

April
2021

NEWSLETTER OF THE
CITY OF TACOMA

2022 Wellness Incentive

**We are nearly half way through
the 2022 incentive period!**

As a friendly reminder, the 2022 incentive period runs from Oct. 1, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2021. We have a new wellness platform through [Virgin Pulse](#) (VP), which better meets the wants and needs of our entire population.

What's Different? The new VP platform offers fun challenges, helpful content, engaging social options, and tools to encourage us to make wellbeing a priority. It goes beyond physical wellness by helping us make healthy, long-lasting behavior changes for more energy, focus and drive. There are MANY more ways for you to earn points in this new platform, [Learn more about the ways to earn.](#)

How to Register: Go to join.virginpulse.com/cityoftacoma. Do not include any leading zeros before your employee ID number.

Employee Testimony: *I like the Virgin Pulse app and wellness tracking system so much better than RedBrick! Like you said in the training, you can check in with it in the morning and it takes like 90 seconds. I love the reminders on living sustainably, and other interesting facts about living a better life (other than just "eat better and exercise"). Plus, it's gotten me to drink a big glass of water first thing in every morning.*

HealthVine



Mind/Body Connection: Getting to the Heart of It

While you might be aware of the positive impact living a healthy lifestyle has on your heart health, have you considered how mental health and the heart are interconnected? Are you familiar with the expressions "you nearly gave me a heart attack," "I was worried to death," or "it broke my heart"? Did you consider the actual mind/body connection to these phrases?

The Head and Heart Connection: It is important to be aware of the head-heart connection. Research shows that negative states of mind, including depression, anxiety, anger and chronic stress may influence your risk of heart disease over time, or worsen heart issues that already exist.

- Research shows that while approximately 20 percent of us experience an episode of depression in our lifetimes, the figure climbs to 50 percent among people with heart disease.
- Heart disease patients with anxiety are twice as likely to die within three years of a cardiac event.
- Heart disease patients are three times as likely to be depressed. For those newly diagnosed with heart disease, depression increases the risk that a harmful heart-related event will occur within that year.
- Even in people with no prior heart disease, major depression doubles the risk of dying from heart-related causes.

Negative emotions may also affect lifestyle habits, which in turn can increase heart disease risk. For example, people who are chronically stressed, anxious, depressed or angry may be more likely to drink too much alcohol, smoke, overeat and get less exercise — all unhealthy habits that are bad for your heart.

Read more on Page 3.



City of Tacoma Mental Health Resources

There are three sources for behavioral health offerings through City of Tacoma benefits package for employees and their eligible dependents:

First Choice Health Employee Assistance

Program (EAP): The EAP benefit provides cost-free, convenient, and confidential consultation and work life resources to help manage life's challenges. The EAP is available 24/7, 365 days a year by phone or their website.

- [24/7 Telehealth Flyer](#)
- [Work Life Balance Resources and Consultation Flyer](#)

Kaiser Permanente of WA (KPWA): Kaiser Permanente has broad range of self-care resources — tools, tips, activities, and articles — designed to help you thrive in mind, body, and spirit. Kaiser Permanente members also have access to digital tools like myStrength and Calm, which provide mental wellness and mindfulness resources, at no additional cost. Additionally, Telehealth through KPWA is available at 0%.

- [Self Care Support for First Responders](#) – myStrength support specific for First Responders
- [Self Care Promotional Flyer – CALM](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellness](#) – Caring for the whole you
- [Healthy Resources Guide](#) – Including Wellness Coach, free online health classes and work outs, tobacco cessation program

To learn more, [watch this informative presentation](#) on mental health or visit their mental health and wellness [page](#).

Mental Health Resources, Cont.



Regence Blue Shield:

- [Quartet](#) matches Regence members to outpatient mental health resources based on the member's unique mental health needs and preferences, such as the gender, race, religious affiliation, and/or language of the mental health provider. Quartet's SmartMatch algorithm and Care Navigation team match members to in-person and telehealth outpatient mental health providers who are in-network, have availability, and offer an array of mental health services including (but not limited to) work-related stress, PTSD, trauma, depression, serious illness, etc. to individuals over broad industries.
- [MDLive](#) is a new Telehealth benefit that offers virtual mental health services to members. This benefit allows access to board-certified doctors, pediatricians, and licensed therapists via online video, phone, or mobile app for behavioral health and primary care 24/7, 365 days a year.

