

## Wellness Program Newsletter

# Wellness Matters

All benefitted and benefit-eligible municipal employees, retirees, and benefit-eligible family members in East Longmeadow, Hampden, HWRSD, Longmeadow, LPVEC and Wilbraham may participate in any of the programs and classes listed. Other employees, family members and friends are also invited to participate, however will not be eligible for incentives.

### Coordinator's Corner

For this issue, we are going back to the basics. The Wellness Program has 5 focus areas—preventive screenings, good nutrition, physical activity, stress management and tobacco cessation. Over the years, additions have crept in, such as self-care and financial wellness, and we will continue with those ideas (and others—suggestions welcomed!).

There were 42 participants in our summertime challenge this year! Entitled *Foundations of Health Challenge*, we completed activities for six weeks, each week with a different concentration, in addition to physical activity goals for the whole duration. Congratulations to all of you who committed to this empowering challenge!

Many experts continue to recommend the yearly flu shot. The Wellness Program will update you if and when it is decided that towns will offer flu shots during work hours.

Here's to a new school year~

~Lyn

For more information on anything in this newsletter, please contact me at [lyn@scantichealth.org](mailto:lyn@scantichealth.org). You are invited to "like" us on FB for info on various health topics:  
<https://www.facebook.com/scanticvalleywellness/>

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FY 2020 saw some great results for your fellow employees! Three met their goal with Weight Watchers, one quit smoking (hooray!), 19 employees had a colonoscopy, and 16 learned to eat and weigh less the Mediterranean Way! We continued to have full yoga and Pilates classes, as they continued one after another, with many of the same folks continuing most of the year! Some took strength classes and there was good participation in the steps challenges. We had 197 employees & spouses complete some aspect of the *Wellness Works!* Program—hope more of you participate this year :)

Visit us on the web! [www.scantichealth.org](http://www.scantichealth.org)



Scantic Valley Regional Health Trust

## It's time to get your flu shot facts straight.

**Fact #1: The Flu Vaccine Doesn't Give You The Flu** This may be the number one objection for those who avoid getting the flu shot every year. The truth is, the flu vaccine doesn't have a live virus that could get you sick. The vaccine is made with inactivated viruses that aren't infectious. Or, it's created from a single gene of a flu virus that will produce an immune response without causing you to get sick.

**Fact #2: The Flu Shot Won't Make You Test COVID-19 Positive** Perhaps one of the newest rumors to hit the flu shot "facts" published on the internet is this one: The flu vaccine makes you test positive for COVID-19. According to the National Academy Of Sciences, that is flat-out wrong. The fact is that seasonal influenza and coronavirus are two different viruses. Flu shots create antibodies to protect you from coming down with the flu. These are quite different from the ones your body would make to fight off coronavirus. An antibody test is a way to tell for sure if you have had COVID-19. It doesn't detect flu antibodies.

**Fact #3: The Chronically Ill Can Get the Flu Shot** If you suffer from a chronic condition like diabetes or another serious health issue, it's important to at least consider your yearly flu vaccine. Some studies have found those with heart disease who receive a flu shot have lower rates of certain cardiac issues. It can also lessen the severity of the flu or hospitalization rates for those with chronic lung disease as well.

**Fact #4: Flu Shots Protect Pregnant Women** The flu vaccine is one of those health precautions recommended for pregnant women. According to the CDC, pregnant women who get vaccinated cut their risk of flu-associated acute respiratory infections by about one half. Additionally, other studies have found that while it protects a woman and her baby during pregnancy, it also protects the baby from flu postpartum, too. Early treatment for flu symptoms during pregnancy is important, too — preferably within 48 hours of symptoms starting.

**Fact #5: Flu Vaccines Reduce the Severity of the Flu** Studies show that flu vaccinations are known to reduce how serious flu symptoms get. A 2018 study of hospitalized flu patients showed that vaccinated patients were 59% less likely to be taken into the ICU than those who were not vaccinated. That means less time in bed; less time out of work.

**Fact #6: As Long As a Flu Circulates, A Shot Helps** If it's late fall and you still haven't received the flu shot, it's actually not too late! Just remember that it usually takes between two to four weeks for maximum protection to kick in, which is why experts recommend getting it as early in the season as possible. The flu season usually starts in October and ends in April. Most of the time it peaks between December and February.

