

LifeTimes

Spring 2025

Your guide to **lifelong health**

Health and wellness and prevention information



Help us
help you.

We Want Your Feedback on the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Survey

In the coming weeks, you might get a letter in the mail asking you to complete a Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems Survey (CAHPS) survey. This survey tells us if we need to make changes to our programs to help you stay healthy and to get the best care possible.

The Quality Management/Quality Improvement Program at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas wants to help members get the best quality of care.

This means members get the right amount of care, delivered at the right time and in the right setting.

Please take time to complete the survey. The results of the survey are used to measure the care and services our members get. Your opinion matters.

LifeTimes is published for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas STAR members. Each issue brings you news about your health plan and staying healthy, along with important phone numbers for you to keep. If you have questions or need help, call the Customer Advocate Department. Articles in *LifeTimes* are meant to educate. They are not meant as medical advice. Please check with your doctor for any advice about your health.

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The Mind-Body Connection: Nurture Both for Better Health

Just as our minds and bodies are linked, so are mental and physical health. If you are facing a health issue, you may need care for both mental and physical symptoms.

More than one in five adults are affected by mental health conditions, which are health issues that change a person's thinking, feeling, mood or actions. They can be short-term or long lasting. Some common ones are depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder.

Mental health and physical health can be helped or harmed, by how we care for ourselves, says the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Poor mental health care can impact your ability to make choices that also harm your physical health.

People affected by mental illness often face the added burden of heart disease, high blood pressure and other health issues. These serious, life-long health problems add to mental health symptoms, worsen quality of life and shorten life expectancy.

Health Problems Interact

Some physical health conditions, like diabetes, high blood pressure, muscle tension, and digestive and sleep problems, can also be linked to mental health concerns like anxiety or depression.

If you are facing these physical health issues, check in with your primary care doctor. Ask if it might be helpful to see a mental health care provider to co-treat symptoms that may be masked as physical health issues.

If you are already seeing a mental health care provider, know that some medications, such as for bipolar or schizophrenia, can impact physical health issues like diabetes. Be sure to talk to your doctor about having your A1C checked at least once per year.

If you are being treated for both physical and mental health issues, let all of your doctors know. One health concern can affect another. Some mental health symptoms may make it hard to know that you also have a physical problem. And some medicines used for mental health issues can affect you physically. To keep you safe and healthy, all of your doctors need to know what you are taking.

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If You Are in the Hospital

If you are in the hospital for medical problems, there may be mental health problems that should be treated too. Some signs include feeling tired, having headaches or an upset stomach. You may have a hard time sleeping or eating. You may feel sad, anxious or really scared. These feelings may make your medical problems worse.

Ask your doctor or nurse about seeing someone for these signs while you are in the hospital. Let them know your symptoms then ask for a behavioral health consultation. This means a specialist will come talk to you about these symptoms.

Before you leave the hospital, make sure to schedule a mental health follow-up visit. Be sure to also book a follow-up visit with your primary doctor. It is best if these appointments, whether in-person or by telehealth, are within 30 days of discharge. Learn more about follow-up care after a stay in the hospital.

What You Can Do

You can take steps to lower your chance of serious health problems. Whether you are handling a serious mental illness, feeling symptoms of stress, or simply seeking ways to help your health, remember that mental health is physical health.

To help both your mental and physical health:

- Advocate for your health. You have the leading role in your care.
- Talk to your doctors about signing a release form that allows them to share information about your care.
- Stay in front of health concerns. Listen to your body. Get routine health exams.
- Talk with your health care team. Discuss how you are feeling. Be sure you are clear on treatment and medication choices.
- Making healthy food choices and staying active can help manage your symptoms.
- Get enough sleep.
- Don't self-medicate with harmful substances.
- Track the medications you take and share that information with your health care team. This can lower the risk of harmful drug interactions.
- Involve your family and friends. Talk to them about ways to help you reach your health goals.

Get Help

Get help for your mental and physical health issues so you can live your healthiest life. Find support for mental health concerns. Call NAMI at **1-800-950-6264** or text 'helpline' to 62640. In a crisis? Call or text 988.

■ Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Alliance on Mental Illness; NAMI; University of Michigan Medicine

Tell Us What You Think!

