

September NEWSLETTER



Aakom-Kiyii Health Services will ensure maintenance, delivery and enhancement of quality health services for Piikani Nation. Our vision is to empower Piikani Nation members in their health and wellness journey.



Wildfire Smoke:

Protecting Yourself and Your Family

Wildfire smoke can occur without warning and can affect communities even when wildfires are located far away. Smoke can travel long distances and have an impact on the air quality in our homes and communities. While we cannot always control when wildfire smoke reaches our area, there are steps we can take to help protect ourselves and our families. Those who tend to be more vulnerable to the effects of wildfire smoke include young children, pregnant women, Elders, and people living with respiratory issues.

Keeping Your Home's Air Clean

When wildfire smoke is affecting the area, try to keep your home and the air inside as clean as possible. There are various precautions you can take to help keep your indoor air clean. Keep windows and doors closed, set your air conditioner to recirculate, and run the fan on your furnace to help circulate and filter the air inside your home. Regularly replacing your furnace air filter can also help improve the air quality inside your home. Portable air purifiers can also help improve indoor air quality, especially in the rooms where you spend the most time, such as your bedroom or living room.

Some things that can worsen the air quality in your home include burning candles, using a fireplace, and even vacuuming, as these activities can release additional particles into the air.

Keeping the Air in Your Car Clean

There are also steps you can take to help keep the air inside your vehicle cleaner. This can include keeping your windows closed, setting your vehicle's ventilation system to recirculate, and checking your vehicle's cabin air filter and replacing it when needed.



Protecting Yourself Outdoors

When air quality is poor, try to limit the amount of time you spend outdoors, particularly when smoke levels are high. If you do happen to be outside, an N95 respirator can help reduce the fine particles you breathe in. Drinking plenty of water can also help your body cope with the effects of the smoke.

Recognize the Symptoms

Wildfire smoke exposure can cause a range of symptoms, including headaches, mild coughing, increased mucus production, and irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, or sinuses. These symptoms are often temporary and may improve once exposure to the smoke decreases.

More serious symptoms can include dizziness,

wheezing, chest pain, severe coughing, asthma attacks, shortness of breath, and heart palpitations or an irregular heartbeat. If you experience serious symptoms or are having difficulty breathing, seek medical attention.

Pay Attention to Air Quality

Even when a wildfire is located far away from our community, the smoke can still affect the air we breathe. During wildfire season, make a habit of checking local air quality reports and taking precautions when smoke levels are high.

By making a few simple changes, we can reduce our exposure to wildfire smoke and help protect the health of ourselves, our families, and our community.



Welcoming our *New Staff Members*

Aakom-Kiyii Health Services continues to grow and expand our services to better serve the Piikani Nation. With more services comes the need for more staff to help support our community!

One of the areas where we identified a need for additional support was within our Home Care and Mental Wellness departments. We are excited to welcome four new team members to our Home Care department, including two Registered Nurses, Hailey Olsen and Nicole Long Time Squirrel, and two Health Care Aides, Valdina Twoyoungmen and Lisa Prairie Chicken. Their addition will help strengthen our Home Care team and allow us to continue providing quality care and support to our community members.

Our Mental Wellness department has also welcomed a new Manager. With the number of programs and services offered through Mental Wellness continuing to grow, we needed someone to help bring everything together and support the team. Our new Manager will help oversee the department, connect our different programs, and work with staff to make sure our services continue to meet the needs of the community. We are looking forward to the support and leadership this position will bring as our Mental Wellness services continue to grow.

With that being said, we would love to introduce the community to our newest Aakom-Kiyii Health Services team members!





First off, we'd like to introduce Nicole Ray, our new Mental Wellness Operations Manager. Nicole has over fifteen years of experience as a mental health professional and holds a master's degree. We are excited to have Nicole as part of our team and look forward to seeing the impact her experience and expertise will have on our organization.

Next, we have Hailey Olsen, a Registered Nurse in our Home Care department. Hailey previously worked as a Registered Nurse for the Blood Tribe Health Department. We are excited to have Hailey join our team and look forward to seeing how her previous experience can help support our Home Care department and the community.



