



Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust

Wellness Works

SUMMER 2018

Standout Wellness Programs

On Tuesday, April 24, 2018 the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust's Wellness Department hosted the 30th annual wellness conference. There were 81 attendees, representing 39 of our member groups. Two groups and one individual were recognized for implementing comprehensive wellness programs at their worksites.

York County Government

York County Government received the *Ripple Award* for initiating a program that will continue to positively impact the health and well-being of employees well into the future.



The York County Government's wellness committee.

Aroostook County Action Program

Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) was presented the *Harvest Award* for planting the seeds of wellness throughout the organization and cultivating healthier lives.

Michael Pardue, Town Manager, Town of Kennebunk

Michael was awarded the *Beacon Award* for shining a light on the importance of employee health and wellness.



Ellen Bemis, a wellness committee member from the ACAP, accepts the award on behalf of the entire wellness committee.



Mike Pardue accepts his award. He is joined by Town of Kennebunk Wellness Coordinator Tasha Pinkham.

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Wellness on the Web



From food to shampoo – we are exposed to chemicals every second, yet we know very little about them. To navigate this complicated world and make safer choices, Environmental Working Group (EWG) created the "EWG's Healthy Living" app to share the health and safety ratings of over 200,000 food and cosmetic products.

The EWG website, www.ewg.org, is also a great resource to empower people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment.



Why do I need to have a PCP?

When you enroll for coverage in an MMEHT health plan, you are required to list a Primary Care Physician (PCP). While you might usually treat with a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant, the PCP you list must be the supervising doctor, and not an entire healthcare practice. We often get questions about why listing a PCP is necessary, in particular from members who participate in a Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plan, which typically doesn't require referrals to specialists.

So why should you have a PCP?

Believe it or not, research shows that people who have a primary care doctor actually live longer. They are less likely to die from cancer, heart disease, stroke and many other illnesses. The reason is simple: over time, you and your doctor form a relationship. You get to know each other, which leads to better medical care by catching small health problems before they become serious.

Here are six other benefits to building a relationship with a primary care physician:

One-Stop Shopping. A primary care doctor knows how to deal with everything from helping you through a bout with the flu to back pain and digestion issues, to uncovering serious illnesses like cancer and heart disease. They can treat almost anything. If not, they'll get you to a doctor who can.

Someone Who Knows All About You. Over time, your doctor will get to know you as person, not just your body. You'll build trust and be able to talk about anything that's bothering you physically, emotionally and spiritually. That's important as problems in any of these areas can impact your overall health.

Coordination of Care. Your primary care doctor is the point person who helps you navigate the healthcare jungle. He or she:

- helps you find the best specialist if you need one.
- knows about all of the medicines and supplements you're taking and look for possible interactions.
- orders the right tests and other diagnostics you need at each stage of your life.
- answers any questions you have regarding your care, no matter where you receive it, so you are clear on all of the details
- and much more.

Keeps You Healthy. Your primary care doctor isn't just interested in you when you're sick. He or she wants to partner with you on a wellness and prevention plan too. Consider your primary care doctor your best source for information on things like weight management, smoking cessation, help with alcohol and drug use, and managing stress and anxiety.

Routine Screenings. Your PCP will do or arrange for screenings such as mammograms, colonoscopies, blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol and more. It's important to note that many serious illnesses are found during routine physicals. We're talking the top three silent diseases that have no symptoms: high blood pressure, high cholesterol and Type 2 Diabetes. When these illnesses are left untreated they can have severe consequences. Also, many early stage cancers have no symptoms. Detecting cancer early gives you an edge for successful treatment and cure.

Time Savings. If you establish yourself with a primary care doctor, it's easier to get in for an appointment. They can often get you appointments with specialists more quickly, too.

So, have we convinced you? Having a primary care physician you trust is one the most important things you can do for a lifetime of good health.

If you need assistance with finding a participating PCP in your area, or wish to change to designate a new PCP, please call Member Services at 1-800-852-8300.

Adapted from Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare

New Field Service Representative

The Health Trust team is pleased to welcome Lauren Gaudet as the Field Service Representative for the northern half of the state. Lauren joined the Trust on May 29, in the position formerly held by Susan Smith, who retired from the Maine Municipal Association on April 27.

Lauren most recently served as a Chronic Disease Management Coordinator for Mayo Regional Hospital in Dover-Foxcroft, Maine. Throughout her experience working at Mayo Regional Hospital and other local hospitals and health centers, a large portion of her time was spent working with patients and providers individually and in group settings to improve the quality and delivery of healthcare that was received.

