



Winter 2026 | Issue 33

Health Home Herald Newsletter

January is the month of Thyroid Awareness, and a time devoted to public education about the thyroid gland and how it impacts our health. In 2000 the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists designated January as Thyroid Awareness month to give us a chance to learn about thyroid conditions and their symptoms.

January Is Thyroid Awareness Month

Silke Kramer, HCA, Health Care Program Manager

Thyroid disease is more common than diabetes and heart disease. According to the American Thyroid Association, thyroid problems come in many forms, including hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism. Hypothyroidism occurs when the thyroid produces insufficient hormones. This can result in symptoms such as fatigue, weight gain, and depression. In contrast, hyperthyroidism is characterized by excessive hormone production, leading to rapid weight loss, increased heart rate, and anxiety. Recognizing the early signs of these disorders is important. Treatments may include medication, dietary and lifestyle changes.

For more information click and follow the links below:

[\(General Information/Press Room | American Thyroid Association\)](#)

[Patient Journey Thyroid - Signs and Symptoms | American Association of Clinical Endocrinology](#)

To self-check the thyroid click on the link below:

[How to Check Your Thyroid | American Association of Clinical Endocrinology](#)

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DSHS 22-2166 (1/26)

JANUARY IS
THYROID
AWARENESS MONTH



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Regular thyroid screening is one of the best ways to protect thyroid health. Many health care providers suggest tests for people with a family history of thyroid disorders or those experiencing symptoms. A simple blood test ("thyroid study or panel") can measure levels that assess thyroid function. Early detection of any thyroid dysfunction allows for timely treatment, potentially preventing more severe health problems later, including heart disease or other hormonal imbalances.

Lifestyle choices have a significant impact on thyroid function. Nutrition plays a key role; a diet enriched with iodine, selenium, and zinc is essential for maintaining hormonal balance. Stress management can improve hormone regulation. Techniques like mindfulness meditation, regular exercise, and adequate sleep can also positively influence thyroid function.

For more information on all thyroid disorders, check out the American Thyroid Association at www.thyroid.org.

For information specific to thyroid cancer, check out www.ThyCa.org. This website includes detailed information about cancer treatments, dietary guidelines, medication regimens, ongoing support groups and educational offerings.

During January 2026 Thyroid Awareness Month, please share information about the symptoms and risks of thyroid disorders. Educate people and let them know that although it is a chronic condition many forms of thyroid disorders can be managed with a healthy lifestyle.



The Importance of Sleep

Kerri Hummel, HH QA Specialist with information from National Institute on Aging.



Health care professionals recommend each adult to get seven to nine hours of sleep a night. Getting enough sleep helps our bodies stay healthy and alert.

I have had an ongoing conversation with a family member about how important sleep is for him. We recently went to see his primary care provider and had a long conversation on this subject.

Seniors need the same amount of sleep as other adults but rarely get the seven to nine hours for many reasons such as feeling sick or body pain. There are medications that can also keep you awake. Not getting enough sleep can make a person irritable, depressed, forgetful, and more likely to have falls or other accidents.

Getting good sleep is important for memory and mood. In a study of adults over 65, researchers found that those who had poor sleep quality had a harder time problem-solving and concentrating than those who got good sleep.

Another study showed that adults in their 50s and 60s who got less than six hours of sleep a night, had a higher risk of developing dementia later in life. Inadequate sleep is associated with the buildup of beta-amyloid, a protein involved in Alzheimer's disease.

Poor sleep may also worsen depression symptoms in older adults. Older adults who were diagnosed with depression in the past and don't get quality sleep, may be more likely to experience depression symptoms again.

Getting good sleep is associated with lower rates of insulin resistance, heart disease, and obesity. Sleep can also improve your creativity and decision-making skills, and even your blood sugar levels.

There are many things you can do to help you sleep better:

- Develop a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Try to fall asleep and get up at the same time each day. Stick to a routine.
- Avoid napping late in the day, as this may keep you awake at night.
- Exercise at regular times each day, but not too close to bedtime.

Research suggests that certain other activities, such as mindfulness meditation, can also improve sleep quality.

Learn more about how to get a good night's sleep at <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/sleep>.

Participant Portrait

Lead: CCW | CCO: CCW | CC Malcolm Clay

I was assigned to assist TC in May of 2025. He is a 62-year-old man with congestive heart failure, chronic homelessness, and diabetes.

When we first met, he was living out of his van in unincorporated Pierce County. While physically he was unwell, mentally he still had passion to fight for his health but just didn't know where to start. He told me about his journey working for over 50 years across multiple businesses and how one missed doctor's appointment led to a spiral of health and social degradation. He is adamant on being able to get back into good health so he can ride motorcycles again.

He was just getting discharged from emergency department due to complications from congestive heart failure and didn't have a good prognosis at all due to his social factors of health. He was referred to a cardiologist but didn't have any way to get there or contact them. After meeting with him, I was able to get him reconnected to Pulse Heart Institute for additional cardiac and preventative care and set up future appointments. I then requested assistance from Antonio, our region's Community Health Worker, to assist him with getting a new phone to be able to contact Care Coordinator and medical team.

It was due to these connections that we were able to save his life. Because in June, TC complained about chest pain and shortness of breath. Despite it being toward the end of the shift, he texted me his symptoms and I knew I had to get him medical attention. I was able to persuade him to go to the hospital where he said that the doctors were treating him for a heart attack. Without the quick thinking of my experience working in medical systems and being able to persuade him to get medical attention, I don't think he would have been here to be part of this conversation today.

