



# HEALTH MATTERS

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## Social Connectedness Improves Your Health, Quality of life

**S**ocial connectedness influences our minds, bodies, and behaviors — all of which influence our health and life expectancy.

Research shows that social

connectedness can lead to longer life, better health, and improved well-being.

When you feel like you belong and have the support and care you need, as well as the number,

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## HIAP RESOLUTION AIMS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

In a landmark decision, the Island County Board of Health has adopted a resolution intended to improve community well-being.

In adopting a [Health in All Policies \(HiAP\) resolution](#), Island County aims to advance health equity,

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# SOCIAL: CONNECTEDNESS CAN IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH

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quality, and diversity of relationships that you want.

People are by nature social creatures. Social connections are important for our wellbeing. Our relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and community members can have a major impact on our health and well-being.

When people are socially connected and have stable and supportive relationships, they are more likely to make healthy choices and to have better mental and physical health outcomes. They are also better able to cope with hard times, stress, anxiety, and depression.

There are many things that create social connectedness. The amount and quality of our relationships matter, as do the various roles they play in our

lives.

## Community Health

There are other benefits of social connectedness beyond individual health. Social connectedness can also help create trust and resilience within communities.

A sense of community belonging and supportive and inclusive connections in our neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, workplaces, and other settings are associated with a variety of positive outcomes. Having supportive and inclusive relationships:

- Helps communities thrive and support the overall well-being, health, safety, and resilience of communities.
- May encourage people to give back to their communities, which may further strengthen those connections.

## Ways You Can Connect With Your Community

The following are links to local volunteer opportunities and community activities in Island County:

- [VolunteerMatch Oak Harbor](#) lists opportunities in advocacy and Human Rights, Animals, Community and more
- [Embrace WhidbeyCamano event calendar](#)
- [Whidbey Island Macaroni Kid](#) (for families)
- [Washington Trail Association Hiking Club](#)
- Other ways to get involved include joining local nonprofit service organizations such as Rotary, Lions, Elks, Soroptimists, and the VFW.

# Create, Strengthen Social Connections

No matter who you are or if your relationships were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, you can take steps to create new and stronger relationships.

Improving social connections can take time. There are no official guidelines or a one-size-fits-all strategy, but these tips can help:

- Invest time in nurturing your

relationships.

