

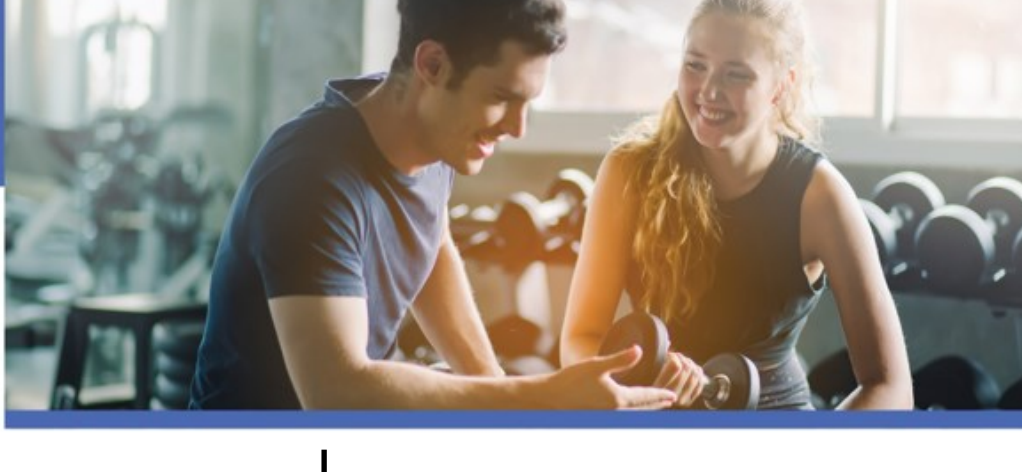
Employee Newsletter & Resources

January Is National Birth Defects Awareness Month

About 1 out of every 33 babies in the United States is born with a birth defect. These can be minor or severe, ranging from structural (e.g., cleft lip or spina bifida) to functional and developmental (e.g., Down syndrome or cystic fibrosis).

January is National Birth Defects Awareness Month. Birth defects can happen for many reasons. Although not all can be prevented, people can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant. Meeting the complex needs of a person with a congenital disorder involves the whole family and can be challenging; however, finding resources, knowing what to expect and planning for the future can help.

January 2024
**Live Well,
Work Well**



How to Make -and Keep- Your New Year's Resolution

As a new year begins, you may be reflecting on the past year. This introspection is a significant first step toward selecting a New Year's resolution to help you grow as a person. Many New Year's resolutions fail by mid-February due to a lack of self-discipline, with only 1 in 5 people sticking with them all year. That's why setting yourself up for success when choosing a resolution is important.



The U.S. News and World Report estimates that 80% of people ditch their New Year's resolutions by February.

Regardless of what you choose as your resolution, make sure it's a "SMART" goal—one that is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely—to increase the odds that you will stick to it. Here's what that means:

Specific—A specific goal is simple and strategic. It's something you can easily conceptualize. For example, instead of saying you'll eat healthier, be specific about how you can actually do that (e.g., cook breakfast daily or eat fish twice a week).

Measurable—A measurable goal is quantified. You'll be able to see if you're making progress as you go. For example, if you want to save \$500 for your emergency fund or save for a down payment on a home, you'll be able to track your savings and prove you're making progress along the way.

Achievable—An achievable goal is realistic and attainable. If you've never worked out before, a daily workout goal won't likely be feasible or sustainable in the long run. Alternatively, if you're already taking walks, start with increasing their duration or frequency.

Relevant—A relevant goal needs to make sense or be appropriate for you. You want your goal to matter, so reflect on the past year about what's working in your life and what's not. Timing is equally important, so ensure this is the right time for you to tackle the resolution.

Timely—A timely goal is accomplished within a specific time frame. You can adjust this period as needed and make new goals or deadlines after achieving the first one.

Remember that New Year's resolutions don't have to be health-related, so find what matters to you to help you live a better life in 2024.

Health Benefits of Dry January

As the holidays end, some people give up alcohol for "Dry January." The month-long wellness challenge can serve as a reset after overindulging during the holidays or an opportunity to reassess one's relationship with alcohol. While a month of sobriety can seem overwhelming to some, it comes with some advantages. A brief break from moderate to heavy alcohol consumption may offer the following health-related benefits:

- Better sleep
- Increased focus
- Improved mood
- Boosted energy
- Clearer complexion
- Potential weight loss

Alcohol can also contribute to various health conditions, such as high blood pressure, kidney or liver problems, heart disease and certain cancers. As such, a period of sobriety can positively affect one's well-being and overall health. If you have any questions or concerns about your alcohol consumption, talk to a health care professional.

Alcohol Alternatives



Mocktails



Zero-proof cocktails



Sparkling water



Functional sodas

Protecting Your Skin During Winter

Taking care of your skin the right way can be difficult. The task can seem almost impossible to achieve when the temperature and humidity levels drop. Dry skin may not seem like the most concerning health problem, but not treating dry skin can result in itchiness, cracked or painful skin, eczema and dermatitis.

This winter, you should limit how much hot water your skin is exposed to, as hot water rapidly dries out your skin. It can help to take shorter baths and showers and use a limited amount of soap. Additionally, it's important to moisturize properly after bathing to keep your skin hydrated and healthy. Lastly, a humidifier can help keep moisture in the air. Contact your doctor if you have any skin concerns.

