

WINTER 2017 ISSUE 7

HealthMatters

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YOUR WINTER WELLNESS PLAN

BEATING THE HOLIDAY BLUES	THREE
FINDING CARE AFTER HOURS	FOUR
CELEBRATING HEALTHY EATING	FIVE
WALKING TO WINTER WELLNESS	SIX



Primary Care
Networks
CALGARY AND AREA



10 years
of care

▶ Your *Health Matters*

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) were established in the Calgary area about 10 years ago to give people access to various health services, programs and health teams through their family doctors. *Health Matters* is published by the PCNs to give you more information about these services.

Today, PCNs work with teams of other health professionals, as well as offer programs such as Prescription to Get Active and Find-a-Doctor.

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'Tis the season to be jolly?

Avoiding disappointment during the holidays

BY ANNE GEORG

No matter how many times someone says "Have a happy holiday!"—many of us just can't. Psychology Today says almost half of North Americans surveyed dread the season.

"The biggest problem we see is that people build big expectations around Christmas, New Year's and other holidays at this time of the year," says Cheryl Henschel, social worker and health promotion facilitator at Southport Health Centre. She says the bigger the difference between holiday hopes and holiday reality, the bigger the disappointment.

Expectations around gift giving, family relationships or social events feel the bite of reality when people have financial issues, family conflicts or are socially isolated. This holiday season may be especially difficult for many families because of Alberta's depressed economy.

"The expectation was that the income would continue," says Henschel. "Now parents have to accommodate a different lifestyle, which is more difficult for them than for the kids." One way to avoid disappointment during the holidays is to start new traditions based on the values that sustain you and your family year-round, rather than focus on what's lacking.



Avoid a holiday letdown by starting new traditions based on your family's values.

A blue Christmas

Depression can happen at any time of the year, but can be felt most deeply around the holidays if people are lonely. Health professionals often see two groups of people: those with depression year-round who become more depressed, and people whose sadness and anxiety are caused by the holidays.

To compound holiday sadness, winter itself can cause the blues, also known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD). We get SAD when our internal biological clock is disrupted. Our 24-hour cycle gets thrown off in winter when we have less exposure to sunlight. That causes fatigue, increased appetite, irritability and lethargy.

Calgary Foothills PCN medical lead

Dr. Ted Jablonski says he's living proof that SAD can be beaten.

"I deploy a plan so winter will never defeat me again," says Jablonski, who unknowingly had SAD for decades. Into his forties and a practising medical doctor, he became increasingly concerned about his seasonally fluctuating energy levels and moods. Finally, his winter blues were diagnosed as SAD.

"I had to admit that I had an illness and I began to manage my life differently," he explains. "I try to stay one step ahead of things now." Jablonski says his success comes largely from making lifestyle changes. (See sidebar.) "It's been working for 10-plus years now, so I'm not giving it up."

10 tips to reduce winter blahs

- Exercise. Physical activity is the best remedy against mild to moderate depression and anxiety.
- Cut down on drinking, eat well and get enough sleep.
- Reach out. Social isolation is among the biggest factors in depression over the holidays.
- Use help lines and free walk-in mental health clinics.
- Acknowledge life's upheavals and make realistic goals to move past them.
- Make a list of what you're grateful for.
- Start a new seasonal tradition.
- Volunteer. It can make you feel better to help those in need.
- Use light therapy (SAD lamp) regularly in the morning to mimic the summer sunrise.
- If your depression is severe, talk to your family doctor about counselling, medication and other options.





After hours

Finding care when your family doctor's office is closed

BY MIKE FISHER

It's the holidays or after hours and your doctor's office is closed. You need care for yourself or a family member. What do you do?

The first step is to call the 24/7 information line Health Link (dial 811) says Christopher Cameron, acting executive director of Clinical Services and Evaluation with Calgary West Central Primary Care Network.

Health Link calls are answered by nurses who provide advice and general health information for Albertans, along with information about treatments, diseases and healthcare services. They help put you in touch with the right healthcare professional or service,

including the Primary Care Network (PCN) where you live.

Patient demand for after-hours care rises a bit during the holidays, says Cameron. People generally seek help for ear, nose and throat infections during the winter cold and flu season.

These kinds of ailments can be quickly treated at an after-hours or open walk-in clinic in your PCN, rather than going to an emergency department at a hospital, says Cameron. "With some clinics, you can call and book an appointment, so you have the ability to avoid delays."

When Michelle Feragen needed medical assistance for her daughter,

Brielle, she called Health Link. Based on the advice they received, they saw a doctor within an hour. "No parent wants his or her child to be ill, but when my girl wasn't doing so well, I was confident she was in good hands and we were receiving quality care. The PCN service works."

If you call your family doctor's office after hours or during the holidays, you'll likely get a recorded message directing you to call Health Link.

"The pace of life for everyone is hectic and our dedicated family doctors throughout Alberta work long hours," Cameron says. "They too, need time to rest and recover so they can provide the best possible care."

PCN options for after-hours care

Calgary Foothills PCN: Access 365 Clinic offers same-day access, 365 days a year. Call Health Link for the hours or visit cfpcn.ca/services/after-hours-clinic.

Mosaic PCN: On evenings and weekends, Health Link and Calgary Lab Services refer Mosaic patients to the physician on call.

