

# Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

[geary.k-state.edu](http://geary.k-state.edu)

**October 2022**

## Ask the Agent

**Q:** How can I check my home for energy efficiency?

**A:** Your best bet is to hire a professional home energy auditor. The challenge in that is there aren't many available to Kansas residents. If you use the search tool that is linked to the U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, there will be only 2 results – both located in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

While a professional energy assessment provides the most complete picture of your home's energy use, a diligent self-assessment can help you pinpoint problem areas and prioritize your energy efficiency upgrades.

You can find a detailed DIY energy checklist at: <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/do-it-yourself-home-energy-assessments>

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at: **785-238-4161**

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## Ready or Not—Fall is Here! October 2022

Fall brings cooler air and reminds us that winter is right around the corner. Have you taken steps to get your house ready for winter? Have you thought about what it might cost you this winter to keep your home warm? Let's take a close look at steps you can take in the fall season to get ready for "Old Man Winter."



During the winter season energy conservation is crucial since heating accounts for the greatest use of energy in our homes. Before the cold weather sets in you should perform a quick inspection of your home. Simply dampen your hand and place it in locations such as attic hatches, baseboards, corners of rooms, cracks, doors, fireplace dampers, outlets, outdoor faucets (make sure these are tightly closed and all hoses have been detached), switch plates, and windows. Your hand will feel cold near a draft. Then seal windows, doors, and other leaks with caulking, weatherstripping, spray foam, or other material as needed.



One of the simplest ways to save money each winter is to change your furnace filter regularly. If you have a forced air heating system, look for this filter near the blower compartment or in a cold air return register. Its purpose is to trap dust and dirt so they don't collect in the blower and reduce the flow of heated air into your home. But if the filter is clogged, the system can't run efficiently. Check the filter once a month during the heating season and clean or replace it as necessary.

Furnace filters protect the furnace but they also contribute to good health by cleaning the air circulating through the house. Filter designs and rating systems vary. Some filters remove large, heavy particles from the air but allow smaller particles to flow through. Large particles (from 6 to 100 microns in size) include lint, pollen, and mold spores. Medium particles (from 0.3 to 6 microns) include dust, animal dander, and bacteria. The smallest particles (0.3 microns and below) include smoke, smog, and viruses. By comparison, a human hair is between 3 to 200 microns. Fiberglass or cellulose pad filters are low cost but only effective at removing up to 2% of submicron particles.

While you're at it, make sure that all hot air registers are open and unobstructed. That antique cabinet from your grandma looks nice, but it isn't good for the cabinet or for your heating system if it is sitting on top of a hot air register. Likewise, make sure the cold air returns are open and accessible.

If you are feeling ambitious, check accessible ductwork for leaks and seal them with duct mastic (a special paste available from a heating contractor or heating supply store). If ducts located in an unheated space are not insulated, you may want to add insulation to them. Use foil faced fiberglass with the foil facing out or use insulation made specifically for ducts. Secure the insulation with contractor grade duct tape.

While you are dealing with your furnace, it's a good time to install a carbon monoxide detector in your home. These are easy to install and look like a smoke detector. In the event of a malfunction in any of your gas appliances, the detector will warn you of the hazard. Be sure to replace the batteries each year or more often if suggested by the manufacturer.

**K-STATE**  
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Family & Consumer  
Sciences

# October Is...

## Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Other than skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women. Mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat and before it is big enough to feel or cause symptoms.

There are different symptoms of breast cancer, and some people have no symptoms at all. Symptoms can include—

- Any change in the size or the shape of the breast.
- Pain in any area of the breast.
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk (including blood).

- A new lump in the breast or underarm. If you have any signs that worry you, see your doctor right away.

You can do things to help lower your breast cancer risk.

- Keep a healthy weight and exercise regularly.
- Choose not to drink alcohol, or drink alcohol in moderation.
- If you are taking hormone replacement therapy or birth control pills, ask your doctor about the risks.
- Breastfeed your children, if possible.

## German-American Heritage Month

**German-American Heritage Month** – President Ronald Reagan proclaimed October as the month to celebrate the impact immigrants from Germany have had on our country. Their impact can be found in architecture, literature, festivals, and settlements. A quick look at the Kansas map will reveal the many communities established by our German ancestors: Bremen, Olpe, Stuttgart, and many more. Germans were the largest European group who settled in Kansas.

Check out the German-influenced slaw recipe below. Kohlrabi may not be the most famous of produce, but it contains many antioxidants and is super easy to prepare! Kohlrabi is a type of German turnip related to broccoli and cabbage. It can be roasted and served with pasta or chopped raw and put into salads/coleslaw!

