

Healthy Connections

The Oklahoma Health Initiatives ACO Beneficiary Newsletter

Welcome to Healthy Connections, the Oklahoma Health Initiatives newsletter for Accountable Care Organization (ACO) Medicare beneficiaries. Inside this newsletter you will find information about your healthcare and healthcare providers.

Don't forget to schedule your annual wellness visit

The annual wellness visit is a conversation between you and your primary care doctor. Come prepared to discuss your health history, goals and concerns. Bring a list of medications you're currently taking. We'll work with you to create a health plan based on your current health and your goals to keep you happy and healthy. You can schedule online anytime at healthcare.ascension.org or call the PulseLine to find a provider at **918-744-0123**



www.ascension.org/StJohnCare



Go online to schedule or call to ask about same-day, next-day, or online visits. Primary care doctors and pediatricians start with a conversation to deliver the right care for minor illnesses and injuries. And if you need more advanced care, they will connect you with specialists and other services close to home, and part of our network of Ascension sites of care.

5 Expert Ways to Prepare for Fall Allergy Season

1. Avoid allergy triggers

During the fall, try to avoid allergy triggers. Keep an eye on daily pollen counts and stay inside as much as possible during high pollen count days. Also, try to avoid going out in the morning, when ragweed pollen is at its highest during the fall. Keep doors and windows closed so pollen doesn't get indoors.

2. Change clothing

To ensure you're not tracking pollen into your home, change out of clothing you've worn outdoors. As soon as you get home, remove your shoes at the door, put your clothing in the washer and take a shower, paying special attention to your hair where pollen can linger.

Pro tip: Wear a hat and sunglasses to prevent pollen from getting in your eyes and wear a NIOSH-rated 95 filter mask when mowing the lawn or doing other chores outdoors. Make sure to remove these items as well when you come indoors.

3. Start taking allergy medication now

Don't wait until fall arrives to start taking your allergy medication. Whether you're taking over-the-counter or prescription medications to treat your allergy symptoms, start taking them two weeks or so before your symptoms usually begin.

Continue your medication for two weeks after the first hard frost. Both nasal and eye symptoms associated with ragweed allergies can linger after pollen is no longer in the air.



4. Consider immunotherapy

For long-term treatment of severe or chronic allergies, consider immunotherapy with either shots or tablets. Immunotherapy is extremely effective for treating pollen allergies and can help with asthma. Unlike medications that treat allergy symptoms, immunotherapy works similarly to vaccines, desensitizing your immune system to allergens over time.

5. Visit your allergist

Make an appointment to see your board-certified allergist. This is especially important if the intensity of your symptoms has changed or if you've developed new ones since your last visit. Ask your allergist about getting tested for asthma if you're coughing or wheezing more than in the past.

Don't let fall allergies catch you unaware. Using these five tips, you can get ahead of ragweed and other fall allergens so you can enjoy the season with minimal sneezing and wheezing.

**American College of Allergy and Immunology*

AUTUMN'S HERE



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HINT: A FEW WORDS MAY SHARE LETTERS.

SEASONEDTIMES.COM

PIE
HARVEST
LEAVES
SCARECROW

CROW
HAYRIDE
MAPLE
CHESTNUT

THANKSGIVING
HALLOWEEN
TURKEY
CORN MAZE



Fall Prevention Tips that Can Help Seniors Stay Independent



1. Check Your Medications

Some medications can cause dizziness or disorientation, increasing the risk of falls. Talk to your doctor about reducing or switching medications that may affect your balance, especially those for anxiety or depression. A CDC study found over half of older adults use medications linked to falls.

2. Get Your Eyes Checked

As we age, our eyesight can change, making it harder to navigate. If you need magnifiers, use them only when necessary. Avoid wearing cheap, non-prescription magnifiers around the house, as they can cause you to misjudge distances.

3. Let Go of Fall Expectations

Aging doesn't automatically mean you'll fall more. But carrying that fear can lead to increased falls. Stay aware of your surroundings, and don't carry more than you can handle—like making extra trips for groceries instead of overloading yourself.

4. Use an Assistive Device

If you're not confident in your balance, consider using a cane or walker. They are simple tools that can significantly reduce your risk of falls and hospital visits.

Balance exercises can improve stability. Try these simple exercises at home, no equipment needed:

5. Remove Obstacles

Make small changes to your home to reduce tripping hazards:

- Tape down throw rugs
- Coil or tape cords and wires
- Use non-slip mats in the bathroom
- Install grab bars in the tub or shower
- Secure loose handrails and banisters

6. Practice Balance

Balance exercises can improve stability. Try these simple exercises at home, no equipment needed:

- **Stand on one foot** for 10 seconds
- **Walk heel to toe** for 20 steps
- **Walk in a straight line** while keeping your balance

7. Build Strength & Flexibility

The American Heart Association recommends yoga and tai chi for balance and flexibility. These exercises help prevent falls and improve overall mobility.

**AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services*

Urgent Care or ER?

Get the right care at the right place

Urgent Care	ER
Cold, flu or allergies	Difficulty breathing
Strains and sprains	Chest pain
Severe sore throat	Open fractures
Minor cuts or burns	Severe bleeding or burns
Eye or ear infection	Extremely high fever
Broken bones (wrist, hand, ankle, foot)	Loss of vision

In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest ER right away.



This free issue of Healthy Connections is for Medicare beneficiaries whose doctors participate in Oklahoma Health Initiatives, an Accountable Care Organization (ACO). It provides information about ACO programs, tools and resources to help beneficiaries stay healthy and engaged in their healthcare. Medicare beneficiaries have the option to decline data sharing. Please contact OKHI with questions.

For general questions or additional information about Accountable Care Organizations, please visit [medicare.gov/acos.html](https://www.medicare.gov/acos.html) or call 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227). TTY users should call 877-486-2048.



**Ascension
St. John**

Oklahoma Health Initiatives

1924 S. Utica Ave., Ste 908
Tulsa, OK 74104
Fax: 918-403-0180
okhi@ascension.org
oklahomahealthinitiatives.org