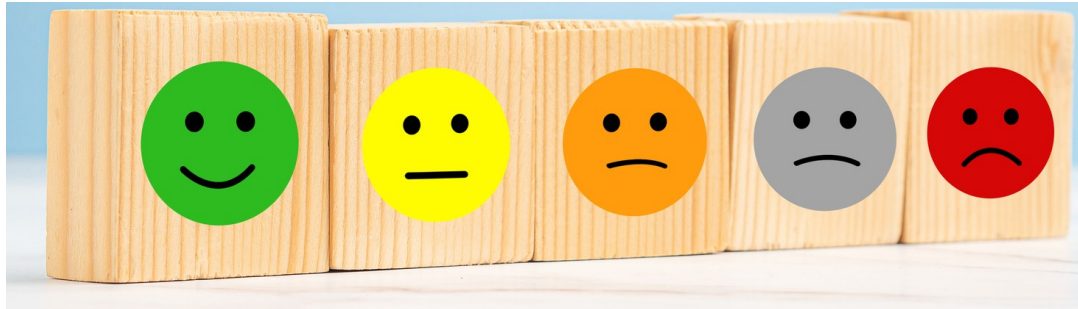


October/
November
2023

NEWSLETTER OF THE
CITY OF TACOMA

HealthVine

Diabetes Impact on Eye Health



Depression and Mental Health Screening Awareness

Each year, millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental health condition — but mental illness affects everyone directly or indirectly through family, friends or coworkers.

Mental Health Facts:

- 1 in 5 U.S. adults experience mental illness each year.
- 1 in 20 U.S. adults experience serious mental illness each year.
- 1 in 6 U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year.

Trying to tell the difference between what expected behaviors are and what might be signs of a mental illness isn't easy. Each illness has its own symptoms, but some [common signs](#) of mental illness in adults and adolescents can include the following:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Changes in sleeping habits of feeling tired and low energy
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite

[Online screening](#) is one of the quickest and easiest ways to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition.

Recommended Resources: [City of Tacoma Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources List](#) (newly updated); [Mental Health America \(MHA\)](#); [NAMI](#)



There are more than 37 million Americans living with diabetes and one in five do not know they have it. Additionally, it's estimated that one in three Americans (96 million) have prediabetes and 80 percent don't even know it.

We all know that diabetes and health are intertwined; but did you know that eye health can be impacted, too? That's why you are encouraged to get your eye screening every year. [Learn more](#) about the connection between diabetes and vision.

Do you have 60 seconds? Take this Type 2 diabetes [risk test](#).

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Prostate Cancer Awareness

Different people have different symptoms for prostate cancer. Most men do not have any symptoms at all.

If you have any of the following symptoms, be sure to see your doctor right away:

- Difficulty starting urination
- Weak or interrupted flow of urine
- Urinating often, especially at night
- Trouble emptying the bladder completely
- Pain or burning during urination
- Pain in the back, hips, or pelvis that doesn't go away

All men are at risk for prostate cancer. Out of every 100 American men, about 13 will get prostate cancer during their lifetime.

The most common risk factor is age. But, some men are at an increased risk for prostate cancer. You are at an increased risk for getting or dying from prostate cancer if you are African-American or have a family history of prostate cancer.

Considering that most men do not experience symptoms of prostate cancer, it is important to consider screening — looking for the cancer before it causes symptoms. There is no standard test to screen for prostate cancer, but the two common screenings are an Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test and a digital rectal exam.

If you are thinking about being screened, you are encouraged to learn about the possible [benefits and harms](#) of screening, diagnosis, and treatment. Most importantly, talk to your doctor about your personal risk factors.

Source: [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)



Mental Health Care for Men

Gender stereotypes and stigma can make it harder for both men and their healthcare professionals to recognize when they might need mental health support.

Men experience a wide range of mental health conditions, but some common ones include:

- Depression
- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Social anxiety disorder
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia


There's a common assumption that women are more likely to have mental health conditions than men, especially when it comes to depression. But, in 2019, men in the U.S. died by suicide at a rate 3.7 times great than that of women.

Men's Mental Health Symptoms

- Anger and/or aggressiveness
- Irritability and/or frustration
- Substance misuse
- Trouble concentrating
- Persistent feelings of worry
- Engagement in high-risk activities
- Changes in appetite and energy
- New aches and pains
- Sleeping issues (more or less sleep)
- Digestive issues

Learn more from: [EAP FirstChoice Health](#)

Don't forget! The City of Tacoma benefit providers offer a variety of mental health and wellbeing resources (including gym membership discounts). [Learn more here.](#)





Breast Cancer Awareness

Other than skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women.

