

Spring 2024

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**Dr. Rollinger on Behavioral  
Health Care**

**Build Your Memory!**

**Coordination of Benefits**

**Spring into New England Walks**



Joseph Varone, MSG, MAARNG and Kaitlyn with Ava

# spring calendar

## MARCH

10

Daylight Saving Time begins  
(set clocks ahead)

Ramadan begins (est.)

17

St. Patrick's Day

19

Spring begins

24

Palm Sunday

29

Good Friday

31

Easter

## APRIL

15

Patriots Day (Massachusetts)

22

Passover begins

  
April is the Month  
of the Military Child

## MAY

12

Mother's Day

18

Armed Forces Day

27

Memorial Day

## JUNE

6

D-Day Remembrance Day

14

U.S. Army Birthday  
Flag Day

16

Eid al-Adha (est.)  
Father's Day

19

Juneteenth

20

Summer begins!

## COMMUNITY

## WELLNESS

## FITNESS



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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](https://usfamilyhealth.org) or at [facebook.com/USFHP.SouthernNewEngland](https://facebook.com/USFHP.SouthernNewEngland).



a message from Susan Brown,  
our Senior Vice President and Plan CEO



## Spring

Time to Reset and Reenergize

Spring is my favorite time of year. Although I prefer the summer heat over the cool spring weather, for me spring represents the transition from winter dormancy to summer wakefulness. As we awaken from winter hibernation, it's a good time to evaluate what makes us happy and energizes us.

Spring is the time I reset and reenergize myself. I carry this out by making my spring "new year" resolutions. This year I'll be working on two resolutions. The first is getting out and jogging more. For me, jogging is a way to disconnect from the stresses and challenges of daily life. It helps me clear my head and refocus my energies.

Growing up, I wasn't a runner. In fact, when I was playing high school field hockey, I chose to be a goalie just so I didn't have to run as much. I didn't start jogging until I was in my fifties. I stress "jogging" because running would imply that I have speed, which I do not. But as spring temperatures moderate, I enjoy being outdoors and I find that jogging brings me peace of mind.

While I hobble along, I find myself calm and tranquil. In fact, since I started jogging, I've participated in numerous 5K and 10K races and even

a half marathon. My goals are very simple: finish the race upright and enjoy every minute of it. To that end, I've participated in races at Disney World — you know, the Happiest Place on Earth. This April I'll run my fourth Disney race, a 10-miler, followed by a few days with my family at the parks.

My second resolution is to build a vegetable garden. I don't really have a classic green thumb, although I'm OK with my annual flower garden. But starting a vegetable garden will be a first for me!

My neighbors have a big, beautiful garden, and every year they add more varieties of vegetables and fruits. They're out almost every day tending to their plants. I'm sure that I'll be calling on them for pointers as I start out modestly with my own.

I hope that I get the same sense of relaxation from gardening as I do from jogging — the ability to disconnect from the hectic world and reconnect with inner peace. And hopefully reap some vegetables along the way.

As I think about what resetting and reenergizing brings to me, I know that it helps me be a better leader for you and the Plan. It allows me to have the energy needed to run a Plan that is worthy of you and to make sure you receive the services you have earned and deserve.

Have a happy spring — find something that helps you reset and reenergize. I will let you know how the vegetables turn out! ■

**As we awaken from winter hibernation,  
it's a good time to evaluate what  
makes us happy and energizes us.**



# Brains

## The Bigger the Better

New research links exercise, even in relatively small amounts, with increased brain size and improved ability to think as we age. The study involved scanning the brains of 10,125 people ages 18 to 97. Those who walked, swam, biked, or worked out in another way for just 25 minutes a week had larger brains than those who didn't.

Dr. Cyrus Raji, who led the study at Washington University in St. Louis, believes that physical activity, even in these amounts, reduces inflammation in the brain. He also believes that it encourages the release of neurochemicals that promote the creation of new brain cells and blood vessels, helping the brain grow.

The differences in the brain are mainly in the parts that are associated with thinking and memory. These parts often shrink as we age, increasing the risk for cognitive decline as well as dementia. So keep on moving! ■

Source: CA Raji, S Meysami, S Hashemi, et al., Exercise-Related Physical Activity Relates to Brain Volumes in 10,125 Individuals, *J Alzheimers Dis.* 2024 Jan 16; 97(2):829 – 839.

## Starting Spring with Awesome Walks

Once the snow and mud have disappeared, be sure to take advantage of these Southern New England walks.

