

WELCOA\* | MARCH 2022

# WELL BALANCED<sup>o</sup>

*Simple Strategies*

FOR MENTAL HEALTH  
& WELL-BEING

HOW TO  
**TAKE CHARGE**  
OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

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WAYS TO MAKE  
**EXERCISE**  
**MEANINGFUL**

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**A FREE**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**RESOURCE**  
THAT CAN HELP YOU  
OR YOUR LOVED ONES

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# COLD Peanut Noodle SALAD

This creamy peanut noodle salad pops with nutty and tangy flavors. With plenty of crisp, cool veggies and a handful of nuts, you get a complete meal in one bowl. Bring it along to picnics or potlucks. It also makes a healthy and satisfying packed lunch.

8 ounces whole-wheat fusilli pasta or penne

4 radishes, thinly sliced

2 small carrots, thinly sliced

¼ cup chopped yellow onion

½ red, yellow, or orange bell pepper, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

½ cup chopped cilantro

6 to 7 Tablespoons natural peanut butter

2 Tablespoons tamari

2 Tablespoons brown rice vinegar

¼ cup water, plus more for boiling pasta

½ teaspoon sriracha or to taste

¼ teaspoon sesame oil

A handful of peanuts, whole or coarsely chopped

## DIRECTIONS:

Cook whole wheat fusilli pasta or penne in boiling water according to package directions. Drain and allow the noodles to cool for a few minutes.

While the noodles are cooking and cooling, make the rest of the salad. Put the radishes, carrots, onion, bell pepper, garlic, and cilantro into a big mixing bowl. Set aside.

In another bowl, combine 6 Tablespoons peanut butter, tamari, brown rice vinegar, ¼ cup water, sriracha, and sesame oil with a fork or whisk. The sauce should have the texture of a thick ranch dressing. If your sauce is too thin, add the remaining tablespoon of peanut butter, and fully combine it with the sauce.

Put the noodles into the mixing bowl with the vegetables. Cover the noodles and vegetables with the peanut sauce, using a large spoon to get everything fully combined. Top with a handful of peanuts. Serve right away, or put it into the refrigerator in a covered container until serving time.

SERVINGS: 6 people

## NUTRITION INFO:

Calories 354, Fat 18g, Carbs 34g, Protein 15g, Sodium 518mg



### DID YOU KNOW PEANUTS AREN'T ACTUALLY NUTS?

Even though they have “nuts” in their name, peanuts are legumes like peas, beans, and lentils. Also known as groundnuts, they grow below the earth as part of the peanut plant.

The average American eats over 6 pounds of peanuts a year, often in the form of nut butter. Peanuts are a good source of protein and fiber.



From the Kitchen of CADRY NELSON // Cadry is the writer, photographer, and recipe creator at Cadry's Kitchen, a vegan food & lifestyle blog. She shares plant-based comfort food classics that are ready in about 30 minutes. Cadry has been featured on Today, NBC News, Mashable, Reader's Digest, Shape, and Huffington Post. For more, visit [cadryskitchen.com](http://cadryskitchen.com).

# Spring Cleaning YOUR DIET



After months of cold and darkness, the time has come to fling open the windows, wipe down the side tables, and sweep off the cobwebs. While spring cleaning usually puts one to the mind of dusting and mopping, there are other areas of our lives that could use a once-over this time of year.

In the midst of the winter doldrums, good habits have a way of falling to the wayside. When the days are short and it's too cold to venture outside, it's all too easy to reach for comfort food. With spring upon us, it's an excellent time to rethink old habits and make some healthy, more nutritious choices.

One easy way we can do that is by adding more fiber to our diets.

In general, Americans struggle with getting enough fiber. In fact, it's estimated that 95% of Americans don't meet their daily recommended intake.

It's recommended that women get 21 to 25 grams of fiber per day. For men, the recommendation is 30 to 38 grams a day. Unfortunately, most Americans are eking out just 16.2 grams on average each day!

Like the sponge and broom used to clean the house, fiber is a sponge and broom for the digestive system. It helps move everything through properly, making bathroom trips easier by adding bulk to your stool, as well as softening it.

