

2022

# Wellness Articles

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JAN  
2022

# Get Ready, Go!

## *Physical Activity 101*

The new year can often be a time for making resolutions or setting goals we'd like to achieve. Fitness goals are very common topic that goals are created around. Physical activity is one component of having and maintaining a healthy lifestyle but what exactly does that look like and why is it so important?

There are many benefits of regular physical activity, including:

- Reduce risk for chronic diseases such as: Heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and more! Disease risk reduction can come within days or weeks of regular exercise.
- Cancer prevention – bladder, breast, colon, endometrium, esophagus, kidney, stomach, and lung
- Sleep better: this comes from moderate to vigorous activity. Strong evidence shows that physical activity helps lessen the time it takes to fall asleep and less time one is awake at night. Physical exercise can also lessen sleepiness during the day.
- Increased quality of life
- Improve physical function: able to carry out daily tasks more easily
- Cognitive function: Improved academic performance for youth. For adults may improve memory, attention, and other functions.

Two main types of physical activity you want to be sure to incorporate into your daily lifestyle are aerobic activity and muscle strength activity.

### **Aerobic Activity**

Aerobic exercise is any type of cardiovascular conditioning. It can include activities like brisk walking, swimming, running, or cycling. You probably know it as “cardio.” By definition, aerobic exercise means “with oxygen.” Your breathing and heart rate will increase during aerobic activities

Continued on next page



JAN  
2022



## Cont'd

### **Muscle strength Activity**

Any type of activity that involves lifting, pushing, or pulling that puts an overload on the muscle. These activities should involve all the major muscle groups: legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms.

You can do resistance training with free weights or machines; but you can also use resistance bands or your own body weight but the aim of at a minimum 2 times per week, working all major muscle groups.

The key to physical activity is to remember to move more and sit less. Researchers shows that even if you do your recommended amounts of exercise, if you spend the rest of the day sitting or engaging in sedentary behavior your risk of cardiovascular disease increases as well increasing your risk of premature death from all causes.

The risk related to sedentary behavior (sitting, watching TV, low levels of movement) is dependent on how much moderate to vigorous exercise a person is doing. The Physical Activity Guidelines states that if you engage in high volumes of moderate to vigorous activity that the risk from sitting may be not be relevant. However, if you have little sitting time but do not engage in moderate to vigorous activity then the risks are not eliminated. Therefore, it is important to decrease time spent in sedentary behavior and increase the amount of time spent in moderate to vigorous activity. Here are a few ways to increase your activity throughout the day:

- Take a break that incorporates movement
- Park in a further parking spot
- Take the stairs, not the elevator
- Move when talking on the phone
- Pick up a new active hobby, such as gardening or cycling
- Play with your pet! Pets are proven to increase activity level in their owners, keeping you and your pet happy and healthy

**FEB  
2022**

# Keeping Your Heart Healthy

February is heart health month and one way to keep your heart healthy is by making sure you have a healthy blood pressure. Here are 5 simple ways to keep your blood pressure and your heart healthy.

## 5 Tips to Keep your Heart Healthy

- **Diet:** make sure to eat well balanced foods including whole grains, a variety of colors, and protein
- **Exercise:** adding in movement throughout the day, even a simple walking break is good for your heart
- **Alcohol consumption:** reduce or limit that amount of alcohol you consume
- **Smoking:** reduce or limit how much you smoke
- **Stress:** work to manage your stress levels, this could be through a hobby, talking with friends, exercise, meditation or getting outdoors

MAR  
2022



# Ten Tips for Holding onto Happiness

Happiness – it's a feeling that many of us strive to have but in life we aren't always happy. The next time you find yourself feeling down, try one of these strategies for picking yourself back up again:

- **Rediscover your joy.** Revisit a hobby or activity that you used to enjoy but haven't had much time for lately — it could bring back some of the feelings of happiness attached to it.
- **Connect with nature.** Surrounding yourself with the beauty and tranquility of the natural world can help reduce your stress and give you a greater sense of perspective.
- **Journal your gratitude.** Taking some time every day to write down the things you're grateful for can make you appreciate them more. It also gives you a resource for those moments when you're having trouble finding the positive in your life.
- **Say thank you.** Properly thanking someone who has helped you out or added to your life can make you both feel better about yourselves. Try calling up or writing a nice note to someone you care about to let them know you appreciate them.
- **Keep in touch.** It's easy to get distracted and lose touch with those you love. Making the effort to stay connected to friends and family can help you hold onto feelings of joy and togetherness.
- **Be more mindful.** Meditation can help you tune out the fears and anxieties of life. Try taking a few moments here and there to get away from the distractions of your day and tune into your senses.
- **Help others out.** Volunteering for a cause you care about can give you a sense of purpose and fulfillment that lasts long after your shift.
- **Get more exercise.** Physical activity isn't just good for your body — it may improve your mental well-being too, reducing your levels of stress, anger, anxiety and depression.
- **Limit social media.** When you use social media, it can be very easy to unfavorably compare your own life to the curated images you receive of other people's. Stepping away now and then can help you regain perspective and feel better about yourself.
- **Accept your feelings.** Giving yourself time to recognize and process negative emotions, and to remember that feelings come and go naturally, can help you return to a happy place more easily.

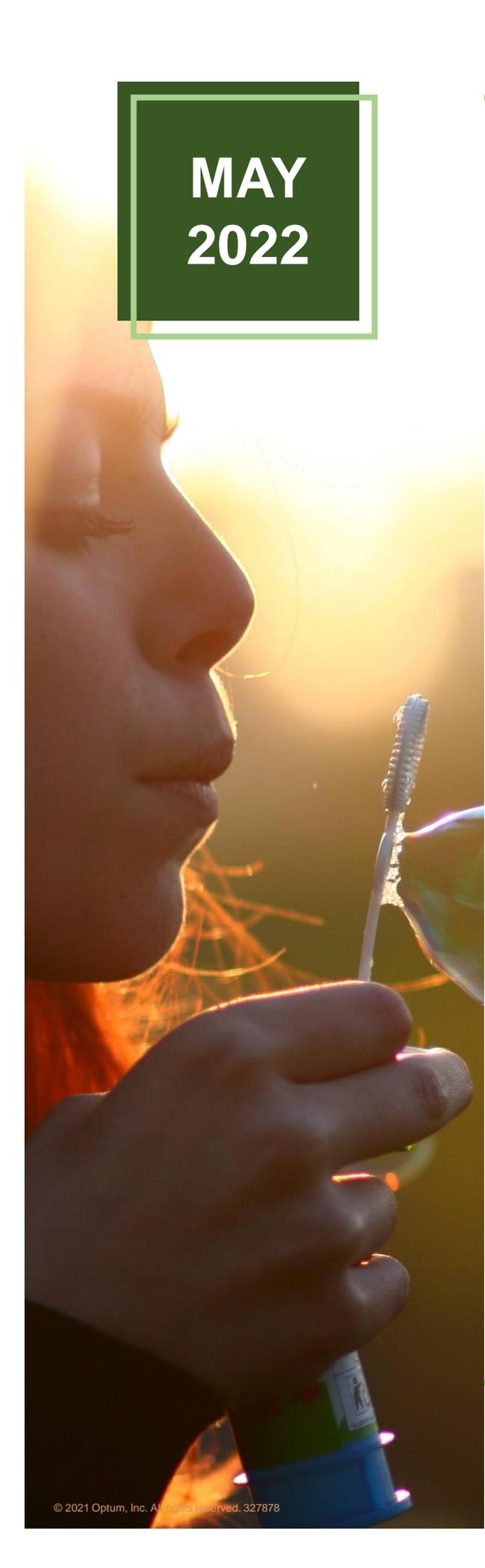


APR  
2022

## Keeping yourself and the planet health through sustainability

Sustainability isn't just about the health and well-being of the planet; it's about the health and well-being of people. From the air we breathe to the food and water we consume; the environment impacts human health. Take some time to take care of not only yourself but the environment at the same time through:

- Taking advantage of the outdoors when possible
- Recycling – while there are some rules and guidelines for recycling, it doesn't have to be difficult.
- Be a conscious buyer – assess and evaluate different purchasing options before buying larger items.
- Shopping locally when able – this not only applies to local produce and food items but can you buy from a local small businesses when gift giving
- Composting – The term “compost” refers to any organic material added to soil in order to aid plant growth. A substantial amount of the waste that a typical household produces could be used for composting — particularly yard waste and table scraps

A woman is shown in profile, blowing bubbles. The background is a warm, golden sunset with rays of light. The bubbles are in various stages of being blown, some large and some small. The woman's hand is visible, holding a bubble wand.

