

WOMEN'S HEALTH EDITION

our

OCTOBER 2023



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# HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE  
TO HEALTHY  
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## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT Women's Health

ROBBIE HARRIFORD, MD  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER





# Healthier Minds By Design

**W**omen know women best. In 2006 two women, Deborah Simon and Dori Tompkins, were motivated by their faith and passion to support women with mental health challenges. They created GateWay of Hope as a safe space where women could embark on a journey of self-healing.

**GateWay of Hope** is the only mental health nonprofit in Johnson County, Kansas, that exclusively works with women. In 2015 they hired Dacia Moore, MA, LPC, NCC as its executive director and appointed new board members.

As more women accept the support of mental health counseling, the stigmas are removed. Gateway of Hope is a safety net mental health provider with staff that reflect the diversity of women served. Programs for Latina, Black, and Asian women are specifically designed to address the social struggles and generational cycles they face.

## Services include

### Individual and Group Counseling:

Licensed counselors and social workers provide mental health counseling to women experiencing depression, anxiety, trauma, grief, abuse or dissociation. Women improve their resilience, grit and mental

endurance. Group counseling is available for groups of two to three women in an intimate setting.

### Life Coaching:

Women who feel stuck or unable to reach their goals are matched with a Certified Life Coach to provide encouragement and useful resources to help them move forward.

## Who can receive services?

Women who are low-income, uninsured, women of color, and teen girls and women ages 15 and older who need help to manage anxiety, depression, stress, trauma, dissociative identity disorder (D.I.D.) and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are encouraged to seek help.

Gateway of Hope does not discriminate nor turn away any woman regardless of their socioeconomic status; whether they are insured or uninsured; or their ability to pay for care. Fees range from \$65 to \$95 per session. Financial help is available based on need and reported earnings.

Gateway of Hope welcomes monetary donations and tangible items such as feminine hygiene products, journals, toilet paper and paper towels.



## GateWay of Hope

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Photo Credit: Ruth Ramsey

## COVER STORY

### What You Need to Know About Women's Health

By Ruth Ramsey, Editor-in-Chief

The legacy of Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center founder, Dr. Samuel U. Rodgers, lives on. With compassionate healthcare delivery, the health center meets the needs of individuals and families. In this Women's Health edition, Dr. Robbie Harriford, Chief Medical Officer, offers recommendations to help women take control of their health.



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### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

#### Sorry Isn't Good Enough: What Women Need to Know about Domestic Violence

By Jenna Phelps, Assistant City Prosecutor  
City of Kansas City, MO

There were 14 domestic violence-related homicides in Jackson County between January 1, 2022, and August 31, 2023. Learn the signs, risk factors, steps to protect yourself and how the domestic violence court handles these cases.

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American Heart Association  
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### What Women Need—People Who Care

By Rae Sedgwick, Ph.D., J.D.  
Clinical and Consulting Psychologist  
Attorney at Law  
Among other health concerns, loneliness is becoming a significant contributor to poor health.



# What Do Women Need?

**T**here are a lot of things women are expected to be and do for themselves and the people in their lives. Over a life span, women will learn how to do many things: nurture and support family, care for their children and perhaps other people's children; possibly care for their aging parents; define and navigate their and their children's educational path, develop a career, manage finances, and engage with healthcare systems that she trusts to identify and understand what she needs to enjoy optimal health.

On the frontline of helping women understand their health are medical researchers who delve into the known and unknown aspects of women's health. They make head to toe comparisons based on a woman's race, physical and mental health, socio-economic status, family history, environment and education, to name a few. They determine a woman's baseline in order to guide her in developing best health practices as well as manage and treat chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

In our cover story **Dr. Robbie Harriford**, the Chief Medical Officer at Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center, shares insightful recommendations that encourage women to take control of their health. **Jenna Phelps**, Assistant City Prosecutor educates us about risk factors of domestic violence that may indicate potential for serious injury or even death at the hands of a partner (Page 11.) **Rae Sedgwick** returns with a poignant piece on "What Women Need—People Who Care." She reminds us that loneliness and isolation can negatively impact our health (Page 26).

Stop whatever you are doing. Take a deep, deep breath. Women, let's examine and take our own assessment of where we are, where we want to be and what we can and will do to take better control of our lives and our health. Even though a lot of people are depending on us, self-care is most important!

Enjoy the beautiful fall. Take a walk and refresh.



**Ruth Ramsey**, Publisher and CEO



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## WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Send us your suggestions for health topics you would like to see in *Our Health Matters*. Also share what you enjoy about the magazine. Email us at [info@kcourhealthmatters.com](mailto:info@kcourhealthmatters.com) or write to us at

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# swope<sup>®</sup> HEALTH

# WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

from Adolescence  
Through Maturity



**We believe you are the most important member of your healthcare team! Our goal is to prevent disease and detect it early to increase your chance of lifelong good health.**

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**To make an appointment, call 816-923-5800.**

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# OCTOBER

## BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH



### Early Detection Saves Lives

**B**reast cancer is the second most common cancer among women in the United States. Each year about 264,000 women get breast cancer, and 42,000 women die from the disease. Most breast cancers are found in women who are 50 years and older. About 9% of all new cases of breast cancer in the United States are found in women younger than 45 years of age. One thing is clear — early detection saves lives.

### Ask your doctor when you should get a mammogram

Mammograms are the best way to detect breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat and before a lump is large enough to feel or cause problems.

#### Symptoms of breast cancer may include:

- Any change in the size or the shape of the breast
- Pain in any area of the breast
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk (including blood)
- A new lump in the breast or underarm

If you have any signs, see your doctor right away.

### Risk factors you can change

**Not being physically active.** Women who are not physically active have a higher risk of getting breast cancer. Being physically active can help lower your risk.

**Being overweight or having obesity after menopause.** Older women with these traits have a higher risk.

**Taking hormones.** Some forms of hormone replacement therapy (those that include both estrogen and

progesterone) taken during menopause can raise the risk for breast cancer when taken for more than five years. Certain oral contraceptives (birth control pills) also have been found to raise breast cancer risk.

**Drinking alcohol.** Studies show that a woman's risk for breast cancer increases with the more alcohol she drinks.

According to the National Institutes of Health, other factors such as smoking, exposure to chemicals that can cause cancer, and changes in other hormones due to night shift working also may increase breast cancer risk. Also, having the first pregnancy after age 30, not breastfeeding, and never having a full-term pregnancy can raise breast cancer risk.

