

# seniorclass

Baystate Health  
ADVANCING CARE. ENHANCING LIVES.



*Autumn in the Quabbin Region of Massachusetts*

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# Virtual Events

## The Balancing Act – Virtual Event

Tuesday, November 2, 11 am - 12 Noon

Do you have a fear of falling? Have you ever been told you are slightly off balance? Learn how to prevent falls from our experts at Baystate Rehabilitation Care, Nancy Densmore, PTA, Michelle Lantaigne, OT, Baystate Medical Center Injury Prevention Program's Ida Konderwicz, RN, BSN and Danyel Adams, PharmD, Clinical Pharmacy Specialist, Baystate Medical Center. The discussion will include instructions for safe exercises to improve balance, information about the injuries that can result from a fall, modifications for the home, and common medications that can impact falls, as the many strategies to prevent falls.



Left to Right: Nancy Densmore, PTA, Michelle Lantaigne, OT, Ida Konderwicz, RN, Danyel Adams, PharmD

## Weathering Diabetes: 6 tips for Winter and Holiday Challenges

Tuesday, November 9, 2-3 pm



Chelsea Gordner, MD

When most of the year, your insulin levels are stable, cold weather as well as the holidays can create the need to be especially alert. Join Dr. Chelsea Gordner, endocrinologist, director, Baystate Inpatient Diabetes Service, and Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine and Pediatrics Division of Adult and Pediatric Endocrinology, UMASS Chan Medical School- Baystate, for a discussion about winter weather and holidays, and how it can affect the body and diabetes, with tips on the best ways to celebrate and be healthy. There will be time for questions and answers.



## Medicare Made Easy

Friday, November 12, 3-4 pm



Sarah Fernandes

Are you starting to think about retirement and your Medicare options? Join Sarah Fernandes, Manager, Health New England Medicare Advantage, to learn the A, B, C, D's of Medicare. Topics will include: When do I sign up for Medicare? When can I sign up for Medicare? How much will Medicare cost? What are my Medicare Options? What is the difference between Part A, Part B, Part D, Medicare Advantage and Medicare Supplement? And much more.

## Could It Be My Thyroid?

Thursday, December 16, 2021, 6-7 pm



Ibitoro Osakwe, MBA

The thyroid and thyroid hormones control a lot of the body's activities including how fast we burn calories, how fast our heart beats and our mood and energy level. Join Dr. Ibitoro Osakwe, MBA, FACE, CPE, Chief and fellowship program director, Division of Endocrinology and Diabetes, Baystate Medical Center, for a discussion about the thyroid, how the gland works, how thyroid disorders and thyroid cancers are diagnosed as well as the many treatments. There will be time for questions and answers.

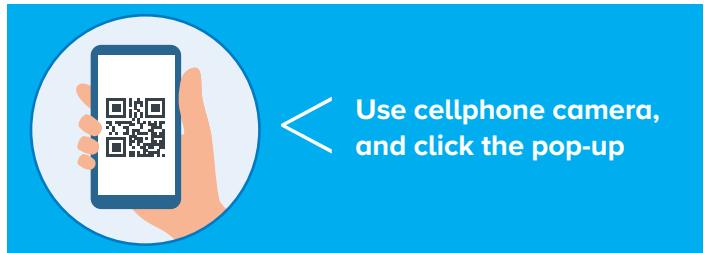
## To register

for any of the virtual events visit [BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass](https://BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass) and scroll to the bottom of the page or visit [BaystateHealth.org/Events](https://BaystateHealth.org/Events).



### Questions?

Email [Sue.Fontaine@BaystateHealth.org](mailto:Sue.Fontaine@BaystateHealth.org) or call 413-794-5200.



## Missed a Virtual Event?

Watch recorded events anytime at [BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass](https://BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass).

## Not a member? **Join us!**

Visit [BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass](https://BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass) to receive monthly email updates and the quarterly publication. It's Free!

