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HealthVine



Diabetes Awareness

Diabetes is a chronic (long-lasting) health condition that affects how your body turns food into energy. More than one in three Americans have prediabetes — and 90 percent don't even know it. The good news is that most cases of Type 2 diabetes are preventable — healthy lifestyle choices can help you avoid, control, or even reverse the disease.

Keep your weight in check.

Excess weight is the primary cause of Type 2 diabetes. If you're overweight, losing just 7 to 10 percent of your current weight can cut your risk in half. Maintaining a healthy weight can help prevent other health problems, too — including heart disease and certain types of cancer.

Be carb-smart. Limit sugar and refined carbohydrates like white bread, pasta, and rice. Focus on high-fiber, whole-grain complex carbohydrates. They're digested more slowly, which helps keep your blood sugar steady.

Stay active to stay healthy.

Inactivity promotes Type 2 diabetes, so regular exercise is essential. You don't have to spend hours sweating in the gym to get the benefits — just walking briskly for a half hour every day can reduce your risk by up to 30 percent.



Want to learn more about the City of Tacoma Resources? Here is a [webinar collaboration](#) from our benefit providers, and don't forget to complete a [smart form](#) for points!



2024 Wellness Incentive Period (Start Now)

This wellness incentive period runs from Oct. 1, 2022 through Sept. 30, 2023. 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.

What's new? In addition to the [many activities](#) available for you to [earn points](#), we are excited to announce a **Voucher** option for the **2024 incentive period**. Here is how the voucher option works:

- Earn voucher points for participating in a community physical activity-related event during the program year (Oct. 1, 2022 and Sept. 30, 2023).
- You can receive **up to six vouchers** throughout the program year for participating in a 5k—9.99k and/or 10k+ event for 200 and 400 points each, respectively.
- Reach out to Wellness at wellness@cityoftacoma.org to share proof of participation in a community physical activity-related event and then you will be emailed a unique voucher code that you will redeem on [Virgin Pulse](#) under 'Rewards'.
- Don't forget that you can also earn points for the physical activity exerted during these events!

Important reminder. Your goal is to earn **25,000 points** during the 12-month period. There will be occasional double point opportunities and fun challenges for you to enjoy along the way! Participation in our voluntary program could save you hundreds of dollars on an annual basis.

Haven't registered? Go to join.virginpulse.org/cityoftacoma to create an account. Do NOT include any leading zeros before your employee ID number.

Need Help? If you are having issues navigating the Virgin Pulse platform, we recommend that you watch this [training video](#). As a bonus, you can earn 250 points if you submit a [smart form](#)! You can also find the contact information for your wellness coordinator and Virgin Pulse [here](#).



Suicide Prevention and Support

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), every day 130 people take their own lives--over 47,000 per year. In more than half the deaths, firearms were used. Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for Americans between age 15-24, and middle aged white men die by suicide at the highest rate. Veterans are also vulnerable and die 1.5 times more often than non-veterans by way of suicide. Men were 3.8 times more likely to die in an attempt than women, though women attempted at a rate of 1.5 times more than men.

The causes of suicide are complex, but the common denominator is mental illness. It is estimated that 90% of those who died by suicide had a diagnosable mental health condition, and nearly 75% told someone first. Given this, it is crucial that we begin to have open empathetic conversations in order to guide someone suffering to mental health treatment and prevent suicide.

Suicidal people are not “just looking for attention”, but are in genuine distress. Medical issues like chronic pain, serious and terminal illnesses, and traumatic brain injury can contribute to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, as can stress, relationship and family crises, and financial hardship. And, for those already experiencing depression or another mental health condition, someone else’s suicide can trigger a belief that this could be a viable way to end their own pain. And a family history of suicide can contribute to the risk of acting on suicidal thoughts.

Knowing that these issues can make people vulnerable can heighten your awareness that suicide may be on someone’s mind. These warning signs associated with suicidal behavior can also help clue you in that someone may be in danger.

Warning Signs of Suicide

- An increase in substance (alcohol or drug) use, misuse, or abuse
- Feelings of guilt, hurt, shame, and despair
- Statements of not wanting to live
- Thoughts of dying or threatening to kill oneself
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Withdrawal from friends and increased social isolation
- Dramatic changes in mood
- Sudden improvement in mood can result if someone has decided to complete suicide

How to Help Someone Else

People with suicidal behaviors often reach out for help indirectly. Listen for their subtle cues and extend an empathetic invitation for the person to express and process the thoughts and feelings that are causing the distress.

