



Wellness Works

SUMMER 2025

Back to Basics to Give Your Health a Boost

There is so much advice available on ways to take care of your health that it can sometimes be overwhelming. However, there are some basic things you can do that can have a significant impact on your overall health. Here are five tips to help you stay healthy and happy:

1. Get Your Screenings

Getting recommended screenings is one of the most important things you can do for your health. Depending on your age, sex, and medical history, you may need to be screened for things like:

- Certain types of cancer
- High blood pressure or high cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis (weak bones)
- Mental health conditions, like depression or anxiety

A conversation with your doctor or nurse can help you understand which screenings you need — and how often to get them.

2. Make Lifestyle Changes

Stop talking about making changes and start doing them. Whether you have been thinking about doing an exercise routine, eating a healthier diet, or quitting smoking - starting now will ensure you have some good habits in place before the fall



holidays roll around. Small changes to your lifestyle can result in big changes to your overall health!

3. Eat Seasonal Foods

Summer fruits and vegetable are abundant in Maine. Incorporating healthy foods like squash, sweet potatoes, peppers, tomatoes and dark leafy greens into your diet can boost your intake of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

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Learn about virtual health care and how to access it through the Sydney app.

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Are you concerned about diabetes and the impact it can have on you and your loved ones? Join us for the free program, Power 2 Prevent!

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Did You Know?



Preventive health screenings help healthcare providers to detect diseases early, often before symptoms appear. This may allow for more effective and less invasive treatment. Regular screenings can also promote overall well-being by encouraging healthier lifestyle choices and ongoing health monitoring.

Scan this QR to see recommended preventive health screenings.





Virtual PCP

Accessing a primary care physician (PCP) can sometimes be challenging. In many non-emergent circumstances, a virtual visit can be a convenient way to see a PCP.

You can access Anthem’s virtual care services through Anthem’s Sydney app or by logging into www.anthem.com. Once logged into the website, you would simply choose Find Care, then Virtual Care. When accessing the app, simply choose Care at the bottom of your screen. You have access to LiveHealth Online for urgent, preventative care, behavioral health, or ongoing condition care. Physicians are available 24/7 and they have the ability to send prescriptions directly to your pharmacy. Applicable cost shares will apply.

For information on how to download the Sydney app or access LiveHealth Online, please visit the Health Trust website at www.mmeht.org. Or scan the QR code to download the Sydney app to your Apple or Android device.



[Back to Basics to Give Your Health a Boost \(cont'd\)](#)

4. Get Enough Sleep

With the change in season, your body may start to feel tired earlier in the evening. Longer summer days can sometimes disrupt our sleep patterns. Make sure to get enough sleep by going to bed and waking up at the same time each day. Aim for seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

5. Take Care of Your Mental Health

There are many ways you can improve your mental and social well-being, including:

- **Reach out to friends and family members.** Staying in touch can help you feel more connected and supported.

Trustee Changes

Thank You and Welcome

The Board of Trustees would like to thank Ellen Bemis for her service to the Trust. Ellen was a member of the Board of Trustees and the Board’s Secretary. She served from 2020 until her recent resignation. The MMEHT Board of Trustees and the MMA staff thank Ellen for her dedication to the Health Trust and wish her all the best.

The Trust’s Selection Committee has appointed Christie Young, Human Resources Director for the City of Augusta, to fill the vacancy on the MMEHT Board.

Christie has been employed as a human resource professional in the public sector for 13 years, also working for the Town of Gorham, Cumberland County Government and the City of Westbrook prior to Augusta. Christie has a BA in Psychology from the University of Southern Maine and an MBA in Human Resources Management from Franklin Pierce University. She is also the current President of the Maine Local Government Human Resources Association (MLGHRA), an MMA affiliate group, and serves on MMA’s Education & Training Advisory Council.

Through these roles have become familiar with the benefit programs MMEHT offers and she plans to use this knowledge to assist the board in responsibly administering the Trust’s programs. She looks forward to working with the board to ensure MMEHT benefit programs continue to meet the needs of employers and participants.

Christie will serve the remainder of the vacant term ending December 31, 2027. We welcome her to the Health Trust Board of Trustees.

