

Spring 2022

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John Fischer, RM1, USN (Ret.)



# spring calendar

## MARCH

13

Daylight Saving Time begins  
(set clocks ahead)

17

St. Patrick's Day

20

Spring begins

## APRIL



April is the Month  
of the Military Child

2

Ramadan begins (est.)

10

Palm Sunday

15

Good Friday  
Passover begins at sundown

17

Easter

18

Patriots Day (Massachusetts)

## MAY

8

Mother's Day

21

Armed Forces Day

30

Memorial Day

## JUNE

6

D-Day Remembrance Day

14

US Army Birthday  
Flag Day

19

Father's Day  
Juneteenth (observed Monday, June 20)

21

Summer begins!

## FITNESS



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boosts kids' school success  
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your everyday routine, easily!

## WELLNESS



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coverage for young adults  
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## COMMUNITY



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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



## Lessons of Winter

Writing this column right now, at the beginning of February, feels a little strange as we just had the largest winter storm of the season, which dumped almost three feet of snow in much of southern New England. I know that spring will come, but making it through the end of winter is always hard.

As I watched everyone shoveling out their cars, I was grateful that when my kids convinced me to move out of the suburbs and into Boston in 2021, they also said, “You need garage parking!” Oh, how wonderful it was to be able to enjoy watching the snow come down instead of dreading the shoveling. Since this was my first big storm since moving to the city, when I finally ventured out, I was really struck by how everyone was coming together to help each other.

Unfortunately, as the piles of snow remain and parking is scarce, I am afraid that this feeling of community might start to wane. As I reflect on this feeling, it makes me think about our current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. When it started in the spring of 2020, most of us were really great about finding ways to keep in touch with people and making sure that we

told those assisting us how much we appreciated their help. As the pandemic has dragged on, I feel that we have all grown a little tired and might have forgotten how important it is to let those around us know how grateful we are for them.

So, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported me and our members over the past two years. I feel so fortunate to have such an amazing team working with our US Family Health Plan members. Deepest thanks to our Member Services representatives, who are here to answer your calls and lend you support; our case managers, who help you navigate through your difficult medical issues; our sales reps, who answer all your enrollment questions; our network providers, who have done an incredible job of keeping you safe and healthy; and all those staff members behind the scenes who make sure the Plan keeps operating smoothly.

Finally, I would like to add how grateful we all are to have the privilege of caring for all of you. You have made great sacrifices for all of us, so for that I add a deep and sincere thank you. ■

How grateful we all are to have the privilege of caring for all of you.



## Tell It to Teladoc®

For an urgent, non-emergency health concern outside of your doctor’s usual business hours, remember that you may use Teladoc virtual health care to supplement your usual in-network care. You may also use Teladoc during ordinary business hours if your doctor doesn’t provide telehealth services.

With Teladoc, you can talk with a licensed medical doctor by web, through an app, or by phone. The service is available at no extra cost and without a referral. It’s also available for behavioral concerns — for example, anxiety — but only for ages 18 and up. Go to [usfamilyhealth.org](https://www.usfamilyhealth.org) (click on “For Members,” then on “Telehealth from Teladoc”) or call **1.800.835.2362** to learn more. ■

## Is There a Young Adult in Your Family?

When your son or daughter turns 21 (or 23 if they are a student), regular TRICARE coverage ends. Fortunately, coverage can be extended until age 26 through US Family Health Plan of Southern New England (a TRICARE Prime option) and the TRICARE Young Adult (TYA) program.

To be eligible, your child must be:

- A dependent of an eligible uniformed service sponsor
- Enrolled in DEERS
- At least 21 but not yet 26
- Not eligible to enroll in an employer-sponsored health plan based on their own employment
- Not eligible for any other TRICARE program coverage
- Living in the area covered by US Family Health Plan of Southern New England

To learn more, go to [usfamilyhealth.org](https://www.usfamilyhealth.org) (click on “About the Plan,” then on “TRICARE Young Adult”). ■





## Has the Pandemic Affected Your Memory?

Is it hard to remember whether you went to the dentist last fall or last spring? You're not alone. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have felt that their memories are playing tricks on them.

