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Joshua Chappelle, CPT, USA, with
Chantal Chappelle, Luke, and Jaxon


**US FAMILY
HEALTH PLAN**

winter calendar

DECEMBER

21

Winter begins



Have you had your flu shot? It's not too late. Call your PCP's office today.

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Christmas Day

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New Year's Eve

JANUARY

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New Year's Day

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

FEBRUARY

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Did the groundhog see its shadow?



February is American Heart Month. Learn ways to keep your heart healthy at heart.org

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Presidents Day

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FITNESS



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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



Resilience and Hope

For so many of us, the winter holidays bring a time for thought and reflection. They also bring opportunities for fellowship with friends and family, and the chance to express our appreciation for each other with gifts, cards, and special meals.

This year is different. The COVID-19 pandemic has left no one untouched. Many of us will be separated from loved ones at a time when seeing them would be reassuring and strengthening. But if the last few months have shown us anything, it is that human beings are capable of grappling with challenges in a way that many of us may never before have thought possible.

How quickly workplaces, including US Family Health Plan, shifted to remote communication, grocery stores invented ways to help shoppers get their food safely, and schools pivoted to teaching differently. Many of you have adjusted to visiting your health care providers by phone or video, just as those providers have adjusted to

making diagnoses and offering advice by screen. We have learned just how far apart six feet is, and what kinds of masks won't slip from our noses.

Although it's difficult to be separated from loved ones, technology has made it possible for us to stay connected. One staff member here does crossword puzzles online with her sons who live in Washington, DC, and Maryland. Another staff member's young son attends a youth group gathering at his aunt's church in New Jersey from his home in Massachusetts. Another ships baked goods every week to her elderly father, who can't have visitors in his retirement community. We all know, deep inside, that connection is critical. Even though we'd rather connect in person, and we're learning as we go, we're making connection possible.

Let's hope that next year's winter holidays will be a time of in-person connection. Until then, peace, joy, hope, and health to all of you and to your families. I will be thinking about you. ■

Human beings are capable of grappling with challenges in a way that many of us may never before have thought possible.



Brighton Marine Hanscom Pharmacy Pivots to Home Delivery

Before we started our Home Delivery mail-order pharmacy program, the Brighton Marine pharmacy on site at Hanscom AFB was a convenient way for Plan members on or near base to fill their prescriptions. Now that most members are using our fast and easy Home Delivery program, we are no longer providing on-site pharmacy services at Hanscom. Our main pharmacy in Brighton remains open.

We ask all members to use Home Delivery for maintenance medications (medications taken regularly for chronic conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure). Please don't use retail pharmacies to fill maintenance medication prescriptions. All members may fill urgent and one-time prescriptions at a retail pharmacy, including the pharmacy at Brighton Marine Health Center.

Questions about Home Delivery? Just call **1.877.880.7007** or visit **usfamilyhealth.org** (click on "For Members," then "Pharmacies and Medications").

Our Member Portal App Is at Your Service

Most of you are familiar with our Member Portal, accessible at **usfamilyhealth.org** (click on "For Members," then "Member Portal"). It lets you review benefits information, claims, referrals, and authorizations.

The Member Portal is now available as a free app that you can easily use on your mobile device. In addition to our traditional Member Portal functions, it lets you access a virtual version of your member ID card, which you can email to yourself or fax to a health care provider.

To download the app, go to your app store and enter "USFHP of southern new england." Call Member Services at **1.800.818.8589** if you have questions.



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

Viral Infections vs. Bacterial Infections Getting Smart About Antibiotics

With all the current talk about COVID-19, it may be a good time to discuss the difference between viral infections like COVID-19, flu, or even colds; and bacterial infections like pneumonia and urinary tract infections.

Antibiotic resistance

Antibiotics are helpful for bacterial infections, but not for viral infections. Many patients think that no harm can come from taking an antibiotic, but if people take antibiotics when they don't have to, eventually the medicine becomes less effective. This means that someday if you contract a bacterial infection and you need an antibiotic, it might not work. This is called "antibiotic resistance."

Bacteria are smart. Over time they have developed genes that make them less sensitive to antibiotics that scientists have developed, like penicillin. You will know when this happens because your doctor may need to try different types of drugs to kill the bacteria. The more drugs that are needed to fight an infection, the greater the chances that a patient is exposed to the potential for side effects like nausea, diarrhea, or rashes. The fewer antibiotics you need to fight an infection, the less likely you are to have some of these side effects.

