



Grandfamilies Guide to Good Health

Tips for you –
and those you care for



United
Healthcare®
There for what matters™





We celebrate all grandparents

At UnitedHealthcare®, we know the important role grandparents play in their grandchildren's lives. Many children live with one or both grandparents who serve as the main caregiver in families known as "grandfamilies." Other grandparents give their love and support from close in town or far away. Whatever the case, we want to celebrate all grandparents. We recognize all you do, every day, to help raise happy, healthy kids.

Being a grandparent is rewarding

Serving as a parent or guardian to your grandchild can also be challenging. We've created this *Grandfamilies Guide to Good Health* to help you. Inside, you'll find tips to help keep you and your family members healthy in:

- Body** – How to eat healthy, stretch your food dollars and get proper preventive care
- Mind** – Ways to help with mental health and substance use issues
- Soul** – Fun and rewarding things to do while spending time together

It's a special opportunity

Multi-generational families are becoming more and more common. When grandparents, grandchildren and other relatives live together, it's a chance to get to know one another better. It's a chance to learn from one another. And it may draw you even closer than ever before.



Did you know?

Nearly 8 million children in the United States live in households headed by grandparents or other relatives¹

About 2.5 million grandparents say they're responsible for caring for their grandchildren²

In roughly 1 in 3 of these households, neither of the children's parents live in the home³



Scan the code to learn more about our commitment to supporting grandparents and grandfamilies.

A healthy body

Good health starts with healthy eating

What we eat and drink can have a big impact on our overall health. Healthy eating has many benefits. It can lower the risk of getting serious diseases, like heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes.⁴

Roughly 1/2 of American adults have 1 or more preventable diseases related to poor eating and physical inactivity.⁵ Eating the right foods, along with regular exercise, can also help with keeping a healthy weight.



Tips for healthier eating

Try to eat meals at about the same time each day. Aim for balanced meals that include a variety of foods like:

- Lots of vegetables, including dark green, red and orange, legumes (beans and peas) and starches
- Moderate amounts of fruits in many colors – especially whole fruits
- Grains, at least half of which are whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat dairy, including milk, yogurt and cheese
- High-protein foods like fish, lean meats and poultry, eggs, nuts, seeds and soy products
- Plenty of water instead of soda, juice and sugary drinks



