

MAY 2026

Through the **WI**RE

LOCAL 26 IBEW-NECA JOINT TRUST FUNDS

**YOUR
HEALTH CARE PLAN**

protecting your family

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL Men and women have very different health care needs.

Did you know that there is an entire department dedicated to women's health at the Department of Health and Human Services? With May serving as National Women's Health Month, now is a perfect time to explore the Office on Women's Health (OWH) and dive into the information available through its website. The Office on Women's Health was created in 1991 to provide education and advocacy for women's health issues. The OWH works to bring women's health issues front and center, and health plans like our EWTF ensure that our female members can get preventative care, screenings and specialized treatment uniquely for women.

Attention to women's health issues and comprehensive women's health resources is a winning combination.

Visit womenshealth.gov to learn more about the Office on Women's Health and women's health issues.



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

Know Your Benefits to Take Charge of Your Good Health



Don't forget that the EWTF has well-woman health benefits that include one routine pap smear per year and one mammogram per year for women age 35 and older. Both the routine annual pap smear and annual mammogram are covered

at 100% with no cost sharing or deductible. Plan information on these screenings, gynecological care, maternity coverage and general health care coverage is always available through the EWTF Summary Plan Description at www.ewtf.org/health-benefits-spd/table-of-contents.

Heart Disease Is a Heavy Burden on Women

Cardiovascular concerns are not something most people think are a primary health concern for women. However, heart disease is the #1 health risk for women, yet only 56% of women know that heart disease is the top health risk they face. Heart disease kills more women than all kinds of cancer combined.

Early research on heart disease excluded women from the studies, resulting in findings that were male-specific, particularly the signs of heart disease, which we now know present quite differently in men versus women. While both men and women can experience chest pain as a sign of heart disease, women can also experience much more subtle symptoms as signs of the disease. Unlike men, heart disease in women may present as fatigue,

nausea, back pain, jaw pain, shortness of breath and/or dizziness rather than just intense chest pain. These subtle symptoms have led doctors to dismiss them in women for another cause, such as stress or anxiety.

Another important difference is that women tend to develop blockages in smaller vessels in the heart, versus the large arteries where men develop blockages, making heart disease in women more difficult to detect. Men also typically experience heart disease at an earlier age than women as it's believed that pre-menopausal women receive some protection from estrogen and progesterone. After menopause, a woman's risk for heart disease increases significantly.

Women are twice as likely to die from heart disease than men!

Hello Heart is a EWTF partner provider that can help all of our participants—men and women—take control of their heart health. Whether you want to play defense and protect your current good heart health or you are trying to improve and repair your heart health, Hello Heart can help. The Hello Heart program includes blood pressure monitoring through an at-home monitor, medication tracking, digital coaching, and, for women, menopause and pregnancy support as these stages relate to heart health. To learn more about the EWTF benefit, available to all participants at no additional cost, visit <https://preferences.helloheart.com/EWTF>.



Man or woman, if you think you are too young to worry about heart disease, think again. For some, heart disease risks can begin as early as their 20s. Women even bear some unique risks for heart disease as compared to their male counterparts:

- ♥ Pregnancy complications such as preeclampsia and gestational diabetes
- ♥ Hormonal factors such as early menopause (before age 40 or 45), early menstruation (before age 10), and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- ♥ Autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and other inflammatory conditions which are more common in women and damage blood vessels
- ♥ Mental health concerns such as stress, anxiety, and depression which are more prevalent in women and strongly linked to heart issues
- ♥ Small Vessel Disease which affects women through coronary microvascular disease, which affects smaller arteries, rather than just large artery blockages

Common gender-neutral risk factors include:

- ♥ Diabetes
- ♥ Smoking
- ♥ High blood pressure and cholesterol
- ♥ Obesity/inactive lifestyle

BUSTING THE MYTHS AND MYSTERIES OF MENOPAUSE



There are only a few health concerns that are uniquely female and menopause is one of them. Menopause is a natural, common part of a woman's lifetime reproductive cycle yet myths and misconceptions about menopause abound. It's not always something that just happens to "old" people. (And, what's considered "old" these days, anyway?)

Simply put, menopause defines a point in time when a woman has gone 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period. Menopause usually occurs around age 52 but it can occur in women as young as age 40...or even younger. Even though menopause refers to the stage in time in which a woman no longer has her menstrual periods, the process of menopause actually occurs in three stages—perimenopause, menopause, and post menopause.

- ☼ Perimenopause describes the roughly eight to ten years before menopause in which the ovaries produce less and less estrogen. Perimenopause can come with symptoms such as irregular menstrual periods, hot flashes or mood swings.
- ☼ Menopause is the point in time when a woman no longer has

a menstrual period at all due to very low levels of estrogen and the ovaries no longer releasing eggs.

- ☼ Post menopause, as the name suggests, is the time after menopause, the stage women remain in for the rest of their life. Typically, symptoms of menopause dissipate in post menopause but this stage is when women are most vulnerable to osteoporosis and heart disease due to low levels of estrogen.

Even though menopause has been a natural part of women's health since the beginning of time, quite literally, there are still so many myths about the transition. In addition to the myth that menopause is only for "old" people, other myths include:

- ☼ "Hot flashes are the only symptom of menopause." Brain fog, insomnia, joint pain, mood changes, and reduced bone density are other hallmarks of menopause.

(Menopause, continued →)

Stay Mentally Strong

Menopause is more than a physical change to a woman's body; menopause can come with very real mental health challenges as well. Fluctuating hormone levels can trigger anxiety, depression, mood swings, irritability, and brain fog. When you combine hormonal shifts with the physical side effects of menopause that make many women feel less than their best, menopause can wreak mental havoc on a woman. Seeking out professional help, such as the services offered through the **Revive and Thrive** program with BHS, our employee assistance provider, can help take the edge off menopause.

You can register in the Revive & Thrive program by calling **800-327-2251** or visiting <https://member.myrevive.health/selfsignup?code=IBEW>. Use code **IBEW**. You can also download the Revive & Thrive app for your smartphone or tablet to explore all that the program can offer you. Just like the mental health services previously under BHS, Revive & Thrive is free of charge to all EWTF participants and maintains complete confidentiality. Mental health providers are also available 24 hours and day, seven days a week at 800-327-2251.

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(Menopause, continued)

- ⊗ "You cannot get pregnant during perimenopause." While fertility chances do decrease during perimenopause, pregnancy is still possible.
- ⊗ "Menopause only lasts a short while." Symptoms can last from two to eight years!
- ⊗ "Hormone therapy isn't safe." Hormone therapy can be an effective way to control symptoms if your doctor believes you are a good candidate for this protocol. Talk with your medical provider.
- ⊗ "Weight gain during menopause is inevitable." Metabolism does slow during menopause but lifestyle and dietary improvements can keep weight gain at bay.
- ⊗ "Symptoms aren't bad enough to see a doctor." You do not have to suffer with symptoms that affect your quality of life. Meeting with a doctor to discuss treatment options and/or meeting with a mental health professional to discuss therapy, if needed, can help you navigate this stage of life.



The EWTF recently partnered with women's health provider **Progyny** to help our female members and those who love them, navigate health challenges that are specific to women. Access to Progyny is there for the taking. Reaching out can help you navigate such issues as family planning, fertility, pregnancy, and, yes, menopause. Reach out to Progyny via email at education@progyny.com.

KIDS' CORNER



MARVELOUS MAY'S MIXED-UP WORDS

Can you set May straight and unscramble her favorite May words?

- | | |
|-----------|---------|
| BTRUTELYF | ICPINC |
| PUITL | LDABGUY |
| SRDIB | LOFREW |
| EGADNR | ISNRGP |

Key:
Butterfly, Tulip,
Birds, Garden,
Picnic, Ladybug,
Flower, Spring