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NEWSLETTER OF THE  
CITY OF TACOMA

HealthVine

## 2023 Wellness Incentive

We are halfway through the 2023 incentive period!

As a friendly reminder, the 2023 incentive period runs from Oct. 1, 2021 through Sept. 30, 2022. The health and happiness of our employees is crucial to the success of our organization. We cannot have one without the other. By continuing our focus towards improving our wellbeing as an organization, we can collectively enrich our lives both personally and professionally. So, make sure to register for and participate in our [Virgin Pulse](#) (VP) wellbeing platform!

**What's new?** Your feedback is greatly appreciated and we have, accordingly, made some enhancements this program year. Make sure to visit Virgin Pulse and "Rewards" to see all of the different ways you can [earn points](#). The requirement for the 2023 program year is 25,000 points (Level 3).

**How to Register:** Go to [join.virginpulse.com/cityoftacoma](https://join.virginpulse.com/cityoftacoma). Do not include any leading zeros before your employee ID number.



## Stress vs. Anxiety

**When you reflect back on the past few years, can you identify a time when you felt stressed? Anxious? Both? Most of us have experienced stress and anxiety at some point in our lives, but there is a difference between the two.**

Stress and anxiety are both part of the body's natural adrenal fight, flight, or freeze response to a perceived external threat, so it can be difficult to distinguish which one you are experiencing. They tend to have similar physical and emotional responses. For example, they can both cause irritability, anger, fatigue, muscle pain, gut issues, elevated heart rate, and difficulty sleeping. But, you can look for some key differences.

**Stress** is the way the body responds to an external trigger of a perceived threat. When the body feels threatened, it releases stress hormones, resulting in more blood pumping into the necessary organs to ensure the person is alert and able to respond to the threat. These bodily responses can be short- or long-term, depending on the circumstances of the stressor.

An example of an external trigger that may cause stress could be a priority work deadline, conflict with a partner, or something like chronic illness or discrimination.

**Anxiety**, on the other hand, originates internally and is a specific reaction to the stress a person is feeling. Anxiety is more persistent and lingers on despite the absence of the stressor. For example, the work deadline has passed and yet you continue to experience excessive worry about it.

Additionally, people who experience anxiety may not be able to identify what caused them to feel anxious; it's simply there and may not seem like anything triggered it. People with anxiety experience issues similar to stress including fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and muscle tension. The major difference is that anxiety will generally persist for a longer period of time (months) and the person will have difficulty managing their worry.

Learn more on Page 2.



# WE CAN DO THIS.

## Stress and Anxiety Management

Now that you can identify whether you may be feeling stress or anxiety (or both), what kind of things can you do to help manage those feelings?

- **Get active:** A quick walk can be calming, and the effect(s) can last for hours.
- **Practice relaxation:** Try meditation, yoga or deep breathing exercises. [Virgin Pulse](#) offers Journeys and trackable healthy habits to help you effectively do so. Additionally, [here is an article](#) from our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that focuses specifically on mindfulness. We also have [deskercise videos](#) that are designed to help you take a quick break and focus on your body and mind.
- **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, do a puzzle, watch something that makes you laugh—whatever helps you recharge.
- **Maintain a healthy lifestyle:** Limit alcohol and caffeine, eat healthy food, and get enough sleep. Did you know that we have [webinars](#) to help you with these various lifestyle choices? You can earn 250 points for each webinar you watch, if you submit a [smart form](#).
- **Schedule an annual physical and other preventive check-ups** to maintain a relationship with your doctor(s), and to discuss how you’re feeling, both mentally and physically. Remember, you can earn [2,500 points](#) towards your wellness incentive for doing so! Did you know that you can earn an additional [500 points](#) for three preventive care activities, including (but not limited to) your annual physical, eye exam, dental exam, colon screening, mammogram, Covid vaccine and more? You can get credit for these activities under “[My Care Checklist](#)” in [Virgin Pulse](#).



