Stick to your medications to stay healthy

Medicine can be an important part of treating health conditions. But many people take their medications the wrong way, or not at all. Follow these tips to be safe and get the most out of your medications.

1. Know how much and when to take each of the medications your health care provider prescribes.
2. Write a daily schedule for your medications on a calendar or chart. Follow the schedule exactly. Do not change the dose (take more or less of the medicine) without talking with your health care provider.
3. Keep medications in their original containers, unless you use a pill organizer. Each label has important information such as the medication name, dose, health care provider’s name and expiration date.
4. Do not take medication in the dark, when you are tired or when you are distracted. You might take the wrong medication or the wrong amount. Ask someone you trust for help, if needed.
5. Alcohol can change the way a medication works. Ask your health care provider if it is safe to drink alcohol with your prescription or over-the-counter medication.
6. Never take a medication that was prescribed for someone else.
7. If your health care provider tells you to stop taking a medication, throw it away. Also be sure to throw away medicine after the expiration date has passed.
8. If a medication is making you feel sick or causing you to have side effects that you cannot handle, talk with your health care provider. Never stop taking a medication on your own — always talk with your health care provider first.

Safely manage medications

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers key facts on medication safety and tips to prevent poisoning. For details, visit www.cdc.gov/medicationsafety. 

WE HAVE MOVED! Our new offices are at 2300 NW Walnut Blvd. in Corvallis.
Tips to stay safe this summer

Summer is the season of sunshine and outdoor activities. Reduce your risk for accidents and injury by taking steps to stay safe.

Stay safe when swimming
Never let children swim alone. Stay within reach at all times. Look into signing your child up for swimming lessons. Allow diving only in marked areas where you know the depth of the water. Learn CPR.

If a child nearly drowns and he or she has chest pain, confusion or bluish skin on the face, call 911.

Stay cool to beat heat illness
If the temperature and humidity are high, your body’s cooling system does not work as well. This puts you at risk for dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after outdoor activities. Avoid caffeine because it adds to dehydration. Wear loose, light-colored clothing when outside. Try to schedule outdoor activities for early morning or after sunset.

Stomach, arm and leg cramps are often the first sign of heat illness. Other signs are thirst, exhaustion and weakness. Stop your activity, drink water and move to the shade to gently stretch. If you do not feel better within 30 minutes, call your health care provider. Seek help right away if you or a loved one vomits, is confused, faints, has trouble breathing or has skin that is hot and dry but not sweaty.

Fire up the grill — safely
Each year thousands of fires are started by charcoal or wood grills in the United States. Never pour lighter fluid on charcoal that is already lit. After your food is cooked, cover hot coals in water. If you are burned, call 911 if the burn is the size of your palm or larger and charred, white or numb.

To avoid getting sick from food, be sure to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Wash your hands often, and do not use the same plates and utensils for raw and cooked food.

Be smart around fireworks
Fireworks cause thousands of fires each year and lead to burns, loss of vision and other injuries. It is best to leave fireworks to the experts. But if you do choose to use fireworks, do not let children hold or set off fireworks. Even sparklers are dangerous for young children. Sparklers can light hair or clothing on fire, causing serious burns.

Never use fireworks indoors or put them in your pocket. Also, never try to relight fireworks that do not work. Do not drink alcohol or take drugs when using fireworks. Keep fireworks away from cigarettes or other open flames.

Summer safety for kids
From playground injuries to mosquito bites, warm weather can bring health risks. Find tips on how to keep children safe all season long at www.cdc.gov/family/kids/summer.
People who suffer from non-cancer chronic pain are often given pain relievers called opioids, such as Vicodin (hydrocodone), OxyContin (oxycodone), morphine or fentanyl, to name a few. The United States is in the middle of an opioid overdose epidemic. These drugs are not as safe or effective as health care providers once thought they were.

Know the risks
Long-term use of opioid pain relievers can lead to addiction and/or accidental overdose. In Oregon and the United States, accidental overdose from these pain relievers causes more deaths every year than auto accidents. Addiction and accidental overdose are considered to be public safety issues.

If you are taking opioid pain relievers, you may notice some changes to how your health care provider prescribes these medications. Samaritan Health Plans, other health plans in our area and your health care providers are taking a closer look at the risks and benefits of opioid medications for non-cancer chronic pain. Your health care provider may talk with you about how your pain can be relieved without using these pain medications. Your health care provider can help you decide what is best for you.

