

TALKING TREND

The Ozempic "Ripple Effect"

Experts anticipate a resurgence in weight loss-focused trends in 2024, driven by the increasing mainstream acceptance of drugs like Ozempic, as reported by [CBS News Health Watch](#).

The rise of celebrity endorsements has significantly boosted the popularity of these new weight-loss drugs. Consequently, there has been a surge in interest in supplements making weight-loss claims, such as berberine, which is being promoted online as "nature's Ozempic," despite lacking substantial evidence to support these claims.

Frank Jaksch, CEO of Ayana Bio, a bioactive ingredient company, predicts that Ozempic's influence will extend further throughout the food, beverage, and dietary supplement markets in 2024. He foresees a rise in products containing berberine.

Moreover, Jaksch anticipates that snack-makers and fast-food chains will adapt by offering smaller portions and incorporating more nutritious, wholesome ingredients to align with the shifting preferences of Ozempic-influenced, health-conscious consumers.

After a period of challenging diet culture and embracing movements like body positivity, there appears to be a shift in attitudes. According to a recent [Forbes Health/OnePoll survey](#), the top New Year's resolution for 2024 is a return to physical health, with the majority of respondents prioritizing fitness, after several years where mental health had taken precedence.

With Sharecare, Health Net members have access to physical health and well-being resources to help keep mind and body strong. All free of charge. All they have to do is visit healthnet.sharecare.com to sign up and create a user ID and password for access to:

- Lifestyle Coaching
- Craving to Quit -Tobacco Cessation
- Eat Right Now
- Unwinding by Sharecare
- RealAge Program



INDUSTRY NEWS



4 Good Reasons to Consider Small-Group Health Coverage

America's small business owners juggle numerous concerns – from marketing expenses and tax compliance to fierce competition. Yet, amidst these challenges, millions of entrepreneurs dedicate their time, resources, and finances to ensure their employees receive health benefits.

Contrary to popular belief, small-business owners aren't compelled by federal law to provide health benefits. Firms with fewer than 50 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees are exempt from the employer mandate, absolving them from the obligation to offer health insurance coverage or face penalties for employees opting for subsidized exchange coverage. So, why do these entrepreneurs choose to establish small-group coverage?

Here are four compelling reasons.

- **Talent Magnet:** Providing health benefits has long been a key strategy for businesses to attract and retain top talent. Employees value the convenience of employer-sponsored plans, which spare them the hassle of seeking coverage independently. Moreover, employer contributions to premiums offer an additional incentive, while the tax advantages of group plans lighten the financial load for both employers and employees. Surveys consistently highlight health benefits as a crucial factor in a competitive job market, making them essential for small businesses aiming to distinguish themselves as employers of choice.
- **Tax Efficiency:** Allocating funds towards employee health coverage can often be more cost-effective than simply increasing wages. Unlike salaries, in most cases money spent on health insurance isn't subject to payroll or income taxes for either employers or employees. Opting for group health insurance thus presents a tax-savvy approach to enhancing compensation packages while minimizing tax liabilities.
- **Shared Costs:** Small businesses need not shoulder the entire burden of coverage expenses. While employers typically cover at least 50% of employee's premiums, employees may be responsible for the remainder and potentially more for family coverage. While the percentage of premium covered by employers varies, small businesses tend to contribute a smaller share for family plans, with employees shouldering a larger portion of the cost.
- **Enhanced Well-being and Performance:** By subsidizing health coverage, businesses can promote a healthier workforce, encouraging preventive care and helping to reduce financial strain on employees. This proactive approach is likely to translate into improved attendance, productivity, and overall profitability for small businesses.

For more information, read this article from Healthinsurance.org.

HEALTH NET NEWS

Second Quarter 2024 Drug Coverage Updates

Date: 02/01/24

This update applies to Health Net Health Plan of Oregon, Inc. "Health Net" Commercial Plans.

Prior Authorization Changes to Physician-Administered Medication
See the table in the [Second Quarter 2024 Drug Coverage Updates document \(PDF\)](#) for a list of new HCPC codes. These codes now require prior authorization for coverage for Health Net Commercial Plan members.

