

# City of Tampa Healthy Heartbeat



Health and wellness newsletter for COT Employees and families, and COT Retirees

April 2025



## ...and Welcome to “Allergy Season” In Tampa Bay!

### What’s Blooming & The Effects of Different Types of Pollen



Many residents of Tampa Bay reach for tissues and antihistamines during allergy season. This time of year often brings about an increase in sneezing, itching, and other allergy symptoms. Understanding what’s blooming and how it impacts your health is vital to navigating this season.

**Allergy season** refers to the time of year when certain trees, grasses, and weeds release pollen into the air. These tiny particles can trigger allergic reactions in people who are sensitive to them. Allergy season usually runs from December through May.

The climate in Tampa Bay plays a significant role in determining when and how plants bloom. Tampa Bay’s subtropical climate, characterized by hot, humid summers and mild winters, allows various plants to thrive throughout the year; however, this also means that allergy season can be particularly intense. One reason for this intensity is the prevalence of grass pollen. Bermuda, Bahia, and St. Augustine grasses are widespread in Tampa, and their pollination period contributes significantly to the overall pollen count. Understanding what’s blooming is crucial because different plants produce different types of pollen, each with potential health effects. By knowing which plants are currently releasing pollen, you can better anticipate and manage your allergy symptoms.

Read the full article here [Allergy Season In Tampa Bay: Different Types Of Pollen](#) to learn more about:

- Familiar plants and pollen types in Tampa Bay (trees, grasses, and weeds)
- The effects of pollen on your health
- Strategies for managing pollen exposure (including regular cleaning, the use of air purifiers, and how to dress to help mitigate exposure)
- And more Frequently Asked Questions



Source: TGH Urgent Care Fast Track, posted March 15, 2024, Accessed March 14, 2025

#### [Worksite Wellness | City of Tampa](#)

Find information about your benefits and wellness activities!

#### [Healthy Cooking | City of Tampa](#)

Watch a cooking demo or find a new healthy recipe!

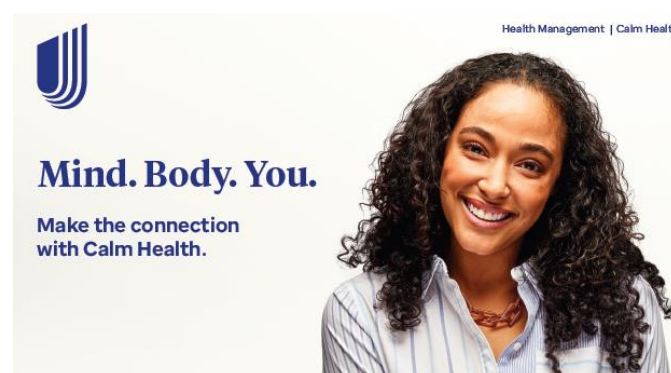
#### Resources to help support your mental health

To help tailor your Calm Health experience, you’ll begin with a short mental health screening. Then, Calm Health will suggest certain programs for you to consider based on where you are in your well-being journey.

#### Tap into tools and support

The Calm Health app brings you a library of support—including mindfulness content and programs created by psychologists—for a variety of health experiences and life stages. This information is designed to help you:

- **Learn techniques to improve well-being** – Find tools, music and sounds to help you meditate, improve focus, move mindfully and feel calm
- **Work toward goals** – Join self-guided self-care programs, and track your progress along the way
- **Support your mind and body** – Access mental health information and support to help you strengthen the mind-body connection



Get Started

Scan the QR code to easily download the Calm Health app.



## Measles!



Since there’s been some news about measles showing up in the U.S. recently, I’ve gotten a few questions about how to know if you’re protected. This very good question is best taken up with your healthcare provider. Here’s some information you can take to your provider’s office to get that conversation started!

First, **what is measles?** Some people think of measles as just a little rash and fever that clear up in a few days. But **measles can cause serious health complications**, particularly in older adults, folks who have chronic health conditions or weakened immune systems, and children younger than 5 years old.

#### Common measles symptoms include:

- High fever (may spike to more than 104° F)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
- Rash

**Measles is highly contagious.** It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. You can get measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been. This can happen even up to 2 hours after that person has left. If one person has it, **up to 9 out of 10 people nearby will become infected** if they are not protected.

**Anyone who is not protected against measles is at risk.** Measles was declared eliminated from the United States in 2000. However, measles is still common in many parts of the world. Every year, measles is brought into the United States by unvaccinated travelers who get measles while they are in other countries.

**The best way to protect against measles** is with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. MMR is safe and effective. **MMR vaccine provides long-lasting protection** against all strains of measles. Two doses of MMR vaccine are about 97% effective at preventing measles; one dose is about 93% effective.

**Talk to your doctor** if you’re unsure about your vaccine status, if you think you may be in a higher risk population, or if you plan to do any international traveling. Talk to your doctor to see if they recommend getting an antibody blood test to check your immunity, or if you might benefit from a “booster” vaccine.

Source: CDC – About Measles, <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html> May 29, 2024, Accessed March 2025



## April: National Substance Abuse Awareness

Did you know... 21 million Americans struggle with some form of substance use disorder. In this context, a “substance” is anything that has mood and mind-altering effects. Things like, alcohol, pain medications and illegal drugs. A substance use disorder is a medical condition that may affect the brain and body. And while this condition may or may not be controlling the individual’s life, it is considered a health risk and may warrant getting some help. One behavior that might indicate a substance use disorder is the regular use of substance(s) even though it might negatively impact that person’s quality of life (like failure to meet major responsibilities or poor health).

Remember, substance use disorder is a disease – not a failure of will or weakness of character. It can be serious and life-threatening. The good news? It may be treatable. In fact, many people can recover if they seek the proper counseling right away. Call the **24-hour Substance Use Helpline: 1-855-780-5955 / TTY 711** for information to help individuals and family members through substance use disorders, including referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups and community-based organizations.

Click this link or scan the QR code to read the full article:  
[Substance use disorder | Health & wellness | UnitedHealthcare](#)



## The sweet truth: All about sugar

December 17, 2024 • By Mayo Clinic Press Editors



**Tara Schmidt, M. Ed., RDN, LD** is a registered dietitian and instructor of nutrition at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. She is the lead dietitian for the [Mayo Clinic Diet](#), host of the podcast [On Nutrition](#), Medical Editor of the [Nutrition & Fitness channel](#), and co-authored [The Mayo Clinic Diet: Weight Loss Medications Edition](#). Tara is passionate about reducing weight bias and educating people about realistic, evidence-based weight management.

Sugar – particularly added sugar – is in nearly all our food. Whether you have a sweet tooth or not, it’s important to know the benefits and consequences of all three kinds of sugar, and how we can adjust our relationship to them.

On this episode of the On Nutrition podcast, presented by the Mayo Clinic, dietitian-nutritionist Lisa Lammert shares about the history of added sugar, discusses whether it’s possible to have a sugar addiction, and reveals if sugar substitutes are as effective as we might think!

Click or scan to hear the podcast or read the transcript:  
[The sweet truth: All about sugar - Mayo Clinic Press](#)



### April 2025 UHC Webinar:

#### How to be a Quitter: a Guide to Quitting Smoking

Wed, Apr 16 2025, 12 - 1pm



Tobacco use is the single largest cause of preventable death and disease in the United States. Cigarette smoking causes an estimated 443,000 deaths each year and can increase the risk for many health problems, including cancer, type 2 diabetes, and coronary artery disease. The nicotine in tobacco products is addictive and makes it difficult to stop, but there are many benefits to quitting.

During this presentation you will:

- Learn about nicotine and how it reacts in our bodies
- Identify sources of nicotine
- Discuss some of the short and long-term benefits of quitting
- Identify tobacco cessation resources that can help

To register: [How to be a Quitter April 2025](#) or scan the QR code



For more tips on living tobacco-free, check out these Health Tip fliers from United Healthcare:

- [Health tip: Living tobacco free](#)
- [Consejo de salud: Vivir sin consumir tabaco](#)

Or check out:

- [Tobacco Free Florida | Smoking Cessation Information & Programs](#)



#### Using tobacco products may put you at a greater risk of<sup>4</sup>:



Developing certain cancers, including throat, mouth, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, kidney, and lung cancers



Having gum disease and tooth loss



Developing lung problems such as chronic obstructive lung disease, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and asthma



Developing reproductive health issues in both men and women



Developing a stroke or coronary artery disease which can lead to angina and heart attacks



Developing type 2 diabetes



#### The benefits of quitting tobacco begin almost immediately<sup>3</sup>

**20 minutes** – Heart rate and blood pressure drop

**24 hours** – The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal

**2 weeks to 3 months** – Your lung function begins to improve

**1 to 12 months** – Coughing, sinus congestion and shortness of breath decrease

**1 year** – The risk for heart attack drops dramatically

**5 to 10 years** – The risk of mouth, throat and esophageal cancer is half that of a smoker’s

**15 years** – The risk of developing coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker’s



## April is also Stress Awareness month. Here are some resources from United Healthcare to help you manage stress and recharge throughout the day!



