

TAKE CHARGE!



for health and living

December 2013



take charge

10 Ways to Lose 10 Pounds

Dropping 1 to 2 pounds per week is a healthy rate of weight loss and may help your body adjust to the changes without slowing your metabolism. Plan the first few weeks of your weight loss in detail. Here are some guidelines:

- 1. Use the 500 Formula to lose 1 pound a week.** Cut 500 calories a day by using an extra 250 calories with exercise and by consuming 250 fewer calories (such as skipping a fancy coffee drink and cookie).
- 2. Avoid keeping high-calorie, high-fat and sugary snacks at home and at work.** Snack on fruit instead.
- 3. Aim for 30 minutes of cardio exercise (walking, biking or swimming) most every day.** Get your provider's OK first if you're not used to regular workouts.
- 4. Keep a food and fitness journal.** Record everything you eat and drink to learn your true intake and any eating patterns to avoid. Log in your exercise, too.
- 5. Keep moving throughout the day.** Add household chores, stretching and walking breaks to boost your metabolism and energy. ➔ Continued on page 4.



Making Sense of Vitamin D

Could you be D-deficient? Vitamin D is a hormone produced by the body in response to sunlight. It also occurs in fatty fish such as salmon and is added to some foods such as milk and orange juice. Factors that may lead to deficiency include:

- Darker skin may absorb less sunshine to make vitamin D.
- After age 50 our skin tends to make less D.
- Unhealthy kidneys are less able to convert vitamin D.
- People with milk allergies or lactose intolerance may consume less D.
- People who live north of the line connecting San Francisco and Philadelphia.

Ask your health care provider about your vitamin D needs. Many doctors are recommending 1000 IU of Vitamin D daily for adult patients.

city events

Account Consolidation – Deferred Compensation

Thursday, December 12
12 noon – 12:45 pm
SMT 4020

Emotional Intelligence

Tuesday, December 17
12 noon – 1:00 pm Webinar
Registration: See future email flyer*

Free Blood Pressure Screening

Wednesday, December 18
Stop by between 10:30 & 1:30
SMT 4096

Retirement Readiness – Deferred Compensation

Thursday, December 19
12 noon – 12:45 pm
SMT 4080

*Or, call Central Benefits at (206) 615-1340

best bits

■ **To lower stress and maintain sound mental health:** Exercise and get plenty of sleep every day; foster good relationships with trusted friends; break unhealthy habits; stay organized; give back to others; try not to worry too much; and accept that there are some things you cannot change.

American Heart Association

■ **Celebrate the company you keep during the holidays.** And, by the way, it might help you dodge added calories at social gatherings where food is the dominant factor. At parties and dinners, fill your plate once, and then engage yourself in conversation with those you haven't seen in a while. Or take a walk together after your meal.



Physical Therapy 101

Physical therapy (PT) can literally put your life back in motion. It is used to treat many debilitating conditions ranging from arthritis to back pain. The best results with PT include pain relief and improved mobility. It also often helps you avoid surgery.



Physical therapists use exercise, manual therapy, education, and applications such as heat, cold and electrical stimulation. People of all ages, from newborns to the very elderly, benefit from physical therapy.

Depending on your condition, your therapy may focus on preventing or correcting problems that affect:

- muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones (musculoskeletal system).
- nerves and related muscles (neuromuscular system).
- heart and related blood vessels (cardiovascular system).
- lungs and breathing (pulmonary system).
- skin wounds or burns.

The keys to success: Seek help early before the problem worsens, and follow your therapist's directions. If you find your PT exercises become a little tedious, focus on the potential rewards – less pain and more strength and flexibility to lead a healthier, fuller life.



Holiday Budget Worksheet

Many people find it hard to budget for holiday spending. Few save money throughout the year to make it through the season without going into debt. Make this year different! Take these steps to make it into the new year without going into the red.