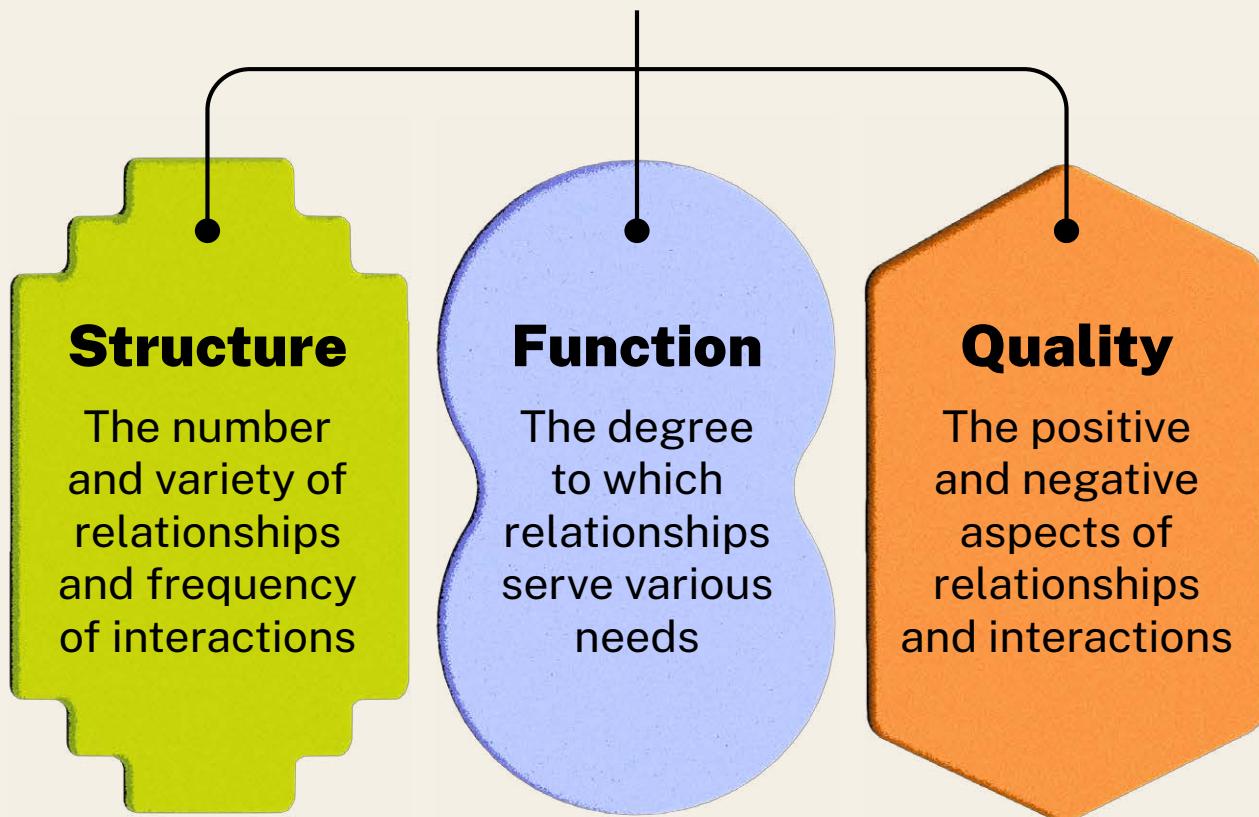
- Explore ways to meet people, like joining a club, volunteering, participating in a mentorship program or taking a class.
- Share things you already do (like exercising or having a meal) with a friend — or do new activities with them.
- Find ways to be responsive, supportive, and grateful to others.

- Reduce practices that lead to feelings of disconnection from others, such as excessive social media use.

- Ensure you are taking care of your mental health. Talk to a health care provider if you are experiencing stress, loneliness, and social isolation. For mental health emergencies, call or text the [988 Crisis Line](#) for immediate support, or call 911.

## The Three Vital Components of Social Connection

The extent to which an individual is socially connected depends on multiple factors, including:



### EXAMPLES

Household size

Friend circle size

Marital/partnership status

### EXAMPLES

Emotional support

Mentorship

Support in a crisis

### EXAMPLES

Relationship satisfaction

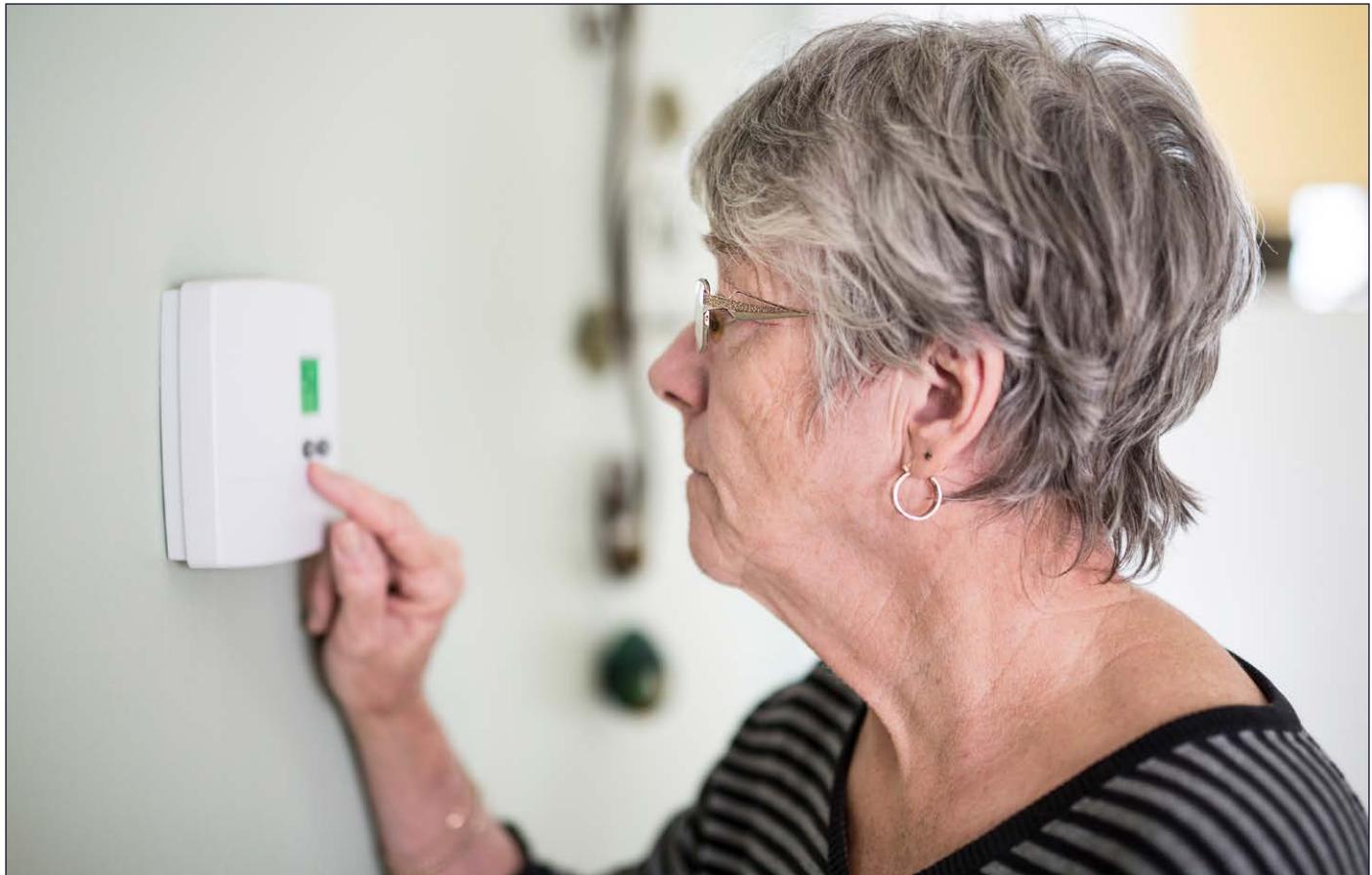
Relationship strain

Social inclusion or exclusion

Source: Holt-Lunstad J. Why Social Relationships Are Important for Physical Health: A Systems Approach to Understanding and Modifying Risk and Protection. *Annu Rev Psychol.* 2018;69:437-458.



Office of the  
U.S. Surgeon General



# As you age, a big chill can turn into a serious health concern

**C**old Weather Safety for Older Adults – National Institute on Aging (.gov)

If you are like most people, you feel cold every now and then during the winter. What you may not know is that just being really cold can make you very sick, according to the National Institute on Aging.

The NIA says older adults can lose body heat fast — faster than when they were young. Changes in your body that come with aging can make it harder for you to be aware of getting cold.

A big chill can turn into a dangerous problem before an older person even knows what's happening.

Doctors call this serious problem hypothermia.

## What Is Hypothermia?

Hypothermia is what happens when your body temperature gets very low. For an older person, a body temperature of 95°F or lower can cause many health problems, such as a [heart attack](#), [kidney problems](#), [liver damage](#), or worse.

Being outside in the cold, or even being in a very cold house, can lead to hypothermia. Try to stay away from cold places, and pay attention to how cold it is where you are.

You can take steps to lower your chance of getting hypothermia.