- **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 below for more information about the City of Tacoma Mental Health Resources](#) available for you and your dependents).
- **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 you.
- **Maintain meaningful social connections.** Staying connected to others helps to fight off loneliness and reduce stress.
- **Get adequate sleep.** Aim for 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. There are [Journeys](#) that can help you develop and maintain a healthy sleep routine.

To sum, your thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes can affect the health of your body. In fact, untreated mental health issues can cause or worsen diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Fortunately, if one gets better, the other tends to get better, too.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The City of Tacoma has a wealth of resources available for you when it comes to your **mental health** and watching the [Mental Health and Mindfulness Webinar](#) is a great start. Not only will you learn about the various resources available from our EAP, medical providers, and wellness program, but you can earn 250 points towards your wellness incentive for watching the webinar, if you submit a [smart form](#).
- Regence and Kaiser Permanente of Washington offer programs that allow you to get **discounted gym memberships**. [Learn more!](#)



## Diabetes Prevention and Management Resources

More than 37 million people in the United States have diabetes, and one in five of them don't know that they have it. Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States (and may be underreported). The good news is that diabetes is both preventable and manageable with healthier lifestyle choices and helpful programs.

**Livongo** is a fully CDC-recognized program for Regence members that focuses on diabetes prevention and management by empowering individuals with tools, insights, and expert support to help them reach their health goals. The benefits Regence members get with Livongo include:

**Top technology:** Receive tools that enable you to track and manage your health on the go by automatically logging your data in a private dashboard and easy-to-use app. This also includes food and activity tracking to help you better understand your lifestyle habits.

**Personalized insights:** Get real-time tips and personalized feedback to help you learn and improve — or keep up the good work! Health challenges are available and the lessons provide evidence-based strategies for healthy living.

**Expert coaching:** Talk to a Livongo health coach for advice on nutrition, weight loss, and more, whenever you need extra support.

**Diabetes Management Healthy Living & Diabetes Prevention items available to Regence members (at no cost):**

- Unlimited test strips
- Connected blood glucose meter
- Personalized insights & more
- Smart Scale
- Unlimited Coaching
- Guidance on Healthy Habits & more

To learn more or join, please visit [join.livongo.com/CITYOFTACOMA/access](https://join.livongo.com/CITYOFTACOMA/access) (registration code: CITYOFTACOMA).

### Recommended Webinar:

We have a recorded webinar "[Diabetes Basics & Beyond](#)" that you can watch at your convenience for [points](#) towards your wellness incentive.

## Diabetes, Stress Less and Weight Management Journey Recommendations

A Journey is a digital coaching tool designed to help you easily make changes to your health and wellbeing, one small step at a time. You can earn 30 points per step AND 150 points for finishing the Journey. You can complete up to 12 Journeys per program year.

### Eating Well to Manage Blood Sugar

**This Journey takes 18 days to complete.** To help you live well with diabetes, you'll learn how food choices and habits affect your blood sugar levels. Your body's response to what and when you eat is unique to you. Tune in to gain a deeper understanding of what you can do to live your best life. Eat well to live well.

### Health for Every Body

**This Journey takes 24 days to complete.** Appreciate your body at any size. Over the next few weeks, eating and movement will become more enjoyable. Discover ways to be more mindful, too. Be kinder to yourself. And look at expectations around weight in a new way.

### Living Healthy: Diabetes

**This Journey takes 19 days to complete.** Don't be overwhelmed by diabetes. There's a lot you can do to keep your blood sugar in a healthy range. If you have type 2 diabetes (or are at risk), learn how to feel better and have more energy. With consistent healthy lifestyle habits, you might be able to stay in control without medication.

### Move to Improve

**This Journey takes 10 days to complete.** Stand up for better health! Really, just stand up. It's hard to find time—or interest, perhaps—for vigorous physical activity every day. There is another way. Learn to add small bursts of movement to your day. Move a bit every hour. Your heart, muscles and mood will thank you for it. Start improving right now and stand up while you read this!

