



Michael Slater, SSG, USA (Ret.)  
and Renee with Michaela  
and Thomas

**INSIDE**  
**Easing PTSD with**  
**Strength Training**  
**Our Provider Network**  
**Keeps Growing**  
**Talking About Tough**  
**Subjects as a Couple**  
**Inside the Pita Pocket**



**US FAMILY**  
**HEALTH PLAN**



# U fall calendar

## SEPTEMBER



September is Suicide Prevention Month. Learn more at [veteranscrisisline.net](http://veteranscrisisline.net).

18

Happy Birthday U.S. Air Force!

22

First day of fall

25

Rosh Hashanah starts at sundown

## OCTOBER

4

Yom Kippur starts at sundown

10

Indigenous Peoples' Day/  
Columbus Day

13

Happy Birthday U.S. Navy!

31

Halloween



Be sure to schedule your flu shot

## NOVEMBER

6

Daylight Saving Time Ends  
(move clocks back)

10

Happy Birthday U.S. Marine Corps!

11

Veterans Day observed

24

Thanksgiving Day

## DECEMBER

7

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

18

Hanukkah starts at sundown

21

Winter begins

25

Christmas Day

## COMMUNITY



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## WELLNESS



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Flu shots are coming right up • Staying hydrated • Online VA workshops **PAGE 8** Talking about tough subjects as a couple **PAGE 10** Try something new for a back-to-school lunch **PAGE 12** Suicide prevention resources

## FITNESS



**PAGE 7** The connection between physical activity and reduced levels of

“chemo brain” • New research suggests link between strength training and PTSD symptoms

US Family Health Plan members choose from a network of over 2,000 civilian primary care providers and thousands of specialists, plus a large network of civilian hospitals.

## Who We Are

US Family Health Plan of Southern New England is a Department of Defense TRICARE Prime option, and one of six regional US Family Health Plan programs across the nation. Our large network of civilian doctors, hospitals, and other health providers serves Plan members who live in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and parts of southern New Hampshire and northern Connecticut.

We pride ourselves on friendly, personal service. If you have questions, call us at **1.800.818.8589**. You can also get to know us better at **usfamilyhealth.org** or at **facebook.com/USFHP.SouthernNewEngland**.



a message from Gail Schlesinger,  
our Senior Vice President and Plan CEO



## Life's Seasons

Each year as summer turns to fall, I sit back and wonder, “Where did the summer go? Why can’t it go on forever?” The next thing I know, I am dreading the winter.

There is a folk story that adds meaning to the changing of the seasons, and I turned to it recently for help thinking about the difficulties seasonal change can pose for me. The Indian yoga master Ram Jain tells it as “The Four Seasons of Life.” It goes like this:

A king had four sons. He asked each one to visit a cherry tree deep in the forest during each of the four seasons.

The son who visited in the winter reported, “The tree is barren, old, and hopeless. Not even birds are coming near the tree. Maybe it is better to cut it down and use the wood before it rots.”

The son who visited in the spring said, “The tree is not barren, rather it is full of beautiful cherry blossoms and looks young and promising. The tree is surrounded by butterflies and bees who are enjoying its flowers.”

The son who visited in the summer reported, “There are no blossoms; rather the tree is loaded with delicious cherries and looks mature and valuable. Many birds are living there, enjoying the fruits.”

The son who visited in the fall returned to say, “The tree now has no fruit or flowers. But it looks beautiful with its colored leaves. It looks like an ideal object for a painting.”

When the king asked his sons what they had learned from this experience, the youngest said:

- Like the tree, we experience different seasons of life and are greatly affected by them.
- We should not judge our life based on only the current season in our life.
- Every season has a purpose.
- No matter what the current season is, it will change again.

Ram Jain goes on to equate the seasons of nature to the personal seasons in life:

- Winter — sadness, sickness, loneliness; time to rest, prepare, and learn
- Spring — hope, new beginnings, opportunities
- Summer — growth, time to nourish, care, and protect
- Fall — time to reap your successes and assess your failures

Ram Jain also reminds us that we can’t change the seasons, but we can change ourselves. Undertaking proper action in each season is key to a joyful and remarkable life.

