



EMPOWERED WELL-BEING

Balancing Health, Happiness, and Community

APRIL 2026

Socializing Boosts Your Health

Research shows that our friendships and social connections directly help maintain our health and may increase our longevity. Maybe you had a physical exam from a health care provider this year, but did you talk about your social life?

High-quality relationships reduce the risk of chronic disease and illnesses, including heart disease, stroke, dementia and depression, according to the CDC. Some of the research on the importance of social connection comes from studying loneliness. About one in three adults in the U.S. reports feeling lonely. This is regarded now as so important, your provider may ask if you regularly spend time with friends.

People are naturally social and look to others to feel a sense of belonging and importance. We look for community to help us survive and thrive.

Friends help with your emotional and physical health. If you just lost someone important to you, a friend can listen while you talk about your grief. Or if you just had surgery, a friend may bring you groceries or help take care of you while you recover.

Social connections extend beyond just friends. They include your neighbors, schools, workplaces, places of worship and other larger communities. And don't forget book clubs, interest groups and volunteering.

Here are some tips from the National Institute on Aging for how to build social connections:

- **Try** to make the most of your social time spent in person.
- **Find** an activity you enjoy, start a hobby or take a class to learn something new.
- **Schedule** a time each day to reach out to others by email, text or voice.
- **To** help you keep connected with someone who lives far away, use video chat.



Friendships and social connections improve health and help people live longer.

City Events

Tools to Handle Stress

Thursday, April 2
Noon – 1:00 PM
[Register here](#)

Meditation and Breathing for Better Health

Monday, April 6
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM
[Register here](#)

Aging Women in the Workforce: Embracing Experience, Navigating Challenges

Tuesday, April 14
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM
[Register here](#)

Women's Health

Thursday, April 16
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM
[Register here](#)

Cultivating Compassion

Monday, April 20
Noon – 1:00 PM
[Register here](#)

Benefits of Moving in Nature

Wednesday, April 22
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM
[Register here](#)

Leadership for Women

Wednesday, April 22
Noon – 1:00 PM
[Register here](#)

Using Guided Imagery

Tuesday, April 28
11:30 AM – 12:30PM
[Register here](#)

Navigating City Benefits for Menopause Care

Thursday, April 30
Noon – 12:45 PM
[Register here](#)

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Medication Disposal the Right Way

Got old prescriptions or outdated over-the-counter medications cluttering your cabinets?

The easiest way to dispose of them is through your local Drug Take Back program or mail them through a prepaid drug mail-back envelope — some pharmacies may offer these envelopes at no cost. Ask your pharmacist for take back dates and locations near you. Some locations may sponsor take back events while others offer year-round drop-off locations.

No Drug Take Back location near you? No problem. Just follow these steps to safely discard medicated liquids and pills:



Important: Never flush anything down the toilet except toilet paper and bodily waste. Doing so helps reduce chemical contamination in the environment, according to wastewater agencies. While the FDA has a Flush List for medications it considers safe, it's better to use the methods described at left.

- ❶ **Take** your meds out of their original containers and mix them with something unpleasant such as dirt, coffee grinds or cat litter. This makes them less tempting for kids or pets who might find them. **Note:** Aerosol or spray inhaler medications have specific handling instructions. Contact your local trash or recycling facility to learn about local laws and regulations.
- ❷ **Seal** the mixture in a closeable container such as a resealable storage bag or old container with a lid. Toss it in the trash.
- ❸ **Remove** personal information on empty prescription bottles or boxes before throwing them away or recycling them.

You may wonder what the word *palpitation* means.

It's the feeling of having a fast-beating, irregular-beating or pounding heart. If you feel something strange, you can help your health care provider by having answers to the following:

- ❶ When did the feeling begin?
- ❷ How long did it last? You may feel a speeding heart during a stressful situation, but it quickly fades. Others may feel irregular beats over days.
- ❸ Do you feel lightheaded or out of breath during an episode?

Quick Risk Assessment™: Your Social Media Life

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Adults spend an average of more than two hours a day on social media, and teens often spend even more. While users sometimes feel more connected to loved ones or discover entertaining content, excessive use can worsen anxiety, depression and low self-esteem.

Assess the impact of your habits by answering the questions below. For each question, select from 1 (rarely) to 5 (very often).

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>❶ I check social media first thing in the morning or last thing at night.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>❹ Notifications interrupt my time with friends or family.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>❷ I lose track of time while scrolling.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>❺ I feel lonelier after spending time online.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>❸ I compare myself to others online.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>❻ I replace in-person interactions with texting or commenting.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>❹ Seeing others' posts leaves me envious or dissatisfied.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>❼ I focus on capturing or sharing moments instead of enjoying them.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |
| <p>❺ I post mainly to get likes or attention.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> | <p>❽ I've tried unsuccessfully to use social media less.</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> |

Tally your score:

- 10 to 20:** You likely have a balanced relationship with social media.
- 21 to 35:** Social media may sometimes affect your mood or relationships.
- 36 to 50:** Social media use could be undermining your well-being.

