



Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust

Wellness Works

WINTER 2023

The Health Benefits of Playing



"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing." – George Bernard Shaw

Most parents know about the importance of play for children to develop essential life skills. But did you know about the importance of play for adults too? Play is defined simply as engaging in activity for pure enjoyment and recreation.

The best thing about play, besides the fact that it's enjoyable, is the benefit to your overall wellbeing and positive impact on your health. It can fuel your creativity, emotional wellbeing and the ability to problem solve. There are many benefits of adding play to your day.

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Learn about the new diabetes prevention program that is available for Health Trust members.

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Read up on ways to fit exercise in if you work nights.

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Discover ways to relieve eye strain.

Playing is good for your stress levels. Play can trigger the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. These promote an overall sense of wellbeing.

It improves brain function. Playing games that challenge the brain – such as puzzles and card games – can improve brain function.

Play stimulates your mind and boosts activity. It can make you more productive. Some companies, such as Google, have set up play stations and encourage employees to play and collaborate. This can help foster team building and cooperation within the company.

It improves your relationships. Laughing and having fun with others can foster empathy, compassion, trust and intimacy. Developing a playful nature can help you loosen up in stressful situations, break the ice with strangers and make new friends.

Wellness on the Web

Did You Know?

A simple 20 second hug has many health benefits.

When people hug for 20 seconds or more, the feel-good hormone oxytocin is released which creates a stronger bond and connection between the huggers. Oxytocin has been shown to boost the immune system and reduce stress. Other benefits of hugging include reduced blood pressure, increased happiness and improved relationships and connections. So, hug your favorite person today (with permission, of course)!



IngenioRx name change

In June Anthem, Inc., the parent company of Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield Maine, changed their name to Elevance Health and created Carelon, a new healthcare services brand. While the Elevance Health name will be used as the corporate name, Anthem Maine will continue to use their current name.

Effective January 1, 2023, Anthem Maine's pharmacy benefit manager IngenioRx will join the Carelon company and change its name to CarelonRx. As a result of this change, IngenioRx Home Delivery Pharmacy will become CarelonRx Mail and IngenioRx Specialty Pharmacy will become CarelonRx Specialty Pharmacy.

This name change will have no impact on members' benefits, coverage or how they fill their prescriptions. Members using the home delivery and specialty pharmacies have been receiving updates on this change for the past few months, and after January 1 will receive an insert in their first prescription filled by either of these pharmacies noting the details of the new branding.

Mental Health Services via Telehealth

Waived copay through 2023

During the early stages of the pandemic, there was a dramatic shift to utilization of telehealth for services that would traditionally have been office visits. Utilization of technology, including by smartphone, tablet, computer or telephone-only, was strongly encouraged to increase health system capacity and to limit office visits which could increase the spread of Covid-19.

To incentivize use of telehealth, the Trust waived cost shares for these visits. While visits to primary care physicians have been returning to more normal utilization patterns in the office, utilization of telehealth for mental health and substance abuse services continues to increase. It is well documented that the impacts of the pandemic have created an increased need for mental health care.

In order to facilitate continued utilization of these services, the Board of Trustees has extended the cost share (copay) waiver through the end of 2023 for members who receive mental health or substance abuse services via telehealth.

The cost share waiver for other telehealth services, including for Primary Care and Specialty Care visits, expired December 31, 2021.

2 www.mmeht.org



Preventing Diabetes Just Got Easier

Introducing Lark Digital Health Coaching

People with prediabetes have higher than normal blood sugar, which can substantially increase the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. Many people don't even know if they have prediabetes, because it can occur with no symptoms. The good news is that there are steps you can take now to decrease your risk.

The Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust has teamed up with Anthem and Lark to bring you access to the tools you need to take those steps and prevent Type 2 diabetes. Available 24/7 on your smartphone, the Lark Diabetes Prevention Program is included at no extra cost as a benefit of your health plan, effective January 1, 2023. If you qualify, you'll also get a digital scale with the opportunity to earn a Fitbit.

