THE SILVERSNACKERS® FITNESS PROGRAM: HOW IT CAN HELP YOUR PATIENTS*

UnitedHealthcare members have a great way to get fit, have fun and make friends – depending on your plan this may be available for no additional cost or for a $10 monthly fee.*

The SilverSneakers Fitness Program provided by Healthways is designed specifically for Medicare beneficiaries. The program concentrates on improving strength and flexibility so daily living activities become easier. It’s a fun way to stay in shape and increase social interaction, and it’s offered to members enrolled in participating UnitedHealthcare Medicare plans. As the nation’s leading exercise program designed exclusively for older adults, SilverSneakers engages members and helps keep them motivated to improve their own health and well-being.

What does the SilverSneakers Fitness Program offer for UnitedHealthcare members?

- A basic fitness membership at a conveniently located participating site
- SilverSneakers classes that are easy on joints, help improve balance and muscle strength, and are led by experienced, caring instructors certified in older-adult fitness programming
- Exercise options for members at all levels of fitness
- A comfortable environment where members can meet new people who share their health goals, participate in social activities and receive health education
- Senior AdvisorsSM who serve as members’ contact for information and personalized, friendly service
- More than 10,000 participating locations (visit www.silversneakers.com to find a SilverSneakers location by zip code)

Those members who don’t live near a participating SilverSneakers location can join the SilverSneakers® Steps program. SilverSneakers Steps is a self-directed, pedometer-based physical activity and walking program that allows members to measure, track and increase their activities and provides the equipment, tools and motivation necessary for them to achieve a healthier lifestyle. Steps includes a PET (Personal Exercise Tracker) for counting daily steps, an activity planner and tracking logs, Healthy Steps quarterly newsletter and access to a toll-free phone line and Web site just for members.

* SilverSneakers is not available in all plans. Some plans have SilverSneakers included at no additional cost, some offer it as an optional rider and others do not have the program included or as rider. Please have your patient contact customer service to see if they have access to the program.
The SilverSneakers Fitness Program, a benefit provided through UnitedHealthcare to eligible members, is designed to address many chronic conditions seen in the older-adult population, including the following.

**Diabetes**
Beginning and keeping good health habits is key to helping control Type 2 diabetes. Walking, stair climbing, low-impact activities and weight training are some exercises recommended for those at risk. A study published in *Diabetes Care*, the Journal of the American Diabetes Association, shows that older adults with diabetes who are enrolled in SilverSneakers are admitted to the hospital less often, have lower inpatient care costs and have significant reductions in overall health care costs after only a year of participation.\(^1,2\)

**Hypertension**
Exercise and diet help manage hypertension. Some exercises recommended for hypertension include brisk walking, moderate aerobics classes and low-impact activities. Along with providing an excellent venue for exercising, the SilverSneakers program offers guidance and support to help members stay on track with their fitness goals.

**Depression**
Exercise has been shown to help reduce depression symptoms among patients with major depressive disorder. A 2008 study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* illustrates the positive impact of physical activity on depression. Depression affects between five and 10 percent of older adults seen in primary care and is associated with decreased adherence to exercise, diet and taking medication, thus negatively affecting health. However, among Medicare-eligible members enrolled in the SilverSneakers Fitness Program, greater participation in the program is associated with a significantly lower risk of depression.\(^3\)

**Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)**
Exercise is associated with improved symptoms, exercise capacity and functional well-being in patients with CHF. Better results may be achieved when exercise is combined with peer-group support and health education regarding lifestyle changes. SilverSneakers offers physical activity, social support and educational resources.

**Osteoporosis**
Exercises that focus on bone health include weight-bearing and resistance exercises, such as walking, stair climbing, low-impact activities and weight training. SilverSneakers members can use weight-training equipment, the pool and other amenities to build muscle and bone strength and help slow the progression of age-related bone loss.

**Osteoarthritis**
Aerobic and resistance exercises, such as walking, weight-training and water exercises, are effective in reducing pain, improving range of motion and reducing disability. Among SilverSneakers class offerings is SilverSplash®, an aqua exercise class designed specifically for older adults. Members don’t need to know how to swim for this shallow-water group exercise class, in which a kickboard is used for support and balance.

Encourage your patients to enroll at a participating SilverSneakers Fitness Program location today! To find out if the program is offered as a benefit, your patients can call the Customer Service number on the back of their ID card. If the benefit is offered, members may call 888-423-4632 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST (TTY: National Relay Service, 711) or visit [www.silversneakers.com](http://www.silversneakers.com) to find their nearest participating location.

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2. [http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/vol31/issue8](http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/vol31/issue8).