



Harvard Pilgrim  
HealthCare

FALL 2016

# Stride **OHIO**

Could mindfulness  
help you control

**ANXIETY?**



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## Stride<sup>SM</sup> (HMO) Medicare Advantage Plan

### Welcome

to Harvard Pilgrim's Medicare Advantage member newsletter. Harvard Pilgrim strives to help individuals stay healthy, reduce health risks and manage life with chronic (long-term) conditions. This first issue of the newsletter provides important and relevant information to help you achieve your best health and get the care you need to assist you in making healthy choices.



The cover article describes the benefits of practicing mindfulness. People who practice mindfulness meditation report that they feel happier and less anxious, and experience reduced blood pressure and lower cholesterol levels. Check us out on Facebook at Mind the Moment or at [harvardpilgrim.org/mindfulness](http://harvardpilgrim.org/mindfulness) for more information. *We hope that mindfulness can make a positive difference in your life.* We appreciate your loyalty as a member of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care's Stride<sup>SM</sup> (HMO) Medicare Advantage Plan and look forward to continuing as your health plan.

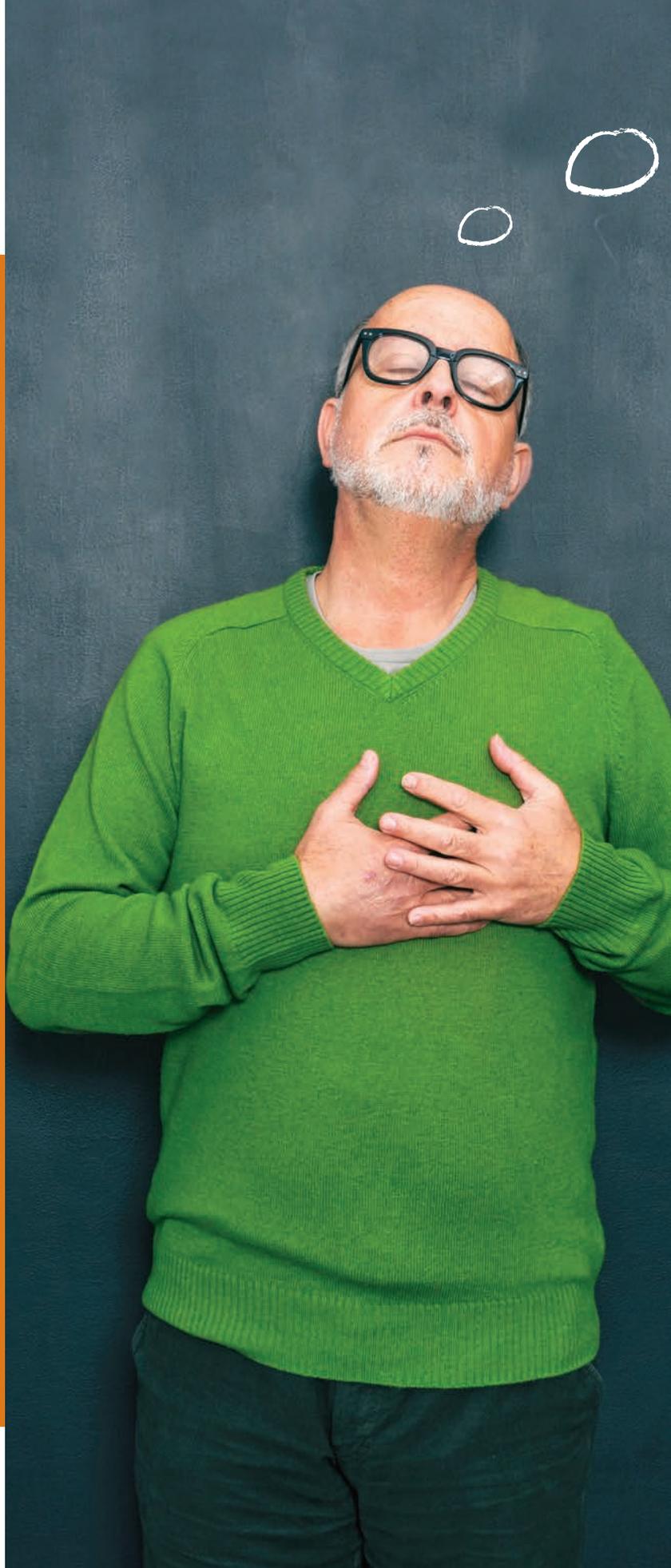
Sincerely,



Michael S. Sherman, MD, MBA, MS  
Senior Vice President,  
Chief Medical Officer

**Tell us what you think!** 

Email your comments and suggestions to  
[healthandwellness@harvardpilgrim.org](mailto:healthandwellness@harvardpilgrim.org).



