Health Matters

FALL 2026



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HIGHMARK

Because Life.™

Fall into better health.

Your guide to blood pressure medication.



As fall sets in and routines shift, it's a good time to refocus on your health. Managing blood pressure helps protect your heart and brain all year long.

High blood pressure often has no clear signs, which can make it easy to overlook. That's why medication is such an important tool. When taken as directed, it helps lower your risk of heart disease and stroke. It's one steady step that supports your long-term health.

How blood pressure medications can help.

Different medications lower blood pressure in different ways. Common types include:

- **ACE medications, like Lisinopril:** Help relax blood vessels so blood flows easier.
- **ARB medications, like Losartan:** Work like ACE medications, through a different path.
- **Beta blockers, like Metoprolol:** Slow your heart rate and ease blood flow.
- **Water pills, like Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ):** Help your body release extra salt and water.
- **Calcium blockers, like Amlodipine:** Relax blood vessels and support steady flow.
- **Alpha blockers, like Doxazosin:** Keep blood vessels open and relaxed.
- **Central medications, like Clonidine:** Help the brain signal blood vessels to relax.

Your doctor will look at your health history and daily needs to choose one or a combination of medications that are right for you. For some people, using more than one medication helps control blood pressure more safely and effectively.

Take your medication the right way.

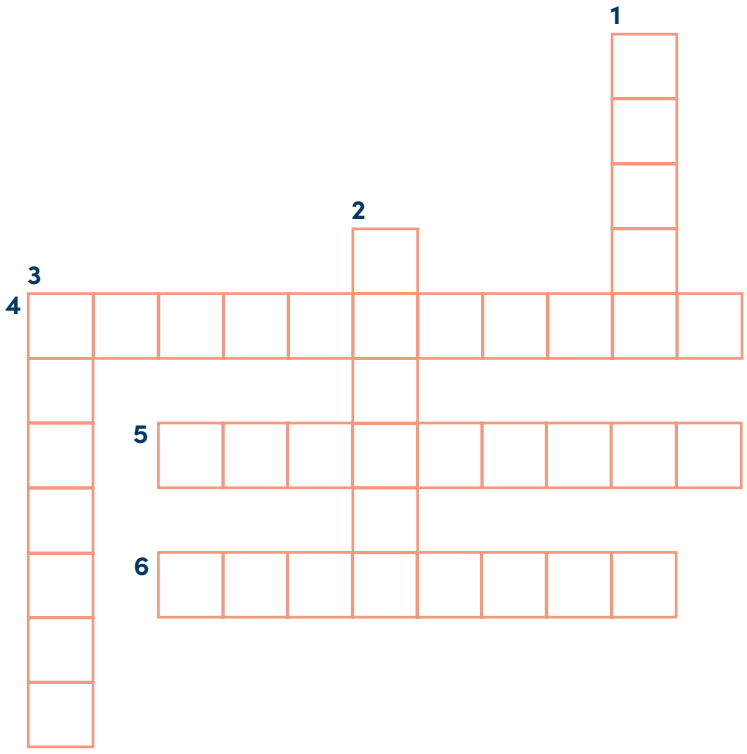
Medication works best when taken as prescribed. If remembering doses feels difficult, simple habits like taking it at the same time each day, using a pill organizer, or setting reminders can help. If side effects come up, your doctor can adjust your plan as needed.

Share your home readings.

If you check your blood pressure at home with a digital monitor, make sure to have those readings handy at your in-person or telehealth visits. You can also share them with your provider quarterly by phone. This helps your doctor understand how your treatment is working.

Remember, every step you take to manage your medications is a step in the right direction.

Crossword Puzzle



Clues

DOWN

1. Organ that benefits from healthy blood pressure.
2. Daily choices that support your health.
3. Device used to check blood pressure.

ACROSS

4. What your doctor may prescribe.
5. Helpful nudges that help you stay on track.
6. What your medication helps to lower.

Down: 1. Brain; 2. Habits, 3. Monitor, Across: 4. Medications; 5. Reminders; 6. Pressure



Make refills easier with mail order medication.

Taking your medication as prescribed supports your long-term health. Mail order pharmacy is one way to make staying on track simpler and more convenient.

Why members choose mail order.