Catherine Loveday, a neuropsychologist at the University of Westminster in the UK, has been carrying out a pandemic memory study. Her preliminary results show that 80 percent of the participants thought their memory abilities had declined in at least one way during the pandemic. A large number, 55 percent, said that it was harder to remember when events took place.

Participants who were physically active reported fewer memory problems. (In the study, physical activity doesn't necessarily mean running or playing tennis. It can mean just moving more often between rooms.) In addition to physical activity, Dr. Loveday and other experts recommend that we boost our memory power by:

- Taking walks on unfamiliar routes
- Learning something new (such as a game or a way to cook)
- Having phone conversations or safe in-person conversations with others instead of sticking with Zoom or texting ■

## New Name, Same Great Service

Point32Health

Tufts Health Plan has provided third-party services to US Family Health Plan for over twenty years. Now Tufts Health Plan and Harvard Pilgrim Health Plan have combined, and are providing their services under a new name, "Point32Health."

If you receive a call from Point32Health, or you call Member Services at **800.818.8589** and the representative who answers says "Point32Health," rest assured that you're still talking with a US Family Health Plan representative, and that you'll continue to receive the same fine service that you've always received.

Curious about the name? It's inspired by a navigation technique and the 32 points on a compass. ■

## Those Myths About Alcohol

In recent years, research has helped us better understand the effects that alcohol can have on our health. Here's the lowdown on some common myths that have surrounded alcohol for a long time.

### Alcohol will help me sleep better.

**False.** Although drinking alcohol before bed can make you fall asleep faster, later in the night you are likely to experience fitful sleep. And because alcohol is a diuretic, you are likely to need to urinate during the night. Sleep experts recommend avoiding alcohol consumption in the four hours before you go to bed.

### Drinking alcohol, especially wine, is good for my heart.

**False.** In January 2022, the World Heart Federation released a policy brief warning that not only does a daily glass of wine not promote health benefits (an idea promoted by some organizations) but that "no amount of alcohol is good for the heart."

### I can sober up quickly if I need to.

**False.** It takes about two hours for an average-size adult to eliminate the alcohol content of a single drink (12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, 1.5 ounces of most distilled liquor). Nothing can speed this process up — not coffee, not walking, not a shower. ■

Sources: The American Academy of Sleep Medicine; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at [niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health](https://niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health); the World Heart Federation at [world-heart-federation.org](https://world-heart-federation.org).