- **Join a social or hobby group.** This can help you meet new people and form new friendships.
- **Volunteer.** Giving back to your community can help you feel good about yourself and connect to others.
- **Make time for social activities that you enjoy.** Whether it’s going out to eat, seeing a movie, or taking a walk, spending time with others can be enjoyable and good for your health!

Taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health.

Power 2 Prevent - Coming Soon!

The **Power 2 Prevent** program is a yearlong program designed for people with prediabetes, or those at risk for developing Type 2 diabetes who want to lower their risk. We will be kicking off this program for our MMEHT members in September of 2025.

About Power 2 Prevent

The **Power 2 Prevent** program is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Prevent T2 Lifestyle Change Program and is designed to help you build healthy new habits that last a lifetime.

The Health Trust's Health Promotion team is specially trained to lead the program and will help you learn new skills, encourage you to set and meet goals, and keep you motivated. The facilitator will lead discussions and help make the program fun and engaging. In addition, our program will focus on creating a support network of people with similar goals and challenges. Together, we will share ideas, celebrate successes, and work to overcome obstacles.

Time commitment

The program runs for one year. During the first six months of the program, we will meet once a week on Zoom either during the day or evening (depending on what works better for your schedule). During the second six months, we will be meeting once or twice a month.

You may think you learned enough in the first six months and can skip the second half of the program, but you'd be cheating yourself. Making lifestyle changes is an ongoing process. Staying in the program for the full year is essential to help you stick to new habits and avoid slipping back into old habits. And if you have not reached your goals in the first half of the program, the team can help you succeed.

Program Goals

The **Power 2 Prevent** program will help participants achieve moderate weight loss by eating well and being active.

By the end of the first six months, the goal is for participants to:

- Lose at least 5 to 7 percent of their starting weight
- Get at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week, at a moderate pace or more

By the end of the second six months, the goal is for participants to:

- Keep off the weight they have lost
- Keep working toward their goal weight if they haven't reached it
- Lose more weight if they wish
- Keep getting at least 150 minutes of activity each week



What's the Structure?

In the first half of the program, you'll learn to:

- Eat healthier without giving up all the foods you love.
- Add physical activity to your life, even if you don't think you have time.
- Learn to better manage stress.
- Cope with challenges that can slow your progress, like choosing healthy food when eating out.
- Get back on track if you stray from your plan. Everyone slips now and then!

Each week will include:

- A review and check-in on weekly progress, including a private weight check-in.
- A discussion about the week's topic that will give you a chance to learn from the program materials and each other.
- A follow-up email with a to-do list and handouts to reinforce what you've learned.

In the second half of the program, you'll enhance the skills you've learned so you can maintain the changes you've made. These sessions will review key ideas such as tracking your food and physical activity, setting goals, staying motivated, and overcoming barriers. The wellness team and the group will continue to support you. You'll learn some new information too.

Is there a Cost?

Wellness Works is offering this program free of charge for all MMEHT members, so there is no reason not to join in.

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The Link Between Drinking Alcohol and Cancer

Alcohol use has been getting a lot of attention lately, as it has been shown that there is a strong link between alcohol consumption and cancer risk. Research indicates that alcohol consumption is associated with an increased risk of several types of cancer, including breast, liver, and colorectal cancer. The byproduct of alcohol metabolism, acetaldehyde, is toxic and can damage DNA, contributing to cancer development. Overall, the scientific consensus is that drinking alcohol can cause several types of cancer, and it is recognized as a known human carcinogen.

The cancers that are linked to alcohol are the following:

Cancers of the mouth, throat, voice box, and esophagus

Alcohol use raises the risk of mouth, throat, voice box, and Esophageal cancer. Drinking and smoking together raises this risk many times more than drinking or smoking alone. This might be because alcohol can help harmful chemicals in tobacco get inside the cells that line your mouth, throat, and esophagus. Alcohol might also limit how well these cells can repair damage to their DNA caused by the chemicals in tobacco.

Liver cancer

Long-term alcohol use has been linked to an increased risk of liver cancer. Regular, heavy drinking use can damage your liver, leading to inflammation and scarring, and raising your risk of liver cancer.

Colon and rectal cancer

Alcohol use is linked to a higher risk of cancers of the colon and rectum. There is stronger evidence for this in men, but studies have found a link in women as well.

