



National Diabetes Month: Raising Awareness and Supporting Health

LOOKING AHEAD...

MoveSpring November Challenge: Gratitude

This month we are challenged to intentionally express gratitude for 26 days.

Eating Healthy During the Holidays

Review tips on how we can enjoy the holiday season without sacrificing our well-being.

Wellness Webinars

This month we learn how to improve focus and productivity and strengthen our gratitude muscle. We also learn about Social Security benefits and financial planning for retirement.

The Recipe Corner

Featuring flavorful vegan chili and healthy pumpkin waffle cookies.

This newsletter will continue to include timely information on health and wellness but will also feature news, tips, and updates on a variety of benefits topics. If you would like to see a particular topic covered, send us your ideas at benefits@rcab.org.

November marks National Diabetes Month—a time to bring attention to one of the most prevalent health conditions and the impact it has on millions worldwide. This month we focus on raising awareness about diabetes, its risks, and ways to manage and prevent it. More than [37 million Americans](#) live with diabetes (about 1 in 10) and nearly 96 million are at risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes. Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects how the body regulates blood sugar (glucose), which is essential for energy. There are three primary types of diabetes:

- **Type 1 Diabetes** – A chronic autoimmune disease where the body attacks insulin-producing cells in the pancreas, often diagnosed in childhood.
- **Type 2 Diabetes** – The most common form, where the body becomes resistant to insulin. This type is also associated with lifestyle factors and tends to develop in adults, though cases in younger people are increasing in the United States.
- **Gestational Diabetes** – Develops during pregnancy and can pose health risks for both mother and child.

While there is no one-size-fits-all treatment, making realistic lifestyle changes will help to improve health outcomes. Early detection and ongoing management of diabetes are essential to avoid serious complications, including heart disease, kidney failure, nerve damage, and vision loss.

Tips for reducing risk and managing diabetes:

1. **Healthy weight management.** Excess body fat is the leading risk factor for type 2 diabetes. Obesity is a chronic disease which makes an individual 20 to 40 times more likely to develop diabetes than someone with a healthy weight. Losing as little as 5% to 10% of your overall body weight can greatly reduce the risk of developing diabetes and improve your condition if you already live with Type 2 diabetes. While obesity is a major risk factor, not everyone who is obese will develop diabetes, as other factors like genetics and lifestyle also play a role.
2. **Get 7-9 hours of sleep daily and go to bed before midnight.** Poor sleep hygiene decreases insulin sensitivity and affects hormones, resulting in increased appetite and decreased satiety after eating. Poor sleep hygiene may also produce excess cortisol, your body's main stress hormone. When cortisol production increases in the body, blood sugar levels may also increase.
3. **Eat the rainbow.** Focus on eating a nutritionally balanced diet and a variety of fruits and vegetables of different colors, as each color contains different nutrients and phytonutrients that can benefit your health. Additionally, dietary fiber from these foods helps with managing blood glucose. Aim to get 25-30 grams of dietary fiber daily. Whenever possible, select whole grains, pair fruit with protein-rich foods, add seeds to your daily diet (such as chia seeds or hemp seeds), and work in vegetables at most meals. As you eat more fiber, remember to drink plenty of fluids to prevent constipation.
4. **Move your body.** Exercising regularly helps the body regulate blood glucose. Work with your doctor to determine what level of physical activity is appropriate for you and figure out how much time per day you can devote to exercise. The [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#) recommends exercising for 150 - 300 minutes a week. A brisk walk counts!
5. **Get support.** Regular check-ups with your doctor can help diabetes in its early stages. For additional support, employees, spouses, and dependents age 18+ enrolled in the RCAB Health Plan have access to Omada, an online prediabetes weight management program. The program is valued at \$700 but costs nothing to participants who are eligible to join. Visit omadahealth.com/rcab and get started!

How to Have a Healthy Holiday

The holiday season is a time filled with celebration, family gatherings, and of course, delicious food. However, the abundance of rich meals, sugary treats, and festive cocktails can make it challenging to maintain a healthy diet. On top of that, we may find ourselves overeating for a variety of reasons. Does any of this sound familiar?

- **The nostalgia factor:** “This dish reminds me of my childhood!”
- **The holiday scarcity mindset:** “I can only eat this during the holidays!”
- **The classic excuse:** “I’ll start eating better after the holidays.”



With all these extra treats, can you guess what the average weight gain is during this season? You might be surprised to know that multiple studies show it’s only about 1-2 pounds! While that might sound like good news, the reality is that most people don’t lose this weight. Over time, these small yearly gains start to add up. While no one is suggesting dieting during this festive time, striking a balance between indulging in holiday traditions and sticking to your health goals is crucial, and it’s completely doable with a few mindful strategies.

1. Lighten Up Your Holiday Cooking. Many people wouldn’t dream of altering treasured family recipes, which is understandable if it’s for a special occasion. However, there are also many ways to make recipes healthier without sacrificing taste. Some suggestions include:

- Reduce sugar in baked goods. You can generally cut back the sugar in most baked goods up to 25% without sacrificing taste or texture.
- Swap out some of the white flour for more nutrient-dense options like whole wheat or almond flour.
- Cut down on added fats in recipes. You may also can substitute plain Greek yogurt for sour cream or cottage cheese for some extra protein as well.

2. Plan ahead for success. Before going to the festivities, start the day with a healthy breakfast, rather than “saving all your calories”. This will help prevent overeating at the event.

3. During Parties and Events: Pay attention to what you’re eating. Slow down and ask yourself, “Do I really like this?” If not, put it down and move on. Lastly, choose wisely. Would there be a better alternative? Look for options that contain some vegetables and/or protein.