## Looking for Answers? Our Member Handbook Can Help

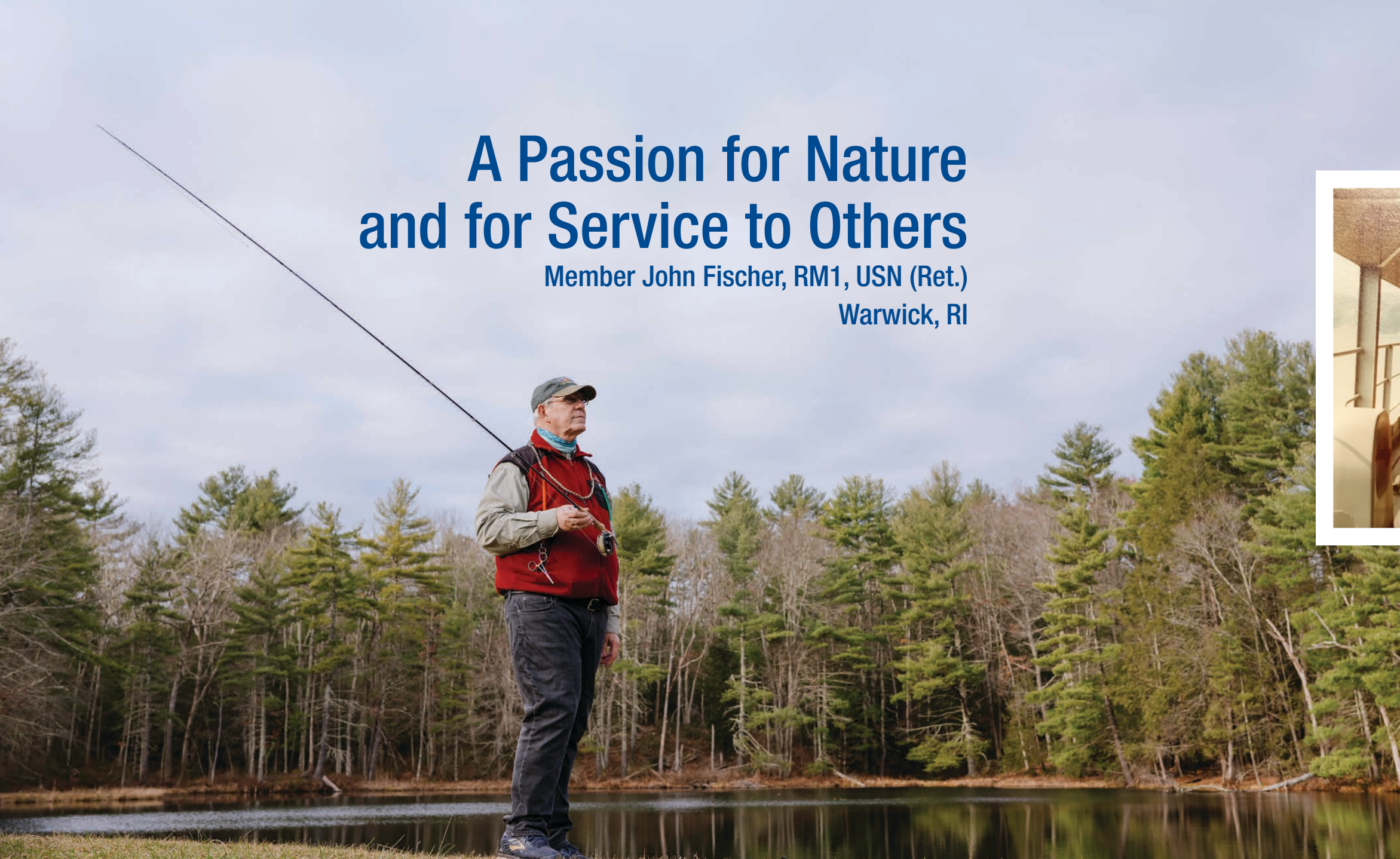
Do you want to learn more about referrals? About Plan extras like chiropractic care? The US Family Health Plan Member Handbook is always up to date on our website. Go to **[usfamilyhealth.org](https://usfamilyhealth.org)** (click on "Members," then on "Member Handbook").

You can read it on your screen or download and print it. If you'd like us to do the printing for you, just call Member Services at **800.818.8589**. We'll print it for you and mail it out. ■



# A Passion for Nature and for Service to Others

Member John Fischer, RM1, USN (Ret.)  
Warwick, RI



Fischer committed to the Reserve), and New Mexico. He returned to college and received a bachelor's degree in 1987.

Fischer's civilian career included time as a jailer and as a police officer. He and Becky moved to Rhode Island, where they raised three children. In Rhode Island, John worked as a federal employee in the personnel support detachment at Newport Naval Station, then as a special agent, performing federal background investigations.

John loves to fish, especially fly fishing and spin fishing. Retirement from the Reserve left him even more

time for fishing, and he has been an advocate for the protection of the freshwater environment for fish, at one time as head of a chapter of Trout Unlimited. Through that organization and later through a Rhode Island Department of Fish and Wildlife program, he's taught many people, including scouts, veterans, and cancer survivors, the pleasures and satisfaction of fishing and of being immersed in nature.

