

# 2025 Health

## Focus



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# 2025 Health *Focus*

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# I Don't Like Going to the Gym....

## NOW WHAT?

**E**xercise is an important component of overall health. Experts say that adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week, along with muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week. Some believe heading to the gym is the best way to get the exercise they need, and it very well may be... unless it's not. Some people don't like going to a gym and are therefore unlikely to do so with enough consistency to benefit from a membership. However, the gym is not the only place where individuals can meet fitness requirements.

Those who are not necessarily enamored with the idea of exercising at a gym for a variety of reasons can rest assured that it's still possible to be fit and healthy. In 2023, Civic Science polled thousands of Americans on how they chose to exercise and found that exercising at home is more popular than heading to the gym. Fifty-two percent of respondents said they exercised regularly at home, while 28 percent exercised regularly at a gym. At-home exercisers also were 21 percent more likely than gym-goers to say they worked out once a week or more.

People who want to find ways to stay fit without a fitness club membership have

plenty of options.

- Get at-home equipment. Setting up gym equipment in a spare room, the basement or the garage can help at-home fitness fans exercise. All it takes is some compact weights, perhaps a treadmill or elliptical and a few additional items to exercise effectively at home.

- Tune into streaming services. Many content providers upload exercise videos online so people can follow along at home or elsewhere. A quick search of YouTube offers a variety of options that fit with the type of exercise one desires. From 30-minute aerobic walking workouts to rebounding to yoga videos, content is there

and also may be free to watch.

- Head outdoors. Walking or jogging around the neighborhood or on local trails can be effective. Plus, it exposes a person to sunlight and fresh air, and provides an opportunity to see people in the community.

- Play a sport and/or join a club. Individuals may want to take up a physical activity, like joining a sports team or participating in a club that has physical activity, such as a hiking club. The Better Health

Channel says exercising with a friend is a great way to stay motivated, as each person can spur on the other.

- Turn on some tunes. Dancing around to favorite songs is a fun way to engage in physical activity. If other exercise ideas seem uninspiring, upbeat songs that get a person moving can help. Union Health says keeping one's heart rate between roughly 114 to 135 beats per minute is a good workout. Search for songs that will help achieve that rate.

If heading to the gym isn't a person's first choice for exercise, there are several other ways to exercise. ➡





# Exercises to keep seniors fit

**P**hysical activity is crucial for people who aspire to maintain their overall health as their bodies age. Exercise improves flexibility, contributes to a healthy weight, reduces the risk for chronic illnesses, and may even help seniors maintain their independence well into their

golden years.

The good news is that exercising regularly doesn't have to be high-impact or strenuous to make an impact. Plenty of exercises are geared toward seniors that feature gentle yet powerful movements, and address specific needs like strength,





bone health, cardiovascular health, and balance. Although many fitness routines are safe, it is best to consult with a doctor or another health care professional prior to beginning a new regimen so seniors learn which activities are appropriate for their individual needs and health conditions. As seniors prepare for those discussions, they can explore the following exercises many of their peers already enjoy.

## Cardiovascular activities

It's important that seniors elevate their heart rates and improve or maintain their endurance. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week. These activities fit the bill for boosting the heart.

- **Brisk walking:** Walking is a simple activity that requires no equipment and can be done almost anywhere... even in front of a television. Walk at a brisk pace to raise your heart rate.
- **Swimming:** Swimming and water-based activities are enhanced by the buoyancy of water, which reduces stress on the joints.
- **Cycling:** Whether riding on a stationary bike or a traditional one, cycling is a low-impact way to boost cardiovascular health and strengthen leg muscles.
- **Chair marching:** Individuals with limited mobility can march in place while seated, an activity that can still elevate the heart rate.

## Strength training

The CDC advises engaging in strength training at least two days per week for older adults. This doesn't necessarily have to involve lifting weights. Body-weight exercises are quite effective, too.

- **Stand up:** From a seated position, standing up

without using hands and sitting back down works the legs, hips and core.

- **Wall push-ups:** This modified push up builds upper body strength without putting strain on shoulders or wrists.
- **Resistance bands:** Using these bands in varying strengths can effectively work arm and leg muscles.

## Balance


Seniors need to focus on exercises that promote balance, which can help prevent dangerous falls.

- **Single-leg stands:** Standing on one leg while holding on to a chair or counter for support is a start, with a gradual build-up for longer lengths of time.
- **Sobriety walk:** Individuals can walk a straight line as if they

are proving sobriety to a police officer, by placing the heel of one foot directly in front of the toes of another.

- **Gentle hop:** Hopping (or stepping) gently from one foot to another is another balance technique to

master.

These are just some of the exercises that are ideal for seniors who are returning to exercise or new to daily fitness. People also can work with trainers who are experienced at helping seniors get fit. 