### Spectacle Island

Boston Harbor, MA

Five miles of walking trails.

Accessible by public ferry.

[nps.gov/boha](https://nps.gov/boha)

### Ashuwillticook Rail Trail

Cheshire, MA

An old railroad track converted into a 10-foot-wide paved trail running 12.7 miles through the Hoosic River Valley.

[mass.gov/locations/ashuwillticook-rail-trail](https://mass.gov/locations/ashuwillticook-rail-trail)

### The Marginal Way

Ogunquit, ME

Along the coast from Perkins Cove to Ogunquit Beach (wheelchair accessible).

[ogunquit.org](https://ogunquit.org)

### Ravenswood Park

Gloucester, MA

Ten miles of carriage paths and trails for walking.

[thetrustees.org](https://thetrustees.org)

### Colt State Park

Bristol, RI

Canoeing, kayaking, biking, walking, and spectacular views of Narragansett Bay.

[riparks.com](https://riparks.com) ■





## 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

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

## Referral Updates

Please remember that referrals to specialists expire at the end of every year, most recently December 31, 2023. Be sure to ask your Primary Care Provider to submit a new referral at the beginning of every Plan Year for specialty services, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. ■



FOCUS ON  
SERVING

YOU



## 24-Hour Nurse Advice Line

Longer days and warmer weather mean more time outside, which is healthy for the whole family. But it can also mean cuts and scrapes, and headaches from too much sun. As a US Family Health Plan member, you can use our reliable, free Nurse Advice Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call **1.866.767.4546** for quick, expert advice from a registered nurse. ■

## Our Member Handbook Is Always Up to Date

Brush up on Plan basics with our *Member Handbook*. It's easy to read and always up to date. Find it online at **usfamilyhealth.org** (click on "Members" on the top bar, then on "Member Handbook"). You can read it there or print it out.

If you'd like someone else to print it out for you, call Member Services at **800.818.8589**. We'll print it out and mail it to your home. ■

## Chiropractic Care

If shoveling snow has moved you into spring with an aching back, remember that the Plan covers spinal manipulation. We provide up to 12 visits with a network chiropractor for members over age 12. No referral required. Call Member Services at **800.818.8589** for more information. ■

# Strengthening Your Memory

Remembering well is important to everyone. Like all of our abilities — including hearing, vision, staying balanced — it's possible to nurture our memories. These suggestions can help.





## Recharge with naps

According to memory expert Richard Restak, MD, naps that last anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes have been shown to improve recall for information we were exposed to before the nap. And napping sometime between 1 pm and 4 pm corresponds best with the body's "natural circadian dip."

If you feel groggy when you wake up from a nap, you've slept too long and will have trouble going to sleep that night. Limit yourself to a nap time that leaves you feeling energetic when you wake up. For some people that's 15 minutes. For others it can be up to an hour.

## Challenge your memory in simple ways

Here are some basic ways to exercise your memory skills:

- Reduce your dependence on GPS. The invention of GPS, built into your car or included in your phone, has kept most of us from getting lost in new places. But if you tend to use GPS to take routes that you can find easily without GPS, travel those routes without GPS and challenge your mind.
- If you keep "to do" or shopping lists handy, don't rely on them entirely for guidance. Use your brain power first, then turn to the list if you need a reminder.
- Memorize a poem or a song. Try a stanza a day until you've absorbed the entire piece. You can read or listen to an endless number of poems for free at [poetryfoundation.org](https://www.poetryfoundation.org).

## Know that diet can affect memory

Food that is good for your brain (the DASH or Mediterranean diets, for example) can also promote a healthy memory. Dr. Uma Naidoo, a nutritional psychiatrist, promotes these foods as important to healthy brain function:

- berries (full of antioxidants, minerals, and vitamins)
- fermented foods, including yogurt, sauerkraut, and kefir
- leafy greens, including spinach, arugula, and lettuce

Dr. Restak recommends limiting alcohol because of its increasing harm to cognition as we age. He advises his patients to avoid alcohol altogether after age 70. ■

Sources: Naidoo, Uma. *This Is Your Brain on Food*. Little, Brown Spark, 2020; Restak, Richard. *The Complete Guide to Memory*. Skyhorse Publishing, 2022; Willett, Walter. *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy*. Simon & Schuster, 2017.