Already a member and would like to receive the monthly email or need to make changes to your membership, visit [BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass](https://BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass)



**Susan M. Fontaine**

Loyalty Programs

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Baystate Mary Lane Outpatient Center  
413-967-2200

Baystate Franklin Medical Center

413-773-2433

Baystate Wing Hospital  
413-967-2200

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Baystate Health is a leading not-for-profit health system with the charitable mission of improving the health of the people in our communities every day, with quality and compassion.



**Baystate  
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Baystate Health Senior Class is a FREE loyalty program dedicated to health and wellness. The program is open to men and women ages 55 and over.

Find us on the web at [baystatehealth.org/seniorclass](https://baystatehealth.org/seniorclass) | Like Baystate Health on Facebook  
Go to [Youtube.com/baystatehealth](https://Youtube.com/baystatehealth) to see all the latest videos | Follow us on Instagram @Baystate\_Health



# Don't Sugar Coat It: Prediabetes, Know Your Risk



Chelsea Gordner, MD

Gordner adds, "The cause for concern is very real as diabetes is the leading cause of blindness, the seventh leading cause of death in the country, and can result in serious health problems, including heart disease, stroke, and limb amputation. In addition, it's one of the chronic conditions that increases the risk that a coronavirus infection will lead to severe illness, hospitalization or even death. Simply put, detection is key to preventing any of the potential negative outcomes of the disease."

## ARE YOU AT RISK FOR PREDIABETES?

You're at risk for developing prediabetes if you:

- Are overweight
- Are age 35 or older (based on new guidance in 2021)
- Have a parent, brother, or sister with type 2 diabetes
- Are physically active less than 3 times a week
- Have ever had gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy) or given birth to a baby who weighed more than 9 pounds
- Are African American, Hispanic/Latino American, American Indian, or Alaska Native (some Pacific Islanders and Asian Americans are also at higher risk)

## EXPERTS URGE EARLIER SCREENINGS FOR PREDIABETES

As recently as late August 2021, the United States Preventive Services Task Force revised its recommendation for screening for prediabetes in adults. The revised recommendation suggests people between the ages of 35 to 70 who are overweight or have obesity should be screened. The previous recommended age range was for people between 40 to 70 years of age.

Gordner notes, "Early detection is critical as the longer you have prediabetes, the greater the risk of developing complications. Screenings are relatively simple and if it reveals someone has prediabetes, they can then take steps to prevent the progression to type 2 diabetes."

Take the American Diabetes Association 60-second risk test.

## PREVENTION IS POSSIBLE

Type 2 diabetes is caused by a combination of genetics and lifestyle factors. While prevention may not be possible in every case there are steps you can take to delay or slow its progress. The key to it all is insulin.

According to Gordner, "Your body either doesn't make enough insulin or can't effectively use the insulin it does make. The good news is you can actually exert some control over your insulin levels through lifestyle changes and habits and potentially delay or even prevent the onset of full-blown diabetes."

**Some of the most beneficial actions you can take include:**

### **1. EAT HEALTHY**

A diet low in fat, sugar, and calories is key to managing blood sugar. The good news is you can find plenty of flavor and sweetness in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains that can actually help you feel fuller longer and lead to weight loss without making you feel deprived.

It also helps to pay attention to the amount of sugar in the foods you eat. When choosing packaged foods, check the label for sugar levels and recommended serving sizes. Download this infographic to learn more about the hidden sugars in common foods.

If you struggle to figure out what to eat, ask your doctor or contact a registered dietitian for help creating an eating plan that works for you.

### **2. GET MOVING**

Exercise can help you lose weight and lower your blood pressure and harmful cholesterol levels. It also lowers blood glucose (blood sugar) levels and boosts your body's sensitivity to insulin.

Aim for 150 minutes of aerobic activity a week—a simple walk will do—and avoid sitting for more than 30 minutes at a time. Try setting an alarm on your phone to prompt you to stand, stretch and move about every half hour.

### **3. GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP**

Getting too little sleep has the potential to undermine your other efforts to gain control of your insulin levels. Getting less than 7 hours of sleep per night can increase insulin resistance (raising your blood sugar level) and make you feel hungrier the next day. It can also increase the chances you'll reach for unhealthy foods and make you feel less full after eating.

Lack of sleep can even raise your blood pressure, increase the risk of a heart attack, and increase your risk of depression and anxiety.

### **4. KICK THE HABIT**

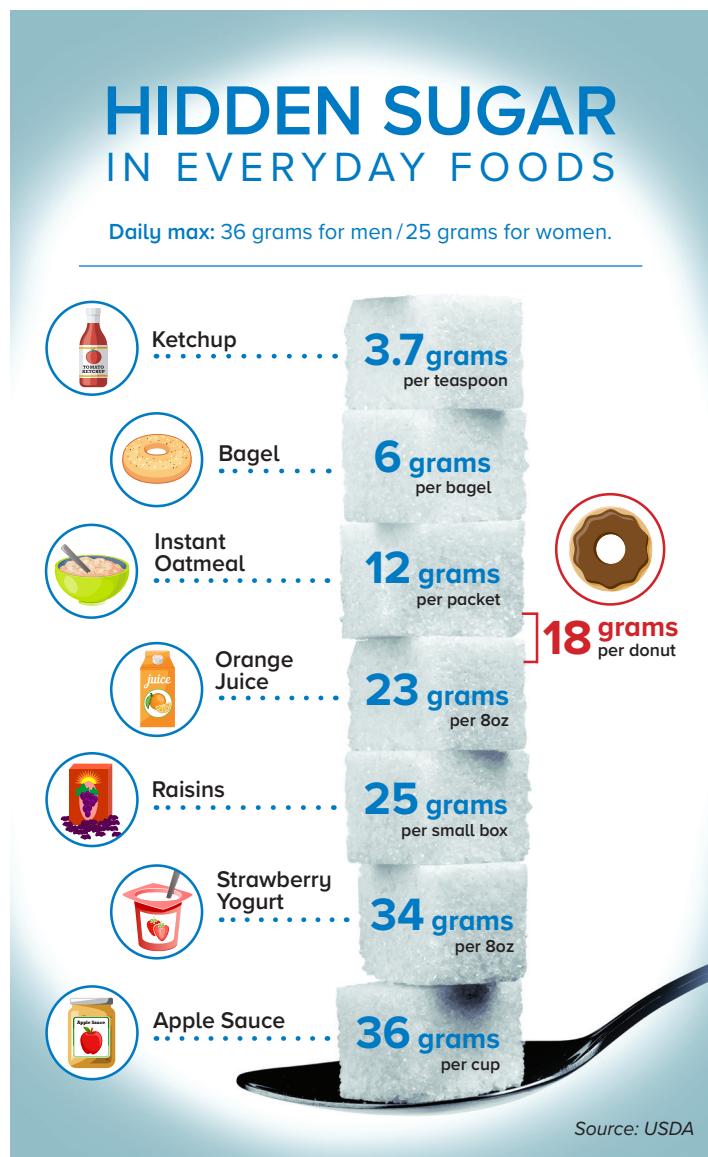
People who smoke are 30-40% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than those who don't smoke. Smoking while you have diabetes makes it more difficult to manage insulin levels and opens you up to more serious health problems including heart disease, kidney

disease, nerve damage, poor circulation, and more. For help quitting smoking, talk to your doctor and see these tips from the American Cancer Society.

Visit [baystatehealth.org/services/endocrinology/diabetes](http://baystatehealth.org/services/endocrinology/diabetes) for more information or scan code with cellphone camera.



**Watch the recorded event,** Beyond Sugar: Diabetes Solutions with Dr. Gordner at BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass and scroll to the event title.



# New Inspire Procedure For Treatment of Sleep Apnea

Joseph Bergeron doesn't know how many close calls he's had.

But, he does remember one.

"I was driving home from my job in Ware one night. I work second shift and it is about a 45-minute ride back home to Chicopee. When I got off my exit from the Mass. Turnpike, I pulled behind a truck with my foot on the brake. The next thing I knew, I hit the truck...my foot was off of the brake," Bergeron said.

"I continued to tell my wife how I would zone out while driving home and then the next thing I knew there would be a car in front of me. I was afraid it was going to be my demise. 'Well, you do stop breathing at least 10 times a night,' my wife told me," he added.

Bergeron was a patient of Dr. Daniel Plosky at Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeons of Western New England, and told him what was happening. Suspecting his patient was suffering from sleep apnea, he sent him to Baystate Medical Center for a sleep study.

## A COMMON CONDITION

Sleep apnea is a common condition that can occur when the upper airway becomes blocked repeatedly during sleep, reducing or completely stopping airflow. This is known as obstructive sleep apnea. Studies at a sleep center or at home can detect obstructive apneas or hypopnea events – which are times when your breathing stops or partially blocks during sleep – monitor blood oxygen levels during sleep, and in laboratory studies monitor brain activity during sleep.

Dr. Kranti Bhagi, a sleep medicine specialist at Baystate Medical Center, explained to Bergeron that

he stopped breathing 32 times per hour with large drops in his oxygen levels due to obstructive sleep apnea and that treatment was needed. She ordered a CPAP machine, the most common treatment for obstructive sleep apnea that uses air pressure to keep the airway open and improve breathing in sleep.

However, despite great improvements in CPAP masks and machines that are now silent and that have led to 85% of patients being able to use CPAP regularly, there are still patients who cannot tolerate the air pressure or full face or nasal masks used with the CPAP machine. The main reason for not using them is that patients often find them cumbersome and uncomfortable.

## A NEWER OPTION THAN CPAP

"I tried it, didn't like it, and was totally uncomfortable with the masks," Bergeron said, who would soon learn about a newer option called Inspire to treat his apnea.

Inspire is the only FDA approved obstructive sleep apnea treatment – deemed safe and effective in multiple clinical studies – that works inside the body to treat the root cause of sleep apnea. It is a small device placed under the skin of the neck and chest during a same-day, outpatient procedure that takes about two hours. When you go to bed for the night, Inspire is turned on by simply clicking the remote you were given. While sleeping, Inspire sends mild stimulation to the motor nerve that controls your tongue, moving it out of the way. The stimulation is very gentle and designed to move the tongue forward without disturbing your sleep.



"After the surgery to implant the device, the patient heals for one month and then Inspire is activated and the amount of stimulation is slowly increased until it controls snoring and the sleep apnea stopping the drops in oxygen and awakenings caused by obstructive sleep apnea. Inspire typically starts stimulating the tongue after a delay so the patient is able to fall asleep without any discomfort," said Dr. Karin Johnson, medical director, Baystate Health Regional Sleep Program and Baystate Medical Center Sleep Laboratory.

## A SLIGHT ADJUSTMENT

"Mr. Bergeron initially felt the tongue movements before falling asleep and felt they were not in sync with his breathing. After a quick adjustment to his stimulation settings in the office, he was able to tolerate Inspire without difficulty and his follow-up sleep study showed much improved sleep and breathing," she added.

The procedure was introduced at Baystate in December 2019, not long before COVID-19 shut down the country.

"It was something I had been aware of and now was getting more popular and established with success rates that were looking very favorable for patients. Previous surgical interventions for those patients who could not tolerate CPAP were painful and invasive, and their success rate did not compare to the Inspire device," Dr. Plosky said, who performs the surgery with Dr. Jonathan Y. Lee of Baystate Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery.

## A PARADIGM SHIFT

Dr. Lee first gained insight into Inspire during a fellowship at University for Pittsburgh Medical Center, which was an early adopter of the procedure.

"I was training in cranial facial surgery, part of which is learning how to address apnea through nasal surgery, so the concept of hypo nerve stimulation to increase muscle tone in the oral pharynx was at the time a paradigm shift in addressing the problem. When I arrived at Baystate four years ago, I soon learned that no one was offering the procedure in the area. That is when I began working with Dr. Plosky and Dr. Johnson to develop a program here," Dr. Lee said.

Candidates for Inspire must be over age 22 and have moderate to severe obstructive sleep apnea, are unable to use or get consistent benefit from CPAP, and must not be significantly obese.

## SCREENING EXAM REQUIRED

"When patients like Mr. Bergeron are referred to us they must undergo a screening exam to see if they are candidates for Inspire. The pre-screen exam is done in outpatient operating rooms at Baystate's Chestnut Surgery Center. The patient receives just enough general anesthesia medicines to mimic their normal sleep at home. Once we hear and see what their bed partner experiences each night, we understand the location of their upper airway collapse. Only a small proportion of patients are not appropriate for Inspire," Dr. Plosky said.

Drs. Lee and Plosky spent two days learning the procedure in New York, and they are the only physicians in western Massachusetts to offer Inspire.

"Dr. Lee and I were already working together to care for head and neck cancer patients. I would first remove the entire cancer and then Dr. Lee

would reconstruct the area to provide better function and aesthetics," Dr. Plosky said.

## A DELICATE SURGERY

The Inspire surgery requires delicate surgical techniques to identify the nerves that control tongue movement.

"Some parts of the nerve move the tongue forward and some move it backward or to the side. The nerves are separated using surgical loupes and operating microscopes to enhance our vision. The stimulator is wrapped around the correct branches and then connected to a generator which is placed below the collarbone just under the skin. A sensor that monitors when the patient tries to fill their lungs with air controls the timing of tongue movement," said Dr. Plosky.

"In regards to the incisions, we have modified our technique in line with a new FDA approved approach to place the device with only two incisions – one under the chin and one under the collar bone. The incisions are meticulously closed in layers with dissolvable sutures, so there is no need for suture removal in the office. Although the ultimate appearance of the scar is dependent on each individual's healing ability, most patients heal extremely well," added Dr. Lee about the surgery.

## POST-SURGERY RECOVERY

Most patients take over-the-counter pain medication and resume non-strenuous activities within a few days, and more strenuous activities within a couple of weeks.

The real value of Inspire is that patients who have tried everything else to get their apnea under control

now have Inspire as a last resort, noted Dr. Plosky.

"Its success is very high when used in the right patients who were really struggling with CPAP. And with Inspire they now have more freedom that they didn't have with CPAP. They don't have all the tubing and apparatus to worry about that comes along with CPAP when traveling," he said.

## EARNING HIGH RATINGS

According to the Inspire website, 90% of bed partners report no snoring or soft snoring; 94% of people are satisfied with Inspire; 96 of patients say it is better than CPAP and would recommend it to others, and there is a 79% reduction in sleep apnea events.

And Bergeron is happy with his results.

"I get up in the morning now feeling rested and head to the golf course by 7 am. After playing 18 holes, I return home to have lunch with my wife then go to work second shift. There's no more snoring, no more stopping breathing, and no more exhaustion," he said.

Inspire is covered by most major insurance providers, including Medicare.

**If you have sleep problems and want to learn more about treatment options, visit the Baystate Regional Sleep Program at [baystatehealth.org/sleep](http://baystatehealth.org/sleep) or scan code with cellphone camera.**



**Watch the recorded presentation,** Sleep Apnea Treatment: Freedom From Gear [BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass](http://BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass) and scroll to the event title.

# The Burning Facts About Skin Cancer and Melanoma



Richard Arenas, MD

Measuring just a few millimeters at its thickest point, your skin is your body's largest and heaviest organ. It plays an important role in regulating body temperature, preventing dehydration, relaying sensations (both painful and pleasurable) to the brain, and even producing hormones and enzymes critical to overall health.

And it does all that while being exposed to countless allergens, irritants, and most damaging of all, cancer-causing UV rays from the sun.