In hospitals, antibiotic resistance has become a huge problem. The media is full of stories about "superbugs" — bacteria that are resistant to almost all drugs. These bacteria are a problem for patients who are very sick and in intensive care. So, if you're feeling lousy with a cold or have nasal congestion, try over-the-counter medications to unplug your nose or quiet your cough.

Secondary bacterial infection

Sometimes a virus can set up an environment that leads to a "secondary bacterial infection." This means that the virus may start an illness that allows bacteria to grow. A sign of this condition might be a cold that doesn't go away within a few days, accompanied by sinus pain with colored nasal drainage, or coughing up colored phlegm. If any of these things happen, you need to let your provider know.

Listen to your doctor

If you have cold symptoms, listen to your health care provider. They will let you know if you're sick because of a virus or bacteria and will prescribe antibiotics if you need them.

If you're on antibiotics, be sure to finish them. Bacteria are smart. The weak ones will be killed right away, but the strong survive and may come back to make you feel worse.

And don't share antibiotics. You may think you have the same infection as a family member, but taking the wrong drug makes the likelihood of developing antibiotic resistance even greater. Let's outsmart those bacteria! ■

If you have cold symptoms, listen to your health care provider. They will let you know if you're sick because of a virus or bacteria and will prescribe antibiotics if you need them.

The Veteran Who Helps Us Deliver Your Medications Safely

John Crotty, Maj, USAF Reserve (Ret.)
South Hadley, Massachusetts
President of America's Preferred Packaging, Inc.

John Crotty felt a call to join the military early in life. As a boy growing up in Buffalo, New York, he liked nothing better than playing with toy soldiers and tanks. His father had served in the Army and the Merchant Marine; for Crotty, enlisting in the Air Force after high school came naturally.

Between active-duty service and the reserve, he served in the military for over four decades, starting in the military police and ending, in 2012, as a commissioned Health Services Administrator. After arriving at Westover ARB in 1974 as an enlisted Security Policeman, he earned an undergraduate degree in law enforcement and a master's in business administration at Western New England College.

In 2005, Crotty struck out in yet a different direction. He started a packaging business, America's Preferred Packaging, Inc., now based in Chicopee. In addition to bags, tubes, envelopes, drums, and crates, the company provides temperature-sensitive packaging. One day Crotty happened to have a conversation with a neighbor whose son received deliveries of insulin from the Brighton Marine pharmacy. That conversation led to a conversation with Jim Germano, the pharmacy director of US Family Health Plan. Crotty has been providing us with special packaging ever since.

Crotty's roots in western Massachusetts now run deep. He and his wife, Lisa, who works as an Education Support person in a South Hadley school, raised two



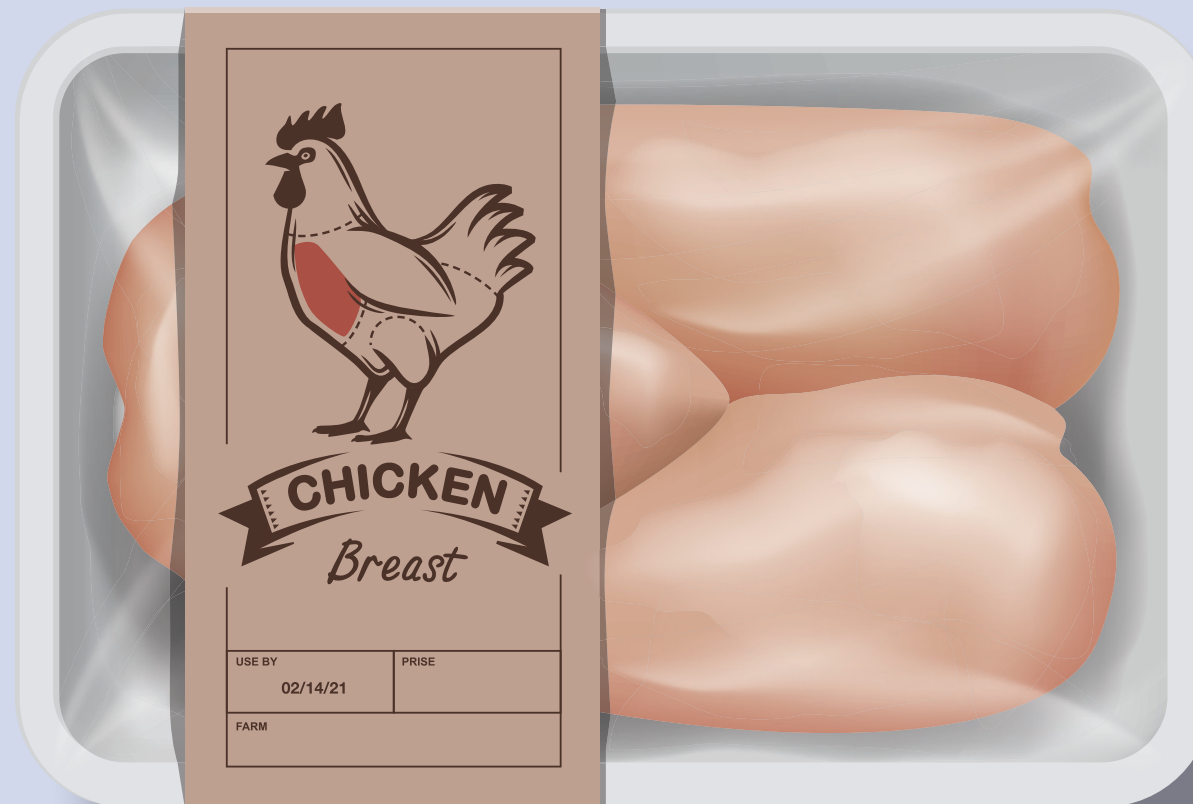
Top: John Crotty with Control Temp Blue packaging, which keeps medications like insulin safe to travel. Bottom right: John Crotty and Lisa Crotty.