## The Essential Blueberry

Berries, especially blueberries, have been linked to lower risks of heart disease, diabetes, and *memory loss*. Eat them as a snack or add them to cereals and salads. Frozen blueberries are also nutritious. Just be sure that the package doesn't include sugar or syrup.



# Coordination of Benefits



## If you have other medical coverage

If you or your US Family Health Plan–covered family members have other medical coverage, or you receive care or services that would also be covered by workers' compensation or automobile medical benefits, US Family Health Plan has a legal right to recover some of the costs of your care. In fact, US Family Health Plan is the secondary payer to any other health insurance you might have, except Medicare and Medicaid.

This Coordination of Benefits provision doesn't deny you any benefits you're entitled to, nor does it reduce your benefits. It's intended to make sure that duplicate payments aren't made. All the health care expenses covered by the Plan are subject to this provision.

It's your responsibility to provide us with the information that will allow us to coordinate payment for your health care services with any other health insurance you may have. If you have other health insurance (OHI) that is primary to US Family Health Plan, you must use your OHI to fill prescriptions. *(Exception: If your OHI doesn't cover a particular prescription drug, in most cases you may use your US Family Health Plan coverage. Please refer to your Member Handbook, pages 43 and 44, for more information.)*

After your OHI pays for a prescription, US Family Health Plan will reimburse you for your OHI's copayment. Download the reimbursement form from the Pharmacies and Medication section of [usfamilyhealth.org](https://www.usfamilyhealth.org) or call Member Services at **1.800.818.8589**. You have 90 days from the date that you fill the prescription to send the form to US Family Health Plan.

## What you must disclose

If (1) before you enrolled in the Plan, you had other health care coverage that's still effective while you're a member of the Plan, or (2) you qualify for other coverage while you're a member of the Plan, you are required to disclose this information.

You may call Member Services at **800.818.8589** with this information. Please be sure to provide information for all insurance coverage you have when you register for an appointment. ■

**It's your responsibility to provide us with the information that will allow us to coordinate payment for your health care services with any other health insurance you may have.**



# Behavioral Health Care

## At the top of the list

In this month's magazine we're highlighting behavioral health services available through US Family Health Plan. With TRICARE®, the Defense Health Agency has made behavioral health care a priority, and the Plan has worked diligently to improve access to behavioral health services.

### Accessing the services

Members can access these behavioral health services without any referral from their primary care provider. At **usfamilyhealth.org** go to the "Our Network" tab, which provides an option for "Doctors by Specialty." Under "Behavioral/Mental Health," a list of providers in your area will appear. Be sure to insert the location you want to identify in the search. Transformations Care Network at **transformationsnetwork.com/our-clinics** is another option for our members seeking behavioral health services.

If you don't want to use **usfamilyhealth.org**, call Member Services at **800.818.8589**, explain that you're a US Family Health Plan member, and ask for a list of behavioral health providers in your area.

### Behavioral Health Service Navigator

Sometimes it can be difficult to find a provider who is accepting new patients. A new service, the Behavioral Health Service Navigator, can help you locate a provider that is accepting new patients or has timely appointments. If you have more complex needs, a Behavioral Health Care Manager may help you locate appropriate services.

If you require supportive care after an admission or emergency department visit for behavioral health issues, a

Care Manager can assist you. Addiction recovery services are also available through the Care Management program.

Members may find having a peer to provide support through either behavioral health issues or substance use issues helpful. US Family Health Plan also offers the assistance of Community Health Workers who can work with social or financial problems that arise from behavioral health issues.

### Telemedicine

It may not always be convenient to see a provider face-to-face. Therefore, the Plan offers options to members who wish to use telemedicine for behavioral health services.

- Teladoc is a telemedicine provider available to US Family Health Plan members for behavioral health services as well as for minor acute medical issues. Call **800.835.2362** to learn more.
- Valera Health is also available to our members in Massachusetts (children over age six, adolescents, and adults) for virtual therapy and psychiatry. Schedule a consultation with a Valera Health Connector at **valerahealth.com/consult**.
- Many of our in-network clinicians also offer virtual appointments.

### Substance Use

For substance use issues we offer a Substance Use Management Team and access to Spectrum Health (go to **spectrumhealthsystems.org**).

*In an emergency always call 911. Don't wait to obtain an appointment. ■*



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

**Please take some time to review the booklet that came with this magazine. It includes additional information about these programs.**



## PTSD Resources

If you or someone close to you has symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), remember that the number of helpful resources continues to grow.

