

# EMBRACE

Summer 2023

**New Moms,  
Speak-Up  
and Be Heard**

**5 Health  
Conditions  
an Eye Exam  
can Uncover**

**What You Need  
to Know About  
Skin Cancer**





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KNOW ABOUT  
SKIN CANCER

## features



# EMBRACE

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## Dear Valued Member:



**S**ummer is flying by! Remember to create your back-to-school checklist. You can start with your annual wellness visit. During the last couple of years, we saw a lot of children and adults delayed on routine vaccinations. Make sure you and your family are up to date.

In this issue, we discuss the importance of new moms actively sharing how they feel with their Provider during and after pregnancy as well as information you need to know about skin cancer. Additionally, we dive into the conditions eye exams can uncover.

Like every Embrace issue, this one is full of information you can use while focusing on what really matters – living. Send me an email with your comments. I look forward to hearing from you.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James M. Repp', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**James M. Repp**

President and COO, AvMed

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### Questions About AvMed Coverage or Benefits?

Contact AvMed's Member Engagement Center:  
Please call the number listed on your AvMed Member ID Card  
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# 5 Health Conditions an Eye Exam can Uncover

Your eyes are one of the only places in your body that can be examined without an invasive procedure. By looking at the blood vessels, tissues, and nerves in the eyes, optometrists can not only detect vision problems and eye diseases but also spot early signs of other serious health conditions. While optometrists can't diagnose these conditions, what they uncover can help you get ahead of potential problems. Here are five of the most common health issues that an eye exam can reveal.

## 1. High blood pressure

High blood pressure (hypertension) is often referred to as a "silent killer," according to the American Heart Association. Many people don't realize that they have a problem because there are no outward symptoms.

During a routine eye checkup, however, an eye doctor has a crystal-clear view of the health of your blood vessels. In fact, the tiny blood vessels of the retina, which is in the back of your eye, are among the first to be affected by high blood pressure.

The eye doctor may see leakage and rupturing that sets off alarm bells. They may also notice twists and kinks in the blood vessels — another warning sign of high blood pressure.

## 2. Diabetes

Diabetes is another chronic condition that often goes unnoticed in its early stages. High blood sugar levels that aren't lowered or well controlled can damage eye tissue, including the retina and the blood vessels that feed into it.

If the problem goes undetected (or untreated) long enough, it can lead to several vision problems, some of which cause vision loss. These include:

- Blurred vision
- Cataracts  
(a cloudy spot in your field of vision)
- Diabetic macular edema  
(when fluid collects in the macula, which is the central part of the retina)
- Diabetic retinopathy  
(when blood vessels leak into the retina)
- Glaucoma  
(when the optic nerve is damaged)

An optometrist can pick up on the early signs of diabetes and recommend that you see your primary health care provider for testing and treatment.

If you already know you have diabetes, you should still go for an eye exam each year. Your optometrist will check for signs of diabetic retinopathy and assess its progression.

## 3. Autoimmune diseases

Inflammation spotted in the eyes or around the eyes can signal the presence of autoimmune diseases such as thyroid disease, lupus, and multiple sclerosis.

Even without the use of equipment, your eye doctor may notice subtle clues that point to an autoimmune condition. Weak, droopy eyelids, for example, could be an early sign of lupus. Enlarged or bulging eyes is a common sign of an overactive thyroid.



#### **4. Cancer**

Sores and disfigurations on the eyelid or near the lash line could be a type of skin cancer known as basal cell carcinoma. A change in the color of your eye, dark spots in the back of the eye, or other tiny changes on your iris can sometimes indicate a different type of cancer known as ocular melanoma.

#### **5. Stroke**

The eyes are part of the brain, so they can also serve as an early warning system for a stroke. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is cut off or when a blood vessel bursts.

Sometimes, blood flow to the retina is clogged (or a vessel bursts). That is called an eye stroke. The most common symptom is sudden, painless vision loss in one eye.

If your optometrist detects signs of an eye stroke, you'll need immediate testing at a stroke center or with a neurologist. That's because the risk of stroke is highest in the first few days after an eye stroke.

Bottom line: Keep up with your yearly eye exams. These health problems sound scary, but the important thing to know is that good treatments are available — and early detection is key.

If you're behind on your eye exams (or can't remember the last time you were asked to read an eye chart), your next step is simple: Make an appointment. Eye exams are painless, and you'll walk away with peace of mind. Search functionality will be expanded, and you'll be able to view a list of items subject to bundled payment arrangements and view out-of-network allowed amounts.