According to Dr. Richard Arenas of Baystate Surgical Oncology & Breast Specialists, skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S. "Almost 10,000 Americans are diagnosed with it daily," he says, adding that 4.9 million adults are treated for it annually. "That breaks down to 1 in 5 Americans developing skin cancer before age 70. While that may sound terrifying, the good news is that if it's caught early, it can be treated quite easily and successfully. But the key is understanding what causes skin cancer, what your risk factors are, and getting to a doctor when you notice changes to your skin."

## THE HARD TRUTH ABOUT SKIN CANCER AND RISK FACTORS

No matter where you live on the planet or the season you're experiencing, if you go outdoors, UV rays from the sun pose a risk to your skin.

"There's really no escaping exposure to the sun," says Arenas. "But that doesn't mean you should live in fear of enjoying spending time outdoors. In fact, there are some actual benefits to spending time in the sun—it helps your body produce Vitamin D and helps stave off depression in the winter months, just to name two. But you do need to take a few precautions to protect your skin. That's especially true if you have any of the widely recognized risk factors."

These risk factors include:

- History of sunburns, including blistering and peeling
- Light complexion and eye color
- Family and personal history
- Suppressed immune system
- Chronic skin inflammation

Even if you don't have any of these risk factors, it's important to avoid overexposure. Arenas notes, "While your body can repair some damage in skin cells, it can't repair all of it. The unrepaired damage builds up and has the potential to trigger the mutations that cause skin cancer."

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF OVEREXPOSURE

According to Arenas, UV exposure is a proven cause of certain types of skin cancer. He explains, “The surface of our skin is called the epidermis. It’s made up of three types of cells: basal, squamous, and melanocyte. UV rays can trigger abnormal growth in all these cell types. The type of cancer that develops is determined by the type of cell affected.”

Here’s a quick look at the three most common types of skin cancer:

### BASAL CELL CARCINOMA

- The most commonly diagnosed and treated type of skin cancer
- Usually occurs on sun exposed areas of the body
- Slow growing, rarely spreads
- If untreated, can cause deep ulcers

### SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA

- Second most common skin cancer
- Commonly occurs in sun damaged skin but can occur in unexposed skin areas
- Usually locally invasive but can grow deep into the skin, causing damage and disfigurement.
- Can be aggressive in spread or metastasize in high-risk patients often preceded by actinic keratosis, a rough, scaly patch on the skin

### MELANOMA

- The most serious skin cancer due to its ability to spread into the body
- The most common cancer in young adults (25-29)
- Frequently develops in a mole or suddenly appears as a new dark spot on the skin
- Can develop anywhere on the body including palm of the hands, soles of the feet, and in finger or toenail beds

Regardless of the type of cancer, Arenas notes that early detection is key. “Knowing what to look for makes it possible for anyone to detect cancer early when it’s easiest to cure, and before it can become disfiguring or, at worst, deadly.”

“  
THAT BREAKS DOWN TO  
1 IN 5 AMERICANS DEVELOPING  
SKIN CANCER BEFORE AGE 70.  
WHILE THAT MAY SOUND  
TERRIFYING, THE GOOD  
NEWS IS THAT IF IT'S  
CAUGHT EARLY, IT CAN  
BE TREATED QUITE EASILY  
AND SUCCESSFULLY.”

— Richard Arenas, MD



### For more information

visit [BaystateHealth.org/Cancer](http://BaystateHealth.org/Cancer) or scan code with cellphone camera.



Watch the recorded presentation,  
Burning Facts About Skin Cancer  
and Melanoma with Dr. Arenas at  
[BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass](http://BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass)  
and scroll to the event title.



# Can I Drive?

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DRIVING EDUCATION

The first speeding ticket was issued in 1902 but roadways, cars, and laws have changed a lot since then. If there have been life changes such as memory loss, changes in vision, changes in physical coordination or strength, ability to problem-solve, changes in medical status or medications, a driving assessment is available. A 90 minute in-clinic assessment with a licensed Occupation Therapist trained in driving rehabilitation will provide physical, visual, cognitive, and functional assessments as well as testing in a driving simulator and much more. Even if you have been driving for decades, it's important to think about what keeps you safe.

