

Completely well



Insurance Agency

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Preventive

As part of a wellness visit, your doctor may order blood work to be completed. There are a number of common blood tests that doctors use to measure health. The following list explains what these common tests measure.

- CBC – CBC, or complete blood count, measures red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. The information in the CBC can detect a variety of conditions, including anemia. It is used to diagnose but also to monitor overall health.

Common Blood Tests

- TSH – The thyroid stimulating hormone test can help identify if the thyroid gland is working correctly. The thyroid helps regulate metabolism. Thyroids can be overactive or underactive.
- Comprehensive Metabolic Panel – This blood test provides an overall picture of metabolism, kidney function, liver function, and chemical processes. It is a panel of 14 tests, including glucose, sodium,

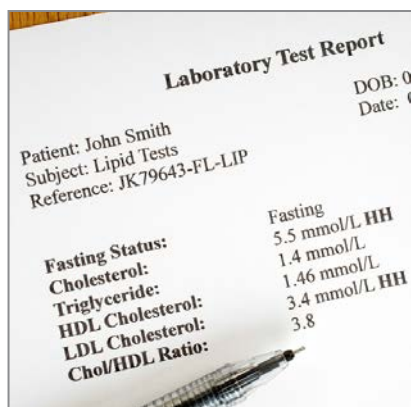


potassium, and creatinine.

- A1C – For those diagnosed with pre-diabetes or diabetes, the A1C provides the average blood glucose level over the prior 3 months.

Another common blood test is the cholesterol test. See page 2 for more information on what that measures!

Brown Bag Best Practices

Nutrition

Cholesterol Test

Another common blood test is the cholesterol test, also called lipid panel. This test is done as a general screening or in response to perceived risk factors (overweight, high blood pressure, sedentary lifestyle, etc.). The blood test measures

- Total cholesterol
- HDL (the “good” cholesterol)
- LDL (the “bad” cholesterol)
- Triglycerides
- Cholesterol ratio = total cholesterol ÷ HDL level. This ratio can help predict risk of heart disease.

Discuss how often your cholesterol should be screened with your doctor.

The reasons are compelling: bringing your lunch to work will save you calories, time, and money. But what should you do to maximize nutrition and taste in your brown bag lunch? Here are some best practices to consider:

- ✓ Pack your lunch the night before or take time on the weekend to make and freeze lunch options. Place your lunch in the refrigerator the night before so it has time to defrost.
- ✓ If you don’t mind leftovers, double your dinner portions and pack your lunch as you clean up after dinner.
- ✓ If you like a deli sandwich, choose meats that are lean and don’t have added nitrates.
- ✓ Pay attention to the nutrients you are packing. Include a protein, healthy fat, and complex carbohydrate. For example, try a sliced turkey and avocado sandwich on whole wheat bread. Or enjoy brown rice and vegetables with a side of cashews.
- ✓ Need to reheat something? It’s best not to do it in plastic. Use glass or a paper plate in the microwave. If possible, you can also keep a dish at work to use.
- ✓ Be sure to include a cold pack in your lunch if you have anything perishable. Or place your lunch in a refrigerator at work.
- ✓ If you are using a reusable lunch box, clean it out daily with an antibacterial cleanser.
- ✓ Have more than 1 lunch to make? Get your family involved by creating a lunch assembly line! Getting everyone involved makes your life easier and helps to teach children about good nutrition!





Produce of the Month: Cucumbers

Feeling “cool as a cucumber”? In the last days of summer heat, enjoying the cool, fresh taste of cucumber is a healthy and refreshing choice. In the same family as watermelon, pumpkin and zucchini, cucumbers are composed of mostly water, making them a great choice for a summer salad or snack. Low in calories, cucumbers are a good source of fiber, potassium and vitamin C and are good for digestive health, blood pressure and healthy skin. Sliced cucumbers are sometimes applied topically to reduce swelling under the eyes and to reduce mild skin redness.

The Basics: Cucumbers are available year round but are considered in season from May through early August. There are different kinds of cucumbers. Slicing cucumbers are those that are grown to be eaten fresh. Other cucumbers are grown to be pickled, including gherkins. The most common cucumbers found in the grocery store are the slicing cucumber and the English cucumber. The slicing cucumber is dark green and often has a waxed skin that should be peeled. It has edible seeds, and it is generally less expensive than the English cucumber. The English cucumber is most often not waxed and is wrapped in plastic. This helps it to retain its water content. Though it is called “seedless,” it contains very small seeds that are digested more easily than a slicing cucumber’s seeds. Some people feel that the English cucumber is less bitter than a slicing cucumber. Whichever you choose, pick a cucumber that is not shriveled but is firm and has a good green color to it. At home, store cucumbers unwashed in the refrigerator. When ready to eat, just wash and slice according to your recipe. (Remember to peel any waxy skin first.)

Try This: Though cucumbers are most often found in salads, try sliced cucumbers on a turkey or roasted pork sandwich for added crunch. Or cut the cucumber lengthwise, scooping out any seeds. Fill your “boat” with a fresh tuna or chicken salad. Use cucumbers to make a Middle Eastern yogurt sauce, excellent with grilled meats, fresh vegetables, or even flat bread. Combine equal amounts of plain yogurt and chopped cucumber (usually 1-2 cups). Add grated garlic to taste and chopped fresh mint. Mix with lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste.

The Facts: A cup of sliced cucumber is only about 14 calories and is a good source of vitamins C and A, potassium, fiber and folate.

Get Ready for Fall Produce:

- Apples
- Winter squash – butternut, spaghetti, and acorn
- Pears
- Sweet potatoes
- Shallots





Lifestyle

Carrying Weight

Packing up for work or school can be nearly as complicated as packing for a weekend trip! We need books or files, tablet/laptop, a lunch (because brown bagging is healthy!), and often a change of clothes and/or shoes for an after work or school workout. Bags have become bigger to handle all we need, and the result is often pain. All of this packing can create a bag or backpack that is heavy! Carrying heavy weight on your shoulders or back can lead to chronic joint and muscle problems as well as headaches and nerve trauma. It's important to know how much to carry, how to distribute the weight, and how to carry it.

When possible, carry lighter loads. It is recommended that you limit the bag's weight to a maximum of 15% of your bodyweight. For example, a child who is about 90 pounds shouldn't carry a backpack that weighs more than 13 ½ pounds. An adult woman who is 150 pounds should carry bags that weigh no more than 22 ½ pounds. Reduce the weight by cleaning out your purse/bag/backpack on a regular basis. If possible, distribute the weight into 2 smaller bags that you can carry with both hands. If that is not possible or convenient for how you commute, there are other ways to manage the load.

Place the heaviest items on the bottom of the bag and try to distribute the weight throughout the bag. If using a shoulder bag, switch shoulders regularly and use bags that have a wide strap. A double strap is also a good idea. Bags that you carry in your hand or in the crook of your elbow can cause tendinitis. Be sure to limit how often you use these and/or how heavy they are. Don't carry backpacks on one shoulder. Center the weight evenly on your back and pull the straps so the backpack is snug but not tight. Use the waist ties if the bag is heavy. All bags should be carried as close to the body as possible, which puts less stress on joints.

When lifting anything heavy, it's always smart to use your legs to help lift and your abdominal muscles to stabilize. Bend your legs and hips and lift the bag, keeping it as close to the body as possible. Do not bend forward and avoid turning or twisting when lifting anything heavy. Better yet, avoid lifting heavy bags by eliminating unnecessary items, distributing weight into smaller bags, balancing weight evenly within your bag, and carrying your bag close to the body. Carrying a lighter load will help prevent injuries!

Fitness

The Importance of Fitness Goals

Do you work out regularly? If so, that's great! If not, setting fitness goals is a great way to get started. If you do work out regularly, how do you know you are becoming more fit? How do you measure your progress? While getting 3-5 workouts a week is a definite success, setting a fitness goal can help you improve how you feel, how you look, and your overall health.

Setting a fitness goal can help you break through a fitness and/or weight loss plateau. Your body gets used to doing the same exercise every day at the same intensity. As it gets used to it, it stops working as hard. You may not reach your aerobic heart rate and you may not burn as many calories. A fitness goal can help! Here are some ways to set your fitness goal:

1. Set a heart rate goal. Determine your aerobic heart rate and be sure to measure that during your work out. If you find you are not getting to that target heart rate, it's time to up the intensity or change the workout!
2. Be specific about the changes you wish to see. For example, how many pounds do you want to lose or how many inches off your waist? Be sure these goals are realistic and healthy! If you have a larger amount to lose, set smaller goals on your way to the larger goal!
3. Measure everything! Not only should you measure your heart rate and possibly weight, you should measure the amount of weight you lift in strength training and the number of reps you complete. Keep a log so you can see the improvement! Measure the distance you walk or run and the amount of time it takes you. Write this down as well. Track how many aerobic or yoga classes you attend in a month. Whatever you do for your health, keep track of it so you can see how you are doing over time.
4. Allow for time to rest, recover, and re-evaluate. Your body needs rest and time to recover if you are working out at a moderate or vigorous intensity. Taking time to rest actually will help prevent injuries. Re-evaluate your workout routine if you are not seeing the results you hoped for.

Setting a fitness goal is an important step in improving your health. Be specific and realistic when setting your goals and be sure to break down large goals into manageable steps. Track all progress over time. Don't worry about occasional setbacks. Those are normal. The journey will lead to a healthier and more fit you!

Note: Before beginning any exercise program, consult with your doctor about what's right for you.

Ask the Trainer, by Erin M. Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT

Q: Hi Erin. I'm looking at starting a strength-training program. It's been over 5 years since I've done something like this, and I'm not sure where to start now. I'm 51 and all I do is walk for exercise. Would you suggest starting with machines like I am used to or should I use free weights? ~Eliza D

A: Thank you for the question. It's exciting you want to get back to strength training! The topic of

Ask the Trainer, continued on next page...

Ask the Trainer, continued

machines vs. free weights is never ending. Machines used to be big, but now free weights have taken over. Don't get me wrong; machines have a place but they are not the most practical or functional for most individuals looking to gain overall strength and get back in shape. Machines are good when it comes to isolating a particular muscle and are easy to learn. The downside to machines is that they are non-functional, which means they don't mimic human movements patterns. They also neglect stabilizing muscles, which can lead to increased risk of chronic injury and poor posture. I prefer the use of free weights over machines because they allow you to train functionally. This means the movement patterns used with these weights help mimic real life activities. By strengthening our body in their normal movement patterns, it creates more overall strength. Also, with free weights you utilize the stabilizing muscles in your core. Another nice thing about free weights is that you can really do them anywhere giving you the possibility of doing workouts at home, a gym or on the road.

However, if you are familiar with machines this would be a good way to get started. After 2-3 weeks I would then start to incorporate free weights with the machines and ultimately move to free weights. If you have never used free weights, I would recommend getting with a personal trainer for a period of time to learn technique and form so you don't hurt yourself. From there, a trainer could develop a program specifically for you to do on your own if you choose. Another option would be to look for a small group training session, which may be less expensive but still provide that individualized attention.

I hope this helps point you in the right direction. Please let me know if you have any further questions!
Good Luck!

~Erin

Want to know more?

Contact TCU Insurance Agency for information on wellness programs. We can help you reduce healthcare costs and improve employee well being.

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