

# Kansas Currents

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

## Central Kansas Extension District

[centralkansas.ksu.edu](http://centralkansas.ksu.edu)

**Jan - Feb. 2025**

*District Extension Agent:*

**Lisa Newman**  
Family & Community  
Wellness

**Melissa Schrag**  
Family Resource  
Management



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## Radon Action Month

January is both Kansas Radon Action Month (KRAM) and National Radon Action Month (NRAM).

Winter is an excellent time for Kansas residents to test their homes for radon. Testing is easy and low-cost – and it could save your life.

You can't see radon gas. You can't smell it. But it's dangerous. Breathing in high levels of radon can raise your risk of lung cancer.

Testing your home is the only way to find out if you have a radon problem. If you do, you can fix it. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1 out of 15 homes has high radon levels.

Radon comes naturally from rocks and dirt in the ground. There's always some radon in the air around us. The problem is when radon gas from underneath a home leaks in through cracks or gaps. Too much of it can build up inside.

When you breath in radon gas, particles can get trapped in your lungs. Over time, they can cause lung cancer. The risks from radon depend on two things:

-How much: High radon levels are more dangerous.

-How long: The more contact you have with radon gas, the greater your risk.

The good news is that testing your home for radon is easy. You can do it yourself or hire someone to do it for you.

Radon in your home can be a serious health risk – but it's a problem you can fix. If you haven't tested your home for radon, get a test kit. Kits can be purchased from our Salina or Minneapolis office.



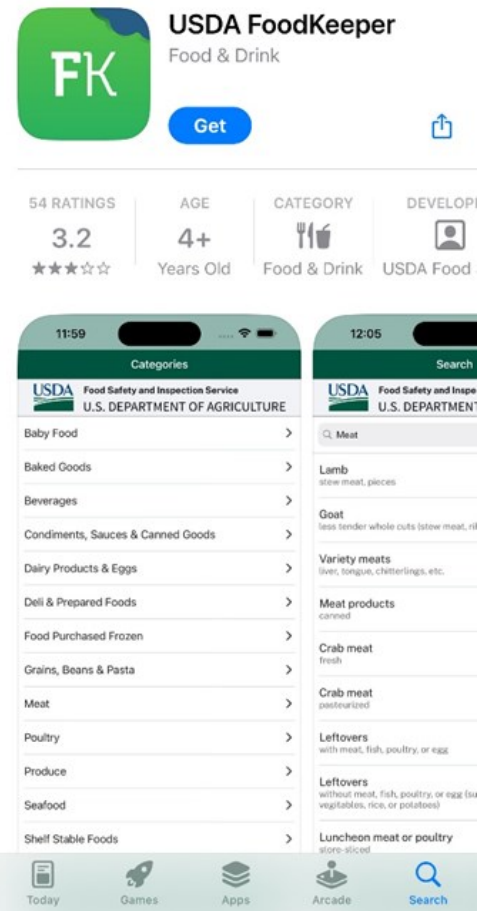
Test Your Home. Protect Your Health.

JANUARY IS NATIONAL  
RADON ACTION MONTH

## Foodkeeper App

Not sure how long to keep blueberries until they are unsafe? How long should you freeze chicken for best quality? Check out the USDA's mobile FoodKeeper App. The FoodKeeper app is a quick way to understand food and beverage storage from a trusted source.

You can also visit <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app> and use the web-based version.



## Simply Produce

Simply Produce is a produce bundle program between Central Kansas District and Gene's Heartland Foods in Minneapolis.

Community members can purchase produce bundles containing fresh fruits and vegetables for \$15 at any register located at Gene's in Minneapolis. Contents in the monthly bundles do vary from month to month.

January purchase dates: Jan 9-14. Pick-up date and time: Friday, Jan 17, 12-12:30 p.m.

February purchase dates: Feb 13-18. Pick-up date and time: Friday, Feb 21, 12-12:30 p.m.

Purchasing location: Gene's Heartland Foods located at 218 W 3rd, Minneapolis.

Pick up location: Community Bible Church located at 929 N. Rothsay, Minneapolis.

## Tips to Prevent Falls

Falls are a leading cause of injuries among older adults. By making simple changes to your home and lifestyle, you can significantly reduce your risk.

