

healthmatters



September

Sept 10	World Suicide Prevention Day Raises awareness to provide worldwide commitment and action to prevent suicide
Sept 18	Air Force Birthday Celebrates the establishment of the U.S. Air Force and honors service members
Sept 20	National PTSD Awareness Day (observed in some areas) Brings attention to the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and the need to support those affected by its lasting impact
All Month	National Suicide Prevention Month & Self-Care Awareness Month Focuses on the importance of mental well-being and encourages those to prioritize their emotional, mental and physical health

October

All Month	October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month Schedule your screenings and encourage the women in your life to do the same. Early detection saves lives.
Oct 1–7	Mental Illness Awareness Week Focuses on breaking the silence around mental health conditions
Oct 10	World Mental Health Day Raises awareness, challenge stigma and advocate for better mental health care
Oct 13	U.S. Navy Birthday Honors Navy personnel and their families
Oct 26	National Day of the Deployed Honors deployed military members and their families
All Month	Depression Awareness Month Encourages education, compassion and support for those living with depression

November

Nov 1	National Stress Awareness Day Focuses on managing stress and promoting emotional wellness
Nov 11	Veterans Day Honors veterans and their families and highlights services and resources
Nov 13	World Kindness Day Encourages kindness and mental health support for individuals and families
All Month	Military Family Month & National Caregivers Month Highlights the strength and commitment of military families and caregivers

Your health plan resources

Have you registered for your member portal yet? Join the thousands of other USFHP beneficiaries who have everything they need to manage their health plan at their fingertips. Scan here to get started or login now!

- Beneficiary Handbook
- Pharmacy information
- Link to TRICARE costs
- Provider Search tool
- And more!



Member
portal

Resources can also be found by scanning the member resources QR or visiting the link below:

Visit www.christushealthplan.org/member-resources/us-family-health-plan or give us a call at 800.678.7347.

Our member services department is available to help you with questions or concerns you may have, from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., local time, Monday through Friday.



Member
resources



Welcome



Theresa L. Lewis

Director, US Family Health Plan Contract

With nearly 30 years of active-duty service in the U.S. Army — including six years as an enlisted soldier and retiring as a colonel in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) — I have dedicated my life to service, leadership and ensuring others receive the highest standard of care. That commitment continues today in my role at CHRISTUS Health Plan, where I lead quality initiatives for the US Family Health Plan (USFHP).

My work focuses on improving patient safety, monitoring provider and beneficiary satisfaction and improving outcomes as it relates to preventive and chronic care programs, such as diabetes management and colorectal screenings. I draw on decades of frontline military health care experience, a deep understanding of system-level care delivery and a personal

dedication to excellence and accountability.

Why should you trust me? Because I've been where you are. I've served alongside service-members and cared for families through every phase of life. I understand the sacrifices you've made, and I am committed to honoring those sacrifices by ensuring you receive safe, effective and compassionate care every time.

My vision moving forward is to build a health care experience that is not only clinically excellent, but also grounded in respect, responsiveness and continuous improvement. I believe in empowering you through education, proactive care and a strong partnership with our providers. **Together**, we can create a healthier future — one where you are informed, supported and truly cared for.

**Get help anytime from
someone you can trust**

24hour - NURSE
LINE Call 800.455.935

Nurses are available through this service, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, to answer questions about medication, help you decide when and where to

seek care or simply provide reassurance when you need it.

If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, such as a heart attack or stroke, call **911** or go to the emergency room.

Suicide and Crisis Hotline

The **988** Suicide & Crisis Lifeline understands that life's challenges can sometimes be difficult.

Whether you're facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug use concerns, or just need someone to talk to, their caring counselors are here for you. You are not alone.

Call or text **988** 24 hours a day to get judgement-free, confidential care. Connecting with someone can help save your life.

While natural anxiety comes with starting each school year, parents should understand the signs of anxiety and stress and seek professional help if needed.

Symptoms of Anxiety in Children

Angelique Snyder, a pediatric psychologist at CHRISTUS Children's, said parents know their kids best.

"Noticing any change in behavior or attitude would be a good start."

