



Spotlight on Women's Health: Hormonal Balance

LOOKING AHEAD...

MoveSpring February Challenge: Good Night

This month we are challenged to sleep at least 7 hours a night for 26 nights.

Heart Health: Beyond the Basics

Learn how to improve heart health with 3 simple tips

Wellness Webinars

This month we learn more about the RCAB Wellness Program, how to manage seasonal depression, improve women's health, build a budget, and save for short and long-term financial goals.

The Recipe Corner

We're exploring two new recipes this month: a heart healthy arugula salad and slow roasted fennel and citrus salmon!

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.

This month we focus on women's health and the role that hormones play in overall physical, mental, and emotional health. It may surprise you to know how hormones play such a key role in daily activities. Women naturally experience fluctuating hormone levels, but some feel "off" in ways that are unrelated to these normal hormonal fluctuations. Hormones send messages to organs letting them know what function to perform and when to do it. An excess (even a small one) or deficiency of hormone production can lead to [major changes](#) throughout the body. Hormones help to regulate appetite, metabolism, sleep cycles, body temperature, mood, and stress levels. Hormonal imbalances may be related to reproductive hormones caused by pregnancy, breastfeeding, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), perimenopause, and menopause. [Common signs](#) of hormonal imbalance include excessive unexplained weight gain, sweaty skin, brain fog, persistent acne, increased thirst, puffy or rounded face, loss of muscle mass, hair loss, extreme fatigue, and digestive problems. If you believe you have a hormonal imbalance, meet with your PCP or OBGYN for diagnostic testing. Making these simple lifestyle changes can help to support proper levels of hormones.

- **Get enough protein.** Protein provides amino acids that your body cannot make on its own and are needed to produce peptide hormones. These hormones play a crucial role in regulating several physiological processes, including growth, energy metabolism, appetite, stress, and more. Aim for 25-30 grams of protein per meal from [healthy, lean sources](#).
- **Exercise regularly.** Getting enough [physical activity](#) strongly influences your hormonal health as it helps to regulate the production and balance of various hormones in the body. Aim for 150-300 minutes of [moderate-intensity exercise](#) per week.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Weight gain is [directly associated](#) with hormonal imbalances that may lead to complications in insulin sensitivity and reproductive health. Eating a healthy diet and avoiding excess calorie intake can help maintain hormonal balance.
- **Eat plenty of fiber.** Fiber plays a role in gut health, helping to regulate hormones like insulin.
- **Watch your gut health.** Your gut produces numerous metabolites that can affect hormone health and regulates female hormones by influencing how the body metabolizes and breaks down hormones like estrogen and progesterone.
- **Limit added sugar intake.** Eating excess amounts of added sugar promotes insulin resistance. Fructose intake, often found in sugar-sweetened beverages, is linked to disruptions in the gut microbiome, ultimately leading to hormonal imbalances.
- **Reduce stress.** Stress can significantly harm the body's hormones in many ways.
- **Get enough sleep.** Sleep is one of the most important factors in hormonal imbalance. The levels of hormones can rise and fall throughout the day due to the quality of sleep. Join us for the [February Challenge](#), Good Night, to improve your sleep hygiene!
- **Eat healthy fats.** Healthy fat intake can work to maintain balanced hormones that are involved with appetite, metabolism, and feeling full.



Heart Health: Beyond the Basics



We tend to think of hearts in February thanks to Valentine's Day, but did you know February is also National Heart Health Month? Heart disease remains the number one killer of both men and women and can lead to years of disability before a major event like a heart attack or stroke. So, it makes sense that if we want to be active and enjoy our midlife and "golden years," we need to focus on heart health now—not later. You might be thinking, "Ok, got it - I know I need to limit salt and saturated fat, eat more fiber, exercise regularly, and take medication if needed to manage my blood pressure and cholesterol levels". These habits are important, but cardiovascular health is more complex than it seems. Think of your arteries as highways that supply blood and nutrients to every organ, including the heart itself. At the center of this system is the endothelium, a thin layer of cells lining all your blood vessels. The endothelium is like a non-stick coating that helps blood flow smoothly and prevents harmful substances from sticking to the artery walls. It also plays a vital role in producing nitric oxide, a gas that keeps arteries flexible and promotes circulation.

Three Tips to Protect the Endothelium and Keep Arteries Healthy

- 1. Eat Micronutrient-rich Foods:** Consuming foods high in natural nitrates, such as beets, spinach, arugula, and other leafy greens, helps your body produce nitric oxide. Polyphenols are plant compounds that reduce inflammation and protect endothelial cells. Add polyphenol-rich foods to your diet, such as berries, dark chocolate, green tea, spices, and extra virgin olive oil.
- 2. Limit Environmental Toxins:** Research has shown that microplastics pose a significant risk to endothelial cells by causing inflammation, dysfunction, and damage. Minimize your exposure with these tips:
 - Filter water and avoid drinking bottled water in plastic when possible.
 - Limit processed and packaged foods, especially frozen meals and microwave popcorn, which are often high in microplastics.
 - Avoid heating food in plastic, as heat can release harmful chemicals into your food.
- 3. Get Sunlight! (Safely):** Moderate sunlight exposure triggers the production of nitric oxide in the skin, which promotes vasodilation (widening of blood vessels) and improves blood flow. Sunlight also helps your body produce vitamin D, which is crucial for vascular health.

