



# Health & Wellness Update

## April 2025



### April National Health Observance: National Alcohol and Substance Abuse Awareness & Stress Awareness Month

April's health observances are National Alcohol and Substance Abuse & Stress Awareness Month. Looking for educational information related to these topics? If so, check out the following UnitedHealthcare educational resources:



[Alcohol use disorder](#)

[Substance use disorder](#)

[Substance use help line](#)

[Living with stress](#)

[Click here to learn more](#)

# United at Work Presentation of the Month:

## Breathing for Better Health



Something as simple as conscious breathing may lead to many health benefits, calming the mind and reducing stress. During this presentation, we will define diaphragmatic breathing and discuss benefits of breathing techniques and its impact on health. We will also review breathing strategies, as well as good breathing practices.

United  
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En Español

Click here for the  
presentation

## Healthy tip flier of the month.

### Soothing Stress

UnitedHealthcare | Health Tip

#### Health tip: Soothing Stress

The current stress level experienced by Americans is 20% higher than the global average.<sup>1</sup> While there is no magic pill to reduce or eliminate stress, there are several ways we can learn to manage the stress in our lives.

#### Stress may affect health in multiple negative ways<sup>2</sup>

##### Chronic stress can:

- Increase your risk for a variety of physical health problems including digestive issues, headaches, muscle tension, heart disease, heart attack, high blood pressure, stroke, and weight gain.
- Increase your risk for a variety of mental health problems including anxiety, depression, sleep problems, memory and concentration impairment.
- Cause a disease either due to changes in your body or behaviors such as smoking, consuming alcohol, or any other poor habit that people use to cope with stress.
- Suppress the body's immune system, making it more difficult to recover from illnesses.

#### The 3 stages of stress

Dr. Hans Selye broke the stress response into three stages, which he called the General Adaptation Syndrome.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Alarm Stage** – also known as “fight or flight”, this stage occurs when you are frightened or under threat. Your heart rate speeds up and the body releases stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. If prolonged it can take a toll on your body.
- 2 Resistance Stage** – occurs after the initial extreme reaction. Your body tries to adapt to the continued stress. If the stress passes, you can start to rebuild your defenses. If it becomes long-term, you move to the third stage.
- 3 Exhaustion Stage** – is the “burnout” or overload phase. Continued pounding by stress depletes your body's reserves, which puts you at risk for disease. Facing multiple long-term stressors piles extra strain on your system and may quickly lead to exhaustion.



#### The power of positive thinking

Whether we see the glass as half empty or half full is an indication of how we perceive things in life. Research suggests negative thinking not only affects health, but also our stress level. Individuals with an optimistic attitude<sup>4</sup>

- May be better able to cope with stress
- Have a better immune system
- Are less likely to get depressed
- Catch few infectious diseases
- Have better health habits
- Often live a longer, healthier life<sup>5</sup>

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En Español

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Click here to learn more tips

Sources:

<sup>1</sup> American Institute of Stress, [www.stress.org](http://www.stress.org), 2023. Accessed October 2023.

<sup>3</sup> NASM, General Adaptation Syndrome in Fitness Explained. <https://openwa.pressbooks.pub/cchith140/chapter/general-adaptation-syndrome/>, 2022. Accessed October 2023.

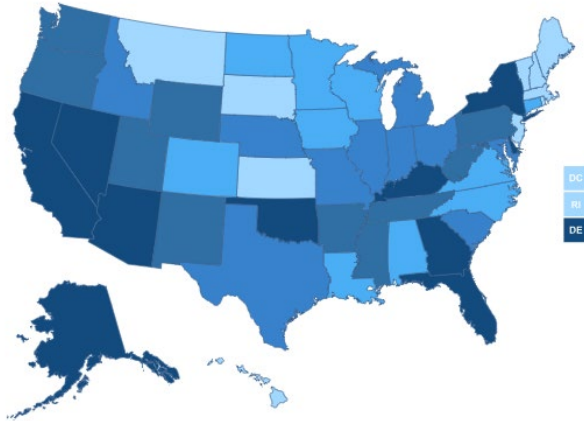
## Research corner:

# Non-Medical Drug Use – Past Year in United States

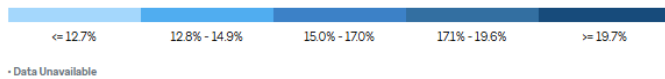


### Non-Medical Drug Use - Past Year by State

Percentage of adults who reported using prescription drugs non-medically (including pain relievers, stimulants and sedatives) or illicit drugs (excluding cannabis) in the last 12 months



Data from Denver Health and Hospital Authority, RADARS® System Survey of Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs Program, 2024



### Why does this matter?

Using illicit drugs, including prescription drugs without a doctor's guidance, can be dangerous and have long-lasting consequences, although the specific effects vary depending on the type of drug. Common negative health outcomes of illicit drug use include asthma, aggression, brain damage, sleep issues and increased risk of contracting HIV. Additionally, substance abuse can lead to addiction – also called substance abuse disorder – which often requires lifelong management.

