

# Leading the Way

– WINTER 2024 –

## FIGHTING FOR AIR

Pulmonary rehab patient shares  
story of lung transplant prep

**REPORT:**

**Community Health  
Needs Assessment**





Stacey Gabriel, HVCH CEO

At Hocking Valley Community Hospital our patient care philosophy is the foundation of everything we do. Community hospitals play a vital role in the healthcare landscape, providing accessible, patient-centered care to local populations. We are dedicated to creating a positive healthcare experience that empowers patients and fosters a healthy community by prioritizing the needs, preferences, and values of our patients. We adhere to the highest standards of care and continually evaluate our practices to improve patient outcomes. We invest in the latest technology and evidence-based practices to ensure effective treatment while providing a wide range of services, from emergency care and inpatient services to outpatient clinics and specialty care.

Healthcare can be a challenging experience. Our staff provides support and comfort to patients and their families, fostering an environment where patients feel safe and cared for. Community health initiatives are becoming a critical component of the healthcare system. Hospitals are recognizing the importance of addressing social determinants of health —factors like socioeconomic status, education, and access to resources that influence health outcomes. By partnering with local organizations, we aim to address those social determinants of health and improve overall community well-being. You can read more about our Community Health Needs Assessment and the work being done later in this publication.

The healthcare sector faces significant challenges. Rising costs, workforce shortages, and regulatory pressures are persistent issues. Hospitals must find ways to deliver high-quality care while managing financial constraints. As technology becomes more integrated into healthcare, concerns about data privacy and cybersecurity are paramount. Protecting patient information is critical, and hospitals are investing in security measures to safeguard sensitive data.

We understand that you have a choice in your healthcare. Your health journey is personal, and we are here to support you in making decisions that meet your individual needs. Thank you for choosing Hocking Valley Community Hospital and trusting us with your care. Your health and well-being are our top priorities.



