



Healthy MercyCare Health Plans

LIVING

A wellness newsletter for MercyCare members

Summer 2022

Got water?

Staying hydrated helps your body control temperature, remove waste, protect body tissues and lubricate joints. Recommended total daily water intake varies by age, lifestyle, health and gender.

Total water intake comes from drinking water, other beverages, and food. Milk, juice, cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelon and grapes all have high amounts of water. Foods with a high water content can also be filling.

Women should aim to consume about 11 cups of water per day through eating and drinking. Men should take in about 15 cups of water per day through eating and drinking as well. Be careful when choosing soft-drinks, caffeinated drinks and sports drinks. Caffeine and high blood sugar can also lead to more trips to the bathroom. Peeing more often can cause dehydration over time. Drinking enough water should be a normal part of your day.

You lose water through sweat when you exercise. Exercise outside when the day is coolest during the summer. You should drink more water when you increase your level of activity. Always be aware of how weather conditions impact you. Water loss through sweat can still occur when it's a cloudy and breezy day or a hot summer night.

Your skin may feel dry, itchy, swollen, irritable or sensitive when you are dehydrated. You may also start to get a headache, upset stomach, dizzy or fatigued. In worst cases, you may have muscle cramps, experience fast breathing or pass out. A good way to know how hydrated you are is to keep an eye on your pee. You will not urinate as much as normal and your urine will also be a darker color when dehydrated.

Water with a twist

Infused water is made when veggies, fruit or herbs sit in water for several hours. Infusions create a subtle flavor twist that can help you to drink more water. Lemon, lime, watermelon, cucumber, mint and rosemary are common ingredients. During renaissance times, infused water was often made with flowers like roses. Consider using frozen items. You can also freeze ingredients in ice cube trays to save prep time and reduce food waste.



Infused water can be a refreshing swap for sugary drinks like soda and juice. Recipes made at home will most likely have no calories or carbs. Read labels on store bought options. They often add sweeteners and preservatives.

How to

There are many recipes to make infused water. Below are the basic steps to help you get started.

- Select your ingredients (fresh or frozen)
- Wash your hands
- Prep food using clean tools
- Wash all items
- Peel and cut items as needed
- Put prepped items into a clean glass or BPA-free plastic container that can seal tightly
- Add desired amount of drinking water to container
- Shake or crush items for added texture and flavor
- Store in the fridge for 2-3 hours or until desired flavor is reached

Safety

- Keep the infusion at or below 41° F to prevent the growth of bad bacteria.
- Toss infusions that sit at room temperature for more than 4 hours.
- Keep in the fridge up to six days in a clean, tightly sealed container.
- Date the container so you know when it is expired.
- Use safe food storage and handling practices to avoid contamination.
- Strain your infusion before drinking. Leaving items in the infusion can be a choking hazard.





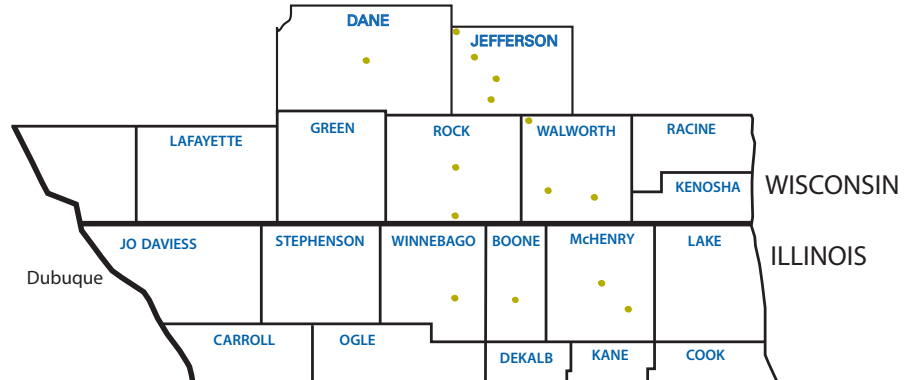
Local farmers markets

Visiting farmers markets is a great way to experience community talents. They don't just happen on weekends either. Many communities have weekday options too! Farmers markets usually have more than just fresh produce. Local crafts people may bring their wares, homegrown meats, cheese and home brews. Food trucks are often available. Musicians and dancers may perform. Seasonal plants also can be purchased.

Interested in finding a farmers market near you?

Illiois: www.ilfma.org/find-a-market

Wisconsin: www.wifarmersmarkets.org



Celebrate health care workers

Mark your calendars! Please take a moment to honor the health care workers that support you during these special days.

May

20-26 – Emergency Medical Services Week: Use this time to thank all the great EMS workers.

June

10-17 – National Nursing Assistant Week: Give a big thank you to all the hard working nursing assistants



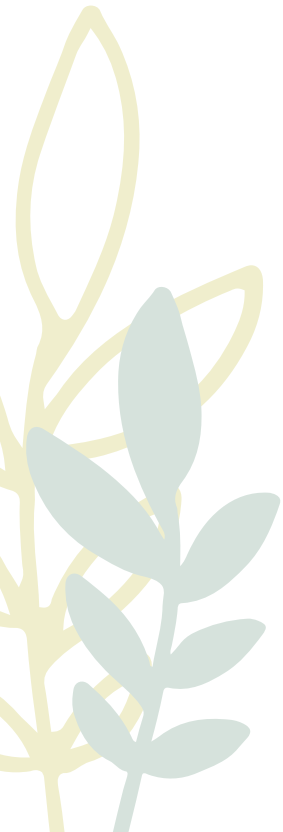


Ticks – What to know and how to stay safe

One arachnid to be aware of is ticks. The reason for concern is due to their ability to spread disease. Ticks feed on blood similar to mosquitoes. Humans are one of many meal options ticks enjoy. They can pick up and share a variety of pathogens and bacteria as they feast. Lyme disease is one of the most well-known. Most people know it for its bullseye rash.