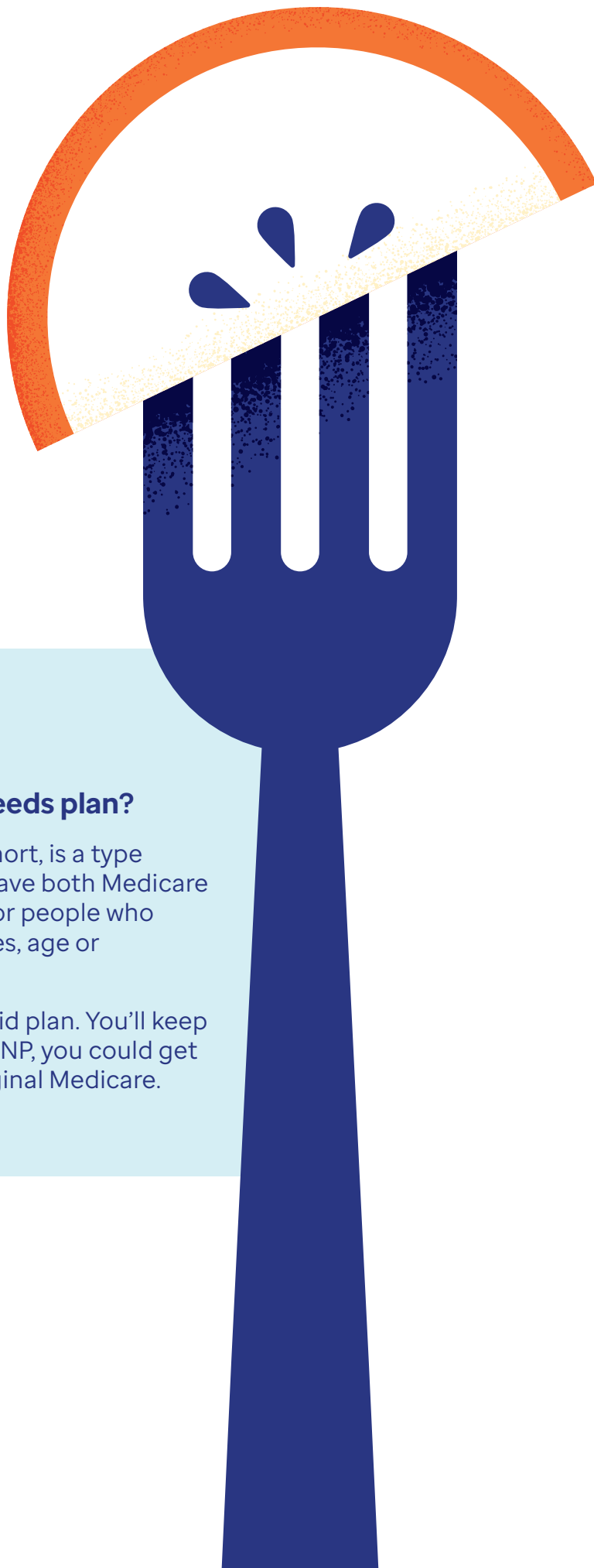
Understanding portion sizes

Portion size, or how much we eat, is as important as what we eat. Thinking visually may help to understand what the right portion looks like. Here are some examples:

- Fist = 1 cup, use for vegetables
- Deck of cards or computer mouse = 3–4 ounces, use for protein
- Tennis ball = ½ cup, use for grains such as rice or starchy vegetables such as potatoes
- Cupped handful = 1 ounce, use for nuts
- Tip of thumb = 1 tablespoon fat, use for butter or oil

Try using smaller plates. Eating from a salad plate instead of a larger plate can help reduce your portion sizes.

Focus on making better choices bite by bite, day by day. Making small changes each day, can make a big difference over time.



Have you heard of a Dual Special Needs plan?

A Dual Special Needs plan, or D-SNP for short, is a type of health insurance plan for people who have both Medicare and Medicaid. These plans are designed for people who may need more help because of disabilities, age or health conditions.

A D-SNP works together with your Medicaid plan. You'll keep all your Medicaid benefits. Plus, with a D-SNP, you could get more benefits and features than with Original Medicare.

Visit getdual.com to learn more

A healthy body

Tips to stretch your food dollars

A little work before you go to the grocery store can go a long way to help you save money on groceries.

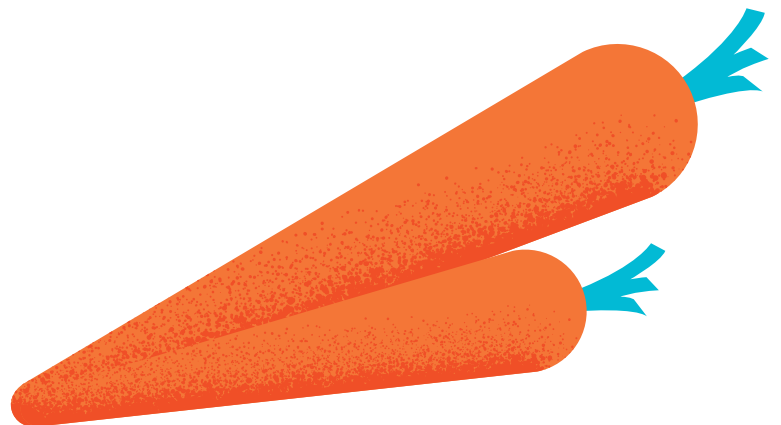
Before you go shopping:

- Plan out meals you want to make for the week
- Check your fridge, freezer and pantry first
- Build meals around what you already have
- Look for coupons and discounts
- Make your list before you go to the store
- Stick to it – stay focused and avoid impulse buys

5 ways to shop wisely

- 1. Buy store-brand items:** You can save as much as 30% buying generic or store-brand products. Things like butter, cereal, canned goods, vegetables and spices. You'll save a lot of money and likely never know the difference.
- 2. See what's in season:** Look for produce that's in-season – fruits and vegetables usually cost less when they're in-season and there's a plentiful supply.

- 3. Consider buying in bulk:** Bulk foods tend to be better priced – just make sure you have the room to freeze it or store it so it doesn't go bad.
- 4. Don't automatically buy the largest size:** To be a smart shopper, you have to compare the unit price. This tells you the best deal based on the price per ounce, pound or other unit.
- 5. Choose canned or frozen:** Fresh fruits and vegetables aren't your only options. Canned or frozen fruits and vegetables are just as healthy, and much cheaper, too. Just make sure there's no added salt or sugar.





Finding it hard to afford food?