### Free or low-cost screenings are available

You may be eligible for free or low-cost screenings if you meet certain qualifications:

- You have no insurance, or your insurance does not cover screening exams.
- Your yearly income is at or below 250% of the federal poverty level.
- You are between 40 and 64 years of age (for breast cancer screening.)
- You are between 21 and 64 years of age (for cervical cancer screening.)
- You have a family history of cancer

Contact your local healthcare centers to see if you qualify for free or low-cost mammograms. Visit the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program resource at: [www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/screenings.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp/screenings.htm). •

**Source:** Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, CDC.gov





# Don't wait to schedule your mammogram.

*We have time for you now.*

## **Call to schedule an appointment today!**

University Health Medical Imaging  
Lakewood Medical Center  
7900 Lee's Summit Road, KCMO 64139  
**816-307-0062**

Health Sciences District  
University Health Medical Imaging UH1  
2101 Charlotte Street., KCMO 64108  
**816-307-0660**

**Evening and weekend hours available through October 31.**

*ACR Accredited Mammography (UH) | ACR Breast Center of Excellence*







# Heart Healthy Tips for Busy Moms

American Heart Association



**W**ith packed schedules, multiple commitments and countless chores, it's a challenge for moms to stay mentally and physically healthy.



**Dr. Michelle Dew**  
Cardiologist  
AdventHealth

"Eating well, moving more and getting enough sleep help lower cardiovascular disease risks and improve quality of life. It is so easy to get overwhelmed trying to keep track of everyone else!" says Dr. Michelle Dew, cardiologist at AdventHealth.

Here are a few tips to overcome common barriers to a healthier lifestyle:

## I don't know how to start.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, start small. Do a simple task such as drinking more water today, walk around the block over lunchtime at work or schedule a doctor's appointment you've put off. Research shows that even modest health improvements have positive effects. And these actions may boost your motivation to tackle bigger health goals.

## I can't find time.

Schedule time on your calendar for your health just like you would for a work meeting. It's okay to ask for help from

family, friends or a babysitter. Research shows support from others improves mothers' health and motivates them to be more active. Even 10-minute blocks of exercise, quiet time or meditation are beneficial. Taking time for yourself can make you a more patient, less stressed parent.

## Eating well is expensive.

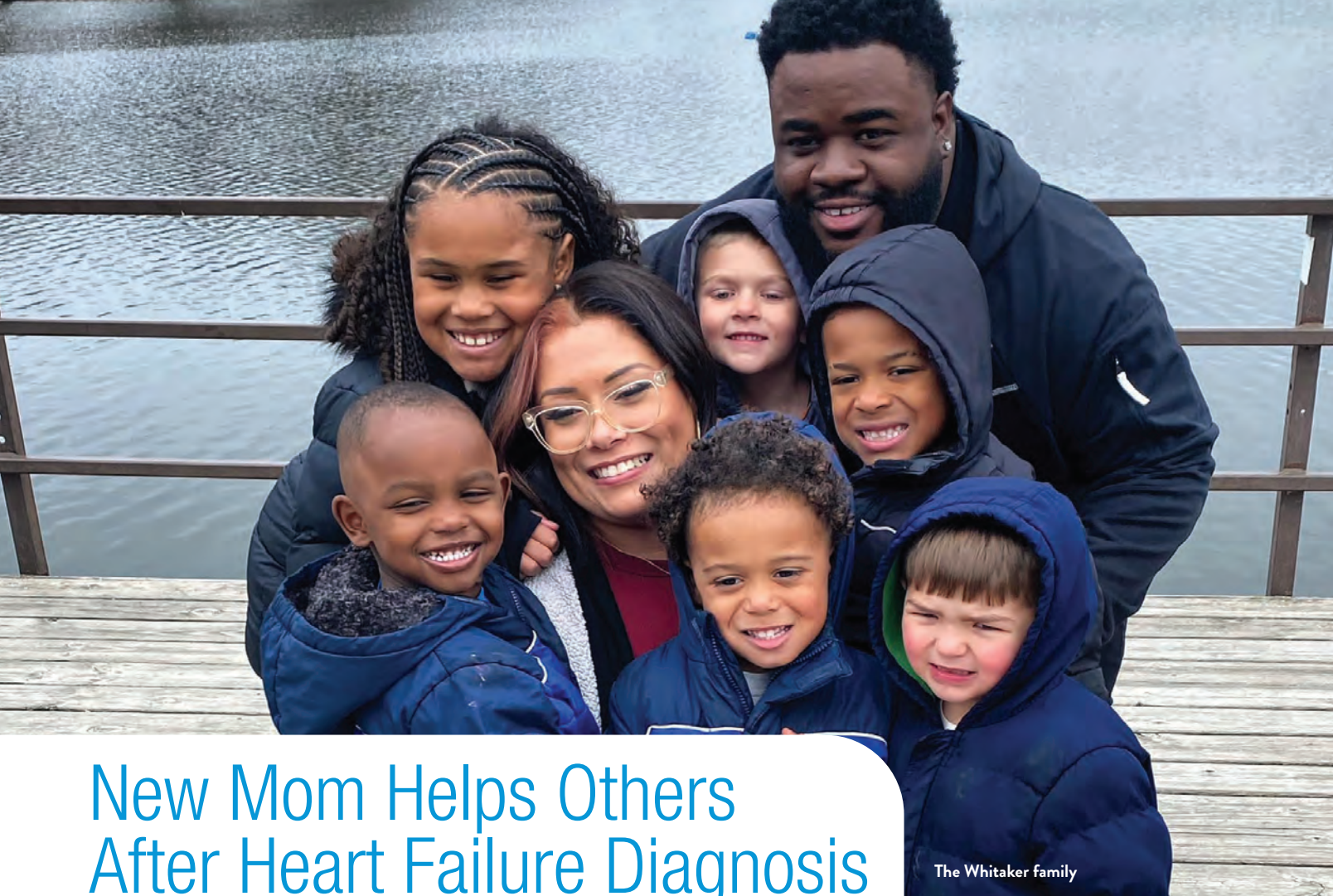
Prioritizing your dietary goals doesn't have to be expensive or time-consuming. Keep a grocery list of your favorite healthy items and opt for in-season produce, which is typically less expensive. Getting the kids involved in cooking can be more work initially, but it pays off in the long run.

