

Health and Wellness NEWS

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BlueCross BlueShield
of Western New York

Caring for Your Eyes



Healthy Tip:

Have a complete eye exam and a follow-up every two years or as prescribed by your eye doctor. It is important to maintain a routine schedule of eye exams even if you have no problems with your vision.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month



Good oral health habits should start early in life. On February 6, 2017, the American Dental Association (ADA) and dentists across the county celebrate Give Kids a Smile Day by providing free oral health care to children.

The ADA is asking parents to help "Defeat Monster Mouth." This campaign promotes good oral health through brushing, flossing, rinsing, and eating healthy snacks.

Healthy Tip: Start a brushing routine with your kids and stick to it. Kids (and adults) should brush their teeth for at least two minutes twice a day.

February is National Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) and Low Vision Awareness Month. Age-related macular degeneration — the deterioration or breakdown of the macula, a small spot in the center of the retina — is one of the leading causes of vision loss in those ages 50 and older. The macula allows us to see fine details, such as reading small print or threading a needle; it even helps us read street signs.

Some risk factors are related to age, gender, and race, which we cannot control.

There are risk factors that we *can* control, such as:

- Smoking (restricts oxygen flow to the eye and constricts blood vessels)
- High blood pressure (if uncontrolled, it can cause damage to blood vessels in the eye)
- Exposure to sunlight (protect your eyes with sunglasses – 100 percent UVA and UVB – when outdoors)
- Diet and exercise (regular exercise and a healthy diet contribute to good eye health)

See your eye care professional for an evaluation if you have any of these symptoms:