



Wellness Works

SPRING 2025

Health Benefits of a Morning Routine

A morning routine offers a variety of health benefits that can set the tone for a productive and balanced day. Establishing a consistent routine in the morning helps regulate your body's internal clock, therefore improving your sleep quality. Morning routines can also help you manage your stress more effectively. An effective routine can reduce stress, which can lead to better mental health, more time to relax and less anxiety.

Here are some suggestions to include in your morning routine:

Ease into the Day

One of the key benefits of a morning routine is the positive impact it can have on mental well-being. Hitting the ground running is not an ideal way to start a stress-free day. Set your alarm a little bit earlier to give yourself time to ease into the day. When you wake up, open the curtains, and take a deep breath. This is a good opportunity to do some meditation, journaling, light stretching, or reading.

Get Active

Engaging in physical activity in the morning promotes the release of endorphins, the body's natural mood boosters. Try doing a yoga session, going for a brisk walk, strength training - whatever gets you going is fine! Exercise boosts energy, helps reduce feelings of fatigue and helps us focus throughout the day.



Eat Breakfast

Incorporating healthy habits like a nutritious breakfast (check out the super protein pancake recipe on page 7) fuels the body with essential nutrients and helps maintain stable energy levels. Don't forget to hydrate in the morning too!

A morning routine does not need to be complicated. Give it a try! Keep in mind that if you get up earlier to allow yourself this time, that you may need to go to bed earlier to get the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep.

What's Inside

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Learn ways that the Sydney app can make your life easier. Download today!

P5

Got a pain in the neck? Learn a simple stretch that may help alleviate that.

P6

Men's health matters – learn about 10 important health concerns for men.

Did You Know?



Spring is here and many of us have gardening on our mind! Gardening has many health benefits. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention spending 2 ½ hours each week working in the garden is considered moderate physical activity. This can help to reduce the chance of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, depression, and colon and breast cancers. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension is a great resource to learning about gardening. Visit: www.extension.umaine.edu.



Anthem's Sydney App

Anthem's Sydney App gives you one convenient place to keep track of your health and benefits. Your dependents can download the Sydney App as well, to access their specific health information. With the App you can:

- Access your ID card and share it with your provider
- Find an in-network Anthem provider
- View claims information and explanations of benefits
- Track plan usage including deductible, co-insurance, and copays
- Compare costs with different hospitals for frequently searched procedures
- Access virtual care through LiveHealth Online or K Health, where you can chat with a physician
- Receive wellness reminders and personalized recommendations
- Manage and order your prescriptions

Sydney is available on iPhone and Android and there is no cost to you to have your health information at your fingertips!



Do I need a referral?

None of Health Trust medical plans require that members obtain a referral from a primary care physician (PCP) in order to receive in-network specialty care. This **insurance referral** requirement was eliminated for members who participate in the Acadia and Baxter (formerly POS C and POS 200) plans effective January 1, 2025, to lessen burdens to receiving necessary care.

You no longer need to designate a PCP, and the Health Trust will not collect or maintain PCP data in our systems. It is not necessary that you let us know if your provider changes, and your PCP is no longer listed on your ID card.

However, some specialists may still require that you be seen by another provider before receiving specialty care. This is referred to as a **medical referral**, and these requirements are set by the providers.

While it is not needed for your insurance, we strongly encourage members to maintain a relationship with a primary care provider, which could be a doctor, nurse practitioner, physician assistant or other clinical provider. This will facilitate medical referrals and scheduling of appointments with specialists. Furthermore, having a relationship with a primary care provider has been shown to lead to better long-term health outcomes.

If you have questions or would like assistance in finding a primary care provider, please contact Health Trust Member Services at 1-800-852-8300 or via email at HTmemberservices@memun.org.





Do You Have a Growth Mindset or a Fixed Mindset?

Your mindset is a set of beliefs that shape how you make sense of the world and yourself. It influences how you think, feel, and behave in any given situation. It means that what you believe about yourself impacts your success or failure. Mindsets can influence how people behave in a wide range of situations. For example, as people encounter different situations, their mind triggers a specific mindset that then directly impacts their behavior in that situation.

Fixed versus Growth Mindsets

If you have a fixed mindset, you believe your abilities are fixed traits and therefore cannot be changed. You might also believe that your talent and intelligence alone lead to success, and effort is not required. On the flip side, if you have a growth mindset, you believe your talents and abilities can be developed over time through effort and persistence. People with this mindset don't necessarily believe that anyone can become Einstein or Mozart, but that everyone can get smarter or more talented if they work at it.

