

# COMPLETELY WELL

November 2017

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**Insurance Agency**

## Gratitude is Good for Your Health

With Thanksgiving upon us, and the gift giving season almost here, we may find that we are saying “thank you” a lot! More than a polite response to kindness, thank you is an expression of gratitude, and gratitude is good for your health!

Taking time to consider what is going right, what we are thankful for, and what we are hopeful for all help to improve our mood and increase optimism. Gratitude reduces stress, helping to lower blood pressure, improving sleep, and strengthening the immune system. Those who express gratitude report better working and personal relationships. In fact, one important benefit to gratitude is increased self-esteem!

Taking time each day to be thankful about something is a great start to increasing gratitude. Keep a journal or include a gratitude discussion in your family dinnertime conversation. Even just a quiet moment on your way home from work can give you the opportunity to appreciate some aspect of your day. Whatever way you choose to include gratitude, you will find that it can improve your outlook and well-being.



## Diabetes

November is American Diabetes Month. According to the American Diabetes Association, almost 30.3 million adults and children in the United States have diabetes and 84.1 million more have prediabetes. Diabetes increases the risk of heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, and nerve damage. It is estimated that diabetes costs our country approximately \$245 billion annually.

Diabetes is a disease in which blood sugar levels are elevated. Sugar levels in the blood rise and fall depending on our activity and what we eat or drink. Most of the food and drink we take in is broken down into glucose, a type of sugar. Glucose is used as energy for cells. Once glucose enters the bloodstream, the pancreas pumps out a hormone called insulin. With the right amount of insulin, the glucose leaves the bloodstream and enters the cells. When there is not any or enough insulin coming from the pancreas, the glucose remains in the blood stream, causing high blood sugar levels. For those with diabetes, there is a problem producing or using the insulin. There are three types of diabetes: type 1, type 2, and gestational.

### Type 1 Diabetes

People with type 1 diabetes no longer produce the necessary insulin to process blood sugar. Type 1 diabetes is normally diagnosed in children or young adults and accounts for only about 2 in 10 of all diabetics. Those with type 1 diabetes must monitor blood sugar levels and use insulin replacement therapy.

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## Produce of the Month Sweet Potato

Sweet potatoes are a common vegetable on the Thanksgiving table, often smothered in butter, cream, and added sugar! But sweet potatoes are one of the most nutritious vegetables you can eat and are delicious when prepared and served simply. Like russet potatoes, sweet potatoes are wonderful baked or mashed, and their moist flesh requires less butter and/or cream than a regular baking potato. Sweet potatoes are an excellent source of antioxidants and are considered to be an anti-inflammatory food. High in vitamin A, C, and fiber, sweet potatoes are available year-round, though are considered in season in November and December.

**The Basics:** Choose sweet potatoes the same way you would choose a russet potato. Look for firm potatoes with little to no bruising. Store in a dark, cool place but not in the refrigerator. (A cabinet away from any heat source would be good.) Don't leave them in a plastic bag since they need ventilation. Wash and peel (if desired) just before cooking. You can bake, steam, roast, boil or microwave a sweet potato. Sweet potatoes are used in side dishes and desserts, baked goods, and salads. Cook and prepare according to your favorite recipe.

**Try This:** Make the sweet potato the foundation of a vegetarian dinner by baking the potato and serving with a warm bean salad on top. (Tuscan Bean Salad – white kidney beans or cooked green beans, onion, garlic, olive oil, diced tomato, oregano, basil, salt and pepper. Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil. Add tomato, beans and seasonings. Heat until warmed through.)

**The Facts:** A medium-sized sweet potato is less than 100 calories and an excellent source of vitamin A, C, manganese, and fiber.

