

# Health Matters

Spring 2026

## Inside this issue:

- Getting care when you need it
- New covered benefits
- Wellness and prevention tips
- Community programs and resources



# Welcome!

In this spring issue, we're sharing tips and resources to help you and your family stay healthy this spring. Whether it's managing allergies, finding the right care, or learning about new benefits, we're here to support you every step of the way.

**Take a few minutes to relax and explore what's inside.**



# Flu season is still here: Know your care options

Flu season can be challenging, and even mild symptoms can get worse if you wait. Getting care early can help you feel better sooner, prevent problems, and protect the people around you. Deciding what to do when you're sick can feel overwhelming, but there are simple options to help you get the care you need. For more information on where to seek care, visit [our page](#).

## Need a ride to care or daily activities?

Whether you need to get to the doctor, physical therapist, or pediatrician, you have a ride<sup>1</sup>. With your added benefits, you also get 24 round-trip rides to the grocery store, community events, laundromat, places of worship, and more.

Call **1-877-892-3986 (TTY: 711)**, Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. to schedule a ride.

## New covered benefits

Discover your benefits. We're here to make life a little easier for you and your family. From utility assistance to maternity support, we've added some new benefits to help you stay healthy, save money, and feel more at ease.

These benefits are designed for everyday needs and important life moments. Here's what's new:

- **Utility assistance program:** Get up to \$250 annually for water, electricity, or gas for qualifying members.<sup>1</sup>
- **Chiropractic services:** Get up to six visits per year for spinal manipulation and therapies to help keep you feeling your best.<sup>1</sup>
- **Medical respite program:** If you qualify, you can get up to a 10-day stay in a skilled nursing facility when you need extra care.<sup>1</sup>
- **Grocery benefit:** Get a \$75 grocery card per quarter for healthy foods.<sup>2</sup>
- **Maternal health support:** If you are expecting, you can get 400 free diapers per pregnancy and choose a free baby monitor, sleep sack, or pack-n-play after completing a safe sleep online course.<sup>1</sup>



## Ask a nurse: Seasonal allergies

Elizabeth Drew, MSN, RN, CCM, Integrated Care Management

### **Q: What are allergies and what causes them?**

A: Allergies happen when your immune system (your body's built-in defense team) responds to a foreign invader inside the body. This can be pollen, bee stings, pet dander, or more. About one out of four adults in the U.S. has seasonal allergies (CDC).

### **What do allergies feel like?**

- Sneezing
- Itchy skin, nose, eyes, or mouth
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Feeling very tired
- Watery or puffy eyes
- Hives

## Wellness and prevention tips

If you have asthma, seasonal allergies can increase the risk of complications and cause serious attacks that can result in a trip to the emergency room or require a hospital stay. The Sentara Health Plans Asthma program can help you control your asthma before it controls you.

To help manage your allergies, follow these simple tips.

- Stay inside on dry, windy days. Rain helps wash away allergens.
- If you do go outside, wear a face mask.
- When you come back inside, remove your clothes and wash your hands, face, and hair.
- Medicines like nasal sprays and drugs like antihistamines can reduce allergy symptoms. These can be prescribed by your doctor or bought at the store.

As a plan through Sentara Health Plans, you can use your over-the-counter (OTC) benefit for medications to help your allergy management.

When should you talk to your doctor?

- Your allergies last more than several weeks.
- The medications aren't helping you or stop working.
- You have trouble breathing like wheezing, coughing, or shortness of breath.
- You keep getting sinus infections.

Don't have a doctor or primary care provider? **Sign in** to the member portal or the Sentara Health Plans mobile app to find a doctor near you. Prefer to stay indoors? We also have convenient **telehealth options**.

With the right care, most people can manage their allergies and still enjoy the springtime fun.



## Black maternal health

Black Maternal Health Week is from April 11 to April 17 and raises awareness about the urgent need to improve maternal health for Black women, who are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related issues (CDC).

Black women are also more likely to face multiple health, social, and economic challenges, including limited access to quality care (March of Dimes). It's an important time to shine a light on the challenges that Black women face when it comes to pregnancy and childbirth.

### Here's how you can help break the trend:

- Advocate for yourself with your doctor.
- Choose doctors who support your health goals.
- Build a supportive network of family and friends.
- Focus on mental health and seek counseling.
- Learn about pregnancy-related conditions.
- Get preventive screenings.
- Keep your health info updated for continuous care.

Talk with your doctor today about any concerns or questions you may have. As a Sentara Health Plans member, you also have access to support and education through the Welcoming Baby<sup>SM</sup> program. Your health and your baby's health are our top priorities.



