

# Benefits News

Get to know your benefits

June 2023



## IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY AT HOME

Your home is supposed to be an oasis. A place where you feel secure and protected. Check out these articles for simple ideas for creating a healthy and safe environment.

- [Creating a healthier home](#)
- [Celebrate National Safety Month](#)
- [Preventing fires and burns](#)
- [Diabetes: How to keep prediabetes from turning into diabetes](#)
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### Creating a healthier home

Life comes with risks. You can't avoid every germ, allergen, or hazard. But you can take steps to limit them. Consider trying these ideas:



**LEAVE YOUR SHOES AT THE DOOR.** Shoes harbor bacteria, chemicals, and pesticides. Keep your house cleaner by swapping your shoes for slippers as soon as you step inside.





**CONTROL THE DUST.** Dust collects on your floor and is stirred up when you walk around. Limit allergies and asthma by vacuuming twice a week. Clean the vacuum canister and filter each time. Use a HEPA filter if available.

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**DISINFECT GERM MAGNETS.** At least once a week, clean common things that hold the most germs:

- **Kitchen sponges.** Microwave your very wet sponge for two minutes. Or toss it in your dishwasher before each load. The high temperature will kill the bacteria. Consider doing this every other day if you use your sponge frequently.
  - **Toothbrush holders.** Use bleach or baking soda and vinegar to thoroughly clean the inside and outside.
  - **Remote controls.** Use disinfecting wipes to clean all of the nooks and crannies without damaging the remote.
  - **Light switches.** Wipe the switches and plates with a disinfecting wipe or spray.
  - **Doorknobs.** For most chrome or metal doorknobs, disinfecting wipes or sprays will do the trick.
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**TEST FOR LEAD AND RADON GAS.** Exposure to both lead and radon gas can lead to serious health issues. Consider these inexpensive tests to make sure your home is safe:

- **Lead.** Was your home built before 1978? If so, do you have small children and/or chipped paint on your walls? It might be a good idea to test your interior paint for lead. Exposure to lead can cause a variety of health problems, especially for young children. Check with your local health department about a testing program. A lab can analyze a paint chip for \$20 to \$50.
  - **Radon.** Radon is a cancer-causing radioactive gas. Visit [this site](#) to see if you qualify for a free test. Or buy a test kit from your local hardware store for about \$12.
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**LIMIT PESTICIDES.** Pesticides are toxic and can be hazardous to humans and pets. Long-term exposure may increase your risk of developing cancer, Parkinson's disease, and/or Alzheimer's disease. In many cases, there are safer alternatives to using pesticides. Seal food containers so they don't attract ants. Fill openings around your foundation to keep out rodents. Look for other ideas in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Citizen's Guide to Pest Control and Pesticide Safety](#).

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**BE CAREFUL WITH PLASTICS AND CANNED FOODS.**

A chemical called bisphenol A (BPA) is found in certain plastics. It's also used as a liner in canned foods. Some studies show that it has negative effects on your health. Consider limiting your exposure by:

- Using water bottles with recycling symbols 1, 2, or 5.
  - Using a non-plastic plate to reheat foods in the microwave.
  - Covering food in the microwave with a paper towel or something other than plastic wrap.
  - Limiting how many canned foods you eat.
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**REPLACE YOUR FURNACE FILTER.** Experts recommend changing your furnace filter every three months. Swap it out more often if you live in a dusty area. Look for the HEPA variety, which filters out the most allergens.

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**FILTER YOUR TAP WATER.** Local water and bottled water can contain small amounts of lead and chlorine. A simple filter can remove these items. Consider a filter that fits on your faucet or use a filtered pitcher.



**OPEN A WINDOW.** Indoor air can have two to five times more pollutants than outside air. Dust, pet dander, and carpet or fabric fumes can stir up allergies and asthma. Open windows to air out your home if the weather and your allergies will allow it.

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**LIMIT TEFLON USE.** The EPA says a chemical found in Teflon and other nonstick coatings may be unhealthy. Consider cooking with stainless steel, cast iron, or copper-coated pans instead.