As for me, I must remind myself that we all need to remember that life isn’t a solo journey. Be sure to share your joys and successes with family and friends, and reach out for help when “winter” might be getting the better of you. This could be just a call to a friend, but it could also be a call to your doctor or someone on our US Family Health Plan team, who can support and encourage you through the changes in life’s seasons. ■

**Undertaking proper action in each season  
is key to a joyful and remarkable life.**





## Open Season

### Doesn't Affect Current Members

In 2017, federal legislation created an annual Open Season enrollment period for all TRICARE beneficiaries. For benefits starting January 1, 2023, Open Season will take place from November 14 through December 13, 2022.

If you are now enrolled in US Family Health Plan, you will be enrolled automatically in the Plan for the coming year. This means *you don't need to do anything during Open Season*. However, if you want to change your TRICARE coverage for 2023, you must make this change during Open Season.

You may also make a change to your TRICARE coverage when you experience a Qualifying Life Event (QLE), such as marriage or divorce, retirement, or birth or adoption of a child. For a current list of QLEs, go to **[tricare.mil/LifeEvents](https://tricare.mil/LifeEvents)**.

Questions? Just call Member Services at **1.800.818.8589**.

## New Provider Network Additions

### Simone Ellis, MD

*Family Medicine*

632 Blue Hill Avenue  
Dorchester, MA 02121

**617.825.3400**

### Melissa Maciborski, MD

*Pediatrics*

35 Turkey Hill Road  
Belchertown, MA 01007

**413.599.1201**

### Phoebe Martin, MD

*Pediatrics*

531 Faunce Corner Road  
Dartmouth, MA 02747

**508.996.3991**

### Jessica Bossie, MD

*Family Medicine*

58 Old North Road  
Worthington, MA 01098

**413.238.5511**

## Looking for Answers?

The US Family Health Plan website at **[usfamilyhealth.org](https://usfamilyhealth.org)** provides comprehensive information. If you'd like to ask in-person questions, have a chat with Member Services at **1.800.818.8589**.



# A Summer's Worth of Program Support



## Big Beautiful Day at Joint Base Cape Cod

US Family Health Plan was honored to be a sponsor of **Joint Base Cape Cod's Coast Guard Day** on August 4 at the Falcon Golf Club. Balmy weather was the backdrop to a day of activities for adults and kids, launched by opening remarks from CDR Sullivan and a stirring rendition of the national anthem by PO1 Shandreka Cancellare, followed by a visit from an MH-60.

The event cranked into high gear with a pie-eating contest, tug of war, face-painting, an egg race, and dunk tank, to keep everyone moving and celebrating. ■



## Family Day at Westover ARB

We also sponsored a face-painting workshop for the children of military attendees at **Westover ARB's Family Day** on July 23. While the kids turned into animals, parents learned more about US Family Health Plan from Dave Mendoza, Maj, USAF (Ret.), our field rep for western and central Massachusetts.

## 18th Annual Air Force Association Golf Tournament

On July 21, we were proud sponsors of the **Air Force Association's 18th Annual Salute to Military Personnel**, held at the Stow Country Club in Stow, Massachusetts. The event, in special honor of Jim Bidy, featured 18 holes of golf, lunch, and a raffle, with proceeds dedicated to veterans' programs.







# End-of-Life Care Documents

Recently a family member was hospitalized, and I became aware of how confusing it is to patients when they're asked about "advance directives." An advance directive is a way to plan for a future possibility of an accident or illness. When a patient enters a hospital, they are asked to name someone who can make medical decisions for them if they aren't able to make these decisions themselves.

## Health Care Proxy

A person's "health care proxy" or "health care agent" is authorized to make these decisions. A health care proxy form is a legal document that is signed by you and two witnesses. It goes into effect when the patient who signed it is determined to lack the capacity to make their own health care decisions.

It's important for you to appoint someone who can act on your behalf in the future if you aren't able to make your own decisions about your care. They should be someone you trust and have had a conversation with about your wishes and values. You should be certain they will honor your wishes in acting on your behalf.

