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Health & Wellness

Live Well Newsletter



Allergy-proof Your Spring

You may notice that you sneeze and cough more during certain times of the year. In this case, you may have seasonal allergies, which are allergy symptoms that occur during specific times of the year, typically when allergens are released into the air. The most common spring allergy trigger is tree pollen, which peaks from March to May.

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America reports that 81 million people in the country are allergic to pollen, grass, and weeds in the spring.

You can reduce your exposure to seasonal allergens and their impact on your body, such as sneezing, stuffy or runny nose, and watery eyes. Try these strategies to manage seasonal allergies:

- **Keep track of pollen and mold counts.** Pollen and mold counts can be found online or on the local news. Monitoring allergens, especially tree pollen, can help you know when to avoid spending excessive time outside.
- **Keep the indoor air clean.** Closing windows and doors can help prevent allergens from entering your home and sticking to items like furniture and carpet. Lean on air conditioning, and be sure to change high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters often.
- **Shower and put on clean clothing after spending time outdoors.** After playing or working outdoors, pollen may be stuck to your clothes, hair and skin, which can irritate your allergies.
- **Bathe pets often.** If your pets go inside and outside, they are likely tracking in pollen on their coats. Bathe them weekly, especially after spending a lengthy time outdoors.
- **Wash bedding weekly in hot water.** Pollen can settle on sheets and blankets, triggering allergy symptoms at bedtime and disrupting your rest.
- **Vacuum regularly.** When pollen levels are high, vacuum floors at least once a week. It's also best to use a vacuum with a HEPA filter.

For many people, avoiding allergens and using over-the-counter medications are enough to ease their allergy symptoms. Talk to your doctor if your symptoms remain bothersome; they can provide guidance on alternative treatments.

Creative Ways to Take More Steps

Walking is one of the most accessible forms of exercise. Its benefits extend beyond physical health, as it can also boost your mood and help with mental clarity. Whether new to fitness or

just looking to increase your daily movement, walking offers an easy and effective way to improve your well-being. However, finding the time or motivation to walk more often can be challenging. Here are some creative and fun ways to get more steps in:

- **The 6-6-6 method**—One version of this challenge involves walking for 60 minutes at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. daily, with a suggested six-minute warm-up and six-minute cool-down. Another version is to walk for six minutes six times a day for six days a week to fit in more movement during the day.
- **The 12-3-30 workout**—Set a treadmill at a 12% incline and 3 mph and walk for 30 minutes. Incline walking adds intensity to your walk to help boost calorie burn and muscle engagement. If you take a walk outdoors instead, use hilly routes or find stairs.
- **An active (or fake) commute**—If you're a remote worker, you could take a 10-minute walk in the morning or stroll after work. The point of a fake commute is to use the time that'd normally be spent commuting to an office and use it to make the day more active.
- **Walking in place**—You can do this anywhere: while watching TV, during a phone call or while waiting for something. For an extra challenge, try adding variations like marching, high knees or using light hand weights.

Walking is one of the easiest ways to improve your health and well-being; these creative strategies can help make it a regular part of your lifestyle. Talk to your doctor and discuss what works best for you to learn more about creating an active routine.

The Impact of Chronic Stress

Stress is defined as a “state of worry or mental tension” often brought on by a difficult situation. It's a natural reaction to perceived threats. Stress can be a good thing in small doses; it's the body's way of handling sudden demands and challenges.

Stress responses can enhance your focus, increase energy and promote quick responses. However, frequent and long-term chronic stress can negatively impact your health.

Stress triggers are deeply personal, and each person experiences this feeling differently. While stress is a normal part of life that will come and go as you navigate various life circumstances (e.g., getting a new job or presenting a project), chronic stress is different. It's characterized by prolonged and constant feelings of pressure and anxiety. Chronic stress can contribute to feelings of anxiety and depression, issues with high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, sleep disturbances and digestive issues. Chronic stress, if left unchecked, can have a long-lasting impact on your physical and mental well-being.

If you're experiencing symptoms of chronic stress, reach out to your health care provider or employee assistance program for guidance and support.



Coping With Stress

April is Stress Awareness Month, a time dedicated to acknowledging the commonality of stress and empowering individuals to manage it effectively. Stress is the body's natural response to an external cause. Common stressors may be financial, social, occupational or related to life changes. However, recognizing the signs of stress and practicing coping strategies can help one better navigate life's challenges.

Stress is not considered a mental health

6 Tips to Reduce Overthinking

If you have ever found yourself in a cycle of negative thoughts that do not seem to end, which led you to second-guess your decisions or imagine worst-case scenarios to the point of exhaustion, the chances are that you were overthinking.

Persistent overthinking can cause significant distress and make it difficult to enjoy your life.

condition, but it can cause other mental health challenges. It can present itself in emotional and cognitive symptoms, such as anxiety, irritability, mood swings, feeling overwhelmed and difficulty concentrating. Stress can also manifest as physical symptoms like headaches, fatigue, and changes in appetite or sleep patterns. Stress may even cause behavior changes, such as withdrawal from social activities, increased substance use, procrastination or neglecting responsibilities.

Remember, stress is a natural response to everyday pressures or demands. Some stress is expected and OK, but prolonged stress that is not addressed can become a serious health concern. While it's impossible to eliminate stress entirely, you are in control of how you respond. Here are coping strategies to try when you're feeling stressed:

- Plan and prioritize your most important responsibilities.
- Limit interruptions so you don't have to refocus each time you're distracted.
- Take breaks away from your workstation to regroup mentally.
- Listen to music or do a relaxing activity (e.g., reading) to help you calm down.
- Limit caffeine intake, as this stimulant can exacerbate stress.
- Exercise to work off your stress.
- Get at least seven hours of quality sleep each night.

Coping strategies will depend on your stressor, so adjust accordingly. If you're experiencing symptoms of chronic stress, contact your health care provider or employee assistance program for guidance and support.

To alleviate this negative thinking, consider the following six strategies:

1. **Take deep breaths.** Studies show that even two minutes of deep breathing can help turn off the body's stress response, calming the overthinking behavior.
2. **Meditate.** Regular meditation helps clear your mind and reduce stress. Find a quiet area and practice meditation for at least five minutes daily to avoid falling deeply into your worries.
3. **Distract yourself.** Highly engaging activities can help you break the cycle of overthinking. Pick an activity you enjoy, such as working out, reading or playing a video game. These healthy distractions may make you less likely to overthink.
4. **Spend time outdoors.** Immersion in nature can calm the mind and combat anxiety and depression. Try to spend at least 120 minutes per week in natural environments.
5. **Practice self-compassion.** Forgiving yourself for past mistakes and accepting things you cannot change are acts of self-compassion. Be kind to yourself, and remember that you are a work in progress, just like everyone else.
6. **Do a reality check.** Remember that thoughts are not necessarily facts. Just because you're thinking something doesn't mean it's accurate or realistic. Talking to a trusted individual can challenge negative thoughts and help you realize whether what you're overthinking reflects reality or not.

Contact a mental health professional for further guidance.

– Take Charge of Your Health –



Create Healthy Routines

Routines can be a great way to incorporate healthy habits into a busy life. Establishing a healthy routine can lower stress levels, improve physical and mental health and help you use your time more effectively. A healthy routine may include healthy eating, quality sleep and regular exercise. However, creating a routine for the first time can be daunting.

Everybody has their own schedules and responsibilities, so it comes down to creating a routine that works best for you. Consider the following tips to help build healthy routines:

Add to or modify an existing habit. Taking a pet for longer or more frequent walks could add movement to an already-established routine. Also, if you normally have alcoholic drinks after a stressful day, swap those for nonalcoholic alternatives (e.g., tea, sparkling water and mocktails).

Make changes slowly. Trying to overhaul your daily routine all at once can make it more challenging to adjust and succeed. Instead, try adding healthy choices or tasks one at a time. It may help you feel less overwhelmed with the changes you are implementing.

Plan ahead. When life is hectic, falling out of a routine can be easy. If you plan to exercise in the morning, set your workout clothes out the night before. You could even prepare your healthy meals in advance, so all you have to do is reheat them when you're hungry.

Make time for things you enjoy. Routines don't need to feel like chores. Be sure to include some time in your day, even if it's just 15 minutes, for activities or hobbies you genuinely like to stay motivated.

Celebrate small victories. Setting personal goals for your routine and celebrating when you achieve them is crucial. Treat yourself to recognize your hard work and progress; this could help keep you motivated.

This infographic is intended for informational purposes only and is not intended to be exhaustive, nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as professional advice. Readers should contact a health professional for appropriate advice.

Pineapple Chicken

April 2025 Recipe

Makes: 5 servings



Ingredients

- 2 ½ lb. boneless skinless chicken
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ⅓ tsp. black pepper
- 20-oz. can pineapple (crushed or chunks)
- 2 oz. water

Nutritional information for 1 serving

Calories	341
Total fat	6 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Cholesterol	141 mg
Sodium	240 mg
Carbohydrate	18 g
Dietary fiber	1 g
Total sugars	16 g
Added sugars included	0 g
Protein	52 g

Directions

1. Coat the frying pan with nonstick cooking spray and set the heat to low.
2. Once the pan heats up, add chicken. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
3. Cook uncovered until chicken begins to brown, then add the pineapple and water.
4. Cover the chicken and cook until the chicken is tender.
5. When done, you may serve it over rice.

Source: MyPlate

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