Making these small, intentional changes can go a long way toward protecting your endothelium and keeping your arteries healthy for the long haul. The best part? These are changes you can start today!



February

Organize your
tax documents

Consider working with
a financial professional

2025 Financial Wellness Calendar

1. Gather all your tax documents to prepare for filing your taxes to avoid last-minute stress. Visit [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov) to learn more about what you need to prepare.
2. Start filing on your own or work with a tax accountant for assistance.
3. Leveraging the knowledge and experience of a financial professional could be a great way for you to feel more confident about your finances, help keep you on track, and help you reach your goals.

Tip: Consider filing your tax documents electronically to speed up the process.



Wellness Webinars

RCAB Wellness Program

[Tuesday, February 11: 3:30 – 4:30 p.m.](#)

Learn how you (and your spouse if enrolled in the RCAB Health Plan) can earn financial incentives from participating in the [RCAB Health Benefit Trust Wellness Program](#). This webinar is geared toward both newcomers to the Wellness Program and seasoned veterans who simply need a refresher course.

Good News about the Winter Blues

[Wednesday, February 19: 5 - 5:30 p.m.](#)

[Friday, February 28: 12 - 12:30 p.m.](#)

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

For many of us, the winter months can feel awfully long with colder temperatures and far less sunshine. Motivation and mood can drop, either subtly or so significantly, that even usual day-to-day activities feel impossible. Learn about research-supported steps to live fully, even through wintertime challenges.

Women's Health:

From Life Balance to Hormone Balance

[Monday, February 24: 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.](#)

Whether she is super mom, super executive, or both, women are busy in today's world, and trying to do it all naturally takes a toll on their health and well-being. Participants learn how to bring balance, health, and happiness back into their lives through mindfulness and optimal nutrition. The program focuses on hormonal imbalances, their effects on chronic and acute disease, and how to prevent and manage such imbalances.

Voya Financial Webinars

Building a Budget

[Tuesday, February 11: 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.](#)

[Tuesday, February 18: 12 p.m. and 3 p.m.](#)

Learn the benefits of creating a budget, how to stick to it, and the difference between good and bad debt.

Save for Other Financial Goals

[Tuesday, February 18: 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.](#)

Learn how to save to cover both short- and long-term financial goals.

In Case You Missed It...



PLAY NOW!

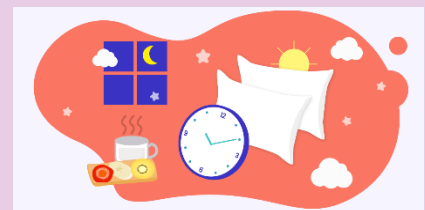
You can still view the recorded webinars from last month!

[Promoting More Helpful SelfTalk: Advanced Strategies to Address the Core of Your Thinking](#)

[Gut Health: What You Need to Know](#)

MoveSpring

Join the February Challenge: Good Night



Health experts recommend that adults sleep 7 to 9 hours per night. Are you sleep deprived?

Improving your sleep hygiene can lower your risk for serious health problems, such as diabetes and heart disease, increase energy level, reduces stress, improve your mood, and enhance your immune system. This month you are challenged to sleep at least 7 hours a night for 26 nights.

Employees and spouses enrolled in the RCAB Health Plan may click [here](#) to join the Challenge by February 7.

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

THE RECIPE CORNER

Beet & Goat Cheese Arugula Salad

Recipe from Wellness Concepts

Ingredients

- 5 cups fresh arugula
- 2 medium-cooked beets, sliced (roasted, steamed, or canned)
- 1/3 cup walnuts (toasted, if desired)
- 2-3 oz of goat cheese, crumbled
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar or freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard and/or honey (optional)
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 tsp kosher salt

Preparation

1. Place arugula and beets in large bowl.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, vinegar, mustard, and honey (if using). Add salt and pepper to taste (about 1/4 tsp of each). Don't skip this step—salt helps to tame the slight bitterness of arugula.
3. Lightly dress salad with dressing (you may have a little dressing left over).
4. Sprinkle salad with goat cheese and walnuts and serve immediately.



Slow-Roasted Salmon with Fennel, Citrus, and Chiles

Recipe from [Bon Appetit](#)

Ingredients

- 1 medium fennel bulb, thinly sliced
- 1 blood or navel orange, very thinly sliced, seeds removed
- 1 Meyer or regular lemon, very thinly sliced, seeds removed
- 1 red Fresno chili or jalapeño, with seeds, thinly sliced
- 4 sprigs dill, plus more for serving
- Kosher salt and coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 2-lb. skinless wild-caught salmon fillet, preferably center-cut
- 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Flaky sea salt (such as Maldon)

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 275°.
2. Toss fennel bulb, blood or navel orange, lemon, chili or jalapeño pepper, and 4 sprigs dill in a shallow 3-qt. baking dish. Season with kosher salt and coarsely ground black pepper. Season salmon with kosher salt and place on top of fennel mixture. Pour 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil over.
3. Roast until salmon is just cooked through (the tip of a knife will slide through easily and flesh will be slightly opaque), 30–40 minutes for medium-rare.
4. Transfer salmon to a platter, breaking it into large pieces as you go. Spoon fennel mixture and oil from baking dish over; discard dill sprigs. Season with flaky sea salt and pepper and top with fresh dill sprigs.

