



Your Health Matters

**CCMHG – Your Town, County, District,
Authority Working together for your health**

Written by Deanna L. Desroches, Director, CC Healthy Connections, LLC

**Volume 52
April 2026**

In this issue:

Gut-Mind Connection

Provider News

Foot Care Awareness

Wellness News

Upcoming Programs

CCMHG Wellness Portal

Wellness Challenge

Hot Topics

Forest Bathing

Turmeric

Mental Wellness

The Gut-Mind Connection: Why Your Gut Health Matters for Your Mood

You've probably heard the phrase "trust your gut" but science now shows your gut is doing much more than digesting food. It plays a powerful role in how you feel, think, and respond to stress. Welcome to the gut-brain connection.

Your gut and brain are in constant communication through a network of nerves, hormones, and biochemical signals. This system, often called the gut-brain axis, means what's happening in your digestive system can directly influence your mental and emotional well-being.

At the center of this connection is your gut microbiome: the trillions of bacteria living in your digestive tract. These microbes help produce key neurotransmitters like serotonin (your "feel-good" chemical), regulate inflammation, and support your body's stress response.

When your gut is balanced, you may experience a more stable mood, better stress resilience, and improved sleep and energy. When it's out of balance, it can contribute to anxiety and low mood, brain fog, and increased stress sensitivity.

Research continues to show strong links between gut imbalances and mental health challenges like anxiety and depression. While it's not the only factor, your gut is a powerful piece of the wellness puzzle.

Supporting Your Gut = Supporting Your Mind

Simple daily habits can make a big impact:

- Eat fiber-rich, whole foods
- Add fermented foods like yogurt, kimchi, or sauerkraut
- Stay hydrated
- Manage stress through movement, breathwork, or mindfulness
- Prioritize quality sleep

The takeaway? A healthy gut creates a strong foundation for a healthy mind. When you nourish your body from the inside out, you're not just supporting digestion, you're supporting your emotional balance, clarity, and overall vitality. *Sources: [Verywell Mind](#); [Nature Reviews Microbiology](#)*

CANARX Cape Cod Municipal Health Group

FREE BRAND-NAME MEDICATIONS

CANARX makes it easier to access the medications you need at no extra cost. **Enjoy \$0 copays on brand-name prescriptions, with no shipping or enrollment fees.** This program supports your existing coverage and delivers your medications right to your mailbox.

LEARN MORE

WWW.CANARX.COM
WEBID: CCMHG



Leading the Way in Behavioral Health

Harvard Pilgrim simplifies access to behavioral health care with faster appointments, specialty care for children, teens, and adults, and seamless provider connections. As part of Mental Health Awareness Month, we highlight our array of behavioral health resources to ensure you and your covered family members receive the right care.

Behavioral Health Service Navigation: Enhanced Support for You and Your Family Our Behavioral Health Service Navigation program offers a hands-on, personalized approach to improve your access to behavioral health care.

This exclusive program provides:

- **Faster Appointments:** Often within 6 days instead of 60, addressing the challenge of long wait times.
- **Real-time Telehealth Options:** Providing timely access to care.
- **Dedicated Service Navigators:** Offering personalized support and simplifying the process of finding the right provider.
- **High Member Satisfaction:** With a 99% satisfaction rate, members appreciate the program's effectiveness.*

<https://www.harvardpilgrim.org/public/behavioral-health>

Spring Into Wellness Programs and Discounts

Ready to reach your wellness goals? Whether it's fitness, nutrition advice or stress management, Harvard Pilgrim offers many discounted programs that can help you live a healthier lifestyle and save money along the way.

<https://www.harvardpilgrim.org/public/discounts-and-savings>

Check It Out!

THE SUPPORT YOU NEED, JUST A FEW CLICKS AWAY

Use MyBlue, your online member account, to:

- Find in-network mental health care** for depression, anxiety, stress, and more from providers who are accepting new patients now and offer online booking, with in-person and virtual options for adults and children.
- Get expert specialty care** from providers who specialize in treating specific conditions, like eating disorders or substance use disorders, or serving specific populations, like veterans and first responders.
- Access personalized support** from Team Blue Member Service advocates who can help assess your needs and guide you to the expert in-network mental health provider that best meet them.

