

# In Sound Health

## KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR EYE HEALTH

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## EMBRACE THE SEASON WITH WINTER WELLNESS

December 2023

Winter is the perfect time to cozy up and set your sights on the coming year. This season, appreciate the beauty of snow-covered landscapes, enjoy quality time with loved ones, and embrace habits that nurture both your body and mind.

In this edition of *In Sound Health* we shine a light on common eye conditions and the importance of eye health. We also share insights on managing difficult holiday emotions and provide information about finding mental health support. Discover the heartwarming benefits of thoughtful gift-giving and warm up your kitchen with a delectable holiday baked pear recipe. And when you are ready, Sound Support programs are here to help you have a healthy and happy winter.

## KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR EYE HEALTH

Understanding these common eye conditions and how to manage them can help you keep your eyes healthy as you age and maintain good vision longer.

### CHRONIC DRY EYE

Chronic dry eye, often linked to inadequate tear production or function, can lead to discomfort and, in some cases, vision issues. It affects millions of Americans but can be managed to maintain eye health and comfort.

**Symptoms:** Symptoms include burning, dryness, itching, blurry vision, and redness.

**Risk:** The risk of getting dry eye is higher for people who are aged 50 or older, female, or wear contact lenses. Risk is also heightened by deficiencies in vitamin A or omega-3 fatty acids, and among people with certain autoimmune conditions, like lupus.

**Prevention:** To alleviate dry eye discomfort:

- Avoid direct air exposure, use humidifiers, and wear protective eyewear.
- Take breaks during prolonged tasks that require visual concentration.
- Position your computer screen below eye level.
- Quit smoking and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Regularly use artificial tears, even when symptoms are absent, to maintain eye lubrication.

### DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

Diabetic retinopathy, which affects people with diabetes, can cause vision loss and blindness. At first, symptoms may go unnoticed, so regular eye exams are crucial for early detection and treatment.

**Symptoms:** Early stages are often symptom-free, but as diabetic retinopathy advances, it can lead to blurry vision, floaters, and potential blindness.

**Risk:** Anyone with any form of diabetes can get diabetic retinopathy, and the risk increases the longer you have diabetes. People with diabetes who are pregnant or who develop gestational diabetes are at a higher risk and should get frequent eye exams.

**Prevention:** Managing diabetes through blood sugar control, exercise, and a healthy diet is the best way to reduce your risk of diabetic retinopathy. In addition, consider:

- Getting regular A1C tests to help set and achieve blood sugar goals.
- Controlling blood pressure and cholesterol levels to further lower the risk of vision loss.
- Prioritizing regular eye exams, as early detection is crucial, especially when symptoms may not be present.



## TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT YOUR VISION BENEFITS

With vision benefits for both PPO and Kaiser plan participants provided by the Trust, there's no reason to neglect your eye health. Your coverage may vary depending on your plan, but all plans cover some cost of exams, lenses, frames and contacts.

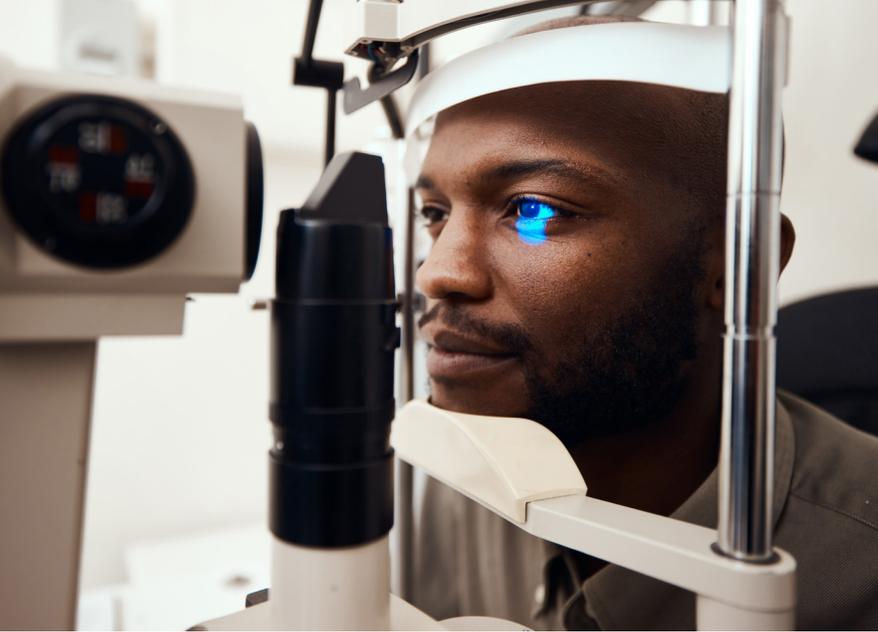
### PPO Plan Participants

The Trust contracts with VSP (Vision Service Plan) to provide vision benefits to you and your eligible dependents. Visit [vsp.com](http://vsp.com) to find a VSP network provider – or use any licensed provider (you may receive a higher benefit with an in-network provider). Call VSP at **(800) 877-7195** if you have questions about your benefits.

