

Banner | Aetna Journey

Fall, 2024

A publication of the Banner | Aetna Eco

Let's get back out there!

Welcome to the Holiday issue of Banner | Aetna Journey, the newsletter for the Banner | Aetna Eco! The great outdoor weather has returned after another hot summer. Fall is finally here and its time to get back out there. For those of you who have new fitness center memberships from the summer, you should still continue your weekly exercise routines there - but now start incorporating more outdoor adventures. Make it a group outing and invite your fitness center friends to join you!

The parks and green spaces in Maricopa County are plentiful and if we haven't shown them to you already, then let us help you with that now. Remember to wear a hat outside and use sunblock, don't forget your water and avoid outdoor temperatures above 90 degrees.

We had another great KYN Event at the beginning of August and several of you attended. More great food from the Banner | Aetna Kitchen and great prizes and swag! Our Banner | Aetna Eco colleagues were engaging hosts as always. The next KYN event will be on December fourth, so you can plan for that now.

With the holidays soon upon us, it's a great time to hear from the Eco colleagues about holiday eating. Yaffi, one of our dieticians, has some great information for you.

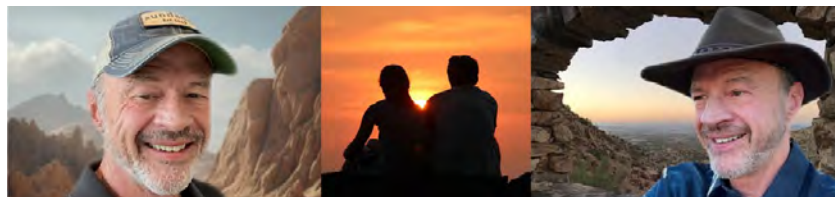
If you haven't met our Eco colleagues yet, we encourage you again to explore the Banner | Aetna Eco and its many programs and services - and if you have any questions, we can help you with that, just reach out and meet our amazing Eco colleagues.

Yours in good health,

Robert Groves, MD

Editor-in-Chief, Banner | Aetna Journey

Chief Medical Officer, Banner | Aetna



[Visit the Banner | Aetna Eco webpage](#)

Exercising outdoors, from the Eco Team

As Dr. Groves has said, it's time to get back outside and enjoy the amazing outdoors in Phoenix and the surrounding communities. The team at the Banner | Aetna Eco is here to provide some helpful and timely advice on exercising outdoors. Katherine, our lead exercise physiologist, and Parker, our lead dietician, have prepared an easy checklist for us. Both have significant expertise in nutrition and exercise and are familiar with the parks in and around Phoenix.



Katherine McCreless
BS, ACSM-EP



Parker Powers
MS, RDN, CDCES

First, and most important, “Check the weather before you go out, especially if you are planning to hike a long distance. Make sure the temperature will not rise above 90 degrees F that day and there won’t be any inclement weather like heavy rain or lightening. It’s crucial to prioritize safety and adjust your plans accordingly.”

- Katherine

Second, “Bring plenty of water. Staying hydrated is very important when exercising. Each person should have at least 8 ounces of water with them for a walk of one-half mile.”

- Parker

Third, “Wear a hat and use sunblock of spf of 30 or more on the exposed parts of your face and body,”

- Parker

Fourth, make sure you know where you are going so you don’t get lost. And lastly, “Don’t push yourself too much in the beginning. The first few outdoor activities should be to take it easy, enjoy the scenery and familiarize yourself with the areas, trails and climate. Gradually increase the intensity as you become more comfortable. We’ll be there to help guide you.”

- Katherine

Many of you may have diabetes, and there are additional guidelines for physical activity. If you have any questions about exercising outdoors or would like information on physical activity with diabetes, let us know, we can help you with that. Call us at **1-602-747-7344** or email us at BannerAetnaEco@bannerhealth.com.



[Visit the Banner | Aetna Eco Webpage](#)

Are you ready to have fun outdoors?

The Banner | Aetna Active Project begins again on January 25th, 2025! You have probably heard about the new Banner | Aetna Active Project from friends or coworkers - or you read about it here! It is a fun and exciting way to get into or back into regular physical activity or exercise. It's just as fun as the Banner | Aetna Kitchen, maybe more!

For more information on the Banner Aetna Active Project or to enroll, call **602-747-7344** or email BannerAetnaEco@bannerhealth.com.



Holiday eating

The holidays will soon be here, so we need to remind ourselves about how we get through the holidays and the extra eating without overloading our bodies with binge amounts of food and calories.

