



Putting the 'Me' in Medicare eBook

A Guide to Total Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

[AetnaMedicare.com](https://www.aetna.com/medicare)

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Introduction

Like many of us, you may be having a hard time focusing on your total health — body, mind and spirit — during the COVID-19 pandemic. You're not alone. A recent study found that nearly half of Americans are struggling to maintain their health.¹ Yet, now more than ever, it's important to take care of yourself.

As president of Aetna® Medicare and the primary caregiver for my own 93-year-old parents, I know this can be very challenging. That's why I'm excited to share our "Putting the 'Me' in Medicare eBook." In the pages that follow, you will find tips, resources, activities and expert advice on some of the health topics we've heard firsthand are top-of-mind for our Medicare members.

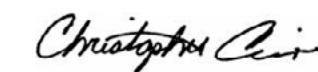
We teamed up with experts on topics ranging from eating healthy and staying active to using technology tools and maintaining mental health. These experts include U.S. figure skater Dorothy Hamill* and others from [Meals on Wheels America](#), [SilverSneakers® fitness program](#) and [Resources for Living®](#) telephone referral service. We also turned to CVS Health® executives including:

- Garth Graham, MD, MPH, Vice President, Community Health, and Chief Community Health Officer, CVS Health
- Alena Baquet-Simpson, MD, Senior Director, Medical Health Services, Aetna Medicare
- Adam Pellegrini, Senior Vice President, Enterprise Virtual Care and Consumer Health, CVS Health
- Sheryl Burke, Senior Vice President, Cross-Enterprise Strategic Innovation, Aetna

As part of the CVS Health family, Aetna Medicare takes a total, connected approach to your health — giving you the confidence to age actively on your terms. We hope these resources help you put the *me* in Medicare.



Stay safe & healthy,



Christopher Ciano
President of Medicare at Aetna,
a CVS Health® company

¹The Regis Group, COVID-19 spurs increase in self-care, new survey shows; June 3, 2020; available at https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-06/trg-csi060220.php. Accessed August 14, 2020.

* This is a paid endorsement for Aetna.



Chapter 1:

Eating healthy

Eating healthy is important for your total health — a fact that becomes even more relevant as you age. Not only can a healthy diet have a positive effect on your weight, energy and nutrition, it can also help you manage or prevent chronic conditions such as diabetes or heart disease.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on how we access healthy food. It has also caused stress and added challenges to other aspects of our lives. So, it's more important than ever to remember that there are resources available to help you eat healthy.

This chapter includes:

- A Q&A on eating healthy from Garth Graham, MD, MPH, Vice President, Community Health, and Chief Community Health Officer, CVS Health®
- A guide to eating healthy during the pandemic
- A photo journey of two Aetna Medicare Advantage members who used a meal delivery service to help them stay healthy while managing chronic conditions

How your diet affects your total health



Q&A with Garth Graham, MD, MPH

Vice President, Community Health, and Chief Community Health Officer, CVS Health®

Q. What health trends are you following among the Medicare-aged population?

I'm most concerned about how people can age in the healthiest way possible.

Unfortunately, **obesity is on the rise among the 65+ population — the most recent data shows as much as 40% of the older population is dealing with this condition.** Unhealthy eating habits can lead to

obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. So we are very focused on helping people eat healthy and exercise so they can age actively.

Q. How does diet directly affect your total health? And, what are some foods that you should always have in your refrigerator or pantry that are both healthy and taste good?

The food you eat has a direct effect on your health. Foods that are heavy in fats, especially trans fats, and red meat can lead to specific health issues like obesity. Fresh fruits and vegetables can provide balance to your diet.

Eating is also very culturally specific and varies from person to person. I am from the Caribbean and enjoy bananas, fruits and green leafy vegetables in the way my mom used to make them. I always tell people to make healthy choices that fit within the food groups that they enjoy, but keep the portions healthy.

“ I always tell people to make healthy choices that fit within the food groups that they enjoy, but keep the portions healthy.

Q. For many, COVID-19 has made accessing food harder than ever. Do you have any tips or resources you can point to, especially for those who are looking to maintain a healthy diet?

Social distancing does not have to mean unhealthy. I tell my own parents to plan out meals in advance and think about where and how to purchase them. Look for ingredients that make multiple healthy foods. Consider meal delivery options and work with family, a delivery service or friends

to help. If you choose to get food delivery from restaurants, try to choose healthy options from the menu where you can.

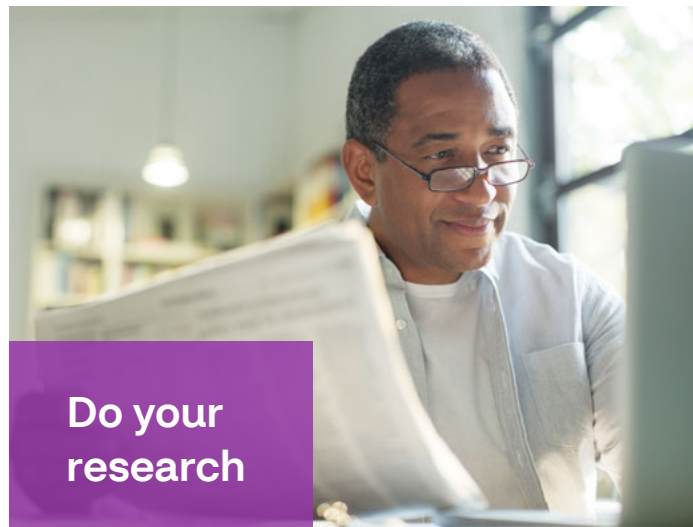
Q. How can people use digital platforms to eat healthy?

People are increasingly familiar with telemedicine, especially in light of COVID-19, and we see older people more and more comfortable using digital platforms to take care of their own health. This opens the door to using other digital tools to support health.

I encourage you to try new things. Consider using a diet tracking app to help monitor your diet. You can also check out senior-focused videos on YouTube, or [Go4Life](#) by the National Institutes of Health. Meal kit services, which often require you to select your meals online, are also a good option.

Eating healthy in a pandemic

Eating healthy — even without a pandemic — can be a challenge. Recent events have only made it more difficult. But there are steps you can take and resources you can use to help you safely maintain a healthy diet during this time.



Do your research

Of course, we want you to stay home to lower the risk of contracting COVID-19. But we understand that sometimes you just have to head to the grocery store. But you might want to consider other options. Many local grocers, for instance, have partnered with grocery-delivery services such as [Instacart](#), [Shipt](#) or [Amazon Fresh](#). These businesses will bring groceries right to your door.

Also, some grocery chains are offering special shopping hours just for seniors and other at-risk groups. Some are also offering online ordering with contact-free pickup at the store.

If your area has neither of those options, try asking the store what their least busy days and hours are. Then time your shopping accordingly.



