



Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust

# Wellness Works

## SUMMER 2022

## Anthem Network Updates

As you have likely heard on the news, MaineHealth has publicly announced its intention to remove Maine Medical Center (MMC) from the Anthem network on January 1, 2023.

The dispute between the Health Trust's third party administrator, Anthem, and the parent organization of MMC, MaineHealth, is about how the hospital is paid, and if MMC is charging appropriately for services as per their existing contractual agreement.

We speak regularly with leadership of both parties, and they have recently shared that some progress is being made in their discussions. As of the time of this newsletter's publication, they report meeting frequently in an attempt to work out their differences, but that no agreement has yet been reached on several key items. All parties remain hopeful that they will reach an agreement and that MMC will remain in the Anthem network for 2023.

We understand the concerns raised by this announcement and this potential change. The Health Trust continues to work on contingency plans in the event an agreement cannot be reached.

Please note that MaineHealth has stated that they are withdrawing only the Maine Medical Center (MMC) *hospital facility* from the Anthem network. MaineHealth has confirmed (on their own website) that "MaineHealth has no plans to remove its physicians and other providers in its system-wide medical group from the Anthem network." We are finding this is a common misconception that is causing members undue anxiety.

We are monitoring this situation very closely, and are doing all we can to



push for a quick resolution and to limit the impact on our members. For the latest updates please visit [www.mmeht.org/anthem-and-maine-medical-center-contract-dispute](http://www.mmeht.org/anthem-and-maine-medical-center-contract-dispute)

Two large Southern Maine practices, Coastal Women's Healthcare and Fore River Urology, also recently notified patients that they have decided to withdraw from the network, effective in August.

Anthem and Coastal Women's Healthcare (CWH) notified us on June 21, 2022 that they have reached an agreement, and CWH will NOT be leaving the Anthem network. You may view their joint press release on the Trust website at [www.mmeht.org/news/anthem-network-changes](http://www.mmeht.org/news/anthem-network-changes).

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## Wellness on the Web

### Did You Know?

3 in 4 adults do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity.

As we age, regular exercise can help prevent various ailments, including cardiovascular disease, coronary artery disease, obesity and cancer. Physical activity strengthens our muscles, helps us lose weight, prevents high cholesterol and improves our mood and overall well-being. Aim to get 150 minutes of moderate activity each week to reap all the health promoting benefits that exercise has to offer!



## Catch Up on Delayed Preventive Care

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every part of our lives — and health care is no exception. In the past couple years, many people put off routine health care and preventive services like screenings, vaccines and treatment for chronic conditions. This could cause serious problems in the future.

Many conditions are harder to treat when they're caught later on. Delays can lead to more complicated treatments, including surgeries, longer hospital stays, and a higher risk of complications.

Regular preventive health screenings, such as mammograms, colonoscopies and physicals are crucial for the early detection of possible issues. The earlier your doctor discovers signs of a problem, the better chance that treatment options will lead to successful outcomes for you. Check with your doctor to see if you or a family member missed these important tests, and when you can get them rescheduled.

Getting preventive services on time is especially important for babies and kids. This is because pediatricians use regular well-child visits to monitor their growth, help them manage any long-term conditions, and give them vaccines. Their doctor can help catch any problems early, when they may be easier to treat.

If you delayed preventive health care during the pandemic, now's the time to get caught up again. We encourage you to get back on track, and to schedule that annual physical, an eye exam, a dental check-up, or to get help with managing a chronic condition.



## New Billing & Enrollment Services Manager

The Maine Municipal Association is pleased to announce that **Nicole Ouellette** has been promoted to the position of Billing & Enrollment Services Manager. Nicole fills the role that was formerly held by Linda Mack, who retired in April after 25 years of distinguished service.

Nicole has been with the Maine Municipal Association since 2006, starting in the Health Trust as a Member Services Representative and then transitioning to Billing & Enrollment in 2011. She most recently was a Senior Billing and Enrollment Representative. Prior to coming to the Trust she had many years' experience working in medical billing and collections.