daughters here. In addition to his affiliation with the Air Force Reserve at Westover, Crotty worked as Deputy Superintendent at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke from 2017 to 2019. He's also involved in Pioneer Valley USO, the recipient of the 2020 Colonel Robert Hawes Award for Community Service.

Thank you, John Crotty, for your service to your family, community, and country. And thank you, too, for helping our Home Delivery pharmacy ship medications safely to our members. ■

BEFORE YOU TOUCH THAT CHICKEN

If, like many people, you are eating more chicken and less red meat these days, take some time with these tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They may save you from an encounter with bacteria like *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*, which can be especially serious in people over 65 or younger than 5, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems.



- ✓ To prevent raw juices from getting on other foods, put chicken in a disposable bag before placing it in your shopping cart — and leave it in that bag in your refrigerator.
- ✓ Wash your hands with warm soapy water before and after you handle raw chicken.
- ✓ **Don't wash raw chicken.** *This is fairly new advice.* During washing, raw juices can spread and contaminate other foods, utensils, and countertops. Use a food thermometer to make sure you cook the chicken to a safe internal temperature of 165°F.
- ✓ Use a separate cutting board for raw chicken, and don't put cooked food or fresh produce on a plate, cutting board, or other surface that previously held raw chicken.
- ✓ Wash cutting boards, utensils, dishes, and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing chicken and before preparing the next item.
- ✓ Refrigerate or freeze leftover chicken within two hours (or within one hour if the temperature outside is higher than 90°F). ■



What You Need to Know

Vitamin D is a hormone produced in your skin when it's exposed to sunlight. It does a lot of important jobs, including helping to build bones and supporting the immune system.

People who spend little time in the sun — because of winter's short days, or mobility issues, or because the COVID-19 pandemic is keeping them indoors — may

risk a vitamin D deficiency. The use of sunscreen, which is important to skin-cancer prevention, may contribute to a deficiency. People with darker skin are also more at risk.

Because few foods naturally contain vitamin D, your doctor may recommend that you take a supplement. Current recommendations are 1,000 to 2,000 IUs a day for most adults and up to 4,000 IUs a day for people with darker skin. ■

For Real Conversation Take a Different Tack

If you're just getting to know someone, try not to ask questions meant to find out what they've achieved (What do you do for living? Where do you live?). Instead, ask questions that will let you know more about how they think and what's important to them (What's the best gift you've ever received? Who was your favorite teacher?). You may be surprised at how interesting the answers are, and how genuine your conversation can be.

YOU AND YOUR CHILD Allergies or a Cold?

Your child is sneezing and rubbing her eyes. How can you tell whether the cause is seasonal allergies or a cold? The American Academy of Pediatrics can help you tell the difference:



Allergies

- A clear, watery nasal discharge
- Itching of the eyes, ears, nose, or mouth
- Spasmodic sneezing (several sneezes in a row)
- Can last for weeks or even months

Cold (or other upper respiratory infection)

- Fever (not always)
- Thick, sometimes colored nasal discharge
- Sore throat and cough (not always)
- Usually lasts for just a few days

Healthychildren.org, from the American Academy of Pediatrics, offers free, extensive information for parents on health, safety, and emotional issues.