### KOHLRABI SLAW

#### Ingredients

- 1 medium kohlrabi
- 2 apples
- 1/2 jalapeno pepper
- 2 tablespoons cilantro
- 1 lime, juice and zest
- 1 orange, juice and zest
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

#### Directions

1. Wash and peel kohlrabi. Slice into small pieces, matchstick style.
2. Wash and slice apple. Leaving skin on chop into small pieces, matchstick style.
3. Finely mince jalapeno pepper and cilantro.
4. Combine kohlrabi, apple, jalapeño, and cilantro.
5. Juice and zest orange and lime.
6. In separate bowl combine orange juice and zest, lime juice and zest and olive oil. Add to other ingredients. Stir together to combine. Add salt and pepper to taste.

#### Nutrition

- Calories — 73
- Carbs — 12g
- Protein — 1g
- Fat — 4g
- Sodium — 7mgFiber —3g



#### Servings

8 servings

*Recipe Source: University of Delaware Cooperative Extension*

From October 15 – December 7 each year, you can join, switch, or drop a plan. Your coverage will begin on January 1 (as long as the plan gets your request by December 7). It's important to take a look at your plan's formulary, deductible, and premiums during Open

## Medicare Open Enrollment!

Enrollment to make sure you are getting the best price and coverage available for your personal prescription drug needs. If you are a Medicare Beneficiary, call the Geary County K-State Research and Extension office at 785-238-4161 to make your appointment!

# Emotional Wellness Checklist

Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. Here are tips for improving your emotional health:

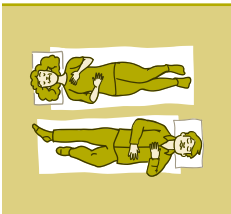


## BUILD RESILIENCE

People who are emotionally well, experts say, have fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficulties faster. This quality is called resilience. Learning healthy ways to cope and how to draw from resources in your community can help you build resilience.

### To build resilience: :

- Develop healthy physical habits.
- Take time for yourself each day.
- Look at problems from different angles. Learn from your mistakes.
- Practice gratitude.
- Explore your beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life.
- Tap into social connections and community.



## REDUCE STRESS

Everyone feels stressed from time to time. Stress can give you a rush of energy when it's needed most. But if stress lasts a long time—a condition known as chronic stress—those “high alert” changes become harmful rather than helpful. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress can also boost your resilience.

### To help manage your stress:

- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly.
- Build a social support network.
- Set priorities.
- Show compassion for yourself.
- Try relaxation methods.
- Seek help.



## GET QUALITY SLEEP

To fit in everything we want to do in our day, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. It's vital to your well-being. When you're tired, you can't function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes and focus better. Take steps to make sure you regularly get a good night's sleep.

### To get better quality sleep:

- Go to bed and get up each day at the same time.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet place.
- Exercise daily.
- Limit the use of electronics.
- Relax before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol before bedtime and stimulants like caffeine or nicotine.
- Consult a health care professional if you have ongoing sleep problems.



**BE MINDFUL**

The concept of mindfulness is simple. This ancient practice is about being completely aware of what’s happening in the present—of all that’s going on inside and all that’s happening around you. It means not living your life on “autopilot.” Becoming a more mindful person requires commitment and practice. Here are some tips to help you get started.

**To be more mindful:**

- Take some deep breaths in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.
- Enjoy a stroll, notice the sights around you.
- Practice mindful eating. Be aware of each bite and when you’re full.
- Be aware of your body. Do a mental scan, bring your attention to how each part feels.
- Find mindfulness resources, including online programs.



**COPE WITH LOSS**

When someone you love dies, your world changes. There is no right or wrong way to mourn. Although the death of a loved one can feel overwhelming, most people can make it through the grieving process with the support of family and friends. Learn healthy ways to help you through difficult times.

**To help cope with loss:**

- Take care of yourself.
- Talk to a caring friend.
- Try not to make any major changes right away.
- Join a grief support group.
- Consider professional support.
- Talk to your doctor if you’re having trouble with everyday activities.
- Be patient. Mourning takes time.



**STRENGTHEN SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**

Social connections might help protect health and lengthen life. Scientists are finding that our links to others can have powerful effects on our health—both emotionally and physically. Whether with romantic partners, family, friends, neighbors, or others, social connections can influence our biology and well-being.

**To build healthy support systems:**

- Build strong relationships with your kids.
- Get active and share good habits with family and friends.
- If you’re a family caregiver, ask for help from others.
- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, or painting.
- Take a class to learn something new.
- Volunteer for things you care about in your community, like a community garden, school, library, or place of worship.
- Travel to different places and meet new people.