Plan ahead

Once you've done your research on how best to get your groceries, sit down with a calendar and plan out what and when you want to eat.

By mapping out your meals and shopping list, you can make sure you have everything you need for the time period you are buying for. This will limit the amount of time you'll need to

actually spend in a store, should you need to enter one. It'll also help you avoid buying anything that you don't need. It'll even help you recognize unhealthy eating patterns that you might not catch otherwise. Finally, planning meals in advance allows you to eliminate an element of uncertainty from your days, which means less stress and worry.



Get food with multiple uses

While you're planning your meals and ordering your groceries, make sure to include foods that you not only enjoy eating, but that provide you with the most flexible options for use. For example, spinach can be used in a salad, steamed or sautéed — each offering a great, and different, addition to any meal.

If you don't like spinach, no problem! Think of your favorite vegetable and go back to step one: Research. Pull out your favorite cookbook or go online to look up new ways to cook your old favorites. [This list](#) from HealthLine might help get you started. Remember, it's important

to eat healthy and in moderation — but it's also important to enjoy the foods you're putting into your body.



Don't be afraid to ask for help

This is a stressful time for everyone. It's important to remember that you're not in this alone. If you're having trouble buying and eating healthy foods, don't hesitate to reach out to your family, friends or local community resources. They may be able to help you by picking up groceries, helping you design meal plans or even just by acting as a support system and listening if you need to talk.

Medicare Advantage plans may also offer resources and benefits that can help support you in this way. For example, at Aetna, we offer access to [Resources For Living](#)® telephone referral service. Their consultants can help connect you with services and resources within your community.

Dora and Ramon's health journey with Meals on Wheels

Last year, we shared a video series celebrating all the different “[Medicare Moments](#)” people may experience along their path to better health. Aetna® Medicare members Dora and Ramon* [shared their story](#) on staying healthy through good food, delivered to them by a meal delivery service within their community.



Ramon, who had retired due to a chronic illness, explained he only had one kidney and needed dialysis. This required close attention to his diet, a responsibility that Dora, his wife and primary caregiver, took on.

Through their Aetna Medicare Advantage plan, Dora and Ramon were connected with a [Resources For Living](#)® consultant, who then connected them with a community-based meal-delivery program called [Meals on Wheels](#).

For Dora and Ramon, the benefits of this program were twofold. First, they were brought multiple healthy, nutritious meals every week. This took pressure off Dora and helped Ramon manage his condition. The program also gave the couple the chance to connect with their local community in a new way — often spending meaningful time chatting with the volunteer who delivered their meals.

* Last names not used to protect member privacy.

Adapting to the pandemic, Meals on Wheels programs across the country are even busier these days. They offer contact-free delivery by staff or volunteers provided with hand sanitizer and face masks. And they do phone calls instead of in-person check-ins.

Whether you have access to Meals on Wheels, use an alternative form of food delivery, or cook for yourself at home, you can still share a healthy meal remotely. Try to set up “dinner dates” with a friend or family member and call or video chat with them during the meal.

This added sense of connectedness can help you just as much as the healthy meal on your plate.





Chapter 2:



Maintaining mental health

Good health isn't just physical. Our minds and bodies are interconnected and have a huge influence on each other. That's why it's important to consider your mental and emotional health along with your physical health. In fact, addressing your mental and emotional needs can directly improve your physical well-being.

COVID-19 has had a serious impact on the mental and emotional health of many people. So it's more important than ever that we address these needs.

This chapter includes:

- A Q&A with Christopher Ciano, President of Aetna® Medicare
- A word search that will give you insights on staying mindful
- A note from Sheryl Burke, Senior Vice President of Cross Enterprise Strategic Innovation at Aetna
- Tips on how to stay calm during COVID-19 from [Resources For Living®](#) telephone referral service

How mental health affects your total health



Q&A with Christopher Ciano

President of Aetna® Medicare

Q. Why is mental health important?

We all know that eating healthy and aging actively are important to maintaining physical well-being. Equally important to our total health

is our mental and emotional well-being, especially as we age. One of the best ways to maintain our mental and emotional health is by staying socially connected.

Unfortunately, older adults are at high risk for social isolation as many live alone or may have lost some social connections over time. Social isolation can lead to an increased risk of depression,

heart attack, stroke or even a weakened immune system. In fact, **studies have shown that loneliness and social isolation can be as harmful to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.**

This is why it's so important that we focus on a total and connected approach to health.

Q. Why is it especially important now?

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on our collective mental health, and baby boomers have specifically **reported** feeling lonelier because of the pandemic.

While safe social distancing practices are critical for our physical health, we must also find safe ways to stay connected to our families, friends and community to maintain our mental and emotional well-being.

“ Find creative ways to stay in touch with friends, loved ones and your local community.”

Q. When it comes to maintaining mental health while practicing social distancing, what should people keep in mind?

At Aetna®, we are encouraging our Medicare members to stay home as much as possible to limit exposure to COVID-19. However, social distancing does not mean you can't maintain your physical or emotional health.

We recommend that you continue to seek preventive and primary medical care, especially if you have a chronic condition. Regular virtual visits with a health professional can help ensure overall health.

Also, while it's important to stay informed, make sure you don't spend too much time consuming negative news that can create fear and anxiety.

And, perhaps most importantly, find creative ways to stay in touch with friends, loved ones and your local community.

Here are some ideas I encourage my 93-year-old parents to engage in:

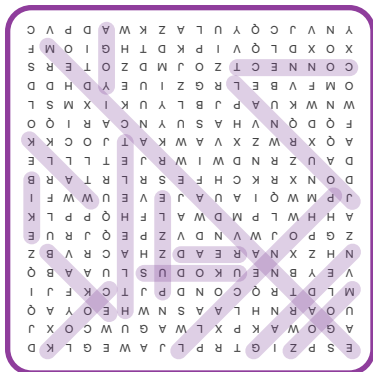
- Use [Google's Arts and Culture page](#) to explore famous monuments, sports arenas, museums and more.
- Complete word scrambles, or check out free online resources that can help keep your mind active, such as [the Daily Word Search](#), [the Daily Crossword](#), [Brain Trainer](#), [Tetris](#) or [Solitaire](#).
- Take part in a family Zoom game night!

Word Search

Part of caring for your mental health is keeping an active brain. Studies have shown that word games and puzzles are some of the best ways to help us keep our brains active.

In this word search, you'll find a list of words — found in any direction — that can help you not only keep your brain active, but also stay mindful. The best part? Many of the activities listed can be done from the comfort of your own home.

Flip this page for the answer key!