### 🧘 Stretch & Thrive with Health Coach Stef 🧘

#### April 2025 Stretch Break Schedule

4/3 – Thursday – 7AM – Wastewater Collections - courtyard

4/7 – Monday – 2PM – Hanna City Center – Hanna Square (lawn out front)

4/10- Thursday – 7:30AM – Water (Dona Michelle) - meeting room

4/11 – Friday – 2PM – Tampa Convention Center - The Landing

4/14 – Monday – 7:30AM – Wastewater AWTP – Lg training room

4/25 – Friday – 2PM – Columbus Municipal Office Building (CMOB) – upstairs training room

**\*\*These stretch breaks will count towards incentive “engage w/ UHC health coach (3 sessions),” if you are on the city health plan. Questions? Reach out to Coach Stef @ [cotcoach@uhc.com](mailto:cotcoach@uhc.com) or 813-535-0482**

In April, Coach Stef is adding some fun to the stretch breaks! She will be bringing her favorite hula hoops to every stretch break this month. The person who keeps their hoop spinning the longest will win a prize! So, channel your inner hoop star, gather your co-workers, and let's make this April the most hula-tastic month ever!



Have you ever heard the saying, “Laughter is medicine”? Turns out, it’s true! Learn about some of the physical, mental, and social benefits of laughter in this United at Work recording, narrated by Nurse Debbie.  
*(does not apply to your wellness incentives)*

To watch this video:  
[UAW: Laughter is Medicine](#) or scan the QR code



United Healthcare



Breathing for Better Health will teach you about deep, diaphragmatic breathing and how this breathing technique may help improve your overall health and manage stress. This United at Work presentation is narrated by United Healthcare Health Coach James.  
*(does not apply to your wellness incentives)*

To watch this video:  
[UAW: Breathing for Better Health](#) or scan the QR code



United Healthcare



This presentation on The Power of Positivity will teach you how to identify negative thinking patterns and to practice optimism in your thoughts, feelings, and actions. This United at Work presentation is narrated by United Healthcare Health Coordinator Jessica.  
*(does not apply to your wellness incentives)*

To watch this video:  
[UAW: The Power of Positivity](#) or scan the QR code



United Healthcare

### Your Dedicated United Healthcare Team

Onsite Representative  
Savio Crasto  
Email: [cotonsiterep@uhc.com](mailto:cotonsiterep@uhc.com)  
Phone: 813-274-8279

Nurse Liaison  
Debbie Johns, RN  
Email: [cotnurse@uhc.com](mailto:cotnurse@uhc.com)  
Phone: 813-482-4856

Health Coach  
Stephanie Olstad, BSW  
Email: [cotcoach@uhc.com](mailto:cotcoach@uhc.com)  
Phone: 813-535-0482



## Come learn from a Real Appeal Coach!



Real Appeal® is an online lifestyle and weight management program. It's available to you at no additional cost as part of your health insurance.

And this year, Real Appeal offers even more coaching, more focus on building new habits, and more inspiration.

Join this *Coach Corner* event to learn more about the program experience and hear from a Real Appeal Coach!

A focus on your mental health is a key component in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In this event you will hear from a Real Appeal coach about how to nurture your mental health and put yourself first.



# Real Appeal®

### Real Appeal Webinar: Nurture Your Mental Health

A focus on your mental health is a key component in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In this event you will hear from a Real Appeal coach about how to nurture your mental health and put yourself first.

#### Tools and Support to Keep Moving Forward

Real Appeal® is an online weight management and healthy lifestyle program designed to spark a healthy transformation—at no additional cost to you.



#### Online Convenience

Set goals, track your meals and activity, and stream expert-led workouts — all on the Real Appeal app.



#### Personalized Support

Communicate with an online coach to discuss your specific health goals and circumstances.



#### Motivational Resources

Join live sessions with a community of members to learn practical tips for creating a healthy lifestyle and boosting your well-being.

Don't miss out. Register today!

May 7, 2025 | 2:00-2:45 pm CDT



[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to register for the event.

Ready to join Real Appeal?  
Get Started at  
[enroll.realappeal.com](https://enroll.realappeal.com)

Real Appeal is available to members at no additional cost as part of their medical benefits plan, subject to eligibility requirements. The Real Appeal program is educational in nature and is not a substitute for medical advice.  
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## BayCare Presents:

### What Dr. Google Can't Tell You - A Family Doc's Tips on Weight Loss and Heart Health

Don't miss this chance to cut through the noise of misleading online health myths and get reliable, science-backed answers! Expert family physician Dr. Julia Jenkins will uncover the facts about weight loss and heart health, correct common misconceptions, and share effective strategies you can count on. Learn why consulting a trusted healthcare provider is essential for achieving lasting well-being and better health.

BayCare Presents: What Dr. Google Can't Tell You – A Family Doc's Tips on Weight Loss and Heart Health  
Julia Jenkins, MD

APRIL 15, 2025

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM

[Click Here to Register or Scan the QR Code](#)