Nicole is known for her knowledge, her ability to problem-solve and for building strong relationships with the employer representatives we serve. She has built a great deal of expertise in the Trust's new administration system.

Nicole manages the Billing & Enrollment Services team of two Billing & Enrollment Representatives and two Administrative Assistants. The Billing & Enrollment team handles employer and participant questions related to premium billing and eligibility. They may be reached at 1-800-452-8786 ext. 2585.

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### Anthem Network Updates cont'd

Anthem continues to negotiate with Fore River Urology, but they have been unable to settle on a new contract.

The Health Trust is concerned about the lack of access to established providers, and the impact on our members. However, we do also understand that there is a balance to be maintained in order to control the costs of healthcare. These organizations initially asked for very large increases (between 50 to 70%) in the amounts they are paid for services provided.

State law requires that 60 days notice be provided to members if your doctor leaves the network.

Under federal law, you may be able to stay with your current doctor(s) at in-network levels for a limited time if you are receiving certain types of care. This is referred to as Continuity of Care. You may refer to the Health Trust website at [www.mmeht.org/news/anthem-network-changes](http://www.mmeht.org/news/anthem-network-changes) for more information and a Continuity of Care Request Form.

Please contact MMEHT Member Services so that we can assist you with the Continuity of Care process, or in finding a new in-network provider if you so choose. Member Service Representatives are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. at 1-800-852-8300.

# Become a Mental Health First Aider

One in five Americans experience a mental health or substance use disorder in any given year and over the course of our lifespan, half of us will experience mental illness. The pandemic has dramatically increased depression and anxiety rates among both children and adults, but it has also served to shine a light on the trouble that already existed in terms of our mental health needs as a country. Many of us are now beginning to see how this unaddressed health issue is affecting our families, communities, and workplaces.

Too often those experiencing mental health challenges or substance use disorders are reluctant to seek help or simply don't know where to turn for care. Unlike physical conditions, symptoms of mental health and substance use problems can be difficult to detect. Friends and family members may find it hard to know when and how to step in. As a result, those in need of mental health services often do not receive care until it is too late. We know that many of our members, family and friends are living with mental health challenges and substance use disorders and need our support.

The Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust (MMEHT) recognizes that without good mental health, good physical health is impossible. For almost 30 years, the Wellness Works program has been focused on helping our members achieve and maintain physical health and we are pleased to be expanding our offerings with mental health as well. MMEHT has committed to training a staff member on the Wellness Works team to offer the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to our membership. We are so excited that Abby DiPasquale has been nationally certified and has begun training our members to help address the mental health crisis in towns across the state of Maine.

## What is a Mental Health First Aider? So glad you asked!

Just as CPR helps even those without clinical training assist an individual having a heart attack, MHFA gives participants skills to interact with a person experiencing a mental health crisis and learn a 5-step Action Plan that guides them through the process of reaching out and offering appropriate support. This groundbreaking skills-based course gives people the tools to identify, understand and respond to someone who might be struggling with a mental health or substance use challenge — and connect them with appropriate support and resources when necessary. People with mental health challenges and substance use disorders are more likely to seek help if encouraged by individuals they trust, like co-workers, friends and family. That is why MMEHT is offering this MHFA training - to increase mental health literacy, increase empathy, and foster supportive conversations about mental health resources.



## When can you get started? Now!

Abby will be offering both one and two-day trainings this fall that will be open to all Health Trust Members and their dependents (18 and older) who are interested in becoming certified as an Adult Mental Health First Aider. This training is being offered exclusively to MMEHT members and space in each class is extremely limited. The MHFA training will consist of 2 hours of pre-course work to be completed on your own and then either one 6-hour training or two 3-hour trainings that will take place virtually on the ZOOM platform, so there is no need for you to travel to become certified. Upon completion of the program, you will be a certified Mental Health First Aider and prepared to help address the mental health challenges and smash the stigma of mental health in your community. The cost of the MHFA training is \$170/per participant, however because MMEHT is committed to address this issue for our members, the cost for the program will be waived. That's right, it is **FREE!**

If you are interested in becoming a Mental Health First Aider, and have the support from your employer, please contact Abby DiPasquale at [adipasquale@memun.org](mailto:adipasquale@memun.org) to enroll in the program. If you are unable to make these initial sessions but are interested in opportunities for training in the future, please let Abby know so she can add you to the wait list!