### Kaiser Plan Participants

With the Kaiser Permanente plan, you get access to in-network providers at all Kaiser Permanente facilities. You can also choose any licensed provider for most covered services. Your out-of-pocket costs will be higher if you choose care outside of the Kaiser Permanente network. Call Kaiser at **(888) 901-4636** if you have questions about your benefits.

For complete details on your vision and other benefits, visit [soundhealthwellnesstrust.com](http://soundhealthwellnesstrust.com)



### AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION (AMD)

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is a common eye disease that can blur your central vision. It occurs when aging gradually causes damage to the macula. While AMD doesn't cause total blindness, it does blur straight-ahead vision. Early detection and lifestyle choices are crucial in managing AMD.

**Symptoms:** Early AMD often lacks noticeable symptoms, while late-stage AMD may cause wavy or distorted central vision.

**Risk:** The risk for AMD increases with age – people aged 55 and older are at higher risk. The risk for AMD is also higher for people who have a family history of AMD, are Caucasian, and smoke.

**Prevention:** To mitigate AMD risk and slow its progression, consider these steps:

- Quit smoking and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Engage in regular physical activity.
- Maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Consume a diet rich in leafy greens and fish.
- Schedule regular eye exams for early detection and proactive management.

Source: [nei.nih.gov](http://nei.nih.gov)



# KEEPING YOUR SPIRITS BRIGHT: HOW TO HANDLE HOLIDAY EMOTIONS

The holiday season can be a time of joy, togetherness, and celebration. However, for many people, it can also be a period of intense emotional turmoil, stress, and sadness. The pressure to create picture-perfect moments and the rush of obligations can lead to heightened anxiety, loneliness, and grief.

If you struggle with difficult feelings around the holidays, fortunately there are strategies and resources available to help you navigate these challenging emotions and find relief during this time of year.

## HOLIDAY SEASON STRUGGLES

Three common challenges can create stress and emotional struggles during the holidays. These practical strategies can help you navigate the difficulties and create meaningful holiday memories:

- 1. Manage Expectations:** One common source of stress is the unrealistic expectations we place on ourselves and others. Try to accept that not everything will go perfectly. Disagreements, mishaps, and imperfections don't have to diminish the value of the holiday season. Remember that these moments can still make for cherished memories.
- 2. Prioritize Financial Wellness:** Money can be a significant source of emotional distress during the season of giving. The holidays are about more than extravagant gifts; they are an opportunity to connect with loved ones and create lasting memories. Explore cost-effective alternatives to expensive presents, such as heartfelt homemade gifts or spending quality time together.
- 3. Grieve and Remember:** For some, the holiday season can be a painful reminder of the loss of loved ones. Keep their spirit alive during the holidays by finding ways to honor and remember them. Consider creating a meaningful ritual or engaging in activities that remind you of the positive memories you shared with them.

## MANAGE HOLIDAY STRESS WITH SELF-CARE

Taking care of yourself can help you stay grounded and cope with stress during the holidays. Here are a few tips:

- **Stay Active:** Exercise can help release endorphins, which are natural mood lifters. Whether it's going for a walk, practicing yoga, or hitting the gym, regular physical activity can reduce stress, improve your mood, and enhance your overall well-being.
- **Acknowledge Your Emotions:** The holiday season can stir up a wide range of emotions. It's important to recognize and accept these feelings without judgment. Denying or suppressing your emotions can make you more stressed and uncomfortable. Instead, allow yourself to feel and express what's truly going on within you. Know that it's perfectly normal to feel sad, lonely, anxious, or angry.
- **Use Your Support System:** Loneliness and isolation can exacerbate emotional struggles, so connecting with friends, family, or a support group can be immensely helpful. Talking to someone you trust about your feelings can provide relief and a sense of connection.
- **Seek Professional Help:** Sometimes, managing holiday emotions on your own or with loved ones may not be enough. If your emotions become overwhelming and persistent, consider reaching out to a therapist or counselor who can provide valuable support and coping strategies tailored to your needs.

The holiday season can be a challenging time for many, but with the right strategies and support, you can navigate difficult emotions successfully.

## FIND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Take advantage of these resources in addition to your benefits:

### PPO PLAN PARTICIPANTS

#### Health Coaching

Health Coaching is open to all eligible participants and spouses, 18 years of age or older. Call **(877) 362-9969** to find out more and sign up.

