

## Thank you!

Thank you for being a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE) Medicare Advantage member. This newsletter is designed to provide tools and resources to keep you healthy, update you on plan information and connect with us.

Additional resources are available online at [Medicare.NebraskaBlue.com/MedicareAdvantage](http://Medicare.NebraskaBlue.com/MedicareAdvantage).

Would you like to receive this communication electronically? Please email [GetStarted@NebraskaBlue.com](mailto:GetStarted@NebraskaBlue.com) or call 888-488-9850 to provide your contact information and email address.

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# Diabetes Checklist

Discuss, create and follow a diabetes management plan with your health care provider using the following suggestions:

### Work with your health care provider

- Learn your levels and what your doctor would like them to be at by using the ABCs:
  - “A” is for A1C, a measure of average blood glucose
  - “B” is for blood pressure
  - “C” is for LDL cholesterol
- Establish and maintain individualized target blood glucose levels. Find out how often you should measure your blood glucose levels and keep a record of readings to show your health care provider so they can best assist you in regulating your levels.

### Take care of your eyes, feet and teeth

- Ask your primary care provider about a dilated eye exam at least once a year. Early detection and treatment of diabetic eye disease can prevent or delay vision loss.
- Brush your teeth regularly and visit a dentist at least once every six months.
- Check your feet for sores and calluses every day, wear shoes that fit properly and get a comprehensive foot exam at least once per year with your health care provider.

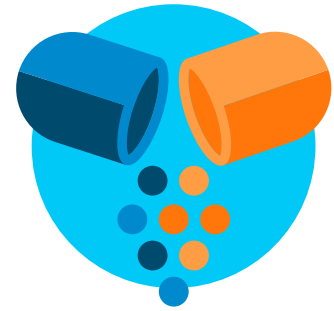
### Protect your heart and kidneys

- Request regular blood pressure checks at every medical visit and cholesterol checks once per year to help lower your risk of a heart attack or stroke.
- If you smoke cigarettes, seek help from your health care provider to quit smoking, which will further reduce your risk for heart disease.
- Ask your health care provider for a urine test at least once a year to monitor the level of protein in your urine, so you can measure your kidney function.

### Learn diabetes self-care - diet, exercise and medications

- Follow a meal plan developed with your health care provider. This can be an important step for maintaining desirable blood glucose levels and avoiding complications.
- Work with your health care provider to develop an exercise program. Exercise is important because it can help insulin work to lower blood glucose levels and improve cardiovascular health.
- Follow your health care provider’s recommendations on how and when to take your diabetes medications.
- Tell your health care provider if these medications do not seem to be working properly.

# Opioid risks and alternative treatments



The misuse of prescription opioids is a significant public health issue in the United States. Approximately 9.5 million people aged 12 or older misused opioids in 2020.<sup>1</sup> Opioid abuse claims more lives than motor vehicle crashes annually. Opioids are not the first choice for chronic pain outside of active cancer treatment, palliative care and end-of-life care. Evidence suggests that nonopioid treatments, including nonopioid medications and nonpharmacological therapies can provide relief to those suffering from chronic pain, and are safer.<sup>2</sup> Patients with pain should receive treatment that provides the greatest benefit.

## Risks

Prescription opioids can be used to treat moderate to severe pain and are often prescribed following surgery or injury, or for health conditions such as cancer. However, prescription opioids carry serious risks of addiction and overdose, especially with prolonged use. Additionally, prescription opioids have several side effects, even when taken as directed:<sup>3</sup>

- Tolerance - meaning you might need to take more of a medication for the same pain relief
- Physical dependence - meaning you have symptoms of withdrawal when a medication is stopped
- Increased sensitivity to pain
- Constipation
- Nausea, vomiting and dry mouth
- Sleepiness and dizziness

- Confusion
- Depression
- Low levels of testosterone that can result in lower sex drive, energy and strength
- Itching and sweating

## Alternative treatments

There may be other ways to manage your pain. Your doctor may recommend treatment options covered by your BCBSNE Medicare Advantage plan. Depending on the type of pain you are experiencing, covered options include:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®)
- Cognitive behavioral therapy – a psychological, goal-directed approach in which patients learn how to modify physical, behavioral and emotional triggers of pain and stress
- Exercise therapy, including physical therapy
- Medications for depression or for seizures
- Interventional therapies (injections)
- Exercise and weight loss
- Other therapies such as acupuncture and massage

Please speak with your health care provider about the best pain management treatment for you.