## Upcoming Trainings:

September 29 from 9-3

September 16 and 23 from 9-12



# Why You May Experience Social Anxiety as You Emerge from the Pandemic

If you're experiencing some discomfort when returning to social situations, you're not alone. Many are feeling the same right now and experts say it's perfectly normal. People are feeling anxiety and distress as they reenter society after two years of taking safety precautions to stay safe from COVID-19. For some, this may be the first time they're experiencing symptoms of social anxiety. There are steps you can take to reduce anxiety and make social situations more enjoyable.

At the start of the pandemic, staying at home and physically distancing from others became necessary precautions to slow virus transmission and keep everyone safe. Now, as people return to the office, mask mandates have lifted, and we begin to reemerge into society, connecting physically with others is becoming more part of our daily lives again. While some people may find this in-person socializing exuberant after being cooped up for so long, others may face anxiety and distress in these now new again social situations.

Re-entry anxiety is normal for everyone. Those that chose to socially distance themselves or were encouraged to complete school or work from home became comfortable with those shifts in their behaviors. Now, as they reemerge and return to work and school or start to attend social gatherings, it is normal to experience some worry or discomfort.

The most obvious symptoms to look for include experiencing severe discomfort in social situations and the choice to avoid social outings. Often this discomfort or avoidance is fueled by fears of being judged or embarrassed. You may also notice physical symptoms, such as a racing heart, sweating, nausea, dizziness, and feeling flushed in social situations.

Many people are experiencing social anxiety for the first time. Experts say people who have never experienced social anxiety in the past may be surprised to find they are feeling it now. People are experiencing unexpected feelings, even people who aren't particularly socially anxious may feel a bit awkward jumping back into activities that were previously comfortable for them. One reason for this is that people are simply out of practice. Partially, it may be because they are no longer comfortable or familiar with those former habits.

There may also be anxiety related to pandemic protocols in social settings. There's a bit of uncertainty right now with how much to interact,

if you can hug people or can shake hands and some of the rules of social interaction are still in flux. Further complicating this, people have different comfort levels when it comes to how they socialize. Now you may have to think about what might make someone else feel uncomfortable and what your own comfort level is. Even though mask mandates have lifted, and society is heading back to "normal," some people may not feel comfortable meeting in a large group and still feel safer wearing a mask. What used to be normal for someone may no longer be the case.



How do people cope with social anxiety as they reenter society? Firstly, if you're experiencing anxiety in social situations, know that this is completely natural. Strategies for dealing with social anxiety are the same whether you're experiencing it for the first time or it's a familiar feeling. A common strategy for dealing with anxiety around a social situation is just to ignore it. That may work for very mild concerns, but it could also be counterproductive because you're not really dealing with what the fear

is. Think through your fears and figure out what exactly it is that's causing concern. Once you can name that, you can then think through ways to deal with it.

When you're aware of what's causing your anxiety, have a game plan to address it. Let's say you're going to a party and you're unsure about everyone's level of comfort with social rules of interaction and you may also be concerned about not having anything to talk about. One strategy would be to bring up the difficulty of socializing, coming back after COVID, and asking others how they feel. It is a real thing; people have forgotten how to small talk because they haven't had to for a couple of years. Another strategy is to think of general topics to have at the tip of your tongue because that will just help reduce your initial anxiety and let you get into the swing of things.

Think of social outings as experiments. As with many things in life, practice makes perfect. People experiencing re-entry anxieties will become more comfortable in these situations as they engage in them more often

Source: [www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com)

# Gardening: A Form of Meditation

Whether you have a sprawling vegetable garden in your backyard, or a thriving plant potted in your living room, there's something special about caring for a plant. It's fun and exciting to watch a plant grow new leaves and get a bit taller. Gardening can bring us joy and it can even be a form of meditation.