Breast cancer

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer in women. Alcohol can raise estrogen levels in the body, which may explain some of the increased risk. Avoiding or cutting back on alcohol may be an important way for many women to lower their risk of breast cancer.

Stomach cancer

Having three or more alcoholic drinks a day raises your risk of stomach cancer.

All types of alcohol increase cancer risk. This includes beer, wine, liquor (distilled spirits), and other drinks. When it comes to cancer risk, the amount of alcohol you drink over time seems to be the most important risk factor. The *type* of alcohol you drink isn't as important.

Most evidence suggests the ethanol in alcohol is what increases cancer risk, not other things in the drink. Ethanol is the type of alcohol found in all alcoholic drinks.

Alcoholic drinks have different percentages of ethanol. But in general, one standard-sized serving of alcohol has roughly the same amount of ethanol (about half an ounce) no matter the type. Of course, larger or stronger drinks can have more ethanol than this.

*One standard-sized serving of alcohol = 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor.

Other long-term health effects from drinking alcohol

Most people know about the short-term effects of drinking alcohol, such as its effects on mood, concentration, judgment, and coordination. But alcohol can also have longer-term health effects. These can vary from person to person.

For some people, alcohol is addictive. Drinking can become heavier over time, leading to serious health and social problems. Heavy drinkers who suddenly stop drinking can have physical withdrawal symptoms over the next few days. This includes tremors, confusion, hallucinations, seizures, and other serious problems.

In some people, these withdrawal symptoms can be life-threatening. This doesn't mean heavy drinkers should *not* stop drinking. But it *does* mean heavy drinkers should talk with their health care team about the safest way to stop.

Over time, excessive alcohol use can:

- Cause inflammation (hepatitis) and heavy scarring (cirrhosis) in the liver, which can lead to liver failure
- Damage other organs, such as the pancreas and the brain
- Raise your blood pressure
- Increase your risk of heart disease and stroke
- Weaken your immune system
- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy, especially heavy drinking, can cause birth defects or other problems with the fetus

What does the American Cancer Society recommend?

According to the American Cancer Society Guideline for Diet and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention, it is best not to drink alcohol. People who choose to drink alcohol should limit their intake to no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink a day for women.

The recommended limit is lower for women because of their smaller body size and because their bodies tend to break down alcohol more slowly.

Source: www.cancer.org

Maine's Hidden Hideaways

Looking for something fun to do this summer? Consider exploring the historic forts of Maine! Regardless of whether you are a history buff, a kid who loves exploring, or someone who just enjoys seeing new places... the many forts of Maine hold a little something for everyone.

Many of Maine's historic forts date back to the 1800s. While many of these forts were never attacked, they stood in defense of our nation and each one holds the history and stories of our great state. While there are over twenty forts to explore in Maine, the most popular is Fort Knox located in an area known as the Penobscot Narrows in Prospect.

Fort Knox was built in 1844 to protect against British invasions and while it was never completed, the fort is rich in history and fun to explore! Fort Knox is considered to be one of the best-preserved forts on the New England coastline and is open for visitors from May 1st- October 31st. In addition to multiple special events during the summer, visitors can take their time exploring the hallowed halls of the fort. For those who are not afraid of heights, the Penobscot Narrows Observatory, located on the grounds of Fort Knox, provides the fastest elevator ride in Northern New England to the top of the tallest public bridge-observatory in the world! This one-minute ride will take you up 420 feet and allow you to see stunning views of Fort Knox and the Penobscot Bay area.

Visit www.fortknoxmaine.com for more information or to plan your visit this summer!



Power 2 Prevent - Coming Soon! (cont'd)

Should You Join?

If you are not sure about your risk for prediabetes and Type 2 diabetes, we encourage you to take the online prediabetes risk test. www.cdc.gov/prediabetes/risktest/index.html. If your healthcare provider has already mentioned that you are at risk of Type 2 diabetes or prediabetes, then now is your chance to take action!

Sign Up

If the idea of real people, real results, and real change sounds



Strategies to Avoid Computer Eye Strain

These days, many of us have jobs that require us to stare at computer screens for hours at a time, which can put a real strain on your eyes. A few changes to your workspace can improve your symptoms and prevent new problems.