We are pleased that she will be representing the Trust and building relationships with our contacts around the state. Lauren lives in Dover-Foxcroft with her husband, who works for the Town of Dover-Foxcroft, and their two children.

Within the next few weeks, Lauren will begin making visits to many of our group contacts. She can be reached at (207) 623-8428 or 1-800-452-8786, ext. 2230 or at lgaudet@memun.org.

What is JUULing?

When it comes to teenagers, fads may come and go, and it can be hard to keep up with the latest dangers facing our children. The latest substance use trend taking over middle and high schools is certainly concerning. It's called JUULing. JUULs are the latest version of electronic cigarettes, and use of them is a fast growing trend among youth. The JUUL e-cigarette stands apart from others in its clever and often deceiving design which makes it look just like a typical USB flash drive or charger. The JUUL pen breaks down into two pieces, the shell and the pod. The shell is the mechanism by which the vapor is heated and delivered, the pod contains the nicotine and flavored vapor. Together, the JUUL pen looks just like your average USB flash drive. It even charges when plugged into a USB socket on your laptop or wall charger.

Students are using e-cigarettes, including JUULs, as first time consumers of nicotine in rapidly rising rates, with over 2 million teens classified as "users." The JUUL e-cigarette is a favorite among school-aged youth because they are difficult for adults to discover. In their own words, youth say they are using JUULs "because it's just easier to get away with at school" and "it looks just like a USB charger." The discreet design, relatively odorless vapor, and the availability of flavors such as Cool Mint, Crème Brulee, Fruit Medley, and Mango have made the JUUL a popular teen trend.

According to the JUUL website, each cartridge contains 0.7 mL with 5 percent nicotine by weight. One JUUL pod is equivalent to smoking one pack of cigarettes or 200 puffs. In addition to being a delivery system for nicotine, e-cigarettes can also be used to inhale marijuana and other drugs. Despite being marketed as an alternative to cigarettes for adults who smoke, current smokers looking to quit are hardly the only people using JUUL products. The FDA has banned the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, so JUUL pods and other vaping devices can't legally be sold to them. But teens still find ways to get them, so parents need to address this trend.

Is Vaping Harmful?

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, 6 out of 10 teens believe that using e-cigarettes causes only "a little" or "some" harm, as long as they don't vape daily. But that's not true, and the risks range from the physical to the psychological. Nicotine in any form is not healthy for a teen's lungs or brain, which is still growing until around age 25. According to a recent study in the *Journal of Physiology*, nicotine exposure in adolescence can make the brain sensitive to other drugs and prime it for future substance abuse. Like smoking a regular cigarette, the nicotine from JUUL or other e-cigarettes gets into teens' lungs and bloodstream and keeps them coming back for more. The vaping behavior is still relatively new, so more research needs to be done to assess the short and long term dangers. However, we do know that in teens, nicotine is more addictive and can interfere with the brain's hardwiring, leading to mood disorders and permanent impulse control issues.

What Should I Say?

Don't lecture. Just saying, don't JUUL (or vape) because it's bad for you, doesn't help. Lecturing about its harmfulness will only compel your teen to keep it a secret from you.

Be open to the conversation. Not every teen will be tempted to JUUL or vape. But it's worth having the conversation if you suspect they may be.

Try to understand why your teen is JUULing. Teens can be tempted to JUUL for many reasons, including not wanting to be bullied, peer pressure, or getting a break from the rigors of the school day. Once you understand why your teen might be drawn to JUULing or vaping, then you can begin to address your teen's vulnerabilities and build the resilience to counterbalance it.

Get outside help. If your teen has developed a nicotine habit in any form, it may be time to have a pediatrician or therapist talk with them. You can also call the Center for Disease Control's national tobacco quit line, 800-784-8669, for more guidance from their professional counselors.

Sources: American Lung Association, Tobacco Free Kids, Fairfax County Public Schools

"High school and college students are rushing to retailers to buy the product because its discreet design makes it easy to hide from parents and teachers while also giving the user a big hit of nicotine. Some students have bragged on social media of using the JUUL in class, even though e-cigarettes are banned indoors at most schools." – Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Vitamin D & Vitamin D Deficiency

Vitamin D is one of many nutrients our bodies need to stay healthy. It helps the body absorb calcium, which then builds bones and keeps bones strong and healthy. Severely low levels of Vitamin D can result in soft, brittle bones, bone pain, and muscle pain and weakness. Since we live in a northern climate where the sun's rays are weaker, most Mainers are Vitamin D deficient.

