

# Member News

VNS Health Medicare (HMO)

## Stay Healthy with an Annual Wellness Visit

Even if nothing's bothering you, it's important to see your primary care provider (PCP) regularly so that you can stay healthy.

An Annual Wellness Visit is included with your plan benefits and you can get a reward for completing this visit through our Member Rewards Program.

At this visit, your doctor may:

- Take your blood pressure, weight, and other health measurements;
- Request or draw bloodwork;
- Perform an EKG (a test to look at your heart rhythm);
- Discuss your chances for having a heart attack or stroke or getting diabetes, depression, dementia, or other common conditions;

- Review the medications you are taking;
- Recommend screenings based on your age and risk factors; or
- Discuss advance directives or other plans for a time when you can no longer make decisions about your own care.

**If you are not able to get to your provider's office for an Annual Wellness Visit, call your Care Team for help scheduling an in-home wellness visit.**

They can connect you with the best options for your current care needs.



## Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones

The Public Health Emergency has ended but **COVID-19** is still here.

You need a booster if you are over 5 years old and:

- You haven't gotten a COVID-19 vaccine yet; or
- You were vaccinated against COVID-19 but your last dose was before September 2022.



**It's also important to get your flu shot every year.**

Both vaccines are free, safe, and available and you can get them both at the same time. Ask your doctor which shots are best for you and when you should get them.

Source: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

## In This Issue - Summer 2023

- How to Talk to Your Doctor about Bladder Leaks
- Check Your Hearing

# How to Talk to Your Doctor about Bladder Leaks

Having leaks or accidents can be embarrassing. But it is a common problem, especially for people who:

- Are older
- Are female
- Smoke regularly
- Are overweight
- Have prostate problems, diabetes, or constipation

Many things can make it hard to control your bladder.

**To help your doctor figure out what's making it tough for you, write down:**

- What you ate and drank and when
- When you went to the toilet (including during the night)
- What happened each time you went to the toilet (for example, did you suddenly feel like you needed to pee but then very little came out?)
- Whether you had any accidents and what caused them

Keep these notes for 2 or 3 days and share them with your doctor. It may feel awkward but it's best to take care of the problem before it gets worse.

Sources: [nafc.org](http://nafc.org), [medlineplus.gov](http://medlineplus.gov), [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org)



## Ways to Manage Chronic Pain

Any pain that lasts more than three months is considered chronic.

Talk to your doctor about prescription and over-the-counter medication options. In addition, these simple things might help:

- 1. Move your body.** For instance, try walking, low impact workouts, or yoga.
- 2. Apply hot/cold therapy.** Switch between hot and cold compresses.
- 3. Explore alternative treatments.** Acupuncture, meditation, or mindful breathing are examples of different therapies you can try.
- 4. Reduce stress.** Some ways to do that include keeping a journal, enjoying a hobby, or spending time with friends and family.



**Talk to your Care Team if you have any questions about managing chronic pain.**

Source: [homecareassistancejeffersonco.com/how-can-seniors-manage-chronic-pain/](http://homecareassistancejeffersonco.com/how-can-seniors-manage-chronic-pain/)

### Help Us Help You

You may be asked to complete a Health Outcomes Survey (HOS), which would arrive in the mail from SPH Analytics on behalf of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

If you receive it, please complete the survey, which asks about your mental and physical health over a two-year period. We'll use the results to identify ways we can improve service for you.

## Do You Need Urgent Care or Emergency Care?

Save time by going to urgent care for non-emergencies.

### Go to your doctor or an urgent care center if you have:

- Cough or sore throat
- Fever and chills
- Sprains, bruises, or cuts
- Nausea, vomiting, or stomachaches
- Slips or falls without serious pain
- Ear and sinus infection
- Rashes and bites
- Back, joint, or muscle pain

### Call 911 and go to the emergency room if you have:

- Shortness of breath
- Sudden, severe, or unusual pain anywhere in the body
- Sudden weakness, dizziness, or numbness
- Slurred speech
- Fever with rash
- Fainting
- Any life-threatening emergency

When possible, visit an in-network hospital or urgent care center. Find one at [vnshealthplans.org](https://vnshealthplans.org).

## Check Your Hearing

Having trouble hearing may seem like a minor problem. But if you lose your hearing, you're more likely to be lonely, start forgetting things, or fall and hurt yourself.