Despite these setbacks he has still been very grateful regarding receiving these services and has been making ample efforts to improve his own situation by keeping in communication with us and letting us know about his progress with his doctors.

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His experience with care coordination has also improved his ability to be able to recognize when he needs to go to the doctor instead of ignoring pain and other symptoms. An example of this is when he reached out to me to notify me that he was having trouble breathing and he took himself to the doctor where they revealed that he had fluid surrounding his lungs which required drainage. Due to him advocating for himself his cardiac output has been improving greatly over the last four months. He also managed to get in contact with his sisters over in Spokane.

Although he has made great strides, he has also been a victim of systemic inequities. Due to him living out of his RV, he has had to place his car in many populated locations so he's able to sleep across the night. This has unfortunately led to the police being called on him which leads to him having to move his vehicle across different times of the day and night. Despite the situation he was able to remain calm and follow the instructions of the officers and has been doing his best ever since to make sure that he has a location to stay that's not garnering attention from different parties.

In this four-month timeframe, I was meeting with him at the library to connect him to Social Security Administration resources. After four grueling months in ministering paperwork and submitting appeals and calling the SSA office, we were finally able to get some form of good news. Due to his age and medical condition, he is considered eligible for early retirement funding. I also assisted with getting him updated with SSA account so he can receive benefits. In addition, I assisted him with getting connected to Metro Development Council for housing assistance. Through MDC, he was able to schedule an assessment with Consejo Counseling as part of entrance prerequisites. Antonio was also able to

get him harvest bucks for food insecurity. I then assisted him with scheduling a cardioversion procedure, which went off without a hitch. He is reporting improved cardiac function and quality of life. He is currently traveling between Pierce County and Castle Rock while he awaits status of housing from MDC. When he gets SSI, the next course of action is to get him a bank account and a home caregiver for medication management needs.

The work that has been done to assist TC is only a symptom of the capabilities and skillsets of care coordinators, and with systemic and organizational supports from Managed Care Organizations and leadership like these, TC's story won't be a needle in a haystack success story, but a common place result of what supporting our most vulnerable populations should look like.



Success Story

Lead: Molina | CCO: Molina | CC: Glade Jones

Carol's addiction to fentanyl and heroin was taking a toll on her life in so many ways. She was homeless and unable to work. She had lost custody of her son. Carol could not work, and the medical concerns caused by her long-term drug use were increasing. She had multiple hospitalizations and was diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension. Her mother was diagnosed with cancer and passed away within two months of receiving her diagnosis, which added to the stressors that Carol was experiencing.



The Health Home Care Coordinator attended one of Carol's cardiology appointments to act as an advocate for her as Carol expressed that the cardiologist was not taking her seriously and had been mean to her. It was during this appointment that the doctor said that she would probably only live another two years if she did not stop using drugs; that was when the light switch flipped because she realized that if she didn't make changes to her life, she would not be around for her son. Previously, Carol had made attempts at substance use disorder treatment but always quit shortly after starting. Carol went back to a local SUD treatment center and completed the intake process and started Suboxone treatment. She has also started participating in the mental health program at the same treatment center. The Health Home Care Coordinator helped Carol obtain a bus pass for transportation to medical appointments or for trips to grocery stores, etc. Additionally, the care coordinator helped her to

schedule medical appointments and procedures and attended the appointments, as needed, to provide Carol with moral support and to answer her questions about treatments and medical care.

Carol is now clean and sober, and her health is getting better. She continues to attend SUD and behavioral health treatment. With the assistance of this Care Coordinator, she is staying on top of her medical needs. Carol's SUD treatment is progressing well as she has already graduated through two phases of treatment in the program. She is now living full-time with her father and son. She is working and has had two jobs since getting clean. At the first job, she had been promoted to a lead shift supervisor position until the business closed its doors. Currently, Carol is working as a waitress and part-time cook at a restaurant. She has also purchased a vehicle. Carol loves spending her time with her son and is so happy to be back in his life; she gets to take him to school and do recreational activities with him. Now that she is working, she has been able to take her son on his first vacation to a water theme park in Idaho. She was so proud of herself for having saved up enough money to do that. Carol's health has improved. Her last echo cardiogram showed that her heart is recovering from the damage caused by her former drug use, and her pulmonary blood pressure is only one point above normal. She has lost weight, and her stamina and strength are getting better. Carol can breathe easier and water retention issues are no longer a concern. She feels her life is finally getting back to normal.

Submit your story, resource, or ideas to the Care Coordinator Corner via: anthony.foster@dshs.wa.gov

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Puzzle

Guess what the emoji's are saying:

Answers:
 1. Let the cat out of the bag
 2. Which came first? The chicken or the egg?
 3. Plenty of fish in the sea
 4. Raining cats and dogs
 5. Piece of cake
 6. Happy New Year

Monthly Webinar Invitations

The Health Home Program offers learning topics for new Health Home Care Coordinators. For the current invitation, please visit [Washington Health Home Program – Training Invitations | DSHS](#)



PRISM Access Reminder:

Please be sure to log into your SAW account every 30 days, enter the PRISM application, and click on at least one of your assigned clients so that you will continue to have uninterrupted PRISM access.