Next, we have Valdina Twoyoungmen, a Health Care Aide in our Home Care department who comes with previous experience in the field. Valdina will be responsible for client health monitoring and assisting with daily living activities. Don't be shy to say hi and welcome Valdina to the team and our community!

Lastly, we have Nicole Long Time Squirrel, a Registered Nurse in our Home Care department. Nicole previously worked as a Nurse Manager for the Blood Tribe Health Department. We are excited to see how Nicole can combine her management skills and experience as a nurse to help bring new ideas and improvements to our Home Care department.





Head Start

Welcome Back!

Well, summer has come to an end, and with fall approaching, so does the start of a new school year!

With that being said, we will be welcoming back our little learners this month! Orientation will be held on September 9 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Registration is still open if you are wanting to register your children for the upcoming school year.

Our official first days of classes will be:

Group 1: September 14, 2026

Group 2: September 15, 2026

We can't wait to have our little learners back! We're looking forward to another great year!

Contact us:

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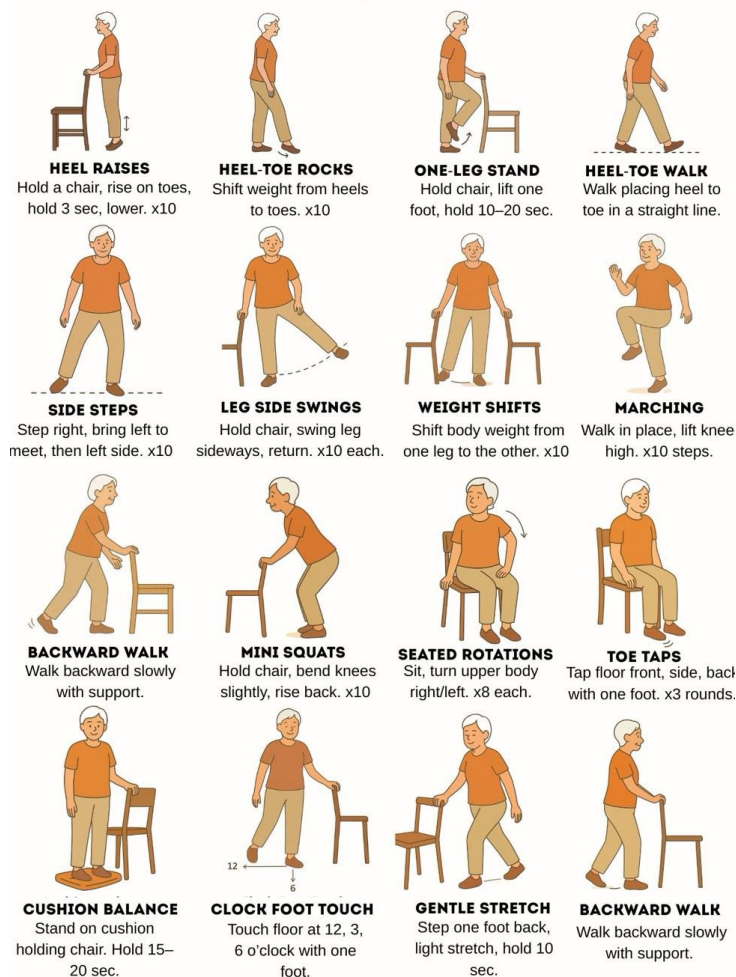
Fall Prevention

Fall prevention is the practice of reducing the risk of falls and fall-related injuries among older adults. Falls are one of the most common causes of injury, loss of independence, and reduced quality of life as people age.

At Aakom-Kiyii Health Services our qualified staff provide Personal Fall Risk Assessments to provide our nation members with a better understanding of their own personal fall risk. We can also help minimize the potential for falls with identifying fall hazards and fall prevention balance exercises. Visit Aakom-Kiyii Health Services to inquire about a Personal Fall Risk Assessment



FALL-PREVENTION BALANCE EXERCISES FOR SENIORS



Why do falls become more common with age?