GET PERSONALIZED SUPPORT, YOUR WAY

See your mental health options online. Scan the QR code, or sign in to MyBlue or create an account at bluecrossma.org.

Connect with a Team Blue advocate. Call 1-888-389-7764, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

Get started



Get to know your benefits

Thank you for choosing Delta Dental of Massachusetts as your trusted smile partner. As a Delta Dental member, you will enjoy convenient access and unmatched value. With 3 out of 4 dentists nationwide participating in a Delta Dental network, you'll be sure to find a dentist near your home or work. By visiting an in-network dentist, you'll benefit from significant cost savings.

Managing your dental plan - and your oral health - has never been easier with Delta Dental's digital tools and resources.

Visit deltadentalma.com for access to:

Find a Dentist search tool
Find an in-network dentist in your area with our searchable directory.

Dental Care Cost Estimator
Discover what a dental procedure will cost before your visit with our estimator tool.

DentaQual®
View dentists' ratings when searching for a participating provider with our 5-star performance scale.

TeleDentistry
Schedule a virtual visit with a dentist 24/7 by visiting teledentistry.com/ddma.

Stay informed with your oral health:

Sign up for our Member Brush Up Newsletter [here](#).

Visit our member engagement website ExpressYourHealthMA.com.

- ✓ Benefit information and reminders
- ✓ Oral health tips for at home care
- ✓ DDMA community initiatives

Need assistance?
Call our Customer Care center: 800-872-0500.
Representatives available Mon-Fri 8 am - 8 pm EST
Email: customer.care@deltadentalmass.com

Dental Services of Massachusetts, Inc. is an independent licensee of the Delta Dental Plans Association. *Registered marks and **Trademarks of the Delta Dental Plans Association. ©2023 DDP.

Access the secure [member portal](#) for:

Coverage information
Review your dental plan information including eligibility, waiting periods, plan maximums and frequency limitations.

Claims history
View the status of your claims or pre-estimates.

Mobile ID card
Print or download a replacement ID card.

Manage your oral health, anytime, anywhere with the *Delta Dental Mobile App:

- ✓ Quick and easy access to digital ID cards
- ✓ Detailed claims information
- ✓ Review your dental policy coverage
- ✓ Find a Dentist search tool
- ✓ Dental Care Cost Estimator tool



Scan to download the Delta Dental Mobile App.

*Members must first register on the Delta Dental of Massachusetts secure, member portal.

Your plan is administered by:
Delta Dental of Massachusetts
405 Medford Street, Ste. 400
Boston, MA 02129

SP1506

April

Women's Eye Health and Safety Month | Sports Eye Safety Month | Presbyopia Awareness Month



All eyes on women's health

As we spend more time this month focusing on the incredible strengths and influence women bring to our local, national and global community, it's also a great time to become more familiar with some of the vision-related health concerns women face.



Eye condition simulator

Look through the lens of common eye conditions and discover how to potentially treat or prevent them.



Exercise your way to healthy eyes

Staying active keeps our minds and bodies in shape, but it can also be the key to healthier eyes. See how.




Our feet carry us through life's journeys. They deserve our attention and care to keep them healthy. For those living with diabetes, taking care of your feet should be an important part of your self-care routine.

Follow the tips below to maintain good foot health:

- Keep your feet clean and dry to promote overall health.
- Check your feet regularly for any unusual changes, such as swelling, redness, or skin changes.
- Wear proper footwear that fits well and feels comfortable.
- Get in some steps daily to keep the blood circulating all the way to your feet.
- Have your doctor examine your feet at least once per year.

Enroll in the Good Health Gateway® Diabetes Care Rewards Program and be rewarded for staying on top of your foot exam and other diabetes care activities with \$0 copays on covered diabetes medications and supplies.