*Sources: Everyday Health, 2023; WebMD, 2009; Reader's Digest, July/August 2020.*

## Ready to quit tobacco?

Secondhand smoke is the leading trigger of asthma in children. If you're ready to quit and improve everyone's health at home, OEBC offers programs to help. Your chances of success are much greater when you partner with a coach. As an OEBC member, you can access one at no cost to you. Here's how:

- **Kaiser Permanente members:** Learn about [Freedom from Tobacco](#). Talk with a [health coach](#) at 503-286-6816 or 866-301-3866—select option 2.
- **Moda Health members:** Visit [Quit for Life](#), or call 866-QUIT-4-LIFE (866-784-8454); there's also a chat feature.

Visit [OEBC's Wellness Programs](#) for details.

# Celebrate National Safety Month

June is National Safety Month. It's a good time to focus on keeping your home safe and free from danger. Here are four ways you can participate.



<b>Update your home first-aid kit</b>	<b>Avoid injuries, tripping, and falls</b>	<b>Prevent heat stroke</b>	<b>Watch for hazards</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you don't have a first-aid kit, consider purchasing one.</li><li>• Check your first-aid kit each year and replace expired medications with new ones.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secure rugs so they stay in place.</li><li>• Avoid walking on wet floors and icy sidewalks.</li><li>• Watch out for trip hazards and move items out of pathways.</li><li>• Store kitchen knives in a safe place.</li><li>• Use handrails in stairwells.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wear loose-fitting and lightweight clothing in hot temperatures.</li><li>• Drink plenty of fluids.</li><li>• Apply sunscreen every two hours, or more often if you're swimming.</li><li>• Never leave anyone in a parked car.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Test your carbon monoxide detector and replace the batteries at least once each year.</li><li>• Make sure extension cords aren't frayed or under the carpet.</li><li>• Learn the <u>Heimlich maneuver (or abdominal thrusts)</u> to save someone who's choking.</li><li>• Store cleaning products out of children's reach.</li></ul>

Sources: National Safety Council, 2023; National Today, 2023; Mayo Clinic, 1998-2023.





## Preventing fires and burns

**Each year, thousands of people are injured in home fires. Most fire-related deaths are caused by smoke inhalation. Take these steps to make your home safe.**



### FIRE SAFETY

- ✔ Be responsible when using matches or lighters around children.
- ✔ Make sure that all smoking products are completely out when you're finished.
- ✔ Install smoke alarms in bedrooms, outside sleeping areas, and on every level of your home. Test them monthly and replace the batteries at least once each year. Replace the whole unit every 10 years.
- ✔ Buy and maintain fire extinguishers.
- ✔ Maintain your heating equipment. Regularly have your furnace inspected. Turn off and unplug space heaters when people are sleeping.
- ✔ Use a fireplace screen in front of a log-burning fireplace. It will help contain sparks. Have your chimney cleaned and inspected yearly.
- ✔ Be careful with candles. Never place lit candles in a window where blinds or curtains could catch fire.
- ✔ Develop several fire escape plans from each room in the house. Practice regularly with your family. Select a safe place for your family to meet outside.
- ✔ Make sure items such as clothing or blankets do not cover lamps.



## ELECTRICAL SAFETY

- ✔ Keep electrical appliances away from sinks and bathtubs.
- ✔ Protect unused electrical outlets with safety covers.
- ✔ Keep electrical cords out of reach of children.
- ✔ Turn off and unplug electrical equipment that is not in use.



## PREVENTING BURNS

- ✔ Set your water heater to 120°F (49°C) or below.
- ✔ Check the water temperature with your elbow, wrist, or bath thermometer before bathing your child.
- ✔ Use the back burners on the stove, away from the reach of children, as much as possible. Turn pot handles away from the edge of the stove.
- ✔ Keep children at least three feet away from the stove when you're cooking.
- ✔ Never carry a child while holding hot food or liquid.
- ✔ Don't use tablecloths or place mats around young children. Children can pull on them and spill hot food or drinks.
- ✔ Test microwaved foods and drinks. Avoid heating baby bottles in the microwave, as the heat may be unevenly distributed.
- ✔ Open microwaved containers away from you and your child. Steam can scald the skin.
- ✔ Keep irons, curling irons, and other heated appliances (and their cords) out of a child's reach.
- ✔ Don't allow children to handle fireworks.
- ✔ Keep children away from kerosene lamps, supplemental heaters, and outdoor grills when in use.