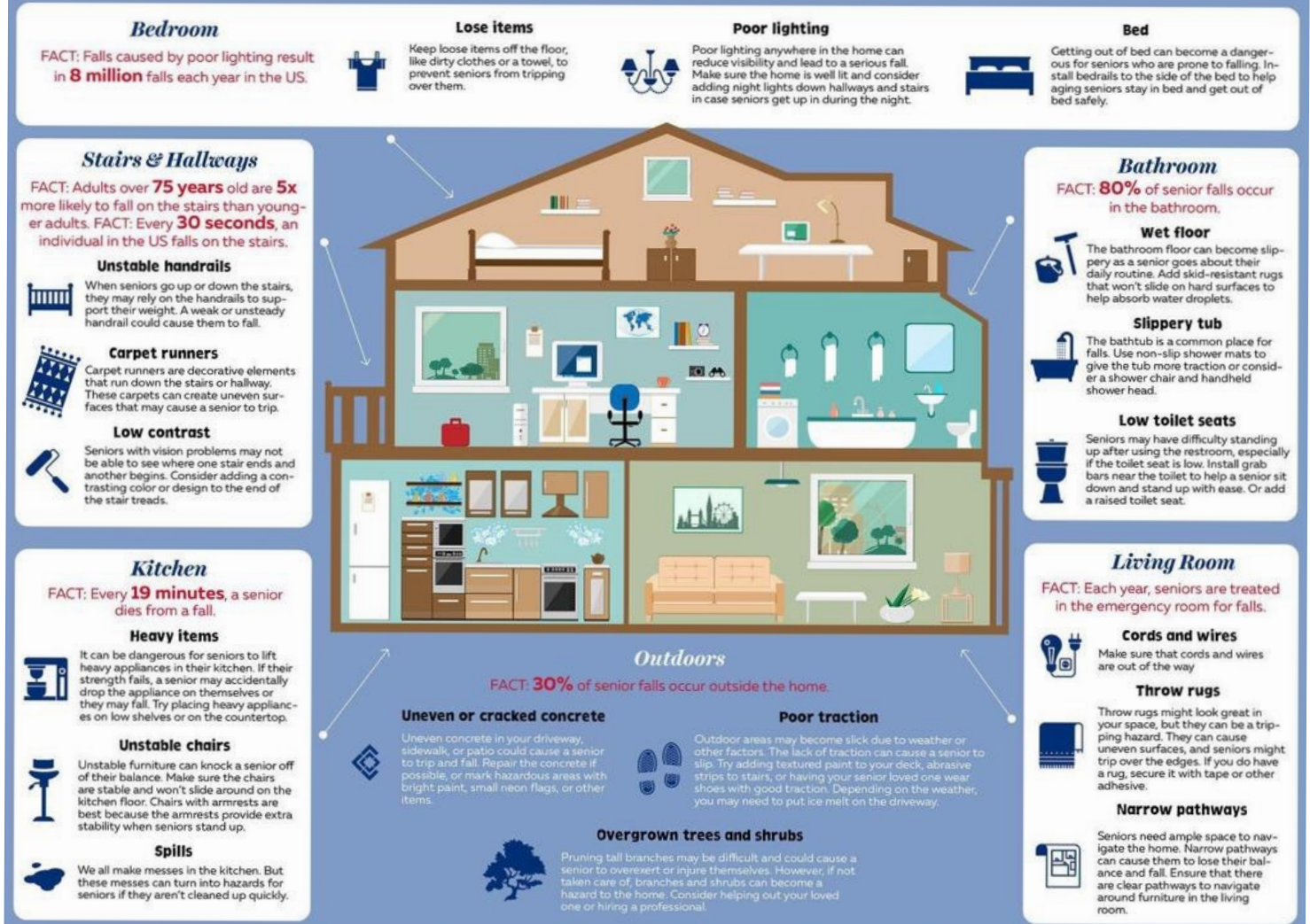
Aging can lead to changes that affect stability and mobility, including:

- Reduced muscle strength, especially in the legs and hips
- Decreased balance and coordination
- Slower reaction time
- Reduced flexibility and joint mobility
- Changes in vision or hearing
- Poorer foot sensation
- Medication side effects, such as dizziness or drowsiness
- Chronic health conditions
- Environmental hazards such as loose rugs, poor lighting, or clutter

The 5 major areas of fall prevention

- **Strength:** Squats to a chair, sit-to-stands
- **Balance:** Single-leg stance, tandem stance/ walking, controlled weight shifts
- **Mobility:** Walking and stepping patterns
- **Vision & Footwear:** Regular vision checks and supportive, non-slip footwear
- **Environment:** Remove loose rugs, improve lighting, install grab bars and handrails

IDENTIFYING FALL HAZARDS IN THE HOME



Exercise is one of the most important tools

A good fall-prevention exercise program should combine strength + balance + mobility + functional movement.

For example: 2–3 days per week

- Sit-to-stand: 2–3 × 8–12
- Supported squats: 2–3 × 8–12
- Step-ups: 2 × 8 each leg
- Calf raises: 2–3 × 10–15
- Hip abduction: 2 × 10 each side
- Tandem stance: 3 × 20–30 seconds
- Single-leg balance with support: 3 × 10–20 seconds
- Walking — 10–30 minutes

Important: Exercises should be matched to the individual's ability. Someone with significant balance problems should initially perform balance exercises near a stable support and/or with supervision. The goal isn't simply "not falling"

The larger goal of fall prevention is to help older adults remain strong, confident, mobile, and independent.

A successful program should improve:

1. Strength
2. Balance
3. Mobility
4. Confidence
5. Independence

Overdose Awareness Day

Aakom-Kiyii Health Services and Akoka'tssini Mental Wellness collaborated with Randy Plain Eagle and Justin Many Fingers of "Plain Eagle Productions" for "International Overdose Awareness Day". The event was a day of remembering our loved ones we have lost, honouring them through performance, balloon release and community connection.

Community members came together at the Multipurpose Building for the event. Elder and President of the 'Crowlodge Elders Society' Patsy English was the Master of Ceremonies for the event. Patsy who's continued work in the field of Addictions and Mental Health spoke to the community "We are all affected by Addiction."

Kayla Megunis started off the 'Recovery Speaker' portion. Kayla is employed with Inii Healing House and shared her journey in recovery.

Megan Gros Venture Boy from Blood Tribe was available to speak about her trauma that began at an early age. Megan spoke the fact that addiction is a generational matter; Pointing out it started with her grandparents. Discovering the importance of family and reconnecting with family after being separated in foster care.

The community welcomed back Jessica Morning Bull who bravely spoke about finding out what the word resilience meant. This came after Jessica



delivered an emotional life story revolving around the moment her Healing Journey Began. With the continued support of her sons, family and friends, Jessica is walking a path of recovery and is here to share her story. Jessica would like to remind everyone to continue being kind to our vulnerable people.

Jo Ann Smith spoke on how she has overcome tremendous hardship while continuing to embrace life in a positive way. Jo Ann also commended all the speakers for sharing their lived experience in recovery. Our own community member Sandra Lamouche who is a hoop dancer shared the origin story of hoop dancing. Sandra mentioned it is where she began as a child hoop dancer with dance teachings from her mother and grandparents. After the story Sandra shared a beautiful hoop dance performance with the audience. She danced in the black light where her regalia and hoop were lit up in neon color.

Randy's creative and excellent performance of his play 'Sugar' is supported by Justin's choreography lighting, and support received a standing ovation from Piikani Community. Sugar is the recovering story of Randy and his mom Wanda, Sister, Family and Community. A story of truth from Piikani family who are sharing this play with all people who they hope to inspire recovery can happen.

The event was very impactful as our last activity was the Balloon Release. Purple Balloons were available for anyone who wanted to inscribe the name of a loved one who they lost, or a short mes-

sage in their honour. The community released the balloons together in remembrance.