## I'm too tired.

Sleep problems are a common struggle for moms. Insufficient sleep impacts mood, health and even longevity. A calming nighttime routine benefits the whole family. Keep bedrooms dark, quiet and calm. Turn off all screens — including your phone — at least 30 minutes before bedtime. And don't use tiredness during the day as an excuse to skip your workout. Exercise helps your body work more efficiently and makes getting through the day easier. •

Contributed by American Heart Association editorial staff and reviewed by science and medicine advisors. Michelle Dew, MD, FACC, is a board-certified cardiologist with AdventHealth.





## New Mom Helps Others After Heart Failure Diagnosis

**M**ary Whitaker had just given birth to her third child when she began feeling ill. She was light-headed and started experiencing a pulsating pain on the side of her head and neck. As a new mom and foster parent, she assumed she just needed some rest.

Mary called her husband Quinton, and told him she wasn't feeling well, and she was planning to lie down for a nap. Quinton had a gut feeling and encouraged her to take her blood pressure. When Mary shared her blood pressure was high, Quinton knew she needed to go to the hospital. There, Mary was told she was experiencing a heart attack at the age of 33. Five weeks and multiple additional tests later, it was revealed that a virus that she contracted while pregnant had weakened her heart, leaving her with heart failure.

Shortly after being diagnosed, Mary and Quinton learned they were expecting another child. Mary knew this would be a high-risk pregnancy but was excited to expand their family. What came next, no mother and father could prepare for.

Medical professionals told the Whitakers that Mary's heart was not strong enough to withstand pregnancy and birth.

She would ultimately have to choose between her life and her unborn child's. "As a mother and a Christian, I couldn't make that decision alone. I just couldn't. It had to be a decision that Quinton and I made together," Mary remembers. Quinton couldn't fathom life without his partner and mother of their children. Today, the Whitakers are turning such a dark time in their lives into something good, by sharing their experience.

"Sharing my story is difficult and has required us to be so vulnerable, but if it changes a life, I know it's worth it. As women, we are strong and we are powerful, but we are not invincible. Listen to your body, trust your gut, and get checked out."

Heart disease is the number one killer of new moms. In fact, 1 in 3 women are still dying of heart disease, claiming more lives than all forms of cancer combined. Furthermore, women of color face a greater risk of developing high blood pressure and having a stroke and complications during or immediately after pregnancy.

Mary has joined forces with the American Heart Association to share her story. To learn more visit [www.heart.org/kansas](http://www.heart.org/kansas) •





# Why Should You Tell Your Doctor About Your Complementary Health Practices?

**W**hen patients tell their doctors about their use of complementary health practices, they can stay in control and effectively manage their health. And they can ensure their doctors are fully informed so they can make wise health care decisions. Here are a few things to start the conversation.

List the complementary health practices you use on your patient history form. When completing the patient history form, be sure to include everything you use—from acupuncture to zinc. It's important to give health care providers a full picture of what you do to manage your health.

At each visit, be sure to tell your providers about any complementary health approaches you are currently using. Don't forget to include over-the-counter and prescription medicines, as well as dietary and herbal supplements. Make a list in advance and take it with you. Some complementary health approaches can have an effect on conventional medicine, so your provider needs to know that you are taking them.

If you are considering a new complementary health practice, ask questions. Ask your healthcare providers about its safety, effectiveness, and possible interactions with medications (both prescription and nonprescription). •

**SOURCE:** National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health

## COMPLEMENTARY VERSUS ALTERNATIVE

According to a national survey, many Americans—more than 30% of adults and about 12% of children—use healthcare approaches that are not typically part of conventional medical care or that may have origins outside of usual Western practice. When describing these approaches, people often use “alternative” and “complementary” interchangeably, but the two terms refer to different concepts.

If a non-mainstream approach is used together with conventional medicine, it's considered “complementary.”

If a non-mainstream approach is used in place of conventional medicine, it's considered “alternative.”

Most people who use non-mainstream approaches also use conventional health care.



**SORRY  
ISN'T GOOD  
ENOUGH!**

## WHAT WOMEN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**D**omestic violence and domestic violence-related crimes heavily impact the Kansas City community. According to the Kansas City Missouri Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit and Kansas City Municipal Court records, the Prosecutor's office files over 5,000 domestic violence cases yearly. Often these cases involve extreme violence, including incidents that involve weapons, stabbings, and strangulation.

There were 14 domestic violence-related homicides in Jackson County between January 1, 2022, and August 31, 2023. Rose Brooks, a local domestic violence resource that works closely with the City Prosecutor's Office, received 400 to 600 hotline calls a month pre-pandemic; they now receive 1,000 calls a month regarding domestic violence situations.

According to the CDC, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men will experience physical violence at the hands of their intimate partner at some point in their lives. Domestic violence also occurs in the LGBTQ+ community. The rate of LGBTQ+ domestic violence is also 1 in 4.

### **Causes and reasons are wide ranging**

Situations involving domestic violence can happen for a variety of reasons. It is often difficult to pinpoint one single incident as the catalyst for a violent relationship. Some of the reasons domestic violence abusers feel the need to control their partner, whether through physical or emotional means, include:



**BY JENNA PHELPS**  
ASSISTANT CITY PROSECUTOR,  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Cont. on Page 12

- anger management issues
- jealousy
- low self-esteem
- feeling inferior
- cultural beliefs that they have the right to control their partner
- personality or psychological disorders
- learned behaviors from growing up in a family in which domestic violence was accepted
- childhood abuse
- alcohol and substance abuse, as impaired individuals may be less likely to control their violent impulses

### Watch for these red flags

Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, economic, and emotional in nature. There are some common red flags that women can recognize in their partner to help them escape a potentially violent situation before it begins.

- Telling someone they never do anything right
- Extreme jealousy of friends or any time that is spent away from the abusive partner. This can include preventing or discouraging someone from spending time with others—friends, family, or even coworkers
- Insulting, demeaning and shaming
- Preventing someone from making their own decisions, including about work or attending school
- Controlling finances without discussion, taking an individual's money or refusing to provide money for necessary expenses
- Pressuring someone to perform sexual acts they're not comfortable with
- Pressuring someone to use drugs and/or alcohol
- Intimidation tactics through threatening looks and/or actions
- Threatening to harm an individual's children or pets
- Threatening to harm someone with weapons
- Destroying personal belongings or the home

## RECOGNIZE THE DANGER

*Those on the outside looking in might ask, "Why didn't she just leave?" A better question would be, "How did the person causing harm prevent their partner from leaving?"*

Men often kill their partners after lengthy periods of physical abuse. In a multi-state controlled study of 11 cities, 70% of the 307 total lethal violence victims were physically abused prior to their deaths by the same intimate partner who killed them. The majority of victims seen in the healthcare system sought out help at emergency departments or inpatient units for their injuries resulting from domestic violence.