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# How nutritional needs change with age

**N**utritious foods are a cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle. The human body undergoes an assortment of changes over the course of a lifetime. Some of those changes are visible to the naked eye, but many more are not. The body's changing needs in regard to nutrition is one alteration that people cannot see.

A nutritious diet can be a building block of a long and healthy life. Nutritional needs change as the body ages, and recognition of those changes can help people rest easy that their diets are working in their favor and not to their detriment.

## **Calorie needs**

The body requires fewer calories as individuals reach adulthood. That's because muscle mass begins to decrease in adulthood while fat increases. The National Institutes of Health notes that muscles use more calories than fat

throughout the day, so it makes sense that a body experiencing a decline in muscle mass will

require less calories than one in which muscle mass is on the rise. No two individuals are the

same, and some adults exercise more than others. So it's best for adults to consult their






physician to discuss their own calorie needs and then adjust their diets based on such discussions.

### What to eat

The American Heart Association notes aging adults' calories should come from nutrient-dense foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean meat, and low-fat dairy. This recommendation aligns with adults' declining calorie needs, as nutrient-dense foods contain ample amounts of protein, vitamins and/or minerals but do not contain a lot of calories.

### Water needs

It's vital for aging adults to make a concerted effort to drink water each day. The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion notes that the sensation of thirst declines with age. Aging adults who are unaware of that unique biological reality may be risking dehydration because they are not compelled to drink water throughout the day. The Cleveland Clinic notes that dehydration can contribute to dizziness, weakness and lightheadedness, among other symptoms. Those symptoms can be particularly menacing for older adults, who are at increased risk for potentially harmful falls even if they are not dehydrated. The body still needs water as it ages, and seniors taking certain medications may need more than usual due to medication-related fluid loss.

These are just some of the ways nutritional needs change with age. Adults are urged to pay greater attention to diet as they age and make choices that can counter age-related changes in their bodies. 







# What to know about processed foods

**A**nyone looking to eat right undoubtedly knows there's no shortage of advice in relation to dietary habits. Fad diets and nutritional trends are shared on social media platforms and websites every day. While access to such information is more available than ever, the volume of data can be overwhelming, especially for people looking to make simple and healthy tweaks.

One trending topic among advocates for improved nutrition concerns processed foods. Various health concerns, from the obesity epidemic to increased rates of high blood pressure, have been traced

to processed foods. Such associations merit consideration, and that begins with answering some common questions surrounding processed foods.

## What are processed foods?

The United States Department of Agriculture defines processed foods as any raw agricultural commodity that has been altered from its original state. Such alterations occur when foods are subjected to various processes, including pasteurization, blanching, freezing, dehydrating, or fermenting, among others. Fortification is another means

to processing foods. Is processing always unhealthy?

Processing food is not always bad for human beings. For example, milk is pasteurized and commercial milk products are fortified with vitamin D. In regard to fortified milk, adding vitamin D ensures milk drinkers receive sufficient amounts of a nutrient that helps strengthen bones.

So why the fear of processed foods? The negative characterizations of processed foods arises mainly from foods that are considered ultra-processed. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics uses a spectrum to differentiate between various types of processed foods. Minimally processed



foods include washed fresh spinach, while heavily processed foods include ready-to-eat foods like cereal and crackers. The negative attributes often associated with processed foods typically refers to heavily processed foods, which may also be referred to as ultra-processed foods.

### What are some examples of minimally processed and ultra-processed foods?


Potatoes are perhaps the simplest example of how a single food item can sometimes be healthy and other times lack nutrition, even though it's the same item. A baked potato is minimally processed because it's been altered from its original state after being washed and baked. But the nutritional profile remains largely the same after these minimal adjustments to the potato. French fries are made from potatoes, but they're often greatly altered from their original state after being fried in oil. French fries also tend to be heavily salted, furthering altering them from their original state and thus lowering their nutritional profile.

### What can I do to avoid eating heavily processed foods?

The Mayo Clinic Health System advises reading food labels to analyze items in relation to how processed they may or may not be. Foods that contain additives and preservatives like high fructose corn syrup,

hydrogenated oils, food dyes,

sodium nitrates, sodium nitrites, monosodium glutamate (MSG), and sulfites are best avoided or consumed in low amounts.

The debate around processed foods is complicated. People seeking to bolster the nutritional profile of their diets are urged to avoid ultra-processed foods and work with a physician or dietitian to ensure they're making healthy choices. 



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HealthFocus





# What to know about alcohol and diabetes

Navigating life with diabetes is no small task. While millions of people across the globe living with diabetes enjoy full lives, such individuals recognize they must remain vigilant in regard to the foods they eat to protect their short- and long-term health.

While food might be a focal point of life for people with diabetes, it's just as important that such individuals monitor the beverages they consume. That's particularly important regarding alcohol. The American Diabetes Association® urges individuals with diabetes to discuss alcohol consumption with their physicians. While the ADA notes there's no universal rule regarding diabetes and alcohol consumption, the National

Library of Medicine reports there are risks involved when individuals with diabetes consume alcohol.