Have you ever wondered how your mindset was created? Research reveals two primary sources: *praise and labeling*, both of which occur in early childhood and carry on into adulthood. Research has found that kids behave differently depending on the type of praise they receive. They found that *personal praise* or praising a child's talents, or labeling them as "smart," promotes a fixed mindset. It sends a message to a child that they either have an ability or they don't, and that there is nothing they can do to change that fact. *Process praise*, on the other hand, emphasizes the effort a person puts in to accomplish a task. It implies their success is due to the effort and the strategy they use, both of which they can control and improve over time.

Here's an example of how they're different. When you were a child and received a good grade on a math test, personal praise might be, "See, you *are* good at math. You got an A on your

test." Process praise, on the other hand, might sound like: "I'm impressed by how hard you studied for your math test and the hard work shows." Adults can pivot and make changes with their children by taking steps to ensure that they develop growth mindsets by praising efforts not results. By focusing on the process rather than the outcome, adults can help kids and themselves understand that their efforts, hard work, and dedication can lead to change, learning, and growth both now and in the future.

Labeling, which involves assigning people characteristics based on stereotypes or associations with diverse groups, can lead to the development of fixed or growth mindsets. A person who holds a stereotype that females are bad at math or that males are bad at reading may form a fixed mindset about their own abilities in those specific domains.

Your mindset plays a critical role in how you cope with life's challenges. When a person has a growth mindset, they tend to have a hunger for learning and a desire to work hard and discover new things. This often translates into academic or professional achievement. As adults, these same people are more likely to persevere in the face of setbacks. Instead of giving up, adults with a growth mindset view it as an opportunity to learn and grow. But those with fixed mindsets are more likely to give up in the face of challenging circumstances. Fixed mindsets are constantly seeking validation to prove their worth not just to others, but also to themselves.

How to Grow into a Growth Mindset

- **Focus on the journey.** A key factor when building a growth mindset is seeing the value in your journey. When you're fixated on the end result, you miss all the things you could be learning along the way.
- **Incorporate "yet."** If you're struggling with a task, remind yourself that you just haven't mastered it "yet." Integrating this word into your vocabulary signals that despite any struggles, you can overcome anything.
- **Pay attention to your words and thoughts.** Replace negative thoughts with more positive ones to build a growth mindset.
- **Take on challenges.** Making mistakes is one of the best ways to learn. So, instead of shying away from challenges, embrace them.

Instead of thinking, "I'm not good enough," or "I don't have the talent for this," a person with a growth mindset thinks, "I may not know how to do this yet, but I can learn." This shift in perspective means that we're more likely to set higher goals, take calculated risks, and venture outside of our comfort zones.

Source: www.hbs.edu

Protein: Focus on Quality

Protein helps you feel full, provides you with essential nutrients to build and repair muscles, and even stabilizes your blood sugar. But in the mad dash to increase our protein intake, we may have forgotten that not all protein sources are not the same.

Anytime your body is growing or repairing itself, protein is needed. In addition to muscles, other body tissues are primarily made from protein, such as organs, hair and eyes. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (www.eatright.org), protein also helps: fight infection, carry fat, vitamins, minerals and oxygen around the body, build and contract muscles, keep body fluids in balance, and clot blood.

How much protein you need depends on several factors, including age, sex, health status and activity level. If you are unsure how much protein you should be eating, you can visit www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan and use the MyPlate Plan to determine how much from each of the food groups you should be consuming throughout the day. While most Americans get enough protein, many lack a variety.

Here are a sampling of healthy protein options:

Seafood, Poultry, and Eggs: Lean and Carb-Free

Fish, poultry (such as chicken and turkey) and eggs are considered “lean” protein sources because they are fairly low in calories and carbohydrates. They can be good choices for weight loss and controlling blood sugar.

Try...

- Grilled or roasted skinless chicken or turkey with vegetables or in salads
- Scrambled egg whites or egg white omelets
- Shrimp in stir fry or on salads
- Hard-boiled eggs plain or in egg salad made with plain Greek yogurt instead of mayonnaise
- Fatty fish have more calories, but are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which improve heart health. Salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, anchovies, and trout are a few examples of fatty fish.

Protein Power of Plants

Plant-based proteins may not have as much protein per serving as meat, poultry, and fish, but can still pack a powerful protein punch. Plus, plants have other beneficial nutrients such as dietary fiber and potassium. Examples include soy and soy products, such as tofu, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, peanuts, and seeds. Grains, especially whole grain products, also have a bit of protein.