What can you do?
Stay safe with your pain medications. Before you start a new medication, tell your health care provider all your current prescriptions, over-the-counter medications and any supplements you are taking.

If you take an opioid pain reliever as part of a pain management plan, talk with your health care provider about:
- The risks of these medications
- How to avoid an accidental overdose
- A plan to reduce the amount or how to stop the use of opioid pain relievers altogether

Always remember to keep your medications in a safe place and out of reach of others.

If you have pain, learn about the risks of these opioid prescriptions and about other options for safe, effective pain relief.

Soothing chronic pain
Long-lasting pain may affect people to the point that they cannot work, eat properly, take part in physical activity or enjoy life.

These strategies can help relieve pain:
- Heat and cold treatments to reduce stiffness and pain, especially with joint disorders such as arthritis
- Acupuncture, the process of putting tiny needles under the skin at certain points in the body to treat pain
- Physical therapy, such as gentle stretching and strengthening moves
- Emotional and mental support for pain, which may include:
  - Community classes
  - Therapy
  - Stress management
  - Relaxation training
  - Meditation
  - Hypnosis
  - Biofeedback
  - Behavior changes

Relaxation tips to ease stress
Too much stress can hurt your body and mind. The good news is that there are many ways to relax, from yoga to meditation. Learn steps to ease stress by visiting www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus. Type relaxation in the search bar, and click relaxation techniques for stress.
Start your pregnancy off smoothly

If you are pregnant or thinking about having a baby, it is even more important to pay attention to your health.

**Eat well**
Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, fish and low-fat or fat-free dairy. You also need 400 to 800 micrograms of folic acid every day. This vitamin can help prevent serious birth defects. Your health care provider may suggest that you take a prenatal vitamin before and during pregnancy. Also try to eat foods rich in folic acid or folate, such as fortified cereals, black beans, spinach and broccoli.

**Stay physically active**
Starting your pregnancy at a healthy weight can help lower your risk for problems during pregnancy, such as high blood pressure. As long as your health care provider says it is OK, stay active. Working out moderately during pregnancy can lead to improved sleep and more energy.

**Look at your lifestyle**
Smoking, drugs and alcohol lower your chances of getting pregnant. It is best to quit smoking before getting pregnant.

Smoking can cause problems such as premature birth. If you are already pregnant, quit as soon as possible.

**Visit your health care provider**
If you are planning to get pregnant, see your health care provider. He or she can review your health and make sure you are up-to-date with vaccines. As soon as you know you are pregnant, talk with your health care provider. Regular prenatal care can help prevent complications.

Your care continues
About six weeks after your baby’s birth, you will have a postpartum visit. Your health care provider will examine you and talk with you about diet, physical activity, mental health and birth control. It is important to keep this appointment.

**Advice for parents-to-be**
From handling the effects of pregnancy on your body to caring for your newborn, the American Academy of Family Physicians has useful tips. Go to www.familydoctor.org and click Pregnancy & Newborns.

Smart steps for safe breastfeeding
When you breastfeed, you are giving your baby the best nutrition possible. For a safe experience, follow these steps:

- **Avoid alcohol.** Avoid drinking while breastfeeding or pumping for milk. If you do have a small drink every now and then, breastfeed beforehand and wait two hours before breastfeeding again.
- **Stop smoking.** Tobacco and nicotine pass into your breast milk. They may cause your baby to have a fast heartbeat, be restless or have vomiting and diarrhea. Tobacco may also reduce the amount of milk you can make. Also, make sure babies are not exposed to secondhand smoke. This increases a baby’s risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- **Do not use marijuana or other drugs.** Potential effects that marijuana can have on a breastfed infant include delayed growth and motor development, sleepiness and reduced muscle tone. Other drugs, such as cocaine and heroin, may lead to side effects in babies such as seizures, vomiting and poor feeding.
A guide to dental care for children

Most dentists agree that regular dental care should start by age 1, with a dental checkup at least twice each year for most children. Some children may need checkups more often. Follow this dental checklist for infants and toddlers.

