

FEBRUARY 2025

Through the WIRE

LOCAL 26 IBEW-NECA JOINT TRUST FUNDS

YOUR
HEALTH CARE PLAN

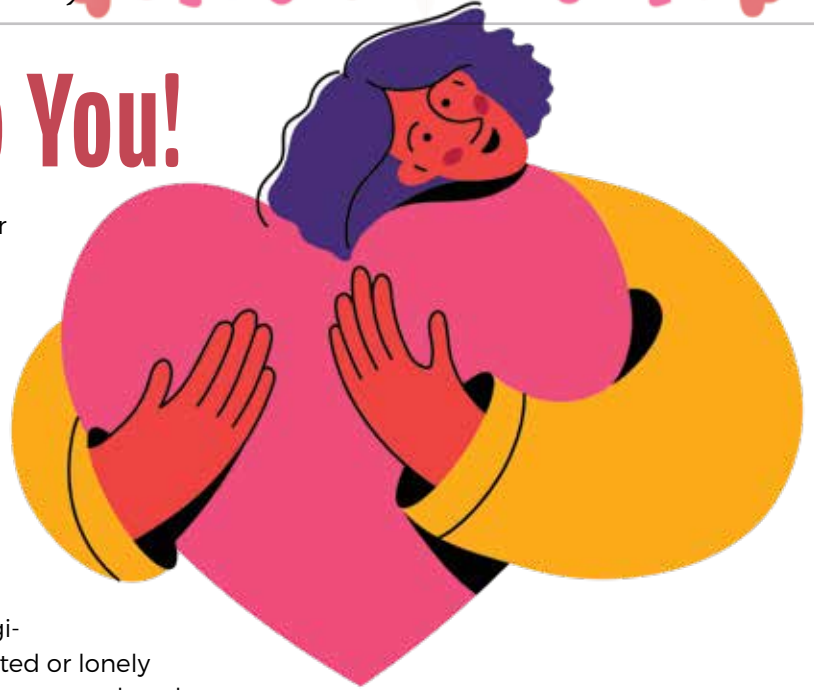
protecting your family

Hugs and Kisses to You!

This month we celebrate Valentine's Day, the day for cards, candy, and, yes, kisses! While candy may not be good for your health and should be enjoyed in moderation, apparently kisses and affection are good for you and help lower your stress hormones which can lead to other health benefits. Lower stress hormones are linked to lower blood pressure. Hugging and kissing also help the body release oxytocin, which is referred to as the cuddle chemical, and dopamine, which creates feelings of pleasure.

A report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine found that people who are isolated or lonely have a higher risk of heart disease and depression. Other researchers have found that when affection is taken away, people don't sleep as well, are in more physical pain, and are more susceptible to secondary immune disorders. One study from the publication *Psychological Science*, of over 400 adults, even found that, when exposed to the cold virus, hug deprived people got sick more often and more seriously than those who reported to receive lots of hugs.

So go ahead and show your affection to those you love. You may be gifting more than just your love; you may be gifting them good health!



Did You Know...

Virta can help you plan the perfect romantic dinner for your sweetheart that's special and healthy at the same time? That's right; in addition to counseling you to help control your diabetes or reduce your risk for diabetes altogether, Virta offers recipes to help you stay on your health journey and still enjoy a wide variety of foods. Check out Virta's recipe library at <https://www.virtahealth.com/categories/recipes>.



SCAN this QR code to access all of the valuable links mentioned in this issue of *Through the Wire*.



High Blood Pressure Can Be High Risk

There are lots of things that can get your heart going—a scary movie, a thrill ride, love, and even your blood pressure, to name a few. Your blood pressure may be the least exciting of the bunch but it's the most important because it's a good indicator of your heart health.

Blood pressure is the force of the blood moving through your arteries en route to your entire body. Every time your heart beats, it's pumping blood into your arteries, a highway system of sorts to deliver oxygen-rich blood to your body's cells and tissues. To be clear though, blood pressure and

heart rate are two different things with blood pressure a measure of how powerfully your blood is moving through your body and heart rate being the number of times your heart beats in a minute. Both blood pressure and heart rate can be affected by what you're doing, such as exercise or something thrilling/exciting, and can be calmed down with rest but *high blood pressure*, also known as hypertension, can take your life and is often called the "silent killer."