You're not alone. Food insecurity can affect anyone. In the United States today:

- More than 34 million people, including 9 million children, experience food insecurity⁶
- Seniors with a grandchild present in the home are much more likely to experience food insecurity⁷

Help is available

When you reach out for support, you're showing strength and bravery to your children and grandchildren.

Where to start

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as food stamps) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) help families buy healthy food.

fns.usda.gov/snap
fns.usda.gov/wic

- Feeding America is a network of food banks. Type in your zip code and find places to get free food, plus dates and times for pickup.

feedingamerica.org

A healthy body

Preventive care can help you – and your family – stay healthier

Everyone should get a checkup once a year. It's a chance for the doctor to check you or your child's overall health. The doctor will help you get any care, tests and treatments that may be needed. If there is a problem, catching it early can make a big difference. When health issues are found early, they're usually easier to treat.



Preventive care for children

Annual wellness visits are a way to make sure children stay healthy. Your child should get a checkup even if he or she doesn't feel sick.

At a typical child's wellness visit, the doctor will:

- 1. Do** a full exam and check height, weight, vision and hearing
- 2. Check** that the child is growing and developing properly for their age
- 3. Make sure** they're up to date with any shots and give any that are needed
- 4. Start or update** the child's care plan

At the visit, be sure to talk about any health or behavior changes in your child. Also bring up any of your child's health concerns. Having a discussion can help get your worries off your mind.



Preventive care for adults

It's just as important for adults to have a yearly checkup. An annual visit can help you see how healthy you are. It may also help tell you about any illnesses you may be at risk for. Together, you and your doctor can create a personalized care plan to help you reach your health goals.

Preventive care may be based on your age and sex. Examples include:

- Breast cancer and cervical cancer screenings for women
- Prostate cancer screening for men
- Colorectal cancer screening for adults aged 45–75
- Cholesterol screening for adults aged 40–75
- Screening for depression and suicide risk in adults
- Screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Your doctor will recommend preventive care screenings that make sense for you and your lifestyle.



There's low or no-cost options for routine care

Many health plans cover the cost for routine preventive health care services such as annual wellness visits, diabetes screenings, mammograms, colorectal screenings and more from an in-network provider. Check with your health plan and provider to learn more.



Don't forget about the dentist

Starting at age 1, children should see the dentist regularly for a checkup and cleaning. Besides checking for cavities, the dentist may also apply a fluoride treatment. Fluoride helps make teeth stronger. It also makes it harder for germs to cause tooth decay.



No health care coverage?

Everyone should have access to health care coverage. And there are options for people in need.

You may qualify for a low-cost or no-cost health plan. The eligibility requirements vary by state. Visit [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) to check eligibility and enroll in a health plan.

A healthy mind

Behavioral health is as important as physical health

Behavioral health care includes mental health care with a focus on a person's behaviors and habits. This includes:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mood disorders
- Psychological issues

Substance use disorders, eating disorders and psychotic disorders are other examples of behavioral health issues.



Mental health is something families need to talk about

Millions of people in the United States are affected by mental health issues each year.⁶ And mental illness impacts people of all ages – young and old. As a caregiver to a child or teenager, you need to know the signs to watch for. But older adults may also feel lonely and alone, which can lead to sadness and depression.

Start the conversation

If you have concerns about a loved one, bring them up in a caring way. Without judging. Explain that you only want to help.

Be open

Talk about any past family history of mental health or substance use. It may help your loved one feel less alone.

Offer to help find support

Help your loved one find resources or treatment services. Encourage them to find out what the next steps might be.

Be patient

Helping someone get on the path to recovery takes time. Continue reaching out with offers to listen and help.

Take care of yourself, too

Being a caregiver may be stressful or emotionally draining. Take time for your own mental health and well-being.



Did you know?

Every year, mental health issues impact:

1 in 5
U.S. adults⁸

1 in 6
U.S. youth aged 6-17⁹

Suicide is the #2
leading cause of death among
people aged 10-14¹⁰

A healthy mind

Support for those struggling with substance use

Substance use disorder involves the over-use of alcohol, drugs or medications. It's a disease – and it's treatable. Recognizing signs of possible substance use may help you get your loved one the treatment they may need.



How does it start?

Substance use can start for different reasons:

- For teens, it might begin with peer pressure
- Some people may use substances to mask depression or anxiety
- Others may just want to see what it's like to use drugs or alcohol
- When people start using more and more often, they can become addicted



What are common signs for concern?

