



EMPOWERED WELL-BEING

Balancing Health, Happiness, and Community

September 2025



Be aware of too-good-to-be-true language and fact-check before sharing or listening to advice.

Social Media and Your Health

Social media influencers can be persuasive, but relying on their health advice without consulting a health care professional or reputable source, such as the CDC, could pose serious risks to your health.

Consider the trend about drinking borax to combat inflammation and joint problems. This is a dangerous suggestion and can cause vomiting, diarrhea and skin rashes — even fatal poisoning. Yet thousands of people follow misleading medical advice daily.

Influencers sometimes push products because they're getting paid — not because it's good advice. They often promote unrealistic body images, fad diets, risky behaviors and inaccurate medical advice.

Teens are especially vulnerable to social media influencers. Many follow health advice from these online personalities, but they aren't always health experts who provide science-based advice. Recent research highlights several effective ways to help teens choose quality information, including teaching them critical thinking skills for recognizing and disregarding misinformation. You can also take steps to protect your teen and yourself from deceptive content.

Here's how:

Fact-check before sharing or listening to advice. Make sure the information is supported by scientific research. Don't rely just on the influencer's content.

Consider the source. Is it credible? Consult your health care provider or credible sources, such as public health agencies, nonprofit research and health advocacy organizations (e.g., the American Heart Association or American Cancer Association) or hospital systems (e.g., Mayo Clinic) and research universities (e.g., Harvard). Subscribe to social media provided by these resources.

Watch out for too-good-to-be-true language. Some of the most common claims are "cure-all," "miracle cure," or "this food is toxic." Another pervasive claim: "Doctors don't want you to know" about an "amazing" health hack or product. When in doubt, ask your provider.

City Events

The Art of Meaningful Choices

Thursday, September 4 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
[Register here](#)

Deferred Compensation

Navigating the Deferred Compensation Website
Tuesday, September 9 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
[Register here](#)

Investment Options in Deferred Compensation
Wednesday, September 17 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm
[Register here](#)

Introduction to Deferred Compensation
Thursday, September 25 12:00 pm – 12:45 pm
[Register here](#)

Benefits 101: Healthcare Demystified

Tuesday, September 9 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm
[Register here](#)

Benefits 101: Using Your Benefits to Manage Chronic Conditions

Wednesday, September 10 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
[Register here](#)

Perimenopause & Menopause: It's More Than a Flash! (3 of 4)

Thursday, September 11 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm
[Register here](#)

Mental Health Awareness for Leaders

Friday, September 12 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm
[Register here](#)

Getting the Most out of Your Healthcare Benefits

Tuesday, September 16 11:30 am – 12:30 pm
[Register here](#)

From Dusk to Dawn: Cultivating Success with Daily Routines

Thursday, September 18 10:00 am – 11:00 am
[Register here](#)

Benefits 101: Exploring Fringe Value Add Benefits at the City

Tuesday, September 23 12:00 pm – 12:45 pm
[Register here](#)

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Are ice baths effective?

While ice baths and cold plunges may temporarily boost alertness and reduce inflammation, their long-term health benefits are unclear. Cold water constricts blood vessels, reducing muscle soreness, which is why athletes use it post-workout. However, claims of better sleep, stress relief, immune support and reduced chronic inflammation remain unproven. Consult your health care provider before incorporating ice baths into your routine, especially if you have a cardiovascular condition.



Loans to Family and Friends

Lending money to people you know can be tricky.

While lending money to loved ones, whether it's a sibling or your best friend, may seem generous and supportive, it comes with both financial and emotional risks.

First, it's important to clearly communicate expectations. Before lending money, discuss how much is being borrowed, when it should be repaid, and if there will be interest or a formal agreement. Having these details in writing, even if it's a simple document or an email, can help avoid misunderstandings.

Another consideration is whether you can afford to lend the money. Sometimes, lending to people close to you may strain your finances, especially if the loan isn't repaid as agreed. It's important to only lend money that you can afford to lose, as there's always a chance the borrower might not be able to pay it back on time, or at all.

Emotions can also come into play. Lending money can alter the dynamics of relationships, especially if there are disagreements or delays in repayment. If the loan isn't paid back as promised, it could lead to resentment or tension.



To minimize risk, some people choose to treat loans to family and friends as gifts, especially for smaller amounts. If you expect repayment, it's wise to ensure there's clear communication and a mutual understanding of expectations. Always put the loan terms in writing.

Overall, while loans to family and friends can offer needed support, it's crucial to approach them thoughtfully, with well-defined terms and an awareness of potential consequences.

— Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, CFP, AFC, RSSA

Your Digestive System Needs Exercise

Regular physical activity is important for total health, including your digestive tract. You may be eating a healthy diet and possibly taking probiotics to benefit digestion. But exercise, it turns out, is also one of the most important things you can do for your digestive system.

Muscles in your digestive tract are key for moving food and nutrients in your body. But if there's a lack of adequate exercise, those muscles can lose strength over time. That raises the risk for chronic constipation, gas, bloating and indigestion. Regular exercise, on the other hand, helps regulate and strengthen your digestive system. It also makes peristalsis (your gut's contractions) more effective at emptying waste smoothly and completely.

In fact, exercise boosts circulation throughout your body, and when your digestive tract has good blood flow, it not only becomes stronger but it is more likely to have an optimum balance of healthy bacteria.

What kind of exercise helps your digestive system? Almost any type of regular exercise is beneficial to your digestive health and your health overall. It's a good idea to incorporate more than one type of exercise, when possible, for optimal benefits. They include:



- ➔ **Aerobic activities** — Whether it's brisk walking, swimming, bike riding or jogging, all stimulate the digestive tract and promote a healthy microbiome and regular elimination.
- ➔ **Abdominal exercises** — These include sit-ups and crunches. They strengthen the core muscles that support the digestive organs.
- ➔ **Strength training** — Lifting weights or using exercise machines strengthens core muscles.
- ➔ **Yoga and gentle stretching** — They can reduce stress and improve gut motility.

Note: Always talk to your health care provider before starting any new exercise regimen, especially if you have an ongoing health concern.

Study: Night Eating and Teens

A new Brown University study looked at the appetite of teenagers and examined how circadian rhythms (the body's natural sleep-wake cycle) influences their eating patterns.

Fifty-one volunteers ages 12 to 18 participated in the study, which lasted ten nights in a controlled sleep research lab. The environment had no clocks or natural light, so researchers could examine internal circadian rhythms.

Results showed food intake was highest in the late afternoon and evening for all teens, regardless of body weight. However, teens with obesity ate more calories during the evening compared to their normal-weight peers.

The study suggests food intake is regulated by the internal body clock, not just behavior or environment. Future studies will examine ways to influence circadian timing, perhaps by dimming evening light and enhancing bright morning light. This may help change circadian rhythms and affect appetite.

September is Fruits and Veggies — More Matters Month



Fruits & Veggies — More Matters Month is a good time to check on your fruit and vegetable intake to make sure you are getting enough. There is a chance you are falling short, since about 90% of Americans eat too few vegetables, and 80% don't eat enough fruit.

The Dietary Guidelines recommend aiming for 2½ cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit per day (in the average 2,000-calorie diet). Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit at every meal to reach this goal. Getting enough produce helps reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease and dementia. **Tip:** Fresh, frozen or canned are all good — eat what you can access, afford and enjoy.

Food Waste No More

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

In the U.S, people toss more than \$473 billion dollars worth of food annually. That's equal to about 145 billion meals. And it's happening on many levels — at grocery stores, restaurants and in individual households.

The loss is known as **food waste**, which is when edible and safe food gets thrown out instead of eaten. Food may be wasted because it is:

- Close to an expiration date.
- Overproduced or unsold.
- Left over after a meal.
- Damaged or misshapen.

Be part of the solution. You can reduce food waste at home by making better decisions when you shop, prepare and store food. Here are some things you can do:

Grocery tips:

- Shop with a list and stick to it. Make the list after looking through your fridge and pantry, so you avoid buying duplicates of food you already have.
- Buy only enough food you can use before it spoils.
- Make your list based on how often you will eat at home each week.
- Avoid buying in bulk if the food will spoil before you can finish it.
- Check the day-old or imperfect section of the store for reduced prices on perfectly good food. That will help the store reduce food waste, too.



Preparation and storage tips:

- Store fruits and vegetables separately. Fruit naturally emits a gas that causes vegetables to ripen more quickly.
- Freeze bread as well as fresh meat, poultry and fish so they last longer.
- After meals, instead of tossing food, store leftovers in the fridge (if you will eat them in two to three days) or freezer.
- Set up a compost bin to repurpose food scraps for garden use or use your city or county composting service, if available.
- Donate surplus food to a local food bank.