The Fischers' service doesn't end there. John and Becky serve as an elder couple at their local church in Cranston, Rhode Island. John has also been an active supporter of the Military Lounge at Rhode Island's T. F. Green International Airport, a place where active-duty service members, veterans, and their families can relax, charge their phones, and enjoy free snacks while they wait for a flight.

We're honored to have the Fischers as part of US Family Health Plan. And we thank you for your commitment to your country, family, and community. ■

As a high-school varsity cross-country and track-team member in Villa Park, Illinois, John Fischer felt a clear sense of purpose and direction. After graduation, though, he found himself somewhat at sea. "I did a year of college," he says, "but it wasn't for me. So in 1969 I enlisted in the Navy."

It turns out that the hands-on education the Navy provided gave Fischer the boost he needed. It also gave him a chance to travel well beyond his comfort zone. "Before boot camp in San Diego," he says, "the farthest west I had been was

camping in Wyoming with my parents."

Fischer had hoped to be a Navy photographer, but boot-camp aptitude tests revealed skills that suited him to being a radioman. And being a radioman launched him into service in some of the farthest — and coldest — reaches of the globe, starting with a Naval Communication Station in Iceland. After a year there, he was sent to Antarctica.

"They trained us for Antarctica in Rhode Island," he says. He met Becky, his future wife, at the Seabee Club there, where Becky had gone

with her best friend to dance. Becky's father was in the Navy, and she had just graduated from high school.

"Antarctica," says Fischer, "was another world. There's no population except for who gets sent down there. I saw killer whales, leopard seals, and penguins — both Adeli and Emperor penguins." He was the radioman for the station's search-and-rescue team, harsh duty in one of the most unforgiving climates on earth.

A year later, Fischer was posted to New Zealand. Becky joined him, and the couple married in Christchurch, on the east coast of New Zealand's South Island. They went on to live in Illinois, Rhode Island, the West Coast (where





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

## Has Your Doctor Prescribed Blood Pressure Medication?

### Taking it regularly is crucial

It's estimated that up to 75 percent of patients don't take prescribed medications as directed by their provider. For patients with high blood pressure, not taking their medication as directed can cause significant consequences, including heart attacks, strokes, and kidney problems.

When people skip a dose of a pain pill, they are likely to feel the effects soon. But people aren't likely to feel any different if they skip a dose or two of blood pressure medication. That's why high blood pressure is sometimes referred to as the "silent killer" — many people don't notice it when their blood pressure is high.

In fact, many people may actually feel better after skipping a dose or two, because some blood pressure medications can have side effects like lightheadedness or coughing. Instead of avoiding a blood pressure medication because of side effects, talk to your provider about alternative medications.

### Lifestyle factors

Sometimes people think that if they watch their diet and get regular physical activity, they don't need to take blood pressure medication. Avoiding salt, limiting alcohol, watching your weight, and getting regular exercise is always good advice. But sometimes these measures aren't enough, and medication is still necessary to lower blood pressure.

Although it's wise to limit your use of added table salt while cooking and at the

table, remember that only a small amount of the salt we consume each day comes from the saltshaker. Because salt is already in processed and restaurant foods when you buy them, it can be hard to reduce your sodium intake on your own.

### Other factors

If you have a close family member with a history of high blood pressure, you're more likely to have high blood pressure. It's also more likely for African Americans to have high blood pressure, and at an earlier age.

According to the National Institutes of Health, about 6 out of 10 of people who have diabetes also have high blood pressure. It seems to be as common in men as women and is more common as people age. You may not have had high blood pressure in your youth but can be surprised to have it later in life.

### Taking your medication as prescribed

Talk to your provider or pharmacist about your medications, particularly if you find it difficult to take them as prescribed. There are many things you can do to remember your medication routine. The simplest is to use a pill box with sections for the days of the week. There are also smartphone applications that can send text messages or alarms that are set on your phone to remind you to take medications. A good place to start investigating is at <https://www.goodrx.com/healthcare-access/medication-education/medication-reminder-apps>. ■



## Moving Keeps Kids Learning

More and more research links children's physical activity with healthy emotional development. According to a 2021 UK study, physical activity can help children:

- Achieve academic success and better handle their behavior.
- Improve their self-esteem and ability to manage tasks.
- Have a healthy outlet for their emotions.