BAKE

BIKE

CONNECT

COOK

GARDEN

JOURNAL

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

PHONE CALL

PUZZLES

READ

SUDOKU

TELEHEALTH

WALK

YOGA

ZOOM

E	S	P	Z	I	G	T	R	P	L	J	A	W	E	G	L	K	D
A	G	O	W	A	K	P	X	L	W	A	G	U	W	C	O	X	J
U	O	A	R	N	H	L	A	A	S	N	W	H	E	O	Y	A	Q
M	L	D	T	R	Q	C	O	N	D	P	J	T	C	K	F	J	I
V	E	Y	B	N	E	U	K	O	D	U	S	L	U	A	A	B	Q
N	H	Z	X	N	A	R	E	A	D	Z	H	A	C	R	V	B	Z
Z	G	P	O	J	W	V	N	D	V	Z	P	E	Q	J	R	U	E
A	H	H	W	L	P	M	D	W	A	L	F	H	Q	P	P	L	K
J	P	M	W	Q	I	A	U	A	J	E	V	E	U	W	W	F	I
D	O	N	X	R	K	C	H	F	E	S	R	L	R	T	A	R	B
D	A	U	Z	R	N	D	W	I	W	R	J	E	T	L	L	L	E
A	Q	X	R	W	Z	X	V	A	W	K	A	T	J	O	C	K	K
F	Q	D	Q	N	V	H	A	S	U	Y	N	C	A	R	I	Q	O
W	N	W	K	U	A	P	J	B	L	Y	U	K	I	X	M	S	L
O	M	F	V	B	E	L	R	G	Z	I	U	E	Y	D	H	D	D
C	O	N	N	E	C	T	Z	O	J	M	D	Z	O	T	E	R	S
X	O	X	D	L	Q	V	I	P	K	D	T	H	G	I	O	M	F
Y	N	V	J	C	Q	Y	U	L	A	Z	K	W	A	D	P	V	C

A note from Sheryl Burke

Senior Vice President of Cross-Enterprise Strategic Innovation, Aetna®



As we get older, it is important to prioritize physical health by staying on top of chronic conditions and scheduling regular doctor check-ups. While we focus on physical health, it can be easy to let our mental health fall by the wayside. However, taking steps that care for your mind, body *and* spirit is key to your total health picture.

One of the best things we can do to stay mentally healthy is sticking to a routine each day. Routines help us cope with change, create healthy habits and manage stress.

Our routines might look a little different right now due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staying home. However, even during this unusual time, it is important to stick to regular daily habits to help address the common feelings of uncertainty or loneliness many are experiencing.

Setting clear goals for the day can help us feel motivated and accomplished. Often, this means things already in our regular practice, such as setting an alarm to wake up at a certain time, sitting down to eat a healthy breakfast and committing to a realistic to-do list for the day. Even before the pandemic, yoga has always been a part of my morning routine to help me feel energized and focused for the day. While I haven't been able to visit my usual yoga studio, I still get out my mat each morning on my back porch for an online class.



Consider how you can continue to make routine activities part of your day-to-day. Try taking a morning walk to stay active or speaking with a loved one over the phone or by video to feel connected. Activities that exercise your brain — such as reading; journaling; or games like Sudoku, crossword puzzles, and word searches (like the one on the previous page) — can also help keep your mind active.

There are also resources available that address more specific mental health needs. For example, the app [MindCheck](#)® gives you a

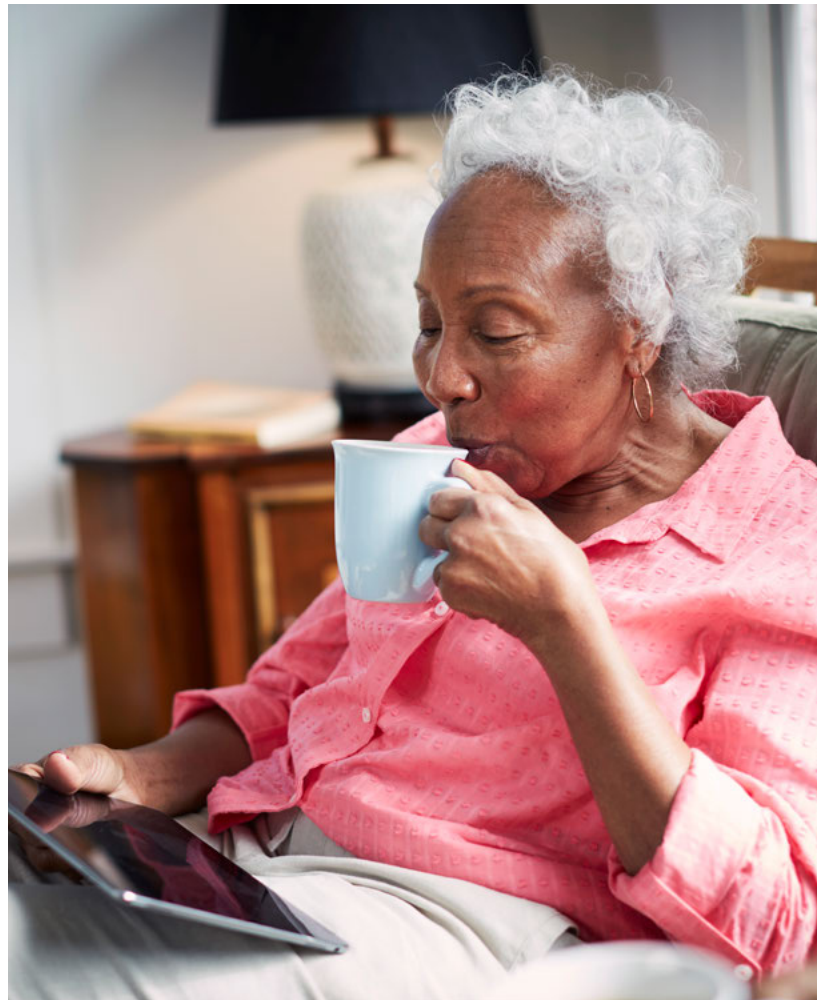
read on your daily emotional health and tailored advice and resources with how to improve it. And for more clinical care, you can see a mental health clinician in-person or through telehealth services.

Consider how you can apply a routine that will help you stay mentally healthy, especially now. If you're having trouble with where to start, try talking about it with a loved one, or if you're an Aetna member, talk to a consultant at [Resources for Living](#)® to understand what is available to you.

COVID-19 fears: Ways to stay calm

Keeping calm and managing stress is vital to our mental health, but it can be especially hard in today's environment. On the right, find a few tips from our [Resources For Living](#)® telephone referral service on how to stay calm during the pandemic.

Also check out our Resources For Living [COVID-19 Resources Toolkit](#). This includes helpful webinars, articles and expert resources on key topics like managing stress, mental health and self-care.



COVID-19 fears: Ways to stay **CALM**

C Use coping skills

Give yourself positive messages like, "I can," rather than negative messages like, "What if...?" Distract yourself with enjoyable activities like reading, taking walks, watching favorite TV shows, calling friends and practicing yoga or other relaxation techniques.

A Be aware (but not obsessed)

Stay informed but limit how much news you watch. The "info-demic" of too much information can create high anxiety.

