

In Sound Health

Surgery on the Table? Know Your Options

4 **Know Your Cholesterol,
Protect Your Heart**

6 **How to Safely Dispose
of Unused Medicine**





SEPTEMBER 2026

Fall Wellness: Know Your Options, Know Your Benefits

As summer winds down and fall approaches, it's a great time to focus on your health and well-being. This issue of *In Sound Health* offers practical information to help you make informed healthcare decisions, including what to consider when surgery is recommended and how a second opinion can help you understand your options.

You'll also find a hearty breakfast casserole recipe, as well as tips for protecting your heart, making heart-healthy food choices, safely disposing of unused medications, and making the most of your health and wellness benefits as you head into a new season.

Whether it's through comprehensive health benefits, wellness programs, or resources to live healthier – the Sound Health & Wellness Trust is here to help you achieve and maintain your health goals.

Surgery on the Table? Know Your Options

When your doctor recommends surgery, it's natural to have questions. Is surgery the best option? Are there other treatments to consider? What are the risks, and what happens if you wait?

For non-emergency or elective surgery, getting a second opinion can help you better understand your diagnosis and treatment options. A second opinion may confirm your doctor's recommendation or provide additional options to consider, giving you more information to make a confident decision.



Elective surgery is a planned medical procedure scheduled in advance. Unlike emergency surgery, it does not address an immediate, life-threatening condition, though it is often recommended to improve a patient's long-term quality of life.



Why Consider a Second Opinion?

Surgery is a significant decision, especially for procedures such as joint replacement, spinal surgery, and other elective procedures. A second opinion can help you:

- **Confirm your diagnosis:** Different conditions can sometimes look similar on imaging studies. Another specialist may recommend additional testing to confirm or clarify your diagnosis.
- **Explore your options:** There may be more than one way to treat your condition, including nonsurgical treatment, a different procedure, or a less invasive approach.
- **Understand the risks:** Your age, overall health, medical history, and other factors can affect the risks and benefits of different treatments.
- **Feel more confident:** Knowing you've considered your options can provide peace of mind before moving forward.



When Should You Get a Second Opinion?

Consider a second opinion if you've been diagnosed with a serious or complex condition, received a recommendation for elective surgery, have an unclear diagnosis, or have more than one treatment option. You may also want to get another opinion if your symptoms haven't improved with treatment or your questions and concerns haven't been fully addressed.

Seeking another opinion doesn't mean you don't trust your doctor. Most healthcare providers understand that patients want to learn as much as possible before making an important decision.



Visit [soundhealthwellness.com](https://www.soundhealthwellness.com)
to learn more about what is
covered by your plan.



Prepare for Your Appointment

Make the most of your second opinion by gathering your medical information ahead of time. Check with your second opinion provider before your appointment to find out what records, test results or other information they would like you to bring. They may need:

- Imaging results, such as X-rays, MRIs, or CT scans
- Pathology or laboratory reports, if applicable
- Operative or hospital records from previous treatment
- A summary of your current treatment plan
- A list of medications and supplements, including doses

Bring a list of questions, too. Ask why surgery is recommended, what happens if you wait, whether other treatments are available, and the risks and benefits of each treatment option.



Check Your Coverage

Before scheduling a second opinion, verify that your new provider is in-network and that the consultation and any recommended treatment options are covered by the Plan. Check first to see whether you need to follow specific Plan requirements at the links below, or call the Trust Office.

→ PPO PARTICIPANTS:

Visit <https://soundhealthwellness.com/ppo/benefits/>

→ KAISER PERMANENTE PARTICIPANTS:

Visit <https://soundhealthwellness.com/kp/benefits/>

For emergency surgery, there may not be time to seek another opinion. But when surgery is elective or scheduled well in advance, taking the time to understand your choices can help you make an informed decision that fits your health needs and goals.

Sources: stanfordhealthcare.org, medicare.gov, nyulangone.org

PPO Plan Participants: Get Guidance When You Need It with Guardian Nurses

Considering surgery or facing a complex health decision? You don't have to navigate it alone. The Trust's Guardian Nurses program connects eligible PPO Plan participants and their covered dependents with experienced Mobile Care Coordinators (MCCs) who can provide one-on-one guidance through your diagnoses, surgeries, hospitalizations, and more.

Your MCC nurse can help you understand your options, prepare for conversations with your healthcare providers, and navigate the healthcare system—giving you the information and support you need to make informed decisions about your care.



Guardian Nurse services are voluntary, confidential, and fully paid for by the Trust.