## The Not-So-Sweet Side of Sugar

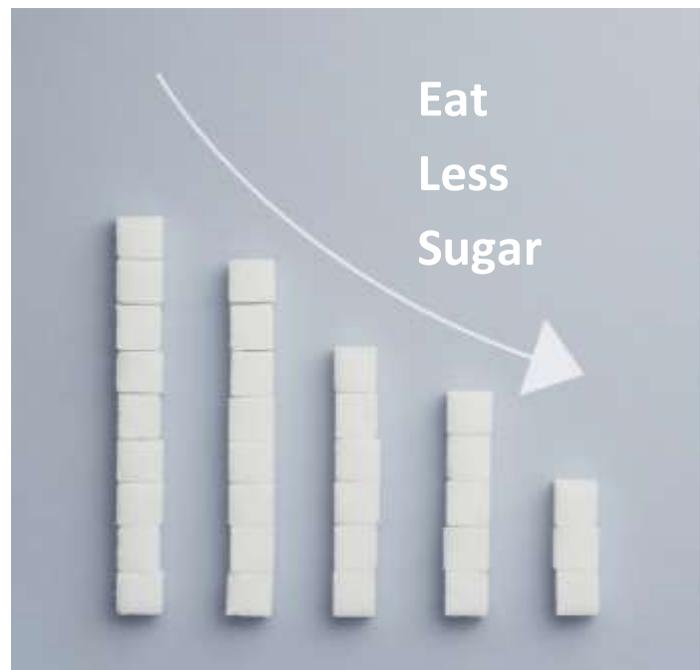


You've probably heard "sugar and spice and everything nice!" Yes? Well, not so fast. It seems that the tempting sweetness of sugar may not be that nice after all. Sugar can occur naturally in foods (fruits, vegetables, and milk), or it can be added (table sugar, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, etc.) Not only is sugar found in a variety of natural and processed foods, there are different types of sugar: sucrose and fructose being the most common. These are processed differently by the body.

Sucrose is made up of half glucose and half fructose. (See the ending "ose"? This is a clue that it is a type of sugar.) Sucrose begins to be processed in the small intestine, where it is broken down into glucose and fructose molecules. These molecules enter the bloodstream and go to the liver. Glucose moves quickly from the liver into the bloodstream, acting as a quick energy food for cells throughout the body. The fructose remains in the liver and is broken down further. So far so good, right? Well, not quite. The overall amount of sugar that we consume has helped to make it a problem. Approximately 200 years ago, the average American consumed about 2 pounds of added sugar a year. We now consume that about every 5 days! The National Institute of Health reports that Americans consume about 152 pounds of added sugar annually! So how does the amount of sugar we eat impact how it is processed in the body? Excess glucose in the bloodstream is eventually stored as fat. Excess fructose leads to increased triglycerides and higher LDL cholesterol, risk factors for coronary heart disease.

Okay, so what to do? First, build your diet on whole plant foods. Though fructose and glucose occur naturally in fruits and vegetables, there are nutrients and fiber in these plant foods that offset the sugar. An article in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* by Dr. David Ludwig reported that it seemed to be the "cellular scaffolding" that slowed the absorption of sugars down. This - along with the fiber, water content, vitamins, and antioxidants in plant foods - makes them a healthy way to ingest sugars. On the other hand, processed foods - especially those with high-fructose corn syrup - are digested quickly, causing large spikes in blood sugar levels, and are associated with obesity, high cholesterol, and high triglycerides.

Limit or eliminate foods with added sugars, and especially eliminate foods with added high-fructose corn syrup. Make a habit of reading food labels and set a goal to eat and drink less than 24-32 grams (that's 6-8 teaspoons) of added sugar daily (American Heart Association). If you need to start small, try to reduce your sugar intake by 5 grams each week until you are where you want to be. And if you wish to enjoy a holiday treat during the upcoming season, try making your own so you can control the amount and the kind of sugar!