Factors that can make it difficult for a survivor to leave a domestic violence situation include children in common, institutional responses (e.g., clergy and secular counselors trying to save a marriage at all costs); inadequate support for survivors; lack of safe and affordable housing; as well as social and cultural barriers.

Domestic violence puts partners at increased risk of being a victim of a domestic violence-related homicide. Signs to be aware of are:

- Abusive partner owns a firearm
- Abusive partner is unemployed
- Abusive partner threatening to kill
- Having a child that is not the abusive partner's
- Survivor believes that the abusive partner is capable of killing her
- Incidents of strangulation

### What happens after charges are made?

When the KCPD responds to an incident involving domestic violence, often responding officers will investigate and make a determination as to whether the incident should be handled at the state level (Jackson County), or at the City level (Kansas City). If there is reasonable grounds that a domestic violence incident has occurred, the suspect is arrested for that incident at the scene.





*"Our approach for domestic violence offenses is accountability-oriented."*

**JUDGE COURTNEY WACHAL KCMO MUNICIPAL COURT JUDGE**

If the suspect is not at the scene, the officers will write the suspect a ticket and submit a warrant application to the City Prosecutor's Office. The warrant is reviewed and signed by a Domestic Violence Prosecutor. The suspect is issued a summons to appear at Court on a specific date and time, or a warrant is issued for their arrest.

After a suspect's first appearance, they are arraigned on their charges and either apply for a court-appointed lawyer or hire their own attorney. The two Domestic Violence Prosecutors work with the defense attorneys to negotiate plea agreements, or will try the case if the Defendant pleads not guilty and the case is set for trial.

## Preparing for trial

It is difficult to move forward on cases without survivors' testimony, especially in situations where there are no other witnesses or evidence. The Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) does everything they can to help make the court process as trauma-free as possible for survivors. Because reliving an incident of domestic violence is traumatic, the DVU staffs three full time witness/victim assistants and has access to community resources like Rose Brooks and New House, who provide a victim advocate to be present with a survivor during the court process and trial proceedings.

## What can victims do to protect themselves?

Protective measures that survivors can take include:

- Make a safety plan, such as identifying a person who is willing to help
- Work with local resources and authorities to ensure their safety
- Work with the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office and the City Prosecutor's Office to help hold domestic violence offenders accountable for their actions

**If you are the victim of domestic violence, call 800-799-7233 or contact one of the community resources listed below. If you feel your life is in danger, call 911.**

Local organizations that provide support to women of domestic violence include: Rose Brooks, New House, Hope House, MOCSA, Mattie Rhodes, and Synergy.

More resources can be found on KCPD's website ([www.kcpd.org/crime/victim-resources/domestic-violence/](http://www.kcpd.org/crime/victim-resources/domestic-violence/)). Not only can these resources help provide immediate respite from domestic violence, they can also provide referrals for shelters and other services.

Jenna Phelps is a Domestic Violence Prosecutor at the City of Kansas City's Prosecutor's Office. Prosecutor Phelps is on the board of directors of the Modern Family Alliance, which is an organization aimed at supporting LGBTQ+ families through events, resources, and education.

# TAKE CARE OF YOUR EYES

**G**etting older increases your risk of some eye diseases. You might also have a higher risk of some eye diseases if you:

- Are overweight or obese
- Have a family history of eye disease
- Are African American, Hispanic, or Native American

Other health conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, can also increase your risk of some eye diseases. Women tend to need glasses more often than men, and they are more prone to developing chronic dry eye. If you're struggling with symptoms such as blurred vision, irritation, pain, and redness in your eyes, it's time to schedule an eye appointment.

More women are diagnosed with two serious, sight-threatening conditions than men: glaucoma (vision loss from damage to the optic nerve over time) and age-related macular degeneration (causes

the gradual loss of central vision). The reason for this is simply that women tend to live longer than men. The best way to fight these diseases is early detection through regular eye exams.

## Risk factors for eye disease

A few eye disease risk factors associated with being a woman include pregnancy, birth control, and menopause, because all three cause a lot of changes in hormone levels. The likelihood of dry eye becomes much higher in these circumstances, and birth control may increase the likelihood of cataracts.

Being a woman is a risk factor no one can control, and another is age, but there are some factors that we can do something about, such as being aware of the importance of eye health. Make your eye exam a priority!

**Source:** [Medline Plus](#)







# Only Have Time to Work Out on Weekends? That's Just Fine.

**Short bursts of exercise may offer big health benefits.**

**A** recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that people who exercised throughout the week and “weekend warriors,” who pack theirs into the weekend, saw similar reductions in risk of heart attack, heart failure, atrial fibrillation and stroke.

Got two minutes to exercise? Then you have enough time to lower your risk of heart disease, cancer, and even early death, according to a study published online in October 2022 by the *European Heart Journal*.

Researchers looked at almost 72,000 adults, average age 62, who were free of cardiovascular disease or cancer. Participants wore a wrist activity tracker for a week. The device measured their overall activity, vigorous activity, and frequency of vigorous activity lasting at least two minutes. Vigorous activity usually means activity during which you can't talk in a full sentence.

At the seven-year follow-up, investigators calculated that exercising vigorously for a total of

15 minutes a week was associated with an 18% lower risk of dying during the study period. Doing at least

*Doing at least 19 minutes per week was linked to a 40% lower risk of developing heart disease in that time, and doing 16 minutes weekly was associated with a 16% drop in cancer risk.*

19 minutes per week was linked to a 40% lower risk of developing heart disease in that time, and doing 16 minutes weekly was associated with a 16% drop in cancer risk. The risk for all three categories dropped even more as the weekly amount increased.