Member Advisory Group

Every three months, we invite STAR members, parents or legally authorized representatives to join our online Member Advisory Group meeting. MAG members are asked to give feedback on our member education materials, Value Added Services and to get health plan program updates. Members, parents or LARs who join MAG are asked to commit to four quarterly meetings and will get a \$25 gift card per family for attending.

Visit www.bcbstx.com to find a schedule of MAG meetings and events or call Member Advocate in the Central Service area at **1-888-657-6061** (TTY: **711**). For a Member Advocate in the Travis service area, call **1-877-375-9097** to get details.



Sexually Transmitted Infection Awareness

Every year, millions of people are diagnosed with sexually transmitted infections (STI) which are infectious diseases spread through sexual contact. More than 2.5 million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis were reported in the U.S. in 2022. Take action to protect your health and the health of your partner.

Talk openly to your partner and your doctor about your sexual health. Learn how you can prevent getting a STI.

Since many STIs don't cause symptoms, the only way to know if you have one is to get tested. If you are having sex, getting tested is the most important thing you can do to protect your health.

If you test positive, work with your doctor to get treatment. STIs are treatable and some can be cured with the right medicine.

■ Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



What Is ADHD?

Paying attention, sitting still and curbing urges are good skills for children to learn. But these are hard for children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Some signs of the disorder are:

- Trouble paying attention
- High levels of action (hyperactivity)
- Acting before thinking (impulsivity)

For children with ADHD, these behaviors happen more often than what is considered normal for children their age. Some children with ADHD only have problems with attention, while others deal only with hyperactivity and impulsivity. Most have problems with all three.

Get Help

Talk to your doctor if you have concerns about ADHD. There is no single test, but a full evaluation will help with treatment. Children with ADHD can thrive, but diagnosis and knowing how best to treat it are critical, says the National Resource Center on ADHD. Treatment choices include:

- Behavior therapy to help children learn positive actions and limit problem behaviors
- Medication therapy to help children handle symptoms and control some of the behavioral problems
- Blend of both to help children six years of age and older

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We Want to See You!

We host member meetings and community events that provide important health information and resources for our members.

Go to <https://www.bcbstx.com/star/pdf/star-community-calendar-tx.pdf> to view a list of upcoming events near you. If you need help completing your STAR renewal packet, come out and see us. We can help!

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Treatment must be monitored. Long-term monitoring is vital to successfully handling ADHD. Studies show that children with ADHD who stop treatment are at a greater risk for more serious problems later. Other steps to take may involve parent and child training, school programs that support kids with ADHD and family therapy.

Tips for Parents:

- **Set a routine.** Try to follow the same schedule each day, from wake-up time to bedtime.
- **Get organized.** Encourage your child to put schoolbags, clothing and toys in the same place each day so your child will be less likely to lose them.
- **Handle distractions.** Turn off the TV, limit noise and have a clean workspace when your child is doing homework. Some children with ADHD learn well if they are moving or listening to music. Watch your child and see what works.
- **Limit choices.** Offer choices between a few things so your child doesn't have too many choices.
- **Be clear and specific.** Let your child know you are listening by telling what you heard them say. Use clear, brief directions.
- **Use goals and praise.** Use a chart to list goals and track positive behaviors. Let your child know when they have done well. Reward their efforts. Be sure the goals are realistic.
- **Create positive chances.** Children with ADHD may find certain situations stressful. Find what your child does well in school, sports, art, music or play. That can help create positive experiences.

Provide a healthy life. Healthy food, physical activity and sufficient sleep are important. They can sometimes help with ADHD symptoms.



Tips for Adults with ADHD

The National Institute of Mental Health says adults with ADHD can organize their life by:

- Sticking to routines
- Making lists for activities
- Using a calendar for events
- Setting reminders
- Keeping things like keys and papers in an assigned space
- Breaking down large tasks into smaller steps

Other Things You Can Do

- Visit the Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder site for facts. Seek help from a mental health professional.
- If you need help, call the number on your BCBSTX member ID card. We are here to help.

■ Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; The A.D.D. Resource Center; National Institutes of Mental Health

Think FAST: Stroke Risks and Warning Signs

A stroke happens when the brain doesn't get the blood or oxygen it needs to work properly. A stroke is a medical emergency and the fifth leading cause of death in the U.S.

You can protect yourself from this life-threatening health crisis with two important steps. First, know your risk for stroke. Second, know what to do when the signs of stroke appear.

