



## Welcome to the Sentara Quality Care Network (or SQCN, pronounced “sequin”)

You are receiving this because your doctor or provider is in the SQCN network. They have chosen to come together to offer you seamless healthcare.

This month we are looking at these important topics:

- Depression and mental health awareness
- Allergy and asthma
- Women's health issues
- Palliative care

You also have access to customizable, no-cost services. Find them [here](#). You can contact us at 757-455-7330 or [SQCN@sentara.com](mailto:SQCN@sentara.com) to get started. We look forward to serving you!

### May is National Mental Health Awareness Month

Which of the following are signs of depression?

- Low mood
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Anger or irritability
- Physical aches and pains

- All of the above

You can find the answer in the depression screening information below.

## **Why Getting a Depression Screening is Important**

There are many signs of depression. They can include any of the ones listed above, and more. Depression is so common that about 21 million adults in the U.S. have had at least one major episode. It is an equal-opportunity issue. It can affect people of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Depression can be the result of a trauma, life circumstance, or other medical conditions. It can even be the result of genetics. No matter what the cause, there are many treatments available. This is why talking with your primary care team is so important.

## **When Do I Reach Out for Help?**

Please see your primary care team if you are experiencing the following for more than two weeks:

- Low mood
- Changes in eating habits or sleep disturbances
- Feeling agitated or excessively tired
- Being down on yourself

**If you are having any suicidal thoughts, contact 988 immediately.** This is the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. You can call or text and connect with mental health professionals.

Source: <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Depression/Overview>

## **What Can I Ask My Primary Care Team?**

You may not think you should contact your "regular" provider about mental health issues, but this is not true. Your healthcare team can give you a depression screening and put you in touch with mental health professionals, if needed. Here are some questions you can ask:

- What is something I can do to feel better?

- Could these feelings be related to changes in my body?
- Would menopause or other hormonal changes affect my mood?
- Could these feelings be a side effect of medications?
- Where could I find someone to talk with about these feelings?

## Children and Mental Health

Adults aren't the only ones with depression and other mental health issues. **Studies have shown as many as 1 in 6 kids will have a mental illness issue. And as many as 50% of these issues can turn into a lifelong problem.**



You can find more about when to seek help, where to find help, and more at the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) website](#). Click on the screenshot above to access a 1-minute video for more information.

If you have questions for the SQCN team, you can contact us at 757-455-7330 or [SQCN@sentara.com](mailto:SQCN@sentara.com).

## Loneliness is an Epidemic

U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, has released a report, "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation." Some of these issues are from the aftermath of COVID-19. However, the report finds that before the pandemic, as many as 1 in 2 people felt lonely. This includes teens and young adults who are well-connected on social media but not in person.

The report suggests that by [following six steps](#), people can help decrease or prevent issues like:

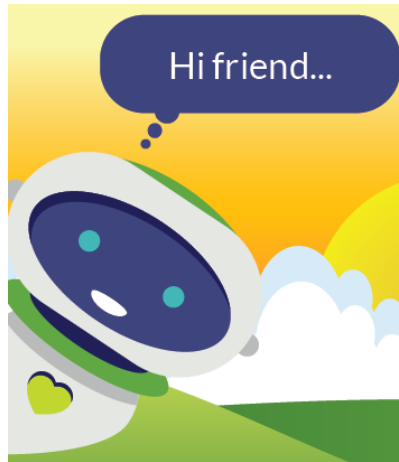
- Depression
- Heart disease
- Anxiety
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Dementia

Read the full report [here](#).

## Program Update: Pyx Health

Do you feel lonely or isolated?

The no-cost Pyx Health app is available to members, like you, who could use a boost or someone to interact with. It includes daily tips, helpful resources, and games/activities.



We encourage you to try it out!

Follow these easy steps. From a smartphone or tablet:

- Search “Pyx Health” in the App Store or Google Play
- Download the app to your smartphone or tablet

Don't have a smart device? No problem, sign up by:

- Landline: Call 1-855-499-4777 (select option 1)
- Web: [PyxHealth.com/store-download](https://PyxHealth.com/store-download)

Contact the team at [SQC�@sentara.com](mailto:SQC�@sentara.com) for more information.

## Ask Your Pharmacist: Depression Medications

Antidepressants are a popular treatment choice for depression. Although they may not cure depression, they can reduce symptoms. The first antidepressant you try may work fine. But if it does not help your symptoms or causes side effects that bother you, you may need to try another.

So do not give up. Many kinds of antidepressants are available, and chances are you will be able to find one that works well for you. And sometimes a combination of medicines may be an option.

To get the best results from an antidepressant:

**Be patient.** Once you and your healthcare provider have selected an antidepressant, you may start to see improvement in a few weeks. But, it may take six or more weeks for it to be fully effective.

**Take your antidepressant consistently and at the correct dose.** If your medicine does not seem to be working or is causing side effects you don't

like, call your healthcare provider before making any changes.

**See if the side effects improve.** Many antidepressants cause side effects that improve with time. For example, initial side effects when starting an SSRI can include dry mouth, nausea, loose bowel movements, headache, and insomnia. These side effects usually go away as your body adjusts to the antidepressant.

