



**M**ark your calendar now for Scale Back Alabama 2019. Join us for the thirteenth year of Scale Back Alabama as it kicks off on January 15, 2019. Scale Back Alabama is a free, statewide campaign that encourages adults in Alabama to get healthier by eating better and moving more.

### Attention Schools!

The Scale Back Alabama School program is an additional component of Scale Back Alabama which gives school personnel the opportunity to be healthy role models for their students. Also, as a result of their participation, each school will be entered into a drawing to win nutrition and physical activity-oriented prizes.

### Becoming a Scale Back Alabama School is easy:

- ◆ Go to [www.scalebackalabama.com](http://www.scalebackalabama.com) for instructions on signing up for Scale Back Alabama. Your school will need a coordinator to get started. On the website, you will find the Coordinators Only section for all the resources on being a coordinator.
- ◆ All schools (k-12) that sign up as a weigh-in site for Scale Back Alabama will automatically be entered in the Scale Back Alabama School program. Students

are not allowed to participate and weight loss for students is not being encouraged.

- ◆ If your school does not have a coordinator or does not wish to be a weigh-in site, check the Scale Back Alabama website for a public site in your area so you do not miss out on the fun! Be sure to let us know your school teams are using a public site so it is still eligible for prizes.
- ◆ Scale Back Alabama Schools receive special recognition and are entered into a school drawing for prizes that promote good nutrition and physical activity habits for the students. These prizes are in addition to the team and individual drawings for cash prizes.

It is a win-win for schools. School personnel work to achieve a healthier lifestyle while their students cheer them on and learn the importance of healthy habits.

### Registration and more:

- ◆ Teams of two (over age 18) can register early at [www.scalebackalabama.com](http://www.scalebackalabama.com) or in person at a weigh-in site.
- ◆ Schools that decide to be a weigh-in site (public or private) must register at least three teams of two.
- ◆ Receive health tips and family centered information for healthier lives.

### Sign up for the App!

The Scale Back Alabama Phone App will help you get the most current information and health tips. The app allows you to log calories, track exercise, and find the closest weigh-in site near you!

### Important program dates:

- ◆ Statewide program kickoff: Jan. 15
- ◆ Initial weigh-in and registration week: Jan. 21-27
- ◆ Final weigh-out week: April 1-7
- ◆ Final event and announcement of winners: April 16

For more information about the Scale Back Alabama School program, please contact Molly Killman at 334.206.5646 or by email at [molly.killman@adph.state.al.us](mailto:molly.killman@adph.state.al.us).

Scale Back Alabama is sponsored by the Alabama Hospital Association and the Alabama Department of Public Health in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama. ●

[www.scalebackalabama.com](http://www.scalebackalabama.com)

# Give Yourself the Gift of Pack Health

**W**ith Christmas and the holidays fast approaching, it is common to feel stressed, and even more so if you have concerns about your health. There is a lot of joy to be had in this season of celebration, but sometimes all of the events, visitors, meals, parties, etc. can become overwhelming. Do not let your holiday spirit get knocked down due to stress! To help navigate the potential stresses and learn tips to still enjoy the delicious meals without going overboard, **PEEHIP in partnership with Blue Cross offers personalized Health Advisors through Pack Health, a local Alabama company offering day-to-day support, guidance, and accountability to help you achieve your health goals and live your healthiest life.**

According to a study, the leading causes of anxiety around the holidays are lack of time, lack of funds, and the holiday hype – from the media, television advertisements, and of course, keeping up with the Jones' next door.

It may be that the hustle and bustle of family members and friends traveling to town, mixed with the stresses of planning a perfect menu, feels like a lot to endure right now. On the flipside, the holidays may exacerbate feelings of loneliness if you are missing someone you've lost, get stuck home sick, or don't have family around. Either way, when you are juggling the many facets of holiday stress, the following tips from Pack Health may help you stay strong and find joy in this special time of year.

## Preparing for the Time Crunch

For all our holiday hosts out there, anyone who is worried they might not get things done in time, there are things you can do to keep calm and stay on track.

### ◆ **Plan Your Plates**

Last minute running around to grab a few forgotten ingredients or figure out your holiday plans can add unwanted (and unneeded) stress to your life.