### Home Safety Checklist:

- Remove tripping hazards like loose rugs and cords
- Install grab bars in bathrooms and near stairs
- Improve lighting in hallways and stairways

### Medication Review:

- Discuss potential side effects and interactions with your doctor
- Consider using a medication organizer to stay on track

### Regular Exercise:

- Strength training and balance exercises can improve your stability
- Consider joining a falls prevention class or program

### Vision Care:

- Ensure your vision is up-to-date and corrected as needed
- Get regular eye exams

Got a four-legged furry friend in your home? Studies have shown that pets, particularly dogs, can increase the risk of falling due to various factors. Be sure to keep your walkways clear of pet toys and supplies, use nightlights to make sure you can see your pet in dark areas to avoid unexpected encounters, and address behavioral issues like jumping up or on people early on in your training with them.

Falls are a serious health risk - but then can be prevented. It's never too late to prioritize fall prevention.

With winter upon us, don't forget to walk like a penguin if you have to get out in the ice and snow.



## Walk Kansas Turns 25!

Get ready to step into a healthier you with Walk Kansas! This 8-week program, celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> year in 2025, is a fun and easy way to improve your health.

### What to expect:

Team up or go solo: Create a team of 4-6 or walk your own path.

Healthful habits: Adopt healthy lifestyle changes, supported by K-State Research and Extension.

Exciting opportunities: Stay tuned for new partnerships and special events.

### Mark your calendar:

Registration opens: March 3, 2025

Program start date: March 30, 2025

Start planning your team name and get ready to walk to a healthier lifestyle!



## State Of Kansas Food Sales Tax Update

The Kansas Department of Revenue has announced that the state's sales tax rate on food will drop to zero starting January 1, 2025. This marks the final phase of a multi-year process to eliminate the state sales tax on food, following legislation passed in 2022. However, local sales taxes on food will continue to apply in many counties.

### What Does This Mean for Kansas?

While research on the health impacts of eliminating food sales tax is limited, studies examining the effects of food sales taxes provide valuable insights. These studies suggest that reducing or removing food sales taxes could have positive outcomes, such as reducing food insecurity and improving the quality of diets.



## Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment January 1 through March 31, 2025

It's essential to carefully review plan options during the annual enrollment period and consider any changes in your health, budget, or preferences when deciding whether to change your Medicare Advantage plan.

If you're already enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan, you can switch to another Medicare Advantage plan or go back to Original Medicare (and, in some cases, add a standalone Part D prescription drug plan).

There could be various reasons why someone might consider changing their Medicare Advantage plan. Here are some common reasons:

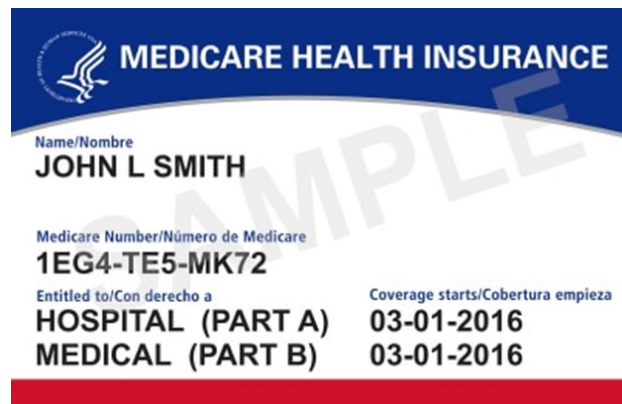
1. **Healthcare Needs:** Changes in health conditions may require different coverage or access to specific medical services that are better covered by a different plan.
2. **Coverage Changes:** Medicare Advantage plans can change their coverage and benefits annually. If there are changes that affect your healthcare needs, you might want to explore other options.
3. **Costs:** Changes in premiums, deductibles, or other out-of-pocket costs might make it necessary to switch plans to better suit your budget.
4. **Provider Network:** If your preferred healthcare providers are no longer in the network of your current plan, you may consider switching to a plan that includes them.
5. **Prescription Drug Coverage:** Changes in prescription drug needs or coverage in a plan's formulary may prompt individuals to switch plans for better prescription drug coverage.
6. **Location:** If you move to a new area, you might need to switch plans to ensure access to healthcare providers in your new location.
7. **Additional Benefits:** Some plans offer extra benefits like dental, vision, or fitness programs. If your needs change, you might want to switch to a plan that better aligns with those needs.
8. **Plan Ratings:** Medicare Advantage plans are assigned star ratings based on various factors. If your current plan has a lower rating, you might consider switching to a higher-rated plan for better overall quality.