800.643.8028
GoodHealthGateway.com

Scan To Join

Get the App



App Store®



Google Play

The Good Health Gateway Diabetes Care Rewards Program is a voluntary and confidential service for employees and their families enrolled in our health plan who are living with any type of diabetes.



Wellness News

Stretch and Strengthen Yoga - Yarmouth



April 2 – June 26, 2026, 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Cape Light Compact, 261 Whites Path, South Yarmouth

It is easy to increase flexibility and strength by incorporating yoga into your fitness routine! You will increase flexibility in your joints and strengthen your muscles during each session. While decreasing the risk of injury, yoga is great for mental well-being and lymphatic and digestive health. Always listen to your body and do whatever is possible for your level of flexibility. Dawn will guide

through this wonderful evening. [REGISTER NOW](#)

Dance Fitness Party – Yarmouth



April 3, 2026, 5:30 – 7:00 PM

Cape Light Compact, 261 Whites Path, South Yarmouth

Get ready to dance, sweat, and celebrate! Join us for a Dance Fitness Party featuring the infectious rhythms of Zumba and the throwback fun of LaBlast. From Latin beats to iconic hits, this class feels more like a dance floor than a workout. Expect big smiles, high energy, and a calorie-burning party you won't want to miss! Join Alice and Jacky to dance the night away! [REGISTER NOW](#)

Spring LaBlast Splash – Yarmouth



April 6 – May 18, 2026 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Freestyle Living, 822 MA-28, South Yarmouth

This energizing workout is low-impact, heart-pumping, gentle on the joints, and incredibly fun. What makes Splash stand out from other aquatic fitness classes? It brings the elegance and excitement of ballroom dance into the water! With simple-to-follow choreography and a playlist spanning all musical styles and

decades, Splash is perfect for every age and fitness levels. Make a Splash with Jacky at Freestyle Living. [REGISTER NOW](#)

Retirement Planning Workshop – Yarmouth



April 6, 2026, 5:30 – 7:00 PM

Cape Light Compact, 261 Whites Path, South Yarmouth

Join us for this workshop if you are planning on retiring in the next five years. Susy Holmes, Director of Barnstable County Retirement will be leading this information session to help you navigate your course. Topics to be discussed include retirement age, self-service portal, salary, creditable service, buying back service, Military Service, timelines for retirement planning,

retirement options, and post-retirement questions. [REGISTER NOW](#)

Regional Health Benefits Fair – Yarmouth



April 7, 2026, 2:00 – 6:00 PM

Cape Light Compact, 261 Whites Path, South Yarmouth

Visit with your Health and Benefit Plan Representatives, enjoy a healthy treat from our County Nutritionist and if you'd like to take part in a health screening while you are here, please select a ticket for the time that best suits you! Enjoy this regional event created for you and your family! [REGISTER NOW](#)

First Time Homebuying – Barnstable



April 7, 2026, 5:15 – 6:15 PM

HQ5 – 1500 Iyannough Road, Hyannis

Cape Cod Healthy Connections will host a 45-minute forum at [Cape Cod 5 Headquarters](#) featuring [Tabitha Baker](#), Mortgage Loan Officer from Cape Cod 5. Tabitha has more than 18 years of mortgage banking experience, specializing in portfolio products, first-time homebuyer products and loans through MassHousing and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Topics will include

deciding when to buy, an overview of the home purchase process, qualifying for a mortgage, interest rates, understanding your monthly costs, and what is needed to close. [REGISTER NOW](#)

Spring Pilates – Yarmouth



April 10 – June 26, 2026, 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Cape Light Compact, 261 Whites Path, South Yarmouth

This unique class merges the dynamic principles of High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) with the focused and controlled movement techniques of Pilates, creating a comprehensive workout experience designed to significantly boost your heart rate, effectively tone your muscles, and profoundly strengthen your core. Annie will be your guide in this wonderful practice. [REGISTER NOW](#)

