

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Park & Sweet Grass Counties



INSIDE:

- Safeguarding mental health
- Eating right for better health
- Social distancing and outdoor exercise
- The effects of stress and how to manage
- Healthy cooking techniques
- How to start exercising at home

YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN 2021



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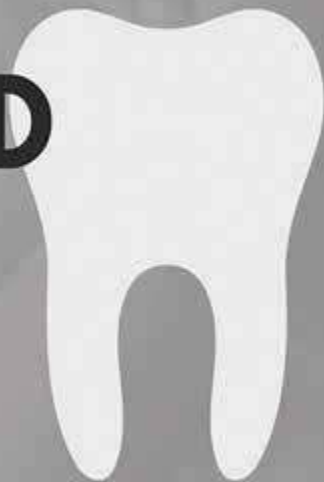
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Answers to questions about handwashing

Prior to 2020, people may never have imagined they would devote so much of their focus to handwashing. But handwashing took center stage in 2020, as organizations such as the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention touted it as an important safety measure against the COVID-19 virus.

It's understandable to question if something as simple as handwashing can really help combat potentially deadly viruses like COVID-19. But the CDC notes that handwashing is one of the best ways people can protect themselves and their families from getting sick. Understanding just how handwashing works may help people better understand how this simple gesture can potentially save so many lives.

How does handwashing remove germs?

The CDC notes that soap and water worked into a lather trap and remove germs and chemicals from hands. Water is a vital component of handwashing, especially when it's applied to hands before soap. Water helps develop a better lather than people will get when applying soap to dry hands. That's important because a good lather forms pockets known as micelles that trap and remove germs from hands.

Why is it important to wash hands for 20 seconds?

Prior to the pandemic, many people likely had no idea that proper handwashing calls for washing hands for 20 seconds. So why so long? The CDC notes that studies have found that hands need to be scrubbed for 20 seconds in order to remove harmful germs. Washing for anything less than 20 seconds runs the risk of leaving germs on your hands.

Should I use antibacterial hand soap?

It might surprise some to learn that the CDC says antibacterial hand soap is not necessary for anyone outside of professional health care settings. Studies



have found no added health benefit of using antibacterial soap as opposed to plain soap and water. So consumers should not fret if they can't find any antibacterial hand soap on their next trip to the grocery store.

Should I use warm or cold water?

According to the CDC, when combined with soap, water removes the same amount of germs whether it's warm or cold. Water's role in handwashing is to help create a lather, and lathers can be created with hot or cold water.

Hands should be washed any time they are visibly dirty or greasy. The CDC also recommends washing hands:

- before, during and after preparing food
- before eating
- before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- before and after treating a cut or wound
- after using the toilet
- after changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- after touching an animal, animal feed or animal waste
- after handling pet food or pet treats
- after touching garbage

Handwashing is as effective as public health officials insist it is, which is why it should be a vital component of everyone's daily health care routine.

Healthy cooking techniques

A large part of healthy eating involves choosing the right foods. In addition to choosing the right foods, health-conscious individuals must choose the right methods to prepare those foods in order to maximize their nutritional value.

Cooking methods such as frying can make for delicious meals, but such meals may not be so healthy. For example, each tablespoon of oil used when frying can add more than 100 calories to a meal. When counting calories, men and women should recognize that the way they prepare foods can affect the overall calorie count of a meal. In addition to choosing healthy cooking methods, health-conscious men and women can employ the following strategies to make meals as healthy as possible.

- **Invest in new cookware.** Choose nonstick cookware that will reduce the amount of oil, spray and butter needed to keep foods from sticking. Manufacturers are now touting ceramic cookware, which is free of trace metals or dangerous chemicals that can leach into food from the cooking surface. What's more, pots and pans don't contain chemical coatings that can eventually flake off into food.

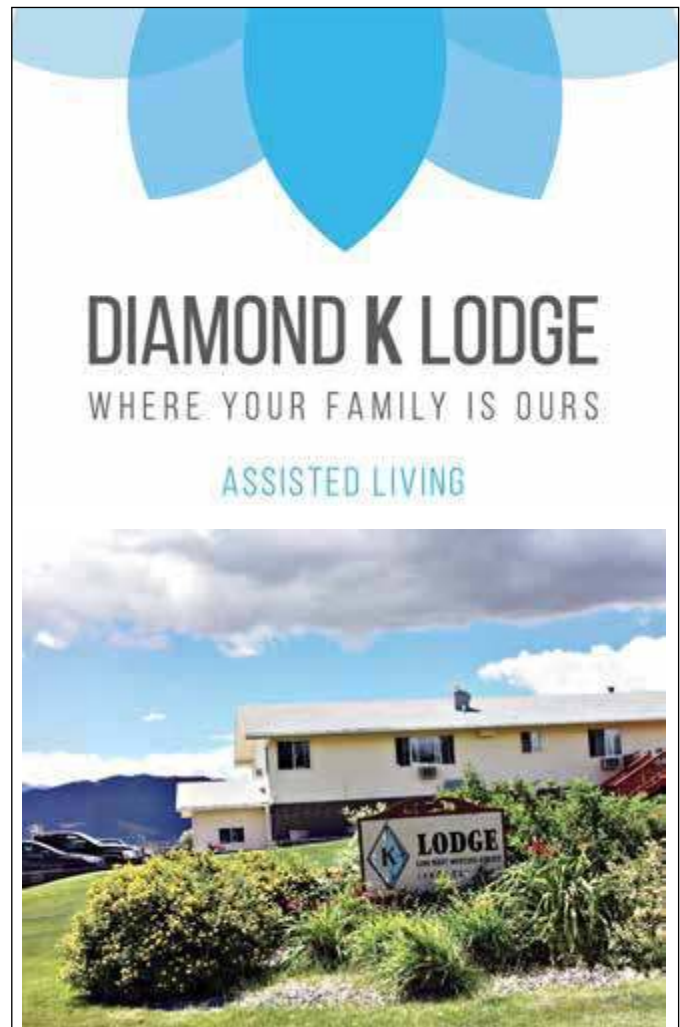
- **Stock up on healthy recipes.** Purchase cookbooks that showcase healthy recipes or peruse the Internet for healthy recipes. Many websites cater to health-conscious foodies who do not want to sacrifice their health to enjoy delicious meals.