To change your Medicare Advantage plan, you can do one of the following:

- Contact the new plan directly and ask for instructions on how to enroll.
- Use the Medicare Plan Finder tool on the official Medicare website to compare plans and enroll in a new one.

It's important to review the coverage, costs, and network of providers offered by different plans to choose the one that best meets your needs. Additionally, make sure that your doctors and medications are covered by the new plan.

If you have specific questions or need assistance, contact our office directly for Medicare counseling.



## Reminders for people with Medicare:

- If changes were made during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period that recently ended, new plan materials should have arrived before January 1.
- If plan costs or benefits have changed, those changes will be effective on January 1, 2025.
- If a service or prescription is needed after the New Year and they haven't gotten plan membership materials yet, take the following items to the pharmacy:
  - Red, white, and blue Medicare card
  - Photo ID
  - Acknowledgement or confirmation letter, or an enrollment confirmation number from the plan
  - Medicaid card or letter showing eligibility for Extra Help
- If enrollment can't be confirmed at the pharmacy, paying out of pocket for drugs and working with the plan for reimbursement is an option.



The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is a Federally funded program that helps eligible households pay a portion of their home energy costs by providing a one-time per year benefit.

The 2025 LIEAP application period will begin November 18, 2024, and end March 31, 2025, at 5 pm.

Apply through the DCF SELF-SERVICE PORTAL: <https://cssp.kees.ks.gov/apsspssp/sspNonMed.portal>

OR contact DCF Customer Service: 1-888-369-4777.

## 2025 Income Eligibility Guidelines

Persons Living at the Address	Maximum Gross Monthly Income
1	\$1,882.50
2	\$2,555.00
3	\$3,227.50
4	\$3,900.00
5	\$4,572.50
6	\$5,245.00
7	\$5,917.50
8	\$6,590.00
+1	\$672.50 for each additional person



## Don't Let Scammers Deceive You! SSA's Cost of Living Adjustment is Automatic



Are you wondering what to do to receive a cost-of-living increase in your Social Security benefits for 2025? No worries, the answer is “nothing”.

The annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) is automatic. The Social Security Administration (SSA) announced its new COLA of 2.5 percent on October 10, 2024. Notices will arrive by mail beginning in December. Further, my Social Security accountholders can see their COLA notice online.

Beneficiaries will see the increase in benefits payable in January 2025.

“Annual Social Security cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) are automatic, and beneficiaries do not need to take any action or provide additional information to receive the legitimate increase,” said Hannibal “Mike” Ware, Acting Inspector General for the Social Security Administration. “Be wary of any communication that asks you to take extra steps or provide personal details for this increase, as it’s likely a scammer attempting to steal your identity or financial assets. Our office is dedicated to protecting the public and deterring these criminals from exploiting honest, hardworking people.”

Scammers often disseminate false information about steps you need to take to get your increase. This is a scam. That is why the SSA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is advising the public to be keenly aware of any attempts from persons seeking to gain your personal information for you to receive a COLA from SSA.

The annual cost-of-living increases issued by SSA are ALWAYS automatic. No additional information is required for you to receive the legitimate COLA increase.



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**Central Kansas Extension District**

**Salina Office**

K-State Polytechnic  
2218 Scanlan Ave  
Salina, KS 67401-8196

Address Service Requested

The enclosed material is for your information. If we can be of further assistance, feel free to call or drop by the Extension Office.

Sincerely,



Melissa Schrag  
District Extension Agent  
Family Resource Management  
meliss89@ksu.edu

**Salina Office**  
K-State Polytechnic  
2218 Scanlan Ave.  
Salina, KS 67401-8196  
785-309-5850  
Fax: 785-309-5851



Lisa Newman  
District Extension Agent  
Family and Community Wellness  
lmnewman@ksu.edu

**Minneapolis Office**  
Courthouse  
307 N. Concord, Suite 190  
Minneapolis, KS 67467-2129  
785-392-2147  
Fax: 785-392-3605