#### Doctor On Demand

Doctor On Demand's diverse team of licensed psychiatrists and psychologists can provide the emotional support you need from the privacy and comfort of home. Download the app, or call **(800) 997-6196** to register.

#### Guardian Nurses

Speak directly with the MCC nurse in charge of Behavioral Health regarding treatment for drug or alcohol dependency, anxiety, depression or any other mental health issue. Call Samuel Hirst, BSN, RN at **(206) 308-5632**.

### KAISER PERMANENTE PLAN PARTICIPANTS

#### Kaiser Permanente Behavioral Health Services

Kaiser Permanente provides mental health care and alcohol and drug treatment through the Kaiser Permanente Behavioral Health Services department.

Call **(888) 287-2680** (in Western Washington); or **(800) 851-3177** (in Central or Eastern Washington).

## HOLIDAY BAKED PEARS

Lighten up the holiday celebration with these simple but festive baked pears. **Serves: 8**

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 medium pears (such as Bartlett, Bosc, or Anjou)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons light brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 cup maple syrup (60ml)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Granola or chopped nuts (optional)

### PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Coat a 9x13 inch baking dish with cooking spray.
3. Cut pears in half lengthwise, leaving stems (if desired). Using a small spoon or melon baller, scoop out cores.
4. Place pear halves in backing dish and brush all over with melted butter. Sprinkle cut sides with sugar and cinnamon.
5. Stir together maple syrup and vanilla and drizzle over pears.
6. Fill centers with granola or nuts (if using).
7. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until pears are soft and sugar has caramelized in the pan.
8. Serve warm.

### NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Serving Size: 1/2 pear

**163 calories**      **30g carbs**  
**5g fat**            **1.5g protein**

Source: modified from [preppykitchen.com](http://preppykitchen.com)





## THE GIFT OF GIVING: HOW GENEROSITY BENEFITS YOUR HEALTH

The saying, "giving is better than receiving," is not just a cliché; it holds scientific truth. Numerous studies conducted over the past decade have shown that acts of generosity, particularly when directed toward those close to a person, can have profound effects on both their mental and physical well-being. The act of giving triggers essential reward pathways in the brain, leading to the release of "feel good" chemicals like serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin.

### GENEROSITY ISN'T JUST ABOUT WARM FEELINGS; IT HAS CONCRETE HEALTH BENEFITS:

- 1. Lower Blood Pressure:** Research indicates that acts of giving can lower blood pressure, similar to the benefits of a healthy diet and regular exercise. In essence, generosity is good for your heart.
- 2. Longer Lifespan:** Engaging in volunteering and acts of giving tends to lead to longer, more fulfilling lives.
- 3. Reduced Stress:** Acts of kindness help lower cortisol, the stress hormone.
- 4. "Helper's High":** Giving stimulates the brain's reward center, releasing endorphins. This often results in a "helper's high," which boosts self-esteem, happiness, and combats feelings of depression.

### GIVING MEANINGFUL GIFTS

When it comes to giving gifts, it's essential to remember that it's not about the money you spend but the thought and care you put into it. In fact, some of the most cherished and meaningful gifts don't cost a dime. Acts of service often reflect genuine thoughtfulness and care, surpassing the value of store-bought items.



**Give Your Time:** An act of service can make someone's life easier and brighter, such as walking a neighbor's dog, helping with household chores, offering free babysitting for a friend, or assisting a tech-challenged relative with technology setup. These acts reflect your willingness to go the extra mile to help and show you care.



**Utilize Your Creativity:** You can create meaningful presents, such as drawing a portrait for someone or assembling a journal or album filled with special memories. Your unique, creative gifts carry a personal touch that store-bought items often lack.



**Make Something Homemade:** Homemade gifts are usually budget-friendly, which can alleviate the financial stress that often accompanies gift-giving occasions. Express your thoughtfulness without breaking the bank, making it a win-win for both you and the recipient.



Remember, the value of a gift is not determined by its price tag! Whether it's an act of service or a homemade creation, what truly matters is the thought and care behind the gesture. When you give from the heart, you create a lasting and meaningful impact that money can't buy.

