



# Geisinger

## Welcome to Geisinger ACO

By Sierra Hawthorne, Executive Officer

You're receiving this newsletter because your primary care provider is part of the Geisinger Accountable Care Organization (ACO), which participates in Medicare's Shared Savings Program.

An ACO is a group of doctors, hospitals and care teams who work together to improve quality and coordination of care for people with Medicare. Being part of an ACO does not change your Medicare benefits or limit your choice of providers. It simply means your care team is working more closely on your behalf.

Despite our name, the Geisinger ACO includes providers from several organizations, including Geisinger Health System, Community Care, The Wright Center, Wayne Memorial Hospital and Barnes-Kasson.

When ACOs work well, they help care teams communicate better, focus on prevention, and support your health needs more effectively. We're committed to serving you, and we look forward to sharing helpful information and hearing your feedback along the way.

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### What's inside

**Pear frost with ginger**  
Refreshing recipe with health benefits!

**Colorectal screening**  
March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

**Community resources**  
Spotlight on social isolation and the Neighborly platform

**Story of the quarter**  
A success story provided by the Care Management team

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## Recipe: Must try!

### Pear frost with ginger (2 servings)

- 2 cups organic pears
- 1 cup apple juice
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
- 1 cup crushed ice

#### Instructions:

Use blender or food processor to blend until smooth. Pour over crushed ice in a tall glass and garnish with mint leaves.

#### Colorectal benefits:

Pears are packed with soluble fiber that has been shown to promote the natural death of colon cancer cells. Ginger, the other key ingredient, may also help reduce the risk of colon cancer.

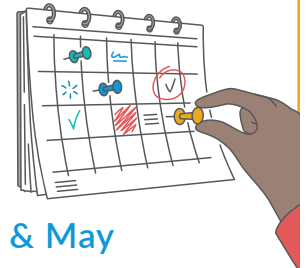
Dessert recipes with colon cancer combating potential: [healwithfood.org/colorectalcancer/recipes/desserts.php](http://healwithfood.org/colorectalcancer/recipes/desserts.php)

## Selecting a primary care provider

Medicare beneficiaries may select their primary care provider (PCP) on [medicare.gov](http://medicare.gov). The how-to video is on YouTube at [youtu.be/AZ7h-rqshG4](https://youtu.be/AZ7h-rqshG4).

A Spanish language version of the same video is available to use in conjunction with the Spanish language [medicare.gov](http://medicare.gov) site, [es.medicare.gov/](http://es.medicare.gov/). The direct link to the Spanish video is [youtu.be/baCO37UqJHU](https://youtu.be/baCO37UqJHU).

## Health awareness holidays



### March, April & May

**March:** Multiple sclerosis, colorectal cancer, kidney care, nutrition, pulmonary rehab, sleep, oral health, diabetes, epilepsy and drugs and alcohol.

**April:** Alcohol awareness, head and neck cancers, irritable bowel syndrome, autism, foot health, stress awareness, Parkinson's disease, testicular cancer, tobacco and immunizations.

**May:** ALS, arthritis, breast cancer awareness, bladder cancer, melanoma, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, stroke, fibromyalgia and hand hygiene.

## Need help affording your medications?

Programs are available for those who meet certain financial requirements, and some pharmaceutical companies offer reduced pricing on certain drugs based on financial need. Reach out to 570-808-4704 to learn more.



## Promoting brain health

5		7	2				9	
		6		3		7		1
4							6	
1			4	9				7
			5		8			
8				2	7			5
	7							9
2		9		8		6		
	4				9	3		8

Research suggests that number puzzles help to keep the brain sharp! Difficulty level: medium

## The Mental Health Benefits of Exercise and Physical Activity

Have you been feeling down lately? Try exercising to help improve your mood! Exercise can:

- Reduce feelings of depression and stress**
- Enhance your mood and overall emotional well-being**
- Increase your energy level**
- Improve sleep**

To learn more about the benefits of exercise visit [www.nia.nih.gov/exercise](http://www.nia.nih.gov/exercise).





# Health spotlight: colorectal cancer screening

By Molham Abdulsamad, MD, gastroenterology, Geisinger Lewistown Hospital and Geisinger Healthplex State College



If caught early, colorectal cancer is highly treatable. The key is screening, and there are several options, each with its own pros and cons.

## What is colorectal cancer and what causes it?

Colorectal cancer develops when abnormal cells in the colon or rectum grow out of control and form a tumor. If left untreated, colorectal cancer can spread to other parts of the body and be potentially fatal.