These skills, the research shows, play a crucial role in children's academic achievement. Parents who schedule exercise for their children as if it's a daily classroom assignment are providing a foundation for success in school and beyond.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it tough for parents to set aside exercise time for their families, but even indoors, families can:

- Limit screen time so that kids get up and move.
- Turn on some music and dance together.
- Set up mats for tumbling and somersaults.
- Assign household tasks (picking up toys, carrying laundry to and from the washer/dryer, emptying trash cans) so kids not only move more but feel the satisfaction of getting things done. ■

Source: F. Vassilopoulos, et al., Investigation of the Associations Between Physical Activity, Self-Regulation and Educational Outcomes in Childhood. PLoS ONE 16(5): e0250984. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0250984>



## Movement for Everyone *It All Adds Up*

Some days it's tough to find the time to exercise. But it's important to remember that you can build movement into your life every day, all day. You don't have to go to a gym or have expensive equipment to stay flexible and fit. You can:

- Walk while you're on the phone.
- Arrange your office so that you have to move. For example, put your wastebasket and printer across the room so that you need to stand up and walk to use them.
- Use a bathroom on a different floor.
- Change position often. Think about getting a stand-up desk so that you can switch between sitting down and standing up.
- Watch your posture. When you're sitting, keep both feet on the floor and make sure your lower back has support (try using a rolled-up towel for this).
- When you have to wait in line, improve your balance by standing on one foot (keeping one hand on or near a counter or railing). ■



# Do You Rumininate?

It's possible to break the cycle

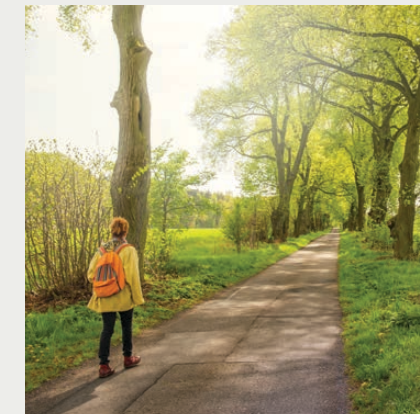
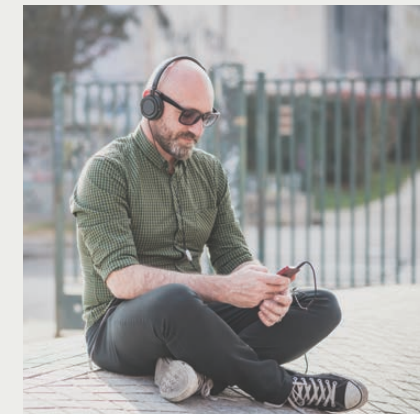
Do you ever find yourself thinking about past events when you'd rather be relaxing, sleeping, or paying attention to friends and family? Returning repeatedly to disturbing thoughts — a conflict with a friend, for example, or a criticism from a coworker — is called “rumination.” It can undermine your health, relationships, and productivity.



## What you can do

Once you're trapped in a cycle of rumination, it can be hard to escape. Surrendering to recurring thoughts can become an intrusive habit. This means that it's best to address rumination quickly. When you find yourself ruminating:

- **Be a problem solver.** Instead of reliving your unhappy experience, think about what you can do to improve the situation or keep it from happening again. Plan the steps you need to take to move forward, either in your mind or by writing them down.
- **If you're ruminating about work when you're home, or about home when you're at work, create a transition between these two worlds.** A commute can do this. So can a walk around the block, a change of clothes, or playing some music.
- **Distract yourself from the ruminating thoughts.** Do something that makes it hard or impossible to think your repetitive thoughts:
  - » Read a book or listen to an audiobook
  - » Play a game or do a challenging puzzle
  - » Watch a movie
  - » Exercise
  - » Take on an activity that fully absorbs your attention (drawing, cooking, music, knitting, or learning another language, for example)
- **Avoid overthinking mistakes.** If you ruminate about a mistake you've made (or think you've made) remember that everyone makes mistakes. It's how people learn and grow.
- **Try mindfulness and meditation.** In the practice of mindfulness, you focus on the present moment. What happened yesterday or earlier today is not relevant. Clearing your mind through meditation can also help break the cycle of rumination.