We are grateful to our invited organizations 'Moms Stop the Harm' and 'Rez Bean'. Rez Bean is a locally Indigenous owned coffee shop who came out in support of the Overdose Awareness. Rez Bean had featured a special drink for the event called 'Yaw My Sugar!'. The 'Yaw My Sugar' was a hit with everyone sipping the sweet, sassy and creamy refreshment.

The news organizations that had come out for the event where Piikani Nation Radio 105.7, Shooting the Breeze, Lethbridge Herald and Lethbridge Global News.

As Randy, Justin and all speakers mentioned, it is going to take our community as a whole to support, encourage one and other.



Pancakes, Puddles & Pouring Rain

August 13 started off looking like it was going to be a beautiful summer morning for our annual Pancake Breakfast. But Mother Nature had other plans! The morning was cold, wet, and rainy, and as the rain continued to come down, we started wondering if our Pancake Breakfast was going to happen as planned. Obviously, canceling was absolutely not an option!

As the rain got heavier, we knew we had to make some alternative arrangements, moving our Pancake Breakfast to a drive-thru event. Our amazing live musicians arrived and toughed

it out despite the weather, ready to play music as everyone drove through.

Despite the weather and the last-minute change, our staff and community members didn't let the rain stop the fun! It may not have gone exactly as planned, but we were still able to bring our community together and serve over 700 plates!

Thank you to everyone who came out, our staff who helped make it happen, and especially our musicians who braved the rain with us!



Terry Fox Run

September 18, 2026

On September 18, Aakom-Kiyii Health Services will be hosting a Terry Fox Run to honour Terry Fox and his his commitment to raising awareness and funds for cancer research. Terry Fox inspired people across Canada and around the world with his Marathon of Hope, and his legacy continues to bring communities together to support cancer research and those affected by cancer.

The run will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Health Centre parking lot, and we invite staff and community members to come out and take part. Whether you

choose to run, walk, or simply come out to show your support, everyone is welcome to participate .

To help commemorate the day, commemorative T-shirts will be available for participants, with lunch to follow the run. We hope this will be an opportunity for our community to come together, get active, support an important cause, and honour the lasting impact Terry Fox has had on so many people.

We look forward to seeing everyone on September 18 as we come together as we support the fight against cancer.



September Awareness

September is a month filled with important awareness days that provide an opportunity to learn and support the health and well-being of our community. This month, we recognize several important causes and dates, including Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, World Suicide Prevention Day, and Orange Shirt Day.

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

September is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness about ovarian cancer and the signs to look out for. Some symptoms can be easy to overlook or may feel like other common health concerns. Paying attention to changes in your body and keeping up with regular appointments with a health care provider is important, especially when something doesn't feel right. Take the time this month to educate yourself about ovarian cancer and learn when it may be time to reach out for support.

Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

September is also Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. This month encourages men to learn more about prostate cancer and understand their risk. Knowing what is normal for you and recognizing changes in your body can help you make informed decisions about your health. Having conversations with your health care provider about screening and your overall health can also help with early detection.





World Suicide Prevention Day – *September 10*

September 10 is World Suicide Prevention Day, a day to bring awareness to suicide prevention and the importance of connection, compassion, and support. Sometimes, simply checking in with someone can mean more than we realize. If you or someone you know is struggling, reaching out for support is always encouraged.

Orange Shirt Day – *September 30*

September 30 is Orange Shirt Day, a day to honour the children who never returned home from residential schools and recognize the experiences of Survivors and their families. For many Indigenous people, this day is deeply personal, as the impacts of residential schools continue to be felt across generations. It is a time to remember, honour the strength of Survivors, and reflect on truth, reconciliation, and healing within our families and communities. Every child matters, every story matters, and every family deserves to be heard and supported.



September gives us many opportunities to take care of ourselves and each other, learn something new, and continue conversations that matter. Whether it's checking in on your health, reaching out to someone who may need support, or taking time to learn and reflect, every conversation and every act of support can make a difference.





Contact Us



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Piikanihealth



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