### US Family Health Plan

Members can self-refer for the first eight behavioral health visits in a Plan Year (January 1 through December 31). Before you make an appointment, call **800.818.8589**, identify yourself as a US Family Health Plan member, and ask for a list of authorized network behavioral health providers.

### National Center for PTSD [ptsd.va.gov](https://ptsd.va.gov)

Expertly prepared information and online tools from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for people with PTSD and Military Sexual Trauma.

### Home Base Veteran and Family Care [homebase.org](https://homebase.org) **617.724.5202**

A partnership between the Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital provides services to veterans of all wars and their families. ■



## Whole Person Care

US Family Health Plan members can access a comprehensive network of medical and behavioral health care providers, along with programs and services, to improve physical and behavioral well-being. The goal is to make sure you receive “whole person” care through an integrated approach.

- **Specially trained service navigators** help find and access the care that’s right for you and your family.
- **Our care management programs include** licensed care managers who work with you and our network providers to help you manage behavioral and medical conditions, create an aftercare plan, and connect you with resources.
- **Our behavioral health programs and services for children, teenagers, and adults** are designed to provide personalized, effective care focusing on improving access to care and overall health outcomes.

To learn about the full range of programs, see the informational booklet you received with this magazine. Or call Member Services at **800.818.8589**. ■



## Welcome April, the Month of the Military Child

If you're the parent or caretaker of a military child, these resources give guidance about the special concerns of military families:

**National Military Family Association**  
[militaryfamily.org](http://militaryfamily.org)

Information about childcare, education, and more, including a new *Field Guide to the Military Teen*.

**Military Kids Connect**  
[Militarykidsconnect.health.mil](http://Militarykidsconnect.health.mil)

These tools and games help kids and teens prepare for challenges around military family transitions. ■



## Bike Helmet Safety and Kids

Your child may have been too young to ride a bike last fall, but this spring they are old enough and ready to go. Do they have a helmet? This advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can help keep them safe.

- **Buy the safest helmet.** Buy a helmet that meets the bicycle helmet safety standards of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Any helmet meeting these standards is labeled.
- **Use bike helmets only for bike riding.** A multisport helmet, certified to meet CPSC standards for bike helmets, can also be used for bicycling. But use bike helmets only for bike riding and not for other activities.
- **Don't buy a used helmet.** It may be too old to provide protection or may have been in a crash that compromises its safety. ■





# The Beets Go On!



**Some people have** unpleasant memories of eating pickled beets as a child. If you're one of those people, it's important to know that roasted beets, unlike pickled beets, are sweet and delicious. They're also crammed with health benefits, including anti-inflammatory properties, fiber, nitrates, potassium, vitamin C, vitamin A, and antioxidants.

Roasting beets is easier than most people think. Once the beets have roasted and cooled, you can slide the peel off, chop the beets roughly, and include them in whatever salads you like to make. This recipe is a great starting point.

## Roasting the beets

*Choose firm, fresh beets, two to three inches in diameter — as many as you think you'll use. Set your oven to 400°.*

Cut off the greens. Then clean the beets under running water, removing extra dirt. Don't peel them yet.

Pat the beets dry and place them on a square of foil on a baking sheet. Brush a little olive oil on them. Fold up and crimp the foil around the beets to make a sealed packet.

Roast until tender (up to 60 minutes depending on their size), then cool. Slide the skins off with your hands and chop the beets.

## Making a salad

Rinse, dry, and tear whatever greens you have handy. Arugula, spinach, or romaine are fine. Add the beet pieces and whatever other raw vegetables you have on hand, like chopped bell pepper or radishes. Drizzle some olive oil over the top, and garnish with walnut pieces, pine nuts, feta cheese crumbles, or chopped chives. ■

*at ease*

What is all this juice and  
all this joy?

— Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Spring"





77 Warren Street  
Boston, MA 02135



## When U Walk Early

Unless there's torrential rain, my husband and I get up extra early on Sunday mornings and walk. We usually head across the Mass Avenue bridge over the Charles River, then along the Esplanade until we hit Boston Garden.

Why so early? The city is on mute. Traffic hasn't worked itself up, the street musicians haven't started their day.

We keep at it until we reach the North End and Caffé Paradiso, just open, for a cappuccino. By the time we drain our mugs, the city is awake. We head home in a now-busy Boston, as though we've traveled through two different landscapes. If you have your own walking strategy, please let me know at [kerry.tucker@usfamilyhealth.org](mailto:kerry.tucker@usfamilyhealth.org).

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