Be Direct. Ask the person “Are you okay?”, “Are you thinking about killing yourself?”, “How long have you been thinking about suicide?”

Ask if the person has a plan. If so, get specific information about the plan, including if they have the means to carry it out. Help remove the means. This is an important safety measure for a person during a short term crisis who may act impulsively.

Actively listen. Listen carefully to find out what the person is thinking and feeling. Acknowledge and empathize as you hear the person’s painful experiences.

Encourage them to seek help as soon as possible. If the person is seeing a mental health professional, recommend that they contact this professional immediately. If not, provide the 24/7 phone number for the National Suicide Prevention Line 9-8-8 or the National Crisis Text Line: 741741. For those with First Choice Health EAP, you can call the EAP 24/7 for support and resources at 800-777-4114. It will be imperative that the person get connected with ongoing counseling to deal with the underlying issues causing the crisis.

How to Help Yourself

The truth is, as humans all of us have experienced difficult situations and emotionally challenging times in our lives and suicidal thoughts are not uncommon. If you find yourself in this situation:

Get professional help. Call the National Suicide Prevention Line 9-8-8 or the National Crisis Text Line: 741741, for in the moment support. You can call First Choice Health EAP 24/7 for telephonic support and a counseling referral and other resources at 800-777-4114. You can also speak with your primary care provider for help. With a professional’s support, you can learn ways to manage stress and troubling thoughts and emotions in a healthy way, and to recognize triggers and warning signs to prevent the situation from feeling overwhelming and insurmountable.

Connect with other people. Avoid being alone. Solitude can increase feelings of despair and make suicidal thoughts worse. Reach out to a professional, a family member, or friend you trust. Talk to someone. Let that person know what is going on with you.

Eliminate lethal means. If you have thoughts about suicide and have access to firearms, medications, or razor blades, get rid of them; lock them up or ask someone to take them away for you.

Avoid alcohol and drugs. These substances increase feelings of depression and anxiety and remove inhibitions that can make you act impulsively-this can be a deadly combination.

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Suicide Prevention and Support, Cont.

How to Help Yourself, Cont.

Create a safety plan. It's helpful to have an accessible plan with written steps for how to keep yourself safe. Remind yourself of activities that calm and comfort you, and include contact numbers for your therapist, doctor, family, friends, and suicide prevention hotline or EAP. Share this plan with a family member or friend for extra support in reminding you of what can keep you safe.

Summary

Remember that suicidal behavior is not a sign of weakness. People who consider suicide are overwhelmed with feelings of hopelessness, despair, and helplessness regarding their current life circumstances. Many different factors contribute to people feeling like suicide will stop their suffering. By empathetically listening and learning about the warning signs for suicidal behaviors, you can be an advocate of change for someone who needs your help. For more information on suicidal behaviors, interventions, and prevention you can visit the EAP website at www.firstchoiceeap.com (username: cityoftacoma) or call them at 800-777-4114. They are here for you 24/7.

Source: [First Choice Health EAP](#)

We Appreciate YOU

It's the season of gratitude and we would like to take this time to express our appreciation for you. Thank you for the opportunity to support your health and wellbeing goals. We appreciate your confidence in our team, your commitment to prioritizing health and wellbeing, and we're especially grateful to have you as a valued, engaged, and innovative employee of the City of Tacoma.

We know this time of year can be hectic for some, with the holidays, competing priorities, and recent economic times only adding to everyone's stress levels. We want you to know you're not alone on this journey.

To help you find balance and as a show of our appreciation, here are a few on-demand [mindfulness](#) and [meditation](#) offerings.

Employee Spotlight/Testimonial

Steve Mann, Trainmaster, Tacoma Rail

Physical and mental health are hugely important to us all, whether we know it or not. Our sleep and play and exercise and food selection have profound, if sometimes unseen, impacts on our life experience. For me the experience of my daily life has been the driving force behind my physical and emotional growth over time. I find that the better I feel, in my physical body, the better I feel about the experience of my day-to-day life.