**MAY  
2022**

## Mental Health Awareness Month

As an essential aspect of overall wellbeing, mental health in the workplace deserves more attention. Mental Health Awareness Month is an opportunity to have conversations that normalize being proactive with self-care, raising awareness about the importance of mental health, and promoting acceptance, support, prevention, and recovery from mental illness conditions.

Everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health. Just as common, 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime. Like other medical conditions, mental health conditions are treatable. To support and lean into conversations around mental health and wellbeing, here are a few ways to get started with taking care of your mental health:

- Pick up an old hobby or start a new one
- Connect with nature
- Keep a gratitude journal
- Reach out for help if needed, remember it's okay to not be okay





JUN  
2022

## Financial Literacy

Budgeting, financial independence, savings, retirement funds. What do you think of and feel when you read these words? Maybe excitement, relief, anxious, or more commonly stressed. Unfortunately, stress about money and finances may have a significant impact on Americans' lives. Nearly 72% of adults report feeling stressed about money at least some of the time and nearly 25% say they experience extreme stress about money.

Financial wellbeing, often described as the state of being wherein a person can fully meet current and ongoing financial obligations, can feel secure in their financial future and is able to make choices that allow them to enjoy life. While this may seem like a big goal, understand that just like your personal health, financial wellbeing is specific to each person.

The American Psychological Association (APA) recognizes financial stress as the leading cause of unhealthy behaviors like smoking, weight gain, and alcohol and drug abuse. Other behaviors linked to financial stress are gambling and overextending credit balances. Each time an individual turns to these temporary stress relievers, the APA concludes that the stress returns and often at even greater intensity.<sup>2</sup>

Whether you have financial stress or not, there are always opportunities to improve, just like any area of wellness. Follow these tips to for a healthier financial plan:

- Budget your money: Here are 4 simple steps to help you get started on a budget:
  - Step 1: Figure out your goals
  - Step 2: Calculate your income and expenses
  - Step 3: See what's left
  - Step 4: Monitor your budget
- Save for emergencies: Expect the unexpected and plan for financial emergencies
- Seek guidance: A financial planner may help you develop an overall strategy for approaching your financial goals. Check out the several financial AWESome Offerings to help in this journey and offer free financial planning
- Plan for retirement: Establish your retirement needs and goals
  - Save early and often
  - Establish the proper retirement savings accounts



JUL  
2022



## Family Wellbeing

Often the focus in wellness is on one's individual health and what they can do to support their health, but a key component is the support systems around them. We would be remised if we didn't focus on the value of the family system. Whether it's your given or chosen family, who we surround ourselves with can have an impact on our health.

Take time this month to check-in on your family and their health, are there things you can do to support one another in each other's wellbeing journey? Can you start a new tradition to as a family and create lifelong memories? Get creative in how you and your family can support one another.

Here are a few ideas on keeping the whole family health and well:

- **Create a family safety plan.** Plan should include emergency contacts, evacuation plans, meet up location and other key contacts.
- **Preventative care.** Ensure that all family members are up to date on age-appropriate preventative screenings including physicals, dental and vision exams
- **Spend time connecting as a family.** Find an activity that everyone can join in on, for example: playing board games, getting outdoors, taking a trip





**AUG  
2022**

## Sleep, the missing link to better health

Do you ever feel like you just can't catch up on sleep? Or don't have enough time in to get enough sleep? Sleep is an essential function that allows your mind and body time to recover, recharge and leaving you ready for the day. Not only does sleep help your recover and recharge but sleep also helps build up your immune and plays a major role on your mental wellbeing.

Here are a few tips to help improve your sleep:

- Turn off any electronics a few hours prior to going to sleep. The blue light that is emitted from devices can cause your brain to stay active when it should be winding down
- Make sure you have a comfortable sleep environment – including [your mattress](#), [pillows](#), [sheets](#) and optimal sleep temperature of 65°F
- Consider a “screen ban” on televisions, computers and tablets, cell phones, and other electronic devices in your bedroom.
- Abstain from caffeine, alcohol, and large meals in the hours leading up to bedtime.
- Establish a sleep routine. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day – even on weekends.

Listen to relaxing music or storytelling to help fall asleep



SEPT  
2022

# Learning the Practice of Mindful Eating

Ever finished an entire bag of chips without realizing how much you were eating? Not paying attention to how much you're eating or when you're full can be considered mindless eating – and it can contribute to overeating and weight gain. But there are ways of giving each bite the attention it deserves.

## Benefits of mindfulness

Mindfulness is the concept of being fully aware of what's going on in and around you in the present moment. Mindful eating applies that concept to eating, and looks at why, when, where, what and how you eat, and your feelings as you do. Mindful eating can help you eat more slowly and control your cravings. Here are some potential benefits of eating mindfully:

- Your brain has time realize you've eaten enough, which can take about 20 minutes.
- You may eat less food and fewer calories.
- You can choose more mindfully to nosh on healthy food
- You can enjoy the experience of your meal and savor every bite.

## Hints for mindful eating

- Take small bites and chew slowly. Finish swallowing before pick up your food again.
- Put your utensils down for 10 to 15 seconds after every few bites.
- Use your senses to savor your food. Notice how it looks and smells. Be aware of the texture of each bite, and how it tastes.
- Be sure to eat in a calm place, a place where you won't likely be distracted. Avoid reading, and turn off your TV, computer and phone. Pay attention to what you are eating.
- Don't judge yourself or your reaction to the food. Just ask yourself: Am I eating too quickly? Am I still hungry?
- Set a timer for 20 minutes, using the entire time to eat your meal.
- Appreciate the meal as an opportunity to care for your body through healthy eating.

Next time you find yourself eating without really thinking, take a breath and focus on eating more mindfully. Your body will be happy that you did.

OCT  
2022

# NEWS

## Exercise for Improved Back Health

Did you know that 80% of people will, at some point, experience back pain? Globally, it is one of the leading causes of disability. While injuries and accidents can be responsible for chronic back pain, it's often the little things you do (or don't do) on a daily basis that can contribute to it. Arthritis, poor desk posture, weight management issues and even psychological stress can create or contribute to back pain.

Luckily, getting active is one of the many ways in which you can support your back health.

### Strengthen Your Core

Your core is made up of multiple muscle groups that support your back and assist with movement. It's important to build core strength through exercises that promote **better movement patterns and endurance** in order to reduce pain in the future.

Exercises like the bird dog, bridge, plank and dead bug can be useful in a back-strengthening program.

### Embrace an Active Lifestyle

Living a healthy, active lifestyle can also support back health. Engaging in regular low-impact cardiovascular activities like swimming, walking or cycling not only builds cardiovascular fitness, but also aids in pain and weight management. You could also try mind-body exercises, like yoga or tai chi, which can help with stretching, strength and stress relief.

### Key Tips

- Do your best to meet, or work up to, the minimum activity guideline of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week, coupled with two full-body muscle-strengthening sessions.
- Avoid sedentary behaviors, which can contribute to back pain. Remind yourself to regularly get up and walk, or set daily step goals for yourself that you can do before, during or after work.

For more information on maintaining a healthy back, consult with your primary care provider or qualified movement specialist, such as a physical therapist or exercise specialist, for individual recommendations.