- 1. Determine how much money you have to spend for gifts and holiday items.** Beginning in January, determine how much you want to spend and divide that number by 12. That is how much you need to save each month so you're ready when Christmas rolls around. Consider using a separate account for holiday money. You'll be less tempted to spend the extra money if it isn't in your main account.
- 2. How much do you want to spend on each person?** Take the amount you tallied in step 1 and divide it by the number of people on your list. This is how much you will spend on each person. Depending on the relationship you have with each person, you might want to change the amount. For example, you wouldn't spend as much on a work colleague as you would on your parents.
- 3. Create a budget worksheet to use as your gift list.**

It can look like this:

Name of Recipient	Gift Idea	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Amount Over or Under
1. Mom	Coffee pot	\$100	\$98	-\$2
2. Aunt Sue	Sweater	\$40	\$47	+\$7

- 4. Track your spending.** Tweak your budget for overages. Don't panic if you spend more than you budgeted for a particular person. Just spend less on another gift.

Get-Fit Gifts for Everyone

A top gift pick to consider is a **wireless fitness tracker**. It can monitor steps walked, heart rate, and calories in and out all day long. Some of these monitors can easily slip into a pocket or clip onto a waistband. More gift ideas:

- > **Pocket diet and exercise journal** – a winning tool for weight watchers who enjoy recording the details of their progress.
- > **Resistance bands** – great for muscle training, ideal for travelers or at-home exercisers who don't have much workout space.
- > **Free weights** – beyond dumbbells, check out sandbells or kettlebells.
- > **Sports bag** – from fashionable to no-nonsense, and always useful.
- > **Lessons** – for yoga, tennis, golf, dancing, skiing – you name it.

> **Wearable gear** – comfortable, fun tanks, shorts, leggings and windbreakers.

> **Exercise DVDs** – for convenient at-home workouts, everything from yoga, dance and core exercise to stretching and strengthening for all ages and fitness levels.

> **Exercise floor mat** – a must for Pilates, stretching or yoga.

> **Personal trainer session** – an excellent way to identify and tailor a fitness plan.

> **Personal blender** – for mixing energizing smoothies.



No matter what you choose, a gift that raises health awareness is a gift that can last a lifetime.

Eating for Energy



Cooking tip: Cooking gluten free is getting easier. Increasingly, you can find products on the market that allow you to bake and make your favorite side dishes without wheat flour – and the taste and texture of these products are improving. You'll find ready-made gluten-free baking mixes and pastas made with quinoa (keen wa) or brown rice.

body and mind

Exercise: No. 1 Mood Enhancer



If you've ever taken a brisk walk after a stressful day, chances are your mood improved. But the mental health benefits of exercise go beyond short-term effects.

Physically active people tend to be less depressed than inactive people, according to population-based research. Clinical studies have shown regular exercise can significantly reduce depressive symptoms in patients, sometimes better than antidepressant medication.

Other benefits: Although scientists aren't certain why moving the body helps the mind, early evidence suggests that exercise may relieve anxiety and reduce panic attacks, while vigorous exercise has helped people quit smoking. And as people slim down and become stronger and more energetic with exercise, their self-image and confidence improve.

The exercise effect is partially triggered by releasing feel-good brain chemicals (endorphins); by reducing immune system chemicals that worsen depression; and by raising body temperature, which may have calming effects.

Which type of exercise is best? Most studies have focused on moderate cardio (aerobic) exercise, though early research suggests weight training might also be effective.

So the next time you're feeling down, take a brisk walk. Check your state of mind afterwards. Even if your mood boost lasts but a few hours, exercising is more positive than using pills or alcohol.

If holiday parties and round-the-clock cheer leave you feeling a little sluggish, it's a great time to steer your choices toward whole foods that supply long-lasting energy.

Just as cars rely on gasoline to run smoothly, people rely on food to provide the body with fuel. Energy in foods is measured in units called calories. And while all foods contain calories, some are more high-powered than others – just like regular vs. premium gasoline.

What about sugar? Foods that mostly contain sugar will provide a quick burst of energy, but as soon as your body burns through it, you'll feel sleepy again and crave more sugar. It's a vicious cycle.

For ultimate endurance, choose foods that contain fiber and protein instead. These 2 vital nutrients are digested slowly, so they provide a steady stream of energy and leave us feeling full longer. Bonus: Protein also stimulates brain cells to help us feel more alert.

Add high-fiber vegetables, fruit and whole grains to protein choices, including:

- Lean meat and poultry
- Fish
- Greek yogurt
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Legumes

These foods also contain **B-vitamins** and **magnesium**, which are required to release energy from carbohydrates.