# Be in the **present**, mind the moment

Inhale, then exhale, focusing on your breath. Place a mint on your tongue and pay close attention to how it tastes.

These types of exercises promote mindfulness. Mindfulness is the practice of being aware of and paying attention to one's thoughts, emotions, experiences and surroundings in an open and curious way. The practice of mindfulness has been shown to improve both your mental and physical health.

## Brain power

Mindfulness is a way to keep your brain healthy, support self-awareness and your ability to make decisions and reduce stress. In addition, many research studies have shown significant physical benefits, including:

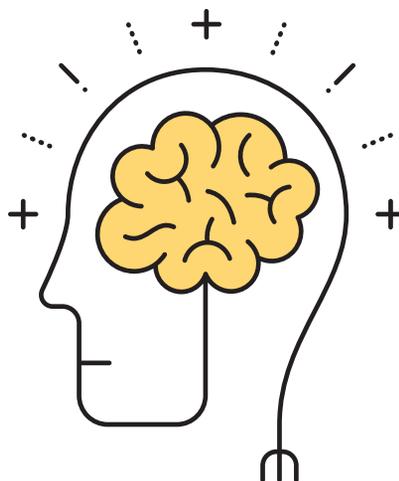
- Reducing blood pressure
- Lowering cholesterol levels
- Enhancing immune function
- Reducing headache, migraine and back pain
- Improving respiratory function

## Quick tips for practicing mindfulness

Although you can practice mindfulness through formal meditation, that's not the only way.

Use these tips to make living in the moment part of your routine:

- Slowly scan your entire body, from your toes to your head. Notice the sensations in each area without trying to alter them.
- Pay attention to your breathing and thoughts, especially when you're feeling strong emotions.
  - One or two days a week, try driving or walking to your destinations without listening to music or the radio.
  - When waiting in line at the grocery store, pay attention to what it feels like to stand still, shift your weight and place items onto the checkout counter.



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- When walking outside, notice your body moving and what that feels like. Pay attention to what's going on around you: the wind, air, rain, sounds, birdcalls and leaves.
- Choose a couple of meals or snacks each week and be fully present. No talking, reading or television. Really notice the feel, taste and texture of the food you are eating.



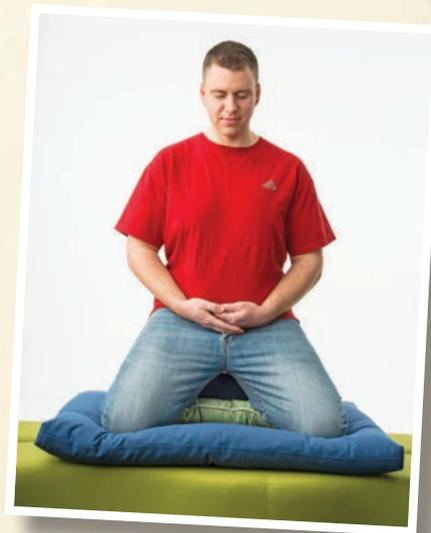
### **GOT FIVE MINUTES?**

Check out our introduction to mindfulness video at [harvardpilgrim.org/mindfulness](http://harvardpilgrim.org/mindfulness) and learn more about how you can practice mindfulness.

Join our Facebook community at [facebook.com/mindthemoment](https://www.facebook.com/mindthemoment) to connect, pick up tips, share ideas and support one another.

## A member's story

Neil Blanchette has been living with a heart condition called atrial fibrillation that once was the cause of a lot of stress and anxiety. Within a year of starting mindfulness practice, however, Neil decreased his anxiety and gained better health and the confidence he needed to undertake a much-needed surgery to help his heart.



When Neil's Harvard Pilgrim nurse care manager, Linda, suggested he try mindfulness to help manage his anxiety and depression, he was open to the idea.

"I decided to give meditation a serious chance and made time to sit every day in quiet to practice. I still had stress after a few weeks, but it was decreasing. What I really wanted was to train my mind not to think about my heart condition. This is funny to me now that I understand more about the practice of mindfulness."

Neil learned to just take in and let himself feel the physical atrial fibrillation experience. "It was actually relaxing. Not exactly enjoyable, of course, but a much better option than resistance. Now I know that the resistance was a huge part of the anxiety I used to feel."

Since beginning his mindfulness practice in December 2013, Neil has lost 80 pounds and his cholesterol and blood pressure are all in the ideal ranges. As his atrial fibrillation symptoms and anxiety lessened, he began to enjoy a more active lifestyle with his family, hiking in particular.

# Be confident: take charge of your health

**K**eeping up with preventive health care screenings is one way you can take charge of your life. Talk with your health care provider to see what screenings make sense for you:

- **Breast cancer** — Mammograms are recommended at least every two years for women ages 50 to 74.
- **Colorectal cancer** — Screenings are recommended for adults starting at age 50 and continuing up to age 75. How often depends on the type of screening. Ask your health care provider which screening is best for you.
- **Diabetes care** — If you have diabetes, it is recommended that you have the following tests or exams at least once every year: dilated eye exam, kidney testing and A1C testing.
- **High blood pressure** — You should have your blood pressure checked by your health care provider at least annually and at every office visit.
- **Depression** — Talk with your health care provider if you have been feeling sad, anxious, depressed, overwhelmed or have other mental health concerns. Call United Behavioral Health/Optum (Harvard Pilgrim Health Care's behavioral health partner) at **888-777-4742** for the name of a participating behavioral health clinician.



Ask your health care provider these questions at your next visit:

- What vaccinations and screenings do I need?
- What are some ways I can improve my mood and stay connected?
- How can I safely maintain or increase my physical activity?
- What treatments are available for a leaky bladder?
- Am I due for a flu or pneumonia vaccine?
- What are some ways I can improve my balance and avoid a fall?
- How can I get a good night's sleep?



## Are you having trouble taking your medicines? Maybe we can help.

**T**aking medicine as your health care provider prescribes will improve your health and may prevent future problems. If you are having difficulty taking your medicine as your health care provider suggests, think about why you are having trouble. Here are some common concerns and ways you can deal with them.

**“I feel good. I don’t need to take my medicine.”** You may feel well even though you have chronic (long-lasting) health conditions such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, but levels that stay high and untreated can lead to other serious health problems like stroke or heart disease.

Treating your chronic condition with medicine can help lower your risk for other serious health problems (complications). Here are some examples of common chronic diseases and how medicine can help:

- When you have type 2 diabetes, your body doesn’t make enough insulin and/or has trouble using the insulin it does make, resulting in high blood sugar levels. Medicines for type 2 diabetes can help your body:
  - Make more insulin
  - Use insulin effectively
  - Decrease the amount of glucose (sugar) in your blood

Managing your blood sugar and keeping it at a healthy level can lower your risk for diabetes complications (eye, heart, blood vessel, nerve and kidney disease).

- Medicines for high cholesterol, known as statins, lower cholesterol by blocking a substance that makes cholesterol in your body. Lowering cholesterol helps lower your risk for complications such as heart attack and stroke.
- Medicines to lower high blood pressure work in a lot of different ways. For example, diuretics, or *water pills*, remove excess salt and water. Other medicines work by relaxing and opening blood vessels, decreasing heart rate or easing the heart's work.

### **“The medicine makes me feel bad.”**

If side effects bother you, talk with your health care provider or pharmacist. Your health care provider may be able to prescribe another medicine.

A pharmacist may suggest ways to reduce the side effects. For example, if an upset stomach is the problem, taking the medicine with food or at night may help.

### **“I run out of my medicine and forget to pick it up at the pharmacy on time.”**

Did you know that with Harvard Pilgrim prescription drug coverage, you could get a 90-day supply for most medicines? Ask your health care provider for a 90-day prescription and take it to a participating retail pharmacy (most of our pharmacies participate in our Choice90<sup>RX</sup> Program). You can also use our mail service and get free delivery and shipping on all prescription orders. Visit [walgreens.com/harvardpilgrim](http://walgreens.com/harvardpilgrim) for more information.