Identify Your Risks

There are some risk factors you cannot change. The American Stroke Association, cites these:

- **Prior stroke and heart attack**
If you have already had a stroke, your risk is greater than it is for a person who has never had one. If you had a transient ischemic attack (TIA) — often called a mini stroke — your risk is nearly 10 times greater. A history of heart attack also raises your risk.
- **Age**
The chance of having a stroke doubles for each decade of life after age 55.
- **Race**
African Americans have a much higher risk.
- **Heredity and family history**
If someone in your family has had a stroke, your risk may be greater.
- **Sex**
Women have a greater risk of having a stroke and of dying from a stroke than men.



There are risk factors you can control:

- **Alcohol:** Heavy drinking boosts the chance of stroke.
- **Smoking and second-hand smoke:** Tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke raise blood pressure and can lead to blood clots.
- **Illegal drugs:** Cocaine, methamphetamines and other drug use raises your risk.
- **Weight:** Excess body weight leads to many health risks.
- **Blood pressure:** The risk of stroke grows when blood pressure is higher than 120/80.
- **Heart health:** Cardiovascular disease increases stroke risk.
- **Hormones:** Some birth control pills and hormone therapies that include estrogen can increase your stroke risk.
- **Blood sugar:** People with diabetes have a higher chance of stroke.
- **Cholesterol:** High cholesterol causes a higher stroke risk.
- **Diet:** Diets high in sodium, saturated fats and trans fats can raise your risk of stroke.
- **Physical fitness:** An inactive lifestyle can lead to strokes.
- **Sleep apnea:** This sleep disorder can up your risk for stroke.

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How to Reduce Risk

If you are concerned you might have risk factors for stroke, now is a great time to get your body moving. One immediate action that can help lower your risk for stroke is exercise.

Physical activity can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight. It also helps lower cholesterol and blood pressure levels, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Adults should aim for 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity physical activity (think brisk walking) each week.

Before making any big changes to your diet or exercise routine, talk with your doctor. He or she will have more information to help you control your risk for a stroke.

It Is Important to Act FAST

Call **911** right away. Stroke is an emergency, that needs immediate medical attention. The American Stroke Association has come up with an acronym to help you know if someone is having a stroke. Look for these symptoms:

- F** (Face): Ask the person smile? Does one side of their face droop?
- A** (Arms): Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one drift down?
- S** (Speech): Ask the person to speak. Is their speech slurred or hard to understand?
- T** (Time): Call **911** right away if you see any one these signs of stroke.

■ American Stroke Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Northwestern Medicine

Family Food Favorites



Carrot Cake Overnight Oats

Ingredients:

- 2 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups skim milk
- 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups old fashioned oats
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups grated carrots
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup raisins
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 14 tablespoons plain Greek nonfat yogurt
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon

Directions:

1. Combine milk and oats and allow to soak overnight.
2. In a medium bowl, mix carrots, raisins, cinnamon, maple syrup and set aside.

Serving Size

Layer one cup of overnight oats, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup carrot mixture (1.5 oz weight), two tablespoons of Greek yogurt, cinnamon garnish. Makes seven servings.

■ Source: FLIK Hospitality Group

Helpful Toll-Free Phone Numbers

Service Coordination	1-877-214-5630	(TTY: 711)
Mental Health Services Hotline	1-888-657-6061	(TTY: 711)
Member Advocate and Value Added Services	1-877-375-9097	(TTY: 711)
Medicaid Managed Care Helpline	1-866-566-8989	(TTY: 711)
ModivCare: Non-Emergency Medical Transportation	1-866-824-1565	(TTY: 711)
Vision Services	1-888-657-6061	(TTY: 711)
Special Beginnings®	1-888-421-7781	(TTY: 711)

STAR Customer Advocate **1-888-657-6061** (TTY: **711**)

Member Outreach **1-877-375-9097** (TTY: **711**)

Activity



Clean or Green Pennies

Use a simple chemical reaction to clean pennies or turn them green.

Materials:

- Four or more pennies (some from before 1982, if possible)
- Vinegar
- Salt
- Two small non-metal bowls
- Paper towels

Time:

10 minutes (active time), 60 minutes (wait time)

Steps:

1. Place a piece of paper towel in the bottom of each small bowl. Remember, do not use metal bowls.
2. Place two pennies in each bowl. Note: Pennies made before 1982 have a higher copper content than pennies made after 1982. The chemical reactions in this experiment will be more visible with the older pennies since they have more copper.
3. In bowl 1, pour in a little bit of vinegar to soak the paper towel. Let this bowl sit for one hour.