L Learn from reliable resources

Social media is not where you want to get your COVID-19 information. Go to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or World Health Organization websites for dependable data.

M Monitor yourself

Eat well, be sure to get enough sleep and exercise regularly to help control stress. Remember to take care of yourself.



Chapter 3:



Aging actively

Just as addressing mental and emotional needs can help with physical well-being, staying active not only improves physical health, but it also has positive mental and emotional impacts. This makes it a great tool on your path to better health.

While COVID-19 has affected our ability to participate in in-person group fitness classes, it doesn't mean we can't get up and move on our own. Whether you are continuing old habits or creating new ones, there are many ways to stay active — even within the comfort of your own home.

This chapter includes:

- Tips for staying active as you age from U.S. figure skater Dorothy Hamill*
- A workout from [SilverSneakers](#)® fitness program to wake up your body and brain
- An exercise tracker with information on household items that you can use as workout equipment
- A note from Christopher Ciano, President of Aetna® Medicare, on how his father turned a lifelong hobby into an exercise routine with one simple adjustment

* This is a paid endorsement for Aetna.

How to stay active as you age



Q&A with Dorothy Hamill U.S. figure skater*

Q. How has a career in sports influenced your physical health?

I started skating when I was really young. It didn't occur to me that my passion was "healthy," it was just a passion. But I quickly realized I had to be healthy — get proper sleep, proper nutrition — to perform at my best.

Q. What types of exercise do you currently participate in? How have you had to adjust in light of COVID-19?

I love to be outside — hiking, walking, biking, rollerblading and playing tennis. I also adore skiing. Recently, I purchased a pair of

rollerblades because I hadn't gone in eons — and it reminds me of ice skating. I'm not a professional athlete anymore, so these activities are more for fun.

Fortunately, because most of the activities I enjoy take place outside, I haven't had to adjust too much as a result of COVID-19. But if I'm with

other people for a walk or a hike, we make sure there is proper physical distance between us.

Q. Have you adjusted your fitness routine as you've aged?

Oh, yes. When I was a young skater, we didn't have the advancements in sports medicine or training support. So I had a number of injuries that I'm paying for now, which means I can't skate as much. Skating combined things I love: music, dance and the cool air. As I got older, I had to find something else I loved doing, something that feels more like an activity than an exercise routine. That realization has been, at times, hard to accept. It took a long time to find other things I enjoy. Nothing will ever be as enjoyable as skating to me, but that's all part of aging, getting older and accepting change.

Q. What role has being active played in your total health? Do you find that you feel more balanced in other areas of your life when you maintain an exercise routine?

Absolutely! I pay attention to my mood and I know I feel much more balanced when I stay active. Exercise and activity certainly help clear the cobwebs out of my mind. In fact, I recently started doing a little bit of meditation, which is terrific, but really hard. I have tried to be a positive person my whole life. And I've noticed that when I'm more active, I feel more balanced, relaxed, and in the moment.

Q. What tips do you have to help others stay active and healthy as they age?

Find something that is enjoyable for you and know what gets you moving. For example, I love music. It inspires me and it's a great motivator to stay active.

Remember too that little things, like taking the stairs or parking farther away in parking lots to get some extra steps in, can help. And what you do does not need to be fancy or expensive. For me, during COVID-19, it's been fun to watch Pilates instructors or dances on YouTube that I can do right in my living room.

Recovery and relaxation are important as well! I do this by taking Epsom salt baths with rosemary and lavender oils to soothe the aches and pains. Just noticing the nature around you can be very calming, too.

Lastly, do what makes you feel best. I'm currently trying to pay more attention to what I eat. Like many of us, I haven't been great about eating healthy while at home and I have a bit of a sweet tooth. Because I wasn't feeling my best, I recently visited a dietician and that's helped me not only make healthier food choices, but also feel much better in other areas of my health.

* This is a paid endorsement for Aetna.

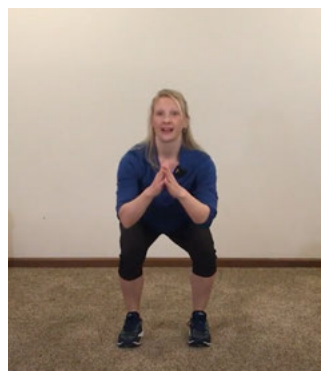
Exercises from SilverSneakers® fitness program to wake up your body and brain

Jump-start your mind and muscles every day with these three exercises that will challenge your coordination. If you prefer to watch the workout, check out the video [here](#).



1. March with overhead press

Start by marching in place. Bring your knees up, alternating each side. Only raise your knees as high as feels comfortable and move with control. While you're marching, press both hands to the sky each time you raise a knee. This is a great exercise for improving hand and foot coordination, while challenging your balance.



2. Squat and reverse lunge

Stand tall with your feet hip-distance apart, shoulders back and down, and core muscles engaged. First, start with a simple squat. Bend your knees and sink your hips back and down, as if to sit in a chair. Gently lift yourself back up to standing position.

From here, move into a reverse lunge. Step one foot behind you, make sure your back foot is aligned with your front and your front knee is bent.



Gently sink down toward the ground until your back knee touches the floor, or as far down as you feel able.

Next, come out of your reverse lunge, stand tall with your legs apart at a comfortable distance and squat. After this squat, move into reverse lunge with your other leg stepping back this time.

This combination of moves helps to engage your mind and body all at once. Repeat the sequence as many times as you feel comfortable and remember to go at your own pace. Feel free to use a sturdy chair or countertop for support.



3. Heel tap with alternating front press

Start by standing in a comfortable position. Tap the heel of your foot out in front of you and as you do, push your opposite hand forward. Alternate each side with your heel tapping forward and the opposite arm pushing toward the front of the room. For an added challenge, switch it up. On your next heel tap, push forward with the arm on the same side of the body as your outstretched leg, then alternate. This is another great movement for improving hand and foot coordination.

This quick exercise circuit challenges both your coordination and your brain. This sequence forces your brain to think while your body moves, ultimately helping to improve your reaction time and overall **coordination**. Add these exercises to your daily routine to **stay sharp** and strong.



Individual Aetna Medicare Advantage plans offer SilverSneakers® memberships at no extra cost. The membership includes video workouts, live online classes and workshops, a mobile app and thousands of participating fitness locations for when you feel comfortable going out again. If your plan offers SilverSneakers, get started today at **SilverSneakers.com**.

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Track your exercise

Studies have shown that tracking exercise improves health outcomes. Tracking comes in many forms, such as wearable devices or paper diaries. Choose what works best for you. This page can help you track your exercise and keep moving.

