



HEALTHY LIVING SECTION

Weekly tips and advice from your neighborhood Carolinas HealthCare System Blue Ridge providers.



Health Insurance Fast Facts: All About Care

Before you choose a health insurance plan, it's important to know which doctors and hospitals are included in the plan's network. Your health insurance plan's network may affect how much you pay for care from the doctors you want to see.

What is a network?

A network is a group of doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers that participate in a health insurance plan.

Why does it matter?

Because your health insurance plan's network may affect how much you pay for care from the doctors you want to see. Getting care with a doctor outside of your plan's network could mean you have to pay higher out-of-pocket costs (out-of-pocket costs are your total costs for medical care that aren't paid by your health insurance plan). Going to doctors and hospitals that belong to your insurance plan's network helps keep your out-of-pocket costs down when you get care.

Why should I choose my preferred doctor before I pick my health insurance plan?

Before you choose a health insurance plan, it's important to know which doctors and hospitals are included in the plan's network. Think about it this way: You wouldn't buy concert tickets before you know who's performing. So why choose health insurance that way?

When you choose your preferred doctor before you pick your health insurance plan, you can make sure your doctors and hospitals are in your health insurance plan's network – which can help keep your out-of-pocket costs down when you need care.

What should I think about when looking at a health insurance plan's network?

When you're choosing the doctors and hospitals you want in your health insurance plan, think about the kind of care you want and need. Here are some things to consider:

- Does the plan's network include easy access to a primary care doctor near you?
- Does it include convenient urgent care locations and other options to get quick care when you and your family need it?
- Think about specialty care too. Does it give you access to experts who can provide high-quality heart and cancer treatment, or advanced care for your children?
- Are the doctors and hospitals in your plan's network connected to each other? Do they work together across different locations to provide coordinated care?

Qualities like these mean better care for you and your family.



A 1/2 cup serving of edamame provides 9 grams of fiber, 11 grams of protein and numerous vitamins and minerals.

Healthy Garden Salad

- 5 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons grapeseed oil
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 limes, juiced
- 1 teaspoon white sugar
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (1 pound) package frozen shelled edamame
- 3 cups frozen corn kernels
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 (15 ounce) can black beans, rinsed and drained

In a large serving bowl, whisk together the red wine vinegar, grapeseed oil, cilantro, lime juice, sugar, salt and garlic. Set aside.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add the soybeans and boil for 3 minutes. Add corn to the boiling water and continue cooking for 1 more minute. Drain very well, and pour into the bowl with the dressing. Gently mix in the cherry tomatoes, green onions and black beans. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving. **Serves: 8**



Are Probiotics Good or Bad?

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If asked to list parts of the body that are most important to keeping you healthy, probably very few people would mention the digestive system or "gut." The truth is that your gut is right up there with your brain and heart. In addition to common digestive issues, your gut can be linked to autoimmune illnesses, mental health disorders and certain skin conditions. This is where probiotics come into play.

The human body is home to many different strains of bacteria and a large portion of them live in our digestive system. These strains are generally divided into good and bad categories. Probiotics are considered the good kind of bacteria. They are responsible for keeping the bad bacteria in check as well as aiding with digestion and the filtration of chemicals, toxins and various artificial substances from our bodies. It's important to keep a healthy balance of bacteria, which is considered around 80 percent good bacteria and 20 percent bad.

Before too much praise is heaped on probiotics, it needs to be said that research into their benefits is still relatively young and there isn't a lot of definitive data to back up any health claims. Although they are considered to be safe, complications can arise, so it's important to consult with your doctor before taking any probiotics.

Some of the health claims made regarding probiotics are that they can help with gastrointestinal issues, irritable bowel syndrome, skin conditions such as eczema, and even the prevention of allergies and colds. In theory, this all checks out, but as mentioned earlier, studying the benefits needs to continue and there aren't any guarantees. Part of the problem and one reason more research is needed is the delivery system of probiotics.

As with most nutrients, it's almost always better to consume probiotics through whole foods, like fruits and vegetables. Today, most probiotic products are sold in pill form or in foods that have been fortified with them. The problem with this is that the good bacteria in these pills and fortified foods are often dead before you even take them and can offer no benefit. If your mother ever told you to eat some "live" food, this is probably why she said it.

If you want to increase your intake of probiotics, or good bacteria, try consuming more yogurt that has live bacteria cultures and little to no sugar, and increase your consumption of pickled produce, like sauerkraut and kimchi. If you have questions regarding probiotics or digestive health, please call us at 828-580-6752.

Probiotic Supplements Aren't All Bad

If you prefer the supplement route, look for capsules that have at least a billion CFUs (colony-forming unit) per dose and that list a "best by" date, instead of a "present at time of manufacture" label.