DID YOU KNOW?

Regence offers an [Active&Fit Direct™ program](#), which allows you to choose from 9,000+ participating fitness centers nationwide for \$25 a month. Get started today!

Additionally, your Tacoma Employee Wellness program not only offers monthly educational webinars; there are now [deskercise videos](#) for you to enjoy! A short 5-10 exercise video is released each month and available the rest of the year for you to watch at your convenience.

Diabetes and Mental Health

Thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes can affect the health of your body. Untreated mental health issues can worsen diabetes, and problems with diabetes can make mental health issues worse. Fortunately, if one gets better, the other tends to get better, too.

Depression and Diabetes: People with diabetes are 2 to 3 times more likely to have depression than people without diabetes. Only 25% to 50% of people with diabetes who have depression get diagnosed and treated. But treatment—therapy, medicine, or both—is usually very effective.

If you're stressed, you may not take as good care of yourself as usual. Your blood sugar levels can be affected too—stress hormones make blood sugar rise or fall unpredictably, and stress from being sick or injured can make your blood sugar go up. Being stressed for a long time can lead to other health problems or make them worse.

Anxiety and Diabetes: Anxiety—feelings of worry, fear, or being on edge—is how your mind and body react to stress. People with diabetes are 20% more likely than those without diabetes to have anxiety at some point in their life. Managing a long-term condition like diabetes is a major source of anxiety for some.

Ways to Manage: Many of the recommended healthy behaviors for diabetes management can also help with stress, depression, and anxiety.

- **Get active:** A quick walk can be calming, and the effect(s) can last for hours.
- **Practice relaxation:** Try meditation or yoga
- **Call or text a friend:** Make sure it is someone who understands you (not someone who is causing you stress).
- **Plan some “you” time:** Take a break from whatever you're doing. Go outside, read something fun—whatever helps you recharge.
- **Maintain a healthy lifestyle:** Limit alcohol and caffeine, eat healthy food, and get enough sleep.

Mind/Body Connection, Cont.

The American Heart Association recommends that heart patients should be routinely screened for depression. Additionally, a new emotion-based approach to heart health, called cardiac psychology, focuses on the mental health needs of cardiac patients. It promotes tools, like stress management and psychotherapy, to help patients cope with their disease.

Tips for Keeping a Healthy Mind and Heart: With a better appreciation of how emotion is linked to the heart, you can focus on staying optimistic, use strategies to cope with chronic stress, and form positive connections in your life. Managing daily stressors and increasing your happiness is crucial to the health of both mind and body.

- **Schedule an annual physical or preventive check-up** to maintain a relationship with your doctor, and to discuss how you're feeling, both mentally and physically. These visits are covered at no cost if you visit an in-network provider. [Remember, you can earn 2,500 points towards your wellness incentive for doing so!](#)
- **Recognize your feelings and express them.** Talk to loved ones, write in a journal or join a support group. Seek professional help if you need it ([see page 2](#)).
- **Manage stress** with daily mindful meditation, yoga or deep breathing exercises. [Virgin Pulse](#) has Journeys and trackable healthy habits to help you effectively do so.
- **Avoid heavy drinking, and don't smoke or vape.**
- **Exercise.** Try a 30-minute brisk walk, swimming, cycling, gardening or dancing.
- **Eat a healthy diet** with plenty of omega-3 fatty acids, which have anti-inflammatory effects.
- **Foster an optimistic outlook.** Practice self-compassion, take time to laugh and find humor in your day, notice the good things around you, and focus on things you can control, pay it forward and compliment someone to keep that positive energy going.
- **Practice gratitude.** Write in a gratitude journal, or ask yourself daily “What am I grateful for?” to bring awareness and appreciation for positives within and around us.
- **Maintain meaningful social connections.** Stay connected to others helps to fight off loneliness, and reduce stress.
- **Catch some Zzzs.** Try to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep nightly. Set a sleep schedule and practice relaxation techniques including: meditation, mindfulness or guided imagery to drift off to sleep.

Source: *First Choice Health EAP; Diane Mayes, MA, LHMC, CWPC*