## **Alcohol and blood sugar levels**

Consuming alcohol can lower blood sugar. The liver is a vital organ that releases glucose into the blood stream as necessary to ensure blood sugar levels remain normal. But the liver also is responsible for breaking down alcohol, and during that process it ceases releasing glucose. That can cause blood sugar levels to drop quickly, leaving people at risk for hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Individuals who are taking certain diabetes medicines or





insulin can be in danger of developing seriously low blood sugar, which the ADA notes can occur even hours after a person finishes their last drink. Drowsiness, confusion and difficulty walking are some of the symptoms of hypoglycemia.

Alcohol and diabetes medications

Alcohol can interfere with diabetes medicine. The NLM notes that alcohol can interfere with the effects of some diabetes medicines. When prescribed medications for diabetes, individuals should discuss the potential side effects of alcohol consumption while taking the


drugs. Individuals who drink while taking certain diabetes medications may be at risk for hypoglycemia.

#### **Additional risk factors**

Alcohol tends to be calorie-heavy, which can contribute

to weight gain that makes it more difficult to manage diabetes. Alcohol also tends to be high in carbohydrates, which can raise blood sugar levels. High blood sugar also is known as hyperglycemia, which is marked by insufficient insulin levels or the inability of the body to utilize insulin effectively.

Weight gain is not the only potential threat linked to the high calorie content of alcoholic beverages. The NLM notes that calories from alcohol are stored in the liver as fat, which can make liver cells more insulin-resistant and increase blood sugar levels over time.

The dynamic between alcohol and diabetes is complicated. Individuals with diabetes are urged to discuss alcohol consumption with their physicians prior to having a drink. 

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# How to eat healthy even if you're always on the *move*

**A** healthy diet pays numerous dividends. Such a diet can help people maintain a healthy weight, reduce their risk for various chronic conditions, including some diseases, and boost energy levels. The energy-boosting benefits of a nutritious diet might be especially appealing to busy professionals and provide the extra motivation they need to embrace healthy eating.

Busy professionals know it's not always so easy to eat healthy. An on-the-go lifestyle only adds to that difficulty, but the following are some ways to eat healthy if you're always on the move.

- **Plan ahead.** Meal planning is an effective way to eat healthy because it reduces the chances that adults will make impulsive dietary decisions without taking nutrition into account. According to Brown University Health, meal planning can save time and money. Planning also helps people avoid dining out too often. That's a notable benefit, as many restaurants, particularly fast food chains that tend to be valued for their ability to provide quick and filling meals, prepare meals that are high in fat, sugar






and sodium.

● **Embrace crockpot cooking.** Slow cooking in a crockpot or slow cooker can help on-the-go professionals eat healthier because it allows them to prepare meals on weekends and then eat them throughout the week. That's helpful for busy adults who don't have time to prepare homemade nutritious meals on weeknights, when work schedules, kids' extracurricular activities and other obligations tend to take precedence over healthy eating.

● **Learn to dine out healthy.** It's important that busy adults do not paint all restaurant offerings with a broad brush. In fact, many restaurants offer a wide range of nutritious fare. Diners just need to know which options fit that criteria. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, veggie-based entrées or those with baked, broiled or grilled fish or skinless chicken are nutritious options when dining out. Johns Hopkins also urges diners to forgo traditionally greasy or oily options like cheese-covered enchiladas in favor of healthier alternatives like tacos featuring fish or grilled chicken.

● **Consider meal kits.** The market monitoring and research firm Statista notes that the meal kit delivery market has been growing rapidly in recent years. Research indicates the domestic market for meal kit delivery services was slightly less than \$21 billion in 2022, a figure that forecasters project will rise to around \$65 billion by 2030. Such estimates underscore the growing popularity of the services. Though meal kit services vary, many offer the convenience busy professionals are looking for without compromising nutrition. Pre-portioned ingredients help meal kit subscribers avoid overeating, and most recipes are easily followed and result in meals made in considerably less time than more traditional means of cooking.

Busy professionals might feel as though they need to eat whatever is convenient and

immediately accessible, even if the available options lack nutritional value. However, there are a host of ways for on-the-go adults to eat healthy even if they're pressed for time. 



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# Kids' bedtime guidelines through the years

**S**leep is pivotal for a child's development. The American Academy of Pediatrics says insufficient sleep is a growing health problem, with some estimates indicating 25 to 50 percent of children and 40 percent of adults have sleep problems. This can lead to issues with attention, behavior, learning, and even physical health, including an increased risk for obesity and depression.

The right routine can make a world of difference in relation to children and sleep. Despite the importance of sleep, bedtime is one of the most challenging times of day in many households. Learning the amount of sleep a child needs and sticking to a routine, particularly as kids grow, can help foster healthy sleep habits that last a lifetime.