## Keep Warm Inside

Living in a cold house, apartment, or other building can cause hypothermia. In fact, hypothermia can happen to someone in a [nursing home](#) or group facility if the rooms are not kept warm enough.

If someone you know is in a group facility, pay attention to the inside temperature and to whether that person is dressed warmly enough.

People who are sick may have special problems keeping warm. Do not let it get too cold inside and dress warmly.

Even if you keep your temperature between 60°F and 65°F, your home or apartment may not be warm enough to keep you safe. This is a special problem if you live alone because there is no one else to feel the chilliness of the house or notice if you are having symptoms of hypothermia.

**Here are some tips for keeping warm while you're inside:**

- Set your heat to at least 68–70°F. To save on heating bills, close off rooms you are not using. Close the vents and shut the doors in these rooms and keep the basement door closed. Place a rolled towel in front of all doors to keep out drafts.
- Make sure your house isn't losing heat through win-

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# Five Tips for Exercising Safely During Cold Weather

Don't let falling temperatures stop your outdoor exercise plans! You can walk, ski, ice skate, shovel snow, and more.

**Take a few extra steps to stay safe:**

**1**

**Warm up and cool down**, such as stretching or walking in place, to prepare and restore your muscles before and after a workout.



**2**

**Pick the right clothes.** Dress in several layers of loose clothing to trap warm air between them. Wear a waterproof coat or jacket if it's snowy or rainy, and don't forget a hat, scarf, and gloves.



**3**

**Be extra careful** around snow and icy sidewalks so you won't slip and fall. Wear sturdy shoes to give you proper footing.



**4**

**Learn about the signs of hypothermia**, a drop in body temperature that can cause serious health problems.



**5**

**Check the forecast.** If it's too windy, cold, or wet outside, consider an indoor workout instead using an online video or your own routine.



Visit [www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercising-outdoors](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercising-outdoors) to learn more.



National Institute  
on Aging

# February is American Heart Month



## SHOW YOUR HEART SOME LOVE

**H**eart disease is a leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women. But, according to the National Institute of Health, you can take steps to protect your heart and stay healthy.

To start, you can learn and keep track of some important heart health numbers, like your weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose (blood sugar).

Then take action to improve your numbers.

One key number to know is your body mass index, or BMI. BMI is an estimate of body fat.

Your BMI is based on your height and weight.

Having a higher BMI is one factor that increases your risk for certain conditions, including heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Get your blood pressure checked at least once a year by a health care professional and ask what your target numbers should be. Then ask for tips to keep your blood pressure under control. Keep track of your numbers.

Getting enough physical activity can help you meet your heart health goals. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week.

Consider wearing a device that counts your steps to track how much you walk every day. Or simply jot down how much time you spend each day with different activities.

Eat a heart-healthy diet and keep a record of what you eat and drink each day. This can also help you stay on track.

### What Systolic, Diastolic Numbers Mean

**Systolic blood pressure** (the first number) – indicates how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls when the heart contracts.

**Diastolic blood pressure** (the second number) – indicates how much pressure your blood is exerting against your artery walls while the heart muscle is resting between contractions.

### Behaviors That Can Increase Your Risk of Heart Disease

✓ Eating a diet high in saturated fats, trans fat, and cholesterol has been linked to heart disease and related conditions, such as atherosclerosis. Also, too much salt (sodium) in the diet can raise blood pressure.

✓ Not getting enough physical activity can lead to heart disease. It can also increase the chances of having other medical conditions that are risk factors, including obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Regular physical activity can lower your risk for heart disease.

✓ Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure levels and the risk for heart disease. It also increases levels of triglycerides, a fatty substance in the blood which can increase the risk for heart disease.

- Women should have no more than one drink a day.
- Men should have no more than two drinks a day.