Hearing loss is more common as you get older but it doesn't have to happen. Getting your ears checked regularly can catch problems before they seriously affect your health.

It's especially important to get tested if you notice that you have to:

- Ask people to repeat themselves;
- Turn up the volume; or
- Focus more while listening to conversations.

Routine hearing exams are included among your plan benefits. Ask your doctor to give you an exam or refer you to a specialist if necessary.

Sources: [asha.org](https://asha.org), [aafp.org](https://aafp.org)

## Get Help Getting Healthy Food

Staying healthy is not just about avoiding germs or preventing accidents. Not having enough to eat, struggling to pay your bills—these kinds of worries can make you sick, too.



Your Care Team can help. If you have trouble getting healthy food, for example, they can help you:

- See if you qualify to get benefits from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to help pay for food;
- Find a local food bank;
- Sign up for home-delivered meals (which may be covered by your health plan); or
- Join a senior center or adult day care where lunch is provided (if you meet the requirements).

### Speak to your Care Team about the resources that may be right for you.

VNS Health Health Plans complies with Federal civil rights laws. VNS Health Health Plans does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, religion, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-866-783-1444 (TTY/TDD: 711). 注意: 如果您使用繁體中文, 您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-866-783-1444 (TTY/TDD: 711)。

Any questions? Call us toll free at:  
1-866-783-1444 (TTY: 711)

October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023  
7 days a week, 8 am – 8 pm

April 1, 2023 – September 1, 2023  
Weekdays, 8 am – 8 pm

[vnshealthplans.org](https://vnshealthplans.org)

Health Plans  
220 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017

### If Something Seems Wrong, Tell Us.

VNS Health Medicare is committed to finding and stopping fraud, waste, or abuse in our health care plans.

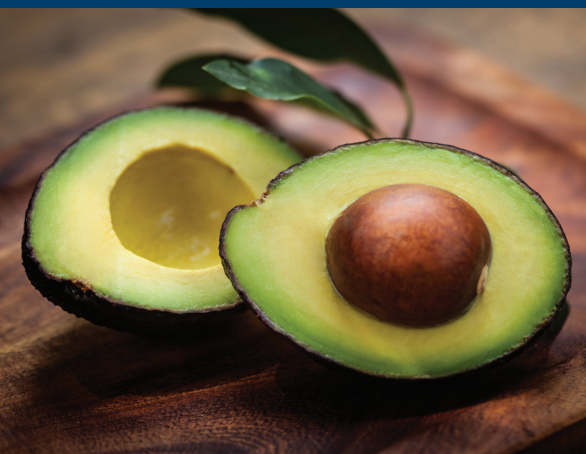
### Anonymous Reporting

VNS Health Medicare Compliance Hotline:  
**1-888-634-1558.**

File an online report: [vnshealth.ethicsspoint.com](https://vnshealth.ethicsspoint.com).

Learn more: [vnshealthplans.org/compliance-program](https://vnshealthplans.org/compliance-program).

24 hours, 7 days a week.



## 4-Layer Stuffed Avocado

Avocados are a good low-carb source of fiber and heart-healthy fat. Topped with black beans, salsa, cheese, and yogurt, these make a hearty snack, appetizer, or side dish. You can use your favorite jarred salsa or quickly make your own by mixing together chopped tomato, onion, and cilantro with lime juice, salt, and pepper.

## Ingredients

- 1/3 cup canned black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 avocados
- 4 tablespoons plain nonfat Greek yogurt
- 4 tablespoons salsa
- 4 teaspoons reduced-fat shredded cheddar or Mexican-style cheese
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 lime, cut into 4 pieces

## Directions

1. Place the beans in a small bowl. Using the back of a fork, mash until smooth.
2. Cut avocados in half and remove the pits. In the center of each avocado, layer 1 tablespoon of the beans, 1 tablespoon of Greek yogurt, and 1 tablespoon of salsa and sprinkle with 1 teaspoon of cheese.
3. Sprinkle the salt evenly over the avocados. Serve each avocado half with 1 piece of lime to squeeze over the dish.

Source: *The Create-Your-Plate Diabetes Cookbook*.

Recipe Credit: Toby Amidor, MS, RD, CDN