Fish with Fresh Peach Salsa

1 large tomato, diced	½ tsp salt, <i>divided</i>
1 cup diced fresh peaches	1½ tsp dried oregano
¼ cup finely diced red onion	1 tsp paprika
1 jalapeño pepper, finely chopped	¼ tsp cayenne pepper (optional)
1 tbsp lime juice	2 lbs tilapia or other white fish
¼ cup fresh chopped cilantro	1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, <i>divided</i>

In a small bowl, combine tomato, peaches, onion, jalapeño, lime juice and cilantro. **Stir** well. **Salt** to taste. In a second small bowl, combine oregano, paprika, remaining salt and cayenne pepper (if using). **Brush** fish with 1 tsp oil. **Sprinkle** with spice mixture. **Add** remaining oil to nonstick pan set over medium heat. **Pan-fry** until fish flakes easily with fork (10 minutes per inch of thickness). **Serve** fish topped with peach salsa.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 276 calories | 46g protein | 7g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 3.5g mono fat | 1g poly fat | 7g carbohydrate | 5g sugar (0g added sugar) | 2g fiber | 410mg sodium



EASY recipe

• **Plan Your 2026 Health FSA Contribution with Confidence:** Start by reviewing your 2025 out-of-pocket healthcare expenses. Ask yourself—did you contribute too much, or not enough, to your FSA? Now, look ahead to 2026. Do you expect costs such as office visit copays, deductibles, prescription medications, dental treatments, or vision care? These are just a few of the eligible expenses that an FSA can help cover. For more eligible expenses, see the [list of qualified and unqualified expenses](#) and Navia's new partnership with [Truemed](#). With Truemed, you can use your pre-tax dollars for recommended interventions—from sleep tech to fitness and recovery.

The minimum annual balance for your Health FSA is \$120, and the contribution limit for 2026 is \$3,300. You can also carry over up to \$660 from your 2025 FSA. Make sure your 2026 FSA contribution aligns with your expected needs. A little planning now can lead to big savings later.

• **Looking for personalized support to make a lifestyle change?** You may benefit from working one-on-one with a ComPsych Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselor or well-being coach. Counselors are licensed professionals who take a clinical, solution-focused approach to help you identify and address challenges, manage stress, and work through personal concerns. Coaches, on the other hand, are certified guides who take a non-clinical, action-oriented approach to help you set meaningful goals, explore possibilities, and build momentum toward the life you want.

All City of Seattle employees and their household members are eligible to access ComPsych services at no cost. To schedule an appointment, call **1-800-858-6715** or visit www.guidanceresources.com and use registration ID: SeattleEAP.

• **Mark Your Calendar: 2025 Benefits Open Enrollment:** Open Enrollment for 2026 benefits runs from Monday, October 6, through Friday, October 31. This is your annual opportunity to review your coverage and make any necessary updates in Workday. All changes will take effect on January 1, 2026. Don't miss out—add it to your calendar now and watch for more details coming your way in October.

City Events: Continued from page 1>>

Renew and Recharge: Navigating Burnout
Monday, September 29 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
[Register here](#)

FSA Smart: Your Open Enrollment Advantage
Tuesday, September 30 11:30 am – 12:15 pm
[Register here](#)

Q: PTSD therapies?

A: After enduring a terrifying or life-threatening event, some people experience temporary symptoms, such as disruption in sleep, appetite or concentration, which eventually subside. Others may develop a more lasting condition, post-traumatic stress disorder. Although PTSD impacts daily functioning, there are effective treatments available, including:

Cognitive behavioral therapy, which aims to modify the thoughts, feelings and behaviors associated with PTSD. Therapists may encourage gradual exposure to the trauma (e.g., by thinking, talking or writing about it) or may guide individuals to think

about the trauma differently through cognitive restructuring.

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, which involves guided eye movements while recalling the trauma in a carefully monitored fashion.

Medication, which can provide some relief from symptoms, such as anxiety or depression for individuals with PTSD, often in combination with other therapies.

If you believe you may be dealing with PTSD, contact your health care provider, health plan or employee assistance program (EAP) for referrals.

Ask Me 3

When you visit your health care provider for a check-up or a health concern, ask questions. If you aren't feeling well or tend to be anxious at health care appointments, it helps to come prepared with your concerns. But what questions should you ask?

Ask Me 3, an educational program provided by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the National Patient Safety Foundation, is designed to help patients become more active in their health care by encouraging open communication with their families and health care professionals.

The program gets its name from the three important questions you should always ask all of your health care providers. It's a good idea to write down or download these questions and bring them with you to all health care appointments:

- 1 What is my main problem?
- 2 What do I need to do?
- 3 Why is it important for me to do this?

Every time you talk with a health care provider

ASK THESE 3 QUESTIONS



Institute for
Healthcare
Improvement

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You should ask the same questions of a physician, nurse practitioner, pharmacist or other health care providers, whether you are having an examination, preparing for a medical test or procedure or picking up medication.

But what if you ask a question and don't understand the answer? Don't be anxious or embarrassed. Instead, tell your provider you need more clarity. If you don't understand the explanation, say something like, "Will you explain that to me one more time?"

Remember, health care providers are there to help and educate you. Knowledge is power — to feel better and stay well.

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