“Avoiding weight gain during the holidays can be difficult and, if you have diabetes, maintaining stable blood sugar levels can be especially challenging as well,” said Yaffi Lavova, a registered dietician in the Banner | Aetna Kitchen program. “Abundance of festive foods, irregular mealtimes, and added stress can wreak havoc on us all.” Yaffi provided some effective strategies to help manage your celebrations, and your diabetes, and keep blood sugars in check during the holiday season:

1. **Practice Mindful Eating**- Eating with awareness by paying attention to what and how much you’re eating can prevent overindulging. Take time to recognize the flavor, texture, and satisfaction of every bite.
2. **Choose- Low Glycemic Foods**- Incorporating fiber such as whole grains, legumes, and fibrous vegetables slow down digestion and helps stabilize blood sugar levels.
3. **Incorporate Protein and Fats**- Balancing your meals with sources of proteins and fats in every meal helps you feel fuller for longer and prevent blood sugar spikes.
4. **Modify Traditional Recipes**- Consider modifying traditional recipes to make them healthier by reducing sugar, using whole grains, or adding more vegetables.
5. **Choose Low-Carb Desserts**- Prepare or bring low-carb dessert options to gatherings to ensure you have a suitable sweet treat.
6. **Avoid portion distortion**- Use smaller plates or bowls and be mindful of portion sizes. Try sampling portions of different dishes instead of large servings. Prioritizing foods that are lower in carbohydrates and sugar can keep blood sugars stable and avoid hyperglycemia.
7. **Stay Hydrated**- Staying hydrated is essential, especially when eating foods high in sodium, sugar, or drinking alcohol. Sometimes thirst can be mistaken for hunger. Avoiding beverages high in sugar that can lead to blood sugar spikes and crashes, may increase your cravings. Try drinking water before the meal to help with hydration and prevent unnecessary snacking to aid in better glucose control.

“We should also remember that it can take several minutes for us to feel full after eating, so try not to eat a lot in a short period of time. Space it out, take pauses.”



From the members

Stories from the Eco: Meet Melissa Saliba

Melissa Saliba, a Banner | Aetna member, first participated in the Banner | Aetna Kitchen in the Summer of 2021. She had such a great experience, that she became a member ambassador for the program later that year and has remained one ever since! This earned her gold status in the Eco and she recently received her pin and cooling towel.

"I am so grateful to the Banner | Aetna Kitchen and the Eco because it has really changed my life and the life of my son. We eat differently now and we have both lost weight and are more active," said Melissa. Her A1C was 9.8 when she started in the Kitchen in 2022 and she had begun experiencing some numbness and tingling on the bottom of her feet. Her son had just been diagnosed as prediabetic, hypertensive and with high cholesterol. "I was able to turn everything around in that program, and so did my son. He never had to start any prescriptions for diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol, all of his blood work is normal now. That's why I really wanted to continue in the program and give back as a volunteer. My A1C is pretty steady at 6.5 now and I went off of my statin prescription for cholesterol because I don't need it anymore."

Melissa is an ongoing inspiration to others in the program and beyond. "I also love being able to share my journey with each class so I can be an encouragement to everyone. I feel that any change we make on our journey to a healthier lifestyle is a change in the right direction. It doesn't matter where are at, or how small we may think that one change is. It is important to know that it is never too late to begin making a change, and small consistent changes are what leads to an overall healthier lifestyle."

Melissa has enrolled in the Banner | Aetna Active Project for the Winter 2025 session beginning in January and she is ready for her next adventure.

For more information on the Banner | Aetna Kitchen or the Banner | Aetna Active Project, call **602-747-7344** or email BannerAetnaEco@bannerhealth.com.



[Click here to enroll now!](#)

Start the next phase of your journey

Speak to an Eco colleague and hear about the free and fun programs you may have available to you right now!



Visit the [Banner | Aetna Eco](https://BannerAetna.com/eco) webpage now!
BannerAetna.com/eco

AbleTo

Most Banner | Aetna members have AbleTo as part of their plan benefits, but you still may not know much about it. AbleTo provides personalized, virtual mental health care that you can easily access through your smartphone. With the AbleTo program, you'll get virtual, personalized support that can help you feel better. You'll learn how to better manage your emotions and improve your overall health. Members can receive behavioral therapy and learn skills to help manage their mental wellbeing. The app is free and copays start at \$0, depending on your plan. You may be able to receive AbleTo services with no out-of-pocket cost to you, depending on your employer and plan. If out of pocket costs apply, they will vary based on your plan benefits and deductible.

Your AbleTo therapist will help you better understand the relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions, get ahead of challenging issues, and overcome obstacles that keep you from living your best life. Go ahead, it's really easy to take the first step. In fact, you can speak to a licensed therapist within seven days or less from calling. Then, you can attend a private, confidential session virtually, by telephone or secure video chat, right from your home. Simply schedule your sessions at your convenience, including outside normal business hours and on weekends.



Let's do this!

KYN Holiday Event | Thursday, December 4th | 5:30pm - 7:00pm



Come by the beautiful Rio Salado College campus in Tempe and taste some of the best Banner | Aetna Kitchen recipes and win cool prizes like this outdoor chair backpack and cooler or these binoculars or camping chair



Just bring your A1C and cholesterol test from the last three (3) months to get in and its free! And we can help you access your test results online from the event or you can take the tests at the event, and they are covered by your Banner | Aetna medical insurance!* Come and join the party.

KYN - K now Y our Numbers! Let's have fun! And it's free for ALL members of the Banner | Aetna Eco! If you are receiving this newsletter, you are an Eco member, so please register now! If you want to get your blood drawn at the event for testing, please complete a quick and easy pre-registration when you register for the party. Register for the free party by calling **1-602-747-7344** or emailing **BannerAetnaEco@bannerhealth.com**.

Do you have an idea for a story in Banner | Aetna Journey?

Let us know! Email RandallP@banneretna.com.

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*Members with high-deductible plans may have some out-of-pocket costs with the laboratory tests required for these events. HSA funds can be used for these laboratory tests.

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