Mail order is an easy option for refilling the medications you take regularly. It offers benefits like:

- **Medication delivered right to your home.**
- **Fewer trips to the pharmacy.**
- **Automatic refills to help prevent missed doses and improve medication adherence.**

Delivery is safe and secure.

Your medications are shipped in discreet, sealed packages that don't show what's inside. Pharmacies also follow strict privacy guidelines to help protect your information. Deliveries can be tracked, and safeguards are in place to help prevent issues like lost or stolen prescriptions.

Save with extended-day supplies.

Some medications can be filled for a longer supply, so you don't have to refill them as often.

- Many low-cost generic drugs on Tiers 1 and 2 on the Medicare Formulary may be filled for up to a 100-day supply.
- You'll pay the same copay as a 90-day fill.

Mail order is best for prescriptions you take on a regular schedule. If you're not sure if it's the right option, Member Services can help you decide. For urgent needs, a local pharmacy is still the best choice.

To get started, call Member Services at 1-833-957-0025 (TTY call 711) to set up mail order.

Using antibiotics safely.

Highmark is committed to providing the highest quality of care and experience for our members. Here are some facts about antibiotic overuse to help you talk with your doctor and make informed decisions for you and your family.

When antibiotics are not needed.

- Antibiotics don't work against viruses (such as COVID-19, the flu, or the common cold).
- Antibiotics aren't needed for many sinus and ear infections, which often get better on their own.
- Unnecessary antibiotic use can lead to antibiotic resistance, making it even more difficult to treat infection and causing more side effects.

Some common side effects of antibiotic use include:

- Rash
- Dizziness
- Nausea and abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Yeast infection

Some serious side effects include:

- Clostridioides difficile (C. diff) which causes severe diarrhea that can lead to colon damage and even death.
- Severe and life-threatening allergic reactions, such as wheezing, hives, shortness of breath, and anaphylaxis (which also includes feeling like your throat is closing or choking, or your voice is changing).

What can you do to feel better?

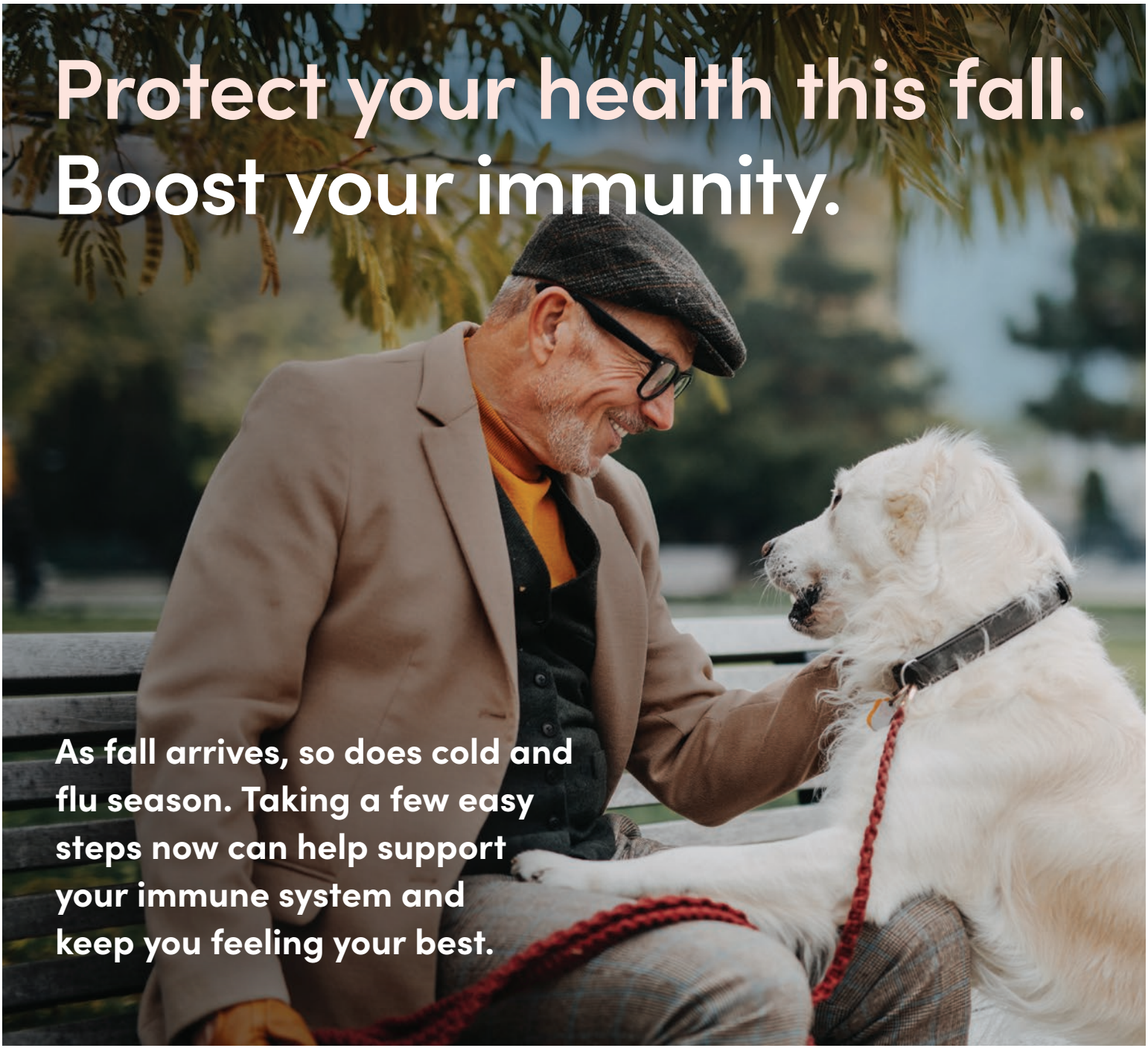
DO NOT:

Call and ask your provider for an antibiotic prescription. If you're sick, your doctor will examine you and determine if you have an infection that should be treated with antibiotics.

DO:

- Call and ask your provider about ways to relieve symptoms caused by a virus.
- Take your antibiotics exactly as prescribed.
- Talk with a healthcare professional immediately if you develop any side effects.
- Keep yourself and others safe and healthy by:
  - Washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.
  - Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough and sneeze.
  - Staying home when you're sick.
  - Getting fully vaccinated, including against flu and COVID-19.

Using antibiotics only when they're needed helps keep them effective, so they work when you need them most. Making informed choices helps protect your health now and in the future.



Simple ways to prevent cold and flu.

Preventing illness starts with daily habits. Here are a few simple ways to protect yourself and others:

- **Wash your hands often:** Use soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after being out in public.
- **Avoid touching your face:** Keep germs out of your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- **Clean shared surfaces:** Wipe down doorknobs, phones, and counters.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes:** Use a tissue or your elbow, then wash your hands.
- **Stay home when you're sick:** Rest helps recovery and protects others.

Don’t forget your flu shot.

The flu vaccine is one of the best ways to protect your health and reduce the risk of serious illness. It takes about two weeks to build protection, so the earlier the better — but it’s never too late to get it during flu season. Flu shots are covered by your plan and are available at your doctor’s office or many local pharmacies. Visit **vaccinefinder.org** to find a participating pharmacy near you, or call Member Services if you have any questions.

Foods that support immunity.

Food also plays a role in supporting your immune system. Here are some everyday choices that give your body’s defenses a boost:

- **Citrus fruits:** Oranges and lemons provide vitamin C.
- **Berries:** Blueberries and strawberries offer antioxidants.
- **Leafy greens:** Spinach and kale supply key vitamins.
- **Garlic and ginger:** Aromatics are known for immune support.
- **Yogurt with live cultures:** Probiotics help support gut health.
- **Nuts and seeds:** Almonds and sunflower seeds provide vitamin E and zinc.
- **Lean protein:** Chicken, fish, and beans support immune cells.

Extra wellness tips to consider.

Here are a few additional habits that can make a real difference in how you feel:

- **Prioritize sleep:** Aim for 7 – 9 hours nightly to support your immune system.
- **Manage stress:** Find healthy ways to reduce stress, since it can weaken immunity.
- **Stay hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- **Move your body regularly:** Moderate exercise can boost immune function.

We know life gets busy, especially this time of year. Focusing on one or two habits can go a long way in supporting your immune system and overall health.



Holiday stress or something more?

The holidays can bring joy and connection, but they can also feel busy and overwhelming — especially as the days grow shorter. It's common to feel stressed or low this time of year. Just remember, you're not alone, and support is available.