# Regain Your Fitness Mojo

By LeeAnn Wilcox

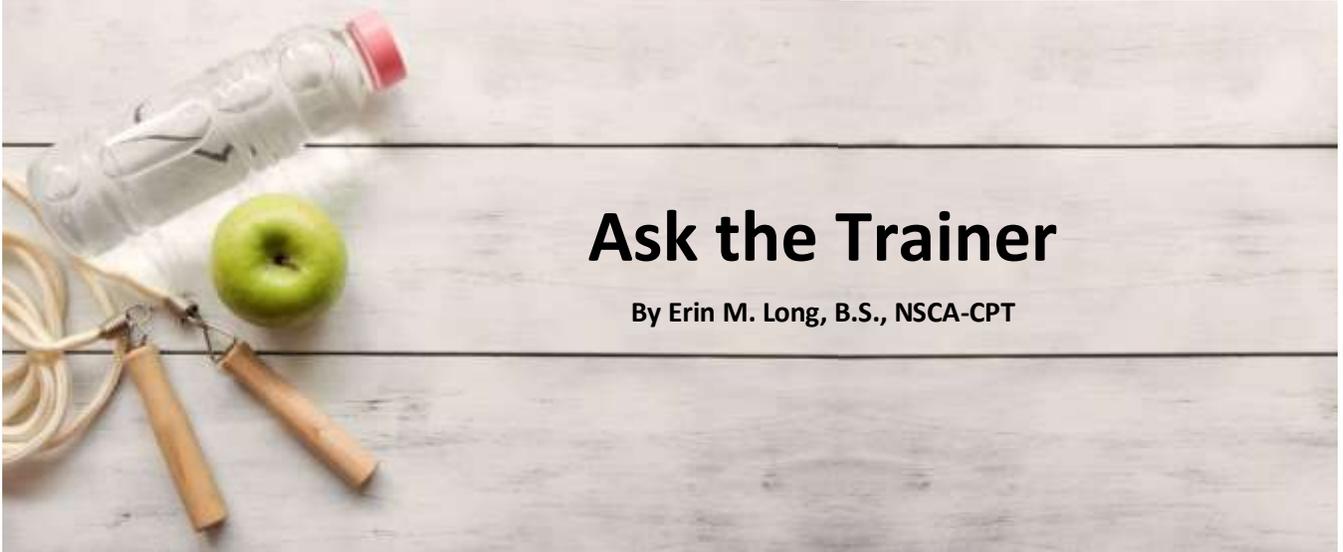
It happens to most people at some point: you've lost your excitement to exercise. Yes, it can be fun and exciting to start exercising January 1<sup>st</sup> with everyone else who resolved to lose some pounds with the new year, but it can also become difficult as weeks go by and seemingly no changes happen. Maybe you're bored with your current class schedule or routine, or all of your exercise buddies have dropped out of the efforts. If you've lost your mojo, or are in danger of doing so, check out these ideas to regain your fervor for fitness:

- **Switch It Up:** Routine can be good, until it's boring. Find a new class or online workout and train in a new way. Sometimes we can get in a rut (and even injured) doing the same exercise over and over again. Cross training, doing a variety of fitness formats, can actually help individuals beat the plateau, defeat boredom, and create a more balanced training program. So if you're stuck at a certain milestone, feeling bored, or noticing you're not getting the overall results you desire, seek out something new.
- **Treat Yourself:** Sometimes a new workout shirt or bottoms, some bright new shoes, a cool new workout tool, or even more comfortable socks can go a long way in reigniting our excitement to hit the gym. If you are excited to use a fitness-related item, you're more likely to find an opportunity to use it.
- **Become a Social Butterfly:** Recruit some new faces (with fresh excitement) to join you in your activities. Do a class together, go on a regular walk date together, take turns creating workout plans together, or simply vow to meet each other on certain days at the gym entrance to hold each other accountable. Having a community of like-minded people surrounding you helps you to keep going on your goals.
- **Take On a New Challenge:** Whether it's a new format like kickboxing, swimming, or Yoga, or a nutrition challenge that intimidates you like no added sugar or soda for a month - try something new that you might be a little hesitant to do. Accomplishing this new challenge may be the perfect spark to relight your fire.

As always, talk to your doctor before starting a new fitness regimen. Don't let a rut of temporary boredom become an unhealthy habit that leads to feeling unwell. Take some steps today to regain your fitness mojo.