There is a direct connection from our physical health and wellbeing to our mental health and wellbeing. That does not mean that if you are physically healthy you are free from the mental health breakdown many of us face, but it is something that can be focused on to move us forward and help us see a way out. Moving from a state of unhealth to a state health is a fantastic guide for so many other aspects of life. What I have learned from my own health journey is the repeatable and successful application of goal setting and follow through. Nothing happens overnight. Whether you are starting to eat right or exercise or beginning to learn about nutrition and food selection, you will quickly find that none of the results are instant or lacking in opportunities for continued attention and adaptation.

The unintended consequence of my desire to be physically healthy has opened my eyes to the value of setting goals and following through. When I first started to run, I was faced with many failures and setbacks. From injuries and overtraining to losing weight and building stamina. The first year of running would have been an easy time to give up and find something else to do for exercise. However, I was determined to run an ultra-marathon, so when the setbacks and injuries hit, I had no choice but to adapt and change and learn something new. This process continued until I finished a 35-mile trail race first in my age group. I learned from this and was able to apply many of the lessons to other parts of my life.

Many people may already know the power of setting goals and staying the course, I was not one of those people. The repeated, self-imposed, need to overcome and achieve and adapt have been lessons that I continue to learn as my health journey continues. I will likely never have a need to stop learning to pay attention to what I am doing and where I am trying to go. What I have learned is applicable for everyone else. I am not special. I am not better than anyone else. I have fought my whole life to be healthy and I am well on my way towards that goal. If you are new to exercise or fitness or mental health training, be patient. Set your goal and follow the steps to reach it. There will be days where you feel like you've failed, you haven't. The only time you fail is when you decide to stop reaching for your goal. Stay the course, be quick to forgive yourself for missed opportunities, and have FUN on the journey.

Holiday Self-Care Tips

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. The holidays shouldn't distract you from fulfilling your personal needs. Here are some ideas to help you manage stress and maintain your wellbeing as you navigate this busy time of year and prepare for a healthy new year.

Don't overcommit. Keep a calendar of upcoming obligations like office parties, family gatherings and social opportunities. Remember, saying no to an invite is okay.

Acknowledge your feelings. If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for other reasons, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's okay to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

Reach Out/Ask for help. You don't have to endure the stress of the holidays alone. Ask family or friends to assist with planning, coordinating, decorating, food preparation—whatever it is that you might need support with for your holiday plans.

If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events or communities. Many may have websites, online support groups, social media sites or virtual events. They can offer support and companionship..

Volunteering your time or doing something to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

Be realistic. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones.

Make time for sleep. Sleep plays a vital role in our overall health and wellbeing, yet 1 in 3 adults aren't getting the recommended amount.

Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, cooking/baking, and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.

Take a breather. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm. So listen to some music, take a walk, read a book or any other activity that helps you relax. You deserve it.

Adapted from: The Mayo Clinic and Koa Health



Journey Recommendations

Reaching a personal health goal starts with a single step. Journeys® are daily, self-guided courses to help you build healthy habits. Take that first step by starting a Journey today.

Calm Your Mind for Sleep

This Journey takes 10 days to complete. Is your mind racing when it's time for bed? You're not alone. For many people, bedtime can be stressful. It's one of the few times of the day that's quiet—and as a result, worries can creep up. Learn how to calm your mind before bed and get better rest.

Practice Self-Love and Self-Acceptance

This Journey takes 16 days to complete. You don't always have to do something drastic to get more out of life: Self-acceptance can be a game-changer. It might not come easy, but trust us when we say that the effort is worth it! With some practice and education to get you started, you can begin learning to appreciate all that you are. Through thoughtful exercises, you'll nurture your ability for self-acceptance, self-compassion and self-love. And you'll walk through this world feeling just a little bit lighter.

Stress Less in No Time

This Journey takes 10 days to complete. We all feel some stress, but continuous stress can affect your health and your productivity. Learn some simple ways you can rein in stress before it becomes a problem. These ideas are all things you can do for a few minutes in a break in your day. You'll soon be in the habit of dialing down your stress level every day!

Build a Solid Routine

This Journey takes 10 days to complete. Think daily routines are boring? Think again. Having a daily schedule can reduce the amount of stress in your life by giving you more time to relax, get things done and sleep too. Plain and simple—a solid routine is good for your health. Learn how to make one that works for you.