Try an app like the Medisafe Pill Reminder, Medication and Prescription Organizer! It can help you organize your medicine list and remember when to take your medicines.

In addition, most pharmacies have refill reminder programs. Ask your pharmacy about how you can sign up to receive alerts via email, text messaging or phone so that you are never late refilling your prescription again.

### **“It’s hard to keep track of so many medicines.”**

Ask your health care provider which medicines you are taking and why, and then make a list. It may make it easier to take your medicine as your health care provider tells you. Share your list of medicines with all health care providers at every office visit. You can download a medicine chart at [heart.org/medchart](http://heart.org/medchart).

Medicine is one of the many tools your health care provider has to treat a health problem. Healthy eating, physical activity, quitting smoking and getting help for depression may also be recommended, and it's important to follow your whole treatment plan.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
Visit [harvardpilgrim.org/stridewellness](http://harvardpilgrim.org/stridewellness) and search Pharmacy Program.

# Exercise your right to prevent falls

## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FALLS

Every year, after 65 years of age, one in three people will fall doing daily activities. **True / False**

Exercising on most days of the week can help prevent falls. **True / False**

Balance exercises are key to preventing falls. **True / False**

If you answered **true** to these questions, you are correct. As people age and become less active, they lose muscle strength, which can make them more likely to fall. Exercise that improves endurance (stamina), muscle strength, balance and flexibility can help you prevent falls and stay active throughout your life. Regular physical activity (such as walking) can also help you reduce the chance of getting an injury such as a fracture from a fall.

Even if you have never exercised, it's not too late. Get started with some balance exercises to help prevent falls and improve coordination.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Talk with your health care provider about an exercise program that is right for you.

For videos on how to do any of the balance or strength exercises described above and more visit [nihseniorhealth.gov](http://nihseniorhealth.gov) and search balance exercises.

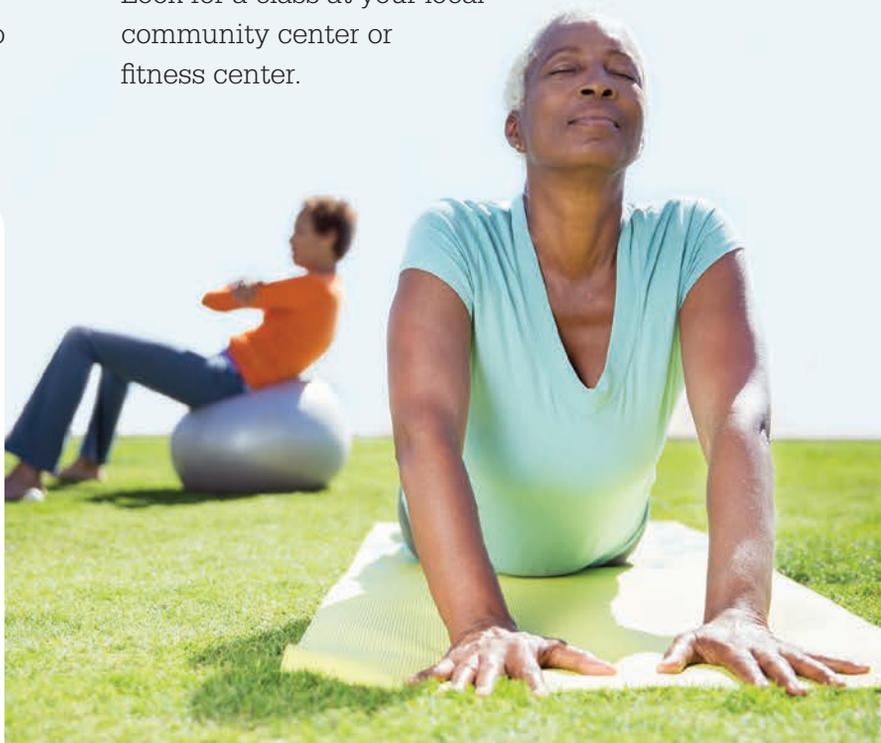
Check [harvardpilgrim.org/stridewellness](http://harvardpilgrim.org/stridewellness) for Health Topics A-Z and search preventing falls.