### Smart Eating

**This Journey takes 11 days to complete.** We were all born with the skill to eat. Have fad diets and misinformation confused you about food? Start over and learn how to listen to your body's cues. Eat the right amount of food for your unique needs. Eat when you are hungry. Stop when you are full. You know what your body needs. So you'll make smart decisions about what to eat.

### Three Ways to Lower Stress

**This Journey takes 10 days to complete.** What if you could stoke your energy level like you can stoke a fire? You can. Use these ideas to charge up your body with 3 basic things: the right foods, proper sleep and physical activity. Reduce your stress and achieve the state of clear thinking and motivation called high energy.



## Fit for Summer

The weather is warming up and many employees are beginning to return to the office, so weight loss or management may be top of mind for many of you.

The foundation of successful weight loss/management is a healthy, calorie-controlled diet combined with physical activity. For successful, long-term weight



management, you must make permanent changes in your lifestyle and health habits. Thankfully, studies suggest that making small, simple changes — rather than overhauling your entire eating and exercise patterns — can reap big payoffs.

**Make sure you're ready.** Long-term weight loss takes time and effort — and a long-term commitment. Ask yourself the following questions to help determine your readiness:

- Am I motivated to lose weight?
- Am I too distracted by other pressures?
- Do I use food as a means to cope with stress?
- Do I need other support either from friends or professionals?
- Am I willing to change eating habits?
- Am I willing to change activity habits?

**Set realistic goals.** This may seem obvious, but do you know what's realistic? Over the long-term, it is best to aim for losing 1 to 2 pounds a week. To do so, you generally need to burn 500 to 1,000 calories more than you consume each day through a lower calorie diet and physical activity.

When you're setting goals, think about both process and outcome goals. "Walk every day for 30 minutes" is an example of a process goal. "Lose 10 pounds" is an example of an outcome goal. Process goals should be your focus, because changing your habits is the ultimate key to become a healthier and happier you.

**Enjoy healthier foods.** Adopting a new eating style that promotes weight loss must include lowering your calorie intake. But, decreasing calories does NOT mean giving up taste, satisfaction or ease of meal preparation. Here are some tips to get you started:

- Eat at least four servings of vegetables each day and three servings of fruit
- Replace refined grains with whole grains
- Cut back on sugar (except the natural sugar in fruit)
- Limit or eliminate liquid calories (especially alcohol)

- Choose low-fat dairy products, lean [meat](#) and poultry and legumes
- Choose whole-foods and try to eat one less serving of processed foods each day
- Limit saturated fat, but include modest amounts of healthy fats, such as olive oil, avocados, nuts and seeds
- Measure servings and [control your portions](#). Eat on a smaller plate.

We also have some amazing archived webinars that can help you adopt healthier eating habits:

- [Simple Meal Prep](#)
- [Health Food Claims Debunked](#)
- [What's the Deal with Alcohol?](#)
- [Deep Dive Into the Mediterranean Diet](#)
- [Food and Mood](#)
- [Plant Forward Nutrition](#)
- [Not all Fats are Created Equal](#)
- [Slash the Cravings](#)
- *And [more!](#)*

Don't forget to submit a [smart form](#) for points.

**Manage stress.** Stress management plays a crucial role in weight management. Stress is generally associated with weight gain because of the changes it creates in your body and the cravings it results in. [See Page 2 for techniques.](#)

**Get active, stay active.** While you can lose weight without exercise, regular physical activity in addition to calorie restriction can help the most when it comes to weight loss and maintenance. Exercise also offers a plethora of health benefits, including boosting your mood, strengthening your cardiovascular system and reducing your blood pressure.



Any extra movement helps burn calories, so even adding just an additional 500 steps per day can make a difference.

**Stay positive.** Some days will be harder than others. Just remember that weight loss is a gradual process.

*\*Adapted from [AARP](#) and the [Mayo Clinic](#)*

## DID YOU KNOW?

You can earn up to [4,000 points](#) per program year towards your wellness incentive for participating in a certified weight management program, such as Noom, Weight Watchers or a Doctor-prescribed program?

To earn points, simply complete a [smart form](#) up to four times per program year.