Spring Pilates – Harwich



April 4 – June 23, 2026, 5:30 – 6:30 PM

204 Cultural Arts Building, 204 Sisson Rd, Harwich

This unique class merges the dynamic principles of High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) with the focused and controlled movement techniques of Pilates, creating a comprehensive workout experience designed to significantly boost your heart rate, effectively tone your muscles, and profoundly strengthen your core. Annie will be your guide in this wonderful practice. [REGISTER NOW](#)

Spring Gentle Yoga – Harwich



April 27 – June 29, 2026, 5:30 – 6:30 PM

204 Cultural Arts Building, 204 Sisson Rd, Harwich

Gentle yoga emphasizes slow, mindful movements, and poses that are accessible to all levels. It is designed to be a relaxing and restorative experience focusing on slow and flowing movements with a focus on breathing and a mind body connection. Gentle yoga is suitable for beginners, seniors, people with injuries, and anyone seeking a low impact practice that promotes relaxation and well-being. This is a beautiful practice led by Sam. [REGISTER NOW](#)

Spring Zen Flow Yoga – Marstons Mills



April 26 – June 23, 2026, 6:00 – 7:00 PM

West Villages Elementary School, 760 Osterville West Barnstable Rd, Marstons Mills

Tonya will guide you through a fun and relaxed blend of movements this class will focus on connecting your body to your breath and is appropriate for the all levels. You will flow to music while learning body alignment, building strength, gaining flexibility, and improving balance. [REGISTER NOW](#)

CCMHG Wellness Portal FY26

Have you created your account on our wellness portal? What are you waiting for? Hop on over to your personalized CCMHG Wellness Portal! If you are a retiree or Harvard Pilgrim member not currently using the portal, please complete this FORM so we can upload you manually.

Go the Distance Challenge

Members will be challenged to log an average of 7,000 steps for each day of the 30-day challenge to earn points. The final milestone is to accrue 210,000 steps in 30 days.

Enrollment starts: 03.30.26 | Challenge starts: 04.14.26

Martha’s Vineyard Members

Are you up to date with all the programming happening on island? Follow this link to [Be Well MV](#) to be up to date with your programming. Please contact [Triva Emery](#) with any island specific questions.

Autism Acceptance Month: Embracing Neurodiversity

April is Autism Acceptance Month, a time to move beyond awareness and focus on understanding, inclusion, and respect for autistic individuals. Acceptance means recognizing autism as a natural form of human diversity and valuing the unique perspectives autistic people bring to the world.



Listening to autistic voices is essential. Their lived experiences help shape better conversations, policies, and communities grounded in empathy and accuracy. Inclusion also plays a key role—creating spaces in schools, workplaces, and public life that support different needs, such as sensory-friendly environments and flexible communication styles.

Challenging stigma is equally important. By promoting respectful language and celebrating autistic individuals’ strengths and contributions, we can replace misconceptions with appreciation. Autism acceptance is about ensuring everyone feels valued and supported.

This April, let’s commit to building a more inclusive world where differences are not just recognized, but embraced.

Hot Topics

Spring Forward, Sun Smart: Protecting your Skin this Season

These days, it can really feel like any moment of clear skies is life-changing. So many of us rightfully abandon our to-do lists for even just a few moments to turn our faces up to the sun and bask in the promise of brighter days ahead. But, with this giddy excitement comes the ever-present responsibility of protecting our skin.

Sun safety is an important part of maintaining healthy skin as the days grow longer and outdoor activity increases in spring.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun—particularly UVA and UVB rays—can damage the skin, contributing to premature aging and increasing the risk of skin cancer.

Health experts recommend protecting your skin by using a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher, wearing protective clothing such as hats and sunglasses, and seeking shade when the sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.. Even on cloudy days, UV rays can still reach the skin, making daily protection important. Reapplying sunscreen every two hours and regularly checking your skin for new or changing spots are simple steps that can help support long-term skin health and reduce the risk of sun damage.

Source: [HopkinsMedicine.org](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org)

PR A Breath of Fresh Air – Forest Bathing

Nature therapy—sometimes called “forest bathing”—is the practice of intentionally spending time in natural environments to support overall wellbeing.