Flags to look for include:

- Changes in appearance, including a lack of hygiene
- Mood swings or unexplained personality changes
- Ignoring responsibilities
- Risk of financial loss or physical danger
- Sudden changes in friends
- Feelings of shame or regrets



Did you know?

4m+ youth (ages 12–17) reported using illicit drugs in 2018¹¹

12 is the average age for trying alcohol for the first time¹²



What can you do to help?

If you're worried about someone you're close to, it's important to be supportive. Tell them you're concerned and explain why. Take care to make sure they don't feel accused or shamed. It's important to remain calm – even if they get upset with you – and remind them how much you care about them.



Learn about your options

Call your primary care provider, behavioral health specialist, school nurse or guidance counselor. Check with your loved one's health plan benefits to understand options, programs and resources that may be available to them.



Hope and healing may be a phone call away

- The Substance Use Disorder Helpline is private and available 24/7. Call **1-855-780-5955**.
- If you or someone you know are experiencing thoughts of suicide or something else that is urgent or an emergency, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**.



A healthy soul

Enjoy your time together to the fullest

Multi-generational living brings unique rewards. Grandchildren have a chance to learn about life from grandparents. And it can help grandparents keep in better touch with the young.

Spending time together is nurturing and emotionally fulfilling. It's good for the soul. Here are some ways to get the most enjoyment out of your shared experiences.



Build meaningful connections

Ask how your grandchild's day was. Know what's going on in their life – and show you care. Being open and honest helps build trust.



Do special things together

Let your grandchild choose something they'd like to do. Maybe there's a special place they want to show you. Or something special they want to cook. Share your ideas, too.



Make up your own stories

Pick a person, animal or character to go on an adventure. One person starts off, then the next person adds to the story. Go back and forth. Where will the story go? That's up to you.



Enjoy friendly competition

Children love to beat their elders at cards, dominoes, checkers and board games. Or do a big jigsaw puzzle. That can bring hours – even days – of quality fun.



Go on walks together

Kids need an hour of physical activity every day. Grandparents need to stay active, too. Going for walks can give you time to talk. Or go to a park. Swings and slides can give kids all the exercise they need.