2020 Colonel Robert Hawes Award for Community Service Goes to Pioneer Valley USO

Top left: Allan Tracy, Executive Director of Pioneer Valley USO and Mike Bucell, US Family Health Plan Marketing Director. Top right: Food pantry. Bottom: Al Chawalek, Lou Boudah, John Chrisant, Allan Tracy, Wayne Dubai, Marcel Lauzon.

This year's recipient of the Colonel Robert Hawes Award for Community Service is Pioneer Valley USO, with its long history of service in western Massachusetts. According to Executive Director Allan Tracy, a Marine Corps veteran, Pioneer Valley USO, located at Westover ARB in Chicopee, has served members of the local military community for nearly 80 years.

The Hawes Award, which is granted by Brighton Marine and US Family Health Plan, comes with a check, which Tracy says will be most welcome at a crucial time for the organization.

"Like so many nonprofits," says Tracy, "we've been hard hit by the pandemic. This will help us keep doing what we exist to do, which is outreach to service members and their families."

That outreach includes a food pantry, care packages for deployed service members, family days and picnics, holiday food baskets, and free Monday-night dinners for service members and their families (limited to pick-up dinners during the pandemic).

The award, named for the late Colonel Robert Hawes, founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Brighton Marine Health Center, is given each year to recognize the outstanding effort of an individual or group that serves local military families.

Previous recipients have included David Chicoine, former Senior Vice President and CEO of US Family Health Plan; the Massachusetts Military Heroes Fund; Heroes in Transition; Homes for Our Troops; and Project New Hope.

Brighton Marine and US Family Health Plan are delighted to recognize the good work done by Pioneer Valley USO. Congratulations and thank you to all involved. ■



The Switch to Winter Walking

If you've been staying fit and burning off stress by walking outdoors during the fall, you're likely to want to stay on the move through the New England winter. These tips can help you stay safe and warm:

- **Layer your clothes.** Try to make your base layer (the layer next to your skin) a moisture-wicking fabric like CoolMax, Spandex, or thin wool. For a middle layer, try a cotton T-shirt. For the top layer, try a fleece or thermal jacket. If it's drizzling, snowing, or extra cold, add a waterproof shell. Don't overdo it. Your goal is to stay warm but not hot.
- **Wear wool socks.** Cotton is fine for summer, but wool keeps your feet warm and dry in winter and is less likely to bunch up.
- **Switch out your shoes.** A brand that says "winterized" or "trail shoe" will provide you with traction and warmth. You can also upgrade ordinary sneakers for slippery conditions by attaching Yaktrax or other grippers that wrap around the sole.
- **Try trekking poles.** If you'll be on irregular ground, trekking poles can help you stay upright. They don't need to be expensive, but they do need to be the right length for your height and stride. Search "trekking pole length" on the internet and you'll find videos that explain how to find the right ones and how to use them. A bonus: using poles provides an upper-body workout.
- **Protect your face and eyes.** The sun's rays are just as damaging in the winter as in the summer. Be sure to wear a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, and sunglasses too. ■

On the Move Inside your home

On days when you can't get outside for a walk, it's possible to stay on the move in your house or apartment. You can:

- **March in place** while you watch a movie or television show.
- **Walk up and down the stairs** for five minutes at a time. Don't rush. Keep one hand on a railing or just above it.
- **Make a loop inside your home.** Clear away anything you could trip on. Keep in touch with friends by hands-free phone while you walk the loop.
- **Put things away.** You may be surprised at how many steps you can get in when you do a big household pickup.



CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS SAFELY DURING COVID-19

For many of us, the holidays usually involve travel and gatherings with family and friends. But COVID-19 means that events like these are riskier this year. How can you maintain the cherished aspects of your celebrations without putting yourself or vulnerable family members in danger of serious illness? The answers will be different for every person and every family.