Rather than focusing on exercise or reaching a destination, nature therapy encourages slowing down and mindfully engaging with the sights, sounds, and sensations of the outdoors. Research has shown that time spent in nature can help reduce stress, lower blood pressure, improve mood, and enhance feelings of calm and connection. Even brief exposure to natural settings—such as a walk through a local park, sitting near water, or gardening—can have measurable benefits for mental and physical health.

As the weather warms and daylight increases in spring and early summer, it's an ideal time to reconnect with the natural world. Building simple habits like taking a daily walk outside, practicing mindfulness outdoors, or visiting nearby green spaces can help support resilience, boost energy levels, and promote a greater sense of balance and wellbeing. Source: [HarvardHealth](https://www.harvardhealth.org)



April is Stress Awareness Month – Some Tips to Help Us Cope

Stress Awareness Month has been recognized every April since 1992, however this year it seems particularly important. Learning to cope with our stress and finding healthy ways to deal with these situations can go a long way in living a healthy and positive life. Long-term stress can prove to be more than just a mental issue. We all experience stress, yet we experience it in different ways. For that reason, there is no single definition for stress, but the American Institute of Stress states the most common explanation is a “physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension.”

Stress can cause the following:

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, desires, and interests
- Trouble concentrating and making decisions
- Nightmares or problems sleeping
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, or skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health problems and mental health conditions



Learning to cope in a healthy way can help reduce your stress. Taking small steps in your daily life to manage stress can have a big impact. Some small steps to start including in your routine could be:

- Take breaks from news and social media. It is good to be informed, but constant information about negative events can be upsetting.
- Make time to unwind - take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Keep a journal. - Remind yourself of specific things you are grateful for and write them down.
- Spend time outdoors either being active or relaxing.
- Try to do some other relaxing activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others - Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- Connect with your community-based or faith-based organizations.

Remember to take care of your mind and body this season and enjoy the little things as they come. Sources: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), [Illinois.gov](https://www.illinois.gov)

Turmeric: The Golden Spice with Powerful Wellness Potential

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Bright golden and packed with flavor, turmeric has been used in cooking and traditional medicine for thousands of years. This vibrant spice—derived from the root of the *Curcuma longa* plant and related to ginger—is widely used in Indian and Southeast Asian cuisine and has long been valued in Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine. Today, modern research is exploring turmeric’s potential health benefits, particularly due to its main active compound, **curcumin**.

Curcumin is a natural plant compound with **anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties**, which means it may help the body fight oxidative stress and inflammation—two factors linked to many chronic diseases. Diets rich in colorful plant foods like turmeric may support overall health by helping protect cells from damage caused by environmental stressors such as pollution or sunlight. Research suggests turmeric may support wellness in several ways. Some studies indicate that people with **osteoarthritis experienced reduced joint pain and stiffness** when turmeric was included in their diet. Other studies are exploring its potential role in supporting heart health, metabolic health, and even mood, although more large-scale research is needed to confirm these effects.

Turmeric also contains beneficial nutrients and plant compounds, including **vitamin C, vitamin B6, fiber, iron, potassium, and manganese**, which contribute to overall nutrition when included in a balanced diet.

While turmeric is widely available as a supplement, experts often recommend enjoying it in food instead. One reason is that curcumin is naturally **difficult for the body to absorb**, but pairing turmeric with **black pepper**—which contains a compound called piperine—can increase curcumin absorption significantly.

Turmeric can be an easy and flavorful addition to everyday meals. Try stirring it into soups, curries, roasted vegetables, rice dishes, smoothies, or the increasingly popular “golden milk” latte. As with most wellness trends, moderation is key. Turmeric used in cooking is considered safe for most people, though high-dose supplements may interact with medications or cause digestive discomfort for some individuals.

Whether added to a cozy spring soup or blended into a warm tea, turmeric is a simple way to bring color, flavor, and potential health benefits to your plate. Sources: [HopkinsMedicine.org](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org), [WebMD.com](https://www.webmd.com), [NCCIH.gov](https://www.nccih.gov)

Simple Turmeric Roasted Vegetables

Ingredients

- 2 cups chopped vegetables (carrots, cauliflower, sweet potatoes, or broccoli)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp turmeric
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Toss vegetables with olive oil, turmeric, garlic powder, salt, and pepper.
3. Spread on a baking sheet and roast for 20–25 minutes until tender and lightly browned.