Use the SilverSneakers® workout on the previous page as inspiration for how best to exercise at home without equipment. Used to the gym? There are many items you can find around the house that you can use as exercise equipment. Feel free to use any of the substitutes below, and don't forget to track it:

- Use a soup can in place of a weight
- Use a towel in place of a yoga mat
- Use an old T-shirt in place of a resistance band
- Use a chair for support as you squat and lunge

Before starting an exercise routine, be sure to check in with your doctor.



Day	Exercise	Amount	Notes
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

A note from Christopher Ciano

President of Aetna® Medicare



Physical exercise is a core component of our total health — but as we age, we often feel as though we can no longer participate at the same level of activity that we once did. This can cause us to lose sight of certain hobbies we once really enjoyed.

However, when you take the time to think it through, there are often ways to adjust so this doesn't happen.

Take my 93-year-old father, for example. He was an avid bowler in his youth, but at a certain age, bowling was no longer possible for him. That is, until we introduced him to Wii digital bowling — which he now loves!

While this might seem like a minor adaptation, this newfound hobby has provided more than just an opportunity for my father to stay active. He is able to continue participating in an activity that has always been a major part of his life and stay connected by challenging others (currently, his quarantine partner is my mother!) to a game every so often. For him, his undefeated status is the cherry on top.



So, before you say goodbye to something you once loved, think to yourself: Is there a way to do it differently? With the power of creativity, and maybe even an assist from technology, as was the case for my father, I'd be willing to bet there is another way.

If you're having trouble coming up with an idea on your own, never hesitate to ask for help. A brainstorm session with loved ones or with a consultant from [Resources For Living®](#) telephone referral service might be just the extra brainpower you need to get started.

Lastly, keep in mind that being active doesn't have to be a chore. Make sure you enjoy the activities you're participating in — it may just be the key to motivating yourself to keep doing them.

“ So, before you say goodbye to something you once loved, think to yourself: Is there a way to do it differently? ”



Chapter 4:



Staying healthy

So far, we shared advice for getting healthy. This chapter will focus on how best to stay healthy.

Right now, it may feel more challenging to maintain your total health than ever before. But luckily, there are steps you can take even while limiting your exposure to COVID-19.

This chapter includes:

- A Q&A on staying healthy during COVID-19 and flu season from Alena Baquet-Simpson, MD, Senior Director of Medical Health Services for Aetna® Medicare
- A five-step guide to help you live well with a chronic illness
- A photo journey of an Aetna Medicare Advantage member who was connected with an Aetna case manager to help manage her chronic condition

How to stay healthy during COVID-19 and flu season



Q&A with Alena Baquet-Simpson, MD

Senior Director of Medical Health Services for Aetna® Medicare

Q. Why is it so important that those age 65+ arm themselves against COVID-19 and the flu?

Older adults are at high risk for both COVID-19 and severe complications from

the flu. That's why it's so important they take protecting themselves seriously. This is particularly true for those with chronic conditions. **According to the National Council on Aging, about 80% of older adults have at least one chronic**

disease and 77% have at least two. As noted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the strength of the immune system also wanes as we age, so no one in this age group should take this lightly.

Q. What are the best steps older adults can take to arm themselves against the flu and COVID-19?

To protect yourself from the flu, the CDC recommends you get the flu shot each year. Most insurance plans cover the cost of the flu shot. Also ask your doctor about the pneumococcal vaccine to help protect against pneumonia.

There is no vaccine yet to protect against COVID-19. So, the best thing you can do right now is avoid crowds, physically distance and stay home when possible. If you leave your home, it's important that you wear a mask and stay at least 6 feet away from others. You should also wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer whenever you come in contact with others.

Another important, though less talked about, way to protect yourself against any illness is to make sure you're maintaining your total health.

“ Staying connected socially, even in a virtual way, can help preserve your mental health.”

Eating a healthy diet, taking your medications, exercising, getting enough sleep and managing any chronic conditions can all help lower your risk of illness by strengthening your immune system. Staying connected socially, even in a virtual way, can help preserve your mental health.

Q. If you could give one piece of advice during this time, what would it be?

If you have a chronic condition, don't neglect it because of COVID-19. Find ways to take care of yourself by staying on your medication, talking to your doctors through telehealth services or over the phone,

exercising and eating healthy food. If it's necessary for you to go into your doctor's office, do so and follow the safety practices put in place.

Lastly — and this one applies to people of all ages and stages of health — take advantage of any extra health services that are being offered to you during this time. This includes expanded mental health resources or prescription delivery services.

Five steps to living well with a chronic illness

A chronic condition — such as diabetes, arthritis, depression or heart disease — is a long-lasting health issue that requires ongoing medical attention. It can be something that many older adults experience, as aging itself increases the risk for many of these issues.

But these conditions can be managed. Below, find our five-step guide to navigating the health care system, while managing the emotional and lifestyle changes that come with a chronic condition.

Use the buddy system

Find a trusted family member or friend who is willing to be your advocate. Choose someone with experience managing a health condition or interacting with doctors. When it's safe to do

so, you can have them come to appointments to act as another set of eyes and ears — to ask questions and take notes. Ask them to remind you of any symptoms or side effects you should share with the doctor.

Until then, ask your doctor if your advocate can be part of your medical appointments. If that isn't possible, see if you can record the visit so you can both review it later.

Read up on your condition

Continue to learn about your medical condition once you're home. Try to familiarize yourself with common terms and the organs involved in your condition. If you have diabetes, for instance, learn about the pancreas and kidneys.

Investigate your treatment options, different medicines and important diet changes. The knowledge you gain will make it easier for you to talk with your doctor and give you peace of mind.

Make sure you are getting your facts from trusted sources like the American Diabetes Association, the American Heart Association and the CDC. It can be hard to distinguish

science-backed information from sales pitches and opinion. You can fact-check information on sites like [HealthNewsReview.org](https://www.healthnewsreview.org) and [Snopes.com](https://www.snopes.com).

Keep stress in check

Try to remember that, in many cases, millions of people around the country live with your condition. And those who take good care of themselves often not only live well but also thrive. Although fear and anxiety are natural, learning to let go of negativity will strengthen your emotional and physical health.



Find somebody to lean on

After a diagnosis, it helps to have someone to talk to when you're feeling down or overwhelmed. They can be a loved one or a professional. Other resources for emotional support include churches, community centers, and private Facebook groups affiliated with an organization devoted to your condition. Many churches and community centers have online groups to continue connecting while social distancing is in place.

Remember to share your successes, as well as your challenges, with the person or group you choose to help you.



Take baby steps to better habits

Lifestyle changes can help keep your condition under control, reduce symptoms and raise your spirits. So, remember to start small.

For instance, if you're struggling with obesity, instead of telling yourself you're going to lose 30 pounds in three months, try losing a pound a week. Or aim for an even smaller goal, like skipping vending machine snacks or not drinking sugary sodas or juices for one week. You'll see that little changes can make a big difference. And these goals are much more achievable, leading to better long-term outcomes.