We often think that to meditate we must be still and in complete silence, learning to let go of our thoughts as well as letting go of worries in the past and anxieties about the future. When we're involved in something like gardening, we are very much able to, in the meditative sense, let go of our thoughts and stay focused in the moment on what we are doing.

Gardening can be extremely rewarding because it allows us to see how we, as individuals, can make a difference. For example, when you plant something like sunflower seeds, you wait and watch for them to pop up and start to grow. You've done something positive and by engaging in something rewarding our dopamine and serotonin levels increase, which puts us in a better mood.

For some, having a full garden may be stress-inducing. It may feel like one too many demands when you already have a busy schedule. So, the fact that you can keep three herb plants alive on a windows sill may feel like a huge accomplishment. One of the things that gardening does for us, whether it's indoors or outdoors, is give us the opportunity to focus on caring for the self while caring for something else. There is this relationship with the plants, you're watching them grow and plants give reinforcement if we give them enough water and fertilizer, they reward us by growing.

Gardening as meditation is especially useful if you don't love traditional seated meditation. Instead of forcing yourself to sit and breathe for 15 minutes, find something that you enjoy doing that is relaxing as well.

Source: [www.wellandgood.com](http://www.wellandgood.com)



## Where There Is a Will, There Is a Way

Each year, nearly 8,000 people die in the United States and 68% of them have no will. Dying without a will can add to the chaos and turmoil a grieving family is already experiencing. As members of the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust, there is no reason any of us should be without a will, because we have access to free resources to create estate plans through the Anthem EAP ([www.anthemep.com](http://www.anthemep.com) Login: MMEHT).

Anthem EAP has partnered with NOLO, the maker of the *Quicken WillMaker & Trust* software to help members create estate plans. Whether you are just getting started or want to update your previous arrangements, this free software will guide you through the process from beginning to end. Visit the Anthem EAP website and click on the Legal/Financial tab in the green section and then "Click here to access legal and financial content." This will provide you with more details about the program and provide you with the coupon code and instructions to access the free *Quicken WillMaker & Trust* program at no cost to you.

This is an amazing benefit for our members and something that everyone over the age of 18 should consider doing - not only for their own peace of mind, but also to ensure that their family members are taken care of in the future.

### Fun Will Facts

The longest will ever probated was 1,066 pages and 95,940 words. The shortest known wills are only three words long reading, "all to son" and "all to wife". Do your loved ones a favor and use the resources outlined above to create a will that is both legal and contains all the relevant information.



# The Benefits of Exercising at Home

During the pandemic, many gyms and studios closed temporarily, and people became creative with their exercise programs. Many people took advantage of this time and started working out at home. Some people purchased equipment (resistance bands, fit balls, stability balls, dumbbells, benches) and many more created programs with body weight exercises only; meaning no weights needed, just your own body weight.

The number one reason people stay away from exercising regularly is because of a time shortage. Well, no more excuses - because you aren't even leaving your house or property! Home workouts are quick to start and finish with no commuting needed. All you need to do is grab your sneakers and get moving.

Another benefit: you will save a ton of money because you will no longer have any membership fees. It's free to workout at home, in the backyard, or the park. You can create your own bootcamp or circuit program with what you have in your yard or around the house. You can use your steps, bench, chairs, curbs, and playground equipment.

If you need ideas, exercises of all kinds, with or without equipment, are online. Search for specific exercises or actual routines and you will be good to go. No more excuses, grab your sneakers, water bottle, and move!