An adequate amount of fiber helps fight constipation, lowers blood sugar levels, and helps you feel fuller longer. Plus, when you eat enough fiber, it can help protect against certain types of cancer, like colon cancer, and reduce the risks of heart disease and diabetes.

Some folks look to fiber supplements to sneak more into their daily life. But fiber is all around us. It's present in every plant food. It's in beans, grains, nuts, seeds, mushrooms, fruits, and vegetables. (Fiber only comes from plants. You can't get it in animal products like meat, dairy, or eggs.)

Think about adding fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains with every meal—from breakfast through lunch, dinner, and snack-time.

Add berries to your morning oatmeal. At lunch, have a veggie stir-fry with brown rice. For dinner, add sautéed mushrooms to whole wheat pasta with marinara. Serve it with roasted Brussels sprouts or a big salad. Finally, enjoy a movie night with a bowl of air-popped popcorn. Whole grains never tasted so good!

Many people complain that if they buy produce it goes bad before they use it. But there's an easy solution. Eat it! When you make a point of incorporating produce into every meal, you add more color, flavor, nutrients, and variety to your meals. And you reap the many rewards of a fiber-rich diet.



## READ INGREDIENT LABELS

The next time you're at the grocery store, turn the package around and read the label. Remember that the ingredient list goes from what is the largest percentage of a product to the least. Choose products that have healthy, whole ingredients—basic foods that you might already have in your pantry. Skip highly processed products that are high in salt, sugar, and fat.



**About CADRY NELSON** // Cadry is the writer, photographer, and recipe creator at Cadry's Kitchen, a vegan food & lifestyle blog. She shares plant-based comfort food classics that are ready in about 30 minutes. Cadry has been featured on Today, NBC News, Mashable, Reader's Digest, Shape, and Huffington Post. For more, visit [cadryskitchen.com](http://cadryskitchen.com).

# MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS!



## What You Need to Know About Mental Health

Not too long ago, talking about mental health was considered taboo. Fortunately, we've come a long way in recognizing mental health as an essential part of our overall well-being. And the more we can discuss and learn about mental health, the more we can remove the stigma. When we're armed with this knowledge we're better equipped to maintain and improve our mental health, and more importantly, we're more apt to seek professional healthcare when needed. Here are some of the key factors to keep in mind when it comes to maintaining your overall mental health.

### Minding Your Mental Health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Performing well at school or work, maintaining healthy and strong relationships, pursuing hobbies, and participating in community activities are a few examples of good mental health in action.

Our mental health is also closely tied to our physical health. For example, depression

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B increases the risk for many types of physical

health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Likewise, the presence of chronic conditions can increase the risk for mental illness. And just as physical health can change over time, so can mental health. Various circumstances like the loss of a job or loved one, economic hardships, or increased stress can all have an impact on mental health. Mental health can also decline if you don't take the steps and effort to maintain it. Luckily, there are several strategies you can follow to maintain and improve your mental health:

**Reframe negative events.** Keeping a positive outlook is important for your mental health. Of course, it can be difficult to stay positive when things aren't going your way. When a negative event occurs, try to look at it in a different way. For example, if you're stuck in traffic reframe the inconvenience as a way to listen to your favorite music or podcast.

**Acknowledge something you're grateful for every day.** Practicing gratitude helps you recognize and appreciate all your blessings, which is key to maintaining a positive outlook and thus good mental health.

**Take care of your physical health.** Remember, physical health and mental health are connected. Some ways to take care of your physical health include exercise, getting enough sleep, and eating nutrient-dense foods.

**Connect with others.** It's important to have strong, healthy relationships with others. A good social network can support you through good, bad, and stressful times.

**Identify your purpose.** Knowing our lives have purpose and meaning is an important element of mental health. Think about what is truly meaningful to you. This could be your family, your job, volunteering, learning new skills, and/or exploring your spirituality.

### Mental Health vs Mental Illness

It's important to note that poor mental health and mental illness are not the same. If a person is experiencing poor mental health, it doesn't necessarily mean they have a mental illness. However, mental illnesses are among the most common health conditions in the United States. According to the CDC, one in five Americans will experience a mental illness in a given year.