Birth to 6 months of age
- Clean your baby's tongue and gums with a clean damp cloth or use a soft infant toothbrush after feedings and before bed.
- Ask your child's health care provider about fluoride supplements, if you live in an area without fluoridated water. If you are not sure if your water has fluoride in it, call your dentist and ask.

Six to 12 months of age
- During this time, the first tooth should appear. Ask the dentist for an exam as soon as the first tooth comes in, but no later than your child's first birthday. Brush teeth after each feeding and before bed with a small, soft brush. Use a very small amount of fluoride toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice. Also ask about fluoride varnish that can be applied to the teeth.

One to 3 years of age
- Follow the schedule of dental exams and cleanings recommended by your child's dentist. Dental exams and cleanings are usually recommended every 6 months for children and adults.
- At about age 3, teach your child to rinse and spit. Brush his or her teeth with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride.

Take care of baby teeth
Taking good care of your child's baby teeth (also called primary teeth) is very important. These teeth hold space for future permanent teeth. Baby teeth play a role in speech development and chewing. If baby teeth become infected, this can cause permanent teeth to develop the wrong way, causing stains and weaker teeth. Most children begin losing their baby teeth around ages 5 or 6. They usually lose the front teeth first.

When permanent teeth come in, your child may need dental sealants. These are thin plastic films applied to the back teeth, which have hard-to-reach areas where food can get stuck. Sealants help protect these teeth against tooth decay (cavities).

Watch your child's diet
Help your child eat well to build strong teeth. Try these tips:
- Avoid filling your fridge or cabinets with sugary snacks.
- Limit the number of snack times. Choose healthy snacks, such as fruits and vegetables.
- Do not put your young child to bed with a bottle of milk, formula or juice.

Not sure where your child can go for dental care? Call their dental plan. Their dental plan name and phone number are listed on their InterCommunity Health Plans member ID card. You can also call Samaritan Health Plan Operations Customer Service for more information at 1-800-832-4580 (TTY: 1-800-735-2900).
Stay well with diabetes

If you have diabetes, there are certain steps you should take to stay well. These strategies can help you manage your condition and avoid health issues.

Lower your blood sugar
Your health care provider will help you identify a target blood sugar range. This usually falls between 80 and 130 mg/dl for fasting blood sugars. The closer you stick to it, the better you will feel, and the less likely you are to get a serious health condition, such as heart disease or kidney disease.

Measure your blood sugar regularly. Write down your results. Keep your levels under control by taking your medications, eating according to your diabetes meal plan and staying physically active.

Get tested often
At least every three to six months, you should have a blood test called the hemoglobin A1c test. The A1c test measures how much glucose (sugar) sticks to your red blood cells. This tells your health care provider how well your treatment plan is working. For most people, an A1c of 7 percent or below means you are doing well.

Watch out for nerve damage
Over time, high blood sugar levels can harm your nerves. This is called diabetic neuropathy. When it happens, your hands and feet may burn, ache, tingle or go numb. You might feel weak, dizzy or faint, especially when you stand up.

If you notice any of these signs, talk with your health care provider. Lowering your blood sugar can help you feel better and prevent more damage.

Count on case management
Your health plan has case managers who can help people with complicated medical needs or other special needs. If you would like to talk with a case manager, please call Samaritan Health Plan Operations at 1-800-832-4580, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you have a hearing or voice problem, you can use Oregon Relay Service by calling TTY at 1-800-735-2900.

3 myths about diabetes
Learn some common myths — and the facts — about one of America’s most common health conditions.

1 Eating too much sugar causes diabetes. FACT: Experts do not fully understand what causes type 2 diabetes. A diet high in calories, whether they are from sugar or fat, raises your risk for type 2 diabetes. When you have diabetes, your pancreas makes little or no insulin and/or your body’s cells do not use it well. Without insulin, sugar (glucose) cannot move from your blood into the cells that need it for energy.

2 Prediabetes is nothing to worry about. FACT: Having prediabetes puts you at very high risk for type 2 diabetes. But research shows you can lower your risk by losing weight and being physically active for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Eat a low-calorie, low-fat diet. Choose lots of whole grains, fruits and vegetables. For example, try eating a salad before dinner every evening. Salad provides lots of nutrients and can fill you up so you may eat less of your meal. Also, try switching from drinking regular soda and juice to water.