## DNR and DNI

Another question that is asked on admission to a hospital is whether a patient wants a "Do Not Resuscitate" (DNR) order. A DNR order is another kind of advance directive. It is a request not to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if your heart stops or if you stop breathing. (Unless given other instructions, hospital staff will try to help all patients whose heart has stopped or who have stopped breathing.) If you have a DNR, no CPR (chest compressions, cardiac drugs, or placement of a breathing tube) will be performed.

A "Do Not Intubate" (DNI) order means that chest compressions and cardiac drugs may be used, but no breathing tube will be placed. This is a difficult decision to be made in a stressful situation and should be thought about in advance of an emergency hospital admission. Wishes should be communicated to the health care agent and family members to be certain that they are acted upon.

## MOLST

Another form, called MOLST, or Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment, is used for immediate decisions for current treatment. Unlike an advance directive, MOLST is not for future wishes but for medical orders that are effective immediately. MOLST offers a way to communicate an individual's decisions about life-sustaining treatment on an easily recognizable form that can travel between care settings, can be acted on immediately, and can be honored by any health care provider who follows medical orders. MOLST is based on an individual's right to accept or refuse medical treatment, including treatments that might extend life.

## Learning more

None of us wants to be in a situation where we are incapacitated and uncertain that our wishes will be carried out by those who care for us. It's important to communicate our desires well ahead of health care emergencies. An excellent resource for advance care planning is the National Institutes of Health website at [nia.nih.gov/health/advance-care-planning-health-care-directives](https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/advance-care-planning-health-care-directives). ■



Charles Rollinger, MD, is our Vice President of Medical Management and Quality



## Eating and Drinking for Hydration

Most of us are familiar with the idea that it's important to drink eight glasses of water a day. But that strict formula has been debunked over the past few years. These tips can help you stay healthy:

- **Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.** Melons are packed with fluid, as are citrus fruits, strawberries, grapes, cucumbers, tomatoes, and celery.
- **Know that caffeinated drinks are hydrating.** Caffeine is no longer thought to have a diuretic (dehydrating) effect, at least in the amounts that most people drink.
- **Know that alcohol is dehydrating.** If you drink alcohol, be sure to keep a glass of water handy to chase it with.
- **Follow your body's instincts.** Drink when you're thirsty. But keep in mind that children and older people may not be as aware of their thirst as others are. Also, larger people, people performing physical activity, and people in hot conditions need more water. ■

Source: T. Hew-Butler, "Do You Really Need to Drink Eight Glasses of Water a Day?" April 28, 2021, *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/do-you-really-need-to-drink-8-glasses-of-water-a-day-an-exercise-scientist-explains-why-your-kidneys-say-no-159020>.

## Time to Schedule Your Flu Shot

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you have your flu shot by the end of October. Just make an appointment with your primary care provider or go to a pharmacy clinic. Either way, US Family Health Plan covers the cost.

### Are you 65 or older?

During most flu seasons, people 65 and older are most likely to develop severe flu disease, accounting for the majority of flu-related hospitalizations and deaths.

Therefore, the CDC now recommends that people 65 and older receive high-dose and adjuvanted flu vaccines (Fluzone High-Dose Quadrivalent, Flublok Quadrivalent, and Fluad Quadrivalent). If one of these vaccines isn't available to you, you should get a standard-dose flu vaccine instead. US Family Health Plan covers the cost of either. ■



## Get a Handle on Your Health with Online VA Workshops

It's easy to learn about a wide range of health and wellness topics in the privacy of your home. The Veterans Administration (VA) offers free, confidential, online workshops on topics including insomnia, anger and irritability management, problem-solving, and parenting skills. Go to [veterantraining.va.gov](https://veterantraining.va.gov) to get started. ■





## Concerned About “Chemo Brain”? Try moving a little more

A study of relationships between physical activity, chemotherapy, and cognition among 500 women being treated for breast cancer shows a strong correlation between physical activity and what is commonly called “chemo brain.” Chemo brain’s features, which are temporary, include fogginess, difficulty concentrating, and forgetfulness.

According to Dr. Salerno, the study’s research lead, most women undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer experience these issues to some extent. But study participants who were the most active before, during, or after their treatment were least likely to develop these symptoms.