For healthy social media habits:

- ✓ **Set daily time limits.** Use a monitoring app if needed.
- ✓ **Designate social media-free times** (e.g., family meals) to help you engage in real life.
- ✓ **Notice how you feel** before and after scrolling through content.
- ✓ **Unfollow people or topics** that make you feel worse about yourself.
- ✓ **Spend time daily** on screen-free activities you enjoy.



Many people suffer from acid reflux. The stomach makes strong acid and enzymes to digest food. But when this acid escapes up from the stomach into the lower part of the esophagus, it's called gastroesophageal reflux disease or GERD. Symptoms of GERD include heartburn or pain in the middle of the chest. Other symptoms include: belching, regurgitating food, nausea, difficulty swallowing, and a sore throat.

GERD increases risk of esophageal cancer, although most GERD patients don't develop the disease. Nine out of ten cases of this cancer are in people 55 or older. Men are at higher risk than women. **Other major risks:** Using tobacco products, including cigarettes, pipes and chewing tobacco, and drinking alcohol can increase chances of this cancer.

tip OF THE month

Protein Powder

Some recent headlines may have overstated the risk of lead in protein powder used as an additive to drinks. Researchers tested protein powders and used a strict lead limit of 0.5 mcg/day, so many products exceeded this amount. But the FDA allows up to 10 micrograms a day of lead, meaning those same products would have passed under government standards. Still, it's smart to keep lead exposure as low as possible since it's linked to kidney issues, high blood pressure and cognitive harm. If you use protein powder, choose wisely: Ask manufacturers for testing results; look on the product label for certification from a third-party organization, such as NSF International or U.S. Pharmacopeia. **Tip:** Consider whey protein, which typically contains less lead than plant-based powders (e.g., soy, pea or hemp) Many people get enough protein by choosing protein-rich foods, such as tofu, lean meat and poultry, fish and seafood.

eating smart

Protein Needs for Adults

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Protein is an essential nutrient found in many foods, including chicken, tofu and yogurt. Your body uses protein to build and repair muscle, support immune health, make hormones and more.

You can't store protein in the body, so you need to eat protein-rich foods regularly throughout the day. This ensures there are always enough amino acids (building blocks of protein) available to meet the body's needs.

Protein-rich foods include:

- Poultry — chicken, turkey, etc.
- Meat — beef, lamb, pork, etc.
- Fish and seafood.
- Dairy foods — milk, cheese and yogurt.
- Soy foods — tofu, edamame and soy beverages.
- Legumes — lentils, beans and chickpeas.
- Nuts, seeds and nut butters.
- Eggs.

An easy way to ensure you're getting enough protein is to choose one of these protein-rich foods at every meal. It should fill about ¼ of your plate, which will provide 20 to 30 grams of protein per meal.

The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (the organization that sets nutrient intakes in the U.S. and Canada) recommends adults get 10% to 35% of calories from protein each day. That's equal to 50 grams to 175 grams of protein per day (on a 2000-calorie diet).

It's a very general range of amounts, because protein needs vary based on your gender, age, height, weight, activity levels, medical conditions and other factors. Men typically need more protein than women due to larger body size and muscle mass (on average and not always the case). Physically active people need more protein to help repair and build muscle after exercise. Children need adequate protein since they aren't just maintaining tissue; they're building new tissue as they grow.

If you are unsure of how much you need, get personalized advice from a dietitian (check your insurance coverage first).



easy recipe

Turkey Lettuce Cups

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2 tsp extra-virgin olive oil | 2 tbsp hoisin sauce |
| 1 lb. lean ground turkey | 1 tbsp reduced-sodium soy sauce |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | 1 tbsp rice vinegar |
| 1 tbsp fresh ginger, minced | 1 tsp toasted sesame oil |
| 1 medium carrot, peeled and grated | 1 large head Bibb or iceberg lettuce |
| 1 (8 oz.) can water chestnuts, drained and chopped | 3 green onions, sliced |



Heat oil in pan over medium heat. **Add** turkey, garlic and ginger. **Cook** until turkey is browned, breaking up turkey into crumbles, about 6-8 minutes. **Stir** in carrot and water chestnuts. **Cook** 1 minute. **Set** aside. **In** a small bowl, whisk together hoisin sauce, soy sauce, rice vinegar and sesame oil. **Drizzle** over the turkey mixture and toss to coat. **Add** some turkey mixture to each lettuce leaf. **Top** with green onions and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving:

332 calories | 25g protein | 12g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 5g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 31g carbohydrate | 5g sugar (3g added sugar) | 2g fiber | 389mg sodium

• **Time-Sensitive: Submit Dependent Eligibility Documents by May 4, 2026.** The City of Seattle periodically conducts dependent eligibility reverification to ensure enrolled dependents are still eligible for benefits. If you enrolled dependents in a City healthcare plan before January 1, 2024, review your reverification letter and submit required documentation to Alight Solutions by **May 4, 2026**, to maintain coverage. Dependents subject to reverification include spouses, domestic partners, stepchildren, and children of domestic partners. For questions, contact Alight Solutions using the number in your letter.