Source: [www.livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com)

**Check out these great resources to support your home exercise routine:**

Workout Trainer – [www.skimble.com](http://www.skimble.com)

Darebee – [www.darebee.com](http://www.darebee.com)

Nike Training Club (app)

# Looking For Place to Explore This Summer? Check This Out!

It's summertime but the gas prices are soaring; meaning for many that long distance travel plans may suddenly been scaled back. But that doesn't mean that you have to sit around the house and do yard-work all summer. Check out the website called **Only in Your State** ([www.onlyinyourstate.com](http://www.onlyinyourstate.com)). It allows you to search out some unique and potentially undiscovered areas to explore right in your own backyard, or if you want to travel to another state you can look up the information in that area as well. From accommodations, to attractions, creepy places to explore, delectable dining experiences, places in nature to recreate and even some seasonal specific options — this site has some amazing ideas for a summer of fun and adventure, no matter what you are looking for. Check it out for yourself and encourage your friends and family to get out and explore the beautiful State of Maine this summer too!



**Quick Access to Anthem EAP Resources**

The Anthem Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers valuable resources designed to help you overcome challenges that impact your health, family life, and job performance. To make it even quicker and easier for you to access EAP's most widely used services, we now have a QR code that you can scan to quickly access the many free resources. No need to enter a password – you are directly brought to the website! The QR code can be found in the Member Resources Section on Page 8 of this newsletter.



## Watermelon Strawberry Caprese Salad

Nutrition Facts: (serves 5)

Total fat: 13 g; cholesterol: 13 mg;  
sodium: 169 mg; carbohydrate: 12g,  
fiber: 1.5 g; protein: 3 g

Source: [www.delish.com](http://www.delish.com)

3 cups watermelon  
2 cups strawberries  
½ cup feta, crumbled  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
Sprinkle of kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
¼ cup fresh basil, torn

Directions:

In a large bowl, combine watermelon, strawberries, feta and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and toss to coat. Garnish with basil and serve.

## How to Save Money on Groceries

If you feel like the prices of groceries has gotten out of hand, you're not alone. Since January 2020, the price of groceries jumped 7%! Do not despair! There are some things you can do to help you save money during your weekly grocery trips:

- **Redesign dinner** - simple meals like sandwiches, breakfast for supper and quick quiches will save you time and money.
- **Keep a tally** - track how much you are putting into your cart by rounding up the amount of each item and putting it in your calculator; this will cut down on surprises at the checkout!
- **Pantry and freezer checklist** - keep track of what you already have on hand to eat and then use it before you buy any more.
- **Shop mid-week** - fewer crowds, more sales and deeper discounts can be found by shopping on Wednesdays instead of on the weekends.
- **Make a meal plan and a list and stick to it** - having a plan of what you will be eating will cut down on unnecessary buying and food waste.
- **Curbside pickup** - ordering your groceries online and avoiding going into the store all together can save you money on those impulse buys - not to mention time!
- **Shop in season and outside the store walls** - consider buying from local farmers and farm stands to get fresher food at better prices.
- **Don't buy more than you need** - even if the price is great, you don't really need 25 cans of baked beans.
- **Watch for deals** - Look for coupons and specials on store apps and in the sales flyers.
- **Grow your food** - get outside and plant a garden with easy to grow veggies and herbs.
- **Meatless Monday** - or any day really. Meat can be one of the most expensive things in our grocery carts. Consider using beans or other plant-based proteins in at least a couple of meals a week.

Grocery shopping doesn't have to break your budget. If you have a plan before you enter the store and stick with it you can save a little extra money each week. For more tips and tricks for eating better on a budget, visit [www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov).





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Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust

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Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust

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## Members Resources

*Keep these numbers handy for future reference!*

### MMEHT Member Services

**1-800-852-8300**

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

### Anthem EAP

Available for anyone whose employer offers a Health Trust health plan

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



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

### VSP

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

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

### IngenioRx Home Delivery Pharmacy

1-833-236-6196

*Service for managing your prescriptions filled via mail order*

### 24/7 NurseLine

1-800-337-4770

*Speak with a nurse anytime about non-emergent issues*

### Future Moms

1-800-828-5891

*Pregnancy support any time of day*

### Anthem Condition Care

1-866-962-0960

*Support for managing chronic health conditions*