4. In bowl 2, pour in some vinegar and salt. Swirl or stir to dissolve the salt. Within about 30 seconds, the pennies in this bowl will start to shine. The vinegar and salt mixture dissolves the outer layer of dirt. Flip the pennies over and wait another 30 seconds. Remove, rinse them with water and dry. Now you have two clean, shiny pennies!
5. After an hour, check on bowl 1. You should start to see a green layer forming on the pennies.

What is happening?

In bowl 1, the vinegar helps speed up a chemical reaction between the copper in the penny and the oxygen in the air. This reaction is called oxidation. When copper oxidizes, it turns a blue-green color, forming a compound called malachite.

In bowl 2, the vinegar and salt create a chemical reaction. This reaction dissolves the copper oxide (the dirty looking spots) and some of the copper on the outside of the penny. The result is a shiny looking penny!

■ Source: United States Mint

To get auxiliary aids and services, or to get written or oral interpretation to understand the information given to you, including materials in alternative formats such as large print, braille or other languages, please call the BCBSTX Customer Advocate Department at the number on the back of your member ID card.

Non-Discrimination Notice

Health Care Coverage Is Important For Everyone

We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin (including limited English knowledge and first language), age, disability, or sex (as understood in the applicable regulation). We provide people with disabilities with reasonable modifications and free communication aids to allow for effective communication with us. We also provide free language assistance services to people whose first language is not English.

To receive reasonable modifications, communication aids or language assistance free of charge, please call us at **1-855-710-6984**.

If you believe we have failed to provide a service, or think we have discriminated in another way, you can file a grievance with:

Office of Civil Rights Coordinator	Phone:	1-855-664-7270 (voicemail)
Attn: Office of Civil Rights Coordinator	TTY/TDD:	1-855-661-6965
300 E. Randolph St., 35th Floor	Fax:	1-855-661-6960
Chicago, IL 60601	Email:	civilrightscoordinator@bcbsil.com

You can file a grievance in person or by mail, fax or email. If you need help filing a grievance, the Office of Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You may file a civil rights complaint with the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, at:

US Dept of Health & Human Services	Phone:	1-800-368-1019
200 Independence Avenue SW	TTY/TDD:	1-800-537-7697
Room 509F, HHH Building	Complaint Portal:	https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/smartscreen/main.jsf
Washington, DC 20201	Complaint Forms:	https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/filing-a-complaint/index.html

This notice is available on our website at

<https://www.bcbstx.com/medicaid/pdf/medicaid-non-discrimination-tx.pdf>

ATTENTION: If you speak another language, free language assistance services are available to you. Appropriate auxiliary aids and services to provide information in accessible formats are also available free of charge. Call **1-855-710-6984** (TTY: 711) or speak to your provider.

Español Spanish	ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. También están disponibles de forma gratuita ayuda y servicios auxiliares apropiados para proporcionar información en formatos accesibles. Llame al 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) o hable con su proveedor.
العربية Arabic	تنبيه: إذا كنت تتحدث اللغة العربية، فستتوفر لك خدمات المساعدة اللغوية المجانية. كما تتوفر وسائل مساعدة وخدمات مناسبة لتوفير المعلومات بتنسيقات يمكن الوصول إليها مجانًا. اتصل على الرقم (711) 1-855-710-6984 (TTY) أو تحدث إلى مقدم الخدمة الخاص بك.

