



HEALTHCARE OMBUDSPERSON PROGRAM

HEALTHCARE CONNECTION | MARCH 2026

“SPRING AHEAD TO HEALTHIER SLEEP”

Spring Ahead, Fall Back. It’s how we remember what direction we change our clocks twice a year. March 8th is when the time changes this year, and while the extra hour of sunshine is always welcome, many people struggle with “losing an hour” of sleep. Leading up to this time change is an ideal time to look at the things that may be keeping you up at night, or possibly leaving your feeling exhausted in the morning, even after you’ve had a solid 7 or 8 hours of sleep the night before.

Janet Gerhard, who works with CWA members experiencing mental health challenges at FHE Health, suggests that good sleep hygiene can help you unwind at night and set you up for getting deeper, more restful sleep. “Establish a good bedtime routine,” Gerhard suggests. “Stop scrolling on your phone at least an hour before bedtime. The light from the electronics can trick your brain into thinking it’s still daytime, and that can keep you from getting good sleep.” Other things you can do to help you get better sleep include making your bedroom a screen-free zone, dimming the lights, and listening to quiet, calming content. If you like to read at night before bed, printed content is best, but if you read electronic books, using a dedicated device with an E-Ink display is less disruptive to your circadian rhythm than reading them on your phone or tablet.



If falling asleep isn’t the problem, but you frequently wake up at night, or wake up feeling tired, it might be time to schedule a visit with your primary care doctor. Waking up frequently to go to the bathroom could indicate an emerging health condition, and sleep apnea is thought to affect as many as 1 billion people worldwide, with 80% of these cases undiagnosed. Sleep apnea can affect anyone, and left untreated can lead to potentially fatal cardiovascular problems. If you aren’t sleeping well, especially if you have a partner who complains about you snoring, schedule a visit with your doctor to learn more about this condition.

HEALTHCARE 101: SPECIALIST



A specialist is a medical provider that, unlike a primary care physician, focuses their practice on a specific area of medicine. Specialists usually focus on one particular organ system or treating a particular type of disease. Neurologists, orthopedists, cardiologists, and oncologists are some of the many types of providers classified as specialists. Depending on what insurance plan you have chosen, your co-pay to see a specialist may be higher than your co-pay to see a primary care physician. If you are still enrolled in an HMO plan, any specialist you want to see will require you to get a referral from your primary care physician in order for those services to be covered.

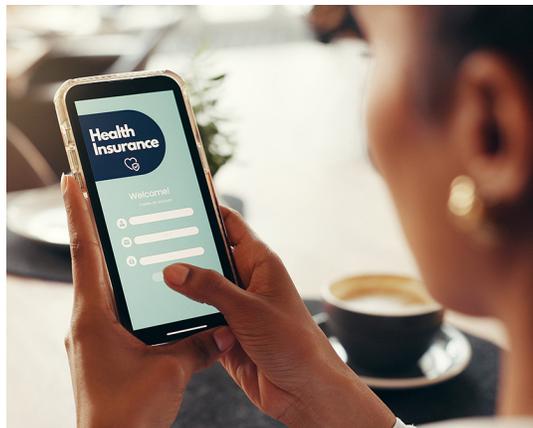
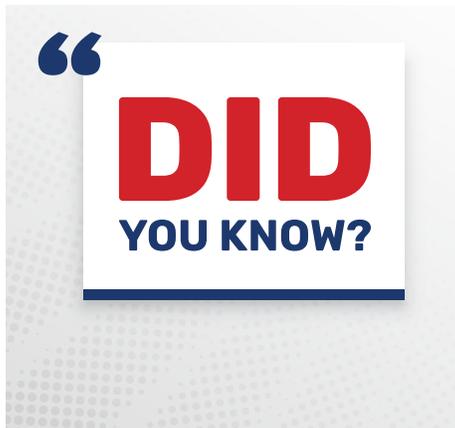
DENTAL HEALTH STRENGTHENS OVERALL HEALTH

While you are focusing on your mind and body, do not neglect your teeth! Our dental plans cover two annual cleanings for free (no copay) with an in-network dentist. These cleanings are important for your oral health. There are certain areas in your mouth where your regular dental tools cannot reach. Herein lies the importance of professional dental cleaning services.



A professional dental cleaning is a preventive treatment performed by a dentist or licensed dental hygienist. Unlike routine brushing and flossing at home, professional cleaning uses specialized tools and techniques to meticulously remove plaque and tartar buildup from your teeth and gums. A typical dental cleaning session is straightforward and painless, taking about 30 minutes to an hour, depending on your oral health status. While some might experience slight discomfort during scaling, especially if there's significant tartar buildup or sensitive gums, dentists use techniques to minimize any potential discomfort. It's common to feel a sense of freshness and smoothness on your teeth afterward, along with a visibly brighter smile. This process not only cleans your teeth more thoroughly than home care can achieve but also allows for the early detection of potential oral health issues.

You can strengthen your overall health by improving your daily brushing and flossing routine, maintaining a well-balanced diet, limiting alcohol and tobacco use, and keeping up with regular dental visits. Good oral health also reduces your risk for heart disease, stroke, and dementia. Talk to your dentist about how you can build lasting healthy habits.



Special Open Enrollment is coming in April!

Based on changes negotiated between CWA and the State, there will be a special open enrollment period. During this time, you will be able to change health plans. Stay tuned for messages from your Healthcare Ombudsman in the coming weeks for more information.

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