- **Choose smart fats.** All oils are loaded in calories, but healthy oils can still be used without sacrificing flavor. Olive oil is an unsaturated fat that is a much healthier choice than butter or saturated fats. When cooking with oil, do so in moderation.

- **Think about baking foods.** Baking is handy for more than breads and desserts. Baking is one method of cooking that may not require the addition of fat. Meats that are baked can be placed on top of a rack, so that excess fat drips off and is contained in the bottom of the pan.

- **Explore poaching, broiling and grilling.** Poaching, broiling and grilling are three healthy alternatives to frying. Broiling and grilling expose food to direct heat, so it is a fast method of cooking and may not be appropriate for foods that require longer cooking times to tenderize. Poaching is the process of simmering foods in water or another flavorful liquid.

- **Use minimally refined ingredients.** Select among whole grains and ingredients that have not been refined.



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3 ways to eat healthier

Diets can be difficult to navigate. Since no two people are the same, a healthy diet that satisfies one person won't necessarily satisfy another. Vegetarians might be perfectly happy without chicken or steak, while some people might shudder at the notion of never indulging in the occasional filet mignon.

While the most effective diets tend to be those that emphasize nutrition while still allowing individuals to indulge in some of their favorite dishes in moderation, the following are three ways that everyone, regardless of their personal preference, can eat healthy every day.

1. Eat lots of whole-grain carbohydrates.

Fad diets tend to paint carbs as the enemy, but various studies have shown just how integral carbohydrates, particularly whole-grain varieties, are to a healthy diet. One such study published in 2018 in the medical journal *The Lancet Public Health* found that diets that got between 50 and 55 percent of their calories from plant-based carbohydrates like whole grains were associated with a lower risk of mortality than low-carb diets that favored animal-derived protein sources. When buying carbs at the grocery store, shoppers can opt for whole-grain varieties, including whole-grain pastas, brown rice and cereals. That won't require sacrificing flavor and makes for a simple way to eat healthier every day.

2. Make a concerted effort to eat more fruits and vegetables.

The United Kingdom-based National Health Service, which is the largest single-payer healthcare system in the world, recommends eating at least five portions of fruits and vegetables every day. That may sound like a lot, but it's pretty easy to incorporate all those healthy fruits and veggies into a diet. For example, add a serving of antioxidant-rich blueberries to your cereal bowl each morning. At dinner time, allow vegetables to take up the most real estate on your plate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that diets rich in fruits and veggies can help people control their weight and may even reduce their risk for certain diseases, including cancer.

3. Kick added sugars to the curb.

Avoiding added sugars is another way anyone can eat healthier every day. Healthy foods contain natural sugars, and these don't pose a threat to overall health. However, added sugars, which the Harvard Medical School notes are found in many foods, can increase a person's risk for various conditions and diseases, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

The effects of stress

Stress affects people of all ages from all walks of life. Though work is a primary source of stress for many people, a recent survey from the American Psychological Association found that stress is more than just work-related.

In its 2017 "Stress in America" survey, the APA found that the future of the nation, money and violence and crime were significant sources of stress for more than half of survey participants. That's a dangerous notion, as the Mayo Clinic notes that the effects of the stress on the human body are considerable. Though everyone experiences and responds to stress differently, these are some of the more common effects of stress, courtesy of the Mayo Clinic.

Stress can have an adverse effect on mood and has even been linked to depression, which the World Health Organization reports is the leading cause of disability across the globe. People suffering from stress also may experience anxiety, restlessness and feelings of being overwhelmed. In addition, stress can compromise a person's ability to focus, adversely affecting a person's ability to complete their work-related tasks. That's not insignificant, as 61 percent of respondents in the 2017 "Stress in America" survey reported that work was a significant source of their stress.

Stress affects more than the mind, manifesting itself physically in various ways. The Mayo Clinic reports that common physical side effects of stress include headache, muscle tension or pain, including chest pain, fatigue, and a change in sex drive. Upset stomach also may be a byproduct of stress. People dealing with stress may even have trouble sleeping.

Behavior also can be affected by stress, which may cause some people to abuse drugs or alcohol.

Some may even turn to tobacco, either becoming a smoker or smoking more if they're already smokers.

Smoking has been linked to a host of negative physical side effects, including an increased risk of developing cancer. Angry outbursts, social withdrawal and overeating or undereating are some additional potential side effects of stress on the body.

Coping strategies can be highly effective at alleviating stress and its negative side effects. Learn more about such strategies at www.stress.org.

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Safeguard against COVID-19 when grocery shopping

Supermarkets and other food merchants are allowed to stay open as “essential” retailers amid the mass shutdowns prompted by the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Along with banks, gas stations and takeout restaurants, supermarkets are among the few places that people are allowed to visit to procure the necessities of everyday life.

Even with social distancing and other precautions in place, grocery stores remain high-traffic locations. As a result, many people feel concerned about how to best protect themselves when turning to in-store visits or grocery delivery services to stay stocked on food and other essentials.