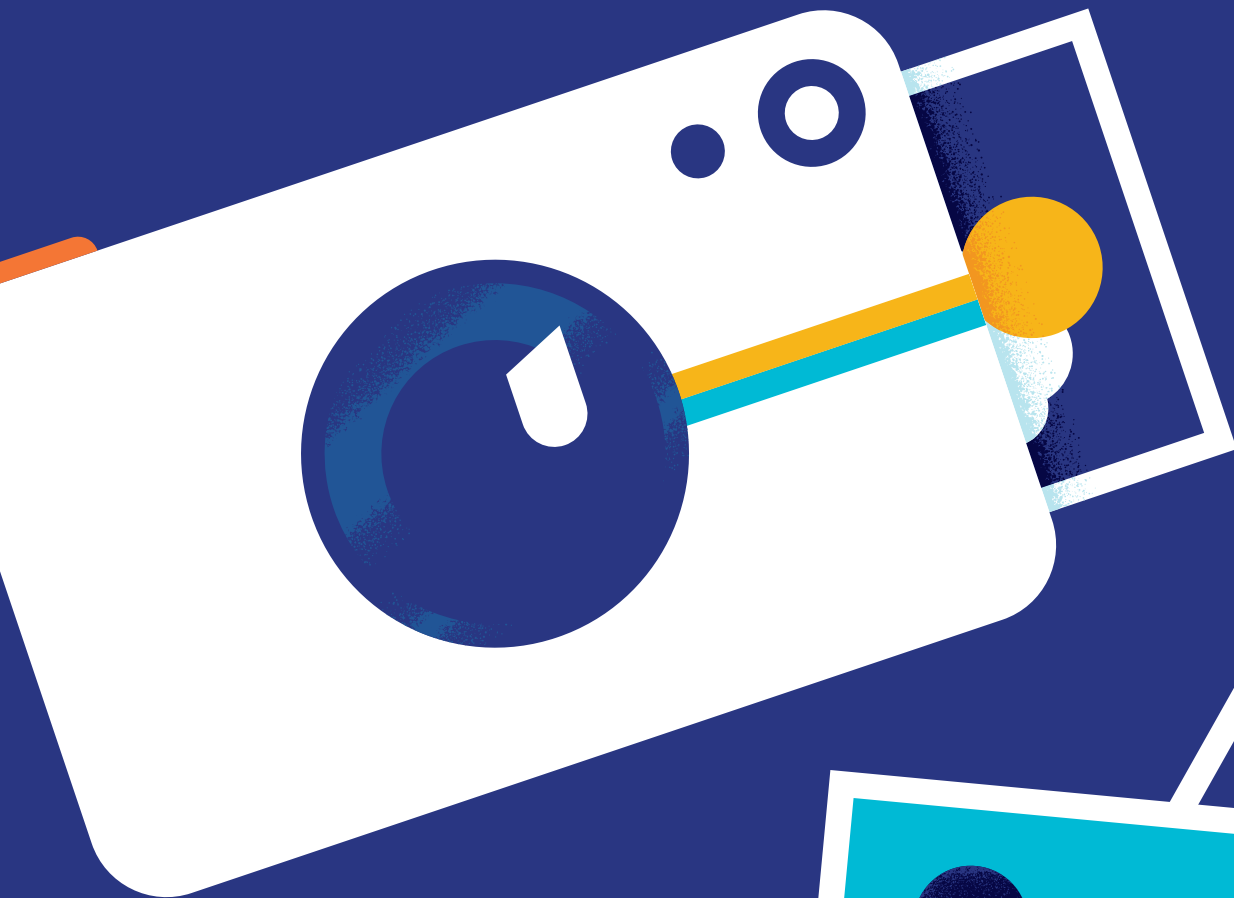


Pass on your knowledge

Do you have a favorite hobby? Maybe you know a lot about cars or music. Or maybe you have a special skill. If so, share it with your grandkids. It may spark a new interest in them.

How do you know what's good?

What's a good activity to share with your grandchild will depend a lot on their age. And what works great for one child probably won't work for all. That's okay. The important thing is to keep trying. Sooner or later, you'll find your favorite things to do together. And that can make special memories for both of you.



Did you know?

Nearly 1 in 4 adults aged 65 and older feel lonely.¹³ Life changes like divorce, retirement, poor health or the loss of a loved one can lead to feeling disconnected.

Ways that grandparents can stay connected to their community:

- **Volunteer** at a local organization such as a church or community center. Visit volunteermatch.org to search for volunteer opportunities.
- **Join or start a group** that meets regularly, such as a neighborhood book club.
- **Take a class** or workshop to learn a new skill, then teach it to your grandchildren.
- **Get involved** in community events, such as a neighborhood clean-up or block party.

Staying connected to your community is important for your physical and mental health. It'll give you a sense of belonging and make you feel useful.

Shopping for a health insurance plan?

With a wide range of plans available, it's likely you'll find a UnitedHealthcare plan that's right for you, including:

Medicaid plans – If you have a low income or have a special circumstance, you may qualify for these low-cost or no-cost plans.

Medicare plans – If you're turning 65, are already over 65 or may qualify for Medicare because of a disability or other special situation.

Dual Special Needs plans (D-SNP) – If you qualify for both Medicare and Medicaid.

Children's Health Insurance Plans (CHIP) – The CHIP program provides health insurance to uninsured children and teens.

Individual and family plans – If you're under 65 and shopping for a plan, short term or Affordable Care Act (ACA) plans may work for you.

Supplemental plans – Enhance your health plan with add-on coverage including dental, vision or cash-benefit plans like accident and critical illness.

Check out your options

Visit [uhc.com](https://www.uhc.com) to learn more about some popular health plans to consider.



Sources:

^{1,2,3} Generations United

⁴ National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, Diabetes Diet, Eating, & Physical Activity, <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/diet-eating-physical-activity>, accessed August 2021.

⁵ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, <https://health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/dietary-guidelines/about-dietary-guidelines>, accessed August 2021.

^{6,7} The State of Senior Hunger in 2021 report by Feeding America

^{8,9,10} National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Mental Health By the Numbers. Last updated March, 2021. Accessed July 13, 2023.

¹¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Results from the 2018 national survey on drug use and health: Detailed tables.

¹² National Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Teens: Alcohol and other drugs. Drug Enforcement Administration. Talking to your child when you suspect drug use.

¹³ CDC.gov, Health Risks of Social Isolation and Loneliness: <https://www.cdc.gov/emotional-wellbeing/social-connectedness/loneliness.htm>. Accessed May 2, 2024.

This information is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for the advice of a doctor. Consult your doctor prior to beginning an exercise program or making changes to your lifestyle or health care routine.