The program focuses on helping you meet goals to reduce your risk of getting diabetes, such as creating healthy eating habits, reducing or maintaining a healthy weight, improving sleep, increasing physical activity and managing stress.

Get started at www.Lark.com/AnthemEnroll, or via the QR code below, or you may access the link on the Health Trust website at www.mmeht.org. You'll take a quick eligibility survey to determine your risks. It's easy and there are no costs to participate.



The Best Time to Work out If You Work the Night Shift

Working non-traditional hours may wreak havoc on your sleep, diet, and exercise routine. If you work the night shift, it is important to find the best time to exercise that fits into your schedule. For some, that may mean exercising right before work, while for others it may mean working out after a night shift. It might also be possible to work out during your shift. There's no best time for the gym for night shift workers. You will need to try several schedules to find the one that works best for you.

Exercise First Thing - If you feel tired, moody, or drained before the night shift, exercise may do you better than that large coffee or energy drink. Exercise fights stress and anxiety, improves your endurance, concentration and focus, and boosts your energy and mood. Before you head to work, spend 30 minutes performing some form of cardiovascular activity such as swimming, walking, biking, or playing a sport. You may notice improved alertness while on the job. There's even evidence suggesting that afternoon is when cardiovascular efficiency and muscle strength are highest, making it ideal for intense exercise sessions

Try Exercising During Work - With family responsibilities, appointments, sleep, eating and other activities to care for first, it may be difficult to find the time to work out before the night shift. Instead of cruising the Internet or hanging out by the water cooler during breaks, spend that time exercising. Keep a pair of light weights, a stability ball, resistance bands, or a jump rope at your desk. Perform weight-bearing exercises like push-ups or go for a walk around the facility.

Workout Before Sleeping - For some people, exercise increases their energy while for others it helps put them to sleep. If your shift ends around 6 a.m. or 7 a.m., wait until everyone is at school or at work before going to sleep to avoid sleep disruptions. Spend some time working out or performing light stretches or yoga to help ease stress and tension from your shift then, once the house is quiet, head to bed.

On another note, research shows that working nights disrupts our circadian clock, which is why the night shift is associated with several negative effects on health. Delaying sleep after night work ends causes sleep to occur at an even more inappropriate time, furthering circadian disruption. When we delay



sleep after the night shift, we're also exposed to more light (from the sun, bright gym lights). Light exposure at this time of day advances our circadian rhythms, suppressing melatonin and making it harder to sleep.

Keep in mind that exercise temporarily raises heart rate, cortisol, and body temperature. All three should be low for quality sleep. Most sleep experts recommend allowing two to three hours to cool down before bed so carefully consider if working out before heading to bed is right for you.

Find Your Best Time - The best time of day to work out for night shift workers is dependent on the preference of the individual. Spend one week working out before, during and after your shift and see which one is the best fit for you. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention points out that you're more likely to exercise regularly if you find an activity you enjoy. If you can't make it to a gym, save time and money by checking out free online exercise videos.

The CDC also reports that in addition to helping you maintain a healthy weight, regular exercise can improve memory, help control blood pressure and even improve the quality of your sleep. No matter what time of day you choose, treat exercise as if it's an important appointment you cannot miss. Team up with a fellow late-night coworker to keep you motivated. In addition to exercise, eat a healthy, well-balanced diet and get plenty of sleep.

Source: www.mayoclinic.org

COVID, Flu and RSV

How to Tell Them Apart and What to Do If You're Sick

Preventive measure such as mask-wearing and physical distancing which were widely implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19 also led to fewer cases of RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), flu and the common cold over the last couple of years. However, as safety measures have relaxed with the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines, there has been a spike of these common illnesses in recent months. In some places in the US, this has led to overcrowded emergency departments and more people needing hospital stays than usual at this time of year.

When you or your child has a stuffy nose, cough and/or fever, you go through the laundry list of potential culprits. Is it a cold? The flu? Symptoms of COVID? Or something worse? Some COVID, flu, RSV and cold symptoms can be alike. But there are some clues that set each of these common viruses apart. The American Academy of Pediatrics (www.healthychildren.org) provides some guidance to help decipher the clues and help you decide what to do if you or your child is sick.