Always consult with your healthcare provider regarding the appropriate exercise based on your health and skill level. •

**SOURCE:** [www.health.harvard.edu](http://www.health.harvard.edu)



# WHAT TO KNOW W



# YOU NEED NOW ABOUT Women's Health

ROBBIE HARRIFORD, MD  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

**A**t the start of my business career I had the privilege of working with Samuel U. Rodgers, MD, MPH, a highly respected physician and the founder of the first FQHC (federally-qualified community health center) in Missouri. Dr. Rodgers commanded the room with his warm and compassionate demeanor and medical expertise. His vision encompassed an understanding of health equity, diversity and inclusion long before they were kitchen table conversations. At the health center, chronic health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and heart disease then and still today disproportionately impacted people of color, the uninsured and under-insured.

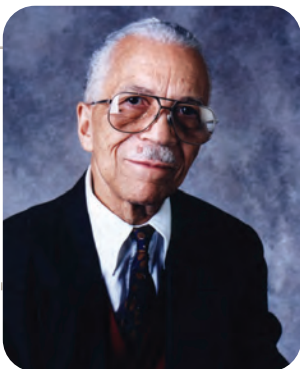
— Ruth Ramsey

## Quality Healthcare—Mission Accomplished!

After more than 50 years, Rodgers Health continues to demonstrate its passion for delivering quality healthcare services to all who walk through their doors, regardless of their ability to pay.

Today, under the leadership of President and CEO Bob Theis, the chief medical director, executive leadership teams and dedicated staff, patients are assured their physical, mental and social needs receive the highest levels of care.

Our October edition is focused on women's health. Ruth Ramsey, Editor-in-Chief, interviewed Robbie Harriford, MD, Chief Medical Officer of Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center, to learn her recommendations for women to achieve optimal health.



Dr. Rodgers believed families deserve access to everything they need to thrive. That's why he chose to open his health center in 1968 at the Wayne Miner Housing Project, so families could receive the care they needed right in the heart of their community. Family was the focus of Dr. Rodgers' vision, and family is still at the heart of Rodgers Health today. In 1988, the Wayne Miner Health Center was renamed in honor of Dr. Rodgers, becoming the Samuel U. Rodgers Community Health Center.





*Our Health Matters* asked Dr. Harriford to share how they are delivering the right care at the right time.

**OHM: To what do you attribute Samuel Rodgers Health Center's success in serving families for more than 50 years?**

**Dr. Harriford:** I think it comes down to compassion and accessibility. Everyone who works here is passionate about helping our patient population. We are unique in that we serve an extremely diverse population, with speakers of close to 40 languages. Our patients often do not have health insurance and because of this, some have not seen a medical provider in years and have numerous complex issues.

Our compassion is seen in all aspects of the care we provide, from the greeters at the front entrance to the medical team and support staff, all the way up to those in executive leadership.

**OHM: Some women may not see a doctor regularly. Why is it important for women to have a primary care doctor and get annual or well-woman exams?**

**Dr. Harriford:** Primary care is about preventing health problems—we want to keep you healthy, and the best way to do that is for you to come see us every year for your annual exam. That is a good time to ask questions regarding your health and any concerns you may have. Our patients are part of the care team. Our goal is to keep them as healthy as possible!

**OHM: What are some of the chronic health conditions impacting women and the screenings or exams that detect them?**

**Dr. Harriford:** Breast cancer and cervical cancer are the two that come to mind—both of which we screen for (depending on one's age) when you see us for an annual exam. We do mammograms for early detection of breast cancer and a pap smear to detect early signs of cervical cancer. We are also seeing higher rates of high blood pressure and diabetes in women—both of which can be prevented with regular visits to a primary care physician who can help them develop steps to incorporate healthier habits.

**OHM: What is Rodgers Health doing to improve the maternal and infant health outcomes of Black and Brown mothers, a population who experiences the highest mortality or deaths?**

**Dr. Harriford:** We recently received a grant to start a Prenatal and Postpartum Health Home, which is a program that provides more comprehensive services to our obstetrics (OB) patients during their pregnancy and for 18 months after the baby arrives. Our OB case management for high-risk patients improves OB care coordination, access to integrated behavioral health and access to bilingual doula services. We have been able to determine the concerns our patients have expressed, and we are proactively trying to address those with this program. The program is

fairly new, but we are already excited about some results we are seeing. For example, with our new OB RN Case Manager, we have been able to better coordinate care for our high-risk moms to ensure that they are getting the appointments they need. One patient has a severe heart problem, and with the help of our case manager, we are able to assist her to get an appointment in an appropriate time frame.

**OHM: What do you want women to know about getting a mammogram screening?**

**Dr. Harriford:** Mammograms help us detect breast cancer at the earliest of stages, which is extremely important. The earlier we can detect cancer and get a patient into treatment, the better their chances of survival.







**OHM: What vaccines are currently available, and does someone need to be a patient to get vaccinated at Rodgers Health?**

**Dr. Harriford:** We now have the flu vaccine. It is available to the public and you do NOT have to be a patient of ours to receive it. We have a walk-in clinic where people can easily receive it. Our pediatric department offers all recommended childhood immunizations, which you DO need to be a patient to receive. I also recommend getting the flu vaccine along with the COVID vaccines.

A new RSV vaccine is available for pregnant mothers. Respiratory syncytial (sin-SISH-uhl) virus, or RSV, is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious. Infants and older adults are more likely to develop severe RSV and need hospitalization. RSV can be found in the lungs of newborns and young children. It

can make them very sick and is responsible for increased hospitalizations. By immunizing the mom, we can help provide protection for babies too.

**OHM: How has telehealth made healthcare delivery more accessible and convenient?**

**Dr. Harriford:** Telehealth gives busy moms and others the option to receive care if they don't have access to transportation, or if they need to be at home with their children. It allows care to continue despite barriers.

**OHM: What type of care should a patient consider for telehealth?**

**Dr. Harriford:** A number of visits can happen through telehealth: behavioral health, family planning, follow-up visits and prenatal care, just to name a few. It allows the patient to

## What are some ways in which women can practice self-care?

Self-care is vital to our health! I tell women to prioritize sleep, eat healthy, get regular exercise, keep your social connections, and also do things to help improve or maintain your mental health such as yoga, meditation or journaling. Overall, it's about recognizing what makes YOU happy and devoting time to it on a regular basis.

feel more comfortable because they are in their own environment and it feels less clinical. It also allows care to continue despite of lack of transportation or childcare.

### **OHM: How does stress impact women's physical and mental health?**

**Dr. Harriford:** Stress can cause physical and mental distress in women. It can manifest in physical ailments such as stomach pain, headaches and increase in weight, and it can also bring on depression and anxiety. Women often carry the weight of many responsibilities for the family. I encourage any woman who is experiencing more than normal stress (not sleeping, feeling hopeless and losing interest in social activities) to make an appointment for mental health counseling or therapy.