## Infants

Infancy is a time of rapid development when children go through many sleep stages. While newborns tend to sleep in short, irregular bursts that don't always follow the day/night schedule, sleep patterns begin to consolidate by the time kids are four months old. A consistent bedtime routine is

essential, which can include a simple sequence of three to four calming activities to signal to baby that it's time to wind down. Experts call this the "3Bs": bath, book, bed. Additional calming activities like a massage or final feeding also can help infants get the 12 to 16 hours of sleep they need each day, including naps.

The AAP recommends placing a baby in the crib while drowsy to help the child learn to fall asleep on their own.

## Toddlers

Parents of toddlers know

they are

bustling with energy as they learn to walk, talk and explore.

Recommended sleep for ages one to two is 11 to 14 hours per day, including naps.

Consistency is paramount for this age group, which means keeping bedtimes the same from day to day. Make sure the routine is predictable to help regulate toddlers' internal clocks. Chances are toddlers





will begin to protest bedtime at some point, at which point parents must be gentle but firm about keeping kids in bed.

### Preschool-aged

By ages three to five, some children begin to drop the afternoon nap and get all of their 10 to 13 hours of sleep overnight. They also are becoming more imaginative, which means that nightmares might crop up more regularly within this age group. A calm, screen-free bedtime routine can help clear the mind so youngsters can get the rest they need.

### School-aged

This is a time when prioritizing sleep is really put to the test. Friends, school and extracurricular activities begin to place greater demands on scheduling, and can interfere with children getting enough sleep. The general recommendation is 9 to 12 hours of sleep for children ages six to 12.


To facilitate getting rest, parents can make the bedroom a sanctuary that is free from tablets, phones or other devices that may distract children from sleeping.

### Teenagers

A biological shift takes place during adolescence that has this age group preferring to go to sleep later and wake up later. National Children's Hospital says this biological shift in circadian rhythm after puberty

moves the adolescent's internal clock by about two hours. That means a teen who used to fall asleep at nine p.m. now does so at 11 p.m. Despite this, teens still need an average of eight to 10 hours of sleep a day. Unfortunately, school start times typically do not coincide with kids' internal clocks, and many teens do not get the rest they need.

Parents can encourage their children to turn off their phones and maintain consistent schedules so they can get enough rest. Also, they should be dissuaded from waking up or going to sleep at different times on weekends, or making up sleep, as this can disrupt sleep patterns and cause "social jetlag."

Sleep is crucial for good health and something parents should prioritize and facilitate through all stages of development. 



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## Significant factors affecting childhood obesity



**C**hildhood obesity is a complex condition with a variety of contributing factors. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates about one in five American children have obesity. The Government of Canada says obesity rates among children and youth in Canada have nearly tripled in the last 30 years, with one in seven Canadian children now meeting the criteria for obesity.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, childhood obesity happens when a child is above a healthy weight for their age, height and sex. The medical definition defines childhood obesity as having a body mass index at or above the 95th percentile for age and sex in children age two years and older. Children in the age range of 12 to 19 have the highest percentage of childhood obesity.

Individuals may wonder what factors are driving these statistics. Childhood obesity has many causes, and the following are some things caregivers should be aware of so that their children's weights do not put their health at risk.

- **Genes:** Childhood obesity is very much affected by a child's genes inherited from parents. Nirvana Healthcare says one study found that 80



percent of kids were obese if both of their parents were overweight. Children with siblings who are obese also are more likely to develop the condition themselves. The Cleveland Clinic says studies show various genes may contribute to weight gain.

- **Poor diet:** The foods children eat contribute to weight gain and the development of childhood obesity. Dietary habits that include consuming high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and beverages put one at risk for becoming overweight or obese.
- **Lack of physical exercise:** The CDC says children who are physically active have stronger muscles and bones, better cardiovascular fitness, and lower body fat than those who are inactive. Kids ages three to five should be physically active throughout the day. Kids between the ages of six and 17 need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- **Insufficient sleep:** Insufficient sleep could be contributing to childhood obesity. The CDC says kids who don't sleep enough are at risk for unhealthy weight gain, although researchers are still trying to learn how sleep is linked to weight gain.
- **Behavioral factors and lifestyle:** Snacking and dining out more frequently than cooking meals at home may increase risk for obesity. Increased screen time and sedentary behavior also influences the chances for childhood obesity to develop, says the Cleveland Clinic.
- **Social determinants of health (SDoHs):** SDoHs are factors in the environments where one lives, works, plays, and learns that can affect health. Some of the SDoHs include proximity to fast food



restaurants, whether parks or recreational facilities are nearby, transportation access, accessibility of healthy food options, foods served in daycare centers, and more.