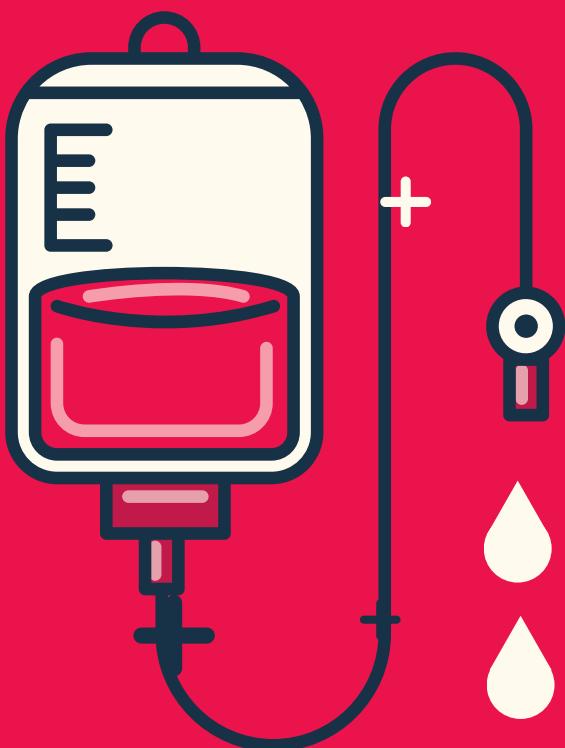
✓ Tobacco use increases the risk for heart disease and heart attack:

- Cigarette smoking can damage the heart and blood vessels, which increases your risk for heart conditions such as atherosclerosis and heart attack.
- Nicotine raises blood pressure.
- Carbon monoxide from cigarette smoke reduces the amount of oxygen that your blood can carry.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke can also increase the risk for heart disease, even for nonsmokers.



# +DONATE+ +BLOOD+

Sign Up to Support Our Local Blood Supply, **SAVE LIVES**



## Show How Much Island County Cares!

Bloodworks Northwest  
needs a minimum of 25 people  
to commit NOW to schedule a  
blood drive at the Island County  
Campus in May.

Scan QR Code for information  
to determine your eligibility  
and for guidelines on how to  
prepare to give blood.



→ Email [Lynette Goodell](mailto:L.goodell@islandcountywa.gov) [L.goodell@islandcountywa.gov](mailto:L.goodell@islandcountywa.gov)  
now to register, or call her at 360-679-7373.

+ Each Donation Can Save TWO Lives.  
Let's Save 50 or more! +

# Do your heart a favor, reduce sodium intake

The National Institute of Health suggests the following ways to cut back on your sodium consumption:

- Look at nutrition facts labels and try to choose prepared foods that have less than 5% of the daily value of sodium per serving.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat, rather than canned, smoked, or processed.
- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables that have no

added salt.

- Rinse canned foods to remove some of the sodium.
- Add less salt — or none — when cooking.
- Use reduced-sodium bouillon, dressings, and sauces like soy sauce.
- Use fresh herbs and buy spices and blends without added salt.
- Cook at home instead of eating out at restaurants, when possible. But when eating out, ask that no extra salt be added to your food.

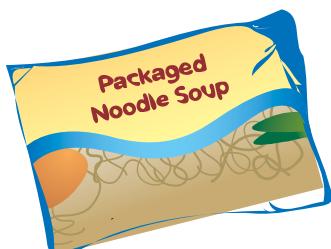
## Choose Foods Low In Sodium

Choosing and preparing foods that are lower in salt and sodium may help prevent or lower high blood pressure.

Choose More Often:	Choose Less Often:
Grilled or baked chicken and turkey (with skin removed)	Smoked and cured meats such as bacon, ham, sausage, hot dogs, bologna, fatback, ham hocks, scrapple, and liver pudding
Fresh fish or rinsed canned fish such as tuna* or sardines	Canned fish
Low-sodium canned foods	Canned foods packed in broth or salt
Low-sodium or reduced-sodium cheeses	Most cheeses
Low-salt or salt-free chips, nuts, and pretzels	Salty chips, crackers, nuts, popcorn, and pretzels
Plain rice, noodles, or pasta	Quick-cooking rice and noodles
Homemade, low-sodium, or reduced-sodium soups	Regular canned and instant soups
Fresh, frozen, "no-salt-added," or rinsed canned vegetables	Canned vegetables
Spices, herbs, and flavorings such as cilantro, parsley, garlic powder, onion powder, vinegar, and chili powder	Condiments and seasonings such as soy sauce, monosodium glutamate (MSG), fish sauce, bouillon cubes, ketchup, and Cajun seasonings