*Talk with your doctor before significantly increasing your activity level. Ask about the amounts and types of activities that may be best for you.*

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**PETSMART**

NOV  
2022

# NEWS

## UV and You: Protecting Your Eyes

You may already know that the sun's ultraviolet (or UV) rays can be damaging to your skin — but it's important to note that they also pose a danger to your eyes. Excessive exposure to UV rays can increase your risk of:

- **photokeratitis** — sometimes known as a “sunburn of the eye” or “snow blindness” — a temporary condition with symptoms such as red eye, a gritty feeling in your eyes and light sensitivity
- **pterygium**, or “surfer’s eye,” a tissue growth on the conjunctiva (the clear covering over the white part of your eye) that may affect your vision if it extends to cover your cornea
- later-in-life eye diseases such as **macular degeneration**, **cataracts** and **certain cancers of the eye**

Luckily, there are many simple choices you can make to help reduce the harm caused by UV rays to your eyes.

Some tips include:

- Wear a wide-brimmed hat when you spend time outdoors
- Find high-quality sunglasses that:
  - block all or nearly all UV-A and UV-B rays
  - screen at least 75% of visible light
  - have lenses free of distortion or fabrication errors
  - are close-fitting or wraparound
- If you wear contact lenses, consider using ones that feature UV protection (though you should still wear them in conjunction with sunglasses)
- Go for regular dilated eye exams, which can help you catch eye diseases early on before they may have presented symptoms

Remember, these tips are useful for people of all ages — so if you're going out into the sun with your little ones, protect their eyes, too.

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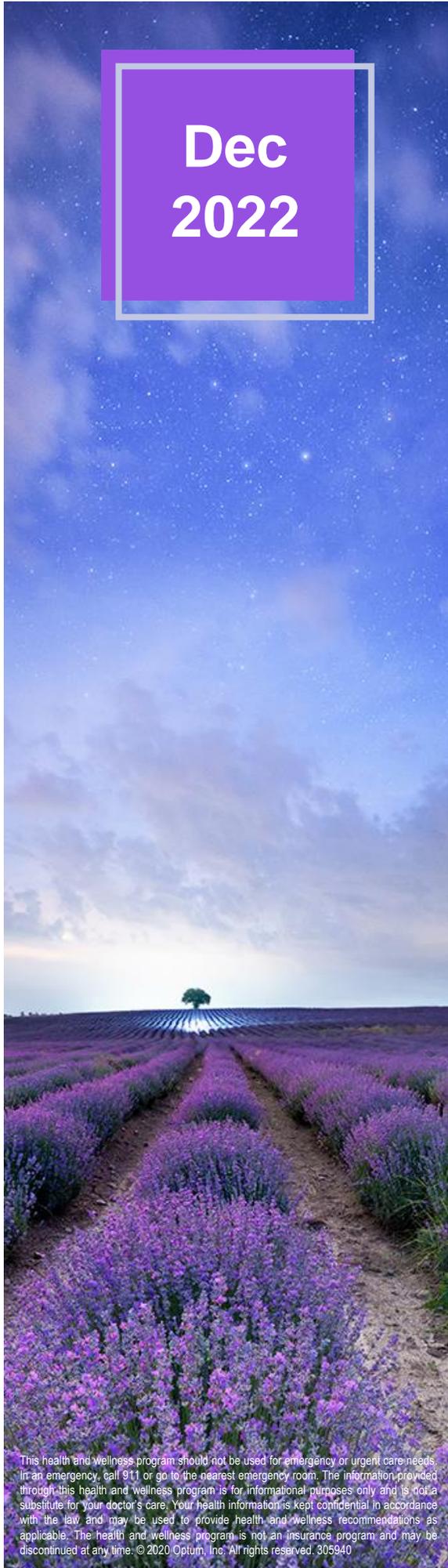
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Dec  
2022

# NEWS

## Stress Management

The next time you find yourself feeling the squeeze of stress, try one of these strategies:

**Practice good sleep habits:** Work on setting a sleep routine that allows for 7-9 hours of sleep each night.

**Press pause:** Give yourself permission to take a break, a deep breath or a few moments to just slow down.

**Try meditation:** It doesn't have to be complicated or lengthy, even short meditation sessions give you a chance to switch your focus.

**Get moving:** Regular exercise can help mitigate feelings of stress.

**Phone a friend:** Giving and receiving support from family and friends can make you both feel good.

Remember stress is normal. But if stress feels overwhelming and begins to affect your daily activities, or you feel that you need additional help managing stress, you may want to seek help from a health care professional.

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