In 2022, there were more than 100,000 drug-related deaths in the United States, and more than 24.6 million people in the U.S. age 12 and older reported using an illicit drug (not including marijuana) in the past year. Between 2018-2019 and 2020-2021, emergency room visits for substance use disorder increased 42% among adults ages 18-34 and 38% among adults older than 35. In 2022, there were an estimated 7.7 million drug-related emergency department visits.

The health consequences of using illicit or prescription drugs without a doctor's guidance are costly to individuals and society. In 2007, it was estimated that illicit drug use cost the U.S. a total of \$193 billion. The opioid epidemic alone cost the U.S. nearly \$1.5 trillion in 2020.



# Non-Medical Drug Use

**U.S. Value:** 17.6%

**Top State #1:** New Hampshire, Vermont 7.4%

**Bottom State #50:** Nevada: 39.3%

**Definition:** Percentage of adults who reported using prescription drugs non-medically (including pain relievers, stimulants and sedatives) or illicit drugs (excluding cannabis) in the last 12 months..

## Who is affected?

According to America's Health Rankings analysis, the prevalence of past-year non-medical drug use is higher among:?

- Men compared with women.
- Adults who identify as other race compared with all other racial/ethnic groups. Asian adults have the lowest rate of non-medical drug use.
- Adults with some post-high school education compared with all other educational attainment groups.
- Adults with an annual household income less than \$25,000 compared with those who have higher incomes.

## What works?

Non-medical drug use can be prevented and treated. The [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) lists evidence-based strategies and effective, sustainable and scalable approaches to implementing substance abuse prevention programs. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) also has evidence-based [programs and resources](#) for parents, schools and primary care doctors, many of them focusing on children and adolescents.

When prevention is no longer an option, there are research-based treatment programs. Effective treatment approaches the individual as a whole person, addressing environmental factors, behaviors and other aspects of health, and is often a lifelong process. SAMSA's [treatment locator](#) can help individuals find state-licenses providers specializing in substance use disorders.

Data Source & Year(s): Denver Health and Hospital Authority, RADARS<sup>®</sup> System Survey of Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs Program, 2024

Suggested Citation: America's Health Rankings analysis of Denver Health and Hospital Authority, RADARS<sup>®</sup> System Survey of Non-Medical Use of Prescription Drugs Program, United Health Foundation, AmercasHealthRangings.org, accessed 2025.

[Click here to see how your state ranks](#)

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# Quick Video Tips. Stress Management



## Let's make healthier happen

A health plan that's easier to understand and simpler to use — that's what we're all about it. Get the scoop on your benefits and feel confident knowing what your plan has to offer.

## Stress Management

Insurance coverage provided by or through UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company or its affiliates.

Administrative services provided by United HealthCare Services, Inc. or their affiliates.

Administrative services provided by United HealthCare Services, Inc. or their affiliates, and UnitedHealthcare Service LLC in NY. Stop loss insurance is underwritten by UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company or their affiliates, including UnitedHealthcare Life Insurance Company in NJ, and UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company of New York in NY.





American Association of Oral  
and Maxillofacial Surgeons

# April is National Facial Protection Month

In April we're spreading the word to remind both children and adults: as you suit up for outdoor activities this spring, don't forget to protect your face and head. Spring often brings a flood of patients suffering with head, mouth and facial injuries resulting from sports-related accidents to doctor's offices and emergency rooms. Many oral and facial injuries can be easily prevented with the use of sports safety equipment like helmets and mouth guards

National Facial Protection Month is sponsored by the [Academy for Sports Dentistry](#), [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [American Dental Association](#), [American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons](#), and the [American Association of Orthodontists](#). Together, these organizations encourage children and adults to enjoy the pleasure of the season by using common sense and taking the necessary precautions to prevent sports injuries.

For more information about the prevention and treatment of facial injury, visit [MyOM.org](#).

