PHP

In Good Health

For the health & wellness of our members

National Bike Month

Mental Hygiene

What to Expect From an Eye Exam

May 2025

Get PHP Fit!

Second Quarter Challenge:
BINGO Challenge

Challenge yourself with one of our Q2 BINGO boards—Boost, Develop, Financial, Fitness, or Nutrition and work towards a healthier and more mindful lifestyle. This could be as simple as taking a walk or setting yourself a budget, or as kind as giving someone a compliment or watching a video on empathy. Whatever tasks you pick, you're on your way to completing your BINGO board!

Q2: April 1 - June 30

Here's the challenge

On the **Get PHP Fit! site**, start by choosing one of five BINGO boards. Next, select a box to complete and once achieved, click on the square to mark it done. Continue this until there's a BINGO on your board (horizontally, vertically, diagonally) or by completing 10 squares in total.

What can I win?

Fifteen individuals who complete this challenge will be randomly drawn to win a *$50 Amazon gift card*.

BINGO can:

1 Enhance communication skills

2 Give positive mental attitude

3 Improve decision-making

4 Increase productivity

PHP Members:

Sign in to your member account at phpni.com, click on **Wellness Tools > Get PHP Fit! > Quarterly Challenge** to join the BINGO challenge.

Join Now! PHP's year-long challenge

In addition to our quarterly Get PHP Fit! challenge, you also have the opportunity to participate in our year-long challenge simply by visiting your primary care provider! Each quarter, enter the date of your visit on the **Get PHP Fit!** site and be entered for the chance to win a *$50 Amazon Gift Card*!

Know Where to Go For Care

Always weigh your options and choose the appropriate level of care for whatever your situation.

Check out this interactive tool at **phpni.com/save**:

| Telehealth | Doctors Office | Urgent Care | Emergency Room |

Cost: ⓘ ●○○○   Severity: ⓘ ●○○○   Speed: ⓘ ●○○○

When to use:
Cold, cough, flu, allergies, pink eye, sore throat, respiratory issues, sinus problems, and skin problems.

Treatment Cost Estimator: Know before you go

This tool provides you with an estimate of both total costs and out-of-pocket expenses for common medical treatments and services.

Log in to your member account and select **My PHP > Treatment Cost Estimator**. From there you can search using location, distance, service desired, and/or preferred doctor/facility.

This feature is also available through the **PHP Go!** mobile app. To download, go to your phone's Apple *App Store* or *Google Play* and search '**PHP Go!**'
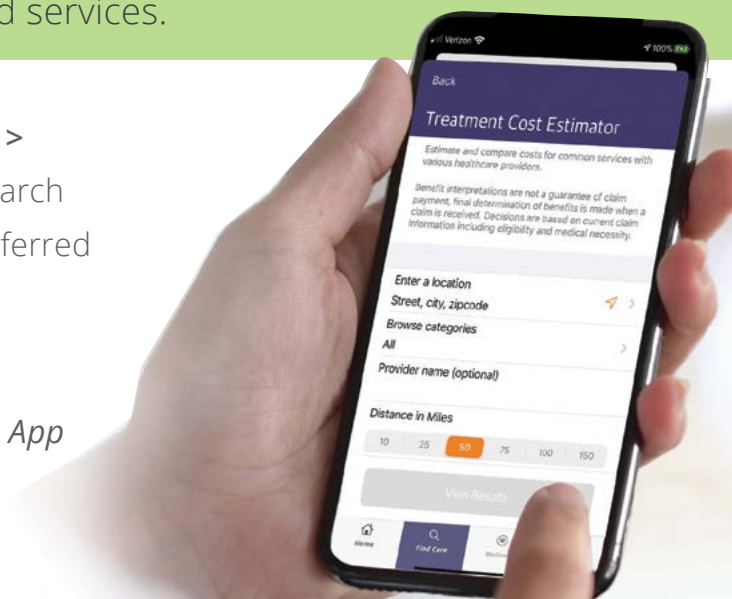
What to Expect From an Eye Exam

May is Healthy Vision Month! If you haven't scheduled your annual eye exam yet, now is the time. Most people should have an eye exam every 1-2 years, or more frequently if they have risk factors like age, injury, diabetes, or if they wear glasses or contacts.

Eye exams are simple, painless tests to check vision and eye health, looking for issues such as cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, and muscle problems like crossed eyes. They can also detect health conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and autoimmune disorders.

Optometrists and ophthalmologists are eye care specialists, with ophthalmologists able to perform surgery. Opticians help select glasses but are not doctors.

During an eye exam, your provider will:

- Check your vision with an eye chart and test your peripheral vision
- Examine your eyes for signs of disease
- Test for color blindness
- Measure your cornea and check for astigmatism
- Assess eye movements and muscle function

- Shine a light in your eyes and dilate your pupils for a closer look
- Test for glaucoma with puffed air or pressure checks

Afterward, they will discuss your results and offer prescriptions if needed. Keep up with regular eye exams to maintain good vision and overall eye health!

How to Improve Your Balance

Improving balance takes a combination of physical strength, coordination, and awareness of body position. Here are some key factors and exercises that can help improve balance:

- A strong core provides a stable base for balance. Exercises that target the abdominal muscles, back muscles, and pelvic floor include planks, bridges, and bird dogs.

- Strengthening the muscles in your legs and hips can enhance stability and balance. Exercises like squats, lunges, and leg presses can help improve leg strength.

- Practice being aware of your body position awareness. Practice exercises that challenge your balance position awareness, such as single leg standing or yoga poses. Yoga and tai chi are both disciplines that emphasize balance, strength, flexibility, and mindfulness. These practices incorporate various poses and movements that can improve overall balance and body awareness.

