



# A Healthy You

Women's Health Edition

**Independence**   
Age Fearless



# Welcome to *A Healthy You!*

The choices you make every day play an important role in your health and well-being — and an *A Healthy You* guide from Independence Blue Cross (IBX) can help make those decisions easier.

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## 4 love-your-body tips

### Stay on track with a positive mindset

We're constantly surrounded by images of sculpted bodies and flawless faces. That can sometimes make it difficult to be happy with the way we look.

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**"We have been very [negatively] affected by the idealization of bodies,"** says Vivian Diller, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and author of *Face It: What Women Really Feel as Their Looks Change*.  
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If you really want to lose weight, it helps to first try to shed a negative body image. Focus on the positive, more productive end: Improving your body because you deserve to, not because you "hate" what you see.

The next time you're starting to obsess about your appearance, try these strategies from Diller.

### 1. Look in the mirror

When you look in the mirror, you may not always love what you see. You may zero in on every line, every perceived flaw. Turn that habit around with this simple exercise: The next time you're alone, study your face in a mirror. Instead of wanting to look away or find flaws, focus on highlighting the good — your enviable eyes, your kind smile. See your reflection, your face, as a collection of all the experiences you've had in your life, both positive and negative, and embrace them as what molds who you are. "You may look in the mirror and think, 'I have wrinkles, but nice eyes!'" Diller says.

### 2. Treat your body well

When you've got weight loss on your mind, it can be tough to keep a positive body image. In fact, it can seem like an opposing mindset. "I don't think they're opposites. We actually have to get them more in sync," Diller says. While it may be a difficult shift, one step that can help is eating healthy foods that make your body feel good. There are inexpensive superfoods that taste great and are full of nutrients. Stock up your pantry with good-for-you basics that make cooking at home easier. Learn how to snack smarter. "A diet that works for the long term has to include a combination of changing behaviors and changing your attitude toward your body," she says.

### 3. Speak nicely to yourself

Think about how you would talk to your best friend or your daughter, Diller says. Would you use words like "fat," "ugly," or "wrinkly" to describe someone close to you? Probably not. When your internal voice becomes negative, pay attention and slip yourself some compliments.

### 4. Adjust your attitude

In addition to reinforcing a positive relationship with your body, changing your attitude has professional perks, too. Studies show that attractive people have advantages in their social and professional lives, but it's their attitudes that define their perceived attractiveness. "If you present your body in a positive way, you'll be more successful professionally and personally," Diller says. "Beauty is what you're born with; attractiveness is what you do with it."

# Feel great with simple self-care

It's no secret that some of the most telltale signs of aging are the appearance of our skin, hair, and nails. But instead of spending money on expensive supplements, vitamins, and lotions that promise the fountain of youth, there are many simple things we can do to help ourselves look and feel great.

## Care for your hair

Coloring your hair is a relatively inexpensive way to brighten your mood and boost your confidence. Whether you choose to enhance your natural color or change it altogether, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Warm colors are more flattering than cool and ash colors.
- Blending highlights with existing grey hair (rather than coloring your entire head) can mean fewer trips to the salon for touch-ups.
- Want to try an accent color? You can have fun with your hair color at any age — and silver-brown lowlights go great with silver-grey hair.
- If you go to a salon, take a picture of the color you have in mind. You'll be happier with the results.

## Tips to keep your hair beautiful and shiny (whether you choose to color it or not):

- Be gentle. Use your comb or brush carefully.
- Work with your hairstylist to find a style that works with your hair type, lifestyle, and budget.
- Look sharp while practicing sun-smarts by wearing a hat, scarf, wig, or hairpiece to protect your hair and scalp.
- Use sunscreen to protect uncovered areas from sun damage.

Women can also develop a type of baldness as they age. There are medications that may help slow the progression of this condition. Talk to your doctor if you have sudden hair loss.

## Love the skin you're in

Everyone's skin changes with age. In addition, sun exposure, dehydration, and certain habits, like smoking, can also make it less elastic. While some of these changes are inevitable, there are ways you can help slow their progression.

- A little sun can brighten your mood, but avoid intense sun exposure, use sunscreen, and wear protective clothing.
- Don't use tanning beds or sunlamps. They emit the same harmful UV radiation as the sun.

## Treat your skin well...

- If a warm bath is what you crave, be sure to bathe in warm — never hot — water. Always use mild cleansers; and wash gently — don't scrub.
- Drink plenty of water, and moisturize, moisturize, moisturize.
- Reduce stress — stress can harm your skin and other body systems.
- Get enough sleep — experts recommend about 7-8 hours.