Quarterly Update on Drug Coverage Guidelines
See the table in the [Second Quarter 2024 Drug Coverage Updates document \(PDF\)](#) for all the updated or new Health Net coverage guidelines that were approved by the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee in the first quarter of 2024. All coverage guidelines will go into effect April 1, 2024 and will become available to view in their entirety on [our website](#) approximately two weeks prior to the effective date.

Additional Information
For questions regarding the information contained in this update, please contact the Health Net Pharmacy Department at [1-888-802-7001](tel:1-888-802-7001).

We're here for you!

For questions, reach out to your Health Net Account Representative

WELLNESS

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

March is [Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month](#) and there's good and bad news when it comes to the third most common cancer diagnosed in the U.S. Overall, the rate of colon or rectal (colorectal) cancer has steadily decreased over the past couple of decades — except for younger adults.

In fact, according to a new [American Cancer Society \(ACS\) study](#), the number of people under 55 newly diagnosed with colorectal cancer has nearly doubled since 1995 despite this age group shrinking in the overall population by more than 9%.

That's why both ACS and the [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force](#) have issued new recommendations for people at average risk of colorectal cancer to start [regular screening at age 45](#). This can be done either with a sensitive test that looks for signs of cancer in a person's stool ([a stool-based test](#)), or with an exam that looks at the colon and rectum called a [colonoscopy](#). Individuals with a family history of colorectal cancer may need to undergo screening at age 40 or even earlier.

The [Sharecare platform](#) offers Health Net members the following resources:

- How to Talk to Your Doctor About Embarrassing Questions
- Eat This and Ditch That to Help Prevent Colorectal Cancer
- Why You Need to Get Screened for Colorectal Cancer
- Why Should I Have Preventive Screenings if I Don't have Health Problems



JUST FOR FUN

7 Surprising Facts About St. Patrick's Day

[From History.com](https://www.history.com)



- The Real St. Patrick Was Born in Britain, not Ireland**
St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was actually born in Britain near the end of the 4th century. At age 16 he was kidnapped by Irish raiders and sold as a slave to a Celtic priest in the area now known as Northern Ireland. After toiling for six years as a shepherd, he escaped back to Britain. He eventually returned to Ireland as a Christian missionary.
- There Were No Snakes Around for St. Patrick to Banish from Ireland**
Research suggests snakes never occupied the Emerald Isle in the first place. There are no signs of snakes in the country's fossil record. And water has surrounded Ireland since the last glacial period. Before that, the region was covered in ice and would have been too cold for the reptiles.
- Leprechauns Are Likely Based on Celtic Fairies**
The red-haired, green-clothed Leprechaun likely stems from Celtic belief in fairies— tiny men and women who could use their magical powers to serve good or evil.
- The Shamrock Was Considered a Sacred Plant**
The shamrock, a three-leaf clover, was called the "seamroy" by the Celts and was considered a sacred plant that symbolized the arrival of spring. According to legend, St. Patrick used the plant as a visual guide when explaining the Holy Trinity.
- The First St. Patrick's Day Parade Was Held in America**
While people in Ireland had celebrated St. Patrick since the 1600s, the tradition of a St. Patrick's Day parade began in America and actually predates the founding of the United States. Records [show](#) that a St. Patrick's Day parade was held on March 17, 1601, in a Spanish colony in what is now St. Augustine, Florida. More than a century later, homesick Irish soldiers serving in the English military marched in Boston in 1737 and in New York City on March 17.
- The Irish Were Once Scorned in America**
While Irish Americans are now proud to showcase their heritage, the Irish were not always celebrated by fellow Americans. Beginning in 1845, a [devastating potato blight](#) caused widespread hunger throughout Ireland. While approximately 1 million perished, another 2 million abandoned their land in the largest-single population movement of the 19th century. Nearly a quarter of the Irish nation immigrated to the shores of the United States. Once they arrived, the Irish refugees were looked down upon as disease-ridden, unskilled and a drain on welfare budgets.
- Corned Beef and Cabbage Was an American Innovation**
The meal that became a St. Patrick's Day staple across the country—corned beef and cabbage—was an American innovation. While ham and cabbage were eaten in Ireland, corned beef offered a cheaper substitute for impoverished immigrants living in the [slums of lower Manhattan](#).