SNYDER SAID PARENTS COULD OBSERVE SIGNS OF ANXIETY IN THEIR CHILDREN:

- Tense or edgy behavior
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- More negative thoughts than usual
- Fears or worries about an upcoming event, and avoidance of it
- Asking more what-if questions or having changes in feelings

"Avoiding something would be a big sign of anxiety or being overly clingy and asking a lot for a lot of reassurance," Snyder said. "Anxious cognitions tend to be about the future, and they're predicting negative outcomes."

Children between 6 and 10 begin showing avoidant behavior, which indicates anxiety.

Some Kids Can't Identify Anxiety

Some children come in and know they are dealing with anxiety. A psychologist or therapist can provide strategies for them. However, the big problem is that many children don't realize they are experiencing stress and anxiety.

"For others, they're not really sure what it is, and they're not sure how to label it or what's going on," Snyder said. "And so we want to make sure that kids have the words to express what's happening to them."

Elena Mikalsen, Ph.D., the Section Chief of the Department of Psychology at CHRISTUS Children's, said that most children have anxiety about starting middle school or high school.

When Should Parents Start Seeking Professional Help and Medical Advice?

Parents should seek help when they feel their child's anxiety is too overwhelming.

Suppose a parent notices that stress is taking things away from kids. For example, they're no longer enjoying their family or friends; they can no longer participate in something as they used to. In addition, they are exhibiting more signs of anxiety more often.



Read the full article here

Rest easy: how good sleep hygiene can lower stress and boost health

In today's busy world, getting a good night's sleep can feel like a luxury — but it's actually a vital part of staying healthy, both physically and mentally. One powerful tool to help improve your sleep is sleep hygiene — a set of healthy habits that support better, more restful sleep.

What is sleep hygiene?

Sleep hygiene refers to the daily routines and environment that impact your sleep. Just like brushing your teeth helps keep your mouth healthy, practicing good sleep habits can improve how well — and how long — you sleep each night.

Why it matters

Quality sleep helps your body recharge, your brain process emotions and your immune system stay strong. Poor sleep, on the other hand, can lead to low energy, irritability and even increase your risk for chronic conditions like heart disease or depression.

Sleep and stress

One of the biggest benefits of healthy sleep habits is **lower stress levels**. When you sleep well, your brain is better equipped to regulate emotions and handle daily challenges. On the flip side, stress can make it harder to fall or stay asleep — creating a cycle that's tough to break without good sleep hygiene in place.



Quick tips for better sleep

Keep it consistent

Even on weekends, try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.

Get some sunlight

Natural light during the day helps regulate your body's internal clock.

Move your body

Regular physical activity can help you fall asleep faster — but avoid vigorous exercise right before bed.

Keep naps short

If you need a nap, aim for 20–30 minutes in the early afternoon to avoid disrupting nighttime sleep.

Clear your mind

Try journaling, deep breathing or guided meditation to let go of worries before bed.

Reserve your bed for sleep

Avoid working, watching TV or scrolling on your phone in bed so your brain associates it with rest.



Try the Calm app for free today using code **CHRISTUSHealth2024**



At CHRISTUS Health, our Care Management program is designed to support you every step of the way. Our team provides a comprehensive, personalized care plan by working with you, your family and your health care provider. Helping you enjoy your best health is more than just a goal — it's our purpose. Through personal, reliable and accessible care, we are committed to improving our beneficiaries' **quality of life**.

Navigating Care Together: Inside Our Care Management Program

We recently sat down with Torie (left), a Care Manager Nurse, and Janette (right), a Care Coordinator, to learn how they support our USFHP beneficiaries every day.



"I like to say we're here to make life easier," says Torie. "A lot of times, people just need someone to speak up for them and help connect the dots." Whether that means finding a specialist, arranging transportation, securing medical equipment or following up after a hospital stay, Torie's role centers around removing barriers so beneficiaries can focus on healing.

Janette often provides the first introduction to the Care Management program. "I'm usually the first voice they hear," she explains. "I help them understand how we can support them, from accessing community resources to answering questions about claims or benefits." Together, Janette and Torie form part of a deeply connected team that works behind the scenes to make sure beneficiaries receive personalized, compassionate care.

That care includes goal setting, advocacy, emotional support and expert guidance on managing chronic conditions. In one case, the team helped a Houston beneficiary facing a crisis after being discharged from the hospital. "We connected them with food assistance, transportation and housing resources," says Torie. "That kind of support can make all the difference."