Cut the glare. Change the lighting around you to reduce the effect on your screen by closing the blinds, relocating your laptop or using a desk lamp. You can also add a glare filter to your monitor.

Rearrange your desk. The best position for your monitor is slightly below eye level, about 20 to 28 inches away from your face. Put a stand next to your monitor and place any printed materials you're working from on it. That way, you won't have to look up at the screen and back down at the desk while you type.

Give your eyes a break. Follow the 20-20-20 rule. Look away from the screen every 20 minutes or so and look at something around 20 feet away for about 20 seconds. Blink often to keep your eyes moist. If they feel dry, try some artificial tear eye drops.

Tweak your settings. Adjust the brightness, contrast, and font size until you find what's best for you.

Visit your eye doctor regularly. Routine exams are important to keep your prescriptions up to date and to assess your eye health. Share any problems or concerns with your doctor.

Source: www.webmd.com

good to you, then sign up for the **Power 2 Prevent** program beginning in September. Contact Abby DiPasquale at adipasquale@memun.org to reserve your spot. Space is limited and attendance will be capped, so act now. Together we have the **Power 2 Prevent** Type 2 diabetes.

Real People, Real Results, Real Change
Power 2 Prevent
Begins with You!

Get Active with the Family Fitness Challenge

Being active as a family is hard, especially when everyone is running in opposite directions and has different interests. According to the American Heart Association, only about one in five adults and teens are getting enough exercise to maintain good health - that equates to about 150 minutes of heart-pumping activity each week. Moving our bodies doesn't have to be a chore. In fact, if we do it right, we might be able to find a way to connect with each other more and encourage healthy behaviors that will last a lifetime! How are you going to find something that everyone wants to do? With the Family Fitness Challenge!



Recently one of our MMEHT members shared with us that they were starting a Family Fitness Challenge. The concept was pretty straightforward - every two weeks the adults and kids in their immediate and extended family agreed to try a new healthy behavior. The participants ranged in age from 7-74, so finding something that everyone wanted to do together seemed like a long shot, but they only had to stick with it for two weeks before they had the opportunity to move on to something new. Each day they checked in via text messaging to determine who had completed their task and to cheer each other on along the way!

The first challenge was to increase water intake. They picked a 96-ounce goal for women, a 128-ounce goal for men, and the kids' goal was 64 ounces. This was a pretty lofty goal, since very few actually drank ANY water, but they started off slowly and worked toward increasing their intake throughout the next two weeks. Surprisingly, most of them found that they felt better and most cut out the caffeinated and carbonated drinks that used to fill their cups. At the end of the two weeks about half of the challenge participants decided to keep track of their water intake.

The second challenge was proposed by one of the kids and it was to do wall sits. A wall sit is an exercise where you hold a squat position against a wall, engaging your legs and core

muscles without moving. Apparently, this is a pretty easy task for kids, but much harder for adults! The challenge started with just a 20 second wall sit the first day and then an additional 10 seconds were added each day for two weeks, so on the final day those that participated held a two-minute wall sit.

The third exercise voted on by everyone in the family was to hold a plank. A plank is a core-strengthening exercise where you hold your body weight in a straight line from your head to your heels either from your forearms or from a push-up position. Again, the group started with 20 seconds on the first day and added an additional 10 seconds each day for a grand total of 2 minutes at the end of two weeks.

The fourth family fitness challenge was to do body weight squats, with the goal being to do at least 100 throughout the day. The fifth challenge was to walk or run for a minimum of 20 minutes each day. The sixth challenge was to include some upper body strength training either in the form of 30 push-ups or 30 bicep curls into overhead extensions with dumbbells each day.

After 12 weeks of the Family Fitness Challenge, those who continued to participate (which was about 75% of those that started) were still going strong. Most had just added the new challenge each week to the one from the week before, which resulted in a pretty robust fitness plan. The group overwhelmingly reported feeling better, most dropped some weight, and more importantly, they all reported a better connection with each other.

Finding an activity that everyone wants to do can be difficult, but by including everyone in the planning and decision making, this family was able to make some real lasting changes and have a lot of fun along the way!

** Please note: it is important to realize your limitations and where you are physically. Make modifications to account for current abilities with whatever challenge your family throws your way!

