

Montana Health Care Programs MESSENGER

FREE High Blood Pressure Program

- Do you have high blood pressure and need help keeping it under control?
- Do you need help finding information on healthy foods, medication, and staying active?

If so, the Montana Cardiovascular Health Program has an event for you! **Health Coaches for Hypertension Control** is a program that provides a way for local coaches to help you control your blood pressure. This program shows you ways to make better lifestyle choices about your health.

The classes are once a week for eight weeks and could be a great step to complete your blood pressure goals. They are **FREE**, and you will get a free blood pressure cuff, stress ball, cookbook, step tracker, and other items to help you control your blood pressure.

The program teaches you ways to cut down high blood pressure. Your coach will support you each step of the way! Lifestyle choices focus on nutrition, exercise, measuring blood pressure at home, taking your medicine, quitting smoking, and creating action plans.

The **Health Coaches for Hypertension Control** program is open to all people living in Montana. For details, contact Callan Brick, Cardiovascular Health Program, at Callan.Brick@mt.gov or (406) 444-9044. There are coaches planning classes in Cascade, Gallatin, Madison, Richland, Lewis & Clark, and Sanders counties. **Virtual options are available, too!**



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Does DPHHS have your **CORRECT** Mailing Address?

In the coming months, DPHHS will need to contact **all** Montana Medicaid and HMK members to begin the cycle of yearly renewals for healthcare coverage qualification. Giving DPHHS your correct mailing address will ensure you receive these important



DPHHS Urges Montanans to be Fall Aware

Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) officials report that nearly one in three Montanans aged 65 and older have reported falling at least once in the last 12 months.

“Falling is not a normal part of aging but knowing a person’s risk factors can reduce the chance of an unintentional fall.” DPHHS Falls Prevention Program Manager Melissa Dale said. **“As a person ages they are at an increased risk for falling and sustaining an injury.”**

Dale notes that almost half (48%) of the falls among Montanans aged 55 and over are from a [slip, trip, or stumble from the ground level](#). In fact, over 1,900 Montanans were hospitalized due to unintentional falls in 2021.

[Many falls are preventable](#) through proactive steps. These steps include:

- **Find a good balance and exercise program.** Look to build balance, strength, and flexibility.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.** Ask for an assessment of your risk of falling.
- **Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist.** Make sure side effects aren’t increasing your risk of falling.
- **Get your vision and hearing checked annually.** Your eyes and ears are key to keeping you on your feet.
- **Keep your home safe.** Remove tripping hazards, increase lighting, make stairs safe, and install grab bars in key areas.
- **Talk to your family members.** Enlist their support in taking simple steps to stay safe. Falls are not just a seniors’ issue.

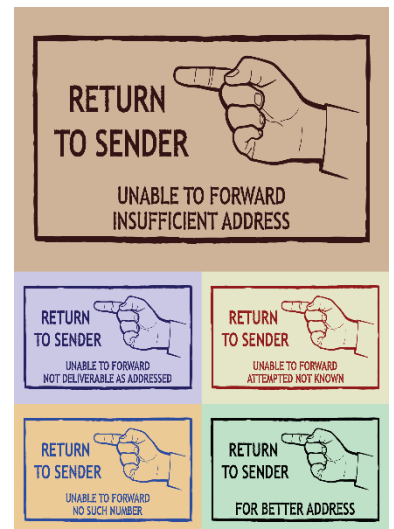
Dale states that more than half of all falls [occur at home](#), but this can be reduced by making a few safety modifications and through practical lifestyle changes. **“Older adults need to be aware of what activities may put them at risk,”** she said.

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) and DPHHS have partnered

notices. Maintaining your coverage may depend on it!

Choose one of FIVE ways to update or confirm your correct mailing address:

- 1. The fastest way is to go to apply.mt.gov and follow the directions that appear in red at the top of the page, [OR](#);
- 2. Call the Public Assistance Helpline at **(888) 706-1535**, [OR](#);
- 3. Mail a letter to **DPHHS, P.O. Box 202925, Helena, MT 59620-2925**, [OR](#);
- 4. Fax a letter with the member’s name, date of birth, case number if known, social security number, previous address, and new address to the **DPHHS at (877) 418-4533**, [OR](#);
- 5. Go to an [Office of Public Assistance Field Office](#).



to bring awareness to older Montanans to learn about their falls risk.

The NCOA has a free, falls risk assessment tool **called [Falls Free Check-Up](#)**. The Falls Free Check-Up is an easy-to-use questionnaire. Upon completion of the 12 questions, the risk assessment is provided. The more risk factors calculated, the higher chance an individual has of falling.

“Those who have multiple risk factors for falling, who have fallen, or have a fear of falling are welcome to attend a falls prevention workshop,” Dale said.

DPHHS works closely with local communities across Montana to offer falls prevention workshops, which include Stepping On and Stay Active & Independent for Life (SAIL). These programs focus on practical steps to reduce the risk of falling through lifestyle management and physical activity.

