



your HEALTH *your* WELFARE

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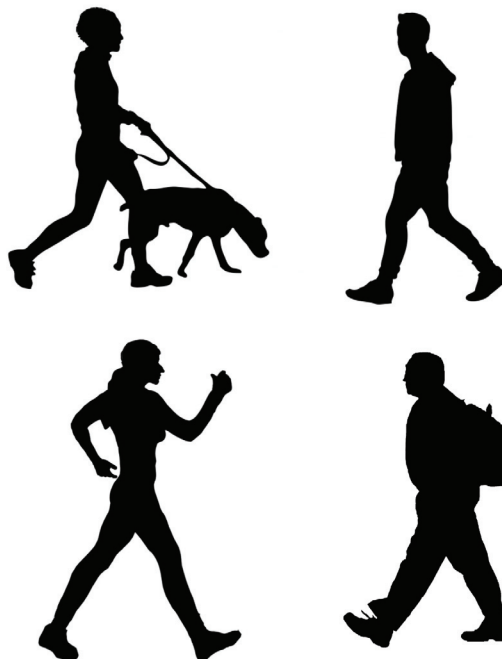


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BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!



Last year's challenge was huge success; members and their families got moving and took steps to improve their health. Letters will be going out in January to introduce the wellness program for 2018.

You will be provided with directions on how to register for the steps challenge, receive the Fitbit Charge 2 and earn a gift card.

Walking is an easy way to trim your waistline, reduce blood pressure, help manage type two diabetes, strengthen bones and muscles, improve your mood and help with balance and coordination.

STEPS CHALLENGE
2018 WITH THE FIT
BIT CHARGE 2

JANUARY IS A
MONTH WHEN WE
SET NEW GOALS
AND MAKE
RESOLUTIONS.

GET YOUR SNEAKERS
OR WALKING SHOES
READY AND START
TAKING STEPS TO
IMPROVE YOUR
HEALTH!

RESOLVE TO GET ON
TRACK TO
IMPROVED HEALTH
IN 2018.



11 Ways to Have a Healthy Holiday Season



1. **Wash your hands often.** Washing your hands can help prevent the spread of germs, especially during the dreaded flu season. Just how long is long enough when washing your hands? Sing happy birthday and rinse your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water. When you're done with your little tune you'll be good to go!
2. **Stay warm and dry by bundling up.** When venturing outdoors wear appropriate clothes, layers and shoes. Especially when shoveling snow or playing with the kids. Warm layers, waterproof clothing, shoes, hats, scarves and mittens should all be an essential part of your wardrobe.
3. **Manage your stress.** The holidays can bring about much unwarranted stress to your life, and it's important to step back and take a break when feeling stressed out or overwhelmed. Making sure you're sleeping enough, finding a support system, and stepping out with friends to relax could be ways to reduce and cope with stress.
4. **Drinking and driving is never okay, and it's not okay to let others do it either.** When people drink and drive they often only think of themselves. They don't realize that they're not only putting themselves in danger, but everyone else on the road in harm's way as well. Stand up against drunk driving this holiday season and help others do the same.
5. **Live a smoke-free life.** Say no to smoking all together, and avoid second hand smoke. Those who smoke are at a greater risk for health risks because of their tobacco use. Smokers aren't the only ones at risk when it comes to tobacco exposure, nonsmokers are also at risk due to second hand smoke.
6. **Buckle up for safety!** Always fasten your seatbelt when driving a car, or if you are a passenger in car. It is important to buckle up no matter how short or long the drive may be. Children should also always be buckled and put in a booster seat or car seat, depending on their height, weight and age.
7. **Exams and screenings can be lifesaving.** Update your personal and family history frequently and ask your health care provider which exams and screenings you should be getting and how often you should be getting them.
8. **Vaccines!** Vaccinations cannot only prevent diseases but they can also save lives, it is a good idea for everyone 6 months and older to get a flu shot each and every year.
9. **Keep track of children.** Protect your children from potentially dangerous accidents. Monitor your children's actions and keep objects away from them that could be harmful, such as, toys, drinks, food and dangerous household items. Keep these potentially dangerous items out of children's reach.
10. **Practice fire safety.** Did you know that a majority of residential fires occur in the winter? Have an emergency plan in place and make sure each family member knows the plan. Also, make sure that the plan has been practiced regularly by you and your family. It's important to remember not to leave those candles, space heaters or fireplaces unattended.
11. **Be active and stay healthy.** Staying active at least two and a half hours a week can not only make you feel good but can improve your health as well. Kids and teens should be active for at least one-hour a day. Fruits and vegetables are packed with nutrients and can actually help lower the risk of certain diseases. It is important to watch portion sizes and not over eat. Also try to limit those foods that are high in sugar, salt and fat.