With these changes, out of pocket calculations will now include visit limits and cumulative totals per services and out-of-network benefits.

Plus, communications within the tool will deliver information to help you make more informed health decisions with messaging about prerequisites for procedures, benefit limits and accruals, procedures that are preventive, required disclosure notices, and educational information related to cost estimates.

# Send Your Kids Back to School Prepared for a Safe and Healthy Year!

Heading back to school is an exciting time of year for students and families. As students go back to school, it is important that they eat a nutritious diet, stay active, and are up to date on their immunizations for a healthier and safer school year.

Our children spend the vast majority of their day at school, so it's a place that can have a big impact in all aspects of their lives. Schools can help students learn about the importance of eating a more nutritious diet and being more physically active, which can lower the risk of becoming obese and developing related health problems.

Prevention works. The health of students —what they eat and how much physical activity they get – is linked to their academic success. Early research is also starting to show that nutritionally balanced school lunches may help to lower obesity rates. Health and academics are linked – so time spent for health is also time spent for learning.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and adolescents limit their intake of solid fats, cholesterol, added salt, added sugars, and refined grains. Eating a nutritious breakfast is also associated with improved cognitive function.

Young people aged 6-17 should participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Research shows that physical activity can help cognitive skills, attitudes, concentration, attention and improve classroom behavior – so students are ready to learn.

Getting your children and teens ready to go back to school is the perfect time to make sure they are up-to-date with their immunizations. Vaccination protects students from serious diseases and keeps them healthier and more prepared for success. The recommended immunizations for children birth through 6 years old as well as the recommended immunizations for preteens and teens 7-18 years old can be found on the CDC website.





## New Moms, Speak-Up and Be Heard

Bringing a child into the world gives parents tremendous joy. However, it's also a time when new moms experience many first-time feelings. Questions like, "Is this pain normal?" or "What do these symptoms mean?" are common, but what should not be is keeping these concerns to yourself or chalking it to "being pregnant."

Championing the CDC's "HEAR HER" campaign, AvMed encourages all our expecting Members to speak-up when something seems off. The goal of the CDC's "HEAR HER" initiative is to promote open communication between patients and their doctors to eliminate preventable maternal mortality.

By actively sharing how you feel with your Provider during and after pregnancy, you are playing an active role in your care so that any urgent warning signs are addressed, and medical attention can be provided right away.

While common chronic conditions new moms face are diabetes and depression, one that is particularly important to be vigilant against is preeclampsia. Normally developed after 20 weeks of pregnancy, preeclampsia is a complication from high blood pressure.



### So, what are the signs?

- A headache that will not go away
- Changes in vision, including blurry vision, seeing spots, or having changes in eyesight
- Pain in the upper stomach area
- Nausea or vomiting
- Swelling of the face or hands
- Sudden weight gain
- Trouble breathing

If you are feeling any of these symptoms, it's important to reach out to your healthcare provider immediately and don't ignore it. After all you know your body best, and it's not worth risking your life when you're getting ready to bring another into it.

# What You Need to Know About Skin Cancer

Skin cancer affects the outermost layer of your skin. It's most often caused by UV radiation from the sun (sun lamps and tanning beds are other sources of UV radiation). While you may like the look of bronzed skin, a tan or a sunburn is actually a sign of UV damage. That damage can add up over the years, increasing your risk of skin cancer. There are two main categories of skin cancer: melanoma and nonmelanoma.

**Melanoma** (also known as malignant melanoma) is less common than nonmelanoma, but it's much more dangerous. In 2019, about 88,000 people were diagnosed with melanomas.