Check your skin often. Talk to your doctor if you notice any odd changes to your skin, like a rash or mole that changes size or color.

## Be nice to your nails

Our nails also change over time. They grow more slowly and may break more easily. They may also become opaque. It's easy to neglect your nails — but taking some basic steps can keep them healthy and strong.

- Keep nails dry and clean and wear gloves when washing dishes, cleaning, or using harsh chemicals.
- Trim and file nails carefully — straight across, then round the tips in a gentle curve.
- Don't forget to rub hand lotion into your fingernails and cuticles, too.
- Consider using nail polish or hardener on nails that chip easily. It may help strengthen them.

## And don't forget your toes!

- Wash feet regularly, especially between the toes.
- Wear clean socks.
- Wear well-fitting, comfy shoes.
- Put your feet up when you're sitting, to help circulation.
- If you're sitting for a long time, stand up and move around every now and then.
- If you cross your legs when sitting, reverse or uncross them often.

## A word about salon safety

If you rely on manicures or pedicures for healthy-looking nails, keep a few things in mind. Stick to salons that display a current state license and work only with technicians also licensed by the state board. Don't have your cuticles removed — they act to seal and protect the skin to the nail plate. Also, make sure your nail technician properly sterilizes all tools and foot baths. Ideally, a bleach solution is used between clients and the filters are cleaned regularly.

Check with your provider if your nails develop pits, ridges, lines, changes in shape, or other changes. These can be related to iron deficiency, kidney disease, and nutritional deficiencies.

Sources: National Institutes of Health, News in Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [newsinhealth.nih.gov](https://www.newshealth.nih.gov)  
MedLine Plus, Aging Changes in Hair and Nails, U.S. National Library of Medicine. <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/004005.htm>  
Mayo Clinic. Do's and Don'ts for Healthy Nails, [mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/nails/art-20044954?p=1](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/nails/art-20044954?p=1)



## Osteoporosis

Know the facts. Protect your health.

### What is osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes very weak bones that break easily.

### Who is at risk?

Anyone can get osteoporosis, but women are more likely to get it than men. You may be more likely to get it if you:

- Are over age 50
- Smoke
- Have a low body weight
- Have family members who had osteoporosis or broken bones
- Do not get enough exercise
- Drink alcohol (more than 3 drinks/day)
- Take certain medicines for a long time like seizure medicines or steroids

### How do I know if I have osteoporosis?

There are tests that use either X-rays or sound waves to measure bone density. These tests are painless. Ask your doctor if you should be tested.

- X-ray tests, called DXA scans, examine your spine, hip, or wrist. DXA scans use very few X-ray waves.
- Newer sound wave tests, called ultrasounds, test your heel to predict your risk of bone fractures.

### How is it treated?

There is no way to cure osteoporosis. There are things you can do to slow it down. Talk to your doctor to make a plan to keep your bones healthy.

### Prescription medicines

There are prescription medicines that you can take. These medicines come as a pill, a patch, or a shot (injection). Talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist before you stop taking your medicine.

Bisphosphonates are a common type of drug given to slow bone loss. Your doctor may offer you other drugs.

- Talk to your doctor about how long you should take these medicines.
- Tell your doctor if you start having side effects like new pain in your hip or thigh. Some people who take these medicines had broken thigh bones.
- Some of these medicines may irritate your throat.
- Severe jaw bone problems may also be caused.

### Dietary supplements

Dietary supplements are products that people add to their diets. They include vitamins, powders, energy bars, and herbs. Talk to your doctor before you take any dietary supplements. These may affect your other medicines and make you sick.

### Lifestyle changes

- Stay physically active. Do weight-bearing exercise like walking.
- Do not smoke.
- Limit alcohol use.
- Get enough calcium and vitamin D in your diet. Your doctor may suggest taking calcium and vitamin pills.

Sources: U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) Osteoporosis fact sheet <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/womens-health-topics/osteoporosis>



## Why older women should be thinking about bone strength

**Strong bones and osteoporosis prevention are key to healthy living for women in their 50s and older.**

For women older than age 50, bone health is something to think seriously about. Bones lose strength over time, and older women are at a greater risk of osteoporosis and fractures. It is crucial for women in this demographic to take extra precautions to protect their bones. If you've never had a fracture, it is important to maintain bone strength, so you can avoid one. If you have had a fracture, it is important to avoid future breaks. Start here.

### Feed your bones

Calcium strengthens bones, and vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. Good sources of calcium include low-fat dairy products, salmon, and kale. Vitamin D is found in fortified cereals, milk, and fatty fish such as salmon and tuna.