### **OHM: What mental health services are available?**

**Dr. Harriford:** We offer a range of services to support mental health for children and adults. Some include integrative behavioral health, which is when one of our behavioral health consultants (BHC) accompanies a patient during their medical visit and helps with identifying services. For instance, if a patient is depressed and wants immediate help, we don't have to wait to get an appointment with a therapist. Our BHC can assess the situation and start to provide services at that time. It has been a game changer for our patients!

### **OHM: What are some healthy habits you recommend women adopt?**

**Dr. Harriford:** I strongly urge women to eat less carbohydrates and greasy/fatty foods and get some form of exercise every day for at least 30 minutes. You don't



have to go run a marathon—even just a simple walk helps. Keeping your mind sharp with reading is also a great habit to start and keep up. I personally love to do yoga as a way to keep my mind and body in check. Some women like to write as a healthy self-care option.

### **OHM: Do you offer any healthy lifestyle events, programs or activities?**

**Dr. Harriford:** Rodgers Health offers a variety of health events. We encourage people to visit our website ([samrodgers.org](http://samrodgers.org)) on a regular basis to see what's available.

Whether it's women's health, men's health, or children's health, Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center is prepared to deliver quality healthcare.

For information about the health services, locations, hours of operation, making an appointment and assistance with insurance enrollment, call 816-474-4920 and visit [samrodgers.org](http://samrodgers.org). •





# Many Adults with Disabilities Report Frequent Mental Distress

**W**omen with disabilities need the same general health care as women without disabilities. They may also require additional care to address their individual and specific needs. The most common cause of disability for women is arthritis (i.e., osteoarthritis, rheumatism, fibromyalgia, lupus). Many women with disabilities may not receive regular health screenings as recommended, such as mammograms or a Pap test.

A recent study found that adults with disabilities report experiencing mental distress almost five times as often as those without disabilities. In 2018, an estimated 17.4 million adults with disabilities experienced frequent mental distress, defined as 14 or more reported mentally unhealthy days in the past 30 days.

If you have a disability, there are many things you can do to make sure you are getting the best possible health care:

- Know your body, how you feel when you are well and when you're not.
- Talk openly with your health care professional about your concerns.


- Check to be sure you can physically get into your health care professional's office, such as having access to ramps or elevators if you use an assistive device like a wheelchair or scooter.
- Check to see if your health care professional's office has the equipment you need, such as an accessible scale or examining table.
- Think about your questions and health concerns before you visit your health care professional so that you're prepared.
- Get it in writing. You or someone write down for you, what is said by the health care professional.

Having a disability does not mean a person can't be healthy. Being healthy means getting and staying in good physical, mental and emotional health so you can lead a full, active life. It is important to have the information and tools to make healthy choices and know how to prevent illness.

Call your doctor if your mental health gets in the way of your daily activities for at least 14 days in a month. •

**Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC.gov**





# Unapologetically Improving Pregnancy and Birth Outcomes

Missouri ranks 38th in the nation in maternal mortality (12th worst) and 34th in rate of low birthweight babies. The 2018 Annual Report of the Missouri Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review Board found that Black women experienced four times the rates of pregnancy-related deaths as white women.

## Barriers Removed to Save Black Mothers and Babies

In 2012, **Uzazi Village**, a 501(c)3 organization, was formed to address maternal and infant health disparities in the Black community. Their goal was to decrease factors that put Black mothers and babies at risk for high rates of premature births, cesarean sections and low rates of breastfeeding. They are a Black safe space for healthcare.

Armed with research and culturally congruent methods (a process of effective communications between the provider and client), Uzazi Village is excelling and demonstrating best practices that ultimately lead to improved quality of care for Black pregnant moms and their babies. Uzazi Village offers:

- **Ida Mae Patterson Center for Maternal and Infant Wellness:** A Community-Embedded Group Prenatal Care Clinic
- **Sacred Birth Childbirth Education Series:** Empowered and informative childbirth education

- Certified Doula Training
- Transformative training to assist healthcare organizations to embrace anti-racist practices and culture
- Midwifery care, mental health care, doula care, herbal medicine, nutritional services, lactation care, and home visiting

Programs are designed to ensure quality, culturally competent prenatal care of African-American childbearing families. Services are currently free and available to residents of Kansas City MO. Uzazi Village welcomes monetary donations and volunteers who have a heart for mothers and babies.







# AUTUMN VEGETABLE SUCCOTASH

## SERVING SIZE | MAKES 8 SERVINGS

This nutritious medley of vegetables mixes fresh and frozen vegetables for a side dish that takes a short time to prepare.

### INGREDIENTS

- > 1/4 cup olive oil
- > 1 cup onion (diced)
- > 2 garlic cloves (finely chopped)
- > 2 cups red bell pepper (diced)
- > 2 cups zucchini (diced)
- > 2 cups summer squash (yellow, diced)
- > 3 cups lima beans (frozen)
- > 3 cups corn kernels (frozen)
- > 2 teaspoons sage, dried (or 2 Tablespoons fresh, coarsely chopped)

### NUTRIENTS

### AMOUNT

Total Calories.....	203
Total Fat.....	8g
Saturated Fat.....	1g
Cholesterol.....	0mg
Sodium.....	43mg
Carbohydrates.....	30g
Dietary Fiber.....	7g
Total Sugars .....	6g
Added Sugars.....	0g
Protein.....	7g
Vitamin D.....	0mcg
Calcium .....	37mg
Iron .....	2mg
Potassium.....	637mg

Please note: nutrient values are subject to change as data is updated.

### DIRECTIONS

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. In a large deep skillet over medium-high heat, add oil.
3. Add onion; cook until translucent (2 minutes). Add garlic, bell peppers, zucchini, squash, lima beans, and corn.
4. Season as desired; cook, stirring, until vegetables are tender (10 minutes or longer).
5. Stir in sage and serve.

### NOTES

You may also use dry or fresh herbs. Add other vegetable favorites.

**SOURCE:** US Department of Agriculture, [myplate.gov/recipes](https://www.myplate.gov/recipes)





# WHAT WOMEN NEED

## Quality Healthcare and People Who Care

**W**e were sitting under a canopy of stars, talking about breast cancer—hers and mine. She is a young mother of three preschoolers; I am single, in my sixties. The high school track below us is filled with cancer survivors: Relay for Life. We are not alone.