- **Maintain a six-foot distance.** As with other locations, shoppers should keep a distance of six feet between themselves and other shoppers. Do not hesitate to move back or ask someone to move away if you feel concerned about proximity. Shopping during “off-peak” hours may help thin out crowds and make it easier to maintain social distance.

- **Shop small retailers.** It can be beneficial to visit independently owned retailers, like local markets, delis and specialty food stores. Crowds at such stores will likely be smaller than the crowds at large chain stores.

- **Wipe down products.** Data published in The New England Journal of Medicine that tested how long COVID-19 survived on surfaces found the virus was detected up to 72 hours on



plastic, 48 hours on stainless steel, 4 hours on copper, and 24 hours on cardboard. While infection from touch may not be as likely as it is from direct inhalation of COVID-19 from an infected individual, it can be helpful to wipe down surfaces, including non-porous packaging, once items are brought home, as well as counters or tables used to unload packages. Wiping down a shopping cart handle also may be helpful.

- **Wash produce.** Consumer Reports suggests washing fruits and vegetables in a mild soap-and-water solution to eliminate any possible live virus and pesticides.

- **Avoid direct contact.** Whether items are delivered or

purchased in-store, avoid personal contact with cashiers or other store employees. Pick up and pack your own groceries. Opt to pay with a credit card or another digital pay option like Apple Pay instead of handing over cash. Use your own pen to sign receipts. Scan your own frequent shopper card or have the cashier use a scan gun, rather than taking your key ring to hold. Delivery services can place the bags outside of your front door. Tips also can be exchanged electronically for delivery services through an app or online or over the phone.

Some simple shopping strategies can help people prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Amazing facts about honey

Honey is perhaps best known for its sweet taste. But beneath that sweetness is a complex, healthy food.

Bees produce honey from the pollen of plants through a complex enzymatic process, turning it into the beloved golden nectar.

Many properties make honey a unique food that is not just tasty, but also quite healthy. Here are some facts about honey that might get you buzzing.

- When stored in an airtight container, honey can last indefinitely. The substance is naturally acidic and low in moisture, which means it is an inhospitable environment for bacteria. There are small amounts of hydrogen peroxide in honey as well, inhibiting the growth of microorganisms. (Source: Tin Roof Teas)

- Honey has antibacterial properties, so it has been relied on as a health food and topical treatment. Burns, cuts, infections, stomach ailments, and more have been treated with honey. (Source: National Center for Biotechnology Information)

- Honey is the only food source produced by an insect that humans eat.



(Source: Peace Bee Farmer)

- Mead is a fermented beverage that is made from honey. It has a storied history as a beverage of choice in many different cultures. (Source: Hidden Legend Winery)

- Honey is the only food that includes all the substances necessary to sustain life. This includes enzymes, vitamins and minerals. It also contains pino-cembrin, a unique antioxidant associated with improved brain function. (Source: Sirhowy Valley Honey)

- A honey bee produces roughly 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey over the course of its life. Bees are not the only insect to make honey, however. The honey wasp, native to Mexico, also can produce honey. (Sources: Golden Blossom Honey and Inverse)

- Honey will take on the flavor of the nectar from which it was made. This nectar also will affect the color and the consistency of the honey.

(Source: National Honey Board)

Honey has a sweet and rich history. At times honey has been referred to as "the nectar of the gods," and it is still enjoyed for pleasure and medicinal reasons today.

Recommended Vaccinations

Some vaccines are listed below to suggest the kinds of disease prevention available by vaccination. **Consult your provider to ensure you and your family receive the vaccinations you need and the correct doses when you need them.** Most vaccines require multiple doses given at different times.

Vaccinations by Age

Infants and young children

Haemophilus influenza Type B (Hib)*
 Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis
 (DTaP or Tdap)* ***
 Polio (IPV or OPV)* ***
 Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)* ***
 Pneumococcal (PCV)*
 Hepatitis B*
 Varicella "chickenpox" (Var)* ***

Early Adolescents

Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis
 (DTaP or Tdap) Booster
 Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
 Meningococcal

Teens

Meningococcal Booster

Adults

Continue Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis
 (DTaP or Tdap) Booster every ten years

Age 50

Shingles

Age 60

Pneumococcal

Travel

Consult your health care or vaccination provider 4-6 weeks before travel outside the US. Consult <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>.

Some common recommendations are: Hep A B, Meningococcal Booster, Typhoid Fever, Yellow Fever.

Before pregnancy

MMR vaccine one month or more before pregnancy, unless already protected

During pregnancy

Pertussis Tdap, third trimester
 Flu Vaccine (if pregnant during flu season)

After pregnancy

Safe to receive vaccines after giving birth, even while breastfeeding

Other Common Vaccinations

Rotavirus, Flu

*Required for child care in Montana

***Required for school, grades K through 12, in Montana

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Getting ready for flu season, preventative care

Prevention is the best medicine to help protect you and your family from the flu each season. Here are a few tips from CHP for staying strong and healthy during this flu season

Best practices for prevention

Getting the flu shot is a great first step to help keep from getting sick. While you shouldn't live in fear of the flu, it is a potentially deadly disease, requiring hospitalization. It's a good idea to be prepared to fight against it from the start, and the flu shot lends a helping hand there. Put a reminder in your calendar now: you want to get your flu vaccine early in the fall, before flu season starts. You can get it easily at clinics like CHP, or usually even just at the pharmacy.

During this time of COVID-19, the steps to prevent infection are the same as for the flu. Washing your hands with soap and water, wearing a face covering, coughing into your elbow, and staying home when you feel ill can go a long way towards keeping you and those around you healthy.

By now, we're all used to washing our hands frequently, avoiding touching our faces, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, and keeping a distance from sick people. All of these common practices hold true when it comes to the flu.