\*Pregnant and nursing mothers: Talk to your health care provider to find out the types of fish you can eat that are lower in mercury.

Food labels tell you what you need to know about choosing foods that are lower in sodium. Here's a food label for packaged noodle soup. Its % Daily Value for sodium is 34%. This is high in sodium. Choose products with the lowest % Daily Value for sodium.



Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 block	%DV*
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	Amount/Serving %DV*
Calories 190	Total Fat 8g 12%
Calories from Fat 70	Saturated Fat 4g 20% Total Carbohydrate 26g 9%
Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	Trans Fat 0g Sugars 1g
	Cholesterol 0mg Protein 5g
	Sodium 820mg 34%
	Vitamin A 2% Vitamin C 2%
	Calcium 2% Iron 6%

5% or less is low.  
20% or more is high.



National Heart, Lung,  
and Blood Institute

December 2013



COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER  
HEALTH DISPARITIES INITIATIVE



# BOH: Resolution Promotes Health Considerations in Policymaking

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consider health implications in all policymaking, identify gaps in access to resources and expand social drivers of health.

“This is a collaborative approach that brings health considerations into policymaking across various sectors, jurisdictions, and levels of government, recognizing that health is influenced by factors beyond traditional healthcare,” said Island County Public Health Director Dr. Shawn Morris, ND.

“Adoption of the HiAP resolution by the Board of Health marks a significant step, laying the groundwork for effective partnerships and policy coordination,” Morris said. “I commend the Board of Health members for taking this proactive, community-centered approach.

“The resolution reflects a transformative approach to public health,” he said. “This approach centers key factors that influence health, well-being, and quality of life, including the conditions in which people are born, live, learn,

work, play, worship, and age.”

The resolution underscores the need for policies that address the root causes of health disparities, promoting comprehensive and coordinated strategies to improve community well-being. It also calls on policymakers to consider unintended harms that may result from policy decisions while taking an inclusive approach by increasing engagement with under-represented community members.

HiAP advocates for policies that consider economic development, employment opportunities, educational access, social connection, housing conditions, access to nutritious foods, recreational opportunities, community engagement, and other social factors, Morris explained. This holistic perspective acknowledges that health outcomes are influenced by factors beyond healthcare and emphasizes cross-sector collaboration.

HiAP also focuses on achieving health equity, addressing disparities that arise from social, economic, and environmental factors that influence

health outcomes and quality of life.

Island County aims to work with community partners, including the island’s cities and towns, public officials, and policymakers to address the root causes of health inequities and drive meaningful change, Morris added.

Because of the vital importance of health equity, the Board of Health has asked all public agencies, departments, and jurisdictions to take a HiAP approach in policymaking. Current examples include centering health equity in the Island County Comprehensive Plan update and the Community Health Assessment, while taking a stepwise approach to considering equity implications in planned regulatory code revisions.

The Island County Board of Health is comprised of seven members, including all three county commissioners, Oak Harbor’s mayor, a hospital district commissioner, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island’s commanding officer for Navy Medical Readiness and Training and Island County Health Officer Dr. Howard Leibrand, MD.



# If You are Going Out Into the Cold, Dress for the Weather

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dows. Keep your blinds and curtains closed. If you have gaps around the windows, try using weather stripping or caulk to keep the cold air out.

- Dress warmly on cold days even if you are staying in the house. Throw a blanket over your legs. Wear socks and slippers.

- When you go to sleep, wear long underwear under your pajamas, and use extra covers. Wear a cap or hat.

