



rural spotlight

During the winter months, Missourians may face major stressors that can impact their lives. There are ways to recognize stressors and learn how to handle them. This edition will help you identify available resources and tips for living a healthier lifestyle.

Solutions for Holiday Stress

The holidays are upon us. The whirlwind of gift giving and the holiday parties seem to begin earlier and earlier each year. Are you having fun or are you overwhelmed by your to-do list? While the holidays are meant to bring peace, love and joy, stress sets in when you try to do it all. To cope, take time out to think about your stressors, and look for alternatives.

A way to take your mind temporarily off the holidays is listening to your favorite music. If you want to celebrate with non-Christmas holiday songs, pull out your favorite rock-n-roll or jazz CD and lose yourself in the music for a while.

Family movie night is another great way to relax and unwind. Forget about “Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer” and “It’s a Wonderful

Life.” Watch a non-holiday comedy or an action flick that gets your mind off the long to-do list.

Simply playing a game with the kids can be a great distraction. No holiday crafts. No Christmas cookies. Just you and your family and an hour of fun. Get out a board game or put on your coats and head outside to throw snowballs, but get away from the holidays for at least a little while.

Remember to get adequate rest. The best way to get more stuff done is to make sure you are well-rested. Staying up until 3 a.m. to complete a project might make you feel good temporarily -- but you will be paying for it several days later. Experts agree, you cannot catch up on the sleep that you have already lost.

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Missouri Department
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and Senior Services

Missouri Resources for Stress Management

Sometimes stress can impact the way you are living. Missourians have options for support when faced with questions about stress and how it can impact their health and life.

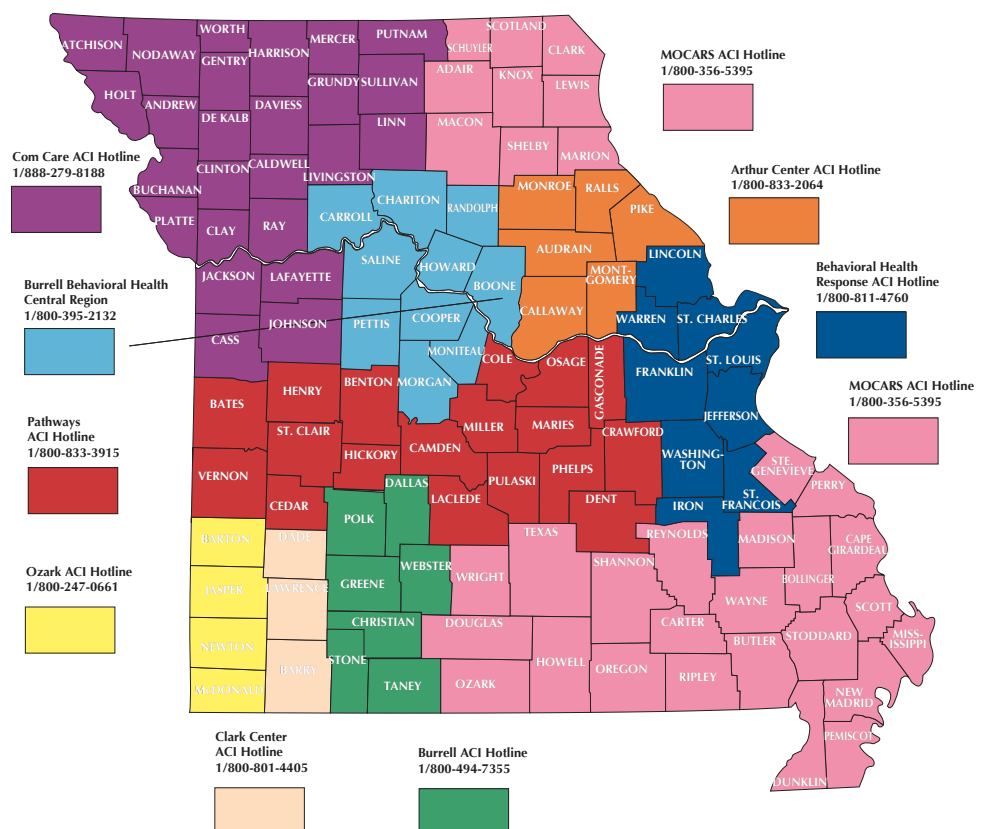
The Challenge of Balance is a University of Missouri Extension on-line resource that offers tips for stress management and a daily stress record. It also lists community resources that are available in almost every area of the state. Additional information on The Challenge of Balance can be found at <http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=gh6651>.