It's a smart idea to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before eating or preparing food, after coughing or sneezing, using the restroom, touching garbage, or petting an animal. When you wash your hands, be sure to scrub them well for at least 20 seconds, getting under your nails, between your fingers, and the backs of your hands too.

Women

Pregnant women can still get safely vaccinated against the flu, as long as they opt for the shot rather than the nasal spray, as the CDC recommends. And having the flu shot also helps protect the baby for the first few months after birth, when they're still too young to be vaccinated.

Pregnant women should contact their doctor right away if they show flu symptoms, like a fever, runny nose, cough, or sore throat. There are several treatments to consider with your doctor, including antivirals, that can help prevent a severe case if you do come down with something.

Kids

It's a good idea to check on policies at your child's school. See how frequently surfaces get cleaned

and determine what they do when a student comes down with a bug. Is there a school nurse on site every day? Or are they on a rotation with multiple schools? When will the school contact parents if their child isn't feeling well?

Kids can get vaccinated for the flu, just like adults. In fact, the CDC recommends the flu shot for everyone six months and up. It's well worth talking to your child's medical provider to see what they would suggest in your particular situation.

School can be complicated, especially when symptoms of flu and COVID can be confusing. Be aware of how your school is handling general sickness and the difference from COVID. Also, make sure that you are confident, or your physician is satisfied, that your child is well before returning to school. The instances of COVID sickness among children are incredibly low, but it doesn't mean that they are impervious to getting others sick.

Wellness checks

It's good to keep up on your regular wellness checks to stay in good health, which will only help your immune system fight off bugs like the flu.

– Submitted by Community Health Partners
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Simple ways to avoid the 'quarantine 15'

Social distancing has led to some surprising and some not so surprising side effects. Many business owners have been pleasantly surprised to learn how smoothly their employees have transitioned to working remotely. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the effects of stay-at-home orders have led to some predictable feelings of restlessness and cabin fever.


One unforeseen consequence of social distancing noted by many people is the "quarantine 15," a term used to refer to weight gained while under stay-at-home orders. An inability to get out and about coupled with the proximity of kitchen can make it easy for people to gain weight as they observe stay-at-home orders. However, there are various ways people can avoid gaining weight while social distancing.

• **Adhere to a routine.** The wellness resource UCI Health notes that lack of structure has been a common side effect of social distancing. But people should adhere to a routine even if they're working from home or have been laid off or furloughed. A routine with established mealtimes can help people avoid random snacking that can contribute to weight gain.


• **Drink more water.** The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics notes that mild dehydration can be mistaken for feelings of hunger. Keep track of how much water you're drinking each day, resolving to drink more if you're not consuming enough. If you're not having any water after your morning cup of coffee, the mid-afternoon urges to eat may be signs of mild dehydration and not hunger.

• **Make time for exercise.** Exercise is essential to maintaining a healthy weight. Social distancing has given many people more free time than they know what to do with. Fill the boredom with exercise, utilizing online tutorials to engage in weight-free exercises if necessary. Go for daily strolls around the neighborhood or, if possible, purchase some home gym equipment.

• **Set goals.** One of the ways to stay the course when beginning a fitness regimen is to set goals. Whether you're exercising for the first time in years or replacing regular workouts at a fitness center with exercising at home, set reasonable goals, including how many days a week you hope to exercise and how many pounds, if any, you hope to lose each week.



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Stress and tinnitus

By Helton Hearing
(www.heltonhearing.com)

As one is no doubt aware, the world is living in a strange time, the likes of which many of us are unfamiliar. The Covid-19 pandemic has come to bear on many aspects of daily life, seen and felt by most everyone. One sees the economy limping along while the world scrambles to control the virus. Consumers rush out to purchase every bit of whatever they feel is in demand at the time while also trying to stay at home as much as possible. However, there is an unseen concern lurking for many people, one which is dealt with daily for those suffering: Tinnitus. And the stress the world is under may be a huge factor for the people hoping to manage it.

Stress is causally linked to tinnitus and has been for almost 200 years. Though not the only cause of tinnitus, a study in 2011 found that there is a very similar probability for a person to develop tinnitus if they are highly stressed when compared to those who are exposed to noise during work. No one can argue that these are stressful times, and managing

that stress could possibly help lessen the struggle against tinnitus.

There are quite a few things one can do to help themselves control stress during this pandemic. One can work on being prepared by making some plans ahead of time for things that could become issues later. Keeping a stock of supplies, even entertainment options, can help keep out of stressful situations that might arise. Some pharmacist will fill multiple months' worth of important medications to help keep your mind at ease. Control your news and information intake. Stay informed for sure, but with the shelter-in-place orders and people trying to stay home to stay safe it can be easy to get bogged down in the 24/7 news outlets on every other channel and web page. Keep on chatting and watching TV though as background noise is known to help at least mask tinnitus.

Tinnitus is a big issue for those suffering from it. From lying awake at night, to shrill noise during conversation, tinnitus impacts many aspects of one's life. Managing your life to help alleviate stress can help make managing your tinnitus a little easier.



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How to start exercising at home

A healthy diet and an active lifestyle are great ways to achieve a healthy weight and good overall health. Many people no doubt associate exercise with fitness centers and gym memberships. While gyms certainly are effective places to break a sweat, exercising at home can be an effective way to get fit as well.

Working out at home may require some creativity, as even homeowners with gyms in their basements may not have as much equipment at their disposal as they would at a local fitness center.

Body weight exercises

Body weight exercises include push-ups, planks, squats, and lunges. Alternating incline and positioning of the body when performing some of these exercises is a great way to work various muscle groups. Body weight exercises do not necessarily require equipment, and that may disappoint some people. That's because, with no added weight – and only one's own body weight to provide resistance – it's difficult for a person to challenge himself or herself effectively and gradually build up progress.