Need support?

If you're facing a serious health condition or upcoming hospitalization, call **(877) 362-9969, option 2**.

Scan the QR code or visit soundhealthwellness.com/GN to learn more:

Know Your Cholesterol, Protect Your Heart

September is National Cholesterol Education Month – a good time to learn how cholesterol affects your heart health. High cholesterol often has no noticeable symptoms, so knowing your numbers and taking steps to manage them can help lower your risk of serious health issues.

? What Is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made by your liver. Your body needs it to make hormones and help digest fatty foods. But too much cholesterol in your blood can cause problems.

A cholesterol test, also called a lipid panel, measures several types of cholesterol and fats:

- **LDL (“bad”) cholesterol:** High levels can cause plaque to build up in your arteries, increasing your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- **HDL (“good”) cholesterol:** Higher levels can help lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- **Triglycerides:** A type of fat in your blood. High triglycerides combined with high LDL or low HDL can increase your risk of heart attack and stroke.
- **Total cholesterol:** A measurement based on your HDL, LDL, and triglyceride levels.

! Why High Cholesterol Matters

High cholesterol can cause plaque to build up in your arteries, increasing your risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. High blood pressure and high cholesterol are different conditions, but they often occur together and can increase your risk of cardiovascular problems.

Because high cholesterol usually has no warning signs, regular screening is important. Talk with your healthcare provider about how often you should have your cholesterol checked. For many people, testing at least every five years is recommended.



♥ Take Steps to Protect Your Heart

You can make lifestyle changes that may help prevent or manage high cholesterol:

- **Choose heart-healthy foods:** Limit saturated and trans fats and choose more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and nuts.
- **Stay active and maintain a healthy weight:** Regular activity and a healthy weight can improve cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- **Don't smoke:** Smoking damages blood vessels and increases your risk of heart disease.
- **Limit alcohol:** Drinking too much alcohol can raise cholesterol and triglyceride levels.
- **Know your family history:** High cholesterol can run in families. Share your family history with your healthcare provider.

For some people, lifestyle changes may not be enough to reach healthy cholesterol levels. Medications, including statins, may be recommended based on your individual risk factors and health history.

\$ Lower Your Cholesterol For Less

You may be able to save on medications to manage your cholesterol with the Trust's Tier 0 prescription benefit. Certain cholesterol-lowering medications are available with a \$0 copay when filled at a Trust Custom Network Pharmacy.

Tier 0 includes:

- Simvastatin – all strengths
- Rosuvastatin calcium – 5 mg and 10 mg

These medications are safe and effective for many people and may provide similar benefits to other, more expensive options.

How to get started:

1. Talk with your doctor about the medication that's right for you.
2. If appropriate, ask your doctor for a Tier 0 medication prescription.
3. Fill your prescription at a Trust Custom Network Pharmacy and pay \$0.

Check your formulary to see which tier applies to your medications and find a list of Trust Custom Network Pharmacies:

Visit [soundhealthwellness.com](https://www.soundhealthwellness.com)
→ select your plan → Forms & Documents → Pharmacy Information

Prescription required. Coverage is subject to the Trust's prescription plan.

Source: cdc.gov

Eat Your Way to Better Cholesterol

What you put on your plate can make a difference when managing cholesterol. A heart-healthy eating pattern can help lower LDL (“bad”) cholesterol while supporting overall heart health. You don’t need to overhaul your diet—small, consistent changes can add up.



Fill Up on Fiber

Soluble fiber helps remove cholesterol from your body before it enters your bloodstream. Add more:

- Oatmeal and oat bran
- Beans and lentils
- Apples, pears and vegetables



Choose Healthy Fats

Limit saturated fats found in fatty meats, butter and full-fat dairy. Instead, choose healthy unsaturated fats found in:

- Avocados
- Nuts and seeds
- Olive oil
- Fatty fish



Add Omega-3s

Omega-3 fats can support heart health by helping lower triglycerides. Good sources include salmon, tuna, herring, mackerel, flaxseed and walnuts.



Choose Whole Grains

Swap refined grains for fiber-rich options such as:

- Oatmeal
- Brown rice
- Whole-wheat bread
- Barley
- Quinoa



Fill Your Plate with Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables provide fiber and other nutrients that support heart health. Try filling about half your plate with colorful options such as leafy greens, berries, citrus fruits and broccoli.



Try Plant Proteins

Beans, lentils, chickpeas and soy provide protein without the saturated fat found in many animal-based foods. Start by adding beans to a favorite meal or choosing a plant-based meal a few times a week.