Bottom line:

When coping with a chronic illness, worry less about what you can't change and focus on what you can change. Hopefully, you will discover you're living a healthier life than ever before.

Betty's health journey: Managing her chronic condition



If you read our [Eating healthy chapter](#), you'll know that last year, we shared a video series celebrating all the different "[Medicare Moments](#)" that people may experience along their path to better health. You heard Dora and Ramon's story, but now you'll meet Aetna Medicare member Betty*, who [shared her story](#) on how learning to manage her chronic condition, diabetes, led to even greater benefits to her total health.

After explaining she needed more test strips for her glucometer, Betty was connected with an Aetna nurse case manager, Sarah Fischer, through her Aetna Medicare Advantage plan.

* Last name not used to protect member privacy.

When Sarah first connected with Betty, Betty told her about how her blood sugars were swinging wildly. She also told her about her back pains and some other areas where she was struggling.

Eventually, what started out as Sarah getting Betty new test strips turned into a friendship. Together, they talked about Betty's health and the reports she got from her doctor. Sarah was also able to help Betty with the social and physical aspects of her life, by encouraging her to volunteer in her local community and join [SilverSneakers®](#) classes.

After a few weeks of addressing her chronic condition, Betty found that her blood sugars had stabilized. She was also able to reduce the amount of testing that she did a day.

While COVID-19 has restricted the ability for nurse case managers like Sarah to directly visit members, they can still talk with members by phone. And while connecting with the community looks different, there are still plenty of ways to do so. If you're looking for inspiration, try reading through the [Living local chapter](#).





Chapter 5:



Living local

When it comes to your health, you might be surprised by how much exists right within your local community to help you. You can use nearby parks, trails or tracks to help get physically active. And community groups such as YMCAs, senior centers or religious groups can give you mental and emotional resources.

While we're encouraging older adults to stay home to lower the risk of contracting COVID-19, that doesn't — and shouldn't — mean you can't still connect with your community. In fact, many community-based programs are now offering digital or virtual resources.

This chapter includes:

- A note from Garth Graham, MD, MPH, Vice President, Community Health, and Chief Community Health Officer, CVS Health®, on the benefits of living local
- A playable bingo card full of local and home-based activities to keep you safely engaged with your community
- A chart that outlines the differences between physical distancing and social distancing

A note from Garth Graham, MD, MPH

Vice President, Community Health, and Chief Community Health Officer, CVS Health®



When you think about where you receive care, what comes to mind? For many, we think of our doctor's office, or, if more urgent, a hospital. While these are excellent resources, don't forget about the convenient care right within your local community. CVS HealthHUB® and MinuteClinic® locations offer convenient, high-quality care close to home. All of these resources empower us to proactively engage in our health, without having to disengage with our day-to-day lives.

In fact, communities are home to a whole host of health care resources that can help you with health factors often overlooked — for example transportation, access to healthy food and social connection. You may have heard these factors referred to as “social determinants of health.” They directly affect your health outcomes in many more ways than you might think.

Within your community are also neighbors, friends and fellow citizens who can help connect you with these resources. Contacting your local senior center, place of worship or local support groups



“ Our communities are home to a whole host of health care resources that can help us with health factors often overlooked — for example transportation, access to healthy food and social connection.

can be a great place to start. Many Aetna members and their loved ones may also have access to **Resources For Living®** telephone referral service. The consultants in this program help connect you with your community, and with personalized care in whatever form you might need.

Perhaps most importantly, our communities are a constant reminder that we are not alone. So, be sure that as you are social distancing, you are not socially isolating yourself. And do the same for your neighbors. If you know someone who might feel like their distancing has become isolation, share these resources with them and remind them that they have options that can help them stay connected to others.

Aetna, CVS HealthHUB and MinuteClinic, LLC (which either operates or provides certain management support services to MinuteClinic-branded walk-in clinics) are part of the CVS Health family of companies.

Living local Bingo card

“Living local” means thriving within the comfort of your own home, and when you need to, taking advantage of the support your community can provide. On the right, find some ideas to keep busy, connected, active and mindful.

As you complete each activity, mark it off on your card, by printing it out or by downloading this eBook and editing it. Then take a moment to reflect on what aspect of your total health the activity has helped you exercise.

Looking for a little competition or motivation? Call a friend and challenge them to a game of Living Local Bingo. You can even complete some of the activities, like a book club, together, virtually!

LIVING LOCAL BINGO

READ A BOOK	ENGAGE WITH LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP	GO OUTSIDE	GARDEN	STRETCH
GO FOR A WALK	REARRANGE A ROOM	SCRAPBOOK OLD PHOTOS	BOOK A TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENT	BAKE COOKIES
TRY THE <u>INSTITUTE ON AGING'S FRIENDSHIP LINE</u>	PARTICIPATE IN A ZOOM CALL	FREE SPACE	TRY A LOCAL MEAL DELIVERY SERVICE	START A JOURNAL
DANCE	FIND A NEW PARK	MEDITATE	TAKE AN ONLINE TECHNOLOGY COURSE	START OR JOIN A BOOK CLUB
CHECK OUT YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY RESOURCES	PLAY AN ONLINE GAME	TRY A NEW RECIPE	CALL A LOVED ONE	TRY AN ONLINE WORKOUT CLASS

Physical vs. social distancing

While the term “social distancing” has been widely used, COVID-19 doesn’t mean you have to break all social connections with your family and friends. “Physical distancing” is a better phrase to describe the need to keep 6 feet away from others to help prevent spread of COVID-19. When we asked the various experts featured in this book for their best advice during this time, everyone mentioned the importance of staying socially connected. They all agreed that right now it can feel hard to do so, but with a little creativity, it’s easier than you might think.

We put together the graphic to the right to bring to life some of the best advice we’ve heard — and given — for staying connected during this time.

Remember you are not alone. If you feel you need more support, reach out to a consultant at [Resources for Living](#)® telephone referral service. They’re happy to talk with you, and can help you cope with the emotional impact of the pandemic. Call **1-866-370-4842 (TTY:711)**.

Instead of:

Try:





Chapter 6:



Medicare moving forward

Over the last several years, technology has become a major part of our day-to-day lives. Especially since the start of the pandemic, it plays a role in how we manage our health and how we receive care — with the increased use of resources like telehealth to keep us safe in our homes.

While technology is a convenient tool for some, it can also be confusing for many. We're here to help.

This chapter includes:

- A Q&A on how to best use technology on your health journey from Adam Pellegrini, Senior Vice President of Enterprise Virtual Care and Consumer Health at CVS Health®
- A guide to understanding telehealth
- Step-by-step instructions on how to use Zoom

How to best use technology on your health journey



Q&A with Adam Pellegrini

Senior Vice President of Enterprise Virtual Care and Consumer Health at CVS Health®

Q. When it comes to total health, why is it important that individuals understand how to navigate technology?

It's important because technology can help you better navigate the health care system, which can be complex for people of any age. The use of technology

can also expand your access to care, by bringing resources that are crucial for overall health directly into your home.