Get outdoors for cardio

A mix of cardiovascular activity, which puts a strain on the heart and lungs to build up stamina, can help shave off the pounds when paired with

strength training exercises. Take to the great outdoors near home to get in a good cardio workout.

Rally Health, a digital, data-based health advisory company, says that walking can constitute a cardio workout if one goes at a brisk pace of around three miles per hour. Walking on an incline also can constitute vigorous exercise that's on par with running or biking, particularly when it's a steep hill.

Home-based cardio workouts also can include cycling, swimming in a backyard pool or playing a pickup sports game with the kids.

Set up a home gym

With a few barbells, dumbbells and a weight bench, it's easy to create a home gym in a basement or garage. Extra equipment, such as TRX resistance training equipment or an elliptical machine, can be added to make the gym more complete.

A home gym also can be a place to do strength and stretching exercises like yoga or pilates.

Many people find that they can effectively workout at home with little to no equipment necessary. With such convenience, individuals may find they make more time for exercise, which is an important component of a healthy lifestyle.



Preventive care and mental health

Preventive care is often looked at through the things people need to do to protect their physical well-being. For example, a healthy diet and routine exercise, while beneficial to mental health, are often viewed as lifestyle choices that can make people feel better physically. But taking steps to protect one's mental health also is vital to a long, productive life.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes that positive mental health and mental wellness can have a profoundly positive impact on a person's life. Positive mental health can help people realize their full potential, cope with the stresses of life and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

What can I do to protect my mental health?

Learning to recognize the early warning signs of mental health problems can help prevent such problems from escalating and compel people to seek help. The DHHS advises anyone feeling these signs or recognizing these signs in others to seek help for themselves or their loved ones:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little

- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or as if nothing matters
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual

- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared

- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships

- Persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head

- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true

- Thinking of harming yourself or others

- An inability to perform daily tasks, such as taking care of your children or getting to work or school

Taking steps to protect one's mental wellness is a vital component of preventive care. More information about mental health is available at www.mentalhealth.gov.

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ALLEGIANCE



How to handle social distancing at the park

Social distancing has changed the way people live. But as many areas began to reopen on a limited basis, returning to some semblance of normalcy became possible.

Cabin fever has affected men, women and children since stay-at-home guidelines were issued in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. So it's no surprise that homebound adults and kids rejoiced when local parks reopened. Though parks may have reopened, the National Recreation and Park Association notes that it's still imperative that park visitors adhere to social distancing guidelines in place at the park.

- Avoid parks if you're exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 is urged to stay home and avoid public places, including parks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that people with these symptoms or combinations of these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- cough
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

In addition, the CDC says people with at least two of these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- fever
- chills
- repeated shaking with chills
- muscle pain
- headache
- sore throat
- new loss of taste or smell
- Follow the CDC guidelines on personal hygiene prior to visiting parks or trails. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before leaving your home to visit a park. If you sneeze or blow your nose en route to the park, apply a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol before getting out of your car. While at the park, wear a cloth face covering that fits snugly but comfortably against the side of your face. Make sure it can be secured with ties or ear loops and allows for breathing without restriction. In hot weather, avoid visiting the

park if you do not think you can move around and breathe comfortably while wearing a mask.

- Share the trail. Share the trails and walking paths with others, letting them know when you plan to pass and giving them ample space to pass if they need to. This includes following CDC guidelines on social distancing, which recommend maintaining a minimum of six feet from other persons at all times.

- Use the restroom before leaving your home. Many parks are limiting access to public restrooms to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. So it's wise for park visitors to relieve themselves at home before going to the park.

- Bring your own water. The NRPA notes that water fountains likely won't be accessible at the park. So visitors should bring their own water so they can stay hydrated during their hikes.

Visiting a favorite park while social distancing will be different. But there are many ways to stay safe and still enjoy the park for all it has to offer.

The healing vibrations of Himalayan singing bowls

By Barbara Woodbury

Have you ever gone to a powwow and listened to the drummers? Have you ever been moved to tears listening to music? Has your heart ever filled with a song as you look out at a beautiful vista?

Modern physics tell us everything has a frequency, a vibration, especially at the quantum level. Humans have long used sound, whether it be voice or an instrument, to evoke and release emotions. In the cultures of the Himalayan countries (e.g. Tibet, Nepal, India) sound, in the form of mantras and singing bowls, have been used for centuries to heal imbalances in the human energy field. The bowls are hand hammered by families that have been making these bowls for centuries. Each bowl is tuned to a specific note, or frequency. The bowl is invited to vibrate by striking it with a mallet or a fist. The bowl can also be rubbed around the upper edge to get a different sound from the bowl. The tuned vibrations of the bowls entrain the human energy centers, called chakras, and harmonize their vibrations. As this happens, emotional pain, stress, depression, trauma, grief, and anger is released and a sense of calm and peacefulness fills these energy centers.

During a sound meditation, sometimes called "sound baths," the bowls are played while participants lay down and relax as they listen to the bowls. Sometimes other instruments are included, such as drums, gongs, and chimes. Sometimes mantras are included. Mantras are very ancient prayers for peace, healing and well-being. Listening to the notes as they fade to silence, the listener finds peace and stillness, releasing stress and trauma. Sound meditations are about frequency, vibration and healing, not religion. This form of meditation compliments any and all beliefs and practices.

Barbara Woodbury has studied with Suren Strestha, founder of the Atma Buti School of Sound and Vibrational Healing in Boulder, CO since 2019. For further information, or a demonstration of the singing bowls, please visit her at the Windy Way Rock Shop, 5237 US Hwy 89, #13, Livingston, MT.