## Get Balanced

The good news is that you can do exercises to improve your balance almost anytime, anywhere and as often as you like! Just make sure you have something sturdy nearby, such as a chair or the wall to hold onto in case you become unsteady.

Here are some ideas:

- **Heel to toe walk.** Choose a flat surface and walk forward placing the heel of one foot directly in front of the toe of your other foot, as if you're walking on a balance beam. Repeat for about 20 steps.
- **Stand on one foot.** Using a sturdy chair for support, hold the back of the chair and practice standing on one foot. Hold this position for about 10 seconds on each side and repeat 10 to 15 times.
- **Join a class.** Tai chi, Yoga, Pilates and Barre all require slow deliberate movements and flowing movements to help balance your body and mind. Look for a class at your local community center or fitness center.



# Living well with chronic illness

**F**rom arthritis and diabetes to eczema and allergies, living with a chronic condition can be a challenge. No matter what kind of challenges you face, Harvard Pilgrim's nurse care managers will support, educate and motivate you on your way to better health. Our nurse care managers will work with you, your primary care physician and other health resources to:

- Assess your health care needs
- Coordinate your health care services
- Develop a customized plan, when needed, that includes education and disease prevention strategies
- Stay in regular contact with you to encourage, support and

monitor your ongoing health care needs

- Help ensure you receive the highest-quality care in a location and setting that is best for you

Nurse care managers help members with any concerns or conditions, including those who may have more complex care needs, such as but not limited to:

- Asthma
- Cancer
- Caregiver needs
- Crohn's disease/ulcerative colitis
- Congestive heart failure (CHF)
- Coronary heart disease (CAD)
- Dementia
- Diabetes
- End-stage renal disease/dialysis



For information about Harvard Pilgrim's care management programs, please contact member services at 888-609-0692.

- Gender dysphoria
- Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS)
- Lupus
- Myasthenia gravis
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- Pulmonary disease
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Scleroderma

## Care managers: helping members achieve healthier lifestyles

Rosemary, a nurse care manager and certified diabetes educator, reached out to a Harvard Pilgrim member diagnosed with diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity. They discussed weight-loss strategies, including healthier snacks and increasing water consumption, to help her feel full. Rosemary also provided her with educational pamphlets, which they reviewed during subsequent calls. The member had also confessed to Rosemary that she had not

been taking her blood pressure medicines, so Rosemary educated her on the importance of controlling her blood pressure.

As time went by, the member lost 50 pounds and continued to keep her blood pressure and blood sugar in check by taking her medicines and improving her diet, all along working with Rosemary.



# Hospital stays: how to avoid a round-trip ticket

Once you leave the hospital after an illness or procedure, the last thing you want to do is go right back. Yet hospital readmissions — ones we can often avoid — are all too common. This is especially true for people older than age 65. In fact, one in five older adults makes a return visit only 30 days after being discharged. One in three goes back within just three months.

You can do the following things to avoid an unnecessary readmission:

## Plan ahead for your postdischarge recovery

The time to ask questions is before you're discharged from the hospital. Some of your questions for hospital staff may include:

- Will I need special care? If so, what are the options (for example, rehab, a home health aide)?
- Will I need medical equipment (like a walker)? Who will arrange for this?

- Will I need help with transportation to my doctor appointments? What help is available?
- What community services (such as nurse home visits, phone monitoring or classes) are available to me after I leave?
- What activities (bathing, dressing, using the bathroom on my own, physical activity) am I ready to do?

**Patients who clearly understand instructions for their after-hospital care are 30 percent less likely to be readmitted — or visit the ER — than patients who don't.**



Also, ask to speak with a social worker if you or your family members are having trouble coping. Ask the hospital staff to show you and your caregiver how to do any tasks — like changing bandages or giving shots — that will need to be done at home.

## Communicate and ask for support

- Be sure your regular health care provider knows you are in the hospital. If the hospital hasn't called your doctor, you or a family member should.
- Make sure you have support, like a caregiver, who can help you at home.
- Start planning your follow-up visit and tests with your primary care physician and specialists.