The Family Fitness Challenge was really about staying connected and accountable to one another. This group started out using standard text messages, but then discovered the free app called HabitShare that allowed them to not only track their individual health goals but also share their progress with their family members. This app allowed them to create their own goals, set up daily reminders to remember their new habits, and control who they connected and shared their progress with. Check out this app!



Nutrition

Calories: 45kcal | Carbohydrates: 12g | Protein: 1g | Fat: 1g | Sodium: 52mg
Fiber: 1g | Sugar: 12g | Vitamin C: 1mg | Calcium: 12mg | Iron: 1mg

Honey Blackberry Mint Mocktails

Ingredients

- 8 fresh blackberries plus more for garnish
- 1/4 cup honey
- Handful fresh mint leaves about 10, plus more for garnish
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 cups seltzer

Instructions

1. In a cocktail shaker, muddle together the blackberries, honey, and mint until blended.
2. Add the lemon juice and water, cover, and shake to mix.
3. Strain the mixture into two glasses with ice.
4. Top each glass with 1 cup of seltzer.
5. Garnish with blackberries and mint leaves.

What Do We Know About Healthy Aging?

Many factors influence healthy aging. Some of these, such as genetics, are not in our control. Others like exercise, a healthy diet, going to the doctor regularly, and taking care of our mental health are within our reach. Research supported by NIA (National Institute on Aging) and others has identified actions you can take to help manage your health, live as independently as possible, and maintain your quality of life as you age.

Whether you love it or hate it, physical activity is a cornerstone of healthy aging. Scientific evidence suggests that people who exercise regularly not only live longer but also may live better, meaning they enjoy more years of life without pain or disability. A study of adults 40 and older found that taking 8,000 steps or more per day, compared to only taking 4,000 steps, was associated with a 51% lower risk of death from all causes. You can increase the number of steps you get each day by doing activities that keep your body moving, such as gardening, walking the dog, and taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

Making smart food choices can help protect you from certain health problems as you age and may even help improve brain function. Much of the research shows that the Mediterranean-style eating pattern, which includes fresh produce, whole grains, and healthy fats, but less dairy and more fish than a traditional American diet, may have a positive impact on health.

Getting enough sleep helps you stay healthy and alert. Even though older adults need the same seven to nine hours of sleep as all adults, they often don't get enough. Not getting enough quality sleep can make a person irritable, depressed, forgetful, and more likely to have falls or other accidents. Try to fall asleep and get up at the same time each day. Avoid napping late in the day, as this



may keep you awake at night.

As people age, changes such as hearing and vision loss, memory loss, disability, trouble getting around, and the loss of family and friends can make it difficult to maintain social connections. This makes older adults more likely to be socially isolated or to feel lonely. Although they sound similar, social isolation and loneliness are different. Loneliness is the distressing feeling of being alone or separated, while social isolation is the lack of social contacts and having few people to interact with regularly.

Taking care of your physical health involves staying active, making healthy food choices, getting enough sleep, limiting your alcohol intake, and proactively managing your health care. Small changes in each of these areas can go a long way to support healthy aging.

Source: www.nia.nih.gov



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Wellness Works Book Club

Do you want to learn more concepts on how to build healthy habits, understand different perspectives and connect with other MMEHT participants who are interested in discussing wellness? Then the quarterly Zoom book club may be for you!

The next selection that the book club will be reading is *Upworthy – Good People: Stories from the Best of Humanity* by Gabriel Reilich and Lucia Knell. This book is a much-needed trove of life-affirming stories told straight from the heart. Each piece speaks to the breadth, depth, and beauty of the human experience. Rippling with wit, compassion, and courage, each chapter offers a restorative opportunity to believe in people's fundamental goodness.

- The book club meeting will be held on **Wednesday, September 17 at noon or 7:00 p.m.** There are two times to choose from (just choose one to attend). Please contact Anne Charles at acharles@memun.org if you have questions or want to join the book club (she will send you the link to register for the meeting).
- Participants will need to supply their own book – the use of public libraries is strongly encouraged. Purchasing a book or listening to audio is a great option too!
- Everyone who attends the book club meeting will receive a fun gift pack in the mail! Who doesn't love fun mail?