

# Healthy highlights

**Spring 2026**

## **In this issue**

- What are allergies and what causes them?
- Remembering to take your medications
- Managing stress to protect your health
- Benefits highlight: over-the-counter allowance and grocery allowance

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



# Hello!

In this issue, we're going to provide you with tips and information on topics like remembering to take your medication, allergies in the spring season, importance of breast cancer screenings, and more. We're also highlighting your over-the-counter and grocery allowance benefits, that can help cover those expenses. So, grab a glass of iced tea, a shady spot, and take a few moments to enjoy reading this issue in the spring weather.



## Pharmacy focus: How do I remember to take all of my medications?

Remembering to take medications as directed by your doctor leads to the best results for your health. If they aren't taken as prescribed, it can lead to symptoms returning, increased risk of complications, or more difficulty managing your health.

There are some useful ways to help remember your medication like:

- Use reminders through phone apps, calendars, or alarms.
- Keep a list of your current medications and when they need to be refilled.
- Ask for a 90-day supply from your doctor, which most medications can qualify for this.
- Use automatic refills when your pharmacy offers them.

Using an automatic pill dispenser or pillbox to keep your medications organized for the week or month can also be helpful. Use your over-the-counter (OTC) products allowance to buy them. To view the catalog and place an order, log into the NationsBenefits® member portal at [SentaraMedicare.NationsBenefits.com](https://SentaraMedicare.NationsBenefits.com).

# 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

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 Sentara Health Plans member, 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.

# Health awareness, prevention, and wellness

## Black Maternal Health

Black Maternal Health Week was from April 11 to April 17, but it's always important to shine a light on the challenges black women face in pregnancy and childbirth. There is an urgent need to improve maternal health for Black women, who are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related issues (CDC).

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. Your health and your baby's health are our top priorities.

## 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 who have blood disorders 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).



# Health awareness, prevention, and wellness (continued)

## 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 Rewards:

- **HgbA1c Test:** If you have diabetes, completing your A1C test helps you track your blood sugar levels. You can earn up to \$15 in Healthy Rewards just for completing it.

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 can earn \$20 Healthy Rewards 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 are 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:** Eating fresh is a great way to feel better. Choose balanced meals with fruits and vegetables, protein and fiber, and less added sugars and saturated fats.
- **Stay active:** Get moving! Pick activities that you like and start doing what you can for at least 10 minutes at a time. You could join a walking club, 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.

To create these healthy habits, start small. Every healthy choice adds up to a big reward.

## Extra support

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).

# 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.

If you're over age 40, you don't need a doctor's referral. You'll receive a Healthy Reward<sup>3</sup> of \$20 on your prepaid flex card once you complete your mammogram. To learn more about the mammogram van visit [sentara.com/mobilemammovan](https://www.sentara.com/mobilemammovan).



## Managing stress to protect your health

Stress is something most people have experienced in their life. 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](#).
- 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. [Yoga and Meditation](#)

If stress is making daily life hard, talk to your doctor or care team. Help is available.

# Benefits highlight



## Over-the-counter benefits

The over-the-counter (OTC) products allowance<sup>1</sup> keeps more money in your pocket. You can enjoy everyday items at no cost to you. With this allowance, you can choose from hundreds of health and wellness items, such as:

- Antacids
- Cold, flu, and allergy relief medicines
- Denture care supplies
- Exercise equipment
- First aid supplies
- Nicotine replacement therapy
- Pain relief
- Reading glasses

## How to shop:

This benefit provides a combined spending allowance each month on a prepaid flex card for groceries, OTC products, and qualified utilities. For groceries and OTC, you can use the benefit by:

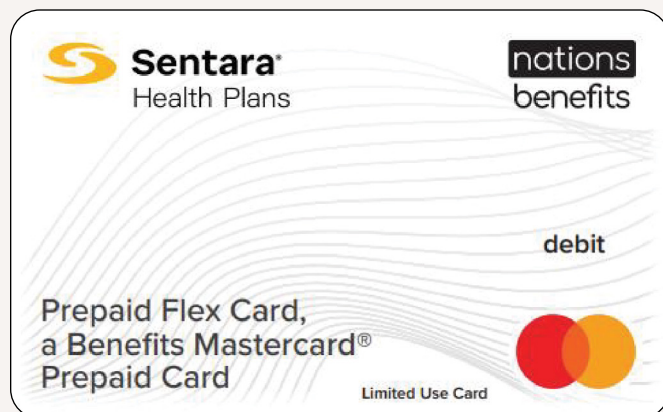
- **In-store at participating retailers**
- **Online:**  
Visit [SentaraMedicare.NationsBenefits.com](https://SentaraMedicare.NationsBenefits.com)
- **By phone:**  
Call **1-877-438-7521 (TTY: 711)** from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., 7 days a week

Your quarterly amount will be loaded to your account on the first day of each quarter. It will expire on the last day of the quarter. **Leftover funds cannot be carried over to the next quarter.**



## Grocery allowance

If you have a qualifying chronic condition you may receive a grocery allowance through NationsBenefits<sup>®</sup> to use toward thousands of healthy options using a Prepaid Flex Card<sup>2</sup>.



To get started, complete the Health Condition Questionnaire online at [SentaraMedicare.NationsBenefits.com](https://SentaraMedicare.NationsBenefits.com) or by calling NationsBenefits customer service at **1-877-438-7521 (TTY: 711)**.

Once you receive your card, activate it by visiting [SentaraMedicare.NationsBenefits.com/Activate](https://SentaraMedicare.NationsBenefits.com/Activate) or calling **1-877-205-8005 (TTY: 711)**, 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Once approved, you can use your allowance to buy eligible groceries online or at stores like **Food Lion, Harris Teeter, Kroger, and Walmart** using your Prepaid Flex Card. **Funds reload monthly and do not roll over.**

# 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 in ensuring every patient feels seen, heard, and valued, as well as his dedication to advocacy, mentorship, and excellence in health care.

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

Nominations for this distinguished recognition are accepted throughout the calendar year. Submissions may be completed via the QEA Nomination Form on the Sentara Health Plans website at [sentarahealthplans.com/providers/qea](https://sentarahealthplans.com/providers/qea).

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<sup>1</sup>Benefits vary by plan.

<sup>2</sup>Members with chronic condition(s) that meet certain criteria may be eligible for this special supplemental benefit.

<sup>3</sup>Rewards cannot be used to buy tobacco or alcohol. Rewards cannot be converted to cash. You can only receive one reward per applicable plan per year.

## 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**



## Your health plan information at your fingertips

Get everything you need to take care of your health in these easy steps.


- **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**. 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.





# Sentara Community Complete Member Services is here for you


- **Sentara Community Complete**  
**1-866-650-1274 (TTY: 711)**  
October 1–March 31 | 7 days a week | 8 a.m.–8 p.m.  
April 1–September 30 | Monday–Friday | 8 a.m.–8 p.m.
- **Sentara Community Complete Select**  
**1-800-927-6048 (TTY: 711)**  
October 1–March 31 | 7 days a week | 8 a.m.–8 p.m.  
April 1–September 30 | Monday–Friday | 8 a.m.–8 p.m.

## Stay connected:

 [facebook.com/sentarahealthplans](https://facebook.com/sentarahealthplans)

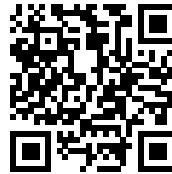
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## Keep your plan close at hand with the Sentara Health Plans mobile app

Go to [sentarahealthplans.com/app](https://sentarahealthplans.com/app)



or scan this code with your smartphone camera or QR code reader app to access all this and more.



- View, print, and share your ID card.
- Request a new ID card.
- Search for a provider.
- Review claims.
- Get copay and coinsurance amounts.