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The beautiful vibrations and sounds of the bowls transport a person to a place of deep relaxation and peacefulness. This meditation compliments any and all spiritual practices and beliefs.

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SUICIDE

Park County has a problem, and we are working to solve it.

Park County has a high rate of death by suicide. Professionals, volunteers and community members in Park County and throughout Montana are weaving a network of support with many connected strands, too many strands to describe them all in detail. The biggest challenge seems to be to convince those who need the support to trust the network as a safety net, a net that will work, a net that will last, a net made for them.

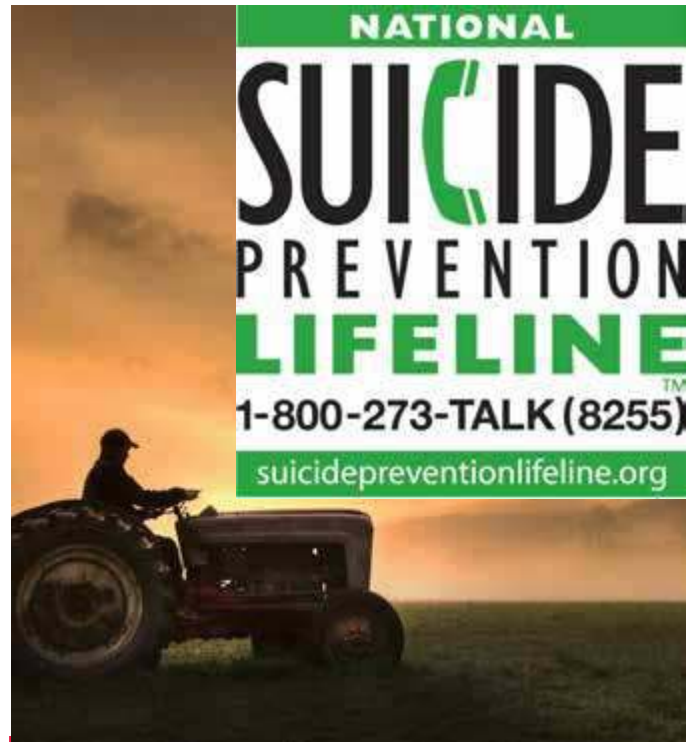
Another challenge is to make sure people who may need a support net know it's there. Another is for them to know it's okay to need it, to know many of their neighbors have been in similar situations.

Our Montana culture holds the self-reliant in high esteem and values rural life and wilderness experiences. The culture can make it more difficult for a struggling person to connect with someone who can help.

That is the challenge many in our community are working to meet. Walk into or call almost any organization, any health care facility, any public agency, and you will find someone willing and likely even trained to help, and you may not be the first to be helped at that place or by that person.

Private businesses and individuals are becoming resources for help as well. The Park County Health Department has many choices for training and education so that all interested parties can be informed, proactive parts of the safety net. Park County also offers support to parents, educators, health care providers, survivors and people who need help.

According to Julie Anderson, the county offers Mental Health First Aid and other training in a for-



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mat similar to CPR or first aid training.

Anderson, who was the Park County Suicide Prevention Coordinator before becoming the current Park County Health Director, is also a member of the Resilience Project, which is working toward several goals, among them to "map all the resources in the community to help prevent suicide and address trauma."

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 RISE UP MONTANA
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PREVENTION

In addition to mapping resources, in other words outlining processes to help each individual from the point he or she asks for or is referred for help, the Resilience Project is working to ensure training is available for public, private and non-profit organizations and individuals and to ensure our community at large can talk effectively about mental and behavioral health and suicide.

Many other organizations are also working toward the same goals.

According to its website, Livingston HealthCare received a Montana Healthcare Foundation grant in 2018 to "hire a licensed clinical social worker to further integrate behavioral health resources for Emergency Department patients and hospital inpatients" and to "expand on and complement the behavioral health strategies already being integrated into primary care."

Rise Up Montana offers a Suicide Prevention Program through a hotline, 223-LIFE (5433), a crisis center next door to its Cool Cafe on Main Street in Livingston, and through ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell) and SOS (Signs of Suicide) classroom lessons for sixth through twelfth grade students and QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training for Livingston School District staff. Rise Up Montana, which aims to teach youth how to succeed by offering healthy support systems and opportunity, is an organization founded by Chantelle Plauché, Executive Director of L'Esprit Licensed Mental Health Center based on Main Street in Livingston.

Livingston Schools, Park County rural schools and organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters of Park and Sweet Grass Counties have pursued funding and are beginning and expanding programs to improve mental and behavioral health

and to help ensure their people are as prepared as possible to connect with those who may be struggling and feeling alone in their struggle.

As described by physicist Neil Hughes on TheMighty.com and shared by suicideprevention-lifeline.org, "Now, I wasn't very open about this. If you had met me at the time, I would have given a fairly convincing impression of having things mostly together. I was putting up an image. And that was bad for me, because I didn't get to share my problems with anybody else... but it was bad for others too, because they didn't get to see the truth. And if we all put up an image, then everyone struggles alone."

None of us is alone, though we may feel that way, and that seems to be at the heart of this health challenge. Montana has one of the highest suicide rates in the country, Park County has one of the highest rates among counties in the state.

A big part of the solution seems to be human connection. Listening without judgement. Spouses, siblings, parents, children, friends, peers, coworkers, all need to be aware their relationships and their help are the solution to our shared problem. The more people who are aware and trained to help effectively the better we meet the challenge. Take action. Find out how you and your organization can learn to recognize someone who may need help and how you can be and find the best help. For resources and training information, contact your health care provider, any mental or behavioral health care provider or Julie Anderson at the Park County Health Department, (406) 222-411 or (406) 222-4145.