# October Is...

## EMOTIONAL WELLNESS MONTH

Observance of Emotional Wellness Month began in 2004. The National Institutes of Health explain that how you feel can affect your ability to carry out daily activities, your relationships, and your overall mental health. How you react to your experiences and feelings can change over time.

Emotional wellness is the ability to successfully handle life's stresses and adapt to change and difficult times. People who take action to maintain their emotional health are more productive at work, able to maintain positive, supportive relationships, and increase their ability to balance work and family life.

One strategy that is proven to help individuals achieve emotional wellness is the practice of using relaxation techniques. Relaxation techniques are practices to help bring about the body's "relaxation response," which is characterized by slower breathing, lower blood pressure, and a reduced heart rate. The relaxation response is the opposite of the stress response.

Some of the studies discussed in this article compare relaxation techniques to cognitive behavioral therapy. Cognitive behavioral therapy is a type of psychological treatment that helps a person become aware of ways of thinking that may be automatic but are inaccurate and harmful. The therapy involves efforts to change thinking patterns and usually behavioral patterns as well.

What are the different types of relaxation techniques? Here are a few of the more commonly practiced relaxation techniques:

**Progressive Relaxation:** Also called progressive muscle relaxation, this technique involves tensing different muscles in your body and then releasing the tension.

**Autogenic Training:** Through a series of mental exercises involving relaxation and ideas you suggest to yourself (autosuggestion), your mind focuses on your body's experience of relaxation.

**Guided Imagery or "Visualization":** In guided imagery, you picture objects, scenes, or events that are associated with relaxation or calmness and attempt to produce a similar feeling in your body.

**Biofeedback-Assisted Relaxation:** Through feedback that is usually provided by an electronic device, you learn how to recognize and manage how your body responds. The electronic device lets you see how your heart rate, blood pressure, or muscle tension changes in response to feeling stressed or relaxed.

**Self-Hypnosis:** In self-hypnosis programs, people learn to produce the relaxation response when prompted by a phrase or nonverbal cue (called a "suggestion") of their own.

**Breathing Exercises:** For breathing exercises, you might focus on taking slow, deep breaths—also called diaphragmatic breathing.

Source: National Center for Complimentary and Integrative Health. <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/relaxation-techniques-what-you-need-to-know>

When families eat together, meals are likely to be more nutritious and kids who eat regularly with their families are less likely to snack on unhealthy foods and are more likely to eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Beyond health and nutrition, family meals provide a valuable opportunity for children and parents to reconnect. When adults, children and teenagers eat together children do better in school, have fewer behavioral problems, and communication improves.

### Tips on How to Make Family Meals Happen:

**Schedule Family Meals.** To plan more family meals, look over the calendar and choose a time when everyone can be there. Figure out which obstacles are getting in the way of family meals and see if there are ways to work around them. Don't forget that breakfast and lunch are meals as well; there are no rules that say family meals should only happen in the evening.

**Prepare Meals Ahead of Time.** It is important to make a shopping list and make time to go to the grocery store so you have foods on hand to create meals. Try doing some prep work for meals on the weekend to get ready for the week ahead. On a night when you have extra time cook

## National Eat Better, Eat Together Month

double and put one meal in the freezer so when you are short on time you have a backup plan. Remember that a meal at home does not have to be complicated or take a long time to make.

**Involve Kids at Family Meals.** Family meals can be fun and it is important to involve kids in them. Celebrate National Eat Better, Eat Together Month by having kids help at mealtime. Younger kids can put plates on the table, pour beverages, or fold napkins. Older kids can get ingredients, wash produce, mix, and stir. You could even have your teens be the cook and you as the parent could be their helper in the kitchen.

During mealtime, make your time at the table pleasant and enjoy being together as a family. Remember to keep your interactions positive at the table. Ask your kids about their days and tell them about yours. Give everyone a chance to talk. Another topic to discuss is future family meals and favorite foods that could be included. If you cannot remember the last time you sat down for a family meal, take the time this October to start a family tradition of eating together and eating better.

*By Lisa Franzen-Castle, Extension Nutrition Specialist  
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**Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs**

**\*\*Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register\*\***

**October**

- 15 Medicare Open Enrollment begins. There are a limited number of appointment times so make your call today to set up a time to visit with Deb and review your prescription plan options. Open Enrollment season runs through December 7.
- 17, 19 Walk With Ease is a physical exercise and nutrition education program offered by K-State Research & Extension SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators Ann Katt and Caroline Davis. Join them at the 12th Street Community Center on Monday & Wednesday mornings at 7:00 for this unique walk and talk learning experience. For more information call the SNAP-Ed office at 785-579-4726.



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