Limit Foods That Raise Cholesterol

Cut back on foods high in saturated and unhealthy fats, including:

- Red and processed meats
- Fried foods
- Baked goods
- Full-fat dairy

Small Changes Add Up

There’s no single “superfood” that improves cholesterol. Your overall eating pattern matters most. Heart-healthy approaches, such as Mediterranean-style or plant-focused diets, emphasize fiber-rich foods, healthy fats, fruits and vegetables.

Start with one change today. Add oatmeal to breakfast, swap butter for olive oil, or add an extra serving of vegetables to dinner. Over time, small choices can help support healthier cholesterol levels and a healthier heart.

Source: [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)



High-Protein Breakfast Casserole

Start your day off strong with this high-protein casserole packed with eggs and veggies. Enjoy it fresh or reheat slices throughout the week for simple, healthy meal prep. **Serves: 6**

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1 (5-ounce) package baby kale
- 1 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 8 large eggs
- 1/2 cup small-curd 2% reduced-fat cottage cheese
- 1/3 cup whole milk
- 1 1/2 cups shredded Colby-Jack cheese, divided

PREPARATION

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly coat an 8-inch-square baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add 4 ounces sliced mushrooms; cook, undisturbed, until browned, about 4 minutes. Stir and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the moisture has evaporated, about 3 more minutes. Add chopped bell pepper, chopped onion, 1/8 teaspoon salt and the remaining 1 tablespoon oil; cook, stirring often, until softened, about 4 minutes. Add 5 ounces baby kale, 1 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder and 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper; cook and stir until the kale is wilted, about 2 minutes. Set aside to cool slightly, about 5 minutes.
3. Combine 8 eggs, 1/2 cup cottage cheese, 1/3 cup milk, 3/4 cup Colby-Jack and the remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt in a blender; process on low speed until smooth, about 20 seconds.
4. Spread half of the kale mixture in the bottom of the prepared dish; pour the egg mixture over the top. Scatter the remaining kale mixture over the egg mixture (most of the vegetables will sink to the middle). Top with the remaining 3/4 cup Colby-Jack. Bake until puffed around the edges and golden brown, about 40 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Serving size: 1 (2-by-4 inch) piece

Calories: 310

Fiber: 2 g

Protein: 20 g

Fat: 21 g

Carbs: 11 g

Source: modified from *Eating Well* at [eatingwell.com](https://www.eatingwell.com)



How to Safely Dispose of Unused Medicine

Old pills sitting in a cabinet can be misused, accidentally taken by kids or pets, or even stolen. Here's how to clear them out safely.



Take them to a drop-off site or mail them back (best options)

Washington's Safe Medication Return lets people dispose of unneeded over-the-counter and prescription medications for people and pets. You can find locations and order mail-back supplies at medtakebackwashington.org or **844-4-TakeBack (844-482-5322)**, TTY 711.



Everything else: trash it the right way

If your medicine isn't on the flush list, don't just toss the bottle in the bin. Instead:

- Take the pills or liquid out of their original containers and mix them with something unpleasant (such as dirt, cat litter, or used coffee grounds) to discourage kids, pets, or anyone digging through the trash. Don't crush pills.
- Seal the mixture in a container like a zip-top bag.
- Throw it in your household trash.
- Be sure to scratch out all personal info (including your Rx number) on the empty bottle or packaging before tossing or recycling it.



A few special cases:

A few special cases:

- **Inhalers/aerosols:** these can be dangerous if punctured or incinerated, so contact your local trash/recycling facility for proper handling. Don't just toss them in the bin.
- **Needles, syringes, sprays, lozenges:** these often have their own disposal rules, check the instructions that came with the prescription or ask your pharmacist.



If you can't find a drop-off or mail option, check the "flush list"

Some medicines are dangerous enough that the FDA specifically recommends flushing them down the toilet if a take-back option isn't nearby. Check the label, patient leaflet, or the FDA's flush list before doing this. This mainly applies to high-risk drugs like fentanyl patches, because even after use they retain a lot of the medicine.



Scan for the FDA's Flush List:

Quick note on flushing: researchers have found no evidence of environmental harm from flushing medicines that are actually on the FDA's approved flush list, so don't worry if a drug's instructions tell you to flush it.



Remember: take-back or mail-back first, flush only if it's on the FDA list, and trash everything else (with your personal info scratched off any packaging).

Source: [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

Time is running out to unlock your 2027 HRA funding!