Try to allot specific days to shopping, connecting with friends, and cooking. Focus on menu planning, and then creating a grocery list to stay on task.

Always remember to set aside time for rest! **Pro tip:** roasting vegetables is one of the easiest, healthiest things you can bring to the holiday table, and can be done with little to no mess!\*

### ◆ **Be the Boss**

Delegate tasks to make planning, preparation, and cleanup a breeze! Family members and friends come in great handy in this department. Your Pack Health Health Advisor can help you sort out which tasks are best offloaded to whom if you need to talk it out.

### ◆ **Say No When Needed**

It is okay to say no to sampling food

or participating in things, especially if you are feeling unwell, overly full, overwhelmed, tired, or stressed. Friends and family will understand when you have had enough and need a night or afternoon to recharge and unwind. Chances are, they need a little R&R too!

## Be Stronger than Financial Pressures

Whether you are hosting, getting gifts for the grandkids, or just a big fan of holiday sales, the key to maintaining your finances through the holiday season is planning ahead.

### ◆ **Stick to a Specific Budget**

The holidays are expensive, but there are ways to be smart and budget to not break the bank. Determine a specific amount of money for each area of your shopping list – food, presents and hosting/traveling expenses – and stick to it! For a foolproof plan, ask your Health Advisor to share our Six Steps to a Debt-Free Holiday guide.

## Celebrate Your Way

The holiday hype can give you an idea of what you should be feeling or doing or experiencing this time of year, but the reality is, none of us is feeling or acting like a television commercial all season long. And we should not be! Being real is a big part of being healthy. Here is how that breaks down.

### ◆ **Recognize your Feelings**

If you are feeling tired, stressed, sad, or angry, it is okay. Acknowledge these feelings rather than ignoring them. Allow yourself to have a few minutes of alone time, or to partake in something else that helps you re-center, then make the most of your holiday season.

### ◆ **Remember to Maintain Healthy Habits**

Stick to your healthy eating and fitness goals that you and your Health Advisor have worked hard on, and do not overindulge on any and everything! Allow yourself a treat or two, but try to stay on track.

### ◆ **Seek Community**

The holidays can sometimes be quite lonely, especially after the loss of a loved one, or when diagnosed with a chronic condition. If you do not have family coming to town, seek out a holiday event with friends, or a dinner at your church or community center. Your Health Advisor can help you find and prepare for the event that is right for you, and surrounding yourself with love can help brighten your spirits!

### ◆ **It's OK to be Alone**

There may be days when you just cannot make it to the party. It happens to the best of us! If you know or think this could be you this year, the key is to have your alternative activity planned in advance. Will you snuggle up with a good book or a favorite film? Do you want to touch base with an online support group and find community there? Your Health Advisor can help you come up with a plan you can look forward to.

### ◆ **Be Realistic**

Pack Health frequently talks about the power of taking tiny steps and the pitfalls of big bad goals. Still, when the holidays come around, there's a tendency to think go big or go home. Don't hold yourself to an unreachable goal/standard. Things do not have to be perfect, chances are they will turn out great if you can just enjoy the moment. By giving a little thought to what is essential, and what is not, you can set yourself up for a day that works for you.

Let's have a fun and stress-free Christmas and holiday season! Do you have a tip to share? One that helps you with budgeting, planning ahead, or coping with sadness that comes around this time of year? Please share it with PEEHIP and Pack Health on Facebook or Twitter.

***Personalized one-on-one Health Advisors from Pack Health are an elite benefit available free of charge for a limited number of PEEHIP members. If you enroll in one of Pack Health's programs – available for pre-diabetes, weight loss, rheumatoid arthritis, or chronic musculoskeletal pain – you'll get weekly coaching calls, encouraging text messages, and personalized follow-up for your specific health goals. All it takes is 15-20 minutes to get started on giving yourself the gift of your healthiest you. So make this a holiday season to remember, and get started on your journey with Pack Health! Simply visit [www.packhealth.com/PEEHIP](http://www.packhealth.com/PEEHIP) or call 855.255.2362.***

Source: <https://packhealth.com/getting-ahead-of-the-holiday-hoopla/> ●

\* Your Health Advisor can provide you with Pack Health's member-tested, nutritionist-approved roasting guide.