Quick, skillful removal of an attached tick is key. The CDC recommends using a clean, fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick close to the skin. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Try not to twist or jerk as the head and mouth can break off in the skin. Remove as much as possible if this happens then leave the site alone to heal. After removal, clean the bite area and your hands well. Wrap the tick tightly in tape and throw it away or flush it down the toilet for safe disposal. Consider saving the tick in a sealed bag or container to test. Contact your doctor and provide the tick (if possible) should symptoms occur.

Enjoy the outdoors and remain tick free. Ticks hang out in wooded, grassy areas and on brush. Sticking to groomed trails and avoiding brush piles and long grass can help you steer clear. Smart “tick fashion” includes tucking pant legs into socks and wearing a long-sleeve shirt and hat. Selecting light colored clothes can make spotting them easier. Treat clothes with products such as .5% permethrin, DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone. Shower within two hours of returning indoors and tumble dry clothes for about 10 minutes.



Areas on the body to check:

- Under arms
- In and around ears
- Inside the belly button
- Back of the knees
- In and around hair
- The groin
- Where clothes are snug

Be aware of the tick varieties in your area so you know what to look for. Watch out for ticks on your pets too. Enjoy the great outdoors and be safe!





Protect your vision

Good vision is important for quality of life and independence as you age. Follow the tips below in addition to healthy habits for long-term eye health.

Sunglasses

Eyes can sunburn just like skin. The sunglasses you choose should block 99 to 100% of UV-A and UV-B radiation. It's important to wear them on cloudy days too. Clouds don't stop harmful UV rays. These rays can also reflect off surfaces such as snow, water, windows and asphalt. Certain lens coatings and lens types can help as well. Some common side effects of high amounts of UV rays over time are clouding of the lens in the eye, growths in the eye and central vision loss.

Safety glasses

The eye is a delicate organ. Wear safety glasses when things could go flying. Yard work, handling toxic chemicals, or working with tools are some examples of when this may occur. You can buy safety glasses from most stores. You can get them with corrective lenses at your eye care center as well.

Eye exams

Complete an eye exam at least every two years. Your eye doctor might ask you to visit more often. Vision loss usually occurs slowly and often goes unnoticed. You may not be able to tell you have an eye disease in its early stages. Early detection and timely treatment can reduce your odds of vision loss and blindness by almost half.

A dilated eye exam is a good way to find out if you have high blood sugar levels. At least 90% of diabetes related vision loss could be prevented. Call (608) 314-2318 or visit [mercycarehealthplans.com/case-management/](https://www.mercycarehealthplans.com/case-management/) for more information on diabetes-related resources.





Why are chlamydia screenings important?

Sexually transmitted infections or STIs are bacteria or viruses. They're spread through sexual contact in blood, semen, vaginal discharge or other bodily fluids. One in five people have an STI in the US. Almost half of new STIs are in young adults ages 15-24 years old.

Chlamydia is one of the most common STIs for men and women. Symptoms in women include vaginal discharge and burning when peeing, while men may have discharge from the penis, burning while peeing and pain and swelling in one or both testicles. Testicular pain is not common. Some people may have no signs at all.

Chlamydia can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) in women. PID impacts the reproductive organs. Scar tissue builds up and pockets of fluid form, called abscesses. Leaving this infection untreated is painful. The permanent damage it causes makes it harder or impossible to become pregnant later. Finding out you have an STI early can prevent PID and more problems.

Get tested for this STI yearly until you are 24 years old. Men and women who are 25 years and older who are high risk should keep getting tested.

Risk factors for infection include:

- Having multiple sexual partners
- Having a partner with this STI
- Not using condoms
- A history of STIs

Testing can be done at a yearly visit with your doctor. It's important to be honest with your doctor about your sexual health. They're able to take care of you better when you are open with them.

You should tell your partner(s) if you test positive. They'll need to get tested too. This will help stop spread of STIs. It's also vital that you finish your medication so the infection doesn't come back. You shouldn't have sex until you know the STI is gone.





Taking care of you before baby

Pregnancy is a time filled with many feelings for new and even second or third time moms. The best way to take care of your growing baby is to care for yourself during pregnancy. Your health affects your baby.

Healthy diet and prenatal vitamins

Prenatal vitamins help with your baby's brain growth. It's a great idea to start taking prenatal vitamins when you're trying to get pregnant. Once you're pregnant, your doctor will ask you to take prenatal vitamins every day. They may be able to write you a prescription so you can get them at a lower cost.

It's important to eat a healthy diet during pregnancy as well. You'll need to increase your caloric intake. The increase may not be as big as you think. You should only eat 340 more calories daily on average. Eating a balanced diet while pregnant can help you avoid too much weight gain and other issues as well.

Prenatal immunizations

Your doctor may also ask you to get some shots during your pregnancy. The flu shot and Tdap are the most common. These are important to protect you. They may provide some defense for your baby after birth too. An infant will not be able to fight infection the way that adults and older kids can. Getting the Tdap shot while pregnant can help keep your baby from getting serious diseases like pertussis, also known as whooping cough, until they're able to get their first shots.



What is the No Surprises Act?

The No Surprises Act protects people from surprise medical bills for out of network emergency services, out of network air ambulance services, and certain out of network services received at in network facilities. MercyCare wants to make sure our members can get the information they need about the No Surprises Act.

To learn more, visit mercycarehealthplans.com/no-surprises-act.







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