What is Vitamin D and why is it needed?

- It helps the body absorb calcium. Vitamin D, along with calcium, helps build bones and keep bones strong and healthy.
- Blocks the release of parathyroid hormone. This hormone reabsorbs bone tissue, which makes bones thin and brittle.

Vitamin D may also play a role in muscle function and the immune system. The immune system is your body's defense system. It helps protect it against infections and other illnesses. Taking Vitamin D every day has been shown to reduce the risk of falling in older individuals.

What are the sources of Vitamin D? You can get Vitamin D through sun exposure, diet, and supplements.

In regards to sun exposure, Vitamin D is produced when your skin is exposed to sunshine. The amount of Vitamin D that your skin makes depends on such factors as the season (usually less sunshine in winter months), the time of day (the sun's rays are most powerful between 10 am and 3 pm), the amount of cloud cover and air pollution, and where you live (cities near the equator have higher UV levels). It's the UV (ultraviolet) light in sunlight that causes your skin to make Vitamin D.

With food sources (diet), the best way to get enough Vitamin D every day is to eat a variety of healthy foods from all food groups such as cod, liver oil, swordfish, salmon (sockeye), tuna, orange juice fortified with Vitamin D, milk (vitamin fortified), yogurt (fortified with 20% of the daily value of Vitamin D), margarine (fortified), sardines, liver, egg yolk, cereal (fortified with 10% of the daily value of Vitamin D), and cheese. It is important to check product labels, as the amount of added Vitamin D varies when it is artificially added to products such as orange juice, yogurt, and margarine.

Getting enough Vitamin D from your diet alone is difficult, as there are a limited number of foods that contain Vitamin D. While sun exposure does produce Vitamin D, too much sun exposure can increase the risk of skin cancer. Therefore, the addition of Vitamin D supplements may be needed. Always check with your physician for recommended dosages because too much Vitamin D could also be harmful. Your Vitamin D can be tested with a blood test and depending upon the results, your physician may prescribe an increased or decreased dosage of Vitamin D supplements.



Are there medical conditions that can cause a Vitamin D deficiency?

Vitamin D deficiency can be caused by specific medical conditions, such as:

- Kidney and liver diseases. These diseases reduce the amount of an enzyme needed to change Vitamin D to a form that is used in the body. Lack of this enzyme leads to an inadequate level of Vitamin D in the body.
- Cystic fibrosis, Crohn's disease, and celiac disease. These diseases do not allow the intestines to absorb enough Vitamin D.
- Gastric bypass surgery. This weight-loss surgery removes part of the stomach and/or the intestines. Reducing the size of these organs lowers the amount of Vitamin D containing nutrients that can be absorbed.
- Obesity. A body mass index greater than 30 is associated with lower Vitamin D levels. It is thought that the fat actually holds onto the Vitamin D, and does not allow it to be released into the bloodstream.

How often do I need to get my Vitamin D level checked?

Routine checks of Vitamin D levels are not currently recommended. However, your doctor might need to check your levels if you have medical conditions, risk factors for Vitamin D deficiency, or are taking certain medications. Sometimes Vitamin D levels can be checked as a cause of symptoms such as long-lasting body aches, a history of falls, bone fractures without significant trauma, hair loss or thinning, or depression, to name a few. In the meantime, try to get some safe sun exposure and eat foods with Vitamin D. For more information: www.webmd.com



Ice Cream Mix-In Ideas

Here are some popular recipes, but feel free to use your own taste preferences to liven it up!

Chocolate Peanut Butter:

3 bananas

2 tablespoons of creamy peanut butter

1 tablespoon cocoa powder

¼ cup milk, of your choice

Vanilla Bean:

3 bananas

¼ cup milk, of your choice

1 teaspoon vanilla bean

Dark Chocolate Chip or Mint Chip:

3 bananas

½ cup dark chocolate chips

1 teaspoon vanilla

¼ cup milk, of your choice

¼ cup fresh mint (optional if you want mint chip)

Strawberry:

3 bananas

½ cup strawberry, frozen

½ cup milk, of your choice

1 teaspoon vanilla



For the Love of Ice Cream

Many of us consume WAY too much ice cream during the summer months. Some of us might even go so far as to say that we have an ice cream “problem”... meaning that when we run out of ice cream, it is a huge problem! The warmer days just blend so nicely with a cold scoop of our favorite flavors. It's too bad that scoop usually comes with lots of empty calories and fat!