• **Moving soon? Update your address.** If you change your residence, be sure to update your address in Workday and with the United States Postal Service (USPS). Updating your address in Workday ensures you receive important benefits mailings on time. If you only update your address with USPS, mail may be returned to the City of Seattle instead of being forwarded to your new address.

• **Life is Challenging – ComPsych EAP Can Help.** Talk to ComPsych for the tools you need to handle any of life's challenges, big or small. Available to all City of Seattle employees and their household members for free. EAP is more than counseling. Services include work and lifestyle support, legal and financial guidance, virtual support groups and well-being coaching. See the flyer at the end of the newsletter to see how ComPsych can help in real-life situations. Find ComPsych services at [Guidance Resources Online](#) (**registration web id: SeattleEAP**) or by phone at **1 (800) 858-6715; TRS: Dial 711.**

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Mobile Mammography Screening

Thursday and Friday,
May 21 and 22
7:40 AM – 3:20 PM
[Register here](#)



expert advice

Q: Exercise good for brain chemistry?

A: Exercise triggers the release of many feel-good chemicals, such as endorphins, which boost mood and decrease pain sensitivity. Other brain chemicals that increase with exercise include neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, serotonin and epinephrine, which may positively impact attention, motivation and emotions. Cortisol, a substance associated with stress, appears to decrease with exercise.



One recent study showed that any amount of moderate to vigorous exercise improved scores on memory tests the next day. Researchers believe this results from increased blood flow to the brain, as well as higher levels of neurotransmitters. Exercise also raises the levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor, which encourages the growth of new neurons (brain cells).

While experiments have shown that even a single bout of exercise can improve functions, such as concentration and creativity, a sustained pattern yields even more benefits. Over time, consistent exercise helps regulate sleep, reduce anxiety and depression, as well as keep cognitive abilities strong.

— Eric Endlich, PhD

Tech Neck Relief

If you're reading this on your phone or tablet, you may already have tech neck — pain and stiffness in the back of your neck, caused by constantly looking down at devices. An adult's head weighs roughly ten to 12 pounds, and your neck supports it with ease when you're looking straight ahead.



However, when you tilt your head downward, say when you're scrolling through messages on your phone, that stress on your neck can increase up to 50 to 60 pounds, which can lead to neck pain, stiffness or numbness. Other symptoms include headaches and shoulder tension. Even worse, not addressing tech neck symptoms can lead to long-term problems such as chronic neck pain, muscle imbalances, joint degeneration and herniated discs.

Here are some tips to help you prevent tech neck:

Limit your screen time. If you can't, take frequent breaks (every 20 to 30 minutes) to stand up, stretch and adjust your position. Set a timer as a reminder.

Make sure your workspace is ergonomically correct: screen at eye level, feet flat on floor and knees at a 90° angle. Use a chair with lumbar support and arm rests.

Consider using a stand for your phone, tablet or laptop so that it is eye level while viewing it.

Think about getting a separate monitor for your laptop and setting it up so that it is eye level and 20 to 40 inches away.

Perform stretching exercises for your shoulders and neck regularly to alleviate stiffness. Contact your health care provider for suggestions.

Help That Meets You Where You Are

John reported that his spouse's health issues were causing him anxiety but that she wouldn't listen to his advise

How the EAP helped:

- John met with a local counselor, shared his issues, and started to work on **improving his approach to this difficult situation**.
- At the counselor's suggestion, **he began to focus on the things within his control**, such as preparing healthy meals for his wife and himself, and started to pursue personal passions and hobbies again, which **helped alleviate anxiety and refocus his attention away from stressful subjects**.
- As a result, John found himself less anxious and was able to work on **improving communication with his wife**.
- With their relationship on a better footing, John and his wife sat down and **created a plan to improve her health habits** and to get the help she needs.
- John has also found that, thanks to the new skills learned in counseling, his resiliency has improved, allowing him to **reduce frustration and better face emotional challenges in general**.



Remember, you can contact the EAP 24/7 for assistance and resources for any issues you face.

EAP Support for:
Relationships & Anxiety



Call: 800-858-6715
App: GuidanceNowSM
Online: [guidanceresources.com](https://www.guidanceresources.com)
Web ID: SeattleEAP

Scan for more
resources