Obesity continues to affect many children, putting their health at risk now and in the future. Understanding contributors to this illness can enable families to make positive changes. ➡



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# The basics of breast cancer

Breast cancer is a formidable disease that affects millions of individuals each year. Data from the World Health Organization indicates 2.3 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2022, when it was the most common form of the disease in 157 of 185 countries across the globe.

The impact of breast cancer goes beyond those diagnosed with the disease, affecting friends, family members, professional colleagues, and others as well. That far-reaching impact means everyone has a vested interest in learning about breast cancer.

## **What is breast cancer?**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast grow out of control. The breast is made up of three main parts known as the lobules, ducts and connective tissue, and which type of breast cancer a person has depends on which cells in the breast turn into cancer.

## **Is there a typical breast cancer?**

No two individuals diagnosed with breast cancer will have the same experience after being diagnosed. However, the CDC



notes that most breast cancers begin in the ducts or lobules. The ducts are tubes that carry milk to the nipple and the lobules are the glands that produce milk.

What are some common risk factors for breast cancer?

The National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc. notes gender is the foremost risk factor for breast cancer, as the WHO reports that 99 percent of breast cancers occur in women. Additional risk factors for breast cancer include age, with two out of three women diagnosed with invasive breast cancer being older than 55, and race, as the disease affects more Caucasian women than women of other races. The NBCF also notes that women who have dense breast tissue may be at greater risk for breast cancer because such tissue can make it harder to detect lumps.

### What causes breast cancer?


The NBCF notes that most women who have breast cancer will never be able to identify an exact cause behind their disease. Common risk factors like gender and age are beyond women's control, but there are some controllable risk factors that can be avoided. The WHO notes that overconsumption of alcohol and tobacco use are two such factors.

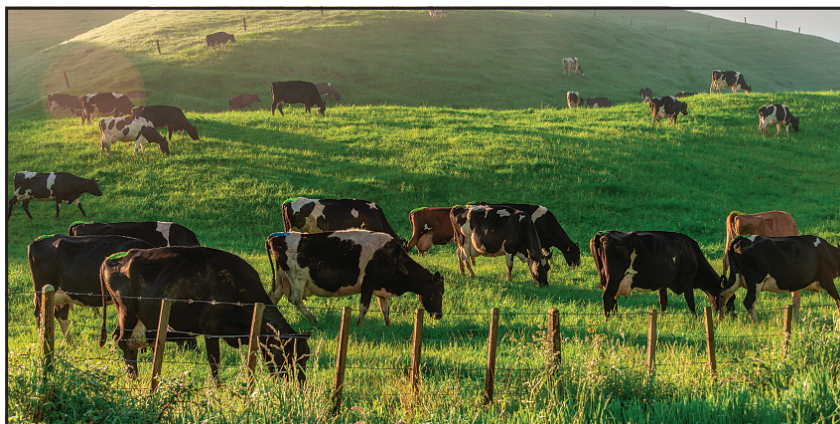
### How important is early detection?

The American Cancer Society reports that the five-year survival rate for breast cancers discovered in the localized stage is 99 percent. That underscores the

significance of early detection. The NBCF notes monthly breast self-exams and routine clinical exams increase the likelihood of early detection. Women are urged to speak with their physicians regarding how frequently they should be tested, as recommendations

vary depending on each individual and their respective family histories.

The basics of breast cancer provide insight into the disease and what women can do to reduce their risk of developing it. 



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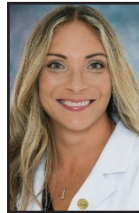
**Edgar Camargo, MD**  
Family Practice  
**Saltville Community Health Center**  
308 West Main Street  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4433



**Cassandra B. Ellison, FNP-BC**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**Bristol Community Health Center**  
2195 Euclid Avenue  
Bristol, VA 24201  
(276) 669-5179



**Chelsey N. Cardwell, FNP-C**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**Saltville Community Health Center**  
308 West Main Street  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4433



**Bambi Evans, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**New Day Recovery Tazewell**  
388 Ben Bolt Avenue, Suite 4  
Tazewell, VA 24651  
(276) 979-9899  
**Tazewell Community Health Center**  
386 Ben Bolt Avenue,  
Tazewell, VA 24651  
(276) 979-9899



**Jessica N. Evans, DO**  
Family Practice  
**Meadowview Community Health Center**  
13168 Meadowview Square  
Meadowview, VA 24361  
(276) 944-3999



**Janet Brooke Cuddy, DNP, FNP, PMHNP**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**Meadowview Community Health Center**  
13168 Meadowview Square  
Meadowview, VA 24361  
(276) 944-3999  
**Tazewell Community Health Center**  
386 Ben Bolt Avenue Tazewell, VA 24651  
(276) 979-9899



**Melissa S. Franklin, FNP**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**Bristol Community Health Center**  
New Day Recovery Bristol  
2195 Euclid Avenue,  
Bristol, VA 24201  
(276) 669-5179



