

# COMMUNITY UPDATE

SUMMER 2026 | Quarterly community newsletter



Columbia  
County  
HEALTH SYSTEM

## Have a safe, healthier summer

August brings warm days, outdoor events, harvest activity, and the risk of wildfire smoke. This quarterly issue shares simple ways to protect your health while highlighting new people, expanded services, equine- assisted therapy, and quality work at Columbia County Health System.

### Quality awards reflect daily teamwork

- CCHS received four 2026 American Heart Association achievement awards for rural stroke, heart failure, and heart attack care.
- CCHS also earned the Gold-level Rural Hospital Achievement of Quality Excellence from the Washington State Hospital Association.
- Dayton General Hospital was named Critical Access Hospital of the Year by LifeNet Health and earned DNV accreditation for quality and patient safety.

### Behavioral Health has room to grow

The expanded Behavioral Health space at Columbia Family Clinic opened this summer after support from a Washington State Department of Commerce grant. The new space supports whole-person care by making it easier to connect primary care and Behavioral Health services.

Asking for help is a sign of strength. Support is available for stress, anxiety, depression, grief, substance use, and other concerns.

### Welcome, Dr. Michael Ettner

Dr. Michael Ettner joined Dayton General Hospital as a hospitalist on June 1. He earned his medical degree from Tulane University and completed Family Medicine training through UCLA and Ventura County Medical Center. His experience includes hospital and emergency care, U.S. Public Health Service work in Micronesia, and international medical missions.

### Meet our Chief Operating Officer

David Lindstrom joined CCHS as Chief Operating Officer in 2026. He brings more than 25 years of experience in healthcare, education, and public service, with a focus on teamwork, clear systems, and rural access to care.

## CCHS people and progress

Local healthcare grows through skilled people, thoughtful programs, and daily teamwork. Recent additions and achievements help CCHS provide more trusted care close to home while preparing for the changing needs of our community.

### Emergency reminder

Call 911 for severe trouble breathing, chest pain, confusion, fainting, blue or gray lips or skin, signs of a heart attack or stroke, or any life-threatening emergency. Move to cleaner, cooler air while help is on the way when it is safe to do so.

# BREATHE EASIER DURING WILDFIRE SEASON

Check the air, reduce smoke exposure, and know when to get help.

Wildfire smoke contains tiny particles that can travel deep into the lungs. Smoke may cause coughing, wheezing, headaches, stinging eyes, tiredness, or trouble breathing. Children, older adults, pregnant people, and people with heart or lung conditions may be affected more quickly.

## What does the AQI tell you? See AQI Scale on next page.

The Air Quality Index uses colors and numbers to show how clean or polluted the air is. As the AQI rises, more people may need to shorten outdoor activity. People with heart or lung conditions should take action sooner.

## Five ways to protect your health

- ☐ Check the Air Quality Index before outdoor work, exercise, sports, or community events. Use AirNow @ <https://www.airnow.gov/>, the Washington Smoke Blog, or a trusted weather app.
- ☐ When air is unhealthy, shorten outdoor time and move activities indoors when possible. Avoid hard exercise outside.
- ☐ Keep windows and doors closed when smoke is heavy. Use a portable HEPA air cleaner or create one cleaner-air room in your home.
- ☐ A well-fitting N95 or KN95 respirator can reduce smoke exposure outdoors. Cloth and surgical masks do not filter the smallest smoke particles well.
- ☐ Follow your care plan and keep needed medicines nearby. Contact a healthcare provider if symptoms are new, worsening, or hard to control.

## Smoke and air-quality facts

| Common question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Plain answer                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Can smoke affect me when the fire is far away?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Yes. Smoke can travel many miles and may reach a community before flames are nearby.                     |
| Will a cloth mask protect me from smoke?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Not well. A well-fitting N95 or KN95 provides better protection from fine smoke particles.               |
| Should I exercise outside when it is smoky?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Reduce or move hard exercise indoors when the AQI is unhealthy, especially if you are at higher risk.    |
| Can I use an air cleaner at home?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Yes. A portable HEPA air cleaner can lower indoor smoke. Use it in a room where you spend the most time. |
| <b>When to get help now</b><br>Contact a healthcare provider for worsening cough, wheezing, shortness of breath, dizziness, or symptoms that do not improve in cleaner air. Call 911 for severe trouble breathing, chest pain, confusion, fainting, or blue or gray lips or skin. |                                                                                                          |

Air quality can change quickly. Check conditions more than once during the day, especially before long periods outdoors. **See AQI Scale on next page**

| Daily AQI Color | Levels of Concern              | Values of Index | Description of Air Quality                                                                                                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Green           | Good                           | 0 to 50         | Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.                                                                   |
| Yellow          | Moderate                       | 51 to 100       | Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution. |
| Orange          | Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups | 101 to 150      | Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.                              |
| Red             | Unhealthy                      | 151 to 200      | Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects. |
| Purple          | Very Unhealthy                 | 201 to 300      | Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.                                                                       |
| Maroon          | Hazardous                      | 301 and higher  | Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.                                                           |

## SERVICES FOR EVERY STAGE OF LIFE

Local care can make the next step easier.

### Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation

CCHS offers Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Acupuncture, and other wellness services. Programs and equipment help patients build strength, balance, movement, and confidence.

### Equine-assisted Therapy

Work with Tulip, our miniature donkey, and Chum Chum, a miniature horse, through support guided, ground-based therapy activities. This new therapy option can support goals such as balance, coordination, confidence, communication, and sensory skills.

### Wound Care and Hyperbarics

Specialty care is available for hard-to-heal wounds, including diabetic foot ulcers, non-healing surgical wounds, and some tissue injuries. A referral may not be required. Call (509) 382-8422 for more information.

### Behavioral health

Support can be part of routine healthcare. CCHS offers local help for emotional health, life changes, stress, and substance-use concerns. Start by talking with your primary care team or calling CCHS.

## A healthy summer checklist

- ☐ Check the AQI before outdoor activities and keep an N95 or KN95 available.
- ☐ Drink water throughout the day and take breaks in a cool place during hot weather.
- ☐ Prepare a cleaner-air room with closed windows, a portable air cleaner, and fewer sources of indoor smoke.
- ☐ Keep a simple go-bag with medicines, identification, water, phone chargers, and important contact numbers.
- ☐ Look ahead to fall: schedule routine visits, review medicines, and watch for CCHS flu-vaccine updates.

### Stay connected

Visit [cchd-wa.org](http://cchd-wa.org) for locations, services, providers, health stories, and updates. For general information, call Columbia County Health System at (509) 382-2531. Watch for our Fall 2026 quarterly issue with flu-season guidance and more CCHS news.