**For more information or to make an appointment  
call Baystate Rehabilitation Care at 413-794-1600.**

# NEW HEALTH NEW ENGLAND \$0 MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PPO PLAN



## Members can use any doctor who takes Medicare...Anywhere in the U.S.

Health New England, Western Massachusetts' local not-for-profit health plan, announces a new \$0 Medicare Advantage PPO plan that gives members the flexibility to use any doctor who takes Medicare anywhere in the United States.

Features of Health New England's new Medicare Advantage PPO plan include:

- Coverage that travels with you – use Medicare doctors anywhere
- \$0 premium option
- No medical deductible
- \$0 telehealth
- No referrals needed to see a specialist
- Built in prescription drug coverage

People can enroll during Medicare's Annual Enrollment Period, October 15 to December 7, 2021.

"Flexibility is the key to our new Medicare Advantage PPO plan. People want the service and savings Health New England is known for, but they want the peace of mind knowing that they are

covered no matter where in the U.S. they may need care," said Andre Gabryjelski, Health New England's Director of Medicare. "This new plan offers that option, whether traveling or wintering down south." Wherever someone chooses to use their benefits, the new Medicare Advantage PPO plan offers greater coverage than traditional Medicare, coverage for prescription drugs, and more than \$600 in allowances and reimbursements, including for vision care, dental, fitness center/WW® (formerly Weight Watchers®)/acupuncture/activity trackers, and over-the-counter items.

When within Massachusetts, Medicare Advantage PPO plan members can access a network of thousands of providers, including those at Health New England's health care system partner, Baystate Health, where they can enjoy integrated care and coverage.

Medicare-eligible customers can also choose from a variety of Health New England Medicare Advantage HMO plans and access a network of more than 11,000 providers locally.

## Medicare Annual Enrollment Period – Starts October 15

Medicare Open Enrollment for 2022 begins October 15! This is the time of year when most people have the option of making changes to their Medicare plan, including prescription drug coverage (Medicare Part D).

Whether you've just started thinking about Medicare or already have a plan, there are many resources available to help you understand your options.

To learn more about Medicare, speak with a Medicare Specialist by calling (855) 599-0464 (TTY 711) or sign up for a Medicare information session with Health New England:

Scan code with cellphone camera or visit [info.healthnewengland.org/medicare-bh](http://info.healthnewengland.org/medicare-bh)





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## Doing More with a Simple, Flexible Gift

**"I wish I could do more."**

This is a sentiment that many community members who support the lifesaving and life-enhancing mission of Baystate Health have shared with us.

In fact, many donors who make legacy gifts to Baystate Health Foundation are not donors who give away substantial amounts each year. They may worry about outliving their money or they may not be comfortable with making significant gifts during their lifetime.

One thing they all share in common is that they care about quality

healthcare and this community.

Donors choose the simple and flexible option of making a gift in their will or trust. Or they may name Baystate Health Foundation as a percentage beneficiary of a life insurance policy or a retirement, bank or securities account.

These gifts may be the largest charitable contributions they will ever make. They give because they want to make a difference for those who come after them. They give because it brings them joy. They give to support what matters most to them and to carry on their legacy.

At Baystate Health Foundation, we celebrate these donors as Legacy Society members.

Every legacy gift we receive has made an impact on Baystate Health. From \$5,000 gifts that help support infants fighting for their lives to \$25,000 gifts that have helped train cardiac surgeons in the cutting-edge treatments to \$100,000 gifts and more that have helped to build state-of-the-art facilities to bring the best in care to our community.

Gifts of all sizes matter. Please consider joining with other community members to create your own legacy gift to Baystate Health. We're here to help. For a **FREE guide to including a gift in your will or through a beneficiary designation**, reach out to Kylie Johnson at 413-794-7789 or Kylie.Johnson@BaystateHealth.org.