There are different symptoms of breast cancer, and some people have no symptoms at all. Symptoms can include:

- Any change in size or shape of the breast
- Pain in any area of the breast
- A new lump in the breast or underarm

Mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat and before it is big enough to feel or cause symptoms. These are covered 100% by your benefits if you are 40 or older.

Risk Factors You Cannot Change

Getting older. The risk for breast cancer increases with age; most breast cancers are diagnosed after age 50.

Genetic mutations. Inherited changes (mutations) to certain genes, such as BRCA1 and BRCA2. Women who have inherited these genetic changes are at higher risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

Reproductive history. Early menstrual periods before age 12 and starting menopause after age 55 expose women to hormones longer, raising their risk of getting breast cancer.

Having dense breasts. Dense breasts have more connective tissue than fatty tissue, which can sometimes make it hard to see tumors on a mammogram. Women with dense breasts are more likely to get breast cancer.

Personal history of breast cancer or certain non-cancerous breast diseases. Women who have had breast cancer are more likely to get breast cancer a second time. Some non-cancerous breast diseases such as atypical hyperplasia or lobular carcinoma in situ are associated with a higher risk of getting breast cancer.



Family history of breast cancer. A woman's risk for breast cancer is higher if she has a mother, sister, or daughter (first-degree relative) or multiple family members on either her mother's or father's side of the family who have had breast cancer. Having a first-degree male relative with breast cancer also raises a woman's risk.

Previous treatment using radiation therapy. Women who had radiation therapy to the chest or breasts (like for treatment of Hodgkin's Lymphoma) before age 30 have a higher risk of getting breast cancer later in life.

Women who took the drug diethylstilbestrol (DES), which was given to some pregnant women in the United States between 1940 and 1971 to prevent miscarriage, have a higher risk. Women whose mothers took DES while pregnant with them are also at risk.

Risk Factors You Can Change

Not being physically active. Women who are not physically active have a higher risk of getting breast cancer.

Being overweight or obese after menopause. Older women who are overweight or obese have a higher risk of getting breast cancer than those at a normal weight.

Taking hormones. Some forms of hormone replacement therapy (those that include both estrogen and progesterone) taken during menopause can raise risk for breast cancer when taken for more than five years. Certain oral contraceptives (birth control pills) also have been found to raise breast cancer risk.

Reproductive history. Having the first pregnancy after age 30, not breastfeeding, and never having a full-term pregnancy can raise breast cancer risk.

Drinking alcohol. Studies show that a woman's risk for breast cancer increases with the more alcohol she drinks.

Research suggests that other factors such as smoking, being exposed to chemicals that can cause cancer, and changes in other hormones due to night shift working also may increase breast cancer risk.

Source: [Center for Disease Control & Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/)





2024 Wellness Incentive Appeals Process

Wellness incentive letters will be mailed to your home address in early November.

This letter will inform you whether you did or did not qualify for the 2024 Wellness incentive, according to Virgin Pulse's records. If you did not receive this letter or have questions about your qualification status, please contact Wellness Coordinator, [Shannon Carmody](#).

Eligible members are entitled to submit an appeals form for their Wellness incentive determination. This form must be received by Dec. 15, 2023.


Please complete and submit your [appeals form](#) per the instructions. Be as detailed as possible in the explanation section of the form.

2025 Wellness Incentive Period is Here!

This wellness incentive period runs from October 1, 2023 — September 30, 2024.

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.

The [ways to earn](#) and incentive goal are not changing this program year. You must earn **25,000 points** by Sept. 30, 2024 in order to qualify for the wellness incentive and save **at least \$240** in 2025.



2023 Tacoma Employee Wellness Survey Results Summary

Employees were recently surveyed regarding the Tacoma Employee Wellness Program. We appreciate the 509 employees who took the time to provide feedback! Your input is essential in helping to ensure that we continue to support your health and wellbeing efforts and needs.

As you know, our work dynamics and wellbeing platform have notably changed since we had our last survey in 2018. Specifically, many employees have adopted telework schedules and we transitioned from the RedBrick Health Portal to a more robust wellbeing platform, [Virgin Pulse](#). So, it was important that we collect your feedback regarding our Tacoma Employee Wellness Program so that we can continue to grow and improve it.