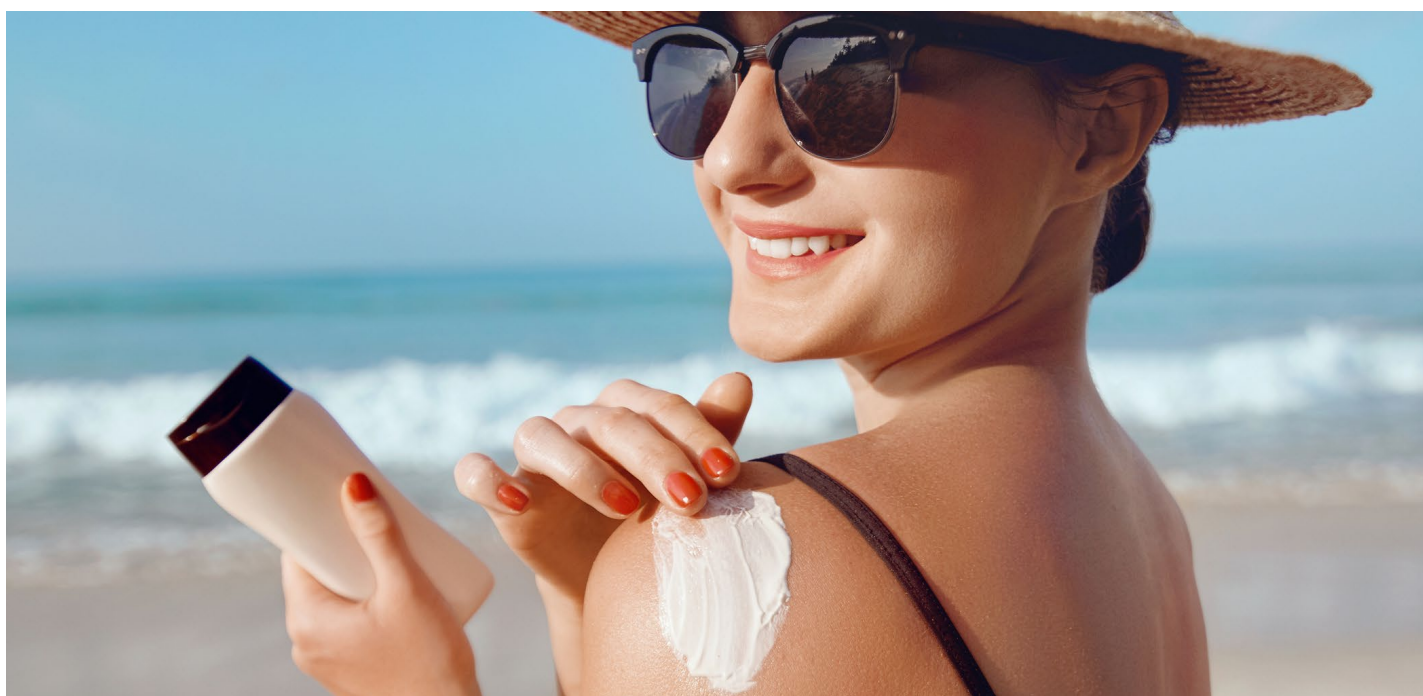
**Nonmelanomas** are much more common — an estimated 4.3 million people are treated for a nonmelanoma each year. Nonmelanomas are often easy to treat, usually with surgery to remove the cancerous tissue.

The two most common types of nonmelanoma skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. More than 4 million cases of basal cell carcinoma occur in the United States each year.

Melanoma often looks like or develops from a mole. It is usually asymmetrical, has an uneven border, an irregular color, or changes in size and shape.

Basal cell carcinoma may look like a pimple, lump, or an open or nonhealing sore. It might display as reddish patches, shiny bumps, or discolored patches of skin.

Your best bet is to talk to your doctor if you notice any unusual spots on your skin or changes to existing moles. They may refer you to a dermatologist, a doctor who specializes in skin care. If you have a personal or family history of skin cancer, your doctor might recommend yearly skin checks by a dermatologist.





# How can I prevent skin cancer?

The prevalence of skin cancer has increased over the last 10 years, and prevention is more important than ever. Protecting yourself from too much sun exposure is the best way to keep your skin healthy. To lower your chances of getting skin cancer, take the following precautions:

- ✓ Avoid tanning beds. Just one tanning session increases skin cancer risk by 70%
- ✓ Cover up. Wear protective clothing when outside, including long sleeves, a broad-brimmed hat, and UV-blocking sunglasses.
- ✓ Seek out shade. The sun's rays do the most damage between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- ✓ Choose your sunscreen carefully. Sunscreens should protect against both UVA and UVB rays. Look for something that is water-resistant with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. A lip balm with SPF is essential too.
- ✓ Apply sunscreen correctly. Adults should apply two tablespoons of sunscreen about 15 to 30 minutes before heading outside and every two hours afterward. If you're swimming or sweating excessively, reapply more frequently. Don't forget hard-to-reach spots. People almost universally forget their hands, scalp, ears, and feet when applying sunscreen.



# Wellness Visits: The Best Way to Stay Healthy

If you're like a lot of people, you probably only think of going to the doctor when you feel sick or you've been injured. But having routine preventive care visits and taking other steps to manage your health are just as important as sick visits when it comes to preventing diseases and ensuring you stay healthy. Now may be a great time to focus on wellness, before the cold and flu season arrives.

