

Mental Health Awareness Month

October is Mental Health Awareness Month, a perfect time to check in on how you're feeling emotionally and mentally. With the hustle of work, school, and holiday preparations approaching, remember that it's okay to prioritize your mental health.

Why Mental Health Matters:

- **Reduces Stress:** Taking care of your mental health helps manage stress and build resilience, improving your ability to cope with life's challenges.
- **Enhances Productivity:** A healthy mind improves concentration, focus, and problem-solving skills.
- **Strengthens Relationships:** Prioritizing mental well-being can lead to healthier, more fulfilling relationships with others.
- **Boosts Physical Health:** Mental and physical health are closely linked. Good mental health can reduce the risk of physical issues like heart disease or a weakened immune system.

Common Mental Health Challenges:

- **Anxiety Disorders:** Generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and panic disorders are some of the most common mental health conditions.
- **Depression:** Persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest in activities once enjoyed.
- **Stress & Burnout:** Emotional exhaustion and overwhelm, often related to work, family responsibilities, or other stressors.
- **Insomnia or Sleep Issues:** Sleep disturbances are often linked to mental health struggles and can further impact emotional well-being.

How to Prioritize Mental Health

1. Practice Self-Care

Take time each day to focus on self-care, whether it's a hobby, a mindfulness practice, or simply spending time doing something you enjoy. Even 10-15 minutes of "me-time" can make a big difference.

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MENTAL HEALTH

Signs You May Need Help

- Constant feelings of sadness or hopelessness.
- Withdrawal from social activities or loved ones.
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions.
- Changes in sleep or appetite.
- Feelings of being overwhelmed, irritable, or anxious.
- If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, don't hesitate to reach out for support. Mental health matters, and so do you.

2. Mindfulness & Meditation

Mindfulness helps you stay present in the moment, which can reduce anxiety and promote calmness. Meditation can also be a great tool for stress relief.

3. Get Active

Physical exercise is not only beneficial for the body but also for the mind. Activities like walking, running, or yoga release endorphins that boost your mood and energy.

4. Talk About It

Open up to someone you trust about how you're feeling. Whether it's a friend, family member, or professional, talking about your struggles can provide relief and help you feel supported.

5. Seek Professional Help

If you're feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed, it's important to seek professional help. Therapists, counselors, and mental health professionals can offer guidance and treatment tailored to your needs.

Mental Health Resources:

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): Offers support and information on mental health conditions.
- Crisis Text Line: Text "HELLO" to 741741 for free, 24/7 crisis support.
- Therapy & Counseling Services: Speak to a mental health professional for personalized care.

Nutrition Tips for Fall

As the days get shorter and the weather cools, fall offers an abundance of nutritious, seasonal produce that can support your health and well-being. Eating seasonally not only provides the freshest flavors but also ensures you're getting a variety of nutrients that your body craves during the cooler months. Here are some essential fall foods and nutrition tips to incorporate into your diet this season.

Embrace Fall superfoods! Autumn brings a variety of nutrient-packed produce that can nourish your body from the inside out. Here are a few fall favorites:

Pumpkins - Benefits: Rich in fiber and beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A, supporting healthy skin, immune function, and vision. How to Enjoy: Roast pumpkin for soups, stews, or blend into smoothies. Don't forget the seeds—pumpkin seeds are a great source of zinc!



Garlicky Sautéed Greens

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic (sliced thin)
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 ½ pounds leafy greens (kale, chard, turnip, beet, etc.)
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

Instructions:

- Warm the olive oil in a wide skillet over medium heat, and then stir in the garlic and crushed red pepper. Cook the garlic until fragrant, about 2 minutes, and then toss in the greens until well-coated with olive oil.
- Pour in the chicken broth, and let the greens simmer until crisp-tender and most of the liquid has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle with vinegar and adjust seasoning with salt, then serve.

Sweet Potatoes - Benefits: High in vitamins A and C, antioxidants, and fiber. These starchy vegetables help maintain healthy eyes, skin, and immune function.

How to Enjoy: Roast them as a side dish, mash them for a healthier alternative to potatoes, or use them in baked goods.

Apples - Benefits: Packed with fiber (especially in the skin) and vitamin C apples promote digestive health and support the immune system.

How to Enjoy: Enjoy apples fresh as a snack, add them to salads, or bake them into pies and crisps for a seasonal treat.

Brussels Sprouts - Benefits: High in vitamin K, folate, and fiber, Brussels sprouts support bone health and digestion.

How to Enjoy: Roast them with olive oil and garlic, or toss them into stir-fries for a crunchy, nutrient-dense side.

Spice It Up!

Spices are a great way to add flavor and health benefits to your fall meals. Many fall spices also offer powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties:

- Cinnamon: Adds warmth and flavor to oatmeal, smoothies, or baked goods while helping regulate blood sugar levels.
- Nutmeg & Cloves: Rich in antioxidants, these spices are perfect for flavoring fall desserts or adding to warm beverages like chai tea.
- Ginger: Known for its anti-inflammatory properties, ginger can soothe digestion and enhance immunity. Add it to soups, teas, or stir-fries for a spicy kick.

Stay Hydrated with Seasonal Beverages

Even though the weather is cooler, staying hydrated is still important. Swap out sugary drinks for healthier, seasonal alternatives:

- Herbal Teas: Warm herbal teas like chamomile, ginger, or cinnamon are hydrating and soothing.
- Infused Water: Add slices of apple, cinnamon sticks, or fresh ginger to water for a flavorful twist.
- Pumpkin-Spice Smoothies: Blend pumpkin purée, almond milk, a banana, and some spices like cinnamon and nutmeg for a nutrient-rich fall smoothie.

Support Your Immune System

Fall marks the start of cold and flu season, so focus on foods that strengthen your immune system. Incorporate the following immune-boosting ingredients:



Baked Apple Slices

Ingredients

- 1 Fuji apple large, unpeeled
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter melted
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon divided

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a square 8-inch rimmed baking dish with high-heat-resistant parchment paper.
- Cut the apple into twelve ¼-inch slices, discarding the core.
- Place the apple slices in the prepared pan. Drizzle them with the melted butter and use your hands to coat them. Arrange them in the pan in a single layer.
- Sprinkle the tops of the slices with half the cinnamon. Bake the apples for 10 minutes.
- Flip the apple pieces and sprinkle them with the remaining cinnamon.
- Keep baking them until golden-brown and tender, about 10 more minutes. Drizzle with the pan juices and serve.

- **Citrus Fruits:** Though more typical of winter, you can find some seasonal citrus like early grapefruits and lemons, which are rich in vitamin C.
- **Garlic:** Has antimicrobial properties that help fight off infections. Add it to your soups, sauces, and stir-fries.
- **Leafy Greens:** Kale, Swiss chard, and spinach are still in season in early fall. They're packed with vitamins A, C, and K, as well as antioxidants.

Batch Cook for Convenience

Fall is a great time to embrace batch cooking. Prepare large portions of soups, stews, or casseroles that you can refrigerate or freeze for quick, healthy meals throughout the week. This will help you avoid unhealthy takeout and processed foods when life gets busy.

Staying Active as the Weather Cools Down

As the crisp autumn air sets in and the days grow shorter, it can be tempting to cozy up indoors. However, staying active during the fall is essential for maintaining both physical and mental well-being. Here are some fun and effective ways to keep moving and make the most of the beautiful season.

Embrace Outdoor Activities

Fall's cooler weather and scenic beauty make it the perfect time to get outside and enjoy nature.

Hiking

Why: The changing leaves and cooler temperatures make hiking a relaxing and invigorating way to stay fit. It's a great full-body workout that engages your legs, core, and even your upper body if you're using trekking poles.

How: Find local trails or nature parks and enjoy the fall foliage. Bring a friend or family member along to make it more social.

Walking or Running

Why: Walking and running are simple, effective ways to stay active. The fresh autumn air can boost your mood and energy levels.

How: Take a walk through your neighborhood or nearby park, or join a local running group to keep you motivated. You can also use apps like Strava to track your progress and challenge yourself.

Cycling

Why: Biking is a low-impact exercise that strengthens your



Slow Cooker Chili

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon coconut or olive oil
- 1.5 pounds ground beef
- 1 medium white onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 – 16oz can dark kidney beans
- 1 – 14.5oz can fire roasted diced tomatoes
- 2 – 4oz can diced green chiles
- 1 cup chicken or beef broth
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1/2 tablespoon cumin
- 2 teaspoons salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Instructions:

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add oil and then ground beef. Brown the beef and drain any excess fat. Add diced onion and minced garlic and cook for four to six more minutes. Transfer ground beef mixture to your slow cooker. Add in the kidney beans, diced tomatoes, green chiles, spices, bay leaf, and broth. Stir everything together until well combined. Cover and cook on high for five to six hours or on low for seven to eight hours. Serve garnished with your favorite toppings.



Partners in Prevention

Taking Health & Safety to Higher Ground

lower body and improves cardiovascular health. Fall weather provides the perfect cool breeze for a refreshing ride.

How: Hit local bike trails or explore your town on two wheels. If you're looking for a challenge, try some hilly routes to increase your intensity.

Take Advantage of Seasonal Sports and Activities

Autumn offers some unique opportunities for seasonal activities that can keep you moving while enjoying the fall spirit.

Strength Training at Home

Why: Strength training builds muscle, boosts metabolism, and enhances bone health. It's also easy to do indoors with minimal equipment.

How: Use bodyweight exercises like squats, lunges, push-ups, and planks. If you have dumbbells or resistance bands, incorporate those into your routine. You can also find online videos or apps that guide you through effective home workouts.

Indoor Sports or Fitness Classes

Why: Joining an indoor sports league or attending group fitness classes is a great way to stay active while staying social.

How: Sign up for activities like basketball, indoor volleyball, or rock climbing. Many gyms also offer classes like spinning, Zumba, or circuit training that can keep your heart pumping.

Stay Motivated with a Fall Fitness Challenge

One of the best ways to stay active is to set a goal or participate in a fitness challenge that keeps you accountable.

Step Challenges: Aim to hit a certain number of steps each day. Use a fitness tracker or app to monitor your progress.

Distance Goals: Set a goal to walk, run, or bike a certain number of miles by the end of the month. This can help you stay consistent and motivated.

Charity Races or Fun Runs: Many communities host fall charity races, such as Turkey Trots or Harvest Runs. Participating in a race, whether virtual or in-person, can give you something to work toward.



Layer Up for Outdoor Fitness

Cooler temperatures shouldn't keep you from staying active outdoors!

Layer Your Clothing:

- Start with moisture-wicking materials to keep sweat off your skin.
- Add insulating layers for warmth, and finish with a waterproof or wind-resistant jacket to protect against the elements.
- Wear Bright Colors: Since daylight hours are shorter, it's important to wear bright or reflective clothing to stay visible during early morning or late evening workouts.