**Fact #7: The Flu is a Serious Condition** Those with chronic health conditions and older adults should take extra precautions during flu season. Since a case of the flu can cause complications and even death, a vaccine is the best way to reduce the risk of serious illness or flu-related complications. On average, vaccinated older adults reduced their risk of flu-associated hospital visits by 40 percent.

**Fact #8: Serious Reactions Rarely Occur** The most common complaint of those who do receive a flu vaccine is usually a sore arm or redness at the injection site. Very rarely do serious complications occur due to flu vaccination.

**Fact #9: You Only Need it Once a Year** Each season, the flu vaccine is formulated to best match the most likely strain of viruses going around. Studies have proven that there's no need to get more than one vaccine during flu season. That goes for those with weakened immune systems, too. The only case where extra doses are needed is for some high-risk children.

**Fact #10: The Flu Vaccine is Recommended Each Year** Every year, the flu strain that circulates changes. Because of this, a yearly flu vaccine is recommended for those who are six months and older. Even if you got your flu shot last year, the immune protection wanes over time. That's why an annual vaccine offers the best protection against the flu. Taken and modified from <https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/10-flu-shot-facts-to-share-with-employees>, retrieved 8.12.20.

## If You Smoke, Why Do You Want to Quit?

You're thinking of quitting smoking. Do you know the reasons you want to quit?

Do you want to be healthier? Save money? Keep your family safe? All of those reasons?

If you're not sure, ask yourself these questions: >What do I dislike about smoking? >What do I miss out on when I smoke? >How is smoking affecting my health? >How will my life get better when I quit?

>What will happen to me and my family if I keep smoking? Once you know your reasons for quitting, remind yourself of them every day. It can inspire you to stop smoking for good. When you're ready, contact

[Lyn@scantichealth.org](mailto:Lyn@scantichealth.org) to see how the Wellness Program can help!

Taken from <https://smokefree.gov/quit-smoking/why-you-should-quit/why-do-you-want-to-quit>

# Grocery Shopping – Healthy Food Choices

Optimal nutrition is fundamental to a life of wellness and achieving nutritional excellence begins with making the right choices in the grocery store. In fact, much of the work of healthy eating is done right in the grocery aisles. What follows are some basic rules of the road that will guide you through your travels in the grocery store to ensure a successful and nutritious trip. Keep the ground rules that follow in mind as you make your way from one area to another.

Here are the “rules of the road” for the basic destinations within the grocery store:

**Produce** – Go for variety, deep rich color, and more, more, more! All forms of produce have something beneficial to offer, but some are especially healthy. These superstars include broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, collards, carrots, garlic, onions, leeks, sweet potatoes, dark leafy greens, tomatoes, winter squash, asparagus, red/orange/yellow bell peppers, berries, cherries, plums, any whole citrus, cantaloupe, kiwi, mango, peaches, pears, red grapes, apples, and dried or fresh apricots. Restrict white potatoes, especially if overweight or diabetic.

**Dairy** – Select reduced fat, low fat, or skim. Avoid whole milk and full-fat cheeses.

**Meat/Seafood** – Restrict red meat and processed meats like bacon and sausage. Choose lean cuts of beef and pork when you do. Concentrate your efforts on seafood and poultry.

**Eggs** – Choose the omega 3-fortified varieties. Look for omega 3 or DHA on the label.

**Frozen Foods** – Frozen fruits, vegetables, seafood, and poultry are just as nutritious as fresh. Avoid frozen vegetables with added butter or sauces. Avoid fruits with added sugar.

**Grain Products/Starches** – Choose **100% whole grain** products. Look for “100% whole grain or whole wheat” on the label to be sure. Physically intact whole grains like brown rice, barley, oats, quinoa, etc. have a health edge over 100% whole grain bread. Choose multigrain brands of pasta, like Barilla Plus or whole wheat varieties.

**Canned Goods** – Generally inferior to fresh, but the following retain their nutritional value: any form of tomato products, beans, and 100% pumpkin. Choose reduced-sodium varieties when available. Canned salmon, chunk-lite tuna, sardines, and oysters are convenient and healthy proteins.

**Beverages** – Coffee, loose-leaf or bagged teas, herbal teas, V8 or 100% vegetable/tomato juice, water. If weight is not an issue, 100% fruit juice in moderation.