# Preventing Diabetes During Every Season

Helping you with pre-diabetes and diabetes prevention and management

## What Is Prediabetes?

Prediabetes is a serious health condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough yet to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. Approximately 84 million American adults—more than 1 out of 3—have prediabetes. **Of those with prediabetes, 90% don't know they have it.** Prediabetes puts you at increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

The good news is that if you have prediabetes, the CDC-led National Diabetes Prevention Program can help you make lifestyle changes to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes and other serious health problems.

## What Causes Prediabetes?

Insulin is a hormone made by your pancreas that acts like a key to let blood sugar into cells for use as energy. If you have prediabetes, the cells in your body don't respond normally to insulin. Your pancreas makes more insulin to try to get cells to respond. Eventually your pancreas can't keep up, and your blood sugar rises, setting the stage for prediabetes—and type 2 diabetes down the road.

## Signs & Symptoms

**You can have prediabetes for years but have no clear symptoms, so it often goes undetected until serious health problems such as type 2 diabetes show up.** It's important to talk to your doctor about getting your blood sugar tested if you have any of the risk factors for prediabetes, which include:

- ◆ Being overweight
- ◆ Being 45 years or older
- ◆ Having a parent, brother, or sister with type 2 diabetes
- ◆ Being physically active less than 3 times a week
- ◆ Ever having gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy) or giving birth to a baby who weighed more than 9 pounds
- ◆ Having polycystic ovary syndrome



## The good news: Prediabetes can be reversed.

Race and ethnicity are also a factor: African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and some Asian Americans are at higher risk.

## Simple Blood Sugar Test

You can get a simple blood sugar test to find out if you have prediabetes. Ask your doctor if you should be tested.

## Preventing Type 2 Diabetes

If you have prediabetes, losing a small amount of weight if you're overweight and getting regular physical activity can lower your risk for developing type 2 diabetes. A small amount of weight loss means around 5% to 7% of your body weight, just 10 to 14 pounds for a 200-pound person. Regular physical activity means getting at least 150-minutes a week of brisk walking or a similar activity. That's just 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

Ask your doctor about more ways, specific to your health needs that will help you prevent diabetes.

Also, for members enrolled in the PEEHIP Blue Cross Group 14000 plan, see the article "Give Yourself the Gift of Pack Health" in this newsletter for a personalized program matching you with a dedicated Health Advisor from Pack Health who can help you prevent the difficult challenges brought about by type 2 diabetes. To reach Pack Health, visit [www.packhealth.com/PEEHIP](http://www.packhealth.com/PEEHIP) or call 855.255.2362.

For members enrolled in the PEEHIP UnitedHealthcare® Group Medicare Advantage (PPO) plan, UnitedHealthcare® also offers free programs designed to help you prevent or manage diabetes and other conditions. To reach UnitedHealthcare® to see what personalized programs are available to help you achieve better health, call United Healthcare at 877.298.2341, TTY 711.

The best time to prevent type 2 diabetes is now. ●

## Flex Filing Deadline Approaching Fast

**A**s explained on the PEEHIP HealthEquity website at <https://learn.healthequity.com/peehip/fsa/>, the deadline to file for reimbursement from your 2018 PEEHIP Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) plan is January 15, 2019. If you were enrolled in the Health FSA or Dependent Care Reimbursement Account (DCRA) between October 1, 2017, and September 30, 2018, there is still time to file for reimbursement of expenses incurred by September 30, 2018.

Submit your request online at [www.myhealthequity.com](http://www.myhealthequity.com) or mail in a reimbursement form along with supporting documentation to HealthEquity. Unused funds contributed to a FSA plan cannot be refunded. All unused funds remaining in your 2018 DCRA and in excess of \$500 in your Health FSA after the January 15, 2019, filing deadline will be forfeited. To check your balance, login to your HealthEquity online account or contact customer service at 877.288.0719. ●



# Flu Facts

**W**hen flu season comes around, it is important to know the facts. You can help protect yourself and your family from infection by learning more about the flu. Then, take steps to prevent it by following these tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## When can a person pass the flu along?