Small steps that can make a difference.

There are simple steps you can take each day to support your mental well-being this season. Start with a few that feel right for you:

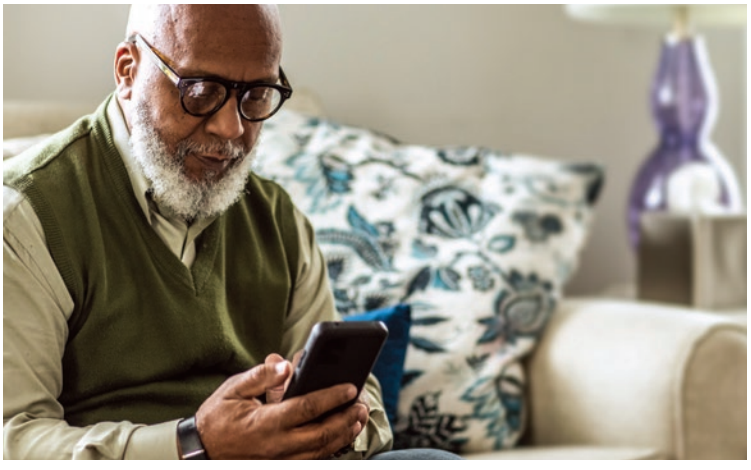
- **Prioritize self-care:**
  Make time for small joys each day.
- **Set limits:**
  Give yourself permission to say no to plans.
- **Stay in touch:**
  Call or message people you trust.
- **Embrace light:**
  Spend time in natural light or consider light therapy.
- **Keep moving:**
  Try gentle movement to boost your mood and energy.
- **Stick to routines:**
  Aim for regular meals and sleep to keep your mood steady.

When to reach out.

If symptoms like low energy, changes in sleep or appetite, or loss of interest in things you enjoy continue for weeks or affect your daily life, you may have Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This is a real and treatable condition, often linked to reduced sun exposure. If you think you may be experiencing it, it's important to talk with your doctor.

Remember, our Case Management team is here for you. Call the number on the back of your member ID card and follow the prompt for Case Management.

This time of year can bring a lot of different feelings — and that's okay. Taking a few small steps to care for your mental health can help you feel more grounded through the holiday season.





Close 2026 on a high note with preventive care.

As the year winds down, you may realize you still have a few health to-dos on your list — which makes it a great time to schedule preventive care. These tests and screenings can help find possible health issues early, when they're often easier to treat.

Here are some key screenings to schedule now:

- **Breast cancer screening:** October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.
- **Colorectal cancer screening:** Options include in-office and at-home tests.
- **Diabetes tests:** A1C level (average blood sugar over 3 months), retinal eye exam, and kidney, urine, and blood checks.

Many screenings are included in your coverage. They're often quick, easier than expected, and can be done in just one visit.

Don't forget your House Call visit.

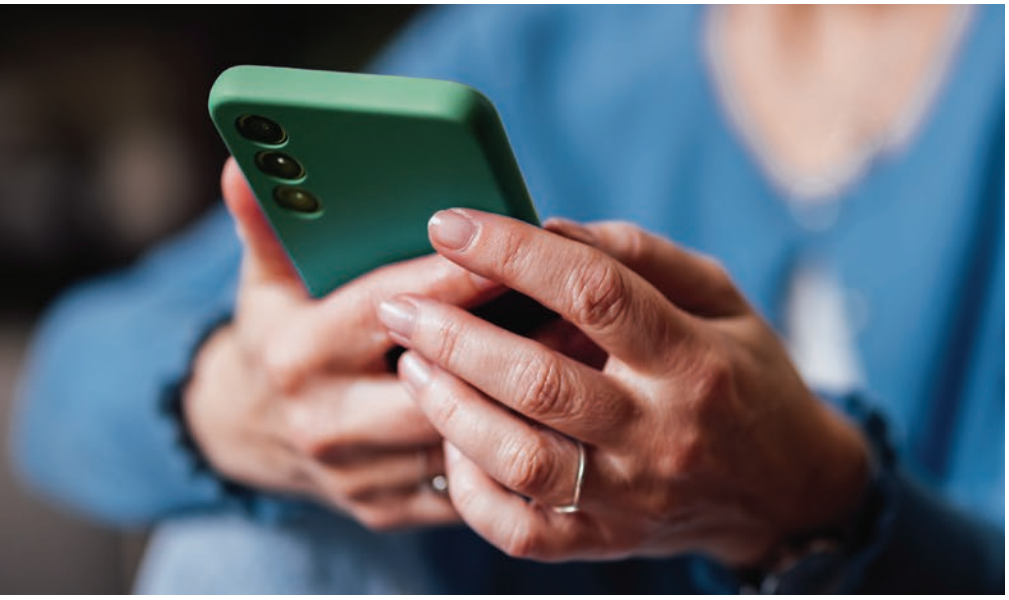
A House Call brings a licensed clinician to you — at home or by video — to check in on your health, review medications, and answer questions. Make sure to schedule it before the end of the year to earn your wellness reward.