<sup>1</sup> Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2021). 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH): Methodological summary and definitions. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>

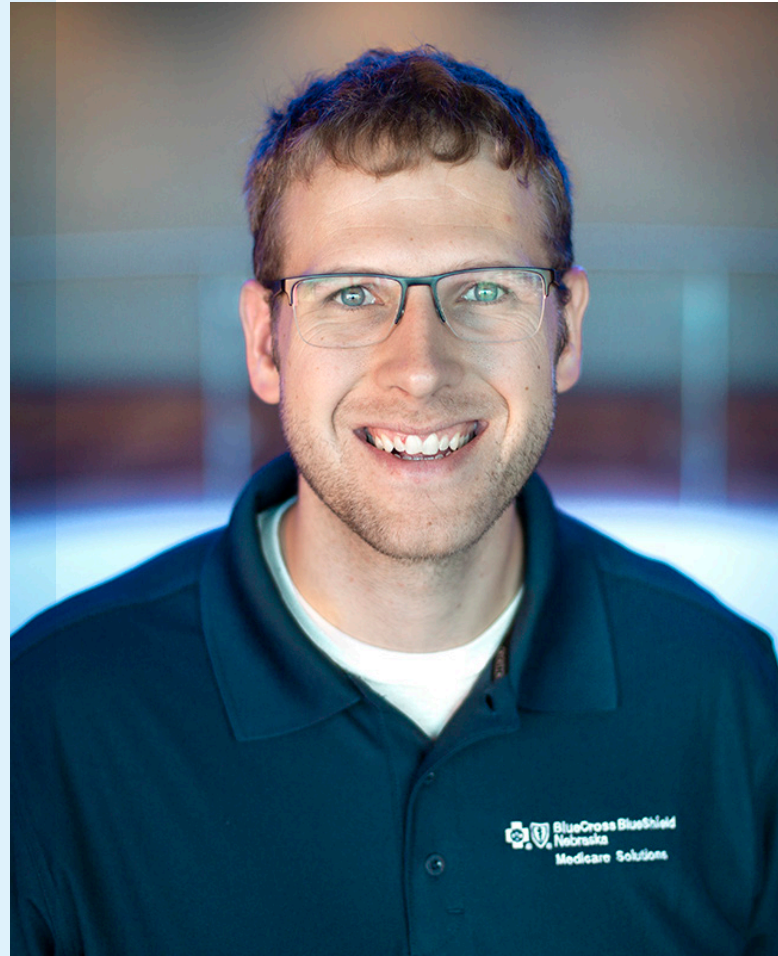
<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/nonopioid\\_treatments-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/nonopioid_treatments-a.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Dowell D, Haegerich TM, Chou R. CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain — United States, 2016. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/rr/rr6501e1.htm>

# Mike Keiser

is passionate about helping you live a longer, healthier life

As a BCBSNE pharmacy program manager, Mike helps members stay healthy every day. If you're a BCBSNE Medicare Advantage member on medication, Mike may call you to discuss potential side effects and to share the importance of taking your medications as directed. "I went into the health care field to help people," Mike said. "It's important to me to be able to help members understand the importance of taking their medications. I helped one of our Medicare members by explaining the benefits of his heart medication. He was against taking it at first, but after our conversation, he said he would start taking it due to its immense benefits." Mike can also help you locate an in-network pharmacy where you may have a lower copay and can identify generic medications that may be less expensive.



As always, you can reach us by calling **888-488-9850 (TTY:711)**.

Important BCBSNE MA information. Health and wellness or prevention information.



## Important **RESOURCES**

### Customer Service

Update your contact information and ask questions about your plan

**888-488-9850 (TTY users call 711)**

**Oct. 1 – March 31:** seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. CT

**April 1 – Sept. 30:** Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. CT

### Prime Customer Care

Call for questions related to prescription drug coverage or to set up home delivery for your prescriptions

**855-457-1349**

24 hours per day / 7 days per week

### 24/7 Nurse Line

**833-968-1764**

### OTC Card Questions

To ask questions about benefits related to the over-the-counter (OTC) pharmacy card

**800-706-5058**

### Learn More Online

**Medicare.NebraskaBlue.com/  
MedicareAdvantage**