Parenting is one of life's most rewarding experiences. It can also be very challenging and stressful. Parentlink, a program through the University of Missouri Extension, supports Missouri parents by linking them to resources, providing quality information and other materials to strengthen families. Find ParentLink online at <http://education.missouri.edu/orgs/parentlink/> or call 800-552-8522.

Missouri's Department of Mental Health offers the Access Crisis Intervention line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can place a confidential call to the line for a telephone conversation about a crisis you are having, make an appointment to receive a face-to-face intervention with a mental health professional or make arrangements for an alternative service that best meets your needs. You may be given other resources within your community to receive ongoing care. Use the map to find the number to call in your area.

Stressful situations can be more difficult for people suffering from mental illness. Missouri's chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) provides peer support, education and community resource. They offer a 12 week Family-to-Family course that teaches the skills needed to cope with mental illness. The organization also offers a helpline, 800-374-2138, to call for guidance, support and referrals.

Access Crisis Intervention (ACI) Hotlines



Volunteering

for Improved Physical and Mental Health

There are many benefits to volunteering. It can be a most satisfying experience to make a difference in your community. In addition to the pride and sense of accomplishment we may feel through volunteerism, connections are made to others and our own lives may be transformed. The body recognizes when you are working for the benefit of others. Researchers have shown altruism manifests in the body with the release of the hormone oxytocin, which helps protect the body from illness. According to a U.S. News and World Report 2007 study, "...older people who volunteer enjoy longer lives, higher functional ability, and lower rates of depression and heart disease." Volunteering provides them with physical and social activity and a sense of purpose at a time when their social roles are changing.

For younger people, volunteering is a great way to demonstrate how giving to others can impact the way you feel about yourself. The number of elementary, middle and high schools that are implementing service learning clubs across the state is rapidly increasing. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, more than 4,200 K-12 students in Missouri schools are improving their communities through service projects with Learn and Serve America. And that's just one group. Encouraging kids to volunteer at an early age prepares them for a lifetime of responsible citizenship.

The holidays bring out the best in people, including their desire to help others. Although volunteering is important to do throughout the year, most people give more time during the holidays. There are many opportunities to get involved

in your community, through neighborhood organizations, professional associations, arts and historic societies, and civic and social service agencies. Identify an area of interest, find a program to support and set up a schedule to volunteer on a regular basis. Find opportunities for volunteering in your area online at www.volunteer.gov.



Understanding the AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The Affordable Care Act is used to refer to the final amended version of the comprehensive health care reform law enacted in March 2010. Nearly everyone has heard some aspects of the Affordable Care Act, but there is a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding about the new law. The Department of Health and Human Services launched a new website, www.Healthcare.gov on July 1, 2010, to assist people to learn about the Affordable Care Act, what it means to them and their families; search for insurance coverage; compare care quality in providers, and learn about prevention to keep yourself healthy.

The benefits of the Affordable Care Act roll out over the next few years, with most benefits taking effect before or on January 1, 2014. Below are some of the immediate benefits in Missouri:

- Closing the Medicare Part D donut hole. Medicare beneficiaries hit the donut hole, or gap in Medicare Part D drug coverage, and received no extra help to defray the cost of their prescription drugs. The gap is the area in coverage where the patient has to pay for 100 percent of their prescription costs because costs have reached more than \$2,800 but less than \$4,550. Medicare beneficiaries who hit the gap this year were automatically mailed a one-time \$250 rebate check beginning in mid-June as they hit the donut hole. Starting in 2011, Medicare Part D participants will receive a 50 percent discount on brand-name drugs in the donut hole and will start to pay less for generic Part D drugs in the donut hole. Starting in 2013, brand-name drugs will be discounted. And by 2020, plans are underway to get the donut hole closed completely.
- Support for health coverage for early retirees. Many Missourians retired before they are eligible for Medicare and have health coverage through their former employers. Unfortunately for many, their health coverage is not extended into their retirement. Beginning June 1, 2010, funding is available to assist employers to continue providing

health coverage to their early retirees.

- Consumer protections from the insurance market beginning on or after September 23, 2010.
- No lifetime limits on coverage provided by insurance companies.
- People cannot be dropped from coverage when they get sick.
- Children cannot be excluded from coverage because of a pre-existing condition.
- Annual limits imposed by insurance plans will be tightly regulated to ensure access to needed care.
- New insurance plans will have to develop an appeals process to allow enrollees to dispute the denial of a medical claim.
- Patients will be allowed to pick any participating primary care provider in the plan, have access to emergency care and a woman can see an ob-gyn without prior authorization.
- Extending coverage to young adults. Beginning on or after September 23, 2010, plans offering coverage of children on their parent's policy must allow the children to remain on their parent's policy until they turn 26, unless the adult child has coverage through their employment.