Adults may be contagious from one day before developing symptoms to up to five days after getting sick. Children can be contagious for more than seven days.<sup>1</sup>

## Are there ways to prevent it?

One of the best ways to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated each fall, if possible.<sup>1</sup> This is especially important for people that are at a higher risk for flu complications. Flu shots are the primary method for preventing the flu and its severe complications. The flu shot protects you from the seasonal flu, H1N1, and other forms of the flu virus<sup>1</sup>, so only one shot is required. An annual flu shot is generally recommended for the following groups:

- ◆ Children aged 6 months to 18 years
- ◆ Persons aged 50 years and older
- ◆ People with a chronic medical condition
- ◆ Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season
- ◆ Residents of nursing homes and other chronic or long-term care facilities
- ◆ Healthcare workers
- ◆ People in contact with children from birth to five years

Talk with your doctor about getting a flu shot if you or a family member falls into one of these categories.

## When is the best time to get a flu shot?

Yearly flu shots usually begin in September or as soon as the vaccine is available and continue throughout the flu season, into December, January, and beyond. This is because the timing and duration of flu seasons vary. While flu outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time flu activity peaks in January or later.<sup>2</sup>

## Is the flu vaccine effective against all types of flu and cold viruses?

The flu vaccine is your best protection against flu viruses.<sup>1</sup> However, the vaccine does not provide protection against non-flu viruses that can cause colds and other respiratory illnesses. It can sometimes be hard to tell the difference between a cold and the flu based on symptoms alone.<sup>3</sup> The flu vaccine won't protect you from cold or flu viruses that are already in your body when you get a flu shot. The flu vaccine takes about two weeks to provide protection from the flu, and it's your best protection to prevent the most common types of flu this season.

## Can a flu shot give you the flu?

No. Inactivated influenza vaccine contains noninfectious killed viruses and cannot cause the flu.<sup>4</sup>

## What else can you do?

It's important to be watchful to protect yourself from the flu. Consider following these steps to prevent the spread of infection<sup>5</sup>:

- ◆ Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- ◆ Stay home if you're sick.
- ◆ Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- ◆ Wash your hands often.
- ◆ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- ◆ Practice good health habits.

## What are my options for getting a flu shot?

- ◆ Getting a flu shot is easy and convenient and is available at the options below:
- ◆ Your doctor's office
- ◆ Your local pharmacy
- ◆ The Alabama Dept. of Public Health (ADPH)
  - ◆ To see a listing of available and upcoming flu shot clinics offered by ADPH, please visit <https://dph1.adph.state.al.us/PublicCal/>

There is no additional cost or copay for any of the flu shot options above. Please remember to bring your PEEHIP ID card to whichever location you choose for your vaccine. Note: Members covered under the PEEHIP UnitedHealthcare® Group Medicare Advantage (PPO) Plan: Be sure to show your UnitedHealthcare® ID card at the time of getting a flu shot from ADPH, your doctor, or your pharmacy. For more information on the flu vaccine and your available options, please visit <http://www.rsa-al.gov/index.php/members/peehip/health-wellness/flu-shots/>. ●

## Sources:

1. "Key Facts." Influenza (Flu), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3 Oct. 2017, [www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm).
2. "Vaccinations." Influenza (Flu), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 14 June 2018, [www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/vaccinations.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/vaccinations.htm).
3. "Vaccine Effects." Influenza (Flu), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3 Oct. 2017, [www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/vaccine-effect.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/vaccine-effect.htm).
4. "Misconceptions." Influenza (Flu), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 3 Oct. 2017, [www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/misconceptions.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/misconceptions.htm).
5. "Flu Prevention." Influenza (Flu), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 9 Feb. 2018, [www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/prevention.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/prevention.htm).

## Medicare-Eligible PEEHIP Members

**T**he information below pertains to PEEHIP members covered under the UnitedHealthcare® Group Medicare Advantage (PPO) plan. For more information, visit [www.UHCRetiree.com/peehip](http://www.UHCRetiree.com/peehip)

## Annual Notice of Change

Like all Medicare plans, UnitedHealthcare® will soon be sending an Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) document that lists any changes to your plan from the prior year. The ANOC will explain any coverage, cost, or service area changes that would become effective January 1, 2019. ●