



Kansas City



YOUR HEALTHIEST YEAR STARTS HERE

When we want to improve our lives, we often think of the bad habits we'd like to break. This year, try to focus on all the healthy behaviors you can start. Begin with this expert advice so you can feel your best and keep doing all the things you love to do.

Schedule your health screenings

Fewer than half of people 65 and older are up to date on screenings, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Are you one of them? Ask about these tests during your annual wellness visit (AWV). Don't forget:

Your AWV is available at no cost. Call 866-508-7140 (TTY: 711) or visit MyBlueKCMA.com to learn more.

TEST	HOW OFTEN	WHY
High blood pressure	Annually	High blood pressure often has no symptoms. But if left untreated, it increases your risk for having a heart attack or stroke.
Cholesterol	Every 5 years	Your total cholesterol is one of several factors that help your doctor determine your risk for heart disease.
Weight	Annually	People who are at an unhealthy weight have a higher risk for diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers.
Colorectal cancer	Every 1 to 10 years	Colorectal cancer is easier to treat when it's caught early. There are several types of screening tests. Ask your doctor which one is right for you.
Hepatitis C	Once	Baby boomers are five times as likely to have hepatitis C. Left untreated, the viral infection can lead to liver damage, cirrhosis, and liver cancer.
Bone density	Once	The bone-thinning disease osteoporosis often goes unnoticed until someone fractures a bone. You may need to be tested more often based on your health history.

Eat good-for-you foods

Giving your body the right fuel can help you stay active and independent. If you eat the same things every day, it's time to change up your grocery list to add some variety to your meals. A healthy diet should include:

- **Lean protein** (lean meats, seafood, eggs, beans)
- **Fruits and vegetables** (think orange, red, green, and purple)
- **Whole grains** (brown rice, whole wheat pasta)
- **Low-fat dairy** (milk and cheese)

New foods I'll try:

Looking for a new doctor?

We can help you find someone you click with. Visit MedicareBlueKC.com/find-care.



Your Medicare Advantage plan includes free fitness benefits.

You can exercise at local gyms or try at-home programs with SilverSneakers. To get started, visit [SilverSneakers.com](https://www.silversneakers.com).

Make a vaccine checklist

COVID-19 shots aren't the only vaccines older adults need. Here are four others that can protect you from a variety of serious illnesses. Check off the ones you've had.

VACCINE	WHY YOU NEED IT	WHEN TO GET IT
<input type="checkbox"/> Flu	Influenza can be life-threatening in older adults.	The best time is usually September or October. It's smart to get it before cold and flu season begins. But if you miss it in the fall, make sure you get it later in the season.
<input type="checkbox"/> Tdap or Td booster	This vaccine protects against three potentially deadly diseases: tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.	If you've never had a Tdap shot, get one as soon as possible. If you have had one, get a Td booster every 10 years.
<input type="checkbox"/> Chickenpox and shingles	Both conditions are caused by the varicella-zoster virus (VZV). If you've had chickenpox, the virus can flare up as shingles later in life.	Any time of year. Talk to your doctor about when to schedule this vaccine if you're also planning to get a COVID booster around the same time.
<input type="checkbox"/> Pneumonia	The pneumococcal vaccine protects against infections of the bloodstream and lungs. Pneumonia can be very dangerous in older adults.	Any time of year. Many seniors get two doses, spaced at least a year apart. Your doctor may recommend a different vaccination schedule.



Make time for meditation

Studies show that mindful meditation can bring cognitive benefits for aging, memory, and attention span. It's simpler than you may think. Just follow these six steps to get started.

1 Set aside a few minutes a day at first (you can do more once you're used to it).

2 Wear something comfortable.

3 Find a quiet, cozy place to sit.

4 Keep your back straight, your neck relaxed, and your hands resting in your lap or on your knees. You can also lie on your back.

5 Close your eyes and just focus on breathing.

6 Your mind will likely wander. Notice the thoughts, but don't get stuck on them. (This gets easier.) Return to your breathing.

Prefer to have a little more guidance during your practice? Search for meditation apps on your phone or check out free videos on YouTube.

Take up a new hobby

Feeling lonely or socially isolated can increase feelings of depression or anxiety, particularly in older adults. Trying a new hobby or volunteering can help you make friends and give you a sense of purpose. Looking for ideas on how to get started? Check out local groups and opportunities at sites like [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) and [volunteermatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org).

Your plan includes mental health support.

Mindful by Blue KC is here to help you cope with stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness and more. Just call 833-302-MIND anytime day or night.



Did you know that your plan includes an annual medication review?

You can do this with your provider or your in-network pharmacist. This yearly check is a great way to make sure you're on track with your current treatments — and aren't taking anything you no longer need.

Manage your medications

Many older people take multiple medications, and it can be hard to keep track of them all. Here are some tips that can help.

☐ **Make a list.** Write down all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter ones. Also include vitamins and supplements. The list should include the name of each one, the name of the doctor who prescribed it, the dose you take, and the time(s) you take it.

☐ **Know what your medicines look like.** If you take more than one, make sure you can tell them apart by size, shape, or color imprinted on the pill.

☐ **Store the paperwork.** Save all the written information that comes with your medicines. Keep these guides for as long as you're taking them.

☐ **Check expiration dates on bottles.** Don't take pills that have expired. Your doctor can prescribe a refill if you need one.

☐ **Dispose of medicines safely.** Discard any unused or expired medicines as soon as possible. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about how to safely get rid of them.



Set a new fitness goal

Exercise is one of the best ways to keep your body and mind healthy. Maybe you don't move around as much as you used to. Or perhaps you are active, but you want more variety. Make a list of new activities you would like to try. The key to success? Set small goals that you can build on. Maybe it's a weekly walk with a friend, trying a class at the gym, or lifting light hand weights to build muscle strength. Always check with your doctor before starting a new exercise plan.

Lower your risk of falling

Here are some room-by-room home-safety tips that can help keep you steady on your feet.

Living room and bedroom

It's easy to trip over cords, throw rugs, a stack of papers, or a pair of shoes. So clear out the clutter. Leave lots of open, furniture-free space to walk around the room.

Bathroom

Wet floors can be dangerous. Put nonslip rubber mats by the sink, toilet, and outside

the shower or bathtub. Place nonslip strips in the shower or bath and add grab bars.

Kitchen

Move the heaviest and most used items to the lowest shelves. It's safer not to reach for those. If you still need to use high shelves, invest in a grabber device to extend reach.

My exercise goals:

Are you worried about falling?

Your annual wellness visit is the perfect time to discuss your concerns with your provider. If you need a new one, just visit [MedicareBlueKC.com/find-care](https://www.MedicareBlueKC.com/find-care).