- **COVID** symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, headache, sneezing, vomiting/diarrhea, or loss of taste/smell. COVID symptoms can appear 2 to 14 days after infection.
- **Flu** symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, stuffy nose, shortness of breath, sore throat, or headache. Symptoms show up about 1 to 4 days after being exposed to a sick person. The infection can cause pneumonia.
- **RSV** can cause a fever, cough, fatigue, stuffy nose, shortness of breath, sneezing, fast/short breaths, flaring nostrils, wheezing and grunting, poor feeding/no appetite, and head bobbing or chest caving in between and under ribs with each breath. Symptoms of RSV usually are worst on days 3 through 5 and last about 5 to 7 days. The infection causes a cold, which may be followed by bronchiolitis or pneumonia. RSV is quite common; nearly all children get RSV by their second birthday.
- **Common cold** symptoms may include fever, cough, fatigue, stuffy nose, sore throat, or sneezing. Colds are upper respiratory infections that can be caused by many viruses. A few common cold viruses are rhinovirus, adenovirus, human coronavirus, human parainfluenza virus, human metapneumovirus and RSV. Healthy children get about 6 colds a year.



Unfortunately, you can get sick with more than one of these illnesses at a time. For example, it is not unusual for children with flu or COVID to develop moderate or severe pneumonia. And cold symptoms can lead to another health problem like an ear infection or sinus infection. Because some of the symptoms of flu, COVID and other respiratory illnesses are similar, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends testing to confirm a diagnosis.

Vaccines are an effective tool to prevent serious illness from the flu, COVID and other vaccine-preventable diseases. Staying up to date on routine immunizations also help prevent the spread of diseases in your community. The protection from vaccines can help to keep people at risk of serious problems from flu, COVID and other viruses out of the hospital. Talk to your doctor about vaccine recommendations.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

Protect Yourself and Loved Ones from Getting Sick

- **Wash your hands often** - Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Washing your hands will help protect you from germs.
- **Keep your hands off your face** - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Germs spread this way.
- **Avoid close contact with sick people** - Avoid close contact, such as kissing, and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who have cold-like symptoms.
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes** - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash afterward.
- **Clean and disinfect surfaces** - Clean and disinfect surfaces that people frequently touch, such as doorknobs. When people touch surfaces and objects, they can leave behind germs. Also, when they cough or sneeze, droplets containing germs can land on surfaces and objects.
- **Stay home when you are sick** - Stay home from work, school, and public areas as much as possible when you are sick. This will help protect others from catching your illness.

Flurries and Fatalities

Know the Risks of Snow Removal Before You Dig Out

Winter is upon us, which means it is time to dig out those hats, mittens, shovels, and ice packs. Wait. Ice packs? That's right, shoveling is responsible for thousands of injuries each year and is linked to over 100 deaths annually due to excessive strain on the heart. Shoveling smarter and safer is key to reducing your risk of injury (or worse) this winter.

While most people won't have a problem, shoveling snow can put some people at risk of a heart attack. Sudden exertion, like moving hundreds of pounds of snow after being sedentary for several months, can put a big strain on the heart. And then there's the cold factor. Cold weather can increase heart rate and blood pressure. It can make blood clot more easily and constrict arteries, which decreases blood supply. This is true even in healthy people. Individuals over the age of 40 or who are relatively inactive should be particularly careful.

The National Safety Council recommends the following tips to shovel safely:

- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Take it slow and stretch out before you begin.
- Shovel only fresh, powdery snow; it's lighter.
- Push the snow rather than lifting it.
- If you do lift it, use a small shovel or only partially fill the shovel.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion.
- Know the signs of a heart attack and stop immediately and call 911 if you're experiencing any of them. Every minute counts!
- Don't pick up that shovel without a doctor's permission if you have a history of heart disease. A clear driveway is not worth your life.