To receive any 2027 HRA funding, you and your spouse (if married) must complete your annual Health Assessment by December 31, 2026. If you have not already done so, don't wait! Scan the QR code to complete your PHA or Health Profile today.

Don't miss out on earning up to \$500 for employee-only coverage or up to \$1,000 for family coverage. Your future self will thank you!

Scan the QR code or visit
www.soundhealthwellness.com/PHA



Important Numbers to Know

PPO Plan Participants

Trust Office—Benefits, Eligibility, HRA	(206) 282-4500 or (800) 225-7620
Delta Dental PPO & Schedule Plan	(800) 554-1907
DeltaCare	(800) 650-1583
VSP (Vision Service Plan)	(800) 877-7195
WellDyneRx—for Prescription Coverage	(888) 479-2000
MCC Nurses—for Hospitalization/Health Conditions	(877) 362-9969 Option 2
MCC Nurses—for Behavioral Health	(206) 308-5632
Nurse Line	(877) 362-9969 Option 1
Health Coaching	(877) 362-9969 Option 3
Quit Tobacco Coaching	(877) 362-9969 Option 4
LiveWell Fit	(800) 225-7620 Option 2, then 5

Kaiser Plan Participants

Trust Office—Eligibility, HRA	(206) 282-4500 or (800) 225-7620
Kaiser Permanente—Benefits, Claims Status	(888) 901-4636
Delta Dental PPO & Schedule Plan	(800) 554-1907
DeltaCare	(800) 650-1583
WellDyneRx—for Prescription Coverage	(800) 373-1568
Consulting Nurse Helpline	(800) 297-6877
Quit for Life® Tobacco Cessation	(800) 462-5327
LiveWell Fit	(800) 225-7620 Option 2, then 5
Chronic Conditions Workshops	(800) 992-2279

PRIVACY POLICY

Your health information is completely confidential, protected by federal law, and cannot be shared with your union or your employer without your permission.

All Trust programs are provided and managed by independent service providers contracted by the Trust. The information on your health status and conditions, your medical and prescription drug claims, and the information you may provide when participating is only used to offer you programs that could help you meet your health and wellness goals.

By law, your health information cannot be used to deny healthcare coverage.



**SOUND HEALTH
& WELLNESS TRUST**

11724 NE 195th St. Suite 300
Bothell, WA 98011-3145

Keep that summer momentum going this fall with LiveWell Fit

The LiveWell Fit program is a great way to earn HRA funding, get reimbursed for participating in local fitness events, and earn fun rewards like a fitness tracking device or a new pair of running shoes! We update the website each month with new events, so check back often!



This newsletter provides a general overview of plan benefits. Please refer to your Plan Booklet for specifics about covered expenses as well as exclusions and limitations. The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your healthcare providers, not to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

DATE		EVENT NAME & DESCRIPTION
SEPTEMBER		
12	Spokane	March for the Fallen —9.3, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk
12	Port Angeles	GOAT Run —31, 26.2 or 13.1 mile trail run/walk
12	Carnation	Beat the Blerch —26.2, 13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk
12	Kenmore	Flyaway 5k & 10k —6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk
12	Vashon Island	Passport 2 Pain —80, 58, 33 or 12 mile bike ride
12	West Seattle	Run for Chocolates 5k/10k/13.1 —13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk and family run
13	Spokane	BRRC Sundae Sunday 10-Miler —10 mile run/walk
13	Renton	Rave the Green —3.1 mile run/walk and kids run
13	North Bend	Tunnel Light Marathon —26.2 mile run
13	Gig Harbor	Race for a Soldier —7.5 or 3.1 mile run/walk
19	Anacortes	Anacortes Half Marathon & 5k —13.1 or 3.1 mile run/walk
19	Grand Coulee	Run the Dam —13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk
19	Redmond	Get Your Rear in Gear —3.1 mile run/walk
19	Black Diamond	Mud Mountain Dam Half Marathon & 5k —13.1 or 3.1 mile run/walk
19	Seattle	Dragonslayer Fantasy Dash and Strut —3.1 mile run/walk
19	Maple Valley	Be the Hope XOXO Walk —1.8 mile walk
19-20	Seattle	Orca Half Marathon & 8-Miler —13.1 or 7.9 mile run/walk
19-20	Snohomish	Spartan Race Beast, Super or Sprint —13, 6.2 or 3.1 mile obstacle course and kids race
20	Richland	Ironman 70.3 Washington —13.1 mile run, 56 mile bike and 1.2 mile swim
20	Bellingham	Bellingham Bay Marathon —26.2, 13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk