

# WASHBURN UNIVERSITY

## Employee Wellness Newsletter



### Why Health?

By Brent Trammell

Getting healthy is something on many people’s minds, and seems like a generally good thing to do. Often, though, it’s those with some extra money and free time that most easily make health goals a central feature in their lives. But what about the rest of us? It can be a challenge, since the behaviors and choices that ultimately make us feel our best often cost more, take additional time, and aren’t as exciting as other options.

If it seems like “health” won’t work with “real” life, don’t give up just yet! While health might look like it’s all about marathon times, body fat percentages, and bench press poundage, the reality is that those things won’t do much to make us happier if we’re not already interested in them. “Health” is what allows us to more effectively do what already makes us happy. Is there anything that wouldn’t be easier or more enjoyable if we felt better?

Health lets us to spend more of our time on things we enjoy with people that matter to us. We can focus on what nourishes us, rather than juggling multiple medications with undesired side effects, undergoing surgeries with complications, and hanging out with medical staff who send us bills even more expensive than the health food we didn’t want to buy.

It’s a bit ironic that the very choices that we rely on for comfort are also the source of so much discomfort in our lives! Once we appropriately associate junk food and inactivity with sluggish feelings, upset stomachs, and illness, it will be easier to seek out choices that enhance our energy, wellbeing, and longevity instead.

Happiness is simultaneously a short and long-term endeavor, so we need to consider both aspects in our daily choices. While health doesn’t guarantee we’ll be happy, it definitely makes it more likely. Most of what we do in life is aimed toward our happiness, in some way, so let’s move toward health as one of the most reliable strategies to get there!

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## Wellness On Campus

### Vaccines and Testing at Student Health Services

COVID SARS Co-V rapid antigen testing and saliva PCR testing is available at Student Health Services 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday. The rapid antigen testing is a nasal swab and takes 15 minutes to get a result. The PCR test is a saliva test that is sent to a lab, results are within 24-48 hours.

Vaccinations are also available 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are both currently available in the clinic. The Pfizer vaccine is two shots given 3 weeks apart. The Moderna vaccine is two shots given

28 days apart. People are required to remain in the waiting room for 15 minutes after vaccination to monitor for any type of reaction.

As many people as possible will be scheduled on the same day to best utilize the amount of vaccines available and to help preorder any additional amount needed from the county health department.

Please contact Student Health Services with any questions or to schedule an appointment for testing or vaccination: 785-670-1470.

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*“Fad diets...are perfect if you want to be hungry all the time and miserable.”*

*Nathan Pritikin*

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#### Fitness Tip: Try Active Recovery

It's well known that rest and recovery are as important for meeting fitness goals as the actual workouts we do, but low intensity exercises the day after our normal routine can be more beneficial than simply resting with no activity.

Participating in gentle exercise like walking, yoga, tai chi, and swimming on “off” days can improve blood flow, reduce soreness, and help maintain flexibility. Staying lightly active each day will also help establish a consistent habit that becomes a foundational part of our daily schedules.

## Why Diets Don't Work (But Lifestyles Do)

By Brent Trammell

In theory, weight management should be as simple as consuming less energy than what we expend, and in the case of food, energy is measured by calories. While this model is essentially true, it doesn't help people who are still struggling to lose weight but have already restricted calories to a point that no further reductions can be implemented without a deficit of essential nutrients necessary for general health. Though exact values will vary greatly by individual, it is generally thought that somewhere around 1,200 calories per day is about as low as most people can go while still ensuring a healthy diet with nutrient sufficiency. In fact, *more* calories are likely optimal.

This does not mean, however, that individuals who reach the lower caloric ranges have no other option for further weight reduction – it just indicates that a focus solely on calories is incomplete and even counterproductive past a certain point. In fact, lowering calories too far leads to adaptations, both physiologically and psychologically, that will not only make our bodies attempt to stabilize our weight where it's at, but over the long-term, facilitate increasingly efficient weight regain when a more typical caloric intake is resumed.

Our body weight, and subsequent eating habits, are not just a matter of education, environment, and willpower; they also rely on a complex, regulatory neurological and hormonal system. While the first three factors can help facilitate behavior change, the later is crucial for determining additional success when we're already “doing everything right.”

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Our bodies are made to withstand the rigors of food scarcity, which has been quite an evolutionary advantage until recent times. Our ancestors didn't have the most predictable food supply, so survival depended on physiological adaptations that helped us make it through the lean times. We have no such mechanism for food abundance. This has profound implications for us today.

The most effective way we can send a signal to our body that food is scarce is to not eat! The only issue here is that the more primitive parts of our brains don't know it's intentional. When we don't eat enough, especially over longer periods of time, our bodies lower our basal metabolic rate, the amount of calories we needed for basic body functioning at rest. This can occur both through hormonal changes, like thyroid function, and loss of muscle mass.

In addition to metabolic rate, hormonal changes for appetite and stress also occur. What all this translates to is that when we don't eat enough, our bodies adapt for survival by making us more able to maintain the weight we're at with less food. These physiological changes can endure for quite some time after weight loss, even years.

More than anything, this would suggest that severe caloric reduction is likely not a sustainable path for weight management. A smaller decrease in calories, accompanied by improvements in food quality, stress management, sleep, and moderate physical activity may reap superior results because more of the contributing causes of weight gain have been addressed.

The only drawback is that this approach is a full lifestyle change, and not a limited intervention to reach a weight target. The upside is that it is effective, and enduring – by addressing the intricate nature of weight gain, and losing weight at slower, measured pace, we bypass the adaptations and stress our bodies go through when we send signals that something is wrong with the food supply.

## Food Confusion: Potatoes

Potatoes often get a bad reputation for their easily digested carbohydrate content and negative associations with metabolic diseases.

The truth is that there is a world of difference between the potatoes most Americans eat, French fries and chips, and the food in its natural state. We also have to separate potatoes from the butter, bacon bits, and cheese that often accompany them! It seems the potato itself may not be the biggest problem...

Potatoes are an inexpensive root vegetable that have been the cornerstone of many traditional diets across the world. They're rich in many vitamins and minerals, while providing resistant starch that supports beneficial bacteria in our digestive systems. To increase resistant starch even more, refrigerate potatoes overnight and consume them cold the next day.

Potatoes can be cooked in many ways and included in vastly different meals. They can be a healthy addition to most diets as long as we eat them before they turn green, watch what we add to them, and eat them in proportion to other healthy foods like non-starchy vegetables and lean protein.

## Supplement Spotlight: Protein Powders

The USDA has set a Recommended Daily Allowance for protein of at least 0.8 grams for every kilogram of body weight. Most people can easily get this amount with lean sources of protein like beans, tofu, nuts, eggs, dairy, fish, or poultry.

However, those with busy schedules or higher protein needs, like athletes, often look to protein powders as a quick addition to their daily total. These are actually one of the most popular supplements sold!

The most bioavailable proteins come from dairy (whey and/or casein) and eggs. A high proportion of these proteins are assimilated into our bodies, and they have an amino acid profile that supports effective muscle building (amino acids are the building blocks of protein—in our food and our muscles). Collagen is not a great standalone source, however.

Most commercial plant-based protein powders are formulated with easily digestible sources, and are blended to get amino acid ratios that compete with milk and eggs. The most popular blend is pea protein with rice protein.

Protein powders have their place as a quick, convenient source of protein, but it should be noted that basic nutritional requirements can be more affordably met with food alone!

## Upcoming EWP Events Annual Health Screening

**Incentives are back!** Throughout September we will have our Annual Health Screening, offered free-of-charge to any benefits-eligible employee. These screenings measure height, weight, waist circumference, blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol, and triglycerides.

In addition to earning a \$75 incentive reward, participation in this opportunity will help identify potential risk factors for chronic illnesses like diabetes and cardiovascular disease. This information can be used as a starting place for implementing healthy lifestyle changes or simply making sure we're still on track.

If you haven't already signed up, contact the Employee Wellness Coordinator or access available times here:

<https://book.appointment-plus.com/d5pzy262/>



## Employee Wellness Program Services

**Group Wellness Classes**—Group health coaching classes are an ideal way to learn the fundamentals of healthy lifestyle choices, track progress over a longer period of time, and establish the support of other participants in the program. The discussion-driven classes present a specific health topic each week and provide health coaching benefits in a fun, relaxed social setting. Start dates will be scheduled throughout the year.

**Personal Health Coaching**—Health coaching is available for any participant looking to make lifestyle improvements regarding nutrition, exercise, and/or stress management. These sessions help to develop a fundamental understanding of general health concepts, goal setting, and creating personal wellness plans.

**Body Composition Analysis**—An InBody scanner provides comprehensive body composition analysis including body water, lean mass, and fat mass. Direct segmental measurement is used for improved precision and provides an excellent resource for tracking changes from exercise and nutrition plans.

**Resting Metabolic Rate**—A Fitmate Pro metabolic monitor is used to measure Resting Metabolic Rate through indirect calorimetry, or the measurement of oxygen consumption at rest. This allows for a highly accurate estimation of caloric targets for weight management.

**Fitness Assessments**—Fitness assessments are available for individuals interested in improving specific fitness parameters. Cardiorespiratory/muscular endurance, balance, and flexibility evaluations may all be used. Exercise recommendations or referrals may be offered based on results and personal fitness goals.

**Lunch and Learns**—By request, EWP staff and community partners are available for on-site departmental and organizational talks that address relevant health-oriented topics such as: Preventative Health, General Wellness, Nutrition/Fitness, Chronic Conditions, Back Health, and Stress Management.

## WU Recipes

### Healthier Carrot Cake submitted by Cat Trammell, adapted from the McDougall Newsletter

Preparation Time: 25 minutes  
Cooking Time: 35-45 minutes  
Servings: makes two 9 inch cakes

1/2 cup walnuts, chopped  
3 1/2 cups sprouted whole wheat flour  
1/4 teaspoon sea salt  
1 tablespoon cinnamon  
1/4 teaspoon allspice  
1 1/2 tablespoons baking powder  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
2 cups unfiltered apple juice  
3/4 cup unsweetened applesauce  
1 cup monk fruit/erythritol sweetener  
3 cups grated carrots  
1 banana, mashed  
1/2 cup raisins

Sift all dry ingredients, except for walnuts, in a large bowl and set aside.

Mix applesauce and juice in a smaller bowl, add to the dry ingredients, whisk until smooth. Fold in carrots, mashed banana and raisins.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Use two non-stick 9 inch cake pans. Place batter in pans and bake 35-45 minutes or until knife comes out clean (do not overbake). Cool for 20 minutes before inverting onto a plate. Add walnuts on top.



## Self-Care is Not Selfish

By Brent Trammell

Self-care often gets confused with spa days, extravagant purchases, and decadent desserts. While these things may help us feel better, there is an important difference between indulgence and really supporting our physical and mental health.

While there is no denying that taking care of ourselves may require resources that could be given to others, both in terms of time and money, we need to examine the outcome before feeling too bad about it. This will make a big difference for how likely we'll be to continue healthy behaviors.

When we are effectively practicing self-care, we are more available to those who need our help, more understanding, and even more productive. We've given ourselves what we need in order to do what is needed. This is a tremendous gift for those around us.

To look at it another way, ambulances are very helpful vehicles. They take sick or injured people where they need to go to get help. But what if the ambulance crew only wanted to focus on helping and not waste time with maintenance and repair? Eventually the ambulance doesn't help anyone, right?

Now that doesn't mean patients should also be billed extra to support custom paint jobs, flashy wheels, and leather seats! The difference is that the expense of taking care of the ambulance helps patients, whereas the aesthetic mods only costs them.

Selfishness only helps us, whereas self-care helps everyone. In fact, if we care about someone enough, we would naturally want to give them the best version of ourselves we can.

Eating nutritious food, having an

exercise routine, scheduling time for relaxation, and ensuring quality sleep all come at a cost, but so does everything in life. The real question shouldn't only be about what others have to give up, but what they also get in return.

The resources we use for self-care are always paid back in full, often with interest, so when we're not feeling so great or not able to keep up with life, it's not just necessary to take some time to tend to ourselves, it's also commendable and responsible.



## Let's Hear From You!

Would you like to contribute an article, recipe, local wellness information, or a Living Well nominee's story to the EWP Newsletter? If so, please reach out to get the details!

All employees will be emailed the newsletter as a Wellness Wednesday attachment and one hard copy will be sent to each department on a quarterly basis. If you would like your own personal copy, or your department could use an extra, please send a message to request one!

References and/or additional information about all featured content are available by request, as well.

## Remember to Breathe By Brent Trammell

Everything we do in life takes energy—eating, walking, breathing, and even thinking! According to some spiritual traditions, the fact that all aspects of life involve energy suggests a potential foundation for how things are connected. It's thought that using energy to manipulate the body can, by extension, also have an effect on the mind.

This is most clearly exemplified in the practice of hatha yoga, the physical exercise system we're most familiar with in the US. The idea is that conditioning the body with movement prepares the mind for deeper meditative states. In fact, all exercise or focused activity performed with a similar intention may work in this way.

The concept can be further applied to our breathing. It is no secret that we breathe differently when we are relaxed compared to when we are nervous or frightened. Since this is true, the reverse may also hold—anxiety, stress, and fear might be potentially managed by consciously manipulating the way we breathe.

Though there are increasingly elaborate practices given across countless traditions, the most direct way to achieve this end through breathing is to simply sit up straight, relax the abdominal area, and breath in slowly and deeply through the nose. There should be an expansion of the belly and lower ribs, forward and out, followed a slight rise in the chest before slowly exhaling.

Deep abdominal breathing in this manner may not only calm a restless mind, but also better oxygenate our bodies, improve digestion, lower cortisol, and help maintain healthy blood pressure levels. To balance a busy work day, try deep breathing during strategically scheduled breaks!

## Connect with Employee Wellness!

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[washburn.edu/wellness](http://washburn.edu/wellness)