Are you struggling? Tell someone. You're not alone. Your community is working to help you. Call or walk into any health care provider.

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Volunteer safety during the pandemic

Volunteers are vital to the survival of many charitable organizations. Without people willing to offer their time and expertise free of charge, many nonprofits would find it difficult, if not impossible, to meet their missions.

The global pandemic that began in late 2019 and continued into 2020 changed many aspects of life as the world knew it, and that includes volunteering.

Social distancing measures and stay-at-home mandates from state and local governments discouraged people from leaving their homes, while various health organizations warned aging men and women to stay home as much as possible. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age. In recognition of that threat, many retirees who were heavily involved in volunteering prior to the pandemic were forced to cease working as volunteers, which could have a negative effect on their mental health as the pandemic continues. A report from the Mayo Clinic Health System noted that adults over age 60 experienced greater life

satisfaction and greater positive changes in their perceived health as a result of volunteering.

Many people have continued to volunteer during the pandemic, and those that want to do so can take these steps to make sure their efforts to give back are as safe as possible.

- **Speak with your physician first.** Anyone, but especially seniors, who wants to volunteer during the pandemic should discuss those aspirations with their physicians prior to offering their services to charitable organizations. Doctors can discuss the acute and chronic threats posed by the COVID-19 virus and examine each individual's medical history to help potential volunteers decide if working with a local charity is safe. In addition, doctors can check patients for COVID-19 symptoms and even have them tested to make sure they won't be putting anyone in danger should they decide to volunteer.

- **Contact the organization prior to volunteering.** Some organizations may not be allowing

See **Volunteer**, Page 22



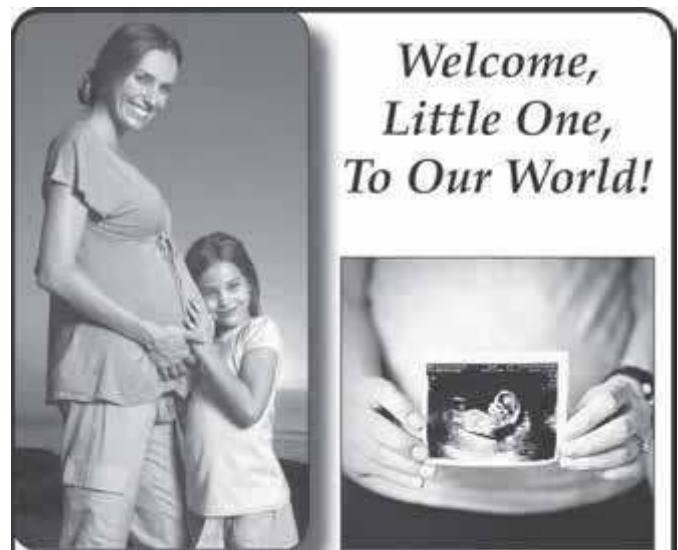
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Volunteers, from Page 21

potentially at-risk volunteers to perform in-person tasks. Contact the organization you hope to work with prior to signing up to confirm your eligibility, but also to discuss the safety protocols they've put in place to protect the health of their volunteers.

- **Monitor your own health.** If you've signed up to volunteer, it's vital that you monitor your own health. Health officials believe the COVID-19 virus has spread so rapidly for a number of reasons, including the likelihood that many people have had the virus but shown no symptoms. Charitable organizations will no doubt assess the health of each volunteer when they show up to work, but volunteers also should make such assessments on their own. Check your temperature each day and familiarize yourself with the symptoms of COVID-19. If you suspect you are unwell or are even slight-

ly under the weather, contact the charity and tell them you won't be showing up that day. Operating with an abundance of caution during the pandemic can save lives.

- **Consider virtual volunteering.** Virtual volunteering is a safe way to give back that won't expose volunteers or others to the COVID-19 virus. Charitable organizations need behind-the-scenes help just as much as they need volunteers with their boots on the ground. Virtual volunteers can help with fundraising efforts and event planning, but also help charities overcome the logistical challenges of operating and meeting their missions during the pandemic.

Prior to volunteering during the pandemic, prospective volunteers can follow numerous steps to ensure volunteering is safe, both for them and the people they're trying to help.



How families can confront remote learning

Amid concerns of coronavirus clusters and efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19, and based on social distancing recommendations from medical professionals, schools across the country began to close their doors and adopt a remote learning model in March 2020. One of the largest communities affected was New York City, which closed schools across the five boroughs.

School administrators and educators quickly scrambled to find a workaround to meet children's educational needs. Remote learning has been a part of many school curriculums for some time. While remote learning had predominantly been reserved for higher learning institutions, in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, it became a necessity for grades K through 12 as well. Teachers have had to design curriculums and assignments virtually on the fly in an attempt to minimize disruptions that could adversely affect students. Remote learning requires the cooperation of school staff and also parents and guardians. Patience is necessary, and parents and educators may need to completely transform their daily schedules. The following tips can be an asset as students continue to navigate remote learning.

- **Record class sessions.** Teachers can consider

recording or "going live" with class instruction so that students can view the video and still have access to their teachers. This helps parents who may be unfamiliar with explaining the curriculum.

- **Utilize chat features.** Remote education software programs likely have a chat or "hangout" feature, which enables classrooms to keep in touch and ask questions in real time.

- **Keep a schedule.** It's easy to begin to sleep late and fall out of routine when not required to go to a school building. Families should make scheduling a priority, which can help students stay on top of lessons and complete their assignments on time.

- **Ask questions.** Everyone is learning as they go, and further clarification may be needed. Students should email or chat with teachers if they don't understand an assignment or are unsure about instructions. Teachers may be able to clearly model a math problem or explain a concept via video chat for students who need help.