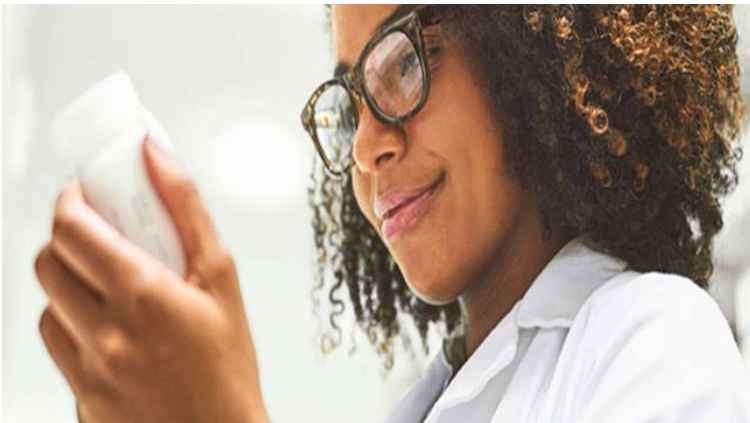
[Click here to learn more](#)

[En Español](#)

Source: [National Facial Protection Month - AAOMS | AAOMS](#)



## Member Resources – Pharmacy Benefits



### Tips for using your pharmacy benefit

#### Ask about lower cost options

If a prescribed medication is in a higher cost tier, ask your doctor if a lower cost option will work for you. A similar drug or generic version can often work just as well.

#### See if you need prior authorization

Some medications need prior authorization. This means your doctor must explain why you need the drug. Then your plan decides how or if they will cover it. To start the prior authorization process, call the number on your member ID card.

[En Español](#)

[More Pharmacy Resources](#)

# What's on the menu?



## Barley Jambalaya

Jambalaya is a Cajun dish containing tomatoes and the trio of celery, onion, and bell pepper. This take on the classic dish uses barley in place of rice, adding fiber and magnesium to the dish. Cayenne pepper adds a kick of spice that will transport you to the American South where this dish originated!

En Español

### MyPlate Food Groups



Vegetables	1 cup
Grains	1 ounce
Protein Foods	1/2 ounces

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup instant pearl barley
- 4 cups water
- 2 whole bay leaves
- 3 medium onions
- 2 small celery stalks
- 1 cup diced green, red, yellow, orange bell pepper
- 2 medium cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 4 ounces ground turkey
- 2 (14.5-oz) cans diced tomato (no salt added)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 1 ½ teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a colander, rinse barley under cold water.
2. In a medium pot over high heat, bring barley, water, and bay leaves to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cover. Cook barley until tender and water is absorbed, about 20-30 minutes.
3. In a colander, drain barley. Set aside.

## Preparation:

1. Peel, rinse, and dice onions. Rinse and dice celery and pepper. Peel and mince garlic.
2. In a large pot over medium-high, heat oil.
3. Add onions, celery, pepper, and garlic to pot. Mix well, Cook until veggies are soft, about 5 minutes.
4. Add ground turkey, cook until internal temperature registers 165 °F on a food thermometer, about 5 minutes more.
5. Add tomatoes, and their juices. Bring to a simmer.
6. Add spices. Stir to combine. Cover and reduce heat. Cook at low simmer for 15 minutes.
7. Add cooked barley to the mixture. Stir to combine. Add more water or broth, if needed. Cook over low heat to blend flavors, about 5-10 minutes more.
8. Remove bay leaves and serve.

## Notes:

- To save time, cook barley up to 2 days in advance. Refrigerate until ready to use. Add to pot in step 7 above. Or, use another whole grain you have made in advance, like brown rice.
- When doubling this recipe, do not double cayenne pepper unless you prefer a very spicy dish.
- For a vegetarian option, use cooked or canned pinto or black beans, rinsed and drained, in place of meat.

## Nutrition Information:

Yield: 6, Serving Size: 1 ½ cups

Prep time: 25 minutes, Cook time: 1 hour, Total time: 85 minutes

Calories – 230  
Carbohydrates – 41 g  
Protein – 9 g  
Fat – 5 g  
Saturated Fat – 1 g  
Sugars – 9 g  
Fiber – 9 g  
Sodium – 440 mg  
Cholesterol – 15 mg

[Click here for the recipe](#)

Source: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/barley-jambalaya>

### May Preview

- Health Observance: Mental Health Awareness & National Physical Fitness and Sports Month
- Health Tip Flier of the Month: Strength for Health
- United at Work Presentation: Strength for Health
- Video of the month: Real Appeal

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Insurance coverage provided by or through  
UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company or its affiliates.  
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HealthCare Services, Inc. or their affiliates. Health  
Plan coverage provided by or through  
UnitedHealthcare of AZ/NM, Inc.