

# SMART LIVING



A PUBLICATION OF THE PUBLIC EDUCATION HEALTH TRUST



## 5 SURPRISING REASONS ORAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT

October is National Dental Hygiene Month, and we at PEHT are celebrating... that's right, celebrating! Oral hygiene is far more important than most people realize — of course, everyone knows it's essential because we love our teeth and want to keep them. But there are other, perhaps somewhat surprising, reasons to take good care of our pearly whites.

Here are five reasons that you might not know:

- 1. HEART HEALTH CONNECTION:** Did you know that poor oral health can affect your heart? It's a little crazy, but research has shown that gum disease and inflammation are linked to heart disease. Bacteria from your mouth can enter your bloodstream and attach to fatty deposits in your heart's blood vessels, potentially leading to serious cardiovascular issues.
- 2. DIABETES MANAGEMENT:** Maintaining good oral hygiene is also crucial for people with diabetes. Gum disease can make it harder to control blood sugar levels, and high blood sugar can lead to infections, including gum disease. By taking care of your teeth and gums, you're also helping to manage your diabetes.
- 3. RESPIRATORY HEALTH:** The health of your mouth can also surprisingly impact your lungs. Harmful bacteria from the mouth can be inhaled into the lungs, leading to respiratory infections such as pneumonia. Keeping your mouth clean reduces this risk, which is especially important in the colder months, which are many in the Land of the Midnight Sun.

**4. PREGNANCY COMPLICATIONS:** For mommies-to-be, oral health is truly vital. Gum disease has been linked to premature births and low birth weights. Keeping your mouth healthy helps ensure a healthier pregnancy and a healthier baby.

**5. SELF-ESTEEM AND MENTAL HEALTH:** Good oral health contributes significantly to self-esteem and overall mental health. A healthy, bright smile can boost confidence, while oral issues like bad breath or missing teeth can lead to social anxiety and depression and can even be a barrier to employment.

As Alaskans, we understand the importance of taking care of our overall health and that includes our oral health. At PEHT, we offer a variety of dental plans to help you stay on top of your oral hygiene. Remember to schedule regular checkups and cleanings every six months; it's a small but mighty step in that makes a huge difference in your overall health!

**Celebrate Dental Hygiene Month with PEHT, and let's keep those lovely smiles shining bright!**





## UPDATED DIRECT CONTRACTS: EXPANDING YOUR ACCESS TO QUALITY, AFFORDABLE CARE

When a national PPO contract doesn't meet the needs of providers, they can negotiate a direct contract with the Trust to benefit its members. Thanks to the responsiveness of our providers, we now have direct contracts with 79 providers, ensuring you and your family have access to high-quality, low-cost care within our network.

**These providers have listened to your requests and successfully negotiated in-network contracts directly with the Trust to better serve you and your loved ones.**

Alaska Family Health Center  
Alaska Natural Health Solutions  
Alaska Oncology and Hematology  
Alaska Pain to Wellness Centre  
Alaska Surgery Center  
Alpine Chiropractic (Dr. Fuller)  
Alyeska Vascular Surgery  
Anchorage Neurosurgical Associates, Inc.  
Arctic Chiropractic Anchorage  
Arctic Chiropractic and Phys Med Eagle River DBA Chiro One Wellness Center of Eagle River LLC  
Arctic Chiropractic Haines  
Arctic Chiropractic Huffman DBA Artic Huffman DBA Chiro One Wellness Center of Huffman LLC  
Arctic Chiropractic South DBA Chiro One Wellness Center of Anchorage South LLC  
Arctic Chiropractic West Mat-Su  
Arctic Chiropractic Wrangell  
Back in Action Physical Therapy  
Birds & Bees Midwifery  
Dimond Chiropractic DBA Arctic Dimond DBA Chiro One Wellness Center of Dimond LLC  
Express Care Clinic  
Fairbanks Urology  
Fireweed Counseling and Wellness  
Free By the Sea  
Healing Therapeutics-Mark Stiubhard  
Hillstrand Mary Margaret, ANP

Hopkins Weston, DR  
Horizon Chiropractic Center LLC  
Hunt Jennie, AGNP  
Ideal Family Medicine  
Integrated Wellness and Center for Birth  
Jaded Body Wellness and Spine Institute  
Jennifer Aist Lactation Services LLC  
Jorgensen Family Chiropractic  
Kiernan Brendan, MD  
Kilby Catherine, MD  
Labor of Love Midwifery  
Larson Chiropractic  
Larson, Logan  
Last Frontier Eye Care  
Litwin, Sharon  
Luminary Chiropractic Care  
Makin S. Harbir, DR  
Medevac Alaska  
Midnight Sun Oncology  
Mind, Body, Spirit Counseling and Consulting  
Mobile Chiropractic and Sports Therapy  
Morris Leslie, DR  
Neurobehavior North, Inc  
Northstar Chiropractic  
NorthStarr Cardiothoracic Surgery  
Nutrition Partnership, LLC  
Pemberton & Young Counseling  
People's Integrative Wellness  
Pioneer Peak Orthopedics  
Prism Optical of Alaska  
Providence Alaska Medical Center  
Rainforest Pediatric Care  
Ramirez Chiropractic  
Restoration Wellness  
Schaefer Sharon, DR  
Schroll Jennie, LCSW  
Silver Moon Acupuncture  
Smith Amy, LCSW, CDCI  
Snow Blossom Acupuncture

Solomon's Porch  
Soma Wellness  
Spine and Sport Injury Center  
DBA Complete Family Care  
Sports, Personal Injury and Chiropractic Consulting  
The Talking Place, Child & Adolescent Counseling  
Transitions Counseling; Christina McGauthiar  
True North TMS  
Valley Allergy and Asthma Clinic  
Vision Centers of Alaska  
Wattenbarger, Judd, DR  
Wendi Compton-Karuna Counseling  
Wickler Laurence, DR  
Wild Iris Integrative Massage (Lawton)  
Willow Medical and Wellness  
Wisdom Traditions Counseling Services  
Wolf Eye Center  
Yelverton, Brian

You can view your health plan's direct contract listing by visiting [pehtak.com/preferred-providers](https://pehtak.com/preferred-providers).

### DID YOU KNOW?

**Imaging Associates** is in the Aetna network and able to provide therapeutic injections along with other specialized services. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call:

**Anchorage Office:**  
(907) 222-4624  
**Valley Office:** (907) 746-4646  
[imagingak.com](https://imagingak.com)

# DON'T WAIT TO FEEL BETTER. GET THE CARE YOU NEED.

From minor illnesses to more serious conditions or injuries, we're here to care for you and your family. Providence offers a range of services, from emergency care to convenient, same-day walk-in options that ensure you get the care you need when you need it and that help you save time and money.



## EXPRESSCARE

*When you need same-day, expert care for minor illnesses and injuries that you just can't treat at home.*

- Cold, flu and allergies
- Eye irritations
- Urinary tract infections (UTI)
- Sprains and strains
- Cuts and scrapes
- Sports physicals



Clinic locations in Anchorage and Eagle River are open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Walk in or make an appointment online that fits your schedule. Virtual visits are also available.\*



## URGENT CARE

*When you have an illness or injury that needs immediate attention but is not life-threatening, Urgent Care is an alternative to an emergency room visit.*

- Asthma and allergic reactions
- Burns and bites
- Bronchitis and pneumonia
- Minor cuts needing stitches



Our convenient midtown Anchorage location is open daily from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Walk in or go online to reserve your spot in line.\*



## PRIMARY CARE

*When you're looking for personalized, whole-person care that helps you achieve and maintain optimal health and wellness.*

- Annual exams
- Management of chronic conditions
- Care of routine conditions
- Preventative and wellness care



Multiple Anchorage locations are available. Scan the QR code to find a provider.



## EMERGENCY CARE

*For critical illnesses and injuries that may be life-threatening, don't wait. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.*

Examples of conditions that may be life threatening are:

- Difficulty breathing
- Severe chest pain
- Difficulty speaking
- Bleeding that won't stop
- Sudden severe stomach pain
- Seizures



Always open.



\*Visit [providence.org/expresscare](https://providence.org/expresscare) to learn more, schedule an ExpressCare visit or reserve your spot in line at Urgent Care.



## MINIMALLY INVASIVE SPINE SURGERY TECHNOLOGY

### New at Providence Alaska Medical Center

The ExcelsiusGPS™ is a revolutionary robotic navigation platform that combines a rigid robotic arm and full navigation capabilities for improved accuracy and alignment in spine surgery.

If you are experiencing chronic back pain that is unresponsive to non-surgical treatment, you may be a candidate for minimally invasive spine surgery in conjunction with ExcelsiusGPS™. Talk to your doctor to learn more and find out if this option is right for you.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION HEALTH TRUST 2024 TRUSTEE ELECTION

On **September 18, 2024**, the Public Education Health Trust Board will commence its election process for Seats B and G. To access the ballot containing the candidates' biographies, please visit [pehtak.com](https://pehtak.com) on the aforementioned date.

To vote, you will be required to login using your full name as the username and your health plan member number, which can be found on your health plan ID card, as the password.

Following the conclusion of the voting period on **October 16**, the candidate with the highest number of votes will be assigned to Seats B and G. Their term will span from **January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2027** (3-year term).

**POLLS OPEN 8 A.M. SEPT. 18, 2024, AND  
CLOSE 5 P.M. ON OCT. 16, 2024**

## DISCOVER MEDICATION SAVINGS

Many of us depend on medication every day. Here are ways you can get the medication you need at an affordable cost.

## TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

Before your doctor writes a new prescription, ask them to use a digital tool called Real-Time Benefit Check. This tool provides information on:

- Insurance coverage details
- Patient out-of-pocket costs
- Covered drug alternatives
- Special rules that may apply (e.g., prior authorization)

Work with your doctor to choose the most cost-effective option.

## LOOK FOR ONLINE SAVINGS

1. ACCESS THE SAVINGS CENTER:
  - Log in at [optumrx.com](https://optumrx.com) and click on Member Tools > Savings Center. Here, you'll find alerts about savings on medications you're currently prescribed.
2. DRUG PRICING AND INFORMATION:
  - Log in at [optumrx.com](https://optumrx.com) and go to Drug Pricing and Information. You can look up a medication by name and compare prices at nearby network pharmacies.
3. USE THE OPTUM RX APP:
  - Download and use the Optum Rx app to receive savings alerts and search for drug pricing information on the go.
4. EMAIL ALERTS FOR PRICE SAVINGS:
  - Optum Rx will send emails to let you know about ways you may save.

## WEIGHT LOSS DRUG COVERAGE

If you've been finding it tough to lose weight through just diet and exercise, or if your weight is starting to affect your health, you might have considered weight loss medications. These drugs usually work to help you eat less, absorb less fat and burn more calories.

There has been a lot of media buzz around a weight loss medication called GLP-1 agonist. They work for many people, but they are also pricey. They can cost over \$1,000 per month. With nearly half of U.S. adults potentially eligible for these drugs, U.S. employers have had to decide whether to cover them. This could mean high insurance premiums for employees.

## GLP-1 COVERAGE CHANGE EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2024

As of July 1, 2024, your plan will no longer cover GLP-1 agonists for weight loss. This will help us keep premium costs down.

## YOUR PLAN IS COMMITTED TO OFFERING AFFORDABLE OPTIONS TO TREAT WEIGHT LOSS.

Talk to your doctor about alternative treatments for weight loss, such as oral medications or lifestyle/wellness options. Oral weight-loss medications covered by your plan:

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| • benzphetamine     | • phendimetrazine ER |
| • diethylpropion ER | • phentermine        |
| • Orlistat          | • Qsymia             |
| • phendimetrazine   |                      |

**Vitality, a wellness program**, is online and user friendly, helping you make smarter health choices and even rewarding you for hitting your health goals!

**Another option to consider is patient assistance programs.**

Many drug companies have savings offers for high cost medications. Visit the drug company's website to see if they offer copay cards you can enroll in.

Hope this helps you navigate your choices and keep moving forward on your health journey!

## GET STARTED WITH VITALITY, PEHT'S NEW WELLNESS PROGRAM!



Vitality rewards your efforts to improve or maintain a healthy lifestyle. When you engage in health-related activities that Vitality can track and measure, you earn Vitality Points. Track

your progress with your Vitality Status and stay motivated. As you earn more points, you raise your Vitality Status from Bronze to Silver to Gold to Platinum.

In addition to increasing your Vitality Status, you can also use those same points to reward yourself. Every Vitality Point you earn equates to one Vitality Buck. When you achieve a higher status, Vitality celebrates your success by awarding you Bonus Bucks. Members can redeem their earned Bucks in the Vitality Mall on wearable devices or electronic gift cards.

## PEHT ENCOURAGES YOU TO KICKSTART YOUR VITALITY JOURNEY!

Members who register on Vitality between August 1 – October 15 will earn a 150-point kickstart bonus!

In efforts to encourage your Vitality engagement, Members who complete their Health Assessment\* for the first time between August 1 – November 30 will receive a 250-point bonus!

During this time, members can expect additional communication to help them navigate through the Vitality platform and provide suggested activities to achieve higher statuses like Silver and Gold Status.

**Start your Vitality journey today. Earn up to 400 bonus points!**

\*The Health Assessment is a brief confidential questionnaire that takes about 10 minutes to complete.



# SWORD RESEARCHERS REVIEW DIGITAL PHYSICAL THERAPY EFFECTIVENESS



In the first-ever systematic review of its kind, Sword Health researchers showed that asynchronous telerehabilitation with biofeedback (known more broadly as digital physical therapy) is effective in improving pain and function in patients with musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions. Keep reading to learn about the peer-reviewed study, published in Digital Health.