## Combine sports/ camp physicals with well-child visits

Summer is heating up, which means camp and sports physicals are upon us! Ask your provider to combine a wellness visit with sports and camp physicals to save time and get the most out of your appointment.

### What to expect at a well-child visit:

- Physical growth, behavioral, vision, and hearing screenings
- Dental health screening
- Developmental screening (crawling, walking, speech, cognitive development)
- Immunization review

### Topics your doctor may discuss:

- Healthy habits and nutrition
- School performance and peer relationships
- Sleep, exercise, and safety
- Emotional health, including signs of stress or depression

### Tip for parents:

- Ask your child's doctor if they use developmental screenings — it's a helpful way to identify extra support early.
- Review recommended **immunization schedules** to help support your child's health and development.

### Recommended well-child visit ages:

- Newborn, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, and 24 months
- Every year from age 3 through 21

### Learn more:

Contact [welcomingbaby@sentara.com](mailto:welcomingbaby@sentara.com) to join programs or get more information.



## Importance of breast cancer screenings

Mammograms are a common form of breast cancer screening to catch cancer early. It looks for signs of cancer before symptoms may be noticeable to you. Screenings make a powerful difference, and 99% of women diagnosed in the earliest stages of breast cancer live five years or more (CMS).

As a Sentara Health Plans member, it has been made easier than ever to do a mammogram screening. Sentara Health now offers mammograms on the road! The mobile 3D mammography van travels throughout Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina.

## Men's Health Month: June awareness

It's time to shine a light on something often ignored—men's health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges men to take care of themselves by getting routine checkups and screenings. This is the key to early detection and prevention. By urging men to have checkups, focus on their mental well-being, and adopt healthier lifestyles, they can take steps to reduce risks and have fulfilling lives. Together, let's make Men's Health Month a time for positive change and healthier, happier lives. For more information about men's health and blood disorders, check out the CDC website at [cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/mens-health.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/mens-health.htm).

Need help finding a provider? Sign in to [member.santarhealthplans.com/sign-in](https://member.santarhealthplans.com/sign-in) to use our Find-a-Doc tool and get started today.



## A1C testing and diabetes prevention

When was the last time you checked your A1C? The HgbA1c screening (A1C test) measures your average blood sugar over the past two or three months and helps you know if your treatment is on track. We're here to reward you for taking care of your health. Here are a couple of ways you can earn Healthy Incentives:

- **HgbA1c Test:** If you have diabetes, completing your A1C test helps you track your blood sugar levels. You may be eligible for \$15 in Healthy Incentives<sup>2</sup> just for completing your A1C test.

If you are living with diabetes, it is important to have your eyes checked every year, even if you don't currently wear glasses. A yearly diabetic eye exam helps catch problems early and protect your vision.

- **Eye Health:** Regular eye exams are important, especially for those living with diabetes. Completing your yearly eye exam helps catch issues early and protect your vision. You may be eligible for a \$15 Healthy Incentives<sup>2</sup> for completing your eye exam.

### Working with your doctor

Taking your medication as directed helps keep your blood sugar levels steady. Regular check-ins with your doctor help catch problems early and make sure your care plan is working, so small concerns are addressed before they become emergency issues.

### Healthy steps to take now

Managing your health doesn't have to be complicated. Small, simple steps can add up to big improvements. Here are a few ways to get started:

- **Healthy eating:** Cooking fresh is a great way to feel better. Choose balanced meals with protein and fiber.
- **Stay active:** Get moving! Join a walking or running group, try free online workouts, or work out with a friend to stay motivated.
- **Manage stress:** Take time to relax and de-stress by meditating, getting active, or spending time with loved ones.

## Dario Health: Manage diabetes confidently

Living with diabetes takes daily effort. Dario Health gives you the tools to stay on top of it. Enroll in the Dario program to track your glucose, meals, activity, and medications all in one app. Eligible members receive a free glucose monitor shipped right to you, which automatically connects your readings to the app. Plus, access to a health coach to keep you motivated and on track. It's included in your health plan at no cost.

Start today: [go.mydario.com/sentara/general](https://go.mydario.com/sentara/general)

Join our Chronic Disease Management program to help manage your care, improve your quality of life, keep your blood sugar levels normal, and catch concerns early.

To learn more about managing diabetes, visit [sentarahealthplans.com/diabetes](https://sentarahealthplans.com/diabetes).