Try...

- Meatless bean or soy veggie burgers on lettuce or a whole-grain bun
- Salad with garbanzo or kidney beans
- Cereal or oatmeal with nuts or peanut butter
- Power bowl with quinoa, black beans, and kale

Dairy Products – Protein Plus Calcium

Dairy products are not always the devil they are made out to be. In fact, people who eat reduced-fat dairy have been shown to have lower risk for cardiovascular disease and lower body weight.

Try...

- Cottage cheese with seeds or nuts and fruit
- Overnight oatmeal with milk or yogurt
- Stuffed tomatoes with spinach, ricotta, and Italian seasoning
- Plain yogurt with oats or shredded wheat

Red and Processed Meat- Know Your Options

High-fat beef and processed meats contribute to more calories and saturated fat and have been linked to higher body weight and other health problems, including certain cancers, heart disease, and diabetes risk.

Lean red meat is better than fatty, and fresh meat is better than processed. Do your best to limit fatty processed meats such as pepperoni, salami, bacon, and sausage, and when choosing lean deli meats, look for all-natural, low-sodium versions. Choose lean steaks and pork chops when you can, and trim off any visible fat before cooking red meat.

Try...

- Extra-lean ground beef
- Canadian or turkey bacon
- Sirloin or loin chop
- Low-sodium all-natural turkey breast or ham

While protein can be good, and more can be better, too much protein can be harmful. The general cut-off for safety is 2 grams per kilogram of body weight per day. That means the maximum safe amount is 140 grams per day if you weigh 154 lb., and 160 grams if you weigh 176 lb. More than that may lead to liver, kidney, and bone problems over time.

Knowledge is Power

The more you know about how the foods you eat impacts your overall health, the better equipped you are to make healthy choices. If you are at risk for diabetes, the **LARK Diabetes Prevention Program** may be able to help you get a handle on your nutritional needs and set you on a path for better health. To see if you qualify, visit www.Lark.com/AnthemEnroll

Source: www.lark.com



Focusing on Pelvic Floor Health

While most people have heard the term pelvic floor, many don't realize what the pelvic floor does daily. Your pelvic floor is working 24/7, supporting your bladder, colon, rectum, and sexual organs. This versatile set of muscles performs essential functions. Pelvic floor muscles help your bladder and rectum relax and contract on demand when you need them, and they're the muscles that contract during sex.

When pelvic muscles are too loose or too tight, problems can occur. Weak or damaged pelvic floor muscles can lead to urinary leakage, accidental bowel leakage and pelvic organ prolapse, a condition in which the uterus, bladder and bowel may drop causing a sense of pressure and fullness. If these muscles are too tight, it can be hard to relax, causing difficult bowel movements, incomplete bladder emptying, burning during urination, weak urinary stream, constipation, or pain when having sex. Anything that puts pressure on the pelvis, including pregnancy and childbirth, chron-

ic cough, chronic constipation, constant straining while toileting or nerve damage from surgery or disease, can lead to a pelvic floor disorder. Almost one-quarter of women face pelvic floor disorders, and the incidence of these issues increases as they age.

Try these strategies to maintain a strong pelvic floor to avoid chronic issues such as bladder and bowel control.

- Implement daily Kegal exercises if loose muscles are the issue to strengthen the pelvic floor.
- Guided meditation can help loosen overly tight pelvic muscles.
- Avoid constipation by consuming ample fluids, fiber, and exercising regularly.
- Dietary changes can improve stool consistency, which can help with bowel leakages or painful constipation.
- Avoid straining or pushing during bowel movements and when urinating.
- Decrease intake of caffeine, alcohol, smoking, and artificial sweeteners.
- Learn how to relax the muscles in the pelvic floor area by taking warm baths and practicing yoga.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Avoid heavy lifting, which can lead to organ prolapse.

Millions of people have pelvic health issues, but few seek treatment, compromising their quality of life. People at higher risk for pelvic floor disorders, such as those with connective tissue disorders, steroid dependency, multiple births, a history of pelvic radiation and pelvic surgery should undergo evaluation early to maintain good pelvic floor health.

Source: www.stanfordhealthcare.org

Neck Pain Relief

Many people experience neck tension at some point in life for a variety of reasons, such as sleeping in the wrong position, sitting slouched over a computer or looking down at a phone, or high levels of stress.