Note: Fatigue and a lack of energy may be signs of dehydration. Often a glass of water is the best solution to bringing your energy levels back up.



Almond Butter Fruit Clusters

EASY | RECIPE

From Personal Best®

These no-bake party treats are gluten free.

- 6 tbsp almond butter
- 2 tbsp honey
- ¾ cup dried pineapple, diced
- ¼ tsp salt
- 2 cups brown rice crispy cereal, gluten free
- 1 cup shredded coconut
- ¾ cup dried cranberries



1. Combine almond butter and honey in a large nonstick saucepan. Cook and stir over low heat 2 minutes; add pineapple and salt and continue cooking 2-3 minutes. Allow to cool 10 minutes.
2. Gently fold in remaining ingredients. When cool enough, form 1½-inch balls and place on wax paper-lined baking sheet. Chill in refrigerator. These treats will keep covered in the fridge for 1-2 weeks.

MAKES ABOUT 40 COOKIES. Per cookie:

48 calories | .6g protein | 2g total fat | .9g sat fat | .8g mono fat | .3g poly fat | 0.0mg cholesterol | 7.3g carbohydrate | 4.9g sugar | .6g fiber | 22mg sodium

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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News & Notes

Check Your 2014 Benefits. Watch your home mail for a letter confirming your 2014 benefits elections. Please pay particular attention if you added or removed a dependent. If the letter doesn't match your records, contact your department's [benefits representative](#).

Health FSA "Use it or Lose it" Change. Health FSA participants may now carry over up to \$500 of unused funds remaining in their accounts at year-end into the next year. See responses to [frequently asked questions](#) at seattle.gov/personnel/benefits/home.



Personalized Health Searches: Search a health topic with Aetna SmartSource and you'll get results based on your health plan, zip code and profile. Find local doctors, treatment options, estimated costs, and medications. Log in to your AetnaNavigator.com account; select "Care and Treatment" tab; choose "search smarter now".

top safety

Annual Safe Gift Guide

Looking for a gift that shows you care about someone? Check out these gifts with safety in mind:

> Thermal emergency blanket:

Give emergency Mylar thermal blankets or a heavy-duty one for people to keep in their vehicles.



> Heat-resistant fireplace gloves: Keep someone safe while building a cozy fire with these handy gloves.

> Weather emergency radio:

A battery-operated or hand-crank radio allows the recipient to receive NOAA alerts and warnings in their area through Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME).



> Parent and child safety bracelets: These bracelets, one worn by the parent and the other worn by the child, are especially useful when traveling with children in places such as

amusement parks and stadium events. An embedded transmitter module that works at a range of up to 100 feet helps parents keep tabs on little ones.

> Parachute cord survival bracelet:

These unique bracelets not only look great, they also serve a practical purpose. Since they can withstand about 550 pounds of pressure, they can be useful in an emergency for anything from a tourniquet to securing shelter.



> Talking smoke detectors: An alternative to the traditional beeping smoke detector, these actually talk to families, telling them to "get out of the house!"



expert advice

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FFAFP

Q: How to manage chronic pain?

A: Defined as pain that lasts longer than 6 months, chronic pain can cause mild or severe symptoms that do not go away. The pain may be intermittent or continuous and affect your physical and emotional well-being.

A team approach can effectively manage chronic pain. Talk to your health care provider about how to get started. First steps may include:

Good nutrition. Eat whole foods such as leafy greens, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts and fish. Drink plenty of water. Limit use of alcohol.

Stress reduction. A regular exercise routine, breathing exercises, meditation and progressive muscle relaxation can reduce muscle tension and worries. Journal writing, massage, guided imagery, hypnosis and biofeedback may help, too.

Support from others. Talk to a counselor or join a support group where you can share your experiences with other people living with chronic pain.

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→ Continued from page 1.

- 6. Include strength building 2 to 3 days a week.** It helps build lean body mass and boost metabolism.
- 7. Drink plenty of water, before, during and after exercise** and before meals so you don't confuse hunger with real thirst.
- 8. Skip sugary and alcoholic beverages** that can add hundreds of empty calories.
- 9. Avoid skipping meals.** And make sure your food tastes good.
- 10. If you see no progress in 3 to 4 weeks,** consult your health care provider, a personal trainer or registered dietitian.



With some dedication, you can adopt these habits for a long and healthy life.