

ConnectiCare

HEALTH MATTERS

2024, Volume 1





The Importance of a PCP

The Copilot in Your Health Journey

Choosing the right primary care provider (PCP), is one of the most important decisions you can make for your health. This health care professional manages your everyday care, performs yearly checkups, recommends preventive screenings, and helps identify when you need to see a specialist. Specialists are doctors that focus on a specific part of your health.

Your yearly checkups help you develop a relationship with your doctor. You can use this visit to discuss factors that impact your health, including sleep, diet, activity, and stress. Your height, weight, blood pressure, and pulse are recorded during the visit. A PCP visit usually also includes a blood draw and urine sample at your doctor's office or nearby lab. The results can help identify if you need medicine to manage a condition or have a vitamin deficiency. Consistent visits create your health story, so you can compare the results over time. Based on your age and family medical history, a PCP may also recommend additional screenings:

- ✦ **Cardiac stress test:** Done by a cardiologist. This is exercise under a doctor's supervision. They watch your heart rhythm, blood pressure, and breathing to make sure your heart works well.
- ✦ **Cholesterol test:** This bloodwork checks your risk of heart and blood diseases.
- ✦ **CBC (complete blood count):** This bloodwork checks the number of platelets, which are important for fighting infections. A CBC can show a picture of your overall health or help diagnose a medical condition.
- ✦ **Colorectal cancer screening:** There are many screening options, including a stool test to check for blood in your sample and a colonoscopy performed by a gastroenterologist. This test uses a camera to look at your colon tissue for cancer or inflammation. You and your PCP can decide on the best option for you.
- ✦ **Mammogram:** This x-ray of breast tissue helps identify cancerous growths early when they may be easier to treat.
- ✦ **Pap smear:** Done by a gynecologist. During an exam, cells are collected from the cervix and checked for cancer or inflammation.
- ✦ **Skin check:** Done by a dermatologist. This is a head-to-toe look at your skin, paying special attention to moles or other changes.

Visit connecticare.com/live-well/preventive-care for a complete list of screenings. If you haven't scheduled a well-visit with your doctor yet, call today. As the year wraps up, appointments may be harder to schedule.

Need a PCP?

You can find one by signing in to your **myConnectiCare member** portal. Click "Find Care" and choose "Primary Care Provider" as your Service Type. The results of your search will only include health professionals available in your plan's network. Don't have an account yet? Go to my.connecticare.com to register today!





Add This to Your "Fall To-Do List" for a Healthy Winter

The best way to reduce your risk of catching seasonal viruses and suffering from potentially serious complications, is to get a flu and COVID-19 vaccine every year. Children, adults over 65, and people with chronic conditions such as asthma are at a higher risk of flu complications. Vaccination is also important for people who are pregnant or have recently had a baby. Also, viruses change fast, so last year's vaccines may not protect you from this year's viruses. You will need this year's vaccines to fight this year's flu or COVID-19.



New Age Guidelines for Breast Cancer Screening

According to the American College of Gynecologists, more than 43,000 American women died of breast cancer in 2023. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force lowered the recommended age to begin breast cancer screenings from age 50 to age 40. A mammogram, an x-ray image of the breast tissue, is the standard test to find breast cancer early. Regular breast self-exams are also important since you can feel changes, such as new lumps. Treatments such as radiation, hormone therapy, and surgery to remove the tumor are used when this cancer is found early. These treatments stop the disease from spreading to other parts of the body and increase rates of survival.

The taskforce suggests women ages 40 – 74 get mammograms yearly or every other year if you have average risk. Men can also get breast cancer, although it's less common. If you have a family history of breast cancer, talk with your doctor about screening more often. Your doctor will ask you questions to set up a plan for you.

Get Into the Routine of Better Sleep



Most people can benefit from better sleep. Sleep hygiene, aka healthy sleep habits, is important for physical and mental health.

There are several things you can do to get better rest each night. The key is to find a routine that allows your body to unwind from the day and ease into the night. An article in Harvard Health Publishing notes that most adults should aim for seven hours of sleep per night, but quality of your sleep is more important than the quantity. Below, we've gathered some of the most helpful tips from The National Sleep Foundation:

- Have a solid sleep schedule. Plan to go to bed at the same time each night and have a fixed wakeup time on weekdays and weekends. Minimizing naps can also help you to stay on a sleep schedule.
- Prepare for bed the same way each night. This will help your mind to recognize that it's bedtime.
- Find a calming activity — like reading, meditating, or journaling — to do before bed, and allow yourself 30 minutes to enjoy it.
- Dim your lights as you prepare for the evening, as bright lights can impact the body's production of melatonin, a hormone that helps to facilitate sleep.
- Stay away from electronics. Not only do they stimulate your brain and make it more difficult to wind down, but the blue light also impacts melatonin production.
- Make your bedroom a relaxing environment with comfortable bedding, shades to block out light, and even ear plugs to drown out sounds.
- Limit alcohol consumption, caffeine, smoking, and eating large meals before bed.
- If you find yourself tossing and turning for more than 20 minutes, try to reset. Get up and do a restful activity under low light before returning to your bed to try again.