Turmeric Ginger Wellness Tea

Ingredients

- 2 cups water
- ½ tsp ground turmeric (or 1 tsp fresh grated turmeric)
- ½ tsp grated fresh ginger
- 1 tsp honey
- Squeeze of lemon
- Pinch of black pepper

Instructions

1. Bring water, turmeric, and ginger to a gentle simmer for 5–7 minutes.
2. Strain into a mug if using fresh ingredients.
3. Stir in honey, lemon, and black pepper before serving.



The 5 C's of Mental Wellness

Most people have, at one point or another, struggled with their mental health. It can be challenging and disheartening when it feels like nothing is working – no matter what you do, you are still feeling down, depressed, or anxious. Unfortunately, there is no magic button that you can press and instantly feel better. However, you can get help. Many times, working with a mental health professional is the first step toward feeling like yourself again and living the most fulfilling life possible. There are many different ways to define what it means to be mentally well, and the 5 C's of Mental Health is just one of these frameworks.

The Last Word

Competence

In terms of mental health, competence refers to the feeling of being capable of coping with the challenges and obstacles life throws your way. If you feel competent, you believe that you can achieve your goals. There are many different opportunities to exhibit competence in your life, including in the workplace, at home, and in your hobbies or activities. People who are struggling with their mental health often do not feel well-equipped to handle everyday life, let alone succeed on a larger scale. Part of mental wellness is believing in yourself and feeling like you have the tools to handle whatever life throws your way. You can also develop coping skills and a mental health toolbox through therapy or behavioral health care.

Confidence

When you have confidence, you believe in yourself and have a positive self-image. You know your worth, and you also believe you can grow and improve over time, continually working toward the person that you want to be. When you do not feel confident, it can be hard to take risks or even advocate for yourself. You might feel as though you are not worthy of close relationships or any of the positive things life has to offer. However, building confidence in yourself is an important part of your mental health. You are worthy, you are loved, and you do deserve the best that life has to offer. Therapy is a great setting to work on building confidence.

Character

When you have character, you demonstrate ethical behavior. You take responsibility for your actions, and you adhere to the values that are important to you. Furthermore, you understand these values and have a well-developed idea of your priorities and moral code. There are many activities you can engage in to identify your values, including online tests or value sorts. Once you know what your values are, you can work on living into those values each day. Discussing your values with your therapist can also help you identify areas where you are shining as well as places where you can improve your value-driven life.

Connection

This one is pretty straightforward! Connection simply means feeling connected to others. You have supportive relationships and belong to a community in which you feel seen and cared for. When you are struggling with mental health concerns, it can be tough to reach out to those around you. However, humans are wired for connection – and facing life's hardest moments on your own can lead to loneliness and even increased anxiety and depression. Fostering a strong social network is important for mental health. When you have connection in your life, you are also well-positioned to employ the final C on this list, caring.

Caring

Exhibiting caring means that you show compassion and empathy. You display concern both for yourself and others, and you are invested in the well-being of other people, particularly those you care about. Caring comes in many forms. Maybe it is calling a friend on their birthday, sending a letter to an aging parent, or even just praising a coworker for a job well done. When you exude caring into the world, you will help lift those around you... And the favor might just come back your way in time! *Source: [Triumph Behavioral Health](#)*

If you or someone you know is in immediate distress or is thinking about harming themselves, you're not alone and help is available right now. In the U.S., you can call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, or chat via [988lifeline.org](#). If you're in immediate danger, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency room.



Your Health Matters is a quarterly publication for municipal employees and family members of the Cape Cod Municipal Health Group.

*All questions and correspondence should be directed to Deanna L. Desroches, Health & Wellness Consultant,
Cape Cod Healthy Connections, LLC
508-631-7263
capecodhealthyconnections@gmail.com*