Many of us make a good effort at eating relatively healthy. But our love of ice cream can lead us down the wrong path. Did you know that there is an ice cream that you can make right at home that is actually GOOD for you? What is it you ask? Drumroll please... banana ice cream!

What Do You Need...Not Much Really.

- Knife
- Cutting board
- Freezer-safe container, airtight
- Small food processor or powerful blender
- Spatula
- Bananas, and anything else you want to add in

Instructions:

- Start with ripe bananas.
- Peel the bananas and cut into coins. It doesn't matter what shape or size the pieces are in, as long as they are chopped up into evenly sized and somewhat small pieces.
- Put the bananas in an airtight container. A freezer-safe glass bowl or bag work great.
- Freeze the banana pieces for at least 2 hours. Ideally overnight works best, but in an ice cream emergency, 2 hours will do.
- Blend the frozen bananas in a small food processor or powerful blender. Using the pulse option on the appliance works best initially.
- Keep blending- the banana will look crumbly. At first the banana pieces will look crumbled or smashed. Scrape down the sides of the food processor or blender.
- Keep blending- the banana will look gooey. The banana will start looking gooey, like banana mush. Scrape down the sides again.
- Keep blending- the banana will look like oatmeal. It will get smoother but still have chunks of banana in it. Scrape down the sides again.

Watch the magic happen! Suddenly, as the last bits of banana smooth out, you'll see the mixture shift from blended banana to creamy, soft-serve ice cream texture. Blend for a few more seconds and add in any mix-ins now. (See side panel for mix-in ideas)

Transfer to an airtight container and freeze until solid. You can eat the ice cream immediately, but it will be quite soft. Label the container and freeze for up to 6 months.

Source: www.thekitchn.com



Eating Mindfully Can Improve Your Health and Well-Being

Growing research suggests that distraction while eating prevents a person from enjoying the bite in the mouth. Coined "mindless eating," this innocent behavior has been linked to overeating, stress and increased anxiety.

How would you know if you are eating in a mindless or distracted way? One quick way is to recall what you ate at your last meal. Can you describe the flavor, the taste, the texture? If you are struggling to remember any of the specifics about your choice, you are not alone.

Mindful eating helps individuals learn how to check in with their direct experience when eating. People often discover that the flavor of common foods can be transformed by bringing a mindfulness practice to the meal.

How does mindful eating change a meal? Pausing and becoming curious focuses the mind. Questions stimulate the mind and create a focus on the bite in the mouth. Mindful eating cultivates becoming grounded in the present moment's awareness of eating. Many people who try eating more mindfully discover that mindfulness may be just the perfect seasoning for any meal.

The next time you eat a meal, take your time eating; extend the length of your meal by using a fork and knife to cut one piece at a time. This will slow you down. Then engage your senses; feel the texture of the food, focus on the different flavors and aromas and you will have a more enjoyable meal. Reference www.health.harvard.edu.



Back Pain Warning Signs and Relief

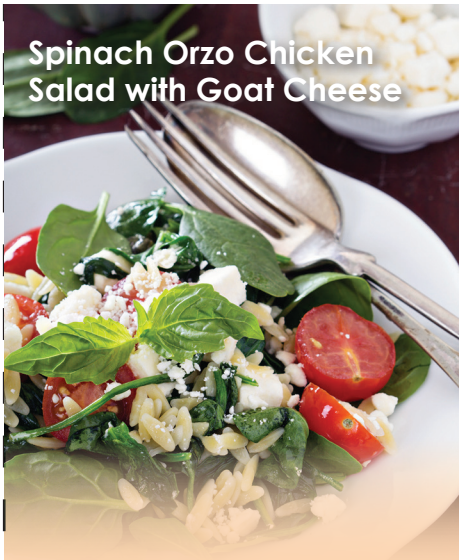
Few people go through life without having episodes of lower back pain. For some people, though, it's a daily struggle.

The American Academy of Family Physicians says back pain may be controlled by maintaining proper posture and sitting, lifting, standing and exercising properly. Others have to seek medical attention for relief. The academy mentions these warning signs that you should see a doctor about your aching lower back:

- If pain radiates down your leg below your knee.
- If your leg, foot or groin feel numb.
- If you have fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain or weakness.
- If you have difficulty going to the bathroom.
- If the pain was caused by an injury.
- If pain is so intense that you can't move.
- If your pain doesn't improve or gets worse after two weeks.