By having a baseline understanding of how to use this technology — or even just knowing where to look when you need help — you're already in better control of your health outcomes.

Q. What has been the biggest change in health care technology since the start of COVID-19?

One of the biggest changes has been the increased use of telehealth. Telehealth is the use of digital or telecommunication technology — such as a phone call or a video chat — to support long-distance care. It can be used for all aspects of your health, from managing chronic conditions to making sure you're staying socially connected, even while you're at home.

As hospitals, doctors' offices and pharmacies have transitioned to methods that better reflect social distancing guidelines, many have adapted to telehealth as an alternative to in-person appointments.

“ Whether you're technology savvy or a beginner, now is a great time to take advantage of all that technology has to offer.

Q. Aside from telehealth, how can older adults use technology to meet their health goals while COVID-19 limits their ability to do so in traditional ways?

There are so many health goals that can be accomplished through the use of technology, especially during this time. For me, it's all about staying fit and staying connected, and there are several ways technology can help you with each.

Smartphones or wearable devices, such as FitBit® or Apple Watch® devices, can be used to track different physical health goals, from how many steps you've taken in a day to your heart rate. There are also a wide range of fitness classes being

offered online and through apps, particularly right now.

As for mental health and well-being, technology can connect you with professionals who can help you from the comfort of your own home. Virtual activities, like Zoom calls, can also keep you connected with loved ones.

Whether you're technology savvy or a beginner, now is a great time to take advantage of all that technology has to offer. Remember, you can be at home *and* still maintain good health.

Understanding telehealth

What is telehealth?

Telehealth refers to any type of virtual care or treatment you may receive for medical or mental health provided by phone, mobile app or online video.

To use it, you don't need any special technology or skills. If you can use a regular phone, you can receive telehealth!



What aspects of your health can telehealth address?

Telehealth can be used for:



Routine checkups



Help managing chronic conditions



Physical ailments



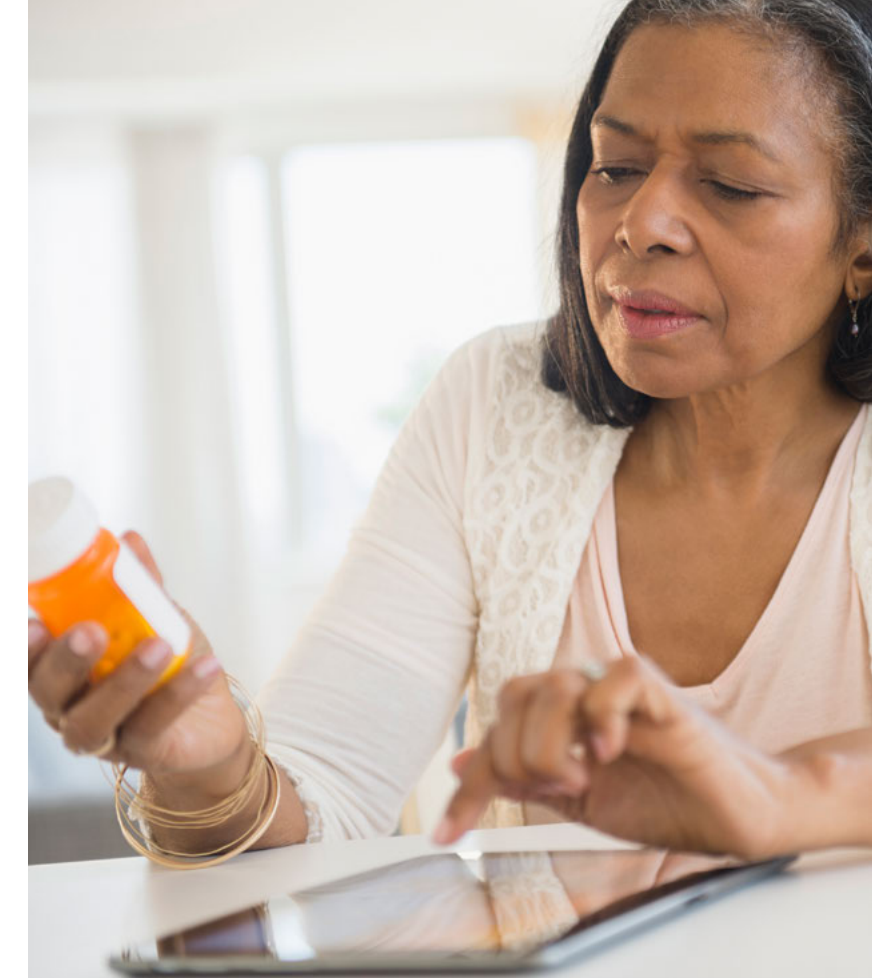
Mental health

Doctors can diagnose and treat conditions such as cold and flu symptoms, allergies, bronchitis, sinus infections, rashes, pinkeye (in kids and adults), arthritis flare-ups, anxiety and depression. Doctors can also prescribe most medication virtually.

Why is telehealth important right now?

Telehealth is being used with increased frequency to help keep individuals safe during COVID-19.

During this time, we've been encouraging the use of telemedicine, where possible, for routine health visits, including any mental health needs you might have.



How do I get started?

Call your provider to see if they offer telemedicine services. You can also ask your insurance company or employer if your benefits include telehealth.

Instructions: Joining a Zoom call

Throughout this eBook, we discussed the benefits on your total health of staying connected with loved ones. While social distancing may require you to stay physically separate from your support systems, video chatting platforms such as Zoom are a great way to stay connected.

If you get an invitation to join a call, you may find the instructions below helpful. This will put you one step closer to virtual get-togethers, classes and time spent with loved ones.

Before you join the meeting, you'll need a few pieces of information to ensure you connect with ease. When you receive an invite to a Zoom meeting, it will include:

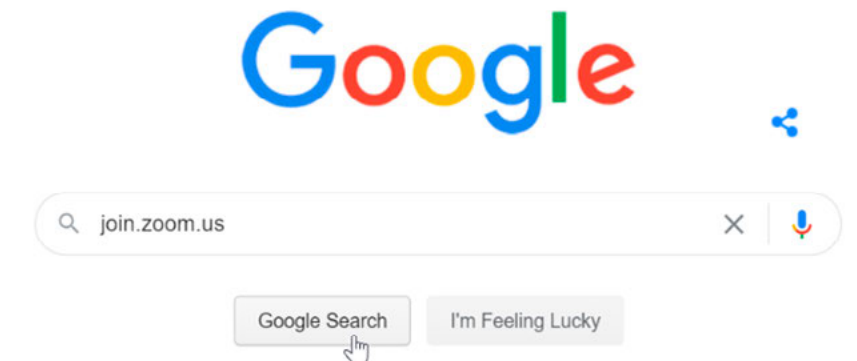
- A meeting link that allows you to connect through your web browser
- A meeting ID number and passcode that you may be asked to enter if you join through join.zoom.us
- And, teleconference information if you join by phone

Once you have this information in hand, you're ready to get started. If it's your first time or you're still feeling unsure, leave yourself some extra time to follow these steps, so you don't feel rushed. And, if you would like give it a try before your meeting, you can always test your system at <https://zoom.us/test>.