**Tammy J. Davidson, AGPCNP**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**New Day Recovery Saltville**  
319 5th Avenue  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4492



**Marie H. Green, AGPCNP**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**Tazewell Community Health Center**  
386 Ben Bolt Avenue  
Tazewell, VA 24651  
(276) 979-9899





**Kimberly D. Harding, MSN, APRN, FNP-BC**  
Nurse Practitioner  
School Based Health:  
**Chilhowie Elementary School**  
130 Lee Hwy, Chilhowie, VA 24319  
**Chilhowie High School**  
1160 E Lee Hwy, Chilhowie, VA 24319  
(276) 783-8865 ext. 5128



**Cathie Harrington, CNP**  
Certified Nurse Practitioner  
**Wytheville Community Hospital**  
791 Ft. Chiswell Road  
Max Meadows, VA 24360  
(276) 637-6641



**Susan L. Horne, FNP-BC**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**Tazewell Community Health Center**  
386 Ben Bolt Avenue  
Tazewell, VA 24651  
(276) 979-9899



**Michael T. Murray, FNP-BC**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**Saltville Community Health Center**  
308 West Main Street  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4433



**Andrea A. McClintic, DO**  
Pediatric  
**Bristol Community Health Center**  
2195 Euclid Avenue  
Bristol, VA 24201  
(276) 669-5179



**Vicente Ortiz, MD**  
Family Practice  
**Meadowview Community Health Center**  
13168 Meadowview Square  
Meadowview, VA 24361  
(276) 944-3999



**Pamela M. Somervell, MD**  
Family Practice  
**Saltville Community Health Center**  
308 West Main Street  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4433



**Emily S. Stacy, PMHNP**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**Bristol Community Health Center**  
2195 Euclid Avenue  
Bristol, VA 24201  
(276) 669-5179  
**Saltville Community Health Center**  
308 West Main Street  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4433



**Kelsie L. Strong, MSN, FNP-BC, FNP-C**  
Nurse Practitioner  
School Based Health:  
**John Battle High School**  
21264 Battle Hill Drive  
Bristol, VA 24202  
(276) 642-5335  
**High Point Elementary School**  
14091 Sinking Creek Road,  
Bristol, VA 24202  
(276) 642-5335



**Teresa Q. Vance, DNP, FNP-C, APRN, BC-ADM**  
Nurse Practitioner  
**Meadowview Community Health Center**  
13168 Meadowview Square  
Meadowview, VA 24361  
(276) 944-3999



**Kristin M. Williams, MSN, APRN, FNP-C**  
Nurse Practitioner  
School Based Health:  
**Saltville Elementary**  
1013 E. Main Street  
Saltville, VA 24370  
**Northwood Middle School**  
156 Long Hollow Road  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 783-7926

## HEARING INSTRUMENT SPECIALIST



**Kelley D. Haynes, B.S., BC-HIS**  
Hearing Instrument Specialist  
**Abingdon Falls Hearing Center**  
319 Falls Plaza NW  
Abingdon, VA 24210  
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## OPTOMETRY



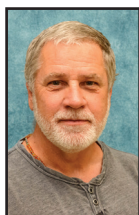
**Brandon Blevins, OD**  
Optometrist  
**Saltville Community Health Center**  
308 West Main Street  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4433

## PRIMARY CARE



**Tri-Area Community Health at Floyd**  
Primary Care  
Multiple Providers  
140 Christiansburg Pike  
Floyd, VA 24091  
(540) 745-9290

## SOCIAL WORKERS



**Richard A. Bare, LCSW, LCAS**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
**New Day Recovery Tazewell**  
388 Ben Bolt Ave, Suite 4  
Tazewell, VA 24651  
(276) 979-9899



**Jessica Barnette, LCSW, CSAC**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
**New Day Recovery Bristol**  
2195 Euclid Avenue, Suite 11  
Bristol, VA 24201  
(276) 669-5179



**Bayleigh Dye, MSW-S**  
Social Work Supervisor  
**Meadowview Community Health Center**  
13168 Meadowview Square  
Meadowview, VA 24361  
(276) 944-3999



**James T. Miller, LCSW**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
**Saltville Community Health Center**  
308 West Main Street  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4433



**Rachael Myers, MSW-S**  
Social Work Supervisor  
**Tazewell Community Health Center**  
386 Ben Bolt Avenue  
Tazewell, VA 24651  
(276) 979-9899



**Kimberly J. Patrick, LCSW**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
**Bristol Community Health Center**  
2195 Euclid Avenue  
Bristol, VA 24201  
(276) 669-5179



**Marcy S. Rosenbaum, LCSW, CSAC**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
**New Day Recovery Saltville**  
319 Fifth Avenue  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4492



**Morgan J. Trogdon, LCSW, CSAC**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
**New Day Recovery Saltville**  
319 Fifth Avenue  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4492



**Alex Versen, LCSW**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
**Meadowview Community Health Center**  
13168 Meadowview Square  
Meadowview, VA 24361  
(276) 944-3999



**Melissa A. Doane-Williams, LCSW, CSAC**  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker  
**New Day Recovery Saltville**  
319 Fifth Avenue  
Saltville, VA 24370  
(276) 496-4492



# The benefits of getting your flu shot



**C**ooler temperatures bring many things, including the arrival of fun and festive holidays. But flu season also kicks into high gear between the months of December and February.