It can also be helpful to:

- **Identify the cues that trigger your ruminating thoughts.** When do you tend to ruminate? In the evening? At night when you're trying to sleep? When you're alone? In certain places? Recognizing the situations in which you ruminate can help you avoid the cues that trigger them.
- **Find alternative responses to your rumination cues and practice them.** Once you've identified the cues that trigger your rumination, come up with alternative responses to them. If feeling lonely is your trigger, immediately do something different when you start to feel lonely. Over time, this new response will start to override your old ruminating habit.

## How therapy can help

Rumination habits can become so deeply ingrained that you may have trouble breaking the cycle by yourself. If your rumination problem persists and especially if you have symptoms of another mental health problem, such as depression, make an appointment with a mental health provider.

Remember that US Family Health Plan members can self-refer to a US Family Health Plan network mental health provider for the first eight visits in a Plan Year (January 1 through December 31). Be sure to call **800.208.9565** for a network provider list before you access services. ■

Sources:

Watkins, E.R. (28 July 2013). "Four Tips from Habit Research to Reduce Worry and Rumination." *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mood-thought/201307/four-tips-habit-research-reduce-worry-and-rumination>

*Medical News Today* (Last medically reviewed 8 November 2019). "How to stop ruminating thoughts." <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326944>

If your rumination problem persists, make an appointment with a mental health provider.



# For the Month of the Military Child



## Child-Size Frittata Muffins

*Makes 12 muffins*

6 eggs  
½ cup milk  
½ cup crumbled feta  
½ cup red bell pepper, diced small  
½ cup raw spinach leaves, sliced small  
¼ teaspoon salt  
Sprinkling of black pepper

Preheat oven to 350°. Coat the cups of a 12-cup muffin tin with no-stick spray or, using a paper towel, grease them with butter or oil. (Or you can use paper liners.)

Beat the eggs in a medium-size mixing bowl. Add the milk, feta, red bell pepper, spinach slices, salt, and black pepper, and stir gently.

Ladle the mixture into the muffin cups, filling them about two-thirds full. Then bake in the oven for 15 to

**For April**, the Month of the Military Child, we're offering a recipe that's flexible and tasty: frittata muffins. Children who are old enough to use a knife and the oven safely can make them on their own. If your child is too young to cook, you can make these together. Little kids can beat the eggs, add the three special ingredients, and stir it all together, while a grownup does the rest.

Don't be afraid to play with this recipe. You may want to substitute grated cheddar for feta, peas for spinach, or halved cherry tomatoes for red peppers. The point is for kids to have some fun in the kitchen and feel the satisfaction of creating a healthy treat with little fuss.

20 minutes, until slightly browned and firm. Cool in the pan for three to five minutes, then run a dinner knife around the edges and lift the little frittatas out with a fork. They're terrific warm, and you can freeze a few for reheating later. ■

*at ease*

You have to love your children unselfishly. That is hard. But it's the only way.

— Barbara Bush, former First Lady of the United States







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## We're All Ears!

Did you like what you just read? Think we can do better? Please let us know what you thought of this issue and what you'd like to read about in future issues. Get in touch at [Kerry.Tucker@usfamilyhealth.org](mailto:Kerry.Tucker@usfamilyhealth.org).

### Kerry Tucker

Managing Editor/Senior Writer

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Cover photo by Kelly Lorenz

At Ease photo by Hal Morgan