Within a few years, a law colleague will call to say she has been hospitalized with a heart attack—stent inserted and now home recovering. Until hiking with a young friend, she had been apparently healthy.

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in women. According to the American Cancer Society, one in eight women will develop invasive breast cancer.

Heart disease, cancer, strokes, COVID-19—all causes of death in women. I would add another cause, not often mentioned: loneliness. A significant number of women over 65 are widows.

A young man shares the grief of losing his pastor and within months, the pastor's wife. We stand shoulder to shoulder, looking out a store window. He turns to me, tears running down his face: "She died of a broken heart." Broken heart syndrome is a reality.

A retired medical colleague called me to say she is having surgery and just wanted to be in touch. "Women need women," she says. She goes on to say that women need men, family and community, but there is something sustaining in friendships among women. "Pray with me," she says.

My mother ran a boarding house after my father died. She died of a coronary at age 69. Had she had access to affordable healthcare, she might have lived longer. What sustained her through the years of hardship were the strong, capable, communal farm women who surrounded her.

What do women need? Affordable, available healthcare, early detection, and a circle of sustaining friends. We need not be alone. •



**By Rae Sedgwick  
Ph.D., J.D.**

Clinical and Consulting  
Psychologist  
Attorney at Law

*Dr. Rae Sedgwick is a published author, nurse, clinical psychologist and attorney in private practice. Sedgwick is a graduate of the Postdoctoral Training Program in Clinical Psychology of the Menninger Clinic.*

# Understanding Menopause — It's a Natural Phase of Life

**M**enopause is the time in a woman's life when her periods (menstruation) stop, caused by a decline in the production of the hormones that stimulate the menstrual cycle—estrogen and progesterone. Menopause is divided into three basic stages: perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause. During menopause, the ovaries begin to atrophy, causing vaginal atrophy, which is the thinning, drying and inflammation of the vaginal walls that may occur when the body has less estrogen. This natural, normal body change occurs most often between the ages of 45 to 55. After menopause, a woman can no longer become pregnant.

Menopause is defined by a backwards look; it occurs when it has been 12 months since a woman's last menstruation.

## Symptoms are usually self-diagnosable

Common symptoms of menopause include hot flashes and vaginal dryness. There may also be sleep disturbances. The combination of these symptoms can cause anxiety or depression. Women may experience:

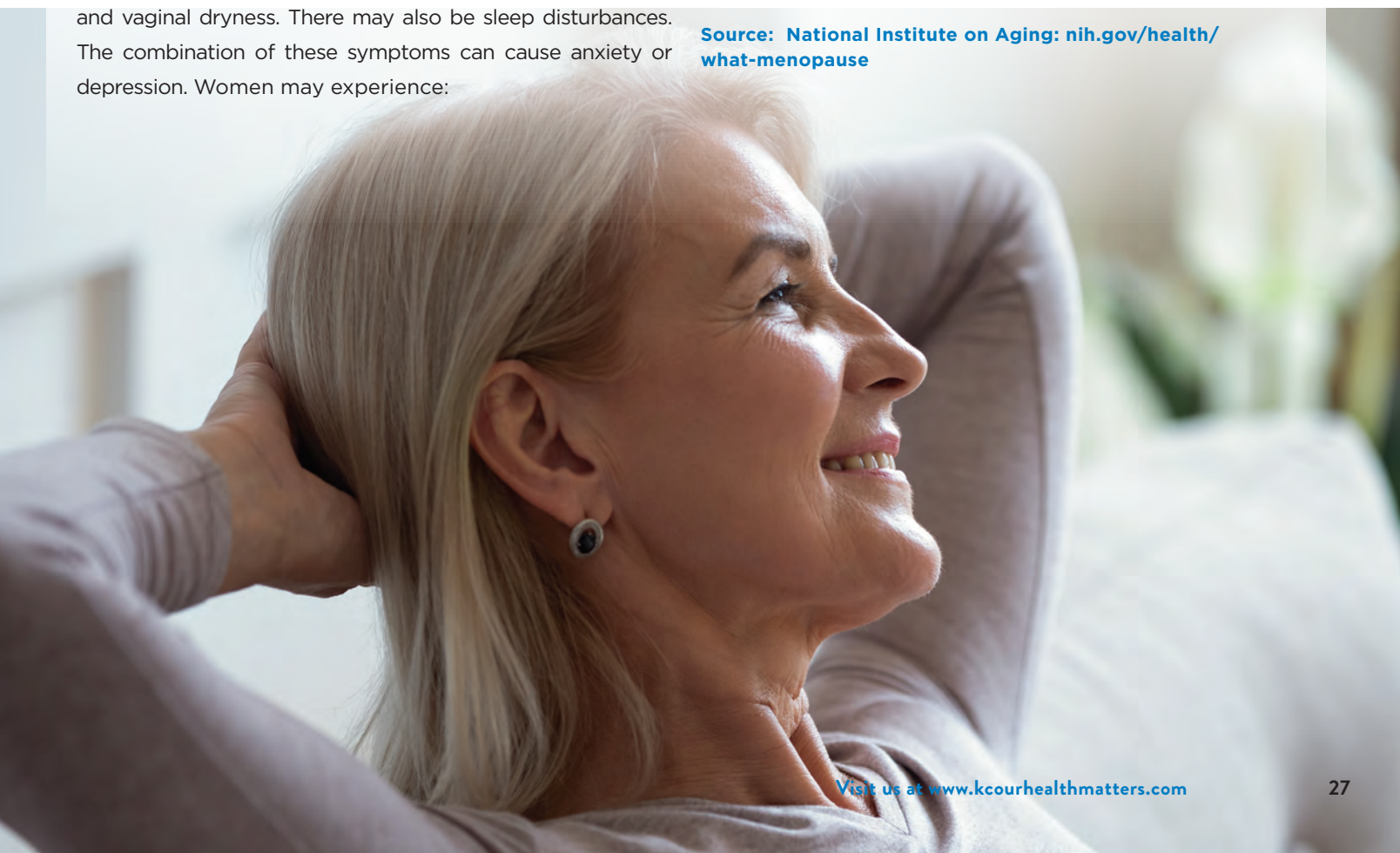
- Fatigue, night sweats, osteoporosis, hot flashes, or sweating
- Absence of menstruation or irregular menstruation
- Pain can occur during sexual intercourse
- Early awakening or insomnia
- Dryness or loss of scalp hair; dry skin
- Anxiety, irritability, moodiness, reduced sex drive

## Treatment depends on severity

Vaginal dryness is treated with topical lubricants or estrogens. Medications can reduce the severity and frequency of hot flashes. In special circumstances, oral hormone therapy may be used.