Risk factors at in-person gatherings

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it's important to make decisions around this year's holiday celebrations based on the main factors known to affect the risk of catching or spreading the virus. These include:

- **The incidence of COVID-19 in the community.** Pay attention to the current levels of disease in the community where a holiday gathering is being considered and in the communities from which people may be traveling. Understand and follow travel orders that affect anyone traveling to or returning to your state.
- **The number of people who will be at the gathering.** The more people at the event, the greater the risk that one or more will be carrying the coronavirus. The number of people allowed to gather may also be limited by state or local health guidelines.
- **How people behave before and during the gathering.** If everyone has followed virus-prevention practices in the weeks before the gathering (limiting contact with people outside of their households, social distancing and wearing masks when outside the home, frequent handwashing) and also observes safe practices during the event, the infection risk will be lower.
- **How people will travel to the gathering.** If anyone will travel by plane, train, or bus to the gathering, the inability to social distance while traveling will increase the risk of their bringing the virus to the event.
- **Ventilation and air flow at the gathering location.** COVID-19 is known to spread through exhaled aerosols when people breathe, talk, sing, yell, sneeze, or cough. Outdoor gatherings are safer than indoor ones, and indoor gatherings are safer with good ventilation, such as open windows and doors to the outside.
- **How long people will be together.** The longer the gathering, the greater the risk of virus transmission.

People at higher risk

In-person gatherings with people outside of your immediate household should not include anyone who is at higher risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19. This includes people 65 and over and people any age with heart, lung, or immune-system conditions. People at higher risk should limit in-person celebrations to members of their immediate households and should instead connect by phone or video with friends and extended family.

Guidelines for gathering

Make sure to communicate safety guidelines to be followed during the gathering:

- Maintain physical distancing (at least six feet apart).
- Wear masks when with people who aren't in your immediate household.
- Wash hands frequently or use hand sanitizers.
- No handshakes, hugs, or fist bumps.
- Sanitize door handles, bathroom surfaces and handles, and other surfaces after every use.
- No sharing of serving utensils — have one person serve everyone or have each household group bring its own food and utensils and serve themselves separately.

Rethinking holiday celebrations

Activities like these can help you celebrate while minimizing the risk of the virus:

- Include other family members and friends by phone or video instead of in person.
- Select key elements of your holiday traditions and modify them to be safe during the pandemic:
 - Prepare traditional family recipes for family and friends who live nearby and deliver them in a way that doesn't involve contact.
 - Make special cookies and mail them to friends and family.
 - Share recipes ahead of time so virtual participants can prepare some of the same food at holiday meals.
 - Watch a holiday movie together using Teleparty (formerly Netflix Party) or another movie-sharing application.
 - Have a virtual cookie-decorating party.
 - Read a favorite story by phone or virtually to children who are at a distance. ■



Feel a Little Chilly?

Warm Up with Golden Milk

“Golden milk,” a traditional drink in India, can bring a warm glow to the darker, colder days of winter. In its simplest incarnation, it takes only a few ingredients and a few minutes on the stove.

Turmeric, the chief ingredient, casts a golden spell on whatever milk you use, and it has nutritional value too. Practitioners of Ayurvedic medicine have long praised turmeric for its anti-inflammatory properties, and a study recently published in *The Annals of Internal Medicine* suggests that curcumin, the key chemical compound in turmeric, may help ease pain and stiffness in knees affected by osteoarthritis.



Golden milk is known as “haldi” in India.

1 serving

- 1 cup milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground turmeric
- Big pinch ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon honey
- Cinnamon

Combine all the ingredients except the cinnamon in a medium saucepan, and heat until hot but not boiling. Pour into your favorite mug and sprinkle the cinnamon on top.

Switch it up

Try almond, oat, or coconut milk instead of traditional cow’s milk; add ground cardamom or ginger to the turmeric; substitute a half cup of brewed tea for half of the milk. ■

at ease



The secret of seeing is, then,
the pearl of great price.

— Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*



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With U

Not long ago, I read an article by David Brooks in which he talked about the importance of cultivating “eulogy virtues” in our lives as opposed to “résumé virtues.” It certainly made me pause and think, long and hard. If there’s anything that the pandemic has made me obsess about, it’s what is genuinely worth doing, worth saying, and worth working for.

Serving others, being kind, sharing knowledge, recognizing the worth of everyone we come across — these are values worth cultivating. And they’re the values that I see so often in our US Family Health Plan members. They are common coin in the military community, where taking care of others takes precedence over accumulating more and bigger possessions.

Thank you for your natural, sincere inclination to build your eulogy virtues. Please have a safe and peaceful winter.

What eulogy virtues are most important to you? Please let me know at Kerry.Tucker@usfamilyhealth.org.

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