- Make sure you eat enough food to keep up your weight. If you don't eat well, you might have less fat under your skin. Body fat helps you to stay warm.

- Drink alcohol moderately, if at all. Alcoholic drinks can make you lose body heat.

- Ask family or friends to check on you during cold weather. If a power outage leaves you without heat, try to stay with a relative or friend.

You may be tempted to warm your room with a space heater. But, some space heaters are fire hazards, and others can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

## Bundle Up on Windy, Cold Days

- Dress for the weather if you have to go out on chilly, cold, or damp days.

- Wear loose layers of clothing. The air between the

layers helps to keep you warm.

- Put on a hat and scarf. You lose a lot of body heat when your head and neck are uncovered.

- Wear a waterproof coat or jacket if it's snowy.

- Change clothes right away if they get damp or wet.

## Illness, Medicines, and Cold Weather

Some illnesses may make it harder for your body to stay warm.

- [Thyroid problems](#) can make it hard to maintain a normal body temperature.

- [Diabetes](#) can keep blood from flowing normally to provide warmth.

- [Parkinson's disease](#) and [arthritis](#) can make it hard to put on more clothes, use a blanket, or get out of the cold.

- [Memory loss](#) can cause a person to go outside without the right clothing.

Talk with your doctor about your health problems and how to prevent hypothermia.

[Taking some medicines](#) and not being active also can affect body heat. These include medicines you get from your doctor and those you buy over-the-counter, such as some cold medicines.

Ask your doctor if the medicines you take may affect body heat. Always talk with your doctor before you stop taking any medication.

# Continued diligence helps to prevent spread of respiratory illnesses

Island County Public Health continues to track [seasonal respiratory illnesses](#) and encourages people to take basic steps to prevent getting sick and spreading viruses to others.

"Over the past six weeks or so we've seen local peaks in our three primary winter respiratory viruses," said Jamie Hamilton,

epidemiologist for Island County.

"There is still a lot of illness circulating in the community, particularly COVID-19 since it is the most prevalent generally and peaked more recently than RSV and influenza," Hamilton said.

"Spring is still a long way away, but thus far the seasonal respiratory hospitalization burden

has been lower than last winter," he said.

Nonetheless, Public Health officials are asking people to remain diligent in their efforts to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses.

Public Health's website on [communicable diseases](#) includes links to [provider resources](#).

## PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES



### Flu, COVID-19, and RSV

- Flu, COVID-19, and RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) are common respiratory viruses circulating this time of year. Last year, we saw high rates of respiratory illness and hospitalizations from the flu, COVID-19, and RSV. Luckily, we have vaccines that can help protect us from severe illness, hospitalizations, and death from these respiratory illnesses.
- Getting an annual flu vaccine and staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccination gives you and your loved ones the best protection from serious illness and death. Flu and updated 2023-24 COVID-19 vaccines are both available and recommended to everyone over the age of 6 months. If you are over the age of 60 or currently pregnant, you may be eligible for an RSV vaccine. The RSV vaccine given during pregnancy has been found to protect the infant from serious illness from RSV. An RSV antibody product is recommended for all children before 8 months of age if the parent was not vaccinated during pregnancy. Talk to your healthcare provider to see if you should get an RSV vaccine, or if your baby should get an RSV product.
- You can get your flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine on the same day for convenience. However, it is important to get both vaccines as soon as you can. Talk to your provider about getting the RSV vaccine with other vaccines if you are eligible.