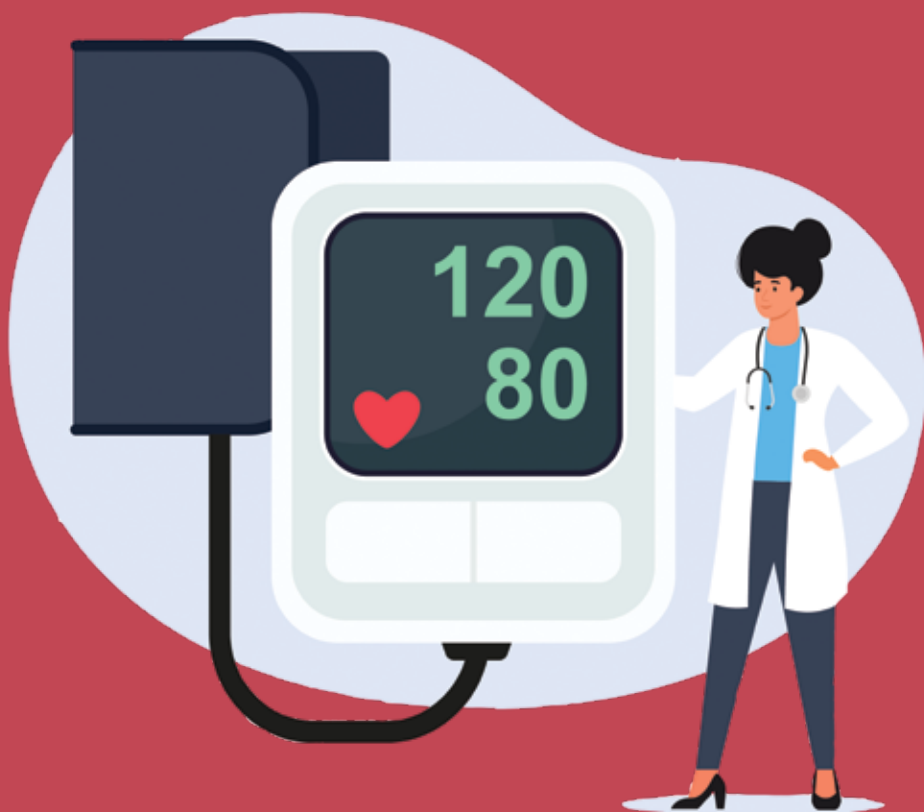
High blood pressure is capable of damaging your heart, kidneys and/or brain before you even know you have it or experience any symptoms.

It is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease and without treatment can cause:

- ♥ Transient ischemic attack (TIA)
- ♥ Heart attack or stroke
- ♥ Aneurysms
- ♥ Heart failure
- ♥ Kidney disease
- ♥ Eye problems
- ♥ Enlarged heart
- ♥ Peripheral artery disease
- ♥ Metabolic syndrome
- ♥ Changes in memory or understanding
- ♥ Dementia

Some symptoms of high blood pressure include headaches, shortness of breath and nose-bleeds, while risk factors include:

- * Age
- * Race
- * Family history
- * Lack of exercise
- * Tobacco use or vaping
- * Too much salt
- * Low potassium levels
- * Drinking too much alcohol
- * Stress
- * Some chronic conditions such as kidney disease, diabetes, and sleep apnea
- * Pregnancy





DON'T FORGET

All EWTF participants have access to **Hello Heart**, a voluntary, free-of-charge heart health program that helps track blood pressure, cholesterol, and medications with the goal of improving cardiovascular health. Learning about Hello Heart and enrolling is simple. Just visit <https://preferences.helloheart.com/ewtf>.

Winter Exercise Gets Your Heart Racing



CALORIES BURNED IN AN HOUR

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

900

Snowshoeing

500

Hiking

400 to 650

Running

500 to 1000

Ice Skating

900

Walking

200 to 400

HOCKEY

400-600

Trail Biking

1000

A crackling fire and a good romantic comedy is one way to enjoy Valentine's Day but why not think outside the box? In fact, why not think outside? The weather may be nippy but that doesn't need to stop you from enjoying outdoor activities with the ones you love.

Skiing and snowboarding can certainly get your heart racing and calories burning. On average skiing burns about 300 calories per hour and snowboarding can burn as much as 400 calories per hour. That's a lot of chocolate hearts burned on the slopes.

Afraid of heights or have no need for speed? Give these other winter activities a try to get your blood pumping:

And, if you are looking for something a little more zen, there's always snoga. That's right, outdoor winter yoga while strapped onto a snowboard!



Too Late for the Flu Shot?



No, it's not too late to get the flu vaccine even though flu season is upon us. While the best time to get the flu shot, for maximum coverage, is September/October, getting the vaccine anytime during flu season, which runs from October-May, is still a smart idea and provides valuable coverage. Once you get the vaccine, it takes up to two weeks to build immunity. The vaccine is safe and reliable and recommended for everyone age six months and older but it's especially important to get for certain high risk groups:

- Adults over age 65
- People in nursing homes or long-term care
- Young children, especially those 12 months or younger
- People who plan to be pregnant, are pregnant or recently gave birth during flu season
- People with weakened immune systems
- People with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher
- People with conditions that affect the nervous system or how the brain works
- People with chronic illnesses such as asthma, heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes
- People who have had a stroke
- People who are younger than 20 years of age and are receiving long-term aspirin therapy



KIDS' CORNER

WORD SCRAMBLE - LOVE IS IN THE AIR

Can you unscramble these Valentine's-themed words?

AVINENTLE _____
 LEVO _____
 HEATR _____
 SGUH _____
 KSEIS _____

WSLFOER _____
 NDCYA _____
 RDAC _____
 UICDP _____
 ETSHEERWAT _____

Answers:
 VALENTINE
 LOVE
 HEART
 HUGS
 KISSES
 FLOWERS
 CANDY
 CARD
 CUPID
 SWEETHEART