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Alaska Medicaid Newsletter

Important information for you as an Alaska Medicaid Participant

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Optum

Exercise and mental health

It isn't often we find a no cost (and fun!) treatment for medical conditions — but there are many easy and affordable mood-boosting activities that are proven to help support mental health. Not only is moving your body incredibly important for your physical well-being, it also helps support a healthy mind.

What are the benefits of exercise on mental health?

Exercising increases blood circulation to the brain, which helps support the areas that control motivation, mood, stress and more. Plus, physical activity helps increase your brain's production of feel-good transmitters (chemicals), called endorphins. These powerhouse chemicals increase feelings of pleasure and well-being. All of this happens behind the scenes during and after a workout to help support a healthy mind. The result? Well, exercise can bring on a lot of positive things, like- better sleep, less stress, improved mood, increased energy.

What exercises can I do to improve my mental health?

It's almost impossible to go through life without feeling blue every now and then. After all, we live with stressors every single day. If you're looking to improve your mental health, getting up and moving around may be one of the best medicines. The key to an effective activity is finding one you like to do. Here's a list of exercises you may want to try:

1. Running, walking, or hiking
2. Boxing, Pilates, yoga, spin class
3. Swimming
4. Weightlifting

Talk with your doctor before significantly increasing your activity level. Ask about the amounts and types of activities that may be best for you.

Article courtesy of Optum partners at UnitedHealthcare; both companies are part of UnitedHealth Group



How to help spot the signs of anxiety in children

Contrary to what many people may believe, anxiety can affect both adults and children. Children and teens can experience stressors like daycare, completing homework, studying for final exams or even just going to a friend's house. Understanding whether a child is experiencing day-to-day stress or displaying the symptoms of an anxiety disorder may be a challenge for parents.

It's normal to feel anxious from time to time, but when those feelings are constant and intense, it can become a health concern.

When [symptoms](#), such as feelings of dread, irritability, and restlessness, are paired with the following, it may suggest an anxiety disorder.

- Racing or pounding heart or shortness of breath
- Dry mouth
- Sweating, clammy hands or feeling hot
- Tremors or twitches
- Headaches
- Tired or insomnia
- Frequent urination
- Upset stomach or diarrhea

Article courtesy of Optum partners at UnitedHealthcare; both companies are part of UnitedHealth Group

If you're a participant or a participant advocate and have questions about Medicaid coverage, please call 800-225-8764, toll-free statewide Monday - Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Alaska Time. Free language assistance services are available to you.



PEER SUPPORT CORNER

In this Peer Support Corner, we are going to talk about a few types of anxiety and ways to manage it. Anxiety affects 40 million adults in the United States.

1. Generalized anxiety disorder: The most common type of diagnosed anxiety. Appears as constant worrisome thought.
2. PTSD: brought on by a triggering event from past experience.
3. Phobia: intense fear around objects, situations, animals, or social settings.

[Here is an article to read if you have more questions about these types of anxiety.](#)

Exercise is a great way to lower stress. I wanted to share a few other ways to manage worry that are available to Alaskans no matter how deep the snow gets:

- Take time to center yourself: manage breathing with meditation, yoga, and breathing exercise.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine: Moderation is key.
- Get good sleep: 8-10 hours if able. [Learn about more sleep tips!](#)

Substance Use Helpline

Free, confidential alcohol and drug addiction help — whenever you need it

Whether you're concerned about yourself or a loved one, you can call the 24-hour Substance Use Helpline at 1-855-780-5955, TTY 711 to talk to a specialized substance use recovery advocate. You'll get confidential support, guidance on treatment options, help finding a network provider and answers to your questions — including concerns about your personal health or care for a family member, coverage, cost of care and more.

Get support, 24/7

1-855-780-5955

More Alaska support and meeting information:

[Native Youth Olympics Games](#)

[Junior Native Youth Olympics Games](#)



Substance use disorder online assessment and treatment recommendation

[Shatterproof Treatment Atlas](#)

MAKE A CONNECTION

Find a Provider:

Participant Access Line: 800-225-8764 TDD/TTY dial 711 or visit alaska.optum.com and click *Find a Provider* on left side of the page.

Get Transportation:

For Medicaid travel benefits call the Medicaid Participant Helpline at 800-770-5650, Option 2.

Live & Work Well:

You can find information about maintaining your wellness and resources for crisis support.

Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Line

9-8-8 988.alaska.gov

Veterans Crisis Line

800-273-8255 text 838255

Careline

877-266-4357 (HELP) or text 4help to 839863

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-7233