## Diabetes: How to stop prediabetes from turning into diabetes

This is the third and final segment in a series about diabetes. Looking for previous segments in this series? Visit this [page](#) and scroll down to Past Newsletters.

It can be a big wake-up call if you're diagnosed with prediabetes. Left unchecked, prediabetes can turn into type 2 diabetes. And diabetes can lead to serious health issues like heart disease or a stroke. But a prediabetes diagnosis doesn't mean you will definitely develop diabetes.

By making healthy lifestyle choices, you can lower your blood sugar. Try these simple steps to reduce your risk of developing diabetes:



**EAT HEALTHY FOODS.** Load your plate with fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole grains. Use olive oil in your cooking. Limit how much sugar and salt you eat.



**MOVE MORE.** Physical activity can control your weight. It also helps your body process blood sugar more effectively. Aim for 20 minutes per day of moderate exercise or 10 minutes per day of heavy exercise.





**STOP SMOKING.** If you kick the habit, it will improve the way your body processes insulin. This will reduce a number of health risks, including developing diabetes.



**TAKE MEDICATION IF PRESCRIBED.** Your doctor might prescribe medication if you're at high risk for developing type 2 diabetes. It might include prescription drugs to control high blood pressure and/or high cholesterol.

Sources: Mayo Clinic, 2022.



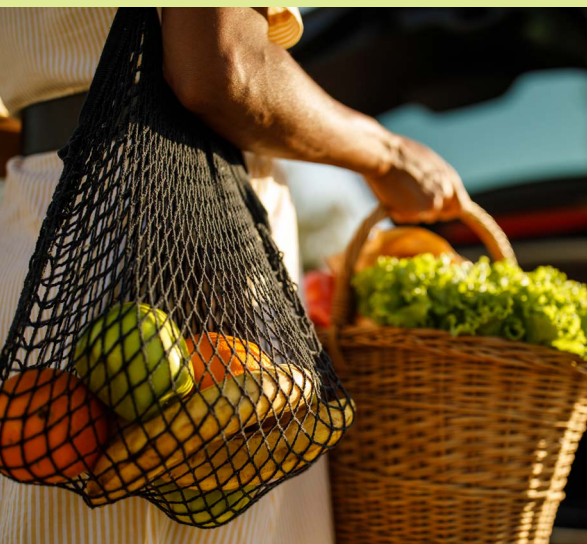
## Prediabetic? Get help at no cost to you.

If you're prediabetic, you might be able to reverse it. But you don't have to do it alone. Access help — at **no cost to you** — through your OEBC medical plan.



**Kaiser Permanente members: Omada**

**Moda Health members: Pre-D**  
(diabetes prevention)



# OEBB at your service

## What's next for the OEBB Board?



We recently sent out a survey to OEBB members about our vendor partners and your experience with the plans. Thank you to those who took the time to respond. The Board members value your responses. They will soon review the feedback and determine what changes and enhancements to consider for the future.

The survey focused on our vendor partners because we know they play a big role in the experience you have with your OEBB benefits. Your survey responses will help the Board evaluate how our vendor partners are doing. The Board is specifically looking for answers to these important questions:

- Are the vendor partners accurately administering OEBB's plans?
- Do they provide good service for our members?
- Do they offer useful tools and resources to help members make informed decisions?
- Are they easy to contact by phone and online?
- Is their website easy to use?

If a vendor partner isn't meeting expectations, the Board works to make improvements. This could include working with the vendor partner to boost their service. Or it could mean conducting a request-for-proposal process to identify new potential partners.

Ultimately, the Board's goal is to partner with dependable vendors that can provide the level of service our members expect and deserve.

*OEBB Board meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month and are open to the public. To learn more about upcoming meetings or view recordings of past meetings, visit the [Public Meetings](#) page of the OEBB website.*

### Benefits Questions?

Email: [oebb.benefits@odhsoha.oregon.gov](mailto:oebb.benefits@odhsoha.oregon.gov)

Phone: 888-4My-OEBB (888-469-6322)