An annual preventive care visit is recommended to ensure your doctor has an ongoing record of your health, which makes it easier to spot subtle signs of disease. Plus, annual visits ensure you get the recommended health screenings and immunizations that can keep you healthy.

Being proactive about your own health and wellness to avoid serious medical issues and keep your healthcare costs



to a minimum. To view a complete list of preventive services, visit [AvMed.org](https://www.avmed.org). Contact your healthcare Provider to find out what services are recommended for you and to schedule your virtual or in office visit and start enjoying a healthier you!

## Help Us Do Even Better!

It is our top priority to continuously improve your Member experience and benefits to help you stay healthy. In the next few weeks, you may receive an independent survey in the mail from the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems or CAHPS program. By filling out this survey, we can learn more about your AvMed experience to improve our services and better meet your needs.

This tool plays an important role in your healthcare and ensures we continue delivering quality services and the best healthcare experience possible.

**We value your opinion. If you receive a letter or call about a survey, we kindly ask that you take a few minutes to participate.**

## YOUR PHARMACY



# FORMULARY UPDATE

See the latest List of Covered Drugs on our website for copay levels and other pertinent pharmacy benefits. Your formulary may be different depending on your plan type.

### NEW DRUGS

Brand Name	Generic Name	Use	Formulary Availability
DEXCOM G7 MIS RECEIVER	continuous blood glucose system receiver	Diabetes	Small and Large Group, Individual, Marketplace
DEXCOM G7 MIS SENSOR	continuous blood glucose system sensor	Diabetes	Small and Large Group, Individual, Marketplace
TEZSPIRE INJECTION 210MG	tezepelumab-ekko	Asthma	Small and Large Group

### NEW GENERICS

Brand Name	Generic Name	Use	Formulary Availability
AUBAGIO	teriflunomide	Multiple Sclerosis	Small and Large Group, Individual, Marketplace
CELONTIN	methsuximide	Seizure Disorders	Small and Large Group, Individual, Marketplace
IRESSA	gefitinib	Oncology	Small and Large Group
LATUDA	lurasidone HCl	Antipsychotic	Small and Large Group, Individual, Marketplace
NAFTIN GEL 2%	naftifine HCl	Topical Antifungal	Small and Large Group
PYLERA	bismuth subcitrate potassium-metronidazole-tetracycline	Ulcer Therapy	Small and Large Group
TROKENDI XR	topiramate XR	Seizure Disorders	Small and Large Group
UCERIS FOAM	budesonide (Intrarectal)	Ulcerative Colitis	Small and Large Group

The List of Covered Drugs includes specific coverage information on copayment levels, medications that require prior authorization or have quantity limits, and therapeutic alternatives. The most recent listing can be viewed online at AvMed's website, [AvMed.org/Prescriptions/](https://www.avmed.org/Prescriptions/)

Medications are added to AvMed's List of Covered Drugs (formulary) after careful review by a committee of practicing doctors and pharmacists called the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee. The committee meets quarterly and decides which medications provide quality treatment at the best value. The medications on this page have been added to the formulary.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FILLING YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS

When your doctor gives you a prescription, getting the prescription filled at a local pharmacy should be the next step. That's not always the case, though: A drug price might be too high, or another factor may be stopping you from picking up your medication. Unfortunately, not following your doctor's treatment plan can lead to complications down the road. If you're having concerns about your medications, consider taking the following steps:

- 1 - Ask about generic medication.** Brand-name medications can cost significantly more than a lower-cost or generic alternative. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about other options that may be available to you.
- 2 - Choose 90-day refills.** Another way to save money is through 90-day refills. Opting for quarterly refills can provide you with discounts as well as cut down on the time you'd otherwise spend refilling your medication once a month.
- 3 - Speak up about side effects.** Some medications can cause unwanted side effects or conflict with other treatments. Speak with your Provider about your concerns to see if treatment can be adjusted.


For more information about prescription services, contact AvMed's Member Engagement Center at the number listed on your AvMed Member ID Card (TTY 711).

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**Important Contact Information**

AvMed's Member Engagement Center\*:  
 Please call the number listed on your AvMed Member ID Card (TTY 711), Monday–Friday, 8 am–8 pm; Saturday, 9 am–1 pm.

\*Hours may vary according to your policy.

- AvMed Nurse On Call: **1-888-866-5432** (TTY 711) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Fraud and Abuse Hotline: **1-877-286-3889**
- AvMed website: **AvMed.org**
- AvMed Facebook  **www.Facebook.com/AvMedHealth**



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