Even small amounts of exercise can help, says Dr. Salerno. If you can’t manage a half-hour walk, even a short, slow trip up and down the driveway can have benefits. ■

Source: E. Salerno, PhD, MPH, et al. “Physical Activity Patterns and Relationships with Cognitive Function in Patients with Breast Cancer Before, During, and After Chemotherapy in a Prospective, Nationwide Study,” *Journal of Clinical Oncology* 39, no. 29 (October 10, 2021): 3283-3292.



## Easing PTSD with Strength Training

People who have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) often carry burdens of anxiety and sleep disorders. Therapy, medication, and support systems can have significant benefits. According to recent research, a routine that involves high-intensity strength training can also help.

James Whitworth, PhD, a combat veteran and researcher at the Boston VA Healthcare System and Boston University School of Medicine, led a recent study to see if strength training alleviates certain PTSD symptoms. He found that a group of participants who participated in high-intensity resistance training showed significant improvements in sleep quality and anxiety symptoms compared to the control group, which participated in a study group instead. ■

Source: James W. Whitworth, et al., “High Intensity Resistance Training Improves Sleep Quality and Anxiety in Individuals Who Score Positive for PTSD,” *Mental Health and Physical Activity* 16 (March 2019): 43-49.



# Talking About Tough Subjects

with Your Spouse or Partner







Some couples argue more than others. But all couples have disagreements. How can two people always think the same way about their plans and daily lives? Fortunately, there are steps you can take to keep those inevitable disagreements from careening out of control.

### Avoid undermining

You know your spouse or partner well. This has benefits: you know how to pick the perfect birthday gift and you know when to provide some quiet time and space.

It also means you know what subjects your spouse or partner is especially sensitive about. Maybe it's their weight. Or maybe they really, really hate it when you compare them with a certain person (*"You're acting just like your mother!"*).

If you're bringing up a hard topic for a real disagreement, don't undermine the discussion by bringing in those sensitive subjects. It's putting yourself on a fast track to nowhere in resolving the problem.

### Stick to the subject

In the heat of the moment, you may itch to bring up earlier issues that were already resolved, but that you still feel annoyed about. Don't do it. Stick to the current matter. If you do dig up the old matter, you're likely to escalate what was meant to be a limited difference of opinion into a tiring, pointless exercise.

### Watch your timing

In some situations, arguments are harsher and longer than they need to be. Avoid bringing up hard subjects when one or both of you are tired or under extra stress (one of you is working on a big work project under a tight deadline or is dealing with a health issue, for example).

The two of you can agree to a rain check. (*"Right now isn't a good time to hash this out. Let's talk about it this weekend when the kids are with my parents."*)

### Make "I" statements, not "You" statements

Some sentences put listeners on the defensive right away. Avoid starting what you say with *"You always..."* or *"You never...."* Instead, aim for more neutral beginnings, like *"I'm worried that..."* or *"I feel as though..."* or *"I know this is a tough subject for you, but let's...."*

### Take some time out

If you're afraid that things are getting too harsh or that one of you may soon say something that you'll regret, take a break to calm down. Go for a walk around the block, pour a glass of ice water for each of you, or take a minute for a hug. You'll both be able to finish up the discussion with clearer heads. ■

## Anxious? Under extra stress?

As a US Family Health Plan member, you can self-refer to an authorized Plan network mental health provider for the first eight outpatient visits in a Plan Year (January 1 – December 31). No referral from your PCP is required. Please call 1.800.208.9565 for a current list of authorized network providers before you access services. When you call, be sure to identify yourself as a US Family Health Plan member.



Are you packing school lunches?

# Try a pocketful of power!

The basic pita, common in the Mediterranean and Middle East, is from a family of round flatbreads made with wheat flour. Some pita is baked to stay flat, then wrapped around meat for sandwiches or torn into pieces for dipping in sauces. Other pita is baked at an extra-high temperature, turning the water in the dough into steam and creating a handy pocket. That makes the pocket pita an ideal vehicle for healthy, no-fuss school lunches.

You can follow the recipes here or make up your own combinations using whatever you have on hand that your kids like to eat. Some protein (fish, chicken, beef, cheese), salad greens, and vegetable chunks, with a drizzle of dressing (olive oil is fine) will keep your schoolkid alert and energetic all afternoon.