## Managing stress to protect your health

Stress is something most people have experienced in their lives. It can come from a big life change, worrying about your finances, juggling many roles and responsibilities, or being faced with challenge after challenge.

Your body can react to stress in different ways.

- Increased blood pressure
- Increased heart rate
- Muscle and stomach tightness
- Decreased concentration
- Increased forgetfulness

It can seem hard to manage stress, but these tips can help you.

- It's important to get enough sleep to be able to cope with stress. If you find yourself struggling with sleep, check out this Sleep Better interactive experience [share.articulate.com/-rEUueUbKiRcuFNaxd2lj#](https://share.articulate.com/-rEUueUbKiRcuFNaxd2lj#/).
- Making time for yourself by doing something you enjoy for a few minutes a day can help improve your mental outlook and help you stay focused.
- Eating right helps keep energy levels steady, so try not to skip meals and drink water.
- Staying on the move can help burn off negative energy like walking, jogging, dancing, or swimming.
- Calming practices like yoga or meditation. Check out this webpage for guided online yoga and meditation practice.
- If stress makes daily life hard, talk to your care team. Help is available.

## Provider spotlight: 2026 Dr. Melvin T. Pinn, Jr. Quality Excellence Award recipient chosen

We are excited to announce Dr. Bradley Cotrina as the recipient of the 2026 Dr. Melvin T. Pinn Jr. Quality Excellence Award (QEA). The award is presented annually to a physician who demonstrates an exceptional commitment to quality care and improved member outcomes.

Dr. Cotrina is a board-certified family medicine physician at Sentara Family Medicine Physicians in Virginia Beach. He earned his medical degree from West Virginia University School of Medicine in 2019 and completed his residency at Eastern Virginia Medical School in 2023.

Highly regarded by his patients, Dr. Cotrina is known for his compassionate, patient-centered approach to care. Patients frequently describe him as empathetic, attentive, and an excellent listener who takes time to thoroughly address questions and concerns, helping individuals feel informed, respected, and supported. Dr. Cotrina was nominated by members of his staff, who described him as a “beacon of care and dedication.” They praised his commitment to ensuring every patient feels seen, heard, and valued, as well as his dedication to advocacy, mentorship, and excellence in healthcare.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Quality Excellence Award, celebrating a legacy of commitment to quality and excellence in care.

The Quality Improvement and Member Safety Team is now accepting nominations for the 2027 QEA Award. If you would like to nominate a doctor for the 2027 QEA Award, please visit [sentarahealthplans.com/providers/qea](https://sentarahealthplans.com/providers/qea), and scroll to the bottom of the page to access the nomination form.



## Stay connected with your health

Get the tools, resources, and support you need to stay healthy and connected. Register your account.

- **Step 1:** Register on the Sentara Health Plans member portal to use on your computer or the mobile app. If you haven't already, go to [sentarahealthplans.com/register](https://sentarahealthplans.com/register) and fill in your information.
- **Step 2:** Once you're registered, get the mobile app. Scan this code with your smartphone camera or QR code reader app, or go to [sentarahealthplans.com/app](https://sentarahealthplans.com/app) to download the mobile app. You'll have instant access to your member ID card, benefits, Member Guide, Member Handbook, and more.
- **Step 3:** Don't forget to set your preferences and let us know if you want to go paperless, opt in for text messaging, or even change your preferred language to Spanish

## Community programs and support

Take advantage of programs and events designed to support you and your family, including:

- **Baby showers:** learn and celebrate: For expecting moms, join us for free Baby Shower events that offer expert tips, helpful resources, and a chance to connect with other parents. It's a great way to celebrate your pregnancy and feel supported along the way.
- **Maternal and child health workshops:** These monthly workshops cover topics like parenting, wellness, and more. They're a great opportunity to learn in a welcoming environment and meet others who are going through similar experiences.
- **Dario Health app support at your fingertips:** Manage your health anytime, anywhere with the Dario Health app. Track blood sugar, blood pressure, and weight, set goals, and get personalized support. Plus, you can connect with health coaches and access insights. Download the Dario Health app today.



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[sentaramedicaid.com/members](https://sentaramedicaid.com/members)

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Some benefits have restrictions and limits.

<sup>2</sup>Some incentives have restrictions and limits. Members can get up to \$50 per year in gift cards. Choose from over 100 retailer gift cards.

### Citations

[Almost a Third of U.S. Adults and Children Have at Least One Allergy | NCHS Pressroom | CDC](#)

[Allergies - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic](#)

[Data Snapshot: Breast Cancer Screening Disparities in People Enrolled in Medicare](#)