中文 Chinese	注意：如果您说中文，我们将免费为您提供语言协助服务。我们还免费提供适当的辅助工具和服务，以无障碍格式提供信息。致电 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) 或咨询您的服务提供商。
Français French	ATTENTION: Si vous parlez Français, des services d'assistance linguistique gratuits sont à votre disposition. Des aides et services auxiliaires appropriés pour fournir des informations dans des formats accessibles sont également disponibles gratuitement. Appelez le 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) ou parlez à votre fournisseur.
Deutsch German	ACHTUNG: Wenn Sie Deutsch sprechen, stehen Ihnen kostenlose Sprachassistentendienste zur Verfügung. Entsprechende Hilfsmittel und Dienste zur Bereitstellung von Informationen in barrierefreien Formaten stehen ebenfalls kostenlos zur Verfügung. Rufen Sie 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) an oder sprechen Sie mit Ihrem Provider.
ગુજરાતી Gujarati	ધ્યાન આપો: જો તમે બીજી ભાષા બોલો છો, તો તમારા માટે મફત ભાષા સહાય સેવાઓ ઉપલબ્ધ છે. સુવલ ફોર્મેટમાં માહિતી પ્રદાન કરવા માટે યોગ્ય સહાયક મદદ અને સેવાઓ પણ વિના મૂલ્યે ઉપલબ્ધ છે. 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) પર કૉલ કરો અથવા તમારા પ્રદાતા સાથે વાત કરો.
हिंदी Hindi	ध्यान दें: यदि आप हिंदी बोलते हैं, तो आपके लिए निःशुल्क भाषा सहायता सेवाएं उपलब्ध हैं। सुलभ प्रारूपों में जानकारी प्रदान करने के लिए उपयुक्त सहायक साधन और सेवाएँ भी निःशुल्क उपलब्ध हैं। 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) पर कॉल करें या अपने प्रदाता से बात करें।
Italiano Italian	ATTENZIONE: Se parli italiano, puoi usufruire gratuitamente di servizi di assistenza linguistica. Sono inoltre disponibili, senza costi, strumenti e servizi ausiliari per ricevere informazioni in formati accessibili. Chiama il numero 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) o rivolgiti a un assistente.
한국어 Korean	주의: [한국어]를 사용하시는 경우 무료 언어 지원 서비스를 이용하실 수 있습니다. 이용 가능한 형식으로 정보를 제공하는 적절한 보조 기구 및 서비스도 무료로 제공됩니다. 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) 번으로 전화하거나 서비스 제공업체에 문의하십시오.
Diné Navajo	SHÓÓ: Diné Bizaad k'ehjí éí dinit's'á'go, t'áá nizaad k'ehjí níká a'doo wołgo bohónéedzǫ. Łahgo bee ata' hodoonigo áádóó éí doodago ałtaa át'éego níka a'doowołgo t'áá jiik'e nábee ahoot'í'. 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) jì' hodíílni éí doodago nits'íís náyaa áhályánii bich'í' hadíídzi.
فارسی Farsi	توجه: اگر فارسی صحبت می‌کنید، خدمات پشتیبانی زبانی رایگان در دسترس شما قرار دارد. همچنین کمک‌ها و تماس خدمات پشتیبانی مناسب برای ارائه اطلاعات در قالب‌های قابل دسترس، به‌طور رایگان موجود می‌باشند. با 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) تماس بگیرید یا با ارائه‌دهنده خود صحبت کنید.
Polski Polish	UWAGA: Osoby mówiące po polsku mogą skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej. Dodatkowe pomoce i usługi zapewniające informacje w dostępnych formatach są również dostępne bezpłatnie. Zadzwoń pod numer 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) lub porozmawiaj ze swoim dostawcą.
РУССКИЙ Russian	ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите по-русски, вам доступны бесплатные услуги языковой поддержки. Соответствующие вспомогательные средства и услуги по предоставлению информации в доступных форматах также предоставляются бесплатно. Позвоните по телефону 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) или обратитесь к своему поставщику услуг.
Tagalog Tagalog	PAALALA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, magagamit mo ang mga libreng serbisyonang tulong sa wika. Magagamit din nang libre ang mga naaangkop na auxiliary na tulong at serbisyo upang magbigay ng impormasyon sa mga naa-access na format. Tumawag sa 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) o makipag-usap sa iyong provider.
اردو Urdu	توجہ دیں: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں، تو آپ کے لیے مفت زبان کی مدد کی خدمات دستیاب ہیں۔ قابل رسائی فارمیٹس میں معلومات فراہم کرنے کے لیے مناسب معاونامداد اور خدمات بھی مفت دستیاب ہیں۔ 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) پر کال کریں یا اپنے فراہم کنندہ سے بات کریں۔
Tiếng Việt Vietnamese	LƯU Ý: Nếu bạn nói tiếng Việt, chúng tôi cung cấp miễn phí các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ. Các hỗ trợ và dịch vụ phụ trợ phù hợp để cung cấp thông tin theo các định dạng dễ tiếp cận cũng được cung cấp miễn phí. Vui lòng gọi theo số 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) hoặc trao đổi với người cung cấp dịch vụ của bạn.