



Kansas Currents

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

Central Kansas Extension District

centralkansas.ksu.edu

Nov. - Dec. 2024

District Extension Agent:

Lisa Newman

Family & Community
Wellness

Melissa Schrag

Family Resource
Management



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Central Kansas District Welcomes Melissa Schrag

We're pleased to announce that Melissa Schrag has joined Central Kansas District as our new family and resource management extension agent. Melissa brings a wealth of experience to the role, having previously served as an agent in Sedgwick County.

Family resource management agents develop and deliver educational programming to support financially successful families and communities. Programs may include, but are not limited to, financial planning; budgeting and record keeping; consumer credit; and taxpayer education.

Melissa is also very familiar with SHICK (Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas) and Medicare. With Open Enrollment upon us, don't hesitate to reach out and schedule some time to meet with her.

Please join us in welcoming Melissa to our district and in supporting her efforts to make a positive impact on our community.



To learn more about Melissa or to schedule an appointment, please contact her at meliss89@ksu.edu or by calling 785-392-2147 if you live in Ottawa County or 785-309-5850 if you live in Saline County.

Central Kansas District offices will be closed on the following holiday dates:

November 11, Veterans Day
November 28 and 29, Thanksgiving holiday
December 24 and 25, Christmas holiday
January 1, New Year's Day

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+tax at any register located at Gene's in Minneapolis. Contents in the monthly bundles do vary from month to month.



November purchase dates: Nov 7-12. Pick-up date and time: Friday, Nov 15, 12-12:30 p.m.

December purchase dates: Dec 12-17. Pick-up date and time: Friday, Dec 20, 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.



LIVING WELL WEDNESDAY

K-State Research and Extension Webinar Series

Living Well Wednesday is a virtual learning series hosted by K-State Research and Extension, Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) professionals from across the state of Kansas. The fall 2024 series (October – December) has begun and we invite you to join us!

Register for all webinars in this series here: bit.ly/3zvWWGQ

November 13: Fall Proof Your Life: A Guide to Better Balance

Erin Martinez, PhD; KSRE Extension Specialist and Associate Professor, Adult Development and Aging

Discover practical tips and exercises to improve your balance, reduce your risk of falls, and live a more independent and active life.

December 11: Simplify Your Space: A Guide to Downsizing and Decluttering

Carol Ann Crouch, KSRE Extension Agent/Director, West Plains Extension District

Learn practical strategies for sorting through your belongings, making informed decisions about what to keep, and creating a more organized and peaceful living environment.

Review Your Medicare Part D Options for 2025

It's crucial to evaluate your Medicare Part D plan annually during the Open Enrollment Period (October 15 to December 7) to ensure it meets your medication needs and budget. The KSRE – Central Kansas District offers no-cost Medicare counseling in both the Salina and Minneapolis offices, but if you have access to a computer and wish to explore your options independently, here are some instructions:



Steps to Review Medicare Part D Options

1. **Gather Your Information:** Before exploring Part D plans, collect the following:
 - o Your Medicare number
 - o A list of your current prescription medications (including dosage and frequency)
 - o Preferred pharmacies
 - o Details about your current Medicare plan (if applicable)
2. **Visit the Medicare Website:** The official Medicare website offers a tool for comparing Part D plans in your area. Access it at [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov).
3. **Use the Medicare Plan Finder:** On the Medicare website, utilize the Medicare Plan Finder to search for and compare Part D plans in your area:
 - o Click on "Find Plans Now."
 - o Enter your ZIP code and click "Continue."
 - o Select "Medicare drug plan (Part D)."
 - o If unsure about cost assistance programs, select "I'm not sure."
 - o Provide information about your current prescription drugs.
 - o The tool will generate a list of available Part D plans, detailing their costs, coverage, and star ratings.
4. **Compare Plans:** Review the list of Part D plans and compare their features, including:
 - o Monthly premiums, annual deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance
 - o Total plan costs (premiums, deductibles, and drug expenses)
 - o The formulary (list of covered medications) to ensure your prescriptions are included
 - o In-network pharmacies that are convenient for you
 - o Star ratings, indicating the quality of each plan
5. **Narrow Down Your Options:** After comparing plans, refine your choices based on your preferences and needs. Consider factors such as cost, drug coverage, and quality of service.
6. **Enroll in a Plan:** Once you've chosen a Medicare Part D plan that suits your needs, you can enroll through the Medicare website, by calling Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), or by contacting the plan directly.

Holiday Tips: Save Time by Freezing Yeast Bread and Cookie Dough

The holiday season can get busy, and being able to prepare yeast bread dough ahead of time and freeze it for later use could save time. Preparing and freezing yeast bread dough must go hand-in-hand with proper food safety practices. Remember to wash your hands before and after handling flour and dough. Raw flour has been linked to several foodborne illness outbreaks, so it is important to keep hands clean.

Guidance for safely freezing yeast bread dough includes these tips from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach:

- Increase the yeast by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon per 3 cups of flour to your favorite bread recipe. Dough that has extra yeast can compensate for potential freeze damage.
- Use bread flour for added dough strength.
- Consider recipes high in yeast and sugar, and low in salt, which are best for freezing.
- Dough can be frozen 1) after kneading and before the first rise, or 2) after the first or second rise.
- Place dough in a freezer-safe package and freeze. Dough can be frozen up to four weeks.
- Thaw frozen dough in the refrigerator or at room temperature, shape, let rise and bake as directed.

Cookie dough also can be prepared and frozen to save time when baking for the holidays. Some tips for freezing cookie dough include:

- Drop cookie dough can be prepared, scooped onto a cookie sheet then frozen.
- After freezing, cookie dough can be removed from the cookie sheet and stored in freezer packaging to be baked later.
- Always remember to wash your hands after handling raw cookie dough.

Another holiday option: Instead of freezing dough, bake the products first, allow them to cool completely then tightly wrap them and freeze. Let them thaw in the wrapping before using.

Turkey Day Myths

Quit food safety confusion cold turkey this Thanksgiving! While this holiday is a great time to spend with family and friends, it's also time to bust some myths.

Myth 1: Refrigerating a whole cooked turkey is safe

False! Always carve your turkey after cooking. A whole cooked turkey will not cool quickly enough, thus putting it at risk for bacterial growth. Carve the turkey into smaller pieces so it cools faster in the refrigerator.

Myth 2: Thawing a turkey on the counter is safe.

Never thaw a turkey on the kitchen counter. Once a turkey has sat at room temperature beyond two hours, it enters the Danger Zone, where bacteria grow rapidly. Thawing a turkey in a refrigerator is safe. Allow approximately 24 hours of thawing time for every four to five pounds of turkey. Turkeys are also safely thawed in a microwave and cold water. When using the cold-water method, allow 30 minutes per

pound of turkey and keep it in the original wrapping. Change the water every 30 minutes and cook immediately after thawing.

Myth 3: My pop-up timer is enough to know if my turkey is fully cooked.

Pop-up timers are disposable thermometers used to measure a turkey's temperature. These timers are a great tool. However, don't forget to check in the three recommended places as well. The turkey's internal temperature must reach 165 F in the following locations: the thickest part of the breast, the innermost part of the thigh, and the innermost part of the wing. Use a food thermometer in addition to a pop-up timer to check the turkey's internal temperature.

Remember the four steps to food safety:

- Clean: Wash hands before touching food.
- Separate: Keep raw meats and poultry away from fruits and vegetables.
- Cook: Turkey is safe to eat once it reaches an internal temperature of 165 F.
- Chill: Refrigerate any leftovers within two hours.

For more information, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or email MPHHotline@usda.gov to reach a food safety expert or chat live at ask.usda.gov from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. The Meat and Poultry Hotline is also open on Thanksgiving Day from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Eastern Time.



Photo Credit: USDA.GOV

Seven Ways to Cope with Holiday Stress
Practice Mindfulness and Meditation

Mindfulness can be a valuable mental wellness tool. Mindfulness practices can be particularly helpful if you are traveling or dealing with an unusual schedule. If you're new to mindfulness, there are many online resources and apps to help you; here's a quick beginner's guide to help you get started and more on mindfulness from the University of Minnesota, Center for Spirituality and Healing. You can search here for mindfulness apps.

Preventing Burnout — It's OK to Say No

For many, the holiday season brings joy, but it can also bring more stress and some conflicting obligations. It is important to prioritize and simplify: prioritize what brings joy and emotional recharge (people or activities) and simplify when you can. It might be nice to make your grandmother's cookie recipe from scratch for every holiday, but if that's stressful for you, buy cookies at the store and celebrate. It's okay to say no to situations that stress you out, whether it's attending a party with people who have mistreated you or missing a party in a week that's been too intense at work.

Take a break

Many families have that one member who can turn a pleasant conversation into a family feud. If you see things are starting to take a turn for the worse, try not to let it escalate. There is no shame in removing yourself from the situation. Get up and leave the room or step outside until everyone cools down.

Get Some Fresh Air and Sunlight

Even if you're not a big winter sports enthusiast, getting outside and some fresh air and exposure to sunlight can help relax you and lift your mood. Many people struggle with some feelings of depression during the winter months with fewer hours of sunlight and more time spent indoors. Walking outside in the sun can be an effective centering and calming tool. Numerous studies have pointed to the mental health benefits of spending time in nature, including stress relief, better concentration, lower levels of inflammation and improved mental energy. Learn more about nature therapy.

If You're in Therapy, Stay in Therapy

Although the holiday season may be overwhelmingly busy, try to keep any regularly scheduled therapy a priority. The holidays can bring up difficult emotions. Keeping scheduled therapy sessions helps ensure you have built-in time to explore anything that comes up. If you are going out of town and you typically meet in person, ask your therapist about a virtual meeting.

Managing mental illness is a challenge, and it can be particularly difficult during the holiday season. While the struggle can feel isolating, remember that you are far from alone. Talk with supportive friends and family and seek help from a mental professional if you need to, maintain your self-care routines, and consider including mindfulness practices into your days as you navigate your way through the holidays.

Grief and Loss

During the holiday season, many people may have a more difficult time missing a loved one they have lost or simply experience increased grief or loss. This can be especially true for people having their first holiday season without a loved one. Instead of trying to avoid thinking about your loved one, psychiatrist Ludmila De Faria, M.D., suggests honoring and celebrating them by getting together with other family members and friends and treasuring their life stories, especially stories that highlight important aspects of their life and personality.

Financial stress

Holiday spending can easily leave people in debt, contributing to stress that may last well into the new year. This year's inflation is only adding to the financial burden. Try to avoid overspending and focus on celebrating together and showing affection by being present, engaging, and supporting each other. Instead of one gift per person, consider a Secret Santa, instead of expensive gifts, consider homemade or handmade items, that may carry special meaning to those receiving them.



Article and Photo Credit: psychiatry.org



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Central Kansas Extension District

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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,



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