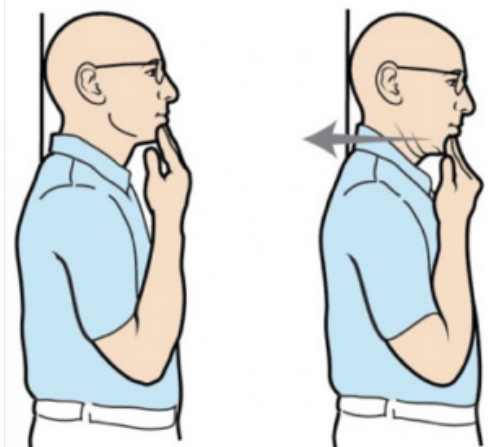
And we all know that having pain in your neck is well...a pain in the neck. But simple exercises can help strengthen and stretch your neck muscles to help prevent neck pain and related issues like headaches. One exercise for improving strength and flexibility in your neck is the chin tuck.

What Are Chin Tucks?

Chin tucks involve gently moving your head back and bringing your chin toward your chest without tilting your forehead. Think of it as putting your spine back into a straight line. This movement can improve neck strength and flexibility and reduce neck pain.

To do a chin tuck:

- Stand up tall with your shoulders back.
- Slowly draw your chin back so that your ears line up with your shoulders.
- Hold for 2 seconds.
- Your forehead should not tilt up or down.
- Relax your neck muscles to move back to the starting motion.
- Repeat 10 times for 2 sets twice a day.





10 Important Health Concerns for Men

Generally, men are hesitant to seek medical attention when something seems wrong with their health. Also, men aren't as likely as women to have preventive screening and checkups with their health care team. This is a problem because early detection of medical issues is the best way to manage them effectively. Not sure where to start? Try one (or all these topics):

Prostate health: Approximately 30,000 men die from prostate cancer annually. All men should consider a baseline PSA test at age 40. Additionally, half of men between 50-60 develop BPH (enlarged prostate), affecting up to 90% of men by age 80.

Erectile Dysfunction: Failure to achieve and maintain an erection can be caused by heart disease, diabetes, certain medications, lifestyle, or other problems.

Cardiovascular Disease: Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death for men. Diet, exercise, and medications (if needed) can help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Testicular Cancer: Testicular cancer is the most common form of cancer in men ages 15-35. Although it can't be prevented, testicular cancer has a very high cure rate if caught early.

Diabetes: You may have diabetes and not know it. Men with diabetes are more likely to suffer from heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and vision problems.

Skin Cancer: Anyone who spends time in the sun is at risk for skin cancer and should be screened.

Low Testosterone: As men age, their testosterone decreases. This can cause andropause, a condition like menopause in women, and may lead to erectile dysfunction, fragile bones, depression, fatigue, and other problems.

Colorectal Cancer: Cancer of the colon and rectum can usually be treated if caught early. Regular screenings are recommended by the age of 45.

Depression: Men are less likely than women to seek help for depression and are 4x as likely to attempt suicide. Help can take the form of medication, counseling, or a combination of both.

Osteoporosis: Osteoporosis, or low bone density, is usually thought of as a women's disease but is also a man's problem. If left untreated, this can lead to broken bones and permanent disability or death.

Regular physician visits and screening can catch many health problems in an early stage when treatment is most likely to be successful.

Source: Men's Health Network



Maine's Hidden Hideaways

Did you know that Maine has Giant's Stairs? Neither did we until we discovered this hidden gem in Harpswell. Named for its interesting geological history, the Giant's Stairs trail follows the rocky coastline with gorgeous views of eastern Casco Bay.

Historically there was a narrow foot path filled with poison ivy that led to the Giant's Stairs monument and beautiful views, but in 2008, with a Maine Recreation Trail Grant, the Maine Conservation Corps and various Town committees and community members, the rustic 700-foot path was resurfaced, widened, and stabilized. The remaining 700 feet of trail runs across the rocky ledges where you can find a small rocky beach, Pinnacle Rock, and "Thunder Hole."

The Giant's Stairs Trail is owned and managed by the Town of Harpswell. The abutting McIntosh Lot Preserve, managed by Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, compliments the Giant's Stairs trail by completing a loop back to the parking area. This easy half mile trail along Maine's beautiful coastline is sure to be one everyone in the family will enjoy.