Key takeaways included (but are not limited to) the following:

- Employees would like more training on how to easily navigate and use Virgin Pulse (including downloading the app and syncing devices/apps).
- Employees would like to see more wellness-related webinars offered throughout the year.
- Employees would like to see more outdoor activities advertised and promoted.
- Employees need more information about the Employee Wellness Centers, such as how to access them and utilize the online videos.
- Employees would like to see some additional equipment added to the Employee Wellness Centers.

For next steps, the Wellness Committee will review the summary of data and determine what enhancements and modifications can be made to the program.

Employee Feedback

"I enjoy this program. I thought it was going to be too difficult to achieve the required points for my wellness discount of my health premiums, but found that using my fitness watch and syncing it coupled with intermittently checking my daily cards and remind and tracking my healthy habits I have been able to achieve the required goal by April or May each year."

"Love being inspired by Virgin Pulse."

"I wish all goal tracking apps were this easy. It is rewarding and fun to use."

"It is a GREAT way to get me thinking about my health and wellbeing. I've been at the City for about a year, and have noticed a difference in my mindset on these types of things."

Financial Wellness: Pre-Retirement Seminars

It is never too early to start planning for retirement!

City of Tacoma employees and their family members are invited to attend any of our retirement planning seminars. All sessions will be held via Zoom. **Space is limited to 100 participants per presentation.** These presentations count towards your Virgin Pulse incentive requirements, so make sure to submit a [smart form](#) after each session.

City of Tacoma Retirement Resources

When: November 1 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. ([register](#))

Retirement Director Tim Allen will give an overview of retirement system benefits. He will demonstrate the online retirement benefits calculator tool, explore various options and show you how to better estimate your future benefit.

Human Resources Specialist Monica Rutledge will provide an overview of the 457 deferred compensation and HRA VEBA plans. Employees can save and invest in their futures with tax advantages when participating in deferred compensation. The HRA VEBA is a post-separation account-based health plan. The overview will cover general rules and benefit options for eligible employees. Monica will also discuss post-retirement health care options and eligibility requirements.

Social Security 101

When: November 30 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m ([register](#))

Kirk Larson is a Washington public affairs representative for the Social Security Administration. He will answer all of your Social Security questions, including (but not limited to):

- When you are eligible to receive retirement benefits
- How early retirement affects your benefits
- How to get the most from your benefit
- What the future of Social Security looks like

We recommend that you familiarize yourself with the “my Social Security” online services prior to this presentation. To do so, go to ssa.gov/myaccount to create an account and print out your Social Security.

Diabetes Awareness, Cont.

Page 1 mentioned some diabetes facts; but the good news is that most cases of Type 2 diabetes are preventable — healthy lifestyle changes can help you avoid, control, or even reverse the disease ([learn more](#)).

Recommended Webinars ([earn 250 points each](#)):

[Diabetes Basics & Beyond](#) (Living Well Alliance): Get up-to-date information on what diabetes is and what are the preventable risk factors for developing diabetes.

[Diabetes Prevention and Management Resources](#): This webinar is a collaboration between your City of Tacoma Benefit providers and your TEW Program.

LEOFF II Retirement Resources (Fire, Police, PPSMA)

When: December 7 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. ([register](#))

Catherine Cadoo from the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems will cover your LEOFF pension plan and benefit options.

HR Specialist Monica Rutledge will provide an overview of the post-retirement medical and COBRA options and eligibility requirements. Monica will also cover the 457 deferred compensation plans.

VEBA Consultant Brian Riehs from Gallagher will cover the general rules and benefit options of the post-separation account-based health plan for eligible employees.

Becky Wallen from DiMartino Associates will cover the Medical Expense Reimbursement Plan (MERP). This is a fire employee only plan.



MissionSquare Financial Wellness Seminars

MissionSquare retirement offers a wide variety of [LIVE webinars](#) for you to attend. You do not need to be a MissionSquare participant in order to learn from these webinars. They also have [recorded webinars](#) for you to watch at your convenience.

Some of the LIVE upcoming webinars include (but are not limited to) the following topics:

- Navigating the Next Chapter: Preparing for Your Retirement
- How Health Can Effect Your Wealth in Retirement
- Maximizing Your Investments: Ensuring Your Retirement is on Track
- The Medicare Puzzle: Understanding Your Medicare Options