Each mental health condition has its own signs and symptoms. In general, professional help might be needed if you experience any of the following:

- » Significant changes in mood, personality, eating, or sleeping patterns
- » An inability to cope with problems or daily activities
- » Feelings of disconnection or withdrawal from normal activities
- » Unusual or "magical" thinking
- » Excessive anxiety
- » Prolonged sadness, depression, or apathy
- » Thoughts or statements about suicide or harming others
- » Substance misuse

Many people who have mental health disorders consider their signs and symptoms a normal part of life or avoid treatment out of shame or fear. If you're concerned about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek the advice of a healthcare professional.



A survey conducted by the Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association found that 87 percent of American adults agreed that having a mental health disorder is nothing to be ashamed of, and 86 percent said they believe that people with mental health disorders can get better.



## Ask the Expert...

### What causes mental illness?

There is no single cause for mental illness. Several factors can contribute to risk for mental illness, such as trauma or abuse (child abuse, sexual assault, witnessing violence, etc.). Living with chronic medical conditions, such as cancer or diabetes can also contribute to the risk, as well as chemical imbalances in the brain, and misusing alcohol or drugs. Mental illnesses are treatable with therapy and/or medication, so seek professional help if you think you're suffering from a mental illness.

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*Have a question?* Ask our experts by going to [welcoa.org/expert](https://www.welcoa.org/expert). If your question is selected we will contact you directly with your answer and it will be featured in an upcoming issue.

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# Keep your KIDNEYS in Check

Every day your kidneys are hard at work performing various functions to help keep your entire body healthy. Your kidneys regulate your body's fluid levels, filter wastes and toxins from your blood, regulate blood pressure, and balance minerals in your blood. Indeed, your kidneys have a lot of important responsibilities, and that's why maintaining kidney health is so vital to your overall health and well-being.

Here are some things you can start doing this very second to help keep your kidneys healthy.

**Try to minimize canned and highly processed foods.** A kidney-friendly diet usually limits sodium to under 2,300 mg per day. Canned and processed foods can act as big sodium culprits, however. To help increase shelf life and taste, high amounts of sodium are added to canned and processed foods like lunch meats, bread, and crackers. Look for sodium amounts on food labels and try to eat more whole foods like cauliflower, blueberries, fish, and whole grains (these are naturally low-sodium foods).

**Go for a walk.** Walking is one of the easiest, safest, and most convenient ways to get active and regular exercise can lower the risk of chronic kidney disease. It can also reduce your blood pressure and boost your heart health, which is important to preventing kidney damage. Get steppin'!

**Drink a glass of water as soon as you wake up.** Water helps clear sodium and toxins from your kidneys. So, do your kidneys right every morning by drinking a glass as soon as you wake up. Keep hydrating throughout the day, too.



According to the National Kidney Foundation, 33 percent of adults in the United States are at risk for kidney disease. That's 1 in 3 people.

**Use OTCs with caution.** Over-the-counter (OTC) medicine like ibuprofen and naproxen can damage your kidneys if you take them regularly for chronic pain, headaches, or arthritis. If you use these medicines regularly, you could be risking your kidneys' health. Talk with your doctor about kidney-safe treatments if you're coping with pain.



### Talk with Your Doc

Kidney damage and disease usually occur over time and usually don't cause noticeable symptoms until the condition is in an advanced state. The key is to find kidney disease before trouble starts. Regular kidney function testing is a good idea, especially if you're at high risk. Risk factors for kidney disease and damage include:

- » Being over 60 years old
- » Having high blood pressure
- » Being diagnosed with diabetes
- » Having cardiovascular disease or having a family history of it
- » Being obese

Talk to your doctor about any risk factors you may have and if and when you should get kidney function testing. Testing can be crucial, as getting ahead of any damage can help slow or prevent future damage.

# MAKE EXERCISE *Meaningful*

## *How to define what exercise means to you.*

For many people, the mere mention of the word "exercise" gives way to feelings of angst and anxiety. To be sure, if you view exercise as a chore or another obligation that you have to do in your life, chances are you're not going to enjoy it and you're probably not going to do it regularly. This is why it's important to reframe your perspective on exercise.

