

# Completely Well



**Insurance Agency**



## Lifestyle

For some people, the winter season brings a pervasive “blue” mood that can feel very hard to shake. As the days lose sunlight, a type of depression can set in called Seasonal Affective Disorder. While it is common for most of us to long for sunnier, warmer days, those who suffer with Seasonal Affective Disorder experience any or all of the following symptoms: loss of energy, changes in sleep patterns, weight gain, anxiety, and depression.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is believed to be caused by a reduction in sunlight affecting either serotonin (a brain chemical that affects mood), melatonin (a hormone related to depression) and/or our circadian rhythm (our “inner



## Seasonal Affective Disorder

clock” that regulates our sleep cycle).

There are things we can do at home that can help beat the winter blues and help those with Seasonal Affective Disorder as well:

- Let the light in! Open the curtains or blinds and bring in as much natural light as possible.
- Get outside. Even just a short time each day can make a real difference.
- Exercise and eat right. Regular exercise helps with all kinds of stress and anxiety, and eating fruits, vegetables, and lean protein help to maintain the blood sugar.
- Make plans. Get

together with friends and family, or plan a trip during the winter months.

- Reduce stress. Try meditation, journaling and delegating chores or work when possible.

If these tips do not improve your mood within two weeks or your mood worsens, make an appointment with your doctor immediately. Light therapy or medication may be needed to treat your depression.

No matter the season, you can feel better. Make the changes necessary and get the support you need.

## In this Issue

Understanding Processed Foods, Preventive Health Recommendations for the Year, SADD, Ask the Trainer: Planks, Produce of the Month: Turnip, Best New Year’s Workouts

# Preventive

## A Year of Preventive Health

### A Doctor Visit

A regular wellness exam is a great way to help prevent disease through the recommendations that your doctor may give and the screenings that he or she may require. With a regular checkup, your weight, blood pressure, pulse rate, heart and lungs will be checked. Any medications you are on will be reviewed and adjusted if necessary. Screenings - such as blood tests, colonoscopy, and examination of moles and freckles – will be recommended depending on your family history, age, and personal medical history. The wellness exam is a good time to discuss any concerns with your doctor.

### Time for the Dentist

Regular dental care and checkups are important for your overall health. Most people should have their teeth cleaned every 6 months, though more often may be necessary for those who have certain chronic health problems or a history of gum disease. To take care of your teeth, be sure to brush and floss at least twice a day.

### Nutrition

Reducing the amount of animal products in your diet and replacing them with fresh vegetables and fruits is the best way to improve your nutrition and benefit your health. Many studies, including The Adventist Health Study – 2, have found that a plant-based diet can help to reduce the risk of high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. Additionally, a plant-based diet will satisfy your hunger with fewer calories, helping you to lose weight. It will also provide you with the necessary fiber to help control blood sugars and ensure a healthy digestive track.

### Fitness

Before you add any exercise or increase your exercise level, be sure to see your doctor. Once you have been cleared to exercise, begin by understanding your fitness level. Know that fitness is the culmination of aerobic health, strength, and flexibility. Set goals for each and steps to help you achieve the goal. Think long term here. Too much too fast can result in an injury.

### Lifestyle

If you are still smoking, commit to quit! Contact your doctor's office for help. Track your sleep and aim for 7-9 hours a night. Schedule time with friends and family; connecting with others is great for reducing stress and increasing self-esteem. Identify your greatest stressors and come up with a plan to reduce or manage that stress.



# Nutrition

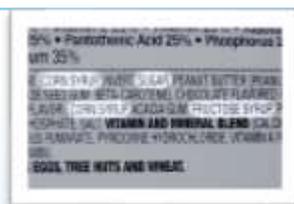
## Understanding Processed Foods



The whole foods movement, one that encourages consumers to eat foods in their whole (natural) state, promises nutrition that includes fiber, vitamins, and minerals as well as phytochemicals, natural compounds found in plants that are considered helpful in reducing the risk of certain diseases. Most nutritionists as well as reputable health organizations recommend eating whole foods, and it is the best way to eat well.

But what about processed foods? Are all of them bad? Well, any food that has been manufactured in some way is considered processed. Given that definition, soy or coconut milk is processed as is yogurt, wine, and bread. So what makes processed food good or bad? The farther from the natural food's state and the more that is taken away from the natural food or added to the natural food, the more processed and, likely, the less nutritious. It may be easier to think about the degree to which foods are processed. For example, minimally processed foods such as canned tomatoes and nut butters (peanut, almond, etc.) can have a place in a whole foods diet if they are processed with no added preservatives, though vitamin C or a small amount of salt could be okay. Foods that are moderately processed and are transformed from their original state can also be okay if the ingredient list contains natural ingredients and both salt and sugar are kept to a minimum. Given this definition, certain boxed crackers and bagged popcorns would be acceptable choices. Those processed foods that are far from their natural state and contain artificial ingredients, as well as excess salt and sugar, should be considered unhealthy and avoided.

Finding processed food options that enhance the whole food diet can be a great help to those who find need the convenience that a processed food offers while not wanting any of the unhealthy ingredients. Remember to rely on the ingredient list. If each ingredient is something you can be confident eating, you can probably include the item in your diet.



## What is that ingredient?

Ever wonder about an ingredient listed on a label? Here are some common ingredients used in processed foods.

- **Soy Lecithin** – helps prevent ingredients from separating, found in salad dressings, margarine, some nut butters
- **Modified Food Starch** – helps the texture of reduced fat foods, keeps them creamy
- **High Fructose Corn Syrup** – a liquid sweetener that is more chemically stable than table sugar, used in many products including baked goods, fruit drinks, canned fruits, and soft drinks

## Produce of the Month: Turnip



In the bitter cold of January, it can be hard to imagine that any fresh vegetable is in season, but turnips and turnip greens are hearty vegetables that are at their peak during the winter months. The turnip is generally planted late in the season, sometimes as a second crop, and can survive frosts. A root vegetable, the turnip is often prepared like a potato, mashed, boiled or added to soups and stews. Turnip greens are the leafy part of the plant, similar to mustard greens or collard greens, and are a side dish in many Southern menus. Both the turnip and turnip greens have fiber and vitamins and can be a welcome addition to the usual vegetable lineup.

### The Basics:

Turnips are generally white or pale yellow and globe-shaped. The tops may be purple or slightly greens. Some will be sold with greens attached, though much of the time the turnip and turnip greens are sold separately. Smaller turnips are younger and may be eaten raw. Their flavor is mild, and they may be served as part of a raw vegetable platter or shredded in cole slaw as a replacement for cabbage. Larger turnips should be cooked in your favorite recipe. Be sure not to overcook a turnip as this can create a strong odor and taste that is unpleasant. To prepare turnips, wash and trim any roots off. Peel the outer layer, then chop or slice as necessary. If boiling turnips, consider not covering the pot completely in order to reduce trapping the gases that can make the taste and smell too strong. Turnips can also be steamed, microwaved, roasted or stir-fried.

Turnip greens are generally served cooked as a side dish, though young greens can be part of a salad. Wash thoroughly to remove any dirt or sand, then boil, steam, sauté or microwave with a little water. Turnip greens cooked with some heart healthy oil (e.g., canola oil, olive oil, etc.) and some garlic and onion can warm up any meal as well as deliver immune building vitamins and antioxidants.

### Try This:

Turnip greens are often cooked with bacon or another fatty piece of pork. Instead, try cooking turnip greens in a little bit of canola oil with onion, then adding some chopped Canadian bacon for the Southern flavor without the excess fat. Turnips can be cooked then pureed as a creamy base for soup without additional cream or butter.

**The Facts:** The turnip root is low in calories and high in vitamin C. Turnip greens are also low in calories and an excellent source of Vitamin A, C and K. They are also a good source of fiber and calcium.

# Fitness

## Fitness Trends in 2016

There's no doubt that the New Year is a time of resolutions, especially when it comes to fitness. Gym memberships increase and more people than ever seem ready to get in shape! To help keep you motivated this year, here are some of the fitness trends for 2016!

- **Wearable Technology:** Fitness trackers, heart rate monitors, smart watches, and other trackers are here to stay, offering individuals a chance to see progress toward a fitness goal and to keep track of exertion and effort. If you are still in the market for wearable fitness technology, do your research and see which one best suits your fitness goals.
- **Streaming Workouts:** Finding ways to workout at home has never been easier. There are a number of options, including workout programs that you can stream right on your Xbox, Roku, iPad, or tablet. Memberships for these services generally cost less than a gym membership and can be a great option for those who are self-motivated.
- **High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT):** Not for the newbie exerciser, HIIT combines high intensity bursts with moderate aerobic exercises. The appeal of HIIT is that individuals can get a great workout and see real results from 30 minute workout sessions.
- **More Barre Work** – Ballet inspired classes continue to be popular, combining yoga and Pilates exercises with challenging barre work. These exercises are generally low impact and can build strength and flexibility.

The American College of Sports Medicine sponsors an annual survey on the top fitness trends. This survey is sent to more than 2,800 fitness professionals around the world. Based on their findings, the fitness trends for 2016 include

- Strength training,
- Functional Fitness,
- Fitness programs for older adults,
- Programs for exercise and weight loss,
- and Yoga.

The survey also found that wearable technology and High Intensity Interval Training were going to be strong trends.

Whether you want to try one of the 2016 fitness trends or prefer the simple walk around the block, it's important get 30 minutes of exercise each day. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.



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

**Question:** Hi Erin! I keep hearing how beneficial a plank can be. Could you explain why this is and how to properly perform them?

~Sarah M

**Answer:** Great question Sarah! You have heard correctly that a plank is one of the most beneficial exercises you can do for your core. It not only helps build endurance and strength but it is something that you can do anywhere. Planks also help strengthen your back, glutes and hamstrings and also help improve balance and posture.

Unfortunately many people do planks incorrectly and end up feeling them more in their shoulders, neck and low back rather than in their core. This indicates that one may have muscle weakness in those areas. When you start performing a plank, you should do a modified version or only hold a few seconds at a time. You should never hold through pain. Form is very important so to hold for a shorter period of time in proper form is better than holding longer with improper form. You also want to make sure that you breathe through planking along with all other exercises.

To perform an effective plank here are the basic steps set by the American Council of Exercise<sup>1</sup>:

- Hold the elbows directly under the shoulders and place the wrists in line with the elbows.
- Push your body up into your upper back and hold your chin close to your neck (like you're holding an egg between your chin and your throat).
- In this position, brace your abdominals—contract them like expecting a punch in the stomach, squeeze your gluteal (tailbone) and thigh muscles simultaneously while continuing to breathe normally.
- Hold a plank at least 20 to 30 seconds. (When using correct form, it is not necessary to hold it for longer than this amount of time.)
- Rest for approximately one minute and repeat three to five more times.
- To modify, start doing the plank using the elbows and toes (feel free to drop to your knees if necessary) and progress up to a high plank when you feel you have developed the necessary strength.

I hope this helps answer your question and that you start to incorporate this awesome exercise!

### Want to know more?

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



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