**Explore options if it does not work well.**

**Try psychotherapy.** In many cases, combining an antidepressant with talk therapy, called psychotherapy, is more effective than taking a medication alone. It can also help prevent your depression from returning once you are feeling better.

**Do not stop taking an antidepressant without talking to your healthcare provider first.** Some antidepressants can cause significant withdrawal-like symptoms unless you slowly taper off your dose. Quitting suddenly may cause a worsening of depression.

**Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs.**

Source: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/antidepressants/art-20046273>

## Care Corner: Diabetes and Distress

Having diabetes can cause anger, resentment, and anxiety. There is portion control, a daily monitoring system, and medication to take. You may have other physical complications. But know that you are not alone. Download the [tip sheet](#) to learn more.

If you are interested in diabetes self-management services, contact us at 757-455-7330 or [SQCN@sentara.com](mailto:SQCN@sentara.com).

### Diabetes and Distress

#### A Message on Behalf of Your Primary Care Team

Having diabetes can cause distress. What is distress? It can come out as worry, frustration, and even anger. If not taken care of, distress can lead to depression. Distress happens because diabetes is a condition that you must manage regularly—but know that you are not alone.

Consider these two questions. In the past month:

1. Are you often overwhelmed by diabetes management?
2. Do you often feel you are not managing your diabetes regimen?

If the answer to either of the above is yes, talk with your primary care team.

#### Here are some ways to manage your distress:

- ✓ Talk about how you feel with your family, friends, and healthcare providers.
- ✓ Allow those that want to help, to help.
- ✓ Take each diabetes-related task as it comes.
- ✓ Meet your daily eating and exercise goals.
- ✓ Research options to lower the cost of supplies and medications.
- ✓ Do the things you enjoy.



Your diabetes care manager can work with you on the above goals and more. Together, you can:

- Lessen your feelings of worry and burnout.
- Empower your lifestyle choices.
- Achieve your best health.

Contact our care management team to get started with diabetes self-management services. Reach SQCN Member Services at 757-455-7330 or [SQCN@sentara.com](mailto:SQCN@sentara.com).

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/monaging/diabetes-distress/tip-sheet-coping-diabetes-distress.html>. Accessed 4 May 2023.

## Environmental Allergies

Do you have environmental allergies? The [Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America](#) put Virginia on the Top 10 list for both spring and fall.

Allergies can last for a short time or for months. Here are some ways to manage seasonal issues:

- Change clothes or shoes after doing yard work
- Wear gloves or a N95 mask while gardening
- Keep indoor windows closed

Allergies are not contagious. There are many over-the-counter medications to help. If your symptoms persist or get worse—including wheezing or having a hard time breathing—contact your primary care team.

### **Pediatric Allergies**

Anyone can be impacted by allergies, but allergies are generally more common in children. Allergies are most common in the spring but can occur at any time. Symptoms can look like other conditions or health problems. They include:

- Stuffy nose, sneezing, itching, or runny nose, and itching in ears or roof of mouth
- Asthma symptoms, such as shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing
- Red, itchy, watery eyes
- Red, itchy, dry skin that might include hives or a rash

Treatment depends on the severity of the condition, as well as your child's symptoms, age, and general health. Effective treatments can include:

- Stay away from what brings on an allergic reaction
- Rinse off showers after play
- Over the counter medications
- Allergy shots
- Nasal steroids
- Medicines for asthma symptoms
- Allergy tablets

Click [here](#) for CHKD's information on allergies in children.

## Women's Care: Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

A UTI is common in females. In fact, it is estimated that there is 40-60% chance of getting one—sometimes repeatedly. (It affects less than 10% of men).

What causes it? There are several common factors, including:

- Pregnancy
- Underlying urinary tract issues
- Personal hygiene routines

What does it feel like? Symptoms vary, but you may experience:

- A frequent need to urinate without much result
- A burning sensation during urination
- Dark, discolored, or foul-smelling urine
- Fatigue, shakiness, chills, or fever
- Pressure or pain in your lower abdomen or back

A urine sample is not always needed to make the diagnosis and have treatment, such as antibiotics. Contact your primary care team to determine how to best diagnose your symptoms. They can also schedule an office or telehealth visit, if needed.

Call your primary care team right away if you have:

- Fevers
- Pain over the kidneys
- Severe body aches
- Constant vomiting

If you think you have a UTI and are 65+ or have a history of chronic diseases, contact your primary care team.

Source: <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/urologic-diseases/bladder-infection-uti-in-adults/definition-facts>

## Palliative Care: Start the Conversation Early

Palliative Care Week is May 21-27. This is a week to empower you and your loved ones to make end-of-life decisions prior to a health emergency. This is a deeply personalized plan that you can change over time.

Palliative care is about treating the whole person, not just the disease. This includes your physical, mental, and even spiritual health. It can help those going through cancer and any other life-threatening issue.

To learn more, check out the [National Institute on Aging](#) resources.

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**Questions? Contact the SQCN Team:**

**757-455-7330 | [SQCN@sentara.com](mailto:SQCN@sentara.com)**

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