- Flexibility plays a role in balance by allowing for a greater range of motion. Incorporate stretching exercises, such as hamstring stretches, calf stretches, and hip stretches, into your routine to improve flexibility.

If you have specific balance concerns or are at a higher risk of falling, it may be beneficial to consult with a physical therapist or balance specialist. They can assess your balance, provide tailored exercises, and guide you through proper techniques to improve your balance effectively.

Consistency and patience are key when it comes to improving balance. Start gradually, listen to your body, and gradually increase the difficulty and intensity of balance exercises as you progress.

Standing on one leg is a simple yet effective exercise for improving balance. This is an exercise that can be done just about anywhere. Try to remember to practice while doing the dishes or when taking a brief break at work. Start by standing near a support (such as a chair or wall) and simply lift one foot off the ground. Gradually progress to balancing without assistance. Aim for 30 seconds to one minute on each leg.

High Density vs. Low Density Calories:
The easy way to monitor food intake

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One of the most common questions I receive is, "How much should I eat to lose weight?" It's a great question because, after all, we need to burn more calories than we consume to shed those extra pounds. However, it's a balancing act. If we cut calories too much, our body's hormones can send hunger signals to our brain, prompting it to start storing body fat. This can lead to unintended consequences.

The good news is that in order to lose weight you don't have to weigh and measure your food or count calories. Instead, one of the best ways to control calories is to focus on **foods that offer higher density with fewer calories. It's simple! Make friends with fruits and vegetables.**

Food density refers to the amount of nutrients, such as vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other beneficial compounds, present in a given volume or weight of food. On the other hand, calorie density refers to the number of calories present in a specific amount of food. High density foods contain a significant amount of nutrients compared to the volume or weight, while low-calorie density means that a food has fewer calories for a given volume or weight.

Example Comparisons:

- A Big Mac contains 550 calories and weighs just under half a pound. A large apple weighs about the same but contains only 150 calories.

- What's going to keep you feeling more satisfied – 1 cup of grapes or 4 Ritz crackers? Both contain about 70 calories, but the grapes weigh 150 grams, while the crackers weigh a mere 13 grams. Can you see why it's so easy to consume a whole sleeve of Ritz crackers?

The simplest way to use the power of calorie density in your favor is to include high density/low calories foods in your daily meals. This means that fruits and/or vegetables should be a part of every meal. This approach ensures you fill up on nutrient-dense, lower-calorie foods, helping you stay full for longer and reducing those nagging between-meal hunger pangs.

National Bike Month

May is National Bike Month, and a good time for a reminder about the importance of wearing a properly fitted bike helmet. Bicycle helmets save lives.

One study found that wearing a bicycle helmet during a crash reduced head injury by 48%, serious head injury by 60%, and traumatic brain injury by 53%. Keep in mind that you can be seriously injured from a simple fall on a casual bike ride.

Your helmet should fit correctly:

• Make sure that you try on the helmet. Sizes and fits vary by manufacturer.

• The helmet should be snug, but not too tight. Check to see if it can be adjusted to customize fit.

• The helmet should sit level on the head. The front of the helmet should sit about 1-2 finger widths about the user's eyebrows, and the padding at the back of the helmet shouldn't touch the top of the neck.

• While wearing the helmet you should be able to see forward, and side-to-side.

• Side straps should make a "v" at the bottom of, and slightly in front of the user's ears, and the chin strap sit snugly (allow 1-2 fingers between chin and strap) in the center of the chin.

Don't forget that you are modeling safe behavior to children by wearing a helmet every time that you ride a bike. Be safe and have fun!

Mental Hygiene

May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

Mental health hygiene refers to the practices and habits that support mental well-being, helping to manage stress, improve emotional resilience, and maintain a balanced state of mind. Just as physical hygiene is important for bodily health, mental health hygiene focuses on maintaining a healthy mind.

Key practices of mental health hygiene include:

- **Self-care:** Taking time for activities that help you relax and recharge, such as exercise, hobbies, or spending time in nature.

- **Managing stress:** Using techniques like deep breathing, mindfulness, or meditation to reduce stress and anxiety.

- **Healthy relationships:** Surrounding yourself with supportive people and maintaining positive social connections.

- **Sleep hygiene:** Ensuring adequate and restful sleep, which is crucial for emotional stability and cognitive function.

- **Setting boundaries:** Learning to say no and managing demands from others to avoid burnout.

- **Seeking professional help:** Consulting a mental health professional when needed, whether through therapy, counseling, or support groups.

- **Mindfulness and reflection:** Regularly reflecting on your thoughts and emotions and practicing mindfulness to stay present in the moment.

Set aside 15 minutes each day to practice mental health hygiene. Experiment with different activities to find what works for you to manage stress. Pay attention to what you need at different times in your life and add another few minutes of mental hygiene to your day if you feel the need.

Practicing mental health hygiene can help individuals cope with life's challenges, build resilience, and promote overall emotional well-being.

Resources to Help you Save at **phpni.com**

We've created a one-stop resource to assist you in using your benefits.

Check it out at **phpni.com/save**:

Smart shopping tool box: Online tools to help you price medications and compare locations.

Pharmacy: Tips and tools to help save you money on prescriptions.

Know your network: Use in-network providers to avoid high out-of-network services cost.

Using care: Easy online resources to use before receiving services.

It's easy to price shop your prescriptions at phpni.com!

Use the '**Price a Medication**' tool in your member account before you head to the pharmacy. It's easy, here's how:

1 Log in on your member portal and select '**Price a Medication**' from the **Pharmacy menu**.

2 Enter the medicine name you want to price, member information, and zip code, then click '**Get Prices**'.

3 Now you have the pricing information to compare costs at various locations, and 1-month vs. 3-month supplies.