Although flu season runs from October to May, a combination of factors during the chilliest months of winter, such as increased time indoors in close proximity to others who may be ill, tends to escalate the rates of flu

infection. Also, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says cold, dry conditions make it easier for the virus to spread.

Individuals can take different steps to reduce their risk of contracting the flu, which includes frequent handwashing, keeping a distance from others who are sick and eating a healthy diet to help boost the immune







system. Getting an annual flu shot is another notable and highly beneficial strategy to beat the flu.

Reduces risk of getting the flu

The primary reason to get a flu shot is to train the body's immune system to recognize and fight off the most common strains of influenza anticipated in a given year. During seasons when the shot is a good match, individuals who get it can reduce their risk of flu contraction by 40 to 60 percent.

### **Lessens severity of the flu**

For those who do get the flu, being vaccinated means the illness is likely to be less severe than it might be for those who are not vaccinated.

### **Prevents serious conditions**

The flu can be dangerous to vulnerable populations, but the virus also can lead to health problems like inflammation of the heart or brain, pneumonia,

or the worsening of conditions like asthma and diabetes. By getting the vaccine, one can reduce their risk of these serious outcomes.


### **Offers protection to pregnant women**

Pregnancy increases risks posed by the flu. The flu shot can reduce the chances of flu-related hospitalization for pregnant women. Also, the mother's antibodies to the flu will be passed to the fetus, helping to protect the newborn

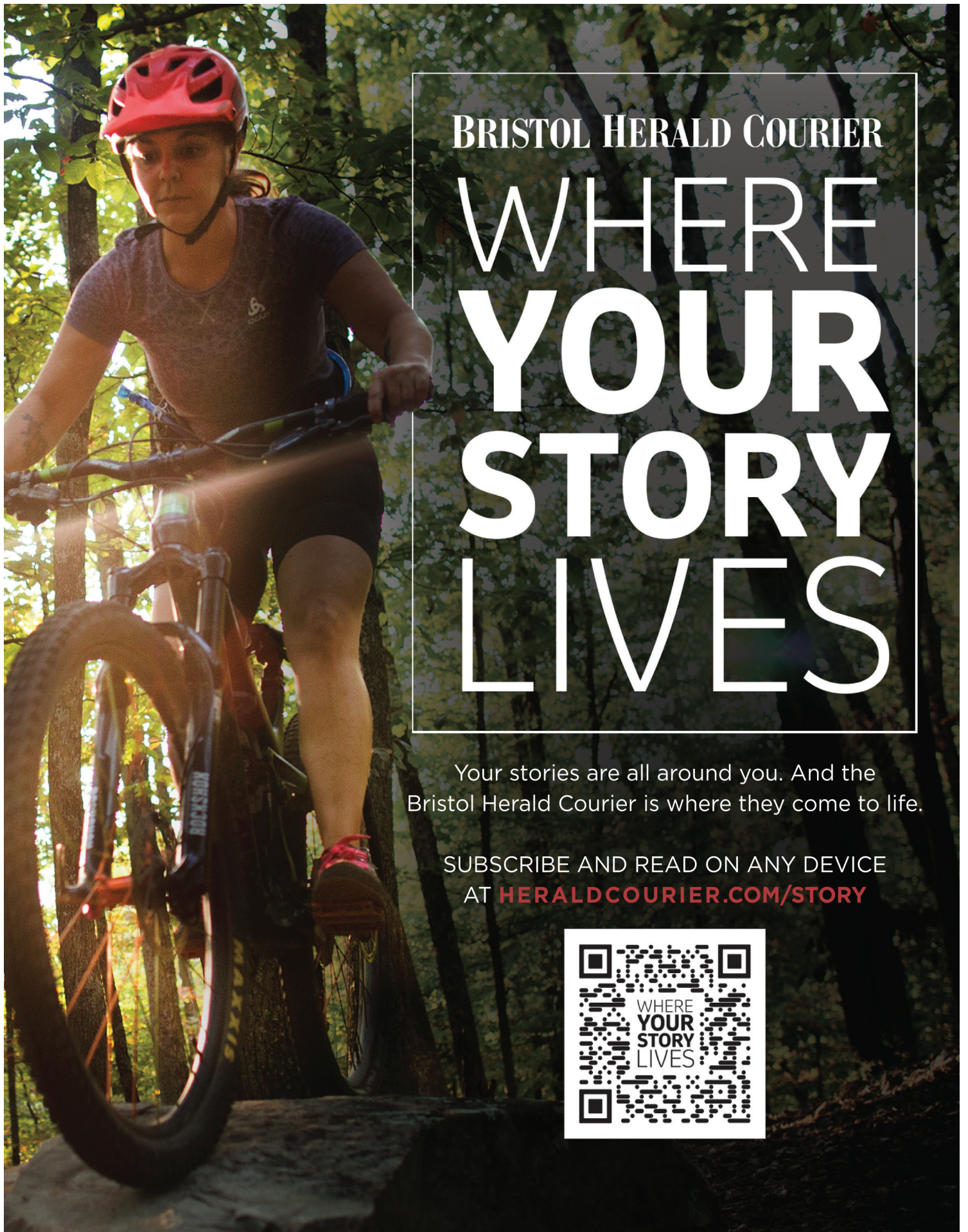
baby for several months during a time when the infant is too young to be vaccinated.