Going Out to Eat Healthfully

Today, everyone is busy with work, children's activities, appointments and errands. There are times when there is not enough hours in the week. So, on those days when you don't have time to run to the grocery store or prepare a meal, you may choose to head out to your local restaurant. So, is it possible to eat out and eat healthfully without blowing your diet? The answer is yes, but you'll need to make healthier choices. Here are some tips on how to dine out and not blow your calories for the week. Check out the menu for the light or low-calorie options. Perhaps you could choose grilled items instead of fried. Avoid drinking your calories, enjoy an ice water with your meal. Try to include extra veggies as your "side" choices, not French fries. The portion sizes can be over the top, so take half of your dish home to enjoy the next day. These helpful tips to help you enjoy eating out, guilt free.

Tips to get through – WINTER BLUES

Winter – BRRR! Some New Englanders find themselves suffering from "winter blues". Here are some tips that may help you get through those blue days. Try to make winter fun, choose a day that you can enjoy a short walk around the neighborhood. A short time outside to feel the warmth of the sunshine or breathe in fresh air can give you a boost. Make a snowman or go sledding with your children or grandchildren. Brighten your spirits, literally, spend time out in the sunlight at lunch or buy a special indoor light for your desk at work to help lift your mood. Embrace the winter, cozy up while "stuck" indoors, fire up the wood stove or fireplace, toast some marshmallows, make s'mores and pour a cup of hot chocolate. Plan a movie marathon day or schedule a family game day, while cooped up indoors. You may be energized by a weekend away, book a hotel with a pool or sauna. Hopefully, these tips can help you get through the upcoming winter in New England.

Protect Your When Shoveling Snow

Snow shoveling is a known trigger for heart attacks. Whether it's pushing a heavy snow blower after a big storm, or shoveling pounds and pounds of the heavy white stuff, if you haven't done anything physical for months, these two seemingly harmless activities can put a big strain on your heart. The cold weather alone is another issue, those bitter cold days can boost blood pressure, make your blood more likely to clot, as well as interrupt blood flow to part of the heart.

You may know the "so-called" signs of a heart attack but if you are unfamiliar with these signs here is a review: squeezing pain in the chest, shortness of breath, radiating pain up the left shoulder and down the left arm, and a cold sweat. Some other common signs that you may notice are lower back pain, jaw pain, fatigue or nausea that is unexplainable, as well as anxiety.

You may come in after a long afternoon of shoveling and feel exhausted because you've been outside for three hours, but how do you know when your symptoms are serious enough to call 911? Maybe your left shoulder hurts from the way you were tossing the snow and maybe your back hurts from the repeated motion of bending and lifting. But if others signs persist your mind set of being okay may change in an instant.

Here are some helpful hints for safely shoveling snow:

- Before heading outside warm up your muscles
- It's better to shovel multiple light loads then fewer very heavy ones
- Bring out a glass or bottle of water with you and take frequent breaks to rest and drink
- It's okay to not clear every speck of snow off your property
- If at any time you feel light headed, shortness of breath, your heart begins to race, your chest starts hurting, or a drastic physical change occurs that makes you nervous, head inside immediately and call 911 or your local emergency number.

One last tip - if you are worried about your heart, or you may be out of shape this winter, hire a teenage neighbor! They could probably use the exercise and could definitely use the money!

LET'S KEEP YOUR RECORD STRAIGHT.....

Any changes in status need record updating
as soon as possible!

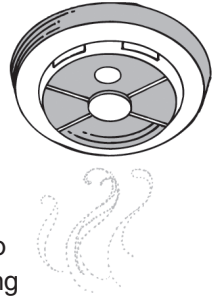
This includes: marriage, a new baby, dependent social security numbers, change of beneficiary, new email, addresses and/or phone numbers, divorce, or updating/ changing your primary care provider with Blue Cross or Fallon to name a few.



When you keep up-to-date,
your service is not interrupted!!

Baby It's Cold Outside!

So, you know that means, we have turned on our heat. Therefore, it's time to check your carbon monoxide (CO) detectors and smoke detectors. If you don't have them, please go to your local hardware store and pick them up. And if you do have them, please be sure to check them and make sure they're working properly. Unfortunately, once these detectors are installed, they usually become an afterthought.



Carbon monoxide detectors are constantly active, even when the alarm isn't ringing. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas. Even with low to moderate levels of exposure, carbon monoxide poisoning can occur and lead to neurological damage and even death. Carbon monoxide detectors usually have a life span between five and seven years, but it is recommended that these detectors be replaced every five years since their ability to detect carbon monoxide can become questionable at that point. The batteries in these detectors should be changed every six months. Many people find a great time to do this is during daylight savings time, when you're turning the clock forward or back. This is a great way to help you to remember to change the batteries during the same time each year. When changing the batteries, you should also vacuum the inside of the detectors to make sure all dust and debris is removed and not interfering with the functioning of the detectors. A carbon monoxide detector should be found on each floor of your home.

According to the National Fire Protection Association three of every five home fire deaths happen without smoke alarms or in those homes that had non-functioning smoke alarms. The death rate was twice as high in homes that did not have smoke alarms or nonfunctioning smoke alarms. You should test your smoke detectors monthly if your detector is battery operated, and these batteries should be changed yearly. Most people find it helpful to change these batteries on the same day each year, often times on New Year's Day or some other Holiday. Smoke detectors should be found on every floor of your home, including basements and attics, as well as inside each bedroom and outside each bedroom area. Smoke detectors usually have a life span of eight to ten years. If the detectors are equipped with a titanium battery or are hard-wired they can last up to ten years. After ten years, the entire unit should be replaced.

The bottom line is that these detectors are not just put up and forgotten about. You need to stay on top of these devices and check frequently if they are properly working. These small detectors could be a huge part of saving you and your families lives.

5 Ways to Reduce Holiday Stress



The Holidays can often provide an opportunity to spend time with family and friends, take some time away from work or head out for a winter getaway. Many people look forward to this season, as well as the start of a new year. For some though, the Holidays can bring about stress and anxiety, so many in fact that a poll by the American Psychological Association shows that 8 out of 10 people anticipate increased stress over the Holidays. The Mayo Clinic reports that this increase in stress and anxiety could even lead to depression. Depression is an unwelcome guest during the Holiday season and in reality, it may not be the only unwelcome guest to come into your home.

Although the hustle and bustle of the Holidays can bring about stress and anxiety it is also a time to enjoy family and friends and all we have to celebrate and be grateful for. Here are five tips to help reduce stress during this Holiday season.

SET A SPENDING BUDGET

Unfortunately, the Holiday season and spending money go hand-in-hand, and it seems that spending money during the Holidays is pretty much unavoidable. You can however, control how much you spend. Many people feel pressured and stressed over the Holidays because of financial pressures. Planning ahead, reviewing your finances and coming up with a realistic budget are all important aspects to help to reduce stress. Buying gifts should never affect your ability to pay bills, nor should it result in credit card debt. It's hard to not let others pressure you into spending more than you can afford. While using a credit card may seem tempting while shopping, this may only make matters worse after the Holidays. This could potentially put you into debt for months or even years. It is crucial to decide on a maximum amount you would like to spend and stick to that budget. Something that may help is having conversations with family and friends and deciding on an amount to spend on each other, this may also be the year you get creative with gifts and decide on a gift that doesn't cost money. A friend or family may actually appreciate spending time with you more than an actual material item. This could be as simple as watching a friend or family members child or children so they can enjoy some time with their partner.

GET PLENTY OF EXERCISE

Being active can elevate your mood and help cope with stress, especially during the Holiday season. Any type of exercise or physical activity can help release endorphins to your brain causing you to be less stressed and anxious. Although it is hard during the hustle and bustle of the Holiday season, but try and give yourself just 30 minutes a day, or even 30 minutes a day for a minimum of

three times per week. Finding activities that work best for you and your lifestyle can make those 30 minutes a day just a little bit easier. Some examples can include, walking, running, jogging, swimming, biking, yoga, even something as fun and easy as a pick-up sports game with friends.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Having family in from out of town and hosting family festivities can add even more stress to your already full plate. Make sure you give yourself realistic expectations as to not set yourself up for failure. It's okay to ask for help, you don't have the weather the storm alone. Not every plate and decoration has to be perfect. It may be the case that hosting Holidays have just become too much for you, it's okay to tell family and friends no, instead of saying yes and adding more stress and anxiety to your life. It's important to be aware of your limitations and it is perfectly okay to say no, believe it or not, many people will understand.

TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

During the holidays it's rare that you even think of yourself, but it's actually very important to not only think of yourself, but to take time for yourself. Did you know that even spending 15 minutes alone can make a world of a difference? Engaging in activities that you enjoy can help you handle your crazy schedule that the Holidays bring. For example, listen to some relaxing music, go on a walk to gather your thoughts, read a book, book a facial or massage for yourself. In reality, you could partake in any activity to take your mind off your to do list!

PICK YOUR BATTLES

Every family and every family member have their own personalities, and all being under one roof can be stressful in itself. Especially if a certain relative really knows how to ruffle your feathers and know exactly what to say to you to get under your skin. If you allow this to happen you could potentially be stressed out the entire time. Although often times its easier said than done, it's best to put aside your differences and agree to disagree. During the joyous Holiday season, don't let others put you down, if you can learn to let go and pick your battles you will have less anxiety and stress.

These few easy and fairly practical tips can help you cope and hopefully minimize your stress and anxiety during this holiday season. For some, these tips may not be enough and speaking to a doctor or mental health professional may be better for you. These professionals may offer more ideas to cope with the stress and anxiety of the Holiday season and help keep a smile on your face when surrounded by family and friends.

December is National Safe Toys and Gifts Month

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has created a booming toy safety system, by requiring testing by independent and third-party testing laboratories all around the world. According to the CPSC, in 2010 hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 251,7000 toy-related injuries. Of those 251,700, 72% were of those that were less than 15 years of age. In 2007, toymakers recalled over 19 million toys worldwide due to small magnets and lead paint. The CPSC administer some of the most stringent toy standards in the world. This helps to stop dangerous toys before they even have the opportunity to get into children hands.



Prevent Blindness America has declared December as National Safe Toys and Gifts Month. This group encourages all to think about the toys they give children, and make sure those toys truly suits the age they are buying for, as well as that child's skill and ability, this is especially crucial for children under the age of three.

Safety tips and guidelines to keep in mind this holiday season (and beyond)

- Before purchasing any toys, inspect them.** Try avoiding those toys that have parts that shoot or fly off. While examining toys make sure there are no sharp edges or points, and the toy itself is sturdy and can withstand breaks.
- In small children **balloons** can cause them to choke and or suffocate. Children under the age of eight should be kept away from deflated balloons, and once a balloon is broken the balloon and all pieces should be discarded immediately.
- When your child receives a toy be sure to inspect** age requirements, skill level, and how appropriate it is for them in the stage they're in developmentally before allowing them to play with it.
- For children under the age of three, **avoid toys with small or many parts that may cause choking.**
- "ATSM" is an important abbreviation to remember. This means the toy has met the American Society for Testing and Material standards. **Look for labels that can assure you that the toy has passed the inspection.**
- It is important that helmets are worn at all times when riding scooters, bikes, motorized toys, or other ride on toys.** Other safety gear should also be worn, and it is crucial to ensure that all helmets are not only worn properly, but are the correct size and fit the child correctly.
- Do NOT give children toys with small parts, for example button batteries and magnets.** If ingested, these can cause serious injuries or in some cases even death, especially to young children who tend to put things in their mouth. If a toy and or piece of a toy can fit inside a toilet paper roll, it is not appropriate for children under the age of three.
- Do NOT give children toys with ropes, heating elements or cords.**
- Do NOT give crayons or markers to children unless labeled "nontoxic".**

Recipe Corner

Holiday Morning French Toast



Holiday Morning French Toast is perfect for a special holiday morning. It can be prepared the night before, refrigerated and simply baked in the morning.

The aroma lets your family know that they are in for a real treat!

20 min - Prep Time 50 Min Cook time 317 - Calories
9 Ingredients 12 Servings

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Cup packed brown sugar | ½ Cup dried cranberries |
| ½ Cup (1 stick) butter, melted | 1 loaf Italian bread, |
| 3 teaspoons cinnamon, ground, | cut into 1-inch slices |
| divided | 6 eggs |
| 3 tart apples, such as Granny Smith, | 1 ½ Cups milk |
| peeled, cored and thinly sliced | 1 Tablespoon pure vanilla extract |

Preparation

- Mix brown sugar, butter and 1 teaspoon of the cinnamon in 13 X 9-inch baking dish. Add apples and cranberries; stir to coat well. Spread evenly in bottom of baking dish. Arrange slices of bread on top.
- Mix eggs, milk, vanilla, and remaining 2 teaspoons cinnamon until well blended. Pour mixture over bread, soaking bread completely. Cover with foil. Refrigerate 4 hours or up to 24 hours.
- Preheat oven to 375° F. Bake, covered, 45 minutes. Uncover and bake 5 minutes longer. Let stand 5 minutes before serving. For an eye-catching presentation, loosen edges with small knife. Invert onto larger serving platter.

RECIPE BY MCCORMICK



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Simple Tips to Stay Fit This Winter

Don't let the cold weather get you down this winter! Often times the brisk winter air keeps people from venturing outside during those cold and frigid winter months. Here are some

simple tips to keep you moving, motivated and rising above the cold!

1. Find a workout buddy – everyone needs a little extra motivation in the winter. Working out with a partner/friend can help to hold you accountable and could even bring about some friendly competition.
2. Try that new workout class you've been dying to try! When you engage in new activities and exercises it tends to engage excitement making it that much easier to step out into the cold and step into the gym.
3. Set a goal! Maybe you finally signed up for that half marathon you've been thinking about doing for months, maybe your planning a tropical vacation in the spring and you want to get in the best possible shape, or maybe your entering that fitness competition you've been too scared to try before. Goals will help you stay focused, and less likely to slack off this winter.
4. New clothes = instant motivation. Showing off your new sneakers or new fitness gear and testing it out is a great way to put some pep in your step and provide you with a little more motivation than normal. Treat yourself!
5. Take advantage of activities that could only be done in the winter months and get the kids involved! These activities can be as simple and easy as building a snowman and sledding or as intense as skiing, cross country skiing and snowboarding.
6. Hire a trainer to keep you motivated during the winter months. Although expensive, the price may be worth it, especially to get you to the gym, because you are spending so much money. Trainers are there to help you, push you through a work out and even add some extra motivation.
7. If you have a dog make a commitment to walk them even during those cold winter months. Although some dogs are picky when it comes to the cold, most will appreciate you putting in the effort walking them, and walking is not only benefiting you, but them as well.
8. Try an indoor activity that you may not normally think of – such as rock climbing or swimming at an indoor pool. These options are not only both great exercises but a great way to engage the family and have them join you for a fun workout and adventure.