In addition to talking with your doctor, new research suggests that patients who suffered from back pain reported significant improvements by doing yoga. When your body is injured or hurting, you definitely want a slow-paced, gentle practice. Viniyoga is an adapted form of yoga that focuses on slow stretches and deep breathing. This type of yoga is often used to ease back pain and arthritis pain. Always check with your doctor before beginning yoga classes. If an injury is fresh, or if you're having an especially painful flare-up, you may need to wait until your body has healed enough to benefit from yoga. And when you do begin taking classes, be sure to let the instructor know about your injury or condition, so she can let you know which poses to avoid and can modify others for you if necessary.

Source: *Health Day News*, 2018



Spinach Orzo Chicken Salad with Goat Cheese

Nutritional Facts (per serving):

Serves 8

Nutrition: 219 calories, 6.8 g fat, 2.5 g saturated fat, 236 mg sodium, 22.6 g carbs, 3.7 g fiber, 1.9 g sugar, 16 g protein.

Source: *Recipe Runner*

Ingredients

For the salad:

- 1 cup uncooked orzo
- 1 large chicken breast, cooked, cooled, and diced
- 1 ½ cups baby spinach, chopped
- ½ cup roasted red peppers, diced
- 3 tablespoons red onion, diced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 ounces goat cheese, crumbled

For the Vinaigrette:

- 2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- ½ tablespoons grapeseed oil (or other flavorless oil)
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Directions

1. Cook the orzo according to package directions omitting any oil it calls for.
2. Rinse and drain the cooked orzo in cold water and put in a large serving bowl.
3. Dice the chicken, roasted red pepper, and red onion, then add it to the orzo.
4. Chop the spinach and basil and half the tomatoes, then add them to the orzo.
5. Add in ¼ teaspoon of salt and toss together all the ingredients.
6. In a small bowl combine all of the dressing ingredients, mix them well, then pour over the salad.
7. Add in the crumbled goat cheese and gently toss the salad until everything is combined and coated in the vinaigrette.

Serve immediately or refrigerate until ready to serve.

Wellness Your Way!

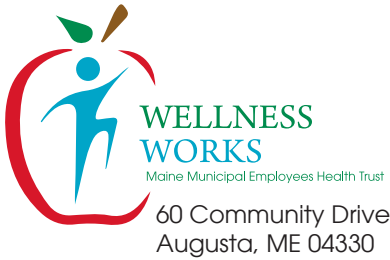
Are you up for the challenge? All MMEHT members can participate! Each quarter a new wellness topic will be featured. The goal of this feature is to give all participants a wellness topic to focus on during that quarter.

Log your progress toward the goal for one week (see the back page of this newsletter for a log card). Simply track your progress toward the goal for a week, and submit the log to us. Each quarter three log cards will be drawn at random and prizes will be mailed to the lucky winners! See the log card on the back page for details of how to submit your log, and for the due date this quarter.

The goal of this Wellness Your Way challenge is to stretch for at least 5-10 minutes every day. Flexibility is very important and as we age it becomes even more important. Studies show that the more flexible you are, the less likely you are to be injured, and if you are injured, the severity and recovery time is usually less. On top of that, it just makes you feel better!

Tips to help you meet this challenge:

- While you are waiting for a fax or making copies, stretch!
- Put stretches you can do at your workstation up on your walls or on bulletin boards to remind yourself and your co-workers to stretch.
- Stretch your upper body while you are walking down the hall.
- Hold each stretch for 5-10 seconds. For larger muscles (like your back and legs) try to hold the stretch for 30 seconds.



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Wellness Your Way – Stretching

For every day you stretch for 5 minutes or more, put an X in the box!

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Sunday | |
| Monday | |
| Tuesday | |
| Wednesday | |
| Thursday | |
| Friday | |
| Saturday | |

Above is your log card to track the stretching you do for one week. See page 7 for details of the program.

Take a picture of your log card and email it to: wellness@memun.org or mail the log card to MMEHT, Attn: Wellness Department, 60 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330.

*Log cards must be turned in by August 1, 2018. Three lucky winners will be drawn at random to win a resistance band exercise kit!

Name: _____

Employer: _____

Address: _____