3 Type 2 diabetes is not as serious as type 1 diabetes. FACT: Both types of diabetes can cause serious health problems. Diabetes is a leading cause of death in the United States. It is also a major cause of disability. Complications include kidney disease, vision loss, leg amputation, heart attack and stroke. Managing diabetes can help prevent these related problems.

Prevent or manage diabetes
Learn diabetes risk factors and prevention tips, ways to live healthy with the condition and more diabetes basics at www.diabetes.org.
Making choices can be tough, especially when you or someone in your family needs quick medical attention and you do not have much time to decide where to go for help — either an urgent care center or the emergency room (ER).

What is the difference?
An emergency room and urgent care center offer some of the same types of services, such as X-rays and blood tests. But they differ in important ways. For example, an emergency room is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and treats patients with life-threatening illnesses or injuries. An urgent care center has limited hours and treats minor medical problems.

What is a true emergency?
Although this is not a complete list, here are examples of true emergency situations:
• Chest pain
• Trouble breathing
• Sudden, severe pain, such as a headache or stomachache
• Head or back injuries
• Bleeding or vomiting that will not stop

• Loss of consciousness
• Poisoning
• Major burns and cuts
• Choking

What is an urgent care need?
An urgent care center is the right place to go for medical problems that need immediate, but not emergency, attention, such as:
• Minor sprains
• Small cuts
• Sore throats
• Fevers
• Ear infections

It can be hard to know where to go when you need quick medical attention. When in doubt, go to the nearest emergency room or call 911.

Rely on Ride Line for transportation
Do you need help getting to your regular health care provider appointments? There are services in your area to help you get a ride to your medical appointments. Call Cascades West Ride Line at 1-866-724-2974 (TTY: 711) for more information. Cascades West Ride Line is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m.

Primary care provider: Your partner in health care
Health care can be confusing at times. Who do you see for a problem? Where do you get a test you need? The good news is that there is someone you can rely on for guidance: your primary care provider (PCP).

Someone you can trust
Your PCP helps you prevent health problems and manage chronic diseases like diabetes. Think of your PCP as your partner in health. Turn to them whenever you have a question or need advice. Your PCP also coordinates your health care team. For example, they will let you know if you should see a surgeon or other specialist. Your PCP will then work with the surgeon or specialist to help manage your health.

Get the most out of your visit
Give your PCP as much information as you can about your health. Before a visit, take a few minutes to prepare.
• Make a list. Write down any health questions, concerns, problems or symptoms, even if they are embarrassing. Be honest.
• Know your medicines. Keep a list of your current medicines and supplements. Share the list with your PCP at each visit.
• Ask about prevention. Your PCP is your best source of information for tips on staying healthy and keeping minor or chronic health conditions under control.
Classes and support

Living well with chronic conditions
This six-session workshop helps those with chronic conditions learn how to take control of their health. Participants build skills and confidence for managing health, staying active and enjoying life.

Benton, Lincoln and Linn counties:
541-768-6070

Quitting tobacco resources
Oregon Quit Line
1-800-QUIT-NOW or 1-800-784-8669
American Cancer Society
1-800-227-2345
National Cancer Institute
1-800-422-6237
Nicotine Anonymous
1-877-879-6422

Cardiovascular health and prevention programs
Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center
541-768-4538
Samaritan Albany General Hospital
541-812-5441
Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital
541-451-7888

Dial 211
Learn more about community resources available in your area:
• Family resources
• Food
• Economic opportunity
• Health care
• Housing
• Energy

For more information, visit www.211info.org, email help@211info.org or text your ZIP code to 898211.

Online resources
• Managing chronic conditions: www.samhealth.org/ManagingYourChronicCondition
• Prevention: www.samhealth.org/HealthyLivingGuides

CUSTOMER SERVICE
InterCommunity Health Network CCO

Call us
Monday – Friday,
8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
In the Corvallis area:
541-768-4550
Outside of Corvallis:
1-800-832-4580
TTY: 1-800-735-2900

Visit us
Monday – Friday,
8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Samaritan Health Plans
2300 NW Walnut Blvd.
Corvallis

InterCommunity Health Network CCO Exceptional Needs Care Coordination (ENCC)
A special type of case management to help members with coordination of their complex health care needs.
All locations:
541-768-4550
1-800-832-4580
1-800-735-2900 (TTY)