HOCKING VALLEY  
Community Hospital



# COMMENTS...

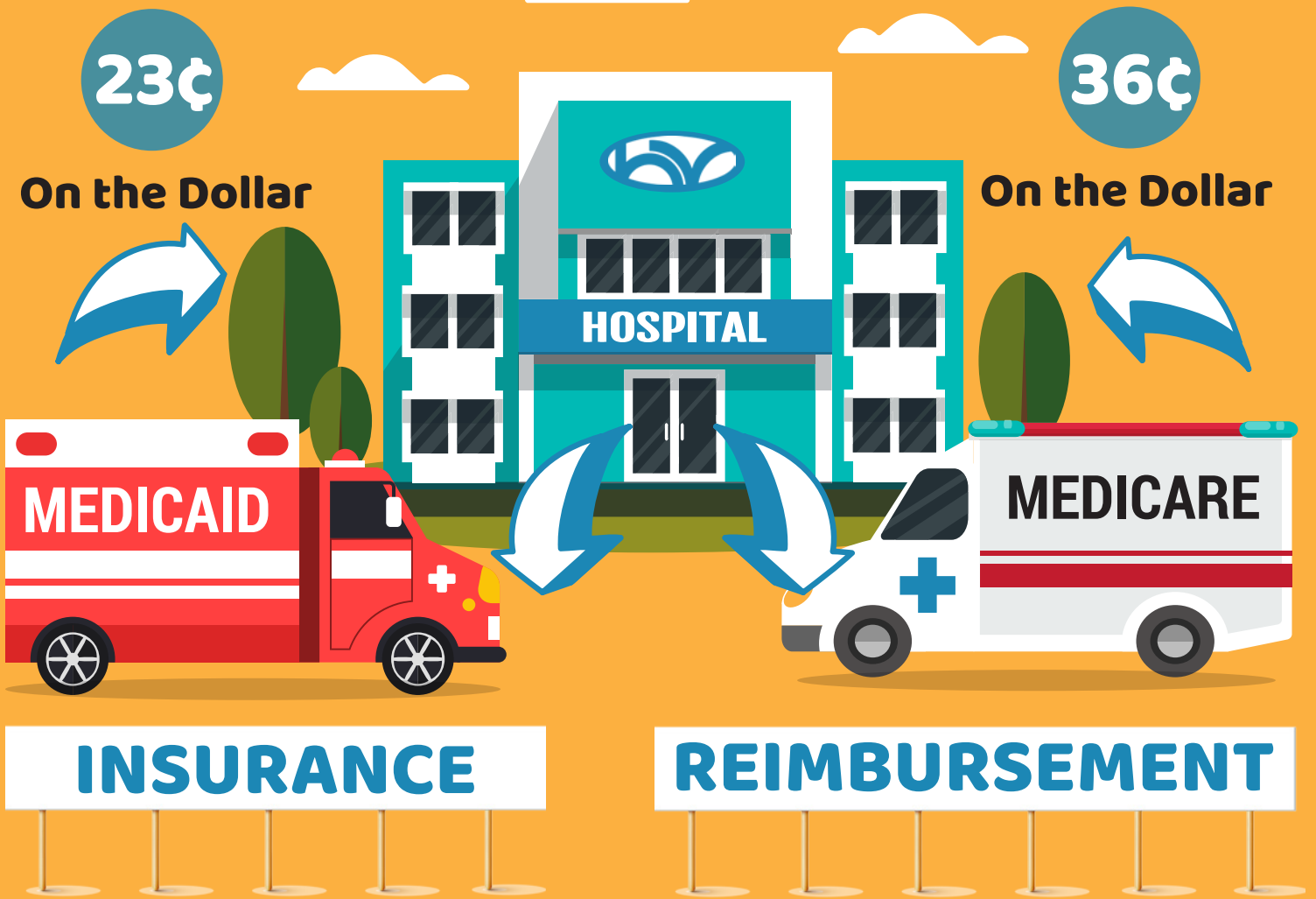
*from our patients*

*"All of the doctors and nurses were very nice before and after my surgery. Being in the hospital is scary, but their kindness put my mind at ease."*  
– Inpatient Department Patient

*"All staff at the Pain Clinic have been extremely caring, sensitive, and professional."*  
– Pain Management Patient

*"My breast cancer was found early with much thanks and gratitude to HVCH and the radiologist who wasn't comfortable with what he noticed and wanted me to get a biopsy. That was in 2019. I am extremely thankful and grateful to say I am now going into 6 years cancer free! Thank you HVCH!"*  
– Radiology Patient





**Have you ever wondered how hospitals are reimbursed by insurance companies?** There are many factors that come into play on how a hospital gets reimbursed. It could differ depending on the insurance company, insurance plan, diagnoses code, and what type of hospital provided the services. This, at times, can be some rough waters to navigate. It takes a lot of resources from the hospital to make sure reimbursement from insurance companies is correct.

Hocking Valley Community Hospital is designated as a critical access hospital. For traditional Medicare, that means the hospital gets reimbursed for the cost incurred by the hospital for services provided plus 1% of the cost incurred. At first glance, this seems good because the hospital is getting a slim profit, but Medicare then takes 2% back from the reimbursement, which is called sequestration. Sequestration is a mandatory payment reduction for traditional Medicare payments that was enacted in the Budget Control Act of 2011. So now, the hospital is getting reimbursed less than what it costs to provide the service, which is around 36 cents on the dollar of what is charged to Medicare. Medicare Advantage plans match the rate traditional Medicare pays, but also deny more claims than traditional Medicare and require more prior authorizations, which impedes care to the patient. **About 54% of our patients at HVCH have Medicare.**

Hocking Valley also has a large portion of services provided

where Medicaid or a Medicaid Managed Care plan is the payor. Medicaid has an even lower reimbursement rate than Medicare does at a rate of 23 cents on the dollar of total charges billed for the service. That is 13% less than Medicare, and Medicare is below cost as mentioned above. **The Medicaid population at the hospital is 20%.**

The Bureau of Workers Compensation and Veterans Administration only reimburse the hospital at 30 cents on the dollar of charges and 4% of the services provided at the hospital. That means that 78% of all services provided at Hocking Valley Community Hospital are reimbursed below what it costs to provide those services. **Commercial insurance makes up 20% of services provided** as well and is reimbursed an average of 60 cents on the dollar of charges billed.

That is just a brief summary of how a critical access hospital receive reimbursement by insurance companies. There are some other complicated nuances that must be examined on a case-by-case basis such as insurance companies denying services that are provided and requiring prior authorizations before billing. It can also take a while to get through the proper billing process or answer immediate denials from insurance companies. If we do not get all of this done in time, we must write off the entire amount. We have over 100,000 visits per year, so that is a lot of charts and bills to go through to make sure they are billed properly.





# Orthopedic Services

with Dr. Mark Holt  
& Dr. David Vaziri

Having access to a local hospital for orthopedic care can make all the difference when it comes to managing pain and recovering from injuries. With a specialized team of providers, Hocking Valley Community Hospital provides expert orthopedic care for everything from joint pain to complex fractures.

## Comprehensive Orthopedic Services

Whether you're dealing with chronic knee pain or recovering from a work-related injury, HVCH offers a variety of services tailored to meet the unique needs of every patient, including:

Cortisone injections for pain relief in knees, shoulders, and other joints like wrists and fingers.

Gel Injections for knee pain, available with prior authorization, in one-time or three-week treatments.

Surgical options, including knee replacements, hip surgeries, carpal tunnel release, arthroscopic procedures, and fracture repairs.

Braces, casts, and splints to manage pain or support healing from injuries.

Referral to physical therapy or occupational therapy to aid in recovery and restore mobility.

"Patients often come to the orthopedic department after trying conservative treatments through their family doctor or physical therapist. When patients are still experiencing pain after physical therapy or other initial treatments, that's when they are referred to us for advanced care," explains Dr. David Vaziri, board-certified orthopedic surgeon.

## Personalized Care with a Local Touch

Dr. Vaziri and Dr. Mark Holt (also a board-certified orthopedic surgeon) emphasize the importance of personalized, community-focused care.

"What sets us apart is our ability to provide top-notch orthopedic services right here in the community," Dr. Holt said. "Patients don't need to travel far to get exceptional care—we bring it to them."

The orthopedic department prides itself on clear communication with patients, ensuring they understand their diagnosis and treatment options. From initial consultations to post-surgical recovery, the team works closely with patients to create customized care plans.

## Advanced Treatments Options

For patients requiring more intensive treatments, the hospital offers advanced options like minimally invasive surgeries and cutting-edge joint replacement techniques.

"We combine the latest medical advancements with a compassionate approach," Dr. Vaziri notes. "Our goal is to relieve pain and restore quality of life."

One of the standout offerings is gel injections for knee arthritis. "For patients dealing with chronic knee pain, these injections can be a game-changer," Dr. Holt explains. "They provide cushioning in the joint and can delay or even prevent the need for surgery."

## A Commitment to Community

"Beyond providing exceptional medical care, we take pride in being an integral part of the community. We're here for our neighbors, our families, our friends," Dr. Holt said. "That's what makes this work so fulfilling."

**If you're experiencing joint pain, recovering from an injury, or exploring surgical options, help is just around the corner. To learn more or schedule an appointment, contact the orthopedic department at 740-380-8140.**

# Navigating Workplace Injuries



Accidents can happen unexpectedly, but it's reassuring to know that systems are in place to support workers when they do. If you've been injured on the job in Ohio, the workers' compensation process is designed to provide the benefits needed for recovery. One key advantage? You have the freedom to choose your doctor.

Our orthopedic specialists are highly skilled in diagnosing, evaluating, and treating work-related injuries in a cost-effective and objective manner. We recognize the unique challenges posed by industrial injuries and emphasize injury prevention and patient education on proper body mechanics.

Navigating Ohio's Workers' Compensation system is relatively straightforward. Here's what to do if you're injured at work:

**1**

## Report the Injury:

Notify your employer as soon as possible. Clear communication is essential. Claims can be submitted online, through mail or fax, or by phone.

**2**

## Seek Medical Care:

Your health comes first. You can choose any doctor who is certified to treat workers' compensation patients in Ohio.

**3**

## File a Claim:

Your employer or doctor typically assists with this, but it's important to ensure the Ohio BWC receives all relevant details about your injury.

**4**

## HVCH treats a wide range of workplace injuries, including:

- Fractures
- Dislocations
- Repetitive motion disorders
- Musculoskeletal conditions
- Carpal tunnel
- Shoulder and back injuries
- Sprains & strains

Our team provides top-quality care to help employees return to work as soon as medically appropriate. We also maintain clear communication and coordination with employers, case managers, and claims adjusters regarding treatment progress and work readiness.

**If you've been injured and need a diagnosis or treatment plan tailored to your condition, contact our orthopedic department at 740-380-8140.**

# Fighting for Air



Preparing for a lung transplant is a fight for air. Local resident Pam Collison has fought many health battles in her life. "I have had a lot of medical issues in my life. I was diagnosed with breast cancer on my right side in 2000. In 2014, my left lung collapsed," Collison said.

She was diagnosed with COPD and emphysema after many years of smoking.

"I was on oxygen for a couple of years. I could not walk two feet without having to sit down. Eventually my body broke down and I ended up at Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. After many tests, OSU determined I needed a lung transplant," Collison shared.

To prepare for her lung transplant, Pamela had to do two things: quit smoking and build up strength for the major surgery.

"I was able to quit smoking just cold turkey because I had to. It was hard to go through, but I'm so glad I did," she shared. "I still crave a cigarette to this day, but I keep the cravings under control."

As for building up strength for the transplant, Pamela trusted her care to the Hocking Valley Community Hospital pulmonary rehabilitation team.

"I enjoyed going to rehabilitation. The staff and other people in the program were so nice," she said.

Pamela was referred to pulmonary rehab in 2018. "I went to rehab three times a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, every week until it was time for my transplant."

"Our goal in preparing a pulmonary patient for lung transplant is to get their body built on and conditioned and to be less reliant on oxygen," Crystal Jordan-Nye, RN, explained.

When Pamela started rehab, she depended on oxygen support and was unable to spend much time on the exercise equipment.

"We're trying to get patients to tolerate as much exercise as possible while maintaining their oxygen saturation so when they go home, they can tolerate their daily activities," Crystal continued. "There's also a socialization aspect to completing rehab in a group."

Eventually Pamela received the call that she had received a match on the transplant list, and she immediately reported to OSU Wexner Medical Center to have her right lung replaced.

"That was the worst surgery I ever had," she shared. "I spent three weeks in the hospital. A few months after my surgery, I went back to rehab and reentered the pulmonary program for continued support in my healing."

"When patients return from lung transplant, we want to continue maintaining oxygen saturation and prevent shortness of breath with breathing techniques," Crystal said.

Pamela still visits HVCH cardiopulmonary department once a month for pulmonary function testing, that measures lung volume, capacity, rate of flow, and gas exchange. The monthly test is required for lung transplant patients, as well as regular lab tests.

"I can do anything now. I can walk a long way without getting winded. I'm so thankful for the staff at HVCH. Every time I've been at the hospital, everyone has been so nice, and they really did a good job taking care of me," Pamela said.

Patients who have had a diagnosis of COPD, emphysema, asthma, interstitial lung disease, or post COVID lung issues can qualify for respiratory services. For more information, call the HVCH Cardiovascular/Cardiopulmonary Department at 740-380-8219.



# Warning Signs of Lung Disease

Lung diseases are among the most common medical conditions worldwide, ranging from mild infections to life-threatening disorders including COPD, asthma and lung cancer. Early detection is crucial in improving outcomes, yet many people overlook or misinterpret the warning signs. Recognizing symptoms can help individuals seek timely medical attention and prevent further complications. If you experience any of the following warning signs, make an appointment with your healthcare provider as soon as possible. Early detection could save your life.

**Chronic cough:** A cough that you have had for eight weeks or longer is considered chronic. This is an important early symptom that tells you something is wrong with your respiratory system.

**Shortness of breath:** It's not normal to experience shortness of breath that doesn't go away after exercising, or that you have after little or no exertion. Labored or difficult breathing—the feeling that it is hard to breathe in and out—is also a warning sign.

**Chronic mucus production:** Mucus, also called sputum or phlegm, is produced by the airways as a defense against infections or irritants. If your mucus production has lasted a month or longer, this could indicate lung disease.

**Wheezing:** Noisy breathing or wheezing is a sign that something unusual is blocking your lungs' airways or making them too narrow.

**Coughing up blood:** If you are coughing up blood, it may be coming from your lungs or upper respiratory tract. Wherever it's coming from, it signals a health problem.

**Chronic chest pain:** Unexplained chest pain that lasts for a month or more—especially if it gets worse when you breathe in or cough—also is a warning sign.

## Talking to Your Doctor

Prepare for a visit to your healthcare provider by following these steps:

Take a copy of your medical records with you or see if your previous healthcare provider can send a copy. If you are unable to obtain your records, write a list of your health problems, when they occurred and the healthcare provider(s) that took care of you.

Make a list of all the medicines that you are currently using. This includes prescribed and over-the-counter medicines, as well as supplements and other methods you use to treat your condition.

Make a list of the symptoms you are having and note which ones bother you the most. Write down when they started and what you have done (if anything) to make them better.

**If you need a health provider, please call the HVCH Rural Health Clinic at 740-385-0202.**



# Happy Holidays from HVCH Foundation!



We are once again entering one of the most magical and beautiful seasons of the year with the holidays quickly approaching. It is a special time when our friends and family take center stage in our lives, and at HVCH we have one BIG family!

You see, our patients and their loved ones have given us the opportunity to extend our own. Having treated patients from all 88 counties in Ohio and 48 of our 50 states – you can definitely say we have touched the lives of many.

The patient mentioned in this publication who needed our cardiopulmonary department to help strengthen them to the point of being able to receive a transplant. The individual who used our physical therapy department for a year due to neuropathy and the struggle with continued debilitating back pain. The mother who delivered her newborn in our Emergency Room. The out-of-towner who ate something that caused a life-threatening allergic reaction. And, the list goes on.

This time of year, also reminds us to count our many blessings and we pause to express our gratitude to all of you for your continued support of our efforts here in the valley. It is with your generosity we continue to serve and seek new ways to bring lifesaving services to Hocking County.

This year's golf event raised over \$7,500 for our local hospital. Our largest annual fundraiser, the Bids & Brews Benefit, netted over \$41,000. Our staff contributed to the Foundation employee giving campaign raising almost \$18,000 towards our hospital expansion project. The Hocking Hills Jeep Run, hosted by Hocking Hills Podcast, raised more than \$10,200.

HVCH touches the lives of thousands of patients each year. As we close out 2024, you can support HVCH Foundation through our annual holiday appeal. Your gift is tax deductible and will allow us to continue our mission at Hocking Valley Community Hospital. Use the QR code to be linked to our donation page, or visit <https://www.hvch.org/foundation/ways-to-give/>.







# VOLUNTEER

"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love." ~Martin Luther King, Jr.

Why volunteer? There are many reasons to volunteer at HVCH, but one of the most obvious benefits is the personal satisfaction that comes from helping others and making a difference. Our HVCH volunteers are making a difference in our community; they are all heart. We currently have 15 volunteers working in a variety of places within the hospital including; the Pain Clinic, Mail Room, watering flowers and filling bird feeders, and of course our chaplains.

Our volunteers began their careers with us by filling out an online application, providing us with an interview, and once hired - attending volunteer orientation. After orientation, we match them to a position that best suits them. They choose the day and time they want to work (probably the best reason to volunteer - you set your own schedule).

Some things in life are hard to put a value on - love, passion, dedication, and selflessness. These are all attributes volunteers embody, but how can non-profits determine the value of a volunteer hour?

Each year, Independent Sector gathers data and conducts research on volunteerism in the nonprofit sector. The results of that research provide nonprofits a way to calculate the value of volunteer time. As of April 2024, their estimated national value of each volunteer hour is \$33.49. That equates to over \$120,000 per year for HVCH with their 15 volunteers, averaging approximately 20 hours per month. This is valuable money to a small community hospital, allowing us to bring other much needed services and resources to our community.

"I love volunteering at HVCH because the staff is so friendly and helpful. I also love being able to be a more active member of my community and HVCH allows me to do that."

~Avery Dicken, 17, Logan High School Student

"I feel like a medical facility in our small community is an asset and I want to contribute in any way I am able to give."

~Marty Skeeles, 72

"I began volunteering after receiving great care in the Physical Therapy Department. Wanting to give back in some way, I was told about the need to continue a bird feeding ministry. As a bird lover it was perfect. I do some flower and rose pruning as well."

~Ruth Murray, 91



MARTY SKEELES



DAVE MCALLISTER



SUSAN GLUNT



# Community Health Needs Assessment

Every three years Hocking County agencies collaborate on completing a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). It is important that we understand what healthcare needs are present in our county and then formulate a plan to address those needs. Agencies that participate in the plan are Hocking Valley Community Hospital, Hocking County Health Department, Hopewell Health (Primary Care and Behavioral Health), Logan-Hocking Schools, Hocking County EMS, Hocking County CIC, 317 Board, HAPCAP, Hocking County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Integrated Services, South Central Ohio Job and Family Services, Scenic Hills Senior Center, The United Way, and Health Recovery Services. These agencies have a common goal – to work on improving the health and wellness of our community.

The Steering Committee enlisted the help of the National Rural Health Resource Center (NRHRC) to complete the CHNA. The NRHRC understands that rural areas differ from larger, urban areas as it pertains to accessing care and health equity. They compile publicly reported data to share with various community focus groups and key stakeholders. These in-person sessions provide attendees the opportunity to hear some of the health data as it pertains to Hocking County residents and discuss issues they feel are most important related to the health and wellness of Hocking County residents. Overall, out of 88 counties in Ohio, Hocking County ranked 58th in health outcomes which look at quality of life as well as life expectancy, and 49th in health factors, which are those things we can have an impact on and change including: tobacco use, diet and exercise, access to care, housing, air and water quality, and education to name a few. The results provide the committee data needed to formulate an action plan and create a road map on how we can make an impact on our community. The data is reported for Hocking County residents, and then compares those results to two surrounding counties (Vinton and Perry) as well as the state of Ohio and the US.

We looked at trends in the responses and three priorities were established – Reducing barriers to accessing mental health resources; utilizing evidence-based strategies for promoting a healthy lifestyle; and developing comprehensive workforce strategies. Each priority area has a group of individuals from the steering committee assigned to identify strategies that will have an impact on future outcomes. The Steering Committee will continue to meet quarterly over the next several years and the sub-groups will meet as often as necessary to work on their respective priority. We are committed to continuous improvement in the health of Hocking County residents and doing what we can to have a lasting impact on wellness in our community.

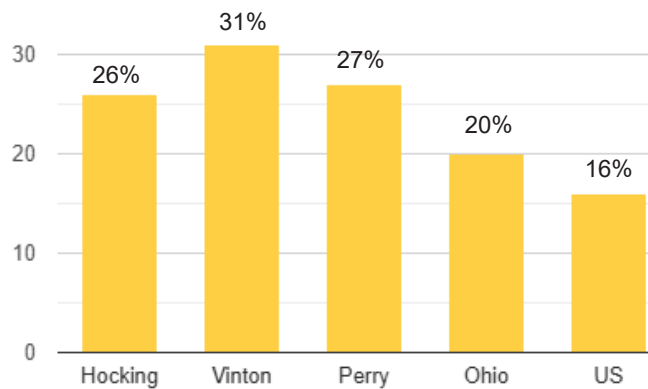


# The following are some of our county results:

People over the age of 50 are not getting a screening colonoscopy. The American Cancer Society actually recommends getting a colonoscopy starting at the age of 45. These screenings allow for early detection of cancer, which leads to better outcomes if treated early. This is especially important if you have a family history of colorectal cancer.

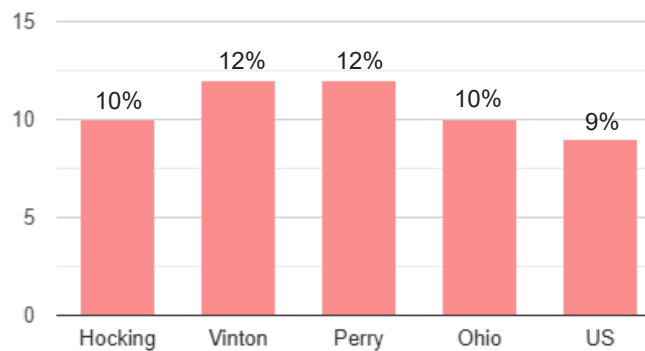
Hocking County residents have a higher rate of smoking as compared to the rest of the state of Ohio and the US. We understand smoking causes an increased risk for lung cancer. Hocking Valley Community Hospital offers low-dose CT scans that can detect any lung abnormalities. If found, you and your provider can have a discussion regarding follow up and treatment.

Adult Current Smokers



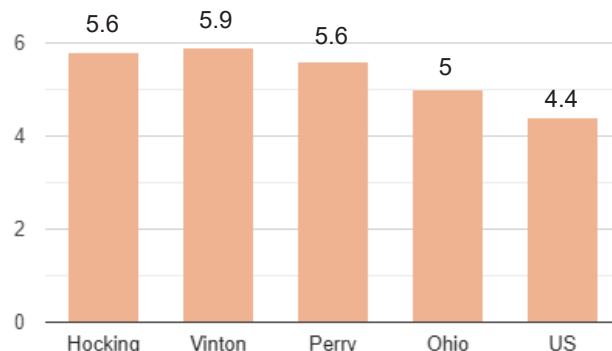
Hocking County residents also have a higher rate of diabetes (10%) than that of the US (9%). We were comparable to the rest of the state of Ohio (10%). Hocking Valley Community Hospital has a Diabetes Education program that can help patients better understand how to manage their diabetes with a healthy eating and exercise plan.

Adult Diabetes Prevalence



Mental health remains a top concern for residents of our county. Residents report more poor mental health days per month (5.6) than the state of Ohio (5) or the US (4.4). It is important to eliminate the stigma associated with mental health and encourage those who need it, to seek help. HVCH has an Outpatient Psychiatry Clinic to help with counseling.

Poor Mental Health



**ON THE COVER:**  
Local resident Pam Collison utilized HVCH's pulmonary rehabilitation services to prepare for and recover from her lung transplant surgery.

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# HOCKING VALLEY Community Hospital

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## TIPS FOR USING ANTIBIOTICS

Using antibiotics wisely is the best way to ensure they work for future bacterial illnesses and prevent unnecessary side effects.

- Antibiotics can only be prescribed by a healthcare provider.
- Antibiotics only treat illness caused by bacteria. They do NOT treat the flu or other viruses.
- Always finish the entire prescription. The infection may return if you stop treatment too soon.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Ask the pharmacist about over the counter remedies to help control fever, cough and nasal symptoms.
- Wash your hands and avoid touching your face. This will help prevent spreading of illnesses.



| ILLNESS                 | Caused by VIRUS | Caused by BACTERIA | ANTIBIOTIC NEEDED |
|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Cold/Runny Nose         | √               |                    | <b>NO</b>         |
| Bronchitis/Chest Cold   | √               |                    | <b>NO</b>         |
| Whooping Cough          |                 | √                  | Yes               |
| Flu                     | √               |                    | <b>NO</b>         |
| Strep Throat            |                 | √                  | Yes               |
| Sore Throat             | √               |                    | <b>NO</b>         |
| Fluid in Middle Ear     | √               |                    | <b>NO</b>         |
| Urinary Tract Infection |                 | √                  | Yes               |