# IMPORTANT NUMBERS TO KNOW

## PPO PLAN PARTICIPANTS

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Trust Office—Benefits, Eligibility, HRA          | (206) 282-4500 or (800) 225-7620 |
| Delta Dental PPO & Schedule Plan                 | (800) 554-1907                   |
| DeltaCare  | (800) 650-1583                   |
| VSP (Vision Service Plan)                        | (800) 877-7195                   |
| WellDyneRx—for Prescription Coverage             | (888) 479-2000                   |
| MCC Nurses—for Hospitalization/Health Conditions | (877) 362-9969 Option 2          |
| MCC Nurses—for Behavioral Health                 | (206) 308-5632                   |
| Nurse Line                                       | (877) 362-9969 Option 1          |
| Health Coaching                                  | (877) 362-9969 Option 3          |
| Quit Tobacco Coaching                            | (877) 362-9969 Option 4          |
| LiveWell Fit                                     | (800) 225-7620 Option 2, then 5  |

## KAISER PLAN PARTICIPANTS

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Trust Office—Eligibility, HRA             | (206) 282-4500 or (800) 225-7620 |
| Kaiser Permanente—Benefits, Claims Status | (888) 901-4636                   |
| Delta Dental PPO & Schedule Plan          | (800) 554-1907                   |
| DeltaCare                                 | (800) 650-1583                   |
| WellDyneRx—for Prescription Coverage      | (800) 373-1568                   |
| Consulting Nurse Helpline                 | (800) 297-6877                   |
| Quit for Life® Tobacco Cessation          | (800) 462-5327                   |
| LiveWell Fit                              | (800) 225-7620 Option 2, then 5  |
| Chronic Conditions Workshops              | (800) 992-2279                   |

### PRIVACY POLICY

Your health information is completely confidential, protected by federal law, and cannot be shared with your union or your employer without your permission.

All Trust programs are provided and managed by independent service providers contracted by the Trust. The information on your health status and conditions, your medical and prescription drug claims, and the information you may provide when participating is only used to offer you programs that could help you meet your health and wellness goals.

***By law, your health information cannot be used to deny healthcare coverage.***



## INSPIRE OTHERS

Share your experience with Sound Support programs!

Many Trust participants have shared their success stories about participating in Sound Support programs like Health Coaching, Wondr, Guardian Nurses and LiveWell Fit and how the programs helped them regain or maintain their health.

By sharing your story, you can help encourage others to prioritize their health and take advantage of all the Sound Support programs that are available to participants, and fully paid for by the Trust.

If you are interested, reach out to a Wellness Coordinator or scan the QR code to fill out our online interest form





**SOUND HEALTH**  
& WELLNESS TRUST

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**GET INVOLVED**

This newsletter provides a general overview of plan benefits. Please refer to your Plan Booklet for specifics about covered expenses as well as exclusions and limitations. The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your healthcare providers, not to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

## FREEZE THE EXCUSES, NOT YOUR PROGRESS

Sign up for LiveWell Fit events today!

Embark on a winter adventure with LiveWell Fit events. This season, stay active and engaged to earn amazing prizes and HRA funding. The frosty twist? Bring along an eligible Trust participant to their first event, and you'll both be in the running for a \$300 VISA gift card! With the Trust reimbursing up to four event registration fees per year, athletes of all kinds will want to join in on the winter adventures.



Earn funds for your HRA with LiveWell Fit. See the full list for details.

| DATE            | EVENT NAME & DESCRIPTION   |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>DECEMBER</b> |  |
| 9 Bellingham    | <b>Jingle Bell Run Bellingham</b> — 3.1 or 1 mile run/walk and kids run          |
| 9 Kent          | <b>Christmas Rush Fun Run/Walk</b> — 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk                    |
| 9 Tacoma        | <b>Santa Runs Tacoma 5k &amp; 10k</b> — 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk                 |
| 9 Orting        | <b>Reindeer Run 5k</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk                                       |
| 9 Anacortes     | <b>Anacortes Santa Run</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk                                   |
| 9 Maple Valley  | <b>Pigtails Run</b> — 31, 26.2 or 13.1 mile run/walk                             |
| 10 Seattle      | <b>Jingle Bell Run Seattle</b> — 3.1 or 1 mile walk/run and kids run             |
| 10 Kirkland     | <b>12ks Of Christmas</b> — 7.5 or 3.1 mile run/walk                              |
| 16 Redmond      | <b>The Santa Bear Run</b> — 6.2 or 3.7 mile fun run and kids run                 |
| 16 Seattle      | <b>Seward Solstice Run</b> — 6.2 or 4.2 mile trail run/walk                      |
| 17 Seattle      | <b>Sleigh That 5k</b> — 3.1 mile run /walk                                       |
| 23 Seattle      | <b>Holiday Fun Run</b> — 7.5, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk and kids dash             |
| 23 Olympia      | <b>White Elephant Run 5 Mile</b> — 5 mile run/walk                               |
| 24 Puyallup     | <b>Christmas Eve Ugly Sweater 5k Run/Walk</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk and kids run   |
| 31 Kenmore      | <b>Absolution Run</b> — 8 or 4 mile trail run/walk                               |
| <b>JANUARY</b>  |  |
| 1 Auburn        | <b>Bridge to Brunch 5k</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk                                   |
| 1 Seattle       | <b>Resolution Run 5k &amp; Polar Bear Dive</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk and kids dash |