Risk factors include age, family history, personal history of certain conditions (e.g., inflammatory bowel disease), lifestyle choices (e.g., diet, smoking) and race/ethnicity. While some of these factors can't be changed, others can be managed by making healthy lifestyle choices and getting regular screenings.

## Types and symptoms

Often, colon cancer doesn't have symptoms until it's very advanced. When symptoms are present, they can vary depending on the location and stage of the tumor. Some common symptoms include:

- Blood in the stool or rectal bleeding
- A change in bowel habits, such as diarrhea or constipation
- Abdominal pain or cramping
- Weakness and fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss

If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor for a diagnosis.

## Colorectal cancer screening

For the general population at average risk for colon cancer, several screening options are available.

### Colonoscopies

The standard option is a colonoscopy. A doctor inserts a long, flexible tube with a camera into the colon to look for any abnormal growths or polyps. A colonoscopy can also be used to take biopsies of tissue or even remove small growths before they become a bigger problem. For patients at increased risk for colon cancer, this is the recommended test.

### Flexible sigmoidoscopies

Another option is a flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years along with annual stool testing. This test is like a colonoscopy, but only evaluates one area where growths tend to form. Its detection abilities are limited, so we generally recommend a colonoscopy if we suspect colorectal cancer.

### Stool testing

These tests can be done at home and involve collecting a stool sample that will be tested for blood or abnormal DNA. If they're found, you'll need a colonoscopy to confirm the results.

### Virtual colonoscopies

A CT colonography, or virtual colonoscopy, is another option, but if abnormalities are identified, you'll need a colonoscopy to confirm results.

No matter which screening option you prefer, talk to your doctor about your risk factors and which option is right for you.

# Social resource corner: social isolation

Contributor: Olivia Marchioni



Feeling disconnected can happen at any stage of life and may affect physical and emotional well-being. A person can feel isolation for many reasons, including lack of transportation, physical limitations, limited access to the internet or not being closely connected with family or friends.

## How common is the lack of social connection

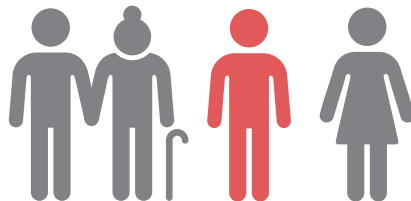
### Feeling lonely

About 1 in 3 adults in the U.S.



### Lack of social and emotional support

About 1 in 4 adults in the U.S.



Source: *Health Effects of Social Isolation and Loneliness | Social Connection | CDC*



Neighborly is a platform that helps connect beneficiaries to community-based resources that address isolation and other social needs. Users can find community centers, food assistance programs, transportation support and much more

right near them. Programs are free or reduced-cost and can be found using a simple zip code search. For resources near you, visit [neighborlypa.com](http://neighborlypa.com).

## How to combat social isolation

### Self-care

- Build a routine
- Consider physical activities such as taking a walk or doing chair yoga
- Take a class on something you would enjoy
- Find an activity or hobby you enjoy

### Stay connected

- Volunteer in the community
- Visit a public library or community center
- Reach out to friends and family
- Introduce yourself to neighbors or community members

# A team that steps in when it matters most

By Jenn Remetta  
(Director of Care Management, GHP & Geisinger ACO)

Just days after returning home from inpatient rehab, a patient found himself facing a new challenge: the inability to urinate, which required urgent attention. His family was worried, and their home health nurse wasn't equipped to place a catheter.

That's when the social worker stepped in.

Within minutes, she connected with the Urology office, speaking directly with an RN to explain the situation. She issued a verbal order for a catheter and immediately arranged a same-day urology appointment.

Throughout the encounter, she provided reassurance, offered her direct contact number and made sure both the patient and his family felt supported. She also followed up to make sure their needs continued to be met during this vulnerable time.

This is what our Care Management team does every day for our sickest patients: **We show up in moments of uncertainty, help families navigate complicated systems and work behind the scenes to remove barriers to care.**

Sometimes, a safe transition home depends on exactly this kind of teamwork. We are proud to be there when our patients need us most.

# Geisinger

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## Medicare resources

For more information on ACOs, call **800-medicare** (800-633-4227) and ask for the ACO Department. TTY users should call **877-486-2048**. You can also visit [medicare.gov/acos.html](http://medicare.gov/acos.html).

To contact Geisinger ACO, call **570-271-6403** or email [geisingeraco@geisinger.edu](mailto:geisingeraco@geisinger.edu)