



# HealthCoach

Timely, trusted advice from Outer Banks Health



## The Power of Social Connections

Research shows that robust social bonds are among the most significant factors contributing to happiness and longevity. Even brief social interactions can lead to better physical health, such as lower blood pressure, a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, and a stronger immune system.

Karla Coughenour, MA, RDN, LDN, LCMHC, founder of and therapist at Thrivewell Counseling Center in Nags Head, notes, “Social isolation increases stress, anxiety, and depression, which can have a tremendous effect on blood pressure, gut health, and essentially all the body systems. We are whole beings, interconnected in intricate ways.”

Isolation can also lead to loneliness, which, like thirst, could be a signal for us to make social connections. Human instinct drives the need for connection and support. “We all have a very innate human need to belong, be connected, and be seen,” Karla says.

Social connections provide invaluable emotional support, validation, and a safe place for expression, all of which can encourage trust and build healthy relationships. Lauren Zaritsky, MSW, LCSW, a social worker at Outer Banks Health, underscores the importance of having a personal support network comprising family, friends, neighbors, or

community members, especially during challenging times. “Studies have shown that people with strong social support networks are more likely to cope effectively with stress, recover more quickly from illness, and maintain a positive outlook in the face of adversity,” she says.

Creating new connections might be intimidating, but taking small, intentional steps, like asking someone a question, sharing new experiences with someone, or even saying hello to a

stranger, can pave the way for deeper connections. Frequenting a local coffee shop or bookstore, taking a class, or even being neighborly can also help pave the way. Amy Klauser, certified yoga instructor, says, “I met two of my closest friends almost 25 years ago here on the Outer Banks through yoga. Meeting in a class setting is so much more than a workout.”

Every interaction has the potential to make a difference in our lives. Building connections isn’t just a choice; it’s also a valuable investment in our well-being, no matter our stage of life.

**“We all have a very innate human need to belong, be connected, and be seen.”**  
– Karla Coughenour  
Thrivewell Counseling Center

### Laugh It Up



Laughter can create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, often strengthening or healing our connection with others.

Laughing together can bring people closer and improve communication. It fosters trust, well-being, and a sense of belonging, thereby enhancing interpersonal connections.

Believe it or not, laughter is also good for our health. According to the American Medical Association, it boosts oxygen levels in the blood, releases endorphins (the body’s natural feel-good chemicals), decreases levels of cortisol (the stress hormone), and strengthens the immune system.

So be prepared when making a connection: Laughter just might ensue.



May/June 2024

Education, Support and Community Events

The Blood Connection Blood Drives

The Blood Connection will be hosting community blood drives on the Outer Banks. All donors are asked to make an appointment. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are highly recommended and take priority. To make an appointment, use the QR codes or visit [thebloodconnection.org](http://thebloodconnection.org). All donors will receive an e-gift card. *Special thanks to the Blood Connection for giving a donation to the Cowell Cancer Center for every donor who attends.*

Friday, May 3 | 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. | The Outer Banks Hospital | 4800 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head  
Saturday, June 8 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Outer Banks Family YMCA | 3000 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head



May 3



June 8

Medicine Drop

In partnership with the Saving Lives Task Force and Dare County Health and Human Services, unused and unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medications will be collected by the Dare County Sheriff's Office for proper disposal. Animal medications are also accepted. For more information, call 252-449-4529.

Friday, May 3 | 9 a.m. - noon  
The Outer Banks Hospital | 4800 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head

Outer Banks Health Stroke Support Network

Outer Banks Health offers a free virtual Stroke Support Network on the first Tuesday of every month for stroke survivors and their caregivers. For more details and to register, contact Robin South, RN, at 252-449-4554 or by email at [Robin.South@theobh.com](mailto:Robin.South@theobh.com). Attend in person or via Zoom.

Tuesday, May 7 | 11 a.m. - noon  
Via Zoom (virtual only)

Tuesday, June 4 | 11 a.m. - noon  
Outer Banks Health Port Room or via Zoom

Advance Care Planning

Do you know who would get to make medical decisions for you if you have not completed a healthcare power of attorney and advance directive? Join us for a free, informative session about advance care planning. If you require only a witness or notary assistance, please arrive 10 minutes before the close of the session. Questions? Call 252-475-0905.

Tuesday, May 14 | 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.  
Tuesday, June 18 | 2 p.m. - 3 p.m.  
Baum Senior Center | 300 Mustian Street, Kill Devil Hills  
Tuesday, May 14 | noon - 1 p.m.  
Tuesday, June 18 | 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.  
Virginia Tillett Center | 950 Marshall C Collins Drive, Manteo

FREE Stroke Walk

You're invited to participate in the third annual Stroke Awareness Walk to celebrate those who have been affected by stroke and learn about the hospital's stroke program. Registration starts at 9:00am. The walk around Dowdy Park begins at 9:30am. For more information, call 252-449-4529.

Saturday, May 18 | Registration 9 a.m.; Walk 9:30 a.m.  
Dowdy Park | 3005 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head

Buxton Community Health Fair

Join us for this free event, open to the public. Outer Banks Health will be offering free wellness screenings, which include blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol and blood sugar on the Outer Banks Health Coach. Bring your unused or expired medications for proper disposal at our Medicine Drop. Speak with local nonprofits and agencies that focus on creating a healthy Outer Banks, including the Dementia Friendly Coalition, Saving Lives Task Force and other local resources. Questions? Call 252-449-4529.

Tuesday, May 21 | 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Fessenden Center Annex | 47013 Buxton Back Rd, Buxton

Help Build the Tribute Path

You can help build the Cowell Cancer Center tribute paths with a purchase of an engraved paver that honors or memorializes a loved one. To purchase a paver, use the QR code or visit [give.ecuhealthfoundation.org/TOBHTRIBUTEPATH](http://give.ecuhealthfoundation.org/TOBHTRIBUTEPATH).

For more information, contact our Development Office at 252-449-4529.



Namaste at the Beach

Get your Thursday mornings started with free yoga classes on the beach in Nags Head (weather permitting). All skill levels welcome. Bring a yoga mat or towel and your water bottle. Questions? Call 252-449-4529.

Thursdays: May 23, 30 | June 6, 13, 20, 27 | 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.  
Jennette's Pier | 7223 S Virginia Dare Trail, Nags Head

Wellness Screenings

Outer Banks Health offers free wellness screenings, which include blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol, blood sugar, and body mass index, as well as health coaching. Appointments are highly recommended and take priority. Walk-ins are welcome if appointments are available; call 252-449-4529 to make an appointment. All screenings will take place on the Outer Banks Health Coach vehicle in the parking lot.

Tuesday, June 11 | 9 a.m. - noon  
Kill Devil Library | 400 Mustian Street, Kill Devil Hills

Eat the Rainbow...for Good Health

A simplified approach to good nutrition brought to you by The Center for Healthy Living. Join us weekly on Thursdays this summer at the Dowdy Park Farmer's Market for a fresh healthy recipe and to try a sample!

Thursdays | June 13, 20, 27 | 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Dowdy Park | 3005 S Croatan Hwy, Nags Head

A1C Screenings

Outer Banks Health will be offering free A1C screenings, which measure a person's blood glucose level over the past three months. Appointments are recommended and take priority; call 252-449-4529. Screenings will take place on the Outer Banks Health Coach vehicle in the parking lot.

Wednesday, June 19 | 9 a.m. - noon  
Baum Senior Center | 300 Mustian Street, Kill Devil Hills

Cancer Survivors Month Celebration

Wednesday, June 26 | 3p.m. - 5 p.m.

In celebration of National Cancer Survivors Month, Outer Banks Health invites cancer survivors and their family and caregivers to a special hands-on arts program celebrating survivorship. For more information and event details, please call 252-564-9163.

SAVE THE DATE!

Friday, October 25, 2024

An Oyster Roast and Low Country Shrimp Boil  
Benefiting OBX Cancer Cares



Enjoy an evening of seafood and music by the Blue Crab Boys, while supporting local cancer care for patients in our community!

Tickets go on sale  
August 19!