Mental health is also a major focus. "We help benefi-

ciaries find virtual counseling and connect them with in-network providers," Torie shares. "We always let them

know they're not alone." Janette adds that the team also screens for mental health concerns and partners with churches and local organizations to build strong support networks.

Family and caregivers are welcomed as part of the care team. "They're often the ones making sure medications are taken or appointments are kept," says Torie. "We encourage them to be involved, especially in mental health cases, and help them recognize early warning signs."

When asked what she would say to a beneficiary unsure about joining the program, Torie's answer is heartfelt: "Give it a try. It's free, it's flexible and it's completely centered around you. There's no obligation, and you can leave at any time. Even one call can change the course of your care for the better."

If you think you or a loved one could benefit from personalized support, whether it's managing a condition, recovering from a hospital stay or accessing local resources, reach out to our care management team today at 800-446-1730, option 2 to get started. We're here to walk with you, every step of the way.

HOW MIGHT DEPRESSION impact other medical illnesses?

Depression can significantly impact other medical illnesses by aggravating existing conditions and increasing the risk of developing new chronic diseases.

By Michael L. Brown, MD

CHRISTUS Health
Networks Behavioral
Health Consultant



Read the full
article here



It's important to recognize that clinically-important depressive illness is more than "just feeling sad." It's a condition that affects us physically by disrupting sleep, energy and concentration; and affects us emotionally by disrupting our mood, our motivation and our sense of hope or optimism. In fact, for many people, sadness isn't even part of the illness. Often, the major impact is a loss of the experience of joy

or anticipation, leading to apathy, a loss of initiative and a feeling that things don't matter. As a result, things like managing medical conditions or attending to unusual symptoms go without being done because they no longer feel important or meaningful. Overall, recognizing and managing depression is crucial for improving outcomes in patients with other medical illnesses.

Fall recipes for mental wellness

Dark chocolate and walnut oat bites

Makes 12–16 bites | Prep time: 10 min | No bake

These no-bake energy bites are perfect for a quick brain-boosting snack. Sweetened naturally with dates, they satisfy a sweet tooth without spiking your blood sugar.

Ingredients

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup walnuts
- 1/2 cup pitted Medjool dates (about 6–7)
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons nut butter (like almond or peanut)
- 1–2 tablespoons water, as needed
- Pinch of sea salt
- Optional: 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon or vanilla extract

Instructions

1. Add oats and walnuts to a food processor. Pulse until crumbly.
2. Add dates, cocoa powder, nut butter, salt and any extras. Blend until a sticky dough forms, adding water if needed.
3. Scoop and roll into 1-inch balls.
4. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to one week.



Nutrition spotlight: a treat that loves you back

- Dark chocolate (at least 70% cocoa) is high in flavonoids, which may improve memory and reduce anxiety.
- Walnuts are rich in omega-3 fatty acids that support brain and heart function.
- Oats contain B vitamins and fiber, helping stabilize mood and support gut health.
- Dates offer natural sweetness plus potassium and magnesium for stress relief.



5101 N. O'Connor Blvd.
Irving, TX 75039

Need a little extra help?

Use findhelp.org to connect with free or reduced-cost services in your community. Whether you're looking for food pantries, housing support, financial assistance or other resources, you can search by ZIP code to find help near you.



FindHelp.org

Need a ride?

As a CHRISTUS Health US Family Health Plan member, you also have access to free transportation assistance through TrustRide to get you to and from medical appointments — 16 one-way trips every calendar year.

Schedule a ride by calling (844) 886-RIDE (7433).

Contact us

For any questions, contact member services at **1-800.678.7347**

Find a provider: www.christushealthplan.org/find-a-provider

We want to hear from you!

Let us know what you would like to see in your next quarterly newsletter by scanning the QR code below.



Feedback

FRAUD, WASTE OR ABUSE?

Report potential fraud, waste or abuse in the CHRISTUS Health Plan Network by submitting details to the Special Investigations Unit via email, secure fax or phone.

FWA HOTLINE: 855.771.8072

EMAIL: christushealthsiu@christushealth.org

SECURE FAX: 210.766.8849

If you prefer anonymity, call the Integrity Line at **888.728.8383**

or visit **CHRISTUSintegritylink.org**.

For compliance questions or concerns, you can email us at chpcompliance@christushealth.org