## BACKGROUND

Exercise-based physical therapy is a clinically and cost-effective treatment for MSK conditions, which are the leading cause of disability worldwide. As such, the use of synchronous telerehabilitation — which is live video conferencing between physical therapy provider and patient — has gained popularity as a more accessible alternative to in-person treatment.

Previous systematic reviews support the effectiveness of synchronous telerehabilitation in patients with MSK conditions. However, this kind of treatment still requires physical therapists (PTs) to meet one-on-one with patients during every session. This poses scalability and scheduling issues, as many patients are unable to consistently attend appointments during regular working hours. Not to mention, there is an ongoing shortage of PTs in the U.S., which can create long waiting lists and additional schedule constraints. Therefore, synchronous telerehabilitation cannot adequately tackle the growing need for physical therapy services.

This is why asynchronous telerehabilitation with biofeedback has emerged as a more scalable solution for the treatment of MSK pain. Asynchronous telerehabilitation with biofeedback refers to digital physical therapy using wearable motion sensors or camera-based sensors to provide biofeedback and patient monitoring. The physical therapy provider does not need to observe the session in real time. This solution allows patients to complete their prescribed exercises on their own schedule, and it allows providers to use biofeedback and adherence metrics to adjust the treatment as needed.

Until now, however, there was no systematic review evaluating the effectiveness of this type of asynchronous treatment.

## METHODS

Sword researchers' systematic review focused on trials published in the last five years to summarize and assess the effectiveness of asynchronous, exercise-based telerehabilitation incorporating biofeedback. In total, 14 papers were included and analyzed. Among them were eight randomized control trials, three non-randomized control trials and three single-arm studies.

The majority of studies used wearable inertial motion sensors to provide biofeedback during exercise sessions, while four studies used camera-based sensors. All studies included some form of communication system between health professionals and patients, but only six studies allowed patients to reach out as needed.

## RESULTS

The systematic review showed that **asynchronous, exercise-based telerehabilitation incorporating wearable motion sensors is effective** in improving pain and function in patients with MSK conditions, yielding at least similar improvements as compared to usual care (including in-person rehabilitation).

The results of this study reinforce the effectiveness of digital solutions such as Sword Health in treating MSK conditions, which is excellent news for patients, providers and employers. Digital MSK programs allow patients to get the treatment they need from the comfort of their homes, as soon as they need it. In other words, the relative accessibility of digital MSK increases the likelihood of patients receiving timely and proper care, which is a key factor in avoiding unnecessary surgeries and other invasive procedures down the line. Meanwhile, providers can effectively treat more patients in less time. And employers can tackle MSK issues in their workforce using a solution that is just as effective as in-person physical therapy and synchronous telerehabilitation, but less costly and much more convenient.

Want to learn how Sword Health can help free your people from pain and reduce your organization's medical spend? Request a demo by visiting [swordhealth.com/request-demo/thrive](https://swordhealth.com/request-demo/thrive).

## PEHT NOTICES

Accessing PEHT legal notices on the PEHT website is quick and easy. Simply visit [pehtak.com/forms](https://pehtak.com/forms) and scroll to the bottom of the page to find important documents, including COBRA Continuation Coverage, Medicare Part D Disclosure, Notice of Privacy Practices, and the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998.



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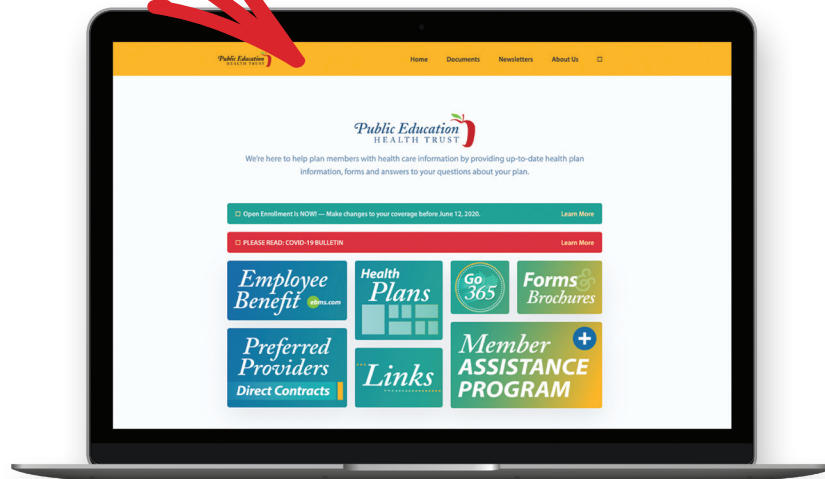
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**JULIA  
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