



## Wellness Articles

Attached are weekly health and wellness articles provided by Alberta Health Services. As a way to help all Albertans live a healthy life, we welcome and encourage weekly newspapers, community newsletters and other publications to reproduce this information free of charge. Credit to Alberta Health Services or the identified content provider would be appreciated.

If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: [Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca). You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

An archive of past wellness articles is available at <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9966.asp>

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Alberta Health Services (AHS) knows that wellness matters, and this year AHS has been asking our people and Albertans, 'What's your balance?' Throughout the year of wellness and finding balance, AHS is highlighting four areas of wellness, including healthy eating, mental wellness, physical activity and sleep & fatigue.

Over the next couple months, AHS is bringing Mental Wellness to the forefront.

## Paws-itive Mental Health

### Pets help us feel more connected, relaxed

Pets can be the purr-fect therapist, offering nonjudgmental, unconditional love and support.

Animal-assisted therapy, and simply being with a pet regularly, has long been known to have mental health benefits.

"Pet therapy visits are for many patients, an unexpected and happy event," says Glen Gross, 63, an Alberta Health Services (AHS) volunteer who visits the Royal Alexandra Hospital with his best friend, Border Collie, Misha. "It is our chance to help patients temporarily put aside their worries."

At AHS, there are 295 registered volunteers who join us with their furry companions through various pet therapy and pet visitation programs across the province. These unique volunteers offer a welcome distraction to those in care by providing an opportunity of friendly and comforting social interaction.

Studies have shown that petting an animal can promote relaxation by lowering blood pressure and slowing the heart rate – in any setting, whether in a hospital environment, or in the comfort of your home.

Check out some of our most gentle volunteers and their stories of bringing comfort and joy by visiting [ahs.ca/whatsyourbalance](http://ahs.ca/whatsyourbalance), and join them now through June, to share how your pet



supports your mental health by posting your photos and stories on social media using the hashtag #AHSwhatsyourbalance.