, nursing home residents and people with chronic health problems are at the highest risk for complications from the flu.
- Everyone 6 months old and above should get the flu vaccine every year. Try to get it as soon as it becomes available. Although it is best to get early, before the flu starts to spread in your community, getting it later can still help you and is important for your health.
- Babies under 6 months old should not get the flu vaccine.
- You can still get the flu even if you've been vaccinated—but you'll likely have a milder case.
- You cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine.
- Look for information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) before the start of the flu season. They may have additional recommendations about the flu vaccine at that time.

Pneumococcal disease is caused by bacteria and causes thousands of infections every year. While it's more commonly seen in children, it tends to cause serious complications in adults. There is a vaccine for pneumococcal disease.

Key facts about the pneumococcal vaccine

- Infants, young children and adults 65 years and older should get the pneumococcal vaccine.
- The vaccine is also recommended for people with long-term conditions such as asthma and heart disease; those with a weakened immune system; and smokers, among others.
- There are two pneumococcal vaccines. You may need both vaccines for complete coverage. Ask your doctor what is right for you.
- The pneumococcal vaccine should not be given to pregnant women or people with serious allergies to vaccine ingredients.



Managing stressors

Whether internal or external, stressors can usually be managed. Sometimes, you can learn to respond to the stressor differently. You may try stress-relief techniques. And sometimes, adjusting your thinking to a positive attitude can help. Eating a well-balanced diet and staying active with exercise also are important tools in helping manage stress. Please talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

Apples and raisins provide the moistness, which means less oil can be used in this low-cholesterol and low-sodium coffee cake.

Nutrition per serving: 2 x 2.5-inch slice

Calories	188
Fat	9 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Cholesterol	11 mg
Protein	5 g
Carbohydrates	31 g
Fiber	2 g
Sodium	68 mg

This newsletter contains general health information and is not a substitute for professional health care. You should consult an appropriate health care professional for your specific needs. Some treatments mentioned in this newsletter may not be covered by your health plan. Please refer to your benefit plan documents for information about coverage. Your personal health information is kept private based on your plan's privacy policy. This information was prepared solely for general educational purposes. If you have specific questions about the topic(s) featured in this newsletter or about other health conditions, see your doctor.

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