A nurse care manager will call you after discharge from a hospital or emergency room to provide support and help with transitioning to home and assess your needs.



Half of patients older than age 65 who were readmitted within a month hadn't seen a doctor after leaving the hospital.

### Medicines

- Review with hospital staff all the medicines you're taking — including prescription, over-the-counter and supplements.
- Get clear written instructions about when and how to take the medicines before you leave.
- Know what symptoms or side effects to watch for and what needs to be done if they occur.

### Go home with full instructions and confidence

Don't leave the hospital without written discharge instructions. Your *take home* paperwork should include the following:

- Updated list of your medicines
- Appointments and tests you will need in the next several weeks
- Your current health status
- Danger signs for your condition and what to do if you see them
- Whom to call — day, night or weekends — with problems or questions

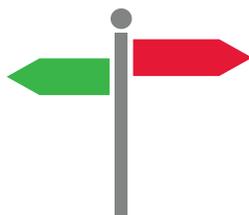
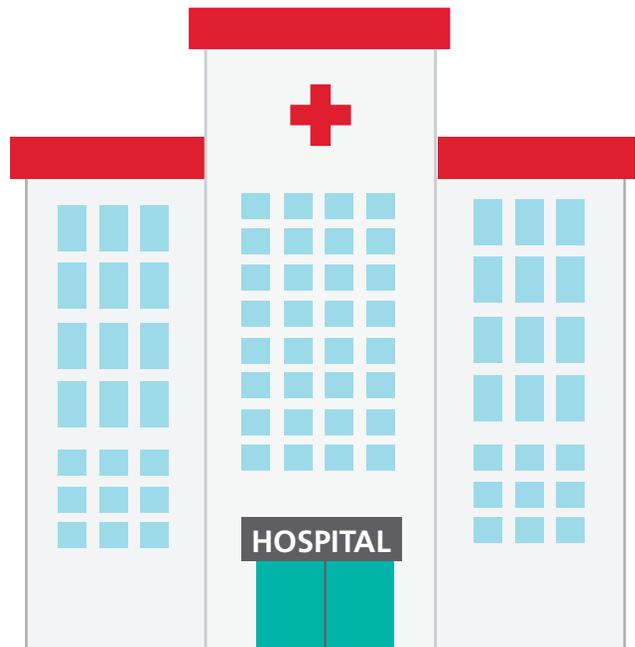
Save this information to bring to your follow-up appointments as well.



When getting care instructions, take time to repeat them back. This can help you better remember instructions once you're home.



Medication problems are one of the top reasons for readmissions. Since a hospital stay often means a change in medicines, there is more room for error and confusion.



**Harvard Pilgrim Health Care**

1600 Crown Colony Drive  
Quincy, MA 02169

**Clinical Advisors**

Colleen Harwood, RN  
Tami Ireland, MPH  
Catherine McFadyen, RNP  
Jennifer Rollo, RPH, CDE  
Joel Rubinstein, MD  
Michael Sherman, MD, Chief Medical Officer

**Editors**

Lydia Bernstein, MPH  
Karen Salvato

**Harvard Pilgrim Member Services**

Phone: 888-609-0692  
(TTY service: 711)

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1600 Crown Colony Drive  
Quincy, MA 02169

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# Looking for a pasta salad alternative?

## Quinoa salad

### Ingredients

1 ½ cups low-sodium  
chicken broth or water  
1 cup quinoa

### Sauce:

3 tbsp. olive oil  
1 ½ tbsp. Dijon mustard  
1 tsp. maple syrup  
¼ tsp. ground cinnamon  
1 large crisp apple, chopped  
into small pieces  
½ cup dried cranberries

### Directions

**1.** Stir chicken broth or water and quinoa together in a saucepan; bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, place a cover on the saucepan and cook until the broth is absorbed, about 10 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat and fluff with a fork.  
**2.** Whisk olive oil, Dijon mustard, maple syrup and cinnamon together in a bowl. Drizzle sauce

over the quinoa; stir. Add apple pieces and cranberries; stir. Return the cover to the saucepan and let the mixture steam until the sauce warms and the apples soften slightly, five to 10 minutes. Serve hot or cold!