**Condiments** – hummus, bean dips, salsa, tabbouleh, bruschetta, guacamole, pesto, sun-dried tomatoes, are healthy choices. All vinegar, ketchup, mayonnaise (olive oil or canola-based best), hot sauce, mustards, tahini, horseradish, and light soy sauce are fine. All herbs and spices – dried or fresh – are fantastic. Select olive oil or canola oil-based vinaigrettes for your salad dressings. Avoid fat-free (too much sugar) and creamy varieties.

**Cooking Oil** – Your best choices are extra virgin olive oil and canola oil. Nut-based oils (walnut, sesame, etc.) are also healthy choices if called for in recipes. Canola-based pan sprays are wonderful.

**Cereals** – To make a healthy selection, check the label for 5 grains (sic) or more of fiber and 10 grams or less of sugar per serving.

Taken from <https://drannwellness.com/grocery-shopping-healthy-food-choices/>, retrieved 8-17-20.

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The **Wellness Works!** Program will run from October through May this year. All SVRHT members and their spouses are invited and encouraged to participate, as well as employees who don't get their health insurance through work. There are many opportunities to earn points (**up to \$150 gift card & raffle tickets for non-members**) for challenges of different levels, webinars, classes, cooking videos and more. Lots of different offerings this year as it will be mostly remote programming. More info to come very soon!

# Staying Active During COVID-19

March 17, 2020 by Liz Joy, M.D., M.P.H., FACSM, FAMSSM

The current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presents some challenges to maintaining a physically active lifestyle. For all of us, young and old, regular physical activity remains an important strategy for staying healthy! Compared to being sedentary, moderate-intensity physical activity is associated with better immune function. Likewise, regular physical activity is associated with lower levels of anxiety and perceived stress (which many of us are feeling in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic).

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend 150-300 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity and 2 sessions per week of muscle strength training. Fit in 2, 5, 10 or 20 minutes, however and wherever you can. Every active minute counts! Below are some strategies to maintain physical activity and fitness:

## Aerobic Activities--Indoor Activities

**Dance** to your favorite music.

**Jump** rope (if your joints can handle it).

**Do** an exercise video.

**Use** home cardio machines if you have them.

**Put** some music on & walk briskly around the house or up and down the stairs for 10-15 minutes 2 or 3 times per day.

## Aerobic Activities--Outdoor Activities

**Go** for a bicycle ride.

**Do** gardening and lawn work

**Play** active games with your family.

**Walk** or jog around your neighborhood (maintain the recommended 6 foot physical distance between individuals).

**Be** active in a local park; spending time in nature may enhance immune function. Wash your hands when you get home.

## Muscle Strength Training

**Do** a strength training video.

**Perform** yoga – deep breathing and mindfulness can also reduce anxiety.

**Download** a strength workout app to your smart phone, such as the 7-Minute Workout (no equipment necessary).

Find ways to do simple muscle strengthening exercises around your house such as:

**Squats** or sit-to-stands from a sturdy chair

**Lunges** or single leg step-ups on stairs

**Push-ups** against a wall, the kitchen counter or the floor

**Don't sit all day! For example:** If watching TV, get up during every commercial (or periodically) and do a lap around your home or an active chore. For example, throw some clothes in the laundry, do the dishes or take out the garbage. Feel productive after just one show!

Taken & adapted from [https://www.exerciseismedicine.org/support\\_page.php/stories/?b=892](https://www.exerciseismedicine.org/support_page.php/stories/?b=892), retrieved 8-17-20.

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Be free and uninhibited today. Your body and mind tell you what you need. According to Dr. Seth Gillihan, when you give yourself what you need, you are more likely to:

1. Be more emotionally stable. People with greater awareness of their needs are less likely to get stuck in negative emotions, report lower levels of worry, and are less anxious in social situations.
2. Have less fear of missing out on social events ("FOMO"). When you know what you need, you can focus on fulfilling that need rather than worrying about what everyone else is up to.
3. Feel more secure in your relationships. When you feel secure with yourself, you also accept the people who love you.

How can we increase our needs awareness? The data suggests that mindful awareness is the key. In the quiet, your true needs will come to you. Take some time today for a five minute check-in where you sit in a quiet comfortable place to tune in with yourself.

Taken from <https://projecthappiness.mykajabi.com/eb/BAh7BjoWZW1haWxfZGVsaXZlcnlfaWRsKwffzixJy-->

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