By its definition, according to the American Council on Sports Medicine, exercise is a type of physical activity that consists of planned, structured, and repetitive bodily movement done to improve and/or maintain physical fitness. To many, that definition may sound clinical and uninspiring. Try adding to that definition with words that motivate your personal goals and mean something to you.

Exercise is:

- » Moving my body regularly to feel my best
- » Something I am blessed to do every day
- » Self-expression through movement
- » Helping me function better in daily life
- » Improving my overall health
- » Fueling my physical, emotional, and mental health
- » Time for me to spend investing in myself

In addition to viewing exercise through a lens of gratitude and a way of taking care of yourself, you should also consider the less obvious benefits. Indeed, physical activity is a great way to improve your health and protect yourself from chronic diseases, but also a vehicle to:

**Boost confidence.** Meeting exercise goals or challenges, even small ones, can help build your self-confidence. It doesn't matter what type of exercise you choose, or what your goal is. What matters is that you are moving and improving!

**Socialize.** Fitness classes, gyms, team sports, a walk with a friend—these are just a few ways to get active while also interacting with others and strengthening social bonds.

**Cope with stress in a healthy way.** Things like drinking alcohol, dwelling on how you feel, or "stress eating" are not healthy ways to cope with stress. On the contrary, exercising is an extremely healthy and effective way to manage stress.

**Protect your mental health.** When you get your body moving, endorphins are released.

These chemicals can make you feel better physically and mentally. Moreover, experts note that regular exercise can improve your interpersonal relationships, manner of processing information, and ability to deal with challenges.

**Sleep better.** Physical activity can help ensure you get a high-quality, restful night's sleep. Research shows that exercise can increase sleep quality for adults by reducing the time it takes to fall and stay asleep. Additionally, physical activity can help alleviate daytime sleepiness and, for some people, reduce the need for sleep medications.

Remember, the next time you think about exercise, don't roll your eyes and chalk it up as another chore on your list. Rather, view it as an opportunity you've been given that comes along with benefits that improve practically every aspect of your life.



# 211:

## Community Resource

### AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

You're likely aware of the three-digit phone numbers for emergencies (911) and directory assistance (411) but do you know the number for social services and community assistance? In 2000, the Federal Communications Commission designated 211 as the 3-digit number for information and referrals to social services and other assistance.

Dialing 211 is an easy and direct way to find help and referrals for basic needs like housing, food, transportation, and healthcare. The 211 network is available to everyone but is especially helpful for certain populations including the elderly, the disabled, those who do not speak English, those with a personal crisis, and those with limited reading skills.

Believe it or not, the 211 network in the United States responds to more than 20 million requests for help every year. The 211 network provides several types of referrals and assistance including:

**Basic human needs and living resources:** The network refers callers to food and clothing banks, shelters, rent assistance, and utility assistance.

**Healthcare resources:** Navigating through the healthcare system can be confusing, at the least. With 211, callers can be directed to health insurance programs, maternal health resources, health insurance programs for children, medical information lines,

crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, and drug and alcohol intervention and rehabilitation.

**Professional and financial assistance:** Users of the 211 network can get help finding financial assistance, as well as job training, transportation assistance, and education programs.

**Language services:** The 211 network offers language translation and interpretation services to help non-English-speaking people find public resources.

**Support for older Americans and those with disabilities:** Finding reputable and dependable providers for things like transportation, adult daycare, respite care, and home healthcare can be challenging. 211 can connect callers to a variety of reliable service providers.

**Family support:** The network can help those who need to find childcare, after-school programs, educational programs, family resource centers, recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, and protective services.

Every 211 conversation is confidential and can be made anonymously. Moreover, there are over 150 languages that are available for those who don't speak English or whose first language isn't English. If you prefer to text, use webchat, or search for resources online you can visit [211.org](https://www.211.org).



211 is available to approximately 309 million people, which is 94.6 percent of the total U.S. population. 211 covers all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.