#### Vaccinate

Your best defense against respiratory illnesses



#### Wash hands

Frequently wash your hands with soap and water



#### Isolate if sick

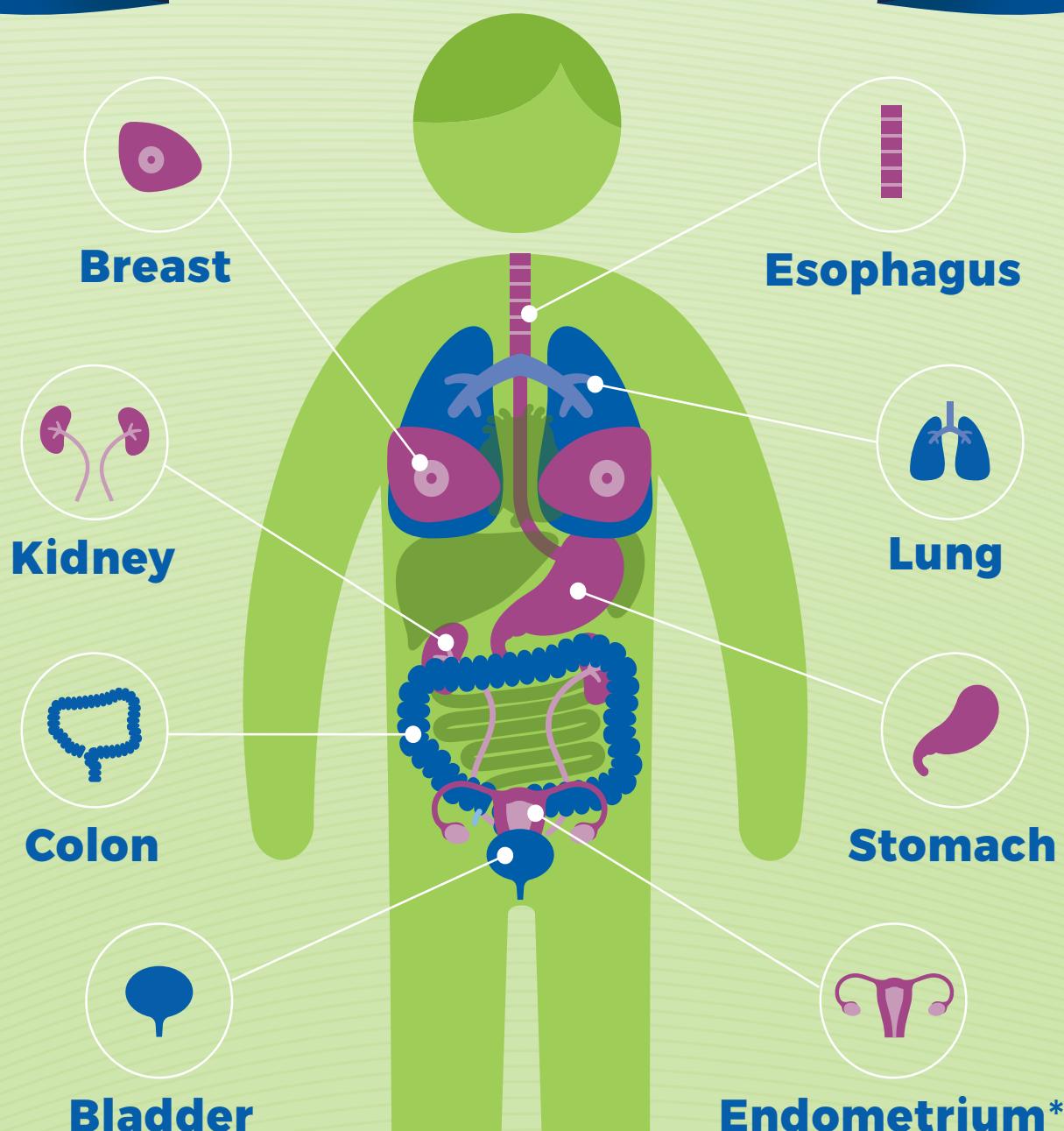
Monitor symptoms and prepare to isolate from others if sick



#### Consider wearing a mask

in indoor crowded spaces

# Regular Physical Activity Helps Lower Your Cancer Risk



Source: *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*,  
2nd edition (Chapter 2, page 32)

LEARN MORE AT  
[www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics)



August 2020