### Strengthen your bones

Weight-bearing exercises can help build up bone strength. Try exercises like walking, dancing, and strength training.

### Get screened

Your doctor may recommend a bone mineral density test, which checks your risk of osteoporosis. If they don't, inquire about it. Your doctor may also ask about your calcium levels and recommend supplements if necessary.

### Help fractures heal with therapy

What if you still end up with a fracture? Help it heal faster and avoid further problems with rehabilitation or physical therapy. Take the medicines your doctor recommends. Be patient and kind to your bones to help keep them strong.



## Breast cancer 101

Here's what you should know about prevention and detection

### What is breast cancer?

As with other cancers, breast cancer is caused by cells that grow out of control and interfere with healthy cells. Cancer cells can damage nearby cells and grow into a tumor. Breast cancer begins in the breast tissue, but it can also spread to nearby lymph nodes and other organs.

### What are some signs of breast cancer?

In some cases of breast cancer, a lump can grow in the breast tissue. But not all breast cancers cause a breast lump. Other warning signs of breast cancer include changes in the size or shape of the breast or nipple, pain in the breast, or discharge from nipples. Lumps from the breast cancer can also grow in the underarm area.

### Who gets breast cancer?

Women are more likely to develop breast cancer than men. In the United States each year, more than 200,000 women and nearly 2,500 men are diagnosed with it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Women under age 45 account for about 10 percent of breast cancers, but most who are diagnosed are age 50 or older.

### What causes breast cancer?

It's difficult to point to any one thing that causes breast cancer because many factors can raise your risk, according to the CDC. Being female, being older than 50, having the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation, starting your period before age 12, and starting menopause after age 55 are risk factors you can't change.

### What lifestyle changes can reduce breast cancer risk?

Many healthy lifestyle habits can help lower your risk of breast cancer. They also can improve your odds of a good outcome if you face a breast cancer diagnosis. Cancer experts suggest practicing healthy habits such as eating a diet filled with fruits and vegetables, getting regular physical activity, and avoiding alcohol and cigarettes.

It's also important to make a habit of getting enough sleep. Talk with your doctor about medications you take. Hormone replacement therapy and some types of birth control can increase your risk for breast cancer, so it's important to discuss using these medicines with your doctor.

### When should I do breast self-exams?

Self-checks aren't recommended as a screening tool to help find breast cancer, according to the American Cancer Society. But that doesn't mean they aren't important. Self-exams help women become familiar with how their breasts normally look and feel, so you can spot and report any changes.

### When should I get screened?

A mammogram can detect tiny changes to breast tissue that could later become breast cancer. When breast cancer is found early, treatment is often simpler and the cure rate higher. Women should begin having mammograms at age 40 and continue with them every year to every other year depending on a host of factors to be discussed with their physician. After age 50 the universal recommendation is for a mammogram every one to two years.

Sources: [getgoodliving.com/article/health/breast-cancer-101](https://getgoodliving.com/article/health/breast-cancer-101)  
[insights.ibx.com/breast-cancer-prevention-knowledge-is-half-the-battle/](https://insights.ibx.com/breast-cancer-prevention-knowledge-is-half-the-battle/)



## Breast cancer myths

### Take control with the truth

There are things you can do to protect yourself from breast cancer. Understanding your risk, getting regular screenings, and making healthy choices are the best ways to find breast cancer early and lower your risk of developing the disease. Here are the facts you need to know.

### I'm not worried about breast cancer because no one in my family has had it

Only 15 percent of women diagnosed with breast cancer have a close relative with it. Even so, breast cancer is the second most common type of cancer among American women, with skin cancer as the top cancer for women. The BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation is passed on from mothers and fathers, which is one risk factor for breast cancer. But other risks have to do with your age, gender, and your age when periods or menopause begin. Having dense breasts and taking hormones for birth control or menopause play a role, as does being overweight or obese.

### Bad habits don't cause breast cancer

Lifestyle habits such as smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol play a role in your risk for breast cancer. One alcoholic drink per day should be your max. Two to three alcoholic drinks per day boosts your breast cancer risk by 20 percent. Quitting smoking may help, too. The American Cancer Society found an increased risk of breast cancer among women who smoke, especially if they start smoking before they have their first child.

### Breast cancer is for women.

It's true that women are more likely to get breast cancer, but men can't rule it out. Less than 1 percent of all breast cancer develops in men. The CDC reports that 2,500 men get a breast cancer diagnosis in the United States each year, compared with 200,000 women. Whatever your gender, know what's normal for your body. Regular self-checks can help with this. Report any breast changes or a lump right away.