4. Day After “Damage Control”: So...you REALLY enjoyed yourself the day before at the party. All is not lost! Remember it’s more important what you do 90% of the time vs 10% of the time. Get right back on track with your healthy habits - the longer you wait, the harder it is to restart healthy habits.

5. Strategies for the Season: Continue with healthy eating habits and try to get most of your calories from whole, minimally processed foods. Think of it as nourishing yourself instead of restricting yourself. Aim to move your body most days. The holiday season can intensify stress – make sure you get enough sleep and prioritize self-care. Most importantly, enjoy this special time that only comes once per year!

The holiday season is a time to embrace joy, traditions, and special moments with loved ones — all of which are possible to enjoy while also taking care of your health. By adopting a few mindful strategies, you can savor the festive foods you love without overindulging or feeling deprived. The key is to find a balance—lighten up dishes when possible, plan ahead to avoid overeating, and stay present during gatherings. If you do end up indulging more than intended, don’t stress; just get back to your healthy habits the next day. Remember, the goal isn’t perfection, but rather enjoying the season in a way that feels good for both your body and spirit. So go ahead, savor the season, and give yourself the gift of mindful celebration!



Wellness Webinars

The following webinars are available for educational purposes. Please note that wellness webinars are no longer incentivized as part of the RCAB Health Benefit Trust Wellness Program.

Learn to Live Webinars

Use access code **RCAB** to view the webinar.

**Squirrels & Shiny Objects:
Addressing Problems with Focus and ADHD**
[Friday, November 15: 11-11:30 a.m.](#)
[Wednesday, November 20: 1-1:30 p.m.](#)

Do you find it hard to pay attention, stay organized, or avoid distractions? Whether or not you have ADHD, these problems can make daily life tough. But there is good news. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) can help. Join this conversation with the Learn to Live clinical team as we explore how CBT can help those living with lack of focus and productivity challenges.

Retrain Your Brain: The Case for Gratitude
[Friday, November 22: 1-1:30 p.m.](#)

Research shows that strengthening your gratitude muscle can lower stress and improve mood. Building this muscle actually feels good! Learn to Live will share ways you can strengthen your gratitude muscle and retrain your brain with practical ideas for every day.

Voya Financial Webinars

Social Security Basics

[Tuesday, November 12: 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.](#)
[Tuesday, November 26: 12 p.m. and 3 p.m.](#)

Discover Social Security's key benefits in this session, where you'll learn its personal impact, explore your options, and find additional resources for next steps.

Steps for Nearing Retirement

[Tuesday, November 26: 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.](#)

This session will review 10 steps that you should consider as you to start preparing for retirement.

In Case You Missed It...



PLAY NOW!

You can still view the recorded webinars from last month!

[The Price of Silence - How to Talk about Mental Health](#)
[Getting Unstuck: The Art of Moving Forward](#)

MoveSpring

Join the November Challenge: Gratitude

Expressing gratitude can improve your mental health and nurture your personal relationships with others. After all, while life isn't perfect, we all have blessings for which we can be thankful. For 26 days this month, challenge yourself to do **one or more** of the following: journal about three things you are thankful for, engage in random acts of kindness, express gratitude toward an acquaintance, co-worker, friend, or even stranger, write a thank you note, or recount the day's blessings before you go to bed. An attitude of gratitude will bring you joy!

Eligible employees will receive an email from the Benefits Department to join the Challenge. **Participants must sign up for the Challenge by November 7.** Don't forget to share the email with your spouse (if enrolled in the RCAQB Health Plan) so s/he can participate!

Earn \$50 into your HealthEquity HRA or HSA when you complete this Challenge!



THE RECIPE CORNER

Recipes courtesy of Carol Gustavson

Quinoa Chili (Vegan)

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ½ cup dark beer
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- 1 red, yellow, or orange bell pepper, chopped
- 1-2 minced garlic cloves
- 1 Tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 can beans (red kidney, black, or your favorite, rinsed)
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 2½ cups low sodium vegetable broth
- ½ cup quinoa, rinsed
- ½ bell pepper chopped (optional)
- 1 Tablespoon vegan sour cream and cheese (optional)

Directions

In a Dutch oven, cook the spices and salt over medium heat for about 2 minutes, until fragrant. Add the beer and quinoa and cook until liquid is gone. Remove mixture from pan and wipe clean. Add onions and pepper to Dutch oven with olive oil and cook until soft and lightly browned, 5-7 minutes. Add garlic and cook for one minute. Add tomatoes (including liquid), beans, broth and quinoa. Bring to a simmer, then cover and reduce heat to low. Cook until quinoa has absorbed most of liquid and chili has thickened, 20-30 minutes. To serve, add chopped uncooked pepper and vegan sour cream and cheese.

Healthy Pumpkin Waffle Cookies (Vegan)

Ingredients

- 1¼ cup whole wheat flour (or gluten-free flour, if preferred)
- 2 Tablespoons flaxseed meal (aka ground flaxseed)*
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. ground ginger
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp. ground cloves
- 1 cup pumpkin puree
- 1½ cup unsweetened plant milk (almond, soy, oat)
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 3 Tbsp. neutral-flavored oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- Unsalted pepitas (optional)

Directions

Pre-heat waffle maker to highest setting. Whisk dry ingredients together in a large bowl. In a separate small bowl, combine pumpkin, milk, syrup, oil, and vanilla extract. Add wet to dry ingredients and mix just to combine. Add pepitas if desired, mixing just to combine. Add ¼ cup of batter to each quadrant of waffle maker and cook until done.

*Flaxseed meal should be refrigerated once opened, as it spoils quickly otherwise.