### **Protects kids**

A flu vaccine can significantly reduce a child's risk of pediatric intensive care unit admission and even death from the illness.

The idea of getting pricked by a needle isn't pleasant, but a flu vaccine is an important tool in building immunity to a common wintertime foe. 





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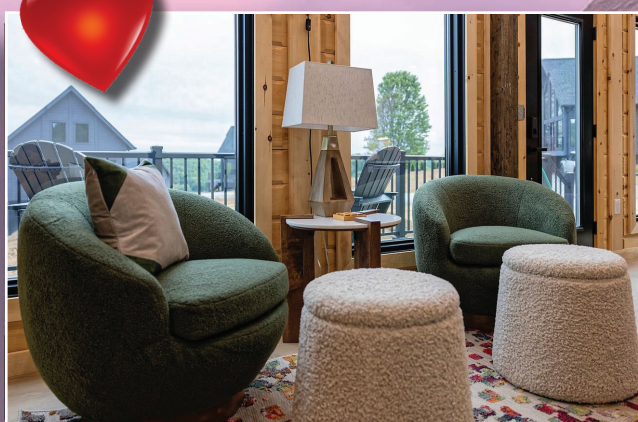
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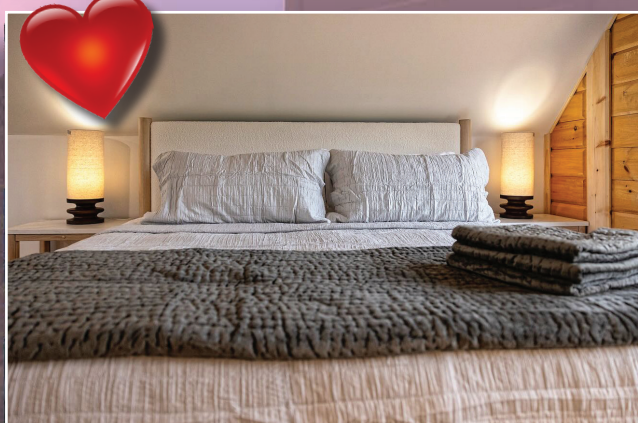




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276-608-8262  
Licensed TN/VA



Rebecca Arnold  
276-734-5085  
Licensed TN/VA



Rob Thomas  
423-341-6954  
Licensed TN/VA



Reed Thomas  
423-341-6866  
Licensed TN/VA



Daniel Shew  
276-274-5271  
Licensed TN/VA



Shelley Martin  
423-416-0303  
Licensed TN/VA



Brittany Rutherford  
989-670-2627  
Licensed TN/VA



Debra Ball  
423-366-7556  
Licensed TN/VA



Ashton Adkins  
423-956-9863  
Licensed TN



Andrew Neese  
276-619-1187  
Licensed TN/VA



Margo Sexton  
276-356-2657  
Licensed TN/VA



Shannon Smith  
423-827-4462  
Licensed TN/VA



Connie Cook  
423-646-8436  
Licensed TN/VA



Annette Leonard  
276-356-9191  
Licensed TN/VA



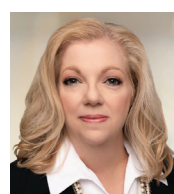
Chris Martin  
423-967-7075  
Licensed TN



Marilyn Worley  
561-632-1101  
Licensed TN & FL



Bethany Johnson  
276-356-2289  
Licensed VA



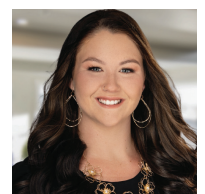
Debra Kennedy  
Broker/Owner  
423-956-4228  
Licensed TN/VA



Ashleigh Lane  
Office Manager



Linda Cross  
Agent Support



Zoe Clark  
276-591-7311  
Licensed TN



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