## Help your heart

### Facts on women and heart disease

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States.<sup>1</sup>
- Although heart disease is sometimes thought of as a “man’s disease,” around the same number of women and men die each year of heart disease in the United States. Despite increases in awareness over the past decade, only 54 percent of women recognize that heart disease is their number 1 killer.<sup>2</sup>
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for African American and white women in the United States. Among Hispanic women, heart disease and cancer cause roughly the same number of deaths each year. For American Indian or Alaska Native and Asian or Pacific Islander women, heart disease is second only to cancer.<sup>3</sup>
- About 5.8 percent of all white women, 7.6 percent of black women, and 5.6 percent of Mexican American women have coronary heart disease.<sup>4</sup>
- Almost two-thirds of women who die suddenly of coronary heart disease have no previous symptoms.<sup>4</sup> Even if you have no symptoms, you may still be at risk for heart disease.

### Five frequently asked questions

#### Why is heart health so important for those over the age of 65?

As we age, our blood vessels become stiff and less flexible. Our heart also becomes thicker and more fibrotic, leading to changes in pump function. Many of us have also built up years of bad habits by age 65, such as smoking and not exercising, that can stress the heart.

#### I was recently diagnosed with hypertension, what should I do?

If you smoke, try to quit. Eat a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, as well as low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish, legumes, non-tropical vegetable oils, and nuts.

#### What are the warning signs of heart disease?

The most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. Women are more likely to experience other symptoms as well, including shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

#### Why is medication adherence important?

Medication non-adherence has serious health consequences. Make sure you’re taking your medications, such as statins, as prescribed, to control or improve symptoms.

#### What role does cholesterol play in heart health?

Too much cholesterol narrows the blood vessels so that blood flow to the heart is slowed or blocked. However, our bodies need cholesterol, so talk with your doctor about the difference between good (HDL) and bad (LDL) cholesterol levels and if statins are right for you.

Source: [getgoodliving.com/article/health/help-your-heart-5-faqs](https://www.getgoodliving.com/article/health/help-your-heart-5-faqs)

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# Recommended health screenings for women

Did you know that preventive health measures and screenings can help prevent illness and disease, and they are covered at no cost by many health plans? Make sure to get all your recommended screenings.

Abdominal aortic aneurysm screening	Once in a lifetime for asymptomatic women age 65 to 75 years with a history of smoking
Annual wellness visit	One exam annually
Bone mass measurement	Beginning at age 65, discuss frequency of screening with your health care provider
Breast cancer screening (mammograms)	Mammography screening every one to two years until age 74
Cardiovascular disease risk reduction visit (therapy for cardiovascular disease)	Discuss frequency of screening with your health care provider
Cardiovascular disease testing	Discuss frequency of screening with your health care provider
Cervical and vaginal cancer screening	Discuss frequency of screening with your health care provider
Colorectal cancer screening	Adults to 75 years using any of the following tests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fecal occult blood testing: Once a year</li> <li>• Highly sensitive fecal immunochemical testing: Once a year</li> <li>• Flexible sigmoidoscopy: Once every five years</li> <li>• CT colonography: Once every five years</li> <li>• Stool DNA testing: Alone or combined with highly sensitive fecal immunochemical testing: Once every three years</li> <li>• Colonoscopy: Once every 10 years</li> </ul>

Depression screening	Annually for all adults
Diabetes screening	Adults to 70 years who are overweight or obese
HIV screening	All sexually active adults
Obesity screening and therapy to promote sustained weight loss	Annually for all adults
Screening and counseling to reduce alcohol misuse	Annually for all adults
Screening for lung cancer with low dose computed tomography (LDCT)	Adults to 80 years who have a 30 pack-year smoking history and currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years
Screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and counseling to prevent STIs	All sexually active adults

This list is based on the recommendations of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, Health Resources and Services Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and applicable laws and regulations.



## Treat-yourself chocolate fudge popsicles

**Servings:** 8

**Prep time:** 10 minutes

**Freeze time:** 12 hours

### Ingredients

- ½ cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup non-fat yogurt
- 1 cup chocolate almond milk

**Optional:** If you'd like to add sticks (or spoons) to your popsicles, simply insert them in your molds after they have been in the freezer for about an hour. Continue to freeze the popsicles until solid.

### Directions

1. Melt the semisweet chocolate chips in the microwave on low for 30-second intervals, stirring after each interval, until mostly melted.
2. Add the almond milk and whisk together. Let cool slightly.
3. Whisk together chocolate mixture with the yogurt.
4. Pour the mixture into eight small paper cups or popsicle molds, and freeze for about 12 hours (or overnight).
5. Pop out of the molds and enjoy!





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