South Calgary PCN: Call Health Link or download the South Calgary PCN's free iPhone app, Time2Doc (Android version is coming). With one click, it gives wait times for south Calgary clinics and all Calgary urgent care centres and hospitals. Visit the Apple App Store or scpcn.ca/time2doc to download.

Calgary West Central PCN: Call Health Link and book an appointment at the CWC Primary Care Centre for a same-day appointment, 365 days a year.



Celebrating healthy eating

Tips for the holidays

BY JENNIFER ALLFORD
PHOTO BY TERRY BULLICK

When you're entertaining, or bringing something to a holiday gathering, forget chips and dip and try this healthy and flavourful tzatziki and pita recipe instead. It makes enough for a crowd.

Ingredients

- 3 medium cucumbers
- 2 cups (500 ml) plain 1% MF yogurt
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp (15 ml) lemon juice
- ¼ tsp (1 ml) mint
- ¼ tsp (1 ml) dill
- pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Wash cucumbers and cut in half, lengthwise. With a spoon, scrape the seeds out of each half and discard
2. Grate cucumbers into a

strainer over a bowl and let sit for 30 minutes

3. Press on cucumber with the back of a large spoon to squeeze out the liquid
4. In a bowl, mix cucumber and the remaining ingredients
5. Cover and keep chilled until served with pita bread.

Makes 12 servings.

For more recipes and tips on healthy eating, visit ahs.ca and search Inspiring Healthy Eating.



Rethink your drink

- Try using flavoured coffee beans instead of flavoured coffee creamer
- Try a light beer or add soda to your glass of white wine to make a spritzer
- Pass on soft drinks and add flavour to tap or sparkling water with cucumber slices, cranberries or sliced oranges.



Walking your way to winter wellness

PCN programs get you up and moving

BY JACQUELINE LOUIE



Mark Young is on a pathway to better health—and staying young at heart—by walking every week with a Calgary area Primary Care Network (PCN) walking program.

“The walking group is great,” says Young, 62, who has lost more than 20 pounds and lowered his blood pressure since joining the Highland PCN’s CrossIron Mills Walking Program in 2014.

Young is enthusiastic about getting and staying active, however possible. “It will keep everything flexed and mobile, and that’s so important,” he says.

The hour-long weekly indoor program provides a safe place for people to walk during the winter, and encourages them to track their steps. “It’s accessible—you don’t need any fancy equipment, just a good pair of comfortable shoes,” says Highland PCN kinesiologist Tejal Sisodiya, who leads the walking group each week.

“We hope our walking program encourages people to leave their

homes, especially in the winter, and come out to walk and connect with others,” says Highland PCN health promotion lead, Teree Hokanson. “The social aspect is just as important as the physical, because social connections are critical to well-being.”

Across town, the free South Calgary PCN Walking Group steps out three days a week at the Lake Bonavista Promenade. “It’s really about getting out and moving, within your own capabilities and limits,” says Katie Elgie, kinesiologist with South Calgary PCN. “It’s giving yourself permission to do what you can today. You don’t have to go fast, you just have to go.”

Being physically active has psychological, mental and social benefits, she adds. “It increases energy levels—it’s the number one way to fight fatigue,” Elgie says. “It’s also a really great source of social support, and can help keep people committed to exercising.”

Outside Calgary, people can find walking programs in Strathmore and

Langdon, which are organized by the Calgary Rural PCN. Visit mypcn.ca for more information.

Photo: Borislav Zhuykov

Watch your step: Avoiding slips, trips and falls in winter

- Take your time and watch where you’re going
- Wear footwear with good grips on the soles
- Clean your shoes when you go inside
- Watch for snow and slush that’s been tracked inside and made the floor slippery
- Watch for changes in walking surfaces, and use handrails when available.

How to avoid colds and flu

Avoiding winter colds and flus is another way to stay healthy. To help you boost your health, Tracy Mullen, Calgary Foothills Primary Care Network health management nurse, offers these tips:

- Get the flu vaccine. “Even if it’s not a perfect match, the flu vaccine does give some ability to either avoid getting the flu or have less severe symptoms,” Mullen says.
- Wash your hands vigorously and often with soap and water, scrubbing 15 seconds or more—long enough to sing Happy Birthday twice. The friction you create by rubbing your hands together helps kill germs.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick, and stay at home if you’re under the weather. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing, and sneeze into a tissue or sleeve.
- Live healthy, which includes getting enough rest, eating healthy food, drinking plenty of water, being physically active, not smoking and managing stress.

Primary Objective

BY JACQUELINE LOUIE
PHOTO BY NEIL ZELLER

Name: Jennifer Halliday, 50

Health condition: Type 2 diabetes

Why my health is important to me: To live a better life. When I don't have energy, I feel like I'm missing out.

Health goal: To regain my energy so I can do anything I want, such as kayaking and hiking. I also want to be able to sleep better.

How has your PCN helped you? I've taken huge strides in achieving my health goals. My blood sugar levels have dropped significantly and I've lost about 20 pounds.

Working together: "Working with our multidisciplinary team really helped Jennifer achieve her goal and stay motivated and engaged," says Mosaic PCN registered nurse, Melanie Mainville.