Take Charge of Your Health



Start a Realistic Workout Routine

Regular physical exercise is one of the best things you can do for your health. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, exercise can boost brain health, reduce the risk of disease and help you manage weight. However, many adults struggle to find the time and motivation to maintain a regular fitness routine. Getting enough exercise often comes down to prioritizing movement and getting creative with planning, so consider the following tips when starting a realistic routine:



Start small. Begin with short sessions and then increase the time and difficulty. If you overdo it, you may experience muscle soreness, become discouraged and quit.



Choose a fun workout. Find an activity you enjoy—or are good at—and incorporate it into your routine. You're more likely to stick with your workout routine if you're having fun.



Move when your energy is high. Plan your workouts for the times of day when you have the most energy. For example, you may find it best to work out in the mornings before other things come up during your day.



Schedule workouts. Putting workouts on your calendar can help you commit to a routine. If you need to change the scheduled workout, reschedule it on your calendar immediately.



Find a workout partner. Working out with a friend or personal trainer can make exercise more fun and help you stay accountable. If you can't work out with someone, pick an accountability partner and check in with each other about your fitness journey.

MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

JANUARY 2024



Mental Health Benefits of a Clean, Organized Space

If you're struggling with seasonal affective disorder, anxiety, depression or other mental health issues, keeping your home tidy and organized may be challenging. However, research shows that disorganization can worsen your mental health, creating a snowball effect. January is Get Organized Month, so it's the perfect time to focus on cleaning or decluttering your space.

The Link Between Clutter and Mental Health

Recent studies have found that clutter in the home is associated with higher levels of cortisol—the body's stress hormone. It can reduce your ability to feel pleasure in a space and contribute to issues in other areas of your life, such as your relationships and financial well-being. A messy living space can also distract you from other priorities and cause you to lose important things.

Living in a tidy, organized place can improve your mental health by increasing your sense of clarity and control. It can also boost your confidence, increase your productivity and create a more peaceful atmosphere.

People also tend to take clues about how they're doing from their living space. Therefore, a clean and organized space can reinforce the notion that you are worth the time it takes to create a calm and peaceful place.

Getting Motivated to Clean or Declutter

Becoming motivated to clean can be difficult. To make it easier, consider breaking every task into much smaller ones. You can also set a timer for 10, 15 or 20 minutes and stop cleaning the moment the timer goes off. This may help you get started by making cleaning seem more manageable.

Conclusion

A clean and organized living space can provide you with clarity and peace this winter. Take advantage of Get Organized Month this January by taking steps to declutter your home.

Building a Daily Meditation Practice

Meditation can provide a sense of peace and calm that can boost your mood, benefit your mental health, and improve your emotional and physical well-being. It is a simple and relatively quick way to relieve stress that you can do almost anywhere. Regular meditation can help you manage stress, increase self-awareness, reduce negative emotions, focus on the present, gain a new perspective and improve sleep quality.

Making Meditation a Habit

When meditation becomes a habit, you're more likely to notice the positive long-term benefits. Start small to avoid feeling discouraged or like you don't have enough time to meditate. Meditating for just five minutes daily can help you sustainably integrate meditation and peacefulness into your routine.

Finding the right time to meditate is also important. You could end up feeling frustrated and more stressed if you try to meditate during a busy time of day or at a time that doesn't work well with your schedule. To begin, you may want to try meditating at several different times throughout the day (e.g., in the morning, on your lunch break or before bed) and see which time works best for you.

It's also important that you find a comfortable way to meditate. You're unlikely to continue meditating in the long term if you don't enjoy your sessions. You can meditate while sitting, lying down or even on a walk.

A meditation app or podcast can help you build meditation into your daily schedule. These apps can typically be personalized to monitor your progress or track changes, which you may find motivational.

Conclusion

Developing a new habit can be challenging, so go easy on yourself when you don't find time to meditate. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to meditate. The best type of meditation is the kind that works for you.

Chicken Creole

January 2024 Recipe

Makes: 8 servings



Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 skinless and boneless chicken breasts
- 14 ½ oz. diced tomatoes
- 1 cup chili sauce
- 1 large green pepper (chopped)
- 2 celery stalks (chopped)
- 1 onion (chopped)
- 2 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 1 tsp. dried parsley
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ¼ tsp. salt

Nutritional information for 1 serving

Calories	77
Total fat	3 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Cholesterol	21 mg
Sodium	255 mg
Carbohydrate	6 g
Dietary fiber	2 g
Total sugars	3 g
Added sugars included	0 g
Protein	8 g

Source: MyPlate

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Directions

- Heat pan over medium-high heat (350 F in an electric skillet). Add vegetable oil and chicken and cook until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165 F (3-5 minutes).
- Reduce heat to medium (300 F in electric skillet).
- Add tomatoes with juice, chili sauce, green pepper, celery, onion, garlic, basil, parsley, cayenne pepper and salt.
- Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, for 10-15 minutes.
- Serve over hot, cooked rice or whole-wheat pasta.
- Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.