Step 1:

The easiest way to join a Zoom meeting is by using the meeting link provided to you. Simply click the link and a new window in your web browser will open.

You could also open your web browser and go to join.zoom.us.



Step 2:

If you are joining the meeting directly from the Zoom website, enter the meeting ID number the meeting host gave you. Press join.

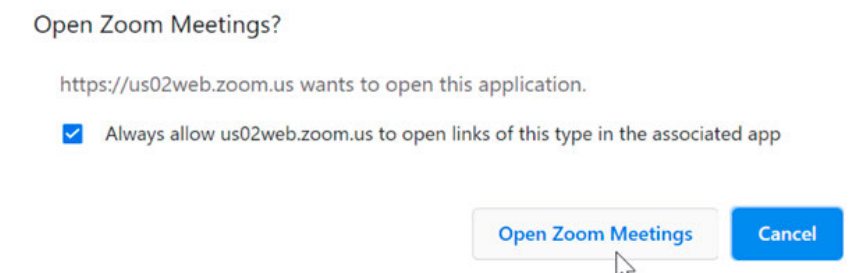
If you are using the link given to you, you may be able to skip this step.

Join a Meeting

A screenshot of the Zoom 'Join a Meeting' interface. It features a text input field containing the meeting ID '826 0113 4310'. Below the input field is a prominent blue 'Join' button with a hand cursor icon over it.

Step 3:

If this is your first time joining a Zoom meeting, a pop-up will appear asking to open Zoom. Click Open Zoom Meetings. You can also check "Always open these types of links in the associated app" and skip this step for future meetings.

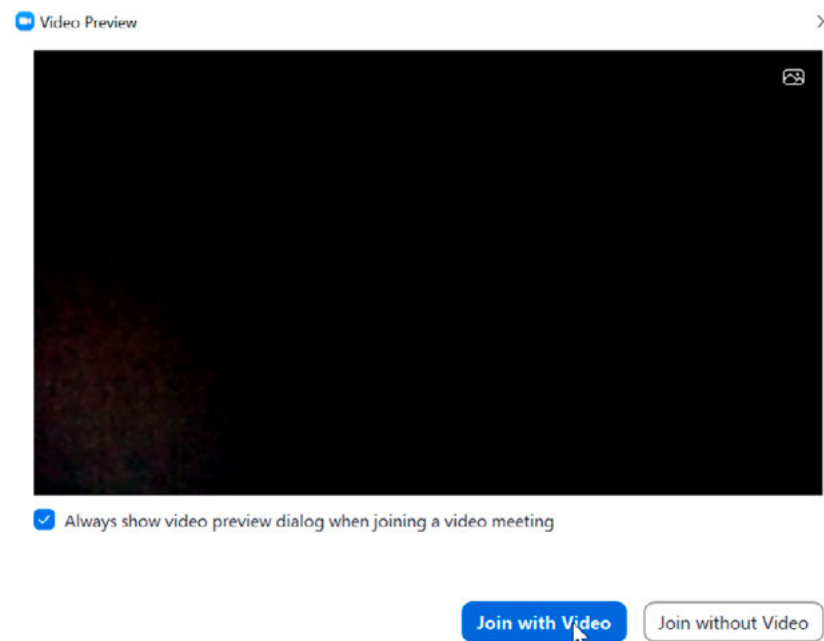


Step 4:

You'll see a video preview and have the option of joining the meeting with or without video. Click the button based on your preference. You can also check "Always show video preview when joining a video meeting" if you like to see the preview before you join.

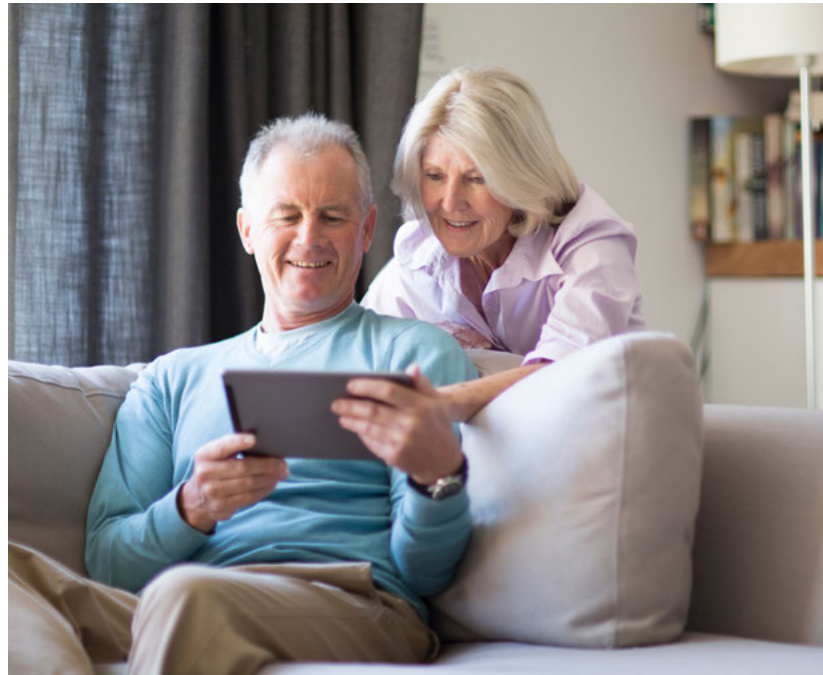
Click Join with Video, and your meeting will connect.

Note: For some meetings, there may be security settings that have you wait to be admitted to the meeting by the host. If that's the case, just wait until you are connected.



Step 5:

Enjoy connecting with family, friends or classes near and far.



If you learned how to join a call and want to start setting up your own Zoom meetings, dinner parties or hangouts, these steps will help you do so:

Set up your own account:

To set up your own Zoom account, type zoom.us into your web browser. Then press "Sign Up, It's Free" in an orange button in the right-hand corner.

The platform will ask you to enter your date of birth and then your email address. Your account is now set up.

[SIGN UP, IT'S FREE](#)

Schedule a new meeting:

To schedule a meeting, press the blue "Schedule a New Meeting" button on the left-hand side of the page. From there, fill out the desired details for your meeting and you'll be ready to start socializing.

[Schedule a New Meeting](#)

See Evidence of Coverage for a complete description of plan benefits, exclusions, limitations and conditions of coverage. Plan features and availability may vary by service area.

[AetnaMedicare.com](https://www.aetna.com)

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