You can find the Giant's Stairs and McIntosh Lot Preserve on Washington Avenue in Baily Island, ME. Parking is at the Episcopal Church when not in use and well-marked spaces along Washington Avenue. There is a loading/unloading zone at the head of the trail, not to be used for parking. Visit <https://www.harpswell.maine.gov/> for more information.



Super Protein Pancakes

Ingredients

- 2 1/4 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1 to 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon table salt
- 1 1/4 cups cottage cheese
- 1 cup milk, plant-based or dairy
- 4 large eggs
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil or 1/4 cup applesauce
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Blueberries or other fruit as desired

Instructions

In the bowl of a food processor or blender, process the oats, sugar, baking powder, and salt until the oats are finely ground, up to a full minute based on your machine.

Add the remaining ingredients and process until everything is well combined, about 30 seconds.

Let the batter rest, uncovered, for 15 minutes at room temperature; it will thicken slightly.

Meanwhile, heat a large skillet over medium heat, or set an electric griddle to 325°F. Spray the surface with cooking spray.

Spoon the batter a generous 1/4 cup at a time onto the hot surface.

Cook until golden brown on the bottom, about 3 minutes; the tops may develop a few bubbles. Flip and cook the pancakes until the second side is golden brown, about another 3 minutes. Serve immediately.

Store leftover pancakes, well-wrapped individually, in the freezer for up to 1 month. Thaw and reheat in the toaster or in a 250°F oven until warmed through.

Nutritional Information

Serving Size: 1 pancake Servings Per Batch: 12-18

Amount Per Serving: Calories: 170, Total Fat: 8g, Saturated Fat: 2g, Trans Fat: 0g, Cholesterol: 65mg, Sodium: 240mg, Total Carbohydrate: 18g, Dietary Fiber: 2g, Total Sugars: 5g, Added Sugars: 3g, Protein: 8g

Source: King Arthur Baking

Why Losing Weight Is One of The Best Ways to Keep Your Heart Healthy

Carrying extra weight takes a toll on your body and can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. One of the best things you can do to keep your heart healthier is to lose weight and even a small amount of weight loss can help. Weighing less also helps prevent other serious health problems, such as diabetes and arthritis, and may improve your quality of life.

If you need another reason to drop some excess weight, consider these three benefits for your heart:

- **Lower blood pressure.** Losing even just 5-10% of your body weight can lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke. When you weigh less, your heart doesn't have to work as hard to pump blood throughout your body. This can help you keep your blood pressure under control or may allow you to lower or eliminate medications you take to manage high blood pressure.
- **Reduce cholesterol.** There's no absolute correlation between how much you weigh and your cholesterol and triglyceride levels, but when you lose weight, you're more likely to reduce your LDL (bad) cholesterol, increase your HDL (good) cholesterol and lower your triglycerides. This means there's less fat floating through your blood vessels that can turn into artery-clogging plaque.
- **Prevent metabolic syndrome.** Weight loss can lower your risk of metabolic syndrome, a collection of conditions that increase your risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, including high blood sugar, high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol levels and excess body fat around the waist. Metabolic syndrome is expected to become the leading risk factor for heart disease due to rising obesity rates in the U.S. (approximately 70% of U.S. adults are overweight or obese) and one of the best ways to avoid or reverse metabolic syndrome is to lose weight by eating healthy and exercising.

Making even minor, consistent changes to your eating and daily movement will bring positive change. For more information visit, www.cdc.gov or www.heart.org.





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Learn & Earn: Wellness Webinar Series

The *Wellness Works* WellSteps platform is an online resource for MMEHT members to explore healthy recipes, discover new workout routines, join challenges, and learn about other important health and wellness topics. We are excited to announce a new program on the WellSteps platform for 2025 called “Learn & Earn.” This web-based webinar series will allow members to dive into a new topic each month (that’s the “Learn” part) and then “Earn” a \$50 Amazon gift card.

What’s the catch?

There really isn’t one. Each month, a new webinar will be available on WellSteps. You can watch these webinars anytime and anywhere, as long as you complete them within the month they’re offered. To earn the \$50 Amazon gift card, you need to complete at least 5 out of 12 webinars, including any quiz questions, by December 31, 2025. *(Note: Gift cards will be sent out in early January 2026, no matter when you finish the webinars.)*

Ready to “Learn & Earn” with Wellness Works?

If you’re registered in the WellSteps program, you’ll get an email each month about the featured webinar. Just choose the ones you’re interested in! If you’re not yet registered for the WellSteps program, email us at wellsteps@memun.org to get started!