Each recipe makes enough for two sandwiches made with seven-inch pita rounds. Slice a lid from each pita about two inches down. When you've filled the pocket, replace the lid and secure with plastic wrap.

## Garbanzo Galaxy

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 15-oz can garbanzo beans (chickpeas), drained, rinsed, patted dry | 6 chopped pitted olives (any kind)     |
| 1 cup corn (canned or frozen and thawed)                            | 2 tablespoons olive oil                |
| 1/4 cup chopped onion (yellow or red)                               | 1 tablespoon white or red wine vinegar |
|   | 1 teaspoon ground dried cumin          |

Gently combine the garbanzos, corn, onion, and olives in a medium-sized bowl. Stir in the olive oil, vinegar, and cumin, then spoon into the pita bread.

## Honey of a Handful

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 2 tablespoons honey                        | 4 ounces sliced cheese (Swiss and cheddar work well) |
| 2 tablespoons mustard                      | 6 ounces sliced roast turkey                         |
| 2 cups baby spinach, rinsed and patted dry | 2 tablespoons olive oil                              |

Spread honey on one inside wall of the pita bread and mustard on the other wall. Line the bottom of the pocket with spinach, setting some leaves aside. Insert the cheese and turkey slices, alternating them in layers with the rest of the spinach. Drizzle the olive oil on top. ■

## Tuna Pita with Pop!

- 1 5-oz can of tuna, drained
- 1 teaspoon mayonnaise or plain Greek yogurt
- 2 cups chopped raw vegetables (bell peppers, halved cherry tomatoes)
- 2 handfuls washed and dried salad greens, torn into pieces
- 1/2 cup popcorn (the new crouton!)

Line the bottom of the pocket with the salad greens. Mix tuna with the mayo or yogurt, add the vegetables, spoon the mixture over the salad greens, and sprinkle with popcorn.



## A Little Handful

For younger kids, try mini pita breads, available at most grocery stores.





# September Is Suicide Prevention Month

## Learn about 988



As of July 16, 2022, access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Veterans Crisis Line has been made easier. Americans can now call or text a new, shorter number — **988** — if they or someone they care about is experiencing a mental health crisis or is at risk of suicide.

The **988** number replaces the longer number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (**800.273.8255**). The new **988 (then press 1)** number replaces the original number for the Veterans Crisis Line, bringing callers to specialized assistance for military veterans and their families.

The longer number will still work after July 2022, but **988** will be easier to remember and use.

### **Veterans Crisis Line**

Call: **988 (then press 1)**

Chat online: **VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**

Text: **838255**

## More resources

**[mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/index.asp](https://mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/index.asp)**

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Comprehensive online tools and articles, including information about ways to respond to social media posts that may indicate a veteran is having suicidal thoughts.

**[homebase.org](https://homebase.org)**

**617.724.5202**

**Home Base Veteran  
and Family Care**

Mental health support for veterans of all wars and their families, provided through a partnership between the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital.





*at ease*

**Believe me. The reward  
is not so great without  
the struggle.**

— Wilma Rudolph (the first American to win  
three gold medals in a single Olympiad)





## Back to Books

When I was little, I filled every corner of my day with books. We were lucky to live a short bike ride away from our public library, and every week — more often during summer vacation — I would travel there to return what I'd read (*Cherry Ames: Student Nurse*; *So You Want to Be a Pilot!*; *The Story of Esperanto*; anything by Louisa May Alcott) and pick up more.

I've kept on reading, but personal reading time became less available as I entered adulthood, the workforce, and parenthood. Then, in 2020, as the pandemic locked us down, I began excavating the bookshelves in our house. I found books I'd never made time for: Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, a guide to growing sweet peas, a wonderful story of the life cycle of eels called *The Book of Eels* by Patrick Svensson, and *The Brothers Karamazov*, among many others.

The book that mesmerized me most, though, was *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*, written by Alfred Lansing in 1959. A narrative of leadership, courage, and the surmounting of seemingly insurmountable odds, for me it was the perfect antidote to the darkness and uncertainty of the pandemic.

Tell me: Have you read a book lately that really lifted your spirits? Let me know at [kerry.tucker@usfamilyhealth.org](mailto:kerry.tucker@usfamilyhealth.org).

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