The UCONN Buzz

Be Well
An EHHD Wellness Program

Seeking Wellness? Back to Basics!

Do you sometimes feel like being healthy or making healthy choices gets more complicated every year? This Spring, consider focusing on the basics: Eat more whole foods, keep on walking and mind your sleep! Each aspect of this triad influences the other and combined, they create synergy in your overall wellness

Food is often on everyone's mind when wellness and health is the topic. March is National Nutrition Month, and the theme for 2021 is: Personalize Your Plate. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics offers tips for improving your plate including learn skills to create healthy and tasty meals at home and plan ahead to include a variety of foods each day. *Be Well* recommends selecting whole foods as often as possible. The National Institutes of Health recently conducted a randomized clinical study to identify if there is a difference between a diet of ultra-processed foods and one where whole foods are the focus of the diet. The trial was compared common meal selections of ultra-processed foods (like canned soups and seasoned pasta/rice) with a whole food based diet—not a junk food vs. healthy food meal plan. The results are stunning: Ultra-processed food diets resulted in eating more (quantity) and consuming about 500 more calories a day than the whole food-based diet.

Walking: There is no doubt and ample evidence that we all need to be active more days than not, but what activity and how much? For starters, an activity you can do, will do and most importantly stick with is the best activity for you! For over a quarter of a century there has been strong evidence of the benefits of walking. Walking is a weight-bearing exercise that involves large skeletal muscle groups and posies minimal risks. For all these years, the research keeps stacking up behind walking and the improve cardiovascular health, blood glucose levels and blood pressure adults can experience. More recent studies extend these benefits to include reduced stress and relief of anxiety and depression. Make the most of your walk by standing up straight with your shoulders back (and tighten your abdominal muscles)and stick to a schedule. Work up to walking every day and increase the distance and your speed as you are able.

Speaking of basics, have you heard the old adage "early to bed, early to rise"? The saying dates back to before 1500—and even then it was important enough to say it clear and repeat it century after century. Perhaps it was the early idea of a current concept called **sleep hygiene**.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, "strong sleep hygiene means having both a bedroom environment and daily routines that promote consistent, uninterrupted sleep. Keeping a stable sleep schedule, making your bedroom comfortable and free of disruptions, following a relaxing pre-bed routine, and building healthy habits during the day can all contribute to ideal sleep hygiene."

Adults need between 7 to 9 hours a sleep each night and every night. Setting a routine for both getting to bed and waking up at the same time each day is the best way to ensure that you are getting the sleep you need to be well! The National Sleep Foundation also recommends following a nightly routine that works for you. Curiously, sleep hygiene also includes guidance to get daily activity, stop smoking, don't eat late and reduce alcohol and caffeine consumption in the evenings.

A quick visualization can keep you focused: wellness is like the three-legged stool: how you fuel your body, what you do with your body, and sleep hygiene. Focusing on one aspect without keeping the other two in balance will not meet overall wellness goals (or keep your stool steady!).

If you are ready to re-start your journey to wellness, try starting with the basics: eat more whole foods, walk every day and get enough sleep on a regular basis.

Sources: National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Sleep Foundation, Anxiety and Depression Society of America & the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Things to do! IDEAS AROUND TOWN AND HOME

~ While social distancing ~

♦ Sort through your digital photos and create a memory book. There are several online options (search "create a photo book") or copy and past on word pages and print on photo paper and create your own book. Try thematic books or group by year or topic!

♦ Learn or brush up on a foreign language. Apps like Duolingo are free and they make it easy and fun.

♦ Organize an online game with friends &/family for social distancing entertainment. Use zoom or facetime and play scattergories (swellgarfo.com/scattergories/)

♦ Tired of your local parks and trails for walking? Go to a neighboring town and try a new town's trail or park each week.

♦ Have more time at home this spring? Plan and plant a garden! No space outside? Try simple things inside like green onions: buy a bunch from the grocery store and use all but 1" from the root end. Place the root end in a glass with water, and change out the water daily and only re-grow 3-4 times. New greens will be ready to harvest about every 7 days!

CDC tips for better masking:

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Make sure your mask fits snugly against your face. Gaps can let air with respiratory droplets leak in and out around the edges of the mask

Pick a mask with layers to keep your respiratory droplets in and others' out. A mask with layers will stop more respiratory droplets getting inside your mask or escaping from your mask if you are sick.

Lentils and Rice

INGREDIENTS (serves 4-6)

3/4 cup dry lentils	1/2 cup raw brown rice
1 small onion, diced	1 tsp garlic
1 T Italian seasoning	1 T olive oil
1 1/2 cups chopped spinach or kale	3 cups water or broth
1 cup shredded cheese (optional)	

DIRECTIONS In a 3 quart pot with lid, heat oil and sauté lentils, rice and onion. Cook over medium high heat for 3-5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add fluids and spinach; bring to a boil. Simmer at a low boil for 5 minutes uncovered. Reduce heat to low, place cover on top and let cook for 25 minutes.

Before serving, top with cheese, diced fresh tomato, and a dollop of plain Greek yogurt.

Nutritional information (without toppings) for 6 servings:

150 Calories   4g Fiber   7g Protein   0g Sugars

3g Fat   1g Saturated fat

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month:
Screening saves lives & isn't always limited to a colonoscopy!

March is colorectal cancer awareness month. Colorectal cancer affects both men and women, and people of all racial and ethnic groups. And according to the CDC, it is the 2nd leading cause of cancer death in the United States.

Did you know:

• Every year, about 140,000 people in the United States get colorectal cancer, and more than 50,000 people die of it.

• Risk increases with age. More than 90% of colorectal cancers occur in people who are 50 years old or older.

• Precancerous polyps and colorectal cancer don't always cause symptoms, especially at first. If you have symptoms,

they may include blood in or on the stool, stomach pain that doesn't go away, or losing weight and you don't know why. If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor.

• There are several screening test options. Talk with your doctor about which is right for you.

• About a quarter of adults in the United States are up-to-date with colorectal cancer screening.

Reduce your risk :

- Stop smoking (betobaccofree.hhs.gov)
- Get regular physical activity. The recommendation is a minimum of 150 min per week & two days should include strength training.
- Limit alcohol intake

- Eat a healthy diet that includes fiber from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts. Adults should get 14g of fiber for every 1000 Calories consumed.

Be proactive and stay informed about your risks for colorectal cancer and consult your medical provider about screening. Screening saves lives!

For more information go to : Colorectal Cancer Alliance or the American Cancer Society **Source:** Centers for Disease Control & Prevention,

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District through funding from the CT Department of Public Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

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