To locate Stepping On and SAIL workshops, visit the Montana Falls Prevention Program website at [Falls Prevention Classes](#) or call 1-844-684-5848.

Back to School and Mental Health

The days are getting shorter, and the weather is turning cooler. It's back to school time! With all the excitement that going back to school brings for families and caregivers here are some helpful tips to help keep this time of year positive and productive ... all while enjoying everything fall has to offer.

1. Acknowledge mixed feelings. With the start of school your student may be excited to see their friends again, but they may also be experiencing anxiety about the new school year will be like or how to tackle lots of homework.

2. Talk with your student about both the good things and the bad things. Have open regular communication with you child. Instead of just asking, “How was your day?”, which may not give you any details, ask “What were the good things that happened today?” But also, be sure to ask, “What didn't go so well today?” This is important because it makes it ok to have days that don't go well. It happens to all of us. It is also a chance to talk about possible solutions.

3. Pay attention to changes in behavior. Know the common signs of mental health issues. Look for changes in sleep patterns, changes in weight or appetite, increased irritability, changes in friends or avoiding friends, drop in grades, or no longer interested in favorite activities. Also, listen to what your child is saying.

4. Know what resources are available. You don't have to go it alone. To find support for your student if you are concerned, contact your family health care provider or the school. School counselors and nurses can provide resources and information on

Other Helpful Information

For Cancer Patients:

The Montana Cancer Coalition has developed [online maps](#) to help cancer patients, health care providers, and caregivers locate the closest cancer services that are key to improving quality of life for all Montanans on the cancer journey.

For Quit Line Participants with Behavioral Health Conditions:

On average, people with a serious mental illness die fifteen years earlier than the general population largely due to conditions caused or worsened by smoking, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. On July 1, the Montana Tobacco Quit Line launched a new program to better support participants with behavioral health conditions on their journey toward successfully quitting all forms of commercial tobacco. Participants in the behavioral health program will benefit from:

- Seven scheduled telephone coaching sessions that focus on developing and practicing coping skills to manage stress while quitting;
- Specially trained tobacco treatment coaches who understand behavioral health conditions;
- 8-weeks of FREE Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) with combinations of patch, gum, or lozenge; or
- 3-months of FREE prescription cessation Medications like Bupropion.

For more information, visit [QuitNowMontana.com](#) or call **1-800-QUIT-NOW**.

what services are available in your community. And reach out to your student's teacher. Staying connected with the school and the classroom teacher is a great way to show your student you support them.

There are a number of everyday activities you can do to take of yourself and your family and support everyone's mental health.

Get enough sleep. It may be tempting to stay up late to do something fun after a busy school day or lots of homework. But studies show that lack of sleep in children can lead to depression, anxiety, and impulsive behavior. Set a bedtime routine that might include a bath or shower and a bedtime story, turn off TV and electronic devices like video games, phones, and tablets two hours before bedtime.

It is recommended that:

- Children ages 6 to 12 years old get 9-12 hours of sleep a night
- Teens ages 13 to 18 years old get 8-10 hours of sleep a night
- Adults should get a minimum of 7 hours of sleep a night

Eat Healthy Foods. Eating healthy foods not only helps young bodies grow, but it also feeds our brains and improves our mood. Get your student involved! Let them help select healthy foods, choose healthy snacks for like fruits and vegetables instead of junk food, and drink lots of water.

Regular Exercise. When we exercise, our brains release positive "feel good" hormones making our moods improve. School sports are one way for your student to get exercise and spend time with friends.

Other ideas to try this fall include going on bike rides, taking walks or hikes to enjoy the fall season, or visiting a corn maze.

Fun activities: You don't have to spend money to have a great time. Research shows that children and adults with positive social connections are happier, live longer and have better mental and physical health. You might want to consider planning a family game or movie night and having dinner more often as a family. You can also check online or in local newspapers for fun, free community activities. And don't forget the many school clubs, sports, and activities your child can choose from!

These ideas will help boost mental health but be sure to talk to your family doctor or therapist if your child is struggling with their mental health.

By DPHHS Children's Mental Health Bureau <https://dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/CMB>

Sources:

Gillison, Jr., Daniel. "Back to School Mental Health." *NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Health*, 3 September 2021, [Back to School Mental Health | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).

Carrillo, Sequoia. "Keep an eye on your student's mental health this back-to-school season." *National Public Radio/Education*, 22 August 2022, [Mental health in the back-to-school season : NPR](#).

"Sleep and Mental Health." Harvard Health Publishing, 18 March 2019, https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/sleep-and-mental-health.



Key Contacts

Medicaid/HMK Plus Member Help Line

For questions regarding benefits copayments, or Passport to Health:

1-800-362-8312

[MT Healthcare Programs](#)

Montana Relay Service

For the deaf or hard of hearing.

1-800-253-4091 or 711

Montana Public Assistance Help Line

For eligibility questions.

1-888-706-1535

[MT PUBLIC ASSISTANCE](#)

Transportation Center

For questions regarding travel or approval. **Call before you travel, or you may not be reimbursed.**

1-800-292-7114.