Get Healthy With WellSpark Health!

It's never too late to make positive lifestyle changes. WellSpark's digital platform offers a range of health resources to help you live your healthiest life.* Sign in to **MySpark Central** to see what's available to you. Depending on your plan, your program may include:

Group health coaching: Engage in live, small group discussions led by a health coach, paired with on-demand learning to help create habits for better well-being.

Wellness library: Videos and articles on a variety of topics including nutrition, exercise, and more.

Health assessment: Answer questions about your health and lifestyle to receive a personalized well-being report.

Health tracking: Connect your wearable devices to the WellSpark platform or manually track your habits.

Start Your Wellness Journey Today

1. Sign in to the secure **myConnectiCare** member portal at **my.connecticare.com**.
2. Go to the Health and Wellness tab.
3. Click "Get Started" in the Wellness Program section.
4. On the "MySpark Central" page you can view the health resources available to you.

*WellSpark Health and ConnectiCare are part of the EmblemHealth family of companies. Health coaching does not replace care received from a health care professional. If it's your first time using MySpark Central, you'll be asked to register.

Visit Us at a ConnectiCare Center



Have questions about your benefits? Trying to choose a health insurance plan? Come to a ConnectiCare Center!

Our friendly associates are here to support your healthcare journey. At ConnectiCare Centers, we can help you understand your current plan and review available plan options. Learn how to get the most out of your coverage with a focus on your unique needs.

ConnectiCare Centers can also support your wellness goals with no-cost virtual fitness classes, health education, nutrition workshops, mental health seminars, and more. All events are free and open to the public, but registration is required. For more information, visit espanol.connecticare.com/events or call **877-523-6837** (TTY: **711**) to schedule an appointment, sign up for classes, and find a location near you. We look forward to seeing you.

YOUR PRIVACY RIGHTS

ConnectiCare is committed to making sure that your health information is kept private and safe. Our Notice of Privacy Practices explains how we use information about you and when we can share it with others. This important document also informs you about your rights with respect to your health information and how you can exercise these rights. To get a copy, visit connecticare.com/legal/privacy-policy or call the number on the back of your member ID card.

Health Matters is published by ConnectiCare to inform members of current health issues and improve the use of services. This publication should not replace the care and advice of your doctor. Always talk to your doctor about your personal health needs. This is not a complete description of benefits. Contact the plan for more information. Limitations, cost-sharing, and restrictions may apply. They may change each year. Our network may change at any time. You will receive notice when necessary.

Put Your Health in Your Hands With myConnectiCare

This holiday season, give yourself the gift of staying on top of your health! It's easier than ever to put your health care in your hands by registering for our member portal, **myConnectiCare**. Simply head to **my.connecticare.com**, select "Register" at the bottom of the screen, and fill in the required information. Then, explore all the features of our member portal:

- Find in-network hospitals and doctors.
- Download a virtual member ID card.
- View your plan benefits.
- Go paperless.
- And more!



Your Child's Foundation for a Healthy Life



Watching your baby grow and develop is exciting! They learn to crawl, walk, and talk, and before you know it, they're in school. These are big milestones. Routine preventive appointments are called "well-child visits" and provide an opportunity for important health screenings, vaccinations, and a check of your child's development. It's also a great time to ask your doctor questions about their growth.

When should my child be seen?

Babies and toddlers need well-child visits more often.

0-15 months of age: It's recommended that children have six visits within the first 15 months of life.

16-30 months of age: It's recommended that children have at least two visits between 16 and 30 months of age.

Ages 3-21: Starting at age 3, kids and teens need one well-visit every year through age 21.

If your child is due for their well-visit, call their primary care provider (PCP) to schedule one today.

Need help finding a PCP? Find one by signing in to your **myConnectiCare** member portal at **my.connecticare.com** and clicking "Find Care." The results of your search will only include providers available in your selected plan or network.

You can learn more about well visits and how often your child should have them at **connecticare.com/live-well/preventive-care**.



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Go Paperless

Once you're signed in to the portal, go paperless to get immediate access to your documents and plan materials as soon as they are available. You will be notified of new communications by email or text message, based on your preferences. Click "My Profile" and select "Go Paperless" under "Communication Preferences."