Snow blowers add a different level of injury risk. Not only is there possible heart strain from pushing the heavy machinery, but there is also the risk of injury to your hands if you try to



dislodge jams while the motor is still running. Remember these tips when snow blowing:

- If the blower jams, turn it off,
- Keep your hands away from the moving parts,
- Be aware of the carbon monoxide risk of running a snow blower in an enclosed space,
- Add fuel outdoors, before starting, and never add fuel when it is running,
- Never leave it unattended when it is running.

Source: National Safety Council, 2022

Eye Strain Caused by Increased Screen Time

In recent years, eye doctors have seen a significant rise in eye strain due to the increased amount of screen time. Technology is part of everyday life in both work, school and for recreational use. Over the last couple of years, some employees have been working remote or hybrid arrangements, and organizations have found it more convenient to continue with virtual meetings in many situations. Increased time spent in front of these screens can play a significant role in eye strain and fatigue.

Ocular fatigue (also known as eye fatigue) is a common medical condition with symptoms such as eye pain, tiredness in the eye, eye itching, tearing, headache, light hypersensitivity, or double vision, due to excessive ocular effort. Examples include excess use of computer or cellular screens, driving for a long time and long distances, reading for extended time without pause and without adequate brightness. Treatment usually consists of changes in life habits, reducing screen time and pauses in activities that require eye effort and concentration such as driving or reading. Some patients may need glasses to reduce eye effort.

To relieve eye strain, take regular breaks from your computer screen and smartphone. The 20-20-20 rule is an effortless way to remember - every 20 minutes look 20 feet away for 20 seconds. If possible, keep overhead lighting muted and reduce glare and reflections on the screen. Keep eyes moist with artificial tears. If eye strain persists, arrange for a checkup with your eye doctor to see if you need glasses or contacts or a tweak in your current prescription.

Source: www.health.harvard.edu



Tips to Avoid Eye Strain

- Position screens about an arm's length away and a bit below your line of vision. This protects vision, as well as the neck and posture.
- Avoid using a screen outside. When indoors, point the screen away from bright lights to help reduce glare.
- Alternate reading e-books with real books and encourage kids to look up and out the window every few chapters. Insert paper clips or bookmarks to remind them to look up.
- Adjust the brightness and contrast of your screen to your comfort level.
- Spend time outdoors when possible. Being outside has been shown to reduce the progression of nearsightedness.
- Stay hydrated and remember to blink regularly to keep your eyes from feeling dry and tired.

Can We Walk and Talk at the Same Time?

We are all aware that distracted driving can cause crashes, injuries, and even death. But what about distracted walking? What are the consequences of pedestrians talking on the phone, texting, listening to music, or engaging deeply in conversation with the person on the other end of the line?

Today more and more people are falling down stairs, tripping over curbs and sometimes even stepping into traffic, all which can lead to cuts, bruises, strains, fractures, or worse. In fact, surveys have shown that over 60% of pedestrians are distracted by other activities while walking.

To be safe and alert when walking, keep in mind these important tips:

- If you wear headphones, maintain a volume where you can still hear the sounds of traffic and your surroundings.
- If you need to make a phone call, text or other action that can distract you from getting where you need to go safely, stop and do so away from the pedestrian traffic flow.
- Don't jaywalk. Cross at crosswalks and be sure traffic comes to a complete stop before you walk across.
- Stay alert in parking lots and on streets, especially during the winter months when it gets dark earlier, and drivers are not as likely to see you.

Source: www.orthoinfo.aaos.org



Nutrition Information:

217 calories, 12 g carbohydrate, 18 g protein, 11 g fat, 1.5 g saturated fat, 170 mg cholesterol, 552 mg sodium, 1 g fiber

Source: www.skinnytaste.com

Petite Crustless Quiche

A perfect make-ahead breakfast for meal prep!