See what screenings you may need.

Your Personalized Wellness Plan (PWP) outlines which screenings and preventive care are recommended for you this year. Take a moment to check your enclosed PWP to see which screenings you may still need to complete.

Finish the year strong by taking care of your health. Staying on top of your preventive care now can make a big difference in the year ahead.

Important phone numbers



Member Services
1-833-957-0025 (TTY call 711)
Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

24-Hour Nurse Line
1-833-957-0025 (TTY call 711)
24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Care Coordination
1-833-957-0025 (TTY call 711)
Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Hotline
1-844-718-6400 (TTY call 711)

Healthy Rewards
1-833-957-0027 (TTY call 711)
Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

National Helpline
Treatment referral and information, 24/7
1-800-662-4357 (TTY call 711)

Report Suspected Abuse of an Older Adult
800-352-6513

WV Tobacco Quit Line
1-800-Quit-Now
(1-800-784-8669)

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
Call or text 988

Fitness Benefit
1-888-423-4632 (TTY call 711)
Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Transportation Benefit
833-623-2630 (TTY call 711)
and select prompt #5
Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Saturday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

FlexCard (PayForward)
1-833-623-2619 (TTY call 711)

RX Assistance Program
800-550-8722 (TTY call 711)

Check out important notices.

Highmark Health Options Duals (HMO SNP) wants to ensure you receive the quality care and service you deserve. You can ask for a printed copy of the Important Member Notices by calling **833-957-0025 (TTY call 711)** to learn about these and other important topics:

- Members' rights and responsibilities
- Medical necessity
- Doctor appointment guidelines
- Second opinions
- Protecting your privacy

Mark your calendar

October



Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Make preventive care a priority. Staying up to date on recommended breast cancer screenings can help catch concerns early, when care is often more effective.

November



National Diabetes Month

Stay on track with your health. Diabetes screenings and regular check-ins can help you manage your condition and protect your long-term well-being.

December



National Influenza Vaccination Week (December 7 – 11)

Give yourself added protection this season. A flu shot helps lower your risk of getting sick and can reduce serious complications.

And don't forget, in order to receive earned rewards, you need to opt in to the Healthy Rewards Program by December 31, 2026.

Call 1-833-957-0027 (TTY call 711) to enroll today.

Benefits and/or benefit administration may be provided by or through the following entities which are independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association:

Delaware: Highmark BCBSD Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield.

West Virginia: Highmark Health Options West Virginia Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Highmark Health Options Duals is offered by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield.

The Plan complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, including sex stereotypes and gender identity.

ATTENTION: If you speak English, free language translation and interpretation services are available to you. Appropriate auxiliary aids and services (such as large print, audio, and Braille) to provide information in accessible formats are also available free of charge. Call the number on the back of your ID card (TTY: 711) for help.

ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de traducción e interpretación de idiomas. También hay disponibles ayudas y servicios auxiliares adecuados (como letra grande, audio y Braille) para proporcionar información en formatos accesibles sin cargo. Llame al número que figura al dorso de su tarjeta de identificación (TTY: 711) si necesita ayuda.

ATANSYON: Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis tradiksyon ak entèpretasyon aladispozisyon w gratis nan lang ou pale a. Èd ak sèvis siplemantè apwopriye (tèlke gwo lèt, odyo, Braille) pou bay enfòmasyon nan fòma aksesib yo disponib gratis tou. Rele nimewo ki sou do Kat ID w lan (TTY: 711) pou jwenn èd.

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