- **Explore educational options.** Many companies offer free educational services while kids are home from school. Scholastic.com is offering online courses, Nat Geo for Kids, Fun Brain, PBS Kids, and Highlight Kids are other places to turn to for activities.

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Coping with the loss of a loved one while social distancing

Coping with the loss of a loved one can be challenging in the best of times, but many people have had to confront such challenges at a time that is unlike any other in modern history.

By the start of the second full week of May 2020, the World Health Organization reported that roughly 279,000 people across the globe had died from the novel coronavirus COVID-19. Many of the 215 countries, areas or territories that reported cases of COVID-19 implemented social distancing measures in an effort to reduce the spread of the virus. While such efforts no doubt saved lives, they also left many people without traditional means of grieving their deceased loved ones.

Though traditional funerals and family gatherings may not be possible as the world responds to the COVID-19 outbreak, those who have lost loved ones can embrace various strategies to cope with their loss even while stay-at-home orders remain in place.

- **Host calls with family members and friends.**

The videotelephone and chat service Zoom has helped millions of people stay connected with loved ones while social distancing. Schools and universities even employed the service when in-person classroom sessions were canceled to stop the spread of the virus. The CDC recommends grieving families employ such technology to connect with each other in the wake of a loved one's death.

- **Share stories.** Grieving family members are urged to share stories and pictures much like they would during wakes and funerals. Share them during group conference calls and/or via social media, emails or other modern modes of communications. Connecting in such ways can ensure no one is forced to grieve alone.

- **Seek support from your community.** The CDC recommends seeking support from faith-based organizations or other trusted community leaders and friends. While in-person church services may not be available, many local religious leaders have made themselves available to congregants and even non-congregants who may need help grieving. Local community organizations may have grief counselors available to help people cope with loss.

- **Take part in an activity that meant something to you and your deceased loved one.** The CDC notes that doing something in memory of a loved one can help people cope. For example, plant flowers in honor of a deceased parent with whom you shared a love of gardening.

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Remembering Life Beautifully Lived

Why routine checkups are vital to overall health

Regular visits with a medical professional are an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Too often people visit the doctor only when they are ill, as they may not realize just how essential well visits and physical exams are.

Routine checkups are the smartest way for people in all age groups to stay on top of their health, but they can be especially valuable for those age 50 and older. Regular checkups enable physicians to check current health against past visits, ensuring that any anomalies can be investigated and treated efficiently and promptly. This can make the difference in slowing down the progression of a disease that has already developed or prevent something from becoming a full-fledged issue. The Mayo Clinic says there are no hard and fast rules about how often seniors should visit health care providers. Those who are in generally good health may only require one medical checkup a year. At this point vital signs will be checked, medications reviewed and lifestyle topics discussed. Doctors may even recommend or discuss tests.

Patients also can bring up any issues they may be experiencing, however insignificant they may seem. Anything from sleep disturbances to memory loss to unexplained fatigue or pain can be addressed. Sometimes getting everything out in the open and being reassured that there's nothing to worry about can be helpful.

General care and geriatric doctors also are adept at asking questions to get a sense of how patients are faring in the world. This may include topics that



seemingly have no relevance to health but can be quite important. A provider may ask about topics such as bathing or dressing. Questions about social interaction or typical routines can paint a better picture of both physical and mental health.

The recommended frequency of doctor visits may change as health issues arise or if follow-up is needed after a treatment plan or injury, according to the caregiver company Home Care Assistance. Some seniors may have to visit a provider once a week or once a month. Doctors, nurses and therapists will design a regimen based on a patient's current health needs.

The following are some compelling reasons to be diligent with provider visits.

- Frequently health issues can

be silent and not noticed early on by a patient, according to Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore.

- Patients will be less likely to forget about important screenings, like mammography, prostate tests, cholesterol tests, and more.

- Vaccines can be administered, as even adults need certain immunizations to stay healthy.

- Patients can discuss potential lifestyle changes, like going on a diet or taking up a new fitness regimen.

It is essential to follow through with health care provider visits, even if they seem redundant. Physicians may detect issues that warrant close observation. Patients are urged to have an open dialogue with their doctors so they understand the reason behind health care visits and expectations in the future.

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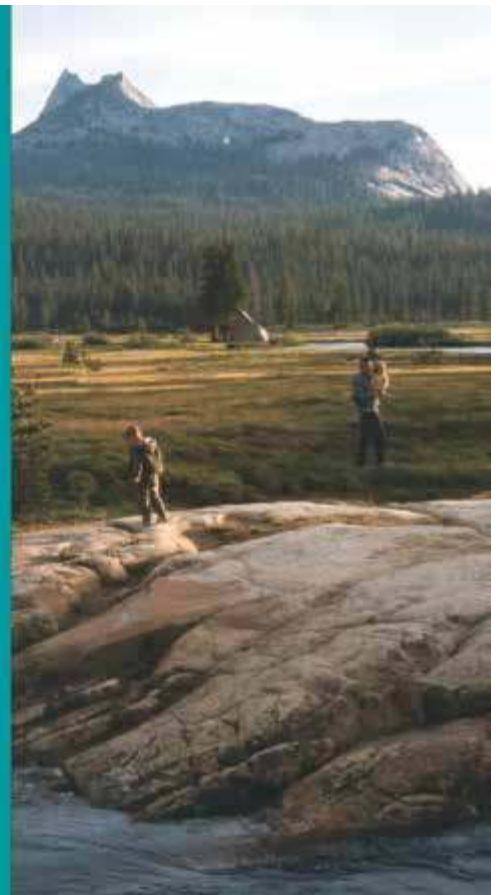
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