Self-care during this season of a woman's life is very important. Be open with your healthcare provider about the symptoms you're experiencing and how they impact your quality of life. They can recommend treatments to manage your symptoms and make you more comfortable. •

**Source:** National Institute on Aging: [nih.gov/health/what-menopause](https://nih.gov/health/what-menopause)







# Is Hopefulness the Key to Better Mental and Physical Health?

**A** woman arrived for her first therapy session distressed and depressed. Her husband of 20 years had just announced that he was in love with someone else. At 47, she was so upset she had a heart attack and then needed to go on disability from work.

“She had her sense of self shaken at the core,” said Dan Tomasulo, PhD, who treated her. “Within about 10 days, her whole life crumbled.”

Working with her regularly, Tomasulo helped her not just recover from depression and her sense that she had no future, but to thrive. The key? Teaching her how to be hopeful.

“Hope is the belief you can have a positive influence on the future and a desire to make that happen.”

## Hopefulness can be learned

Tomasulo and many other mental health experts contend that hopefulness can be learned. Once we learn how to be more hopeful, that habit can help us overcome depression, suicidal thoughts, inertia, bad health habits, and other obstacles and ultimately move forward.

A recent survey suggests that our hopefulness is sorely lagging. Overall, 32.3% of U.S. adults reported anxiety or depressive symptoms in 2023, according to

an analysis of Census Bureau data by the Kaiser Family Foundation. Among adults 18 to 24, nearly half did so.

## The path from hopelessness to hopefulness

At one of their first meetings, Tomasulo asked the woman to focus on gratitude—the things she had in her life she was grateful for. She mentioned friends who had dropped food to her after her hospital stay, and other friends who later took her out.

Instead of being stuck in her pain, the woman's perception started changing as she realized more than one thing was happening in her life, not just depression and adultery. Receiving kindness allowed her to be kind. She started volunteering at a food pantry, which boosted her sense of self-worth.

“Hope is the belief you can have a positive influence on the future and a desire to make that happen,” Tomasulo said. Within six months, she had a much better job, and she had gotten through the divorce. •

Dan Tomasulo, PhD, is a counseling psychologist and academic director of the Spirituality Mind Body Institute at Teachers College of Columbia University and author of *Learned Hopefulness and The Positivity Effect*.

Source: Medscape August 2023



# IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEDICAID

Everyone with Medicaid **must renew to keep their healthcare coverage** through MO HealthNet, Missouri's Medicaid program.

**ACT NOW. STAY COVERED.**



**mydss.mo.gov/renew**



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**Health Forward**  
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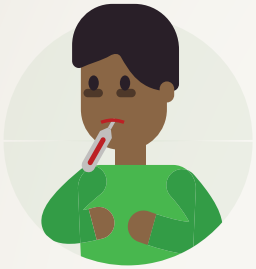


# STOP

## Feeling sick?

Stop the spread of flu in the workplace.  
**Stay home when you are sick.**

Common Flu Signs & Symptoms Include:



**Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills**

\*It is important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.



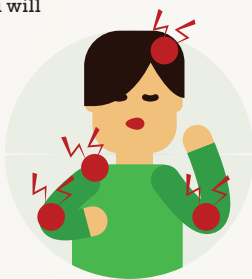
**Sore throat**



**Runny or stuffy nose**



**Cough**



**Muscle or body aches**



**Headaches**



**Fatigue (tiredness)**

*Flu is different from a common cold.  
Flu usually comes on suddenly, and in general symptoms are more intense.*

**If you think you may have flu tell your supervisor and stay home from work.**

**All employees should stay home if they are sick.** CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius) is gone. Your fever should be gone without the need to use a fever-reducing medicine.

For more information visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)



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# WHAT'S NEXT?



## DECEMBER 2023

### Understanding Infectious Diseases and How to Protect Yourself

Infectious diseases are illnesses caused by germs such as bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites that enter the body, multiply and cause an infection. Some infectious diseases are contagious and capable of spreading to others. In this issue we will share which infectious diseases are on the increase; explain when to seek medical treatment; list locations where you can access vaccines; and recommend steps to protect you and your family. As this year comes to a close, let's count our blessings and be aware of our surroundings to keep ourselves, our families and friends safe.

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# WHY?

After a family loses a loved one to murder, they are left with many questions and needs.



"I could never let another victim's family member stand alone in the street without the support of at least one person who understood the life altering road they were now forced to walk."

— Rosilyn Temple, Founder,  
KC Mothers in Charge

On November 23, 2011, in Kansas City, Missouri, Rosilyn Temple spent the day preparing the family's Thanksgiving dinner — which she looked forward to with her son, Antonio Thompson, or "PeeWee," as she affectionately called him. She never imagined that she would be standing alone outside of his apartment on the cold street that same night, searching for answers. She had just been notified that her son had been murdered. Her life changed forever.

Rosilyn quit her job and started to respond to homicide scenes in support of families throughout the Kansas City area. In 2014 Rosilyn formed KC Mothers in Charge, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose

mission is to provide homicide scene support, vigils, individual and group counseling, funeral home visits, criminal justice system navigation, and weekly phone calls to families.

Some of the staff and volunteers have experienced losing someone to homicide. All receive training and bring a unique level of compassion and encouragement to help victims' families build coping skills.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

KC Mothers in Charge welcomes donations to support operations and volunteers who can help them with the needs of families.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:**  
[www.kcmothersincharge.org](http://www.kcmothersincharge.org) | 816-912-2601  
3200 Wayne Avenue, #124, Kansas City, MO 64109





**Download Digital copies of Our Health Matters™ at:**  
<https://kcourhealthmatters.com/digital-editions/>

**IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911.**

**CALL 988:** Every person nationwide can dial “988” to reach trained crisis counselors who can help in a mental health, substance use or suicide crisis.

**CALL 211:** United Way 211 is our city’s 24/7 connection to agencies and resources for anyone in a time of need. Calling 211 connects individuals to free and confidential help—from basic needs to mental health resources to utility assistance and more.