To learn more about the law, the timeline of how benefits are rolled out and find insurance options, visit www.Healthcare.gov.

Some individuals are concerned they may still be out of luck if they have been turned down for insurance because of a pre-existing condition. The Affordable Care Act includes the Pre-existing Condition Insurance Plan. It varies by state. In Missouri, through the Missouri Health Insurance Pool, you can apply to be covered for a broad range of health benefits, including primary and specialty care, hospital care and prescription drugs, regardless of your pre-existing condition. Learn more about the Missouri Health Insurance Pool in the next article.



Options for Health Insurance

Do you know someone with an ongoing medical condition in need of affordable health insurance? Maybe they have been turned down for coverage or maybe insurance plans have given them high prices for benefits that do not address their needs.

To ease this burden, the Missouri Health Insurance Pool (MHIP) offers medical and prescription drug benefits through both state and federal pools.

State plans through MHIP include a variety of Preferred Provider Organizations with a range of premiums and deductibles, as well as a high deductible health plan. These plans have a limitation on coverage for pre-existing conditions for the first 12 months.

A new federal program allows people with pre-existing conditions to purchase insurance without limitations on benefits for their problems.

Federal Pool

Must be uninsured for six months

No limitation or restrictions for pre-existing conditions

One medical plan: \$1,000 deductible

One prescription drug plan: \$100 deductible

Maximum out-of-pocket expenses: \$5,950

To be eligible for the new federal pool, an applicant must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or national, or lawfully present in the U.S.;
- Be a Missouri resident;
- Have a pre-existing condition; and
- Be without health insurance for at least the past six months.

State Pool

Rates are generally 30% higher than commercial market

Restrictions on pre-existing conditions

Five medical plans:

\$500 - \$5,000 deductible

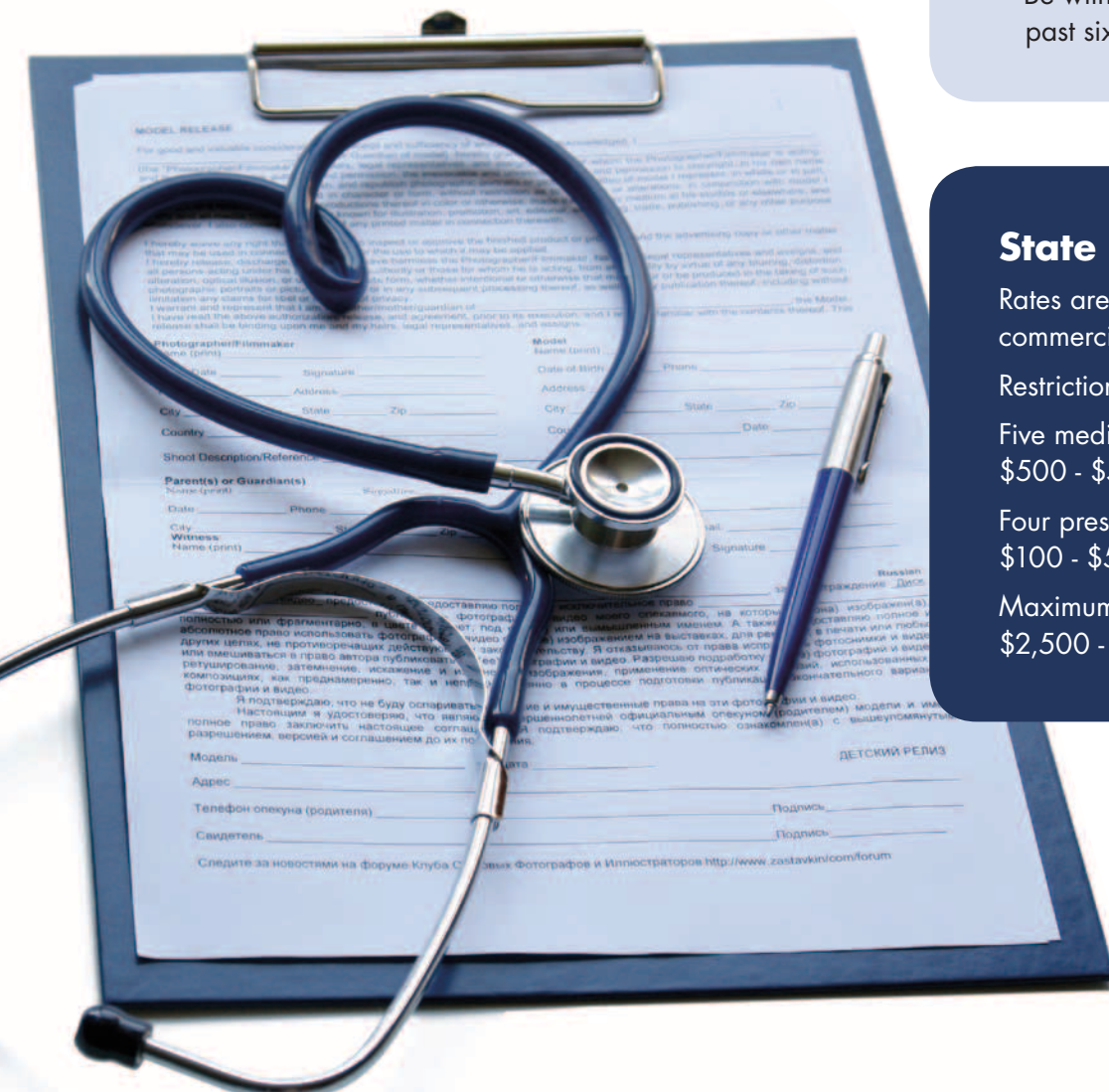
Four prescription drug plans:

\$100 - \$500 deductible

Maximum out-of-pocket expenses:

\$2,500 - \$5,000

*For more information on
MHIP plans or to apply
for coverage,
call 800-821-2231 or
visit www.mhip.org.*





Resolve to Have a Healthy New Year

The start of a new year is a great time to take stock of your life -- and your health. But you do not have to feel overwhelmed by your desire for a total health makeover.

Instead, you can take lots of little steps to improve your health. Pick and choose from the list below for a no-pressure approach to a healthy new year.

- Start each day with a brief stretching session to reduce muscle tension, increase circulation and cut back on stress.
- Mix a little decaf in with your regular coffee and gradually wean yourself off caffeine in the morning.
- Schedule a routine physical at your doctor's office.
- Add a multi-vitamin to your morning breakfast routine.
- Stand up and walk around while you are making telephone calls.
- Replace one soft drink per day with a glass of water.
- Go outside with your kids and play for at least an hour every week.
- Use smaller plates or bowls to trick your brain into accepting smaller portion sizes.
- Pick up one unusual fruit or vegetable from the grocery store each week and add it to your family's menu.
- Chew your food more thoroughly to help you get more out of the meals you eat.

Spotlight ON AWARENESS

December is Seasonal Depression Awareness Month. For people who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), the winter can seem never ending. The condition causes sufferers to start feeling depressed and fatigued during the same period of time each year. Symptoms often begin at the first signs of winter when the days become shorter. When spring arrives, the symptoms disappear. More rarely, the symptoms may occur during the spring and summer. If you find yourself depressed, unmotivated to do the things you normally would, or you have changes in your sleeping or appetite, contact your doctor. Treatment for SAD may include light therapy, counseling, medications, or a combination.





Hammy Pulling

From Wikia Lifestyle

Sit back in a chair, making sure that your lower back is supported as to prevent back pain. Put both your hands under your right knee. Slowly, lift your left leg up, keeping your knee bent toward the chest. Do this 5 times and then repeat, switching legs.



Correcting Health Myths

A common myth spread by both children and adults is sneezing with your eyes open will make your eyeballs pop out. Well, it is not true. Your nose and your eye sockets are not actually connected. So the same pressure released from your nose does not occur in your eyes.



KIDS HEALTH TIP

What To Do When Children Do Not Like School

A lot of children complain they do not want to go to school. Here are suggestions for your child to help keep a positive attitude and make school a more enjoyable experience.

- Write down what you do not like and talk to your parents about it. Parents may be able to help children figure out how to change the issue(s).
- Get involved in a special project or join an extracurricular activity.
- Get plenty of sleep to reduce irritability.
- Drink plenty of water to help your body stay hydrated so your brain will function at its best.
- Try to participate in activities that will lead to new friendships.

For questions or comments about this publication, please contact
the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services,

Office of Primary Care and Rural Health at 800-891-7415

A HEALTHY RECIPE FOR

Winter

Chicken Tortilla Soup

2 boneless chicken breast halves,
cooked and cut into bite-sized pieces
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
1 can whole kernal corn, undrained
1 can diced tomatoes

1 chopped bell pepper
 $\frac{1}{4}$ onion diced
 $\frac{1}{2}$ packet chili seasoning (or more to taste)
1 cup whole wheat rice
1 packet taco seasoning
crushed tortilla chips

Directions:

In crock pot combine all ingredients except tortilla chips. Heat until flavors blend well. Ladle soup into individual serving bowls, and top with crushed tortilla chips. Top with shredded cheese and/or sour cream.

A nice way to take the chill out of the air is a bowl of hot soup. This one is hearty and healthy.