*Fall is the perfect time for being active outdoors with family and friends. Discover nearby parks and trails or toss a frisbee or football around in the backyard.*



# Ask the Trainer

By Erin M. Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT

**Q:** Hi Erin. I have been hearing a lot of debate on when and how often you should weigh yourself. I can be easily discouraged weighing myself every day, but I just read something that you may see better results if you do. What is your stance on this subject?

-Virginia, 47

**A:** Hi, Virginia. Thank you for your question. Just like many health and fitness questions, in my opinion, this answer depends on the individual. I used to be very strict with my clients on not weighing themselves every day as it can mess with their head and do more harm for the individual than good. Recently though, I did a 28-day program that insisted you weigh yourself every day. I was very skeptical with having to do this but I did it because that's what the program wanted me to do. To my surprise it actually helped me in my weight loss journey, it kept me on track and accountable daily. Knowing I had to record my weight each morning helped me not to cheat. It was interesting to see my weight fluctuate day to day with what I ate or drank during that time and this awareness helped me with my weight loss efforts. Now this worked for me, however, weighing each day may not do the same for another individual. We are all different and respond differently to things of this nature. It actually helped and motivated me, but for another individual it could be more stressful and discouraging. If my weight went up one day, it was no big deal. For someone else, it might upset and discourage them. If you know it discourages you, then keep to once a week weigh ins.

Another thing to keep in mind is the scale jumps even you are eating right and working out; it may not be for a bad reason. Remember that muscle weighs more than fat. Sometimes that number on the scale isn't the most important thing. For instance, you can weigh the same but go down a dress or pant size. I believe we can get so obsessed with hitting that number on the scale that we forget to think about other amazing changes may be happening while trying to lose weight. Our clothes start to fit better, our body fat percentage goes down, we feel better and have more energy! These things to me are just as, if not more, important than the weight. Weight is just a number and can even be deceiving. For instance, I get mistaken for weighing 120-125 pounds regularly when in reality I weigh between 140-145 pounds. Because I am highly active and workout daily, I have quite a bit of muscle.

I hope this answers your question. Remember, you do what is best for you!

Dedicated to your success,

Erin M Long

# Diabetes Continued from page 2.



## Type 2 Diabetes

People with type 2 diabetes are either insulin resistant, meaning that the body doesn't process insulin well enough, or may not produce enough insulin. Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes, and is normally diagnosed in adults, though increasing numbers of children are being diagnosed, most likely due to the rise in childhood obesity. Type 2 diabetes can often be prevented or delayed by maintaining a healthy weight and getting regular exercise. Risk factors for type 2 diabetes include family history, being overweight or obese, having a sedentary lifestyle, and smoking. Type 2 diabetes is treated through lifestyle changes (healthy eating and exercise) and medication as needed (including insulin replacement therapy).

## Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes is a disease diagnosed in some pregnant women when the insulin they produce is not enough to manage blood sugar levels. Women with gestational diabetes should follow doctor's guidelines, taking medication if necessary, to insure their own health and the health of their baby.

## Know Your Numbers, Lower Your Risk

Screening for diabetes depends on family history, personal health and lifestyle history, age, and symptoms, though it is recommended that adults age 45 and older be screened at least every 3 years. Once a year is recommended for anyone who has history of high blood sugar, gestational diabetes, or is pre-diabetic. In addition to routine screenings, choosing a healthy lifestyle can prevent or delay onset of type 2 or gestational diabetes. If you are diabetic, eating healthy foods and staying active will improve your symptoms and, in certain cases, help reverse the disease.

## Did You Know?

- High levels of blood sugar damage blood vessels over time leading to an increased risk for heart disease and stroke. In fact, those with diabetes are twice as likely to develop heart disease or have a stroke as those who are not diabetic.
- Nerve damage is common with diabetes, often affecting legs, feet, and eyes. Diabetes is the leading cause for blindness in adults.
- High blood sugar levels damage kidneys and is the leading cause of kidney failure.

**Want to Know More?** Contact TCU Insurance for more information on wellness programs and how they can help you reduce healthcare costs and improve employee wellness.



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