- olive oil spray
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ medium onion (diced)
- ⅓ cup chopped bell pepper
- 2 garlic cloves (crushed)
- 1 medium tomato (diced)
- 6 oz turkey kielbasa or turkey sausage (diced)
- 2 cups baby spinach
- 5 large whole eggs (beaten)
- 4 large egg whites
- ⅓ cup fat free milk
- ⅓ cup all purpose flour
- ½ tsp salt (optional)
- ⅛ tsp black pepper
- 3 oz shredded cheddar cheese

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350°. Spray a nonstick muffin pan with olive oil spray.

Heat the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat.

Sauté onions for 5 minutes, until soft, add bell peppers, garlic, tomato, kielbasa or sausage and sauté for another 5 to 7 minutes. Add spinach and cook until wilted, about 1 minute. Set aside.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk the eggs, egg whites, milk, flour, salt, and pepper until smooth.

Add the cheese and cooked kielbasa/sausage mixture to the bowl and mix well.

Pour into the prepared muffin pan and bake for 28 to 30 minutes, or until firm.

Serving size: 2 quiches

Surprising Facts About Blood Pressure

High blood pressure affects nearly half of the adult population in the U.S., yet many people who have the condition do not know they have it. Uncontrolled high blood pressure raises the risk for heart disease and stroke, which are the leading cause of death in the U.S.

High blood pressure may be linked to dementia. Studies show that high blood pressure is linked to a higher risk for dementia. Timing seems to matter. Evidence suggests that having uncontrolled high blood pressure during midlife (ages 44 to 66) creates a higher risk for dementia later in life. It’s never too early to start thinking about your blood pressure and taking steps to manage it.

Young people can have high blood pressure. Nearly 1 in 4 adults aged 20-44 have high blood pressure. High blood pressure is a leading cause of stroke, a condition that is on the rise among younger people. Experts think the increased risk for stroke in this age group is a direct result of the rising rates of obesity, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes – conditions that are preventable and treatable.

High blood pressure usually does not have any symptoms. High blood pressure is sometimes called the “silent killer”. Most people with high blood pressure don’t have any symptoms. Because people feel fine, they don’t think they need to get their

blood pressure checked. About 1 in 3 U.S. adults with high blood pressure aren’t even aware that they have it.

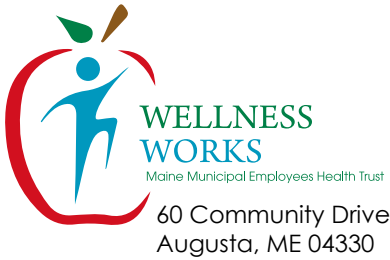
Women and African Americans face unique risks when it comes to high blood pressure. Women with high blood pressure who become pregnant are more likely to have complications than those with normal blood pressure. High blood pressure during pregnancy can harm a mother’s kidneys and other organs, and it can lead to premature delivery and low birth weight babies.

African American men and women have higher rates of high blood pressure than any other racial or ethnic group. These individuals are also more likely to be hospitalized for high blood pressure.

Source: *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

By living a healthy lifestyle, you can help keep your blood pressure in a healthy range and lower your risk for heart disease and stroke. A healthy lifestyle includes:

- Eating a healthy diet
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Getting enough physical activity
- Not smoking
- Limiting alcohol use



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Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust

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Members Resources

Keep these resources handy for future reference!

MMEHT Member Services 1-800-852-8300

Representatives are available to assist you Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. for questions on dental, medical, IPP and life benefits and claims

Anthem EAP

Available for anyone whose employer offers a Health Trust health plan

1-800-647-9151
Support for life's challenges for active members and those in their household



The following number applies to members in the Health Trust vision plan:

VSP
1-800-877-7195
Member Services for the Health Trust Vision Plan

The following numbers apply to members in the Health Trust health plan:

CarelonRx Home Delivery Pharmacy

1-833-236-6196

Service for managing your prescriptions filled via mail order

24/7 NurseLine

1-800-337-4770

Speak with a nurse anytime about non-emergent issues

Anthem Condition Care

1-866-962-0960

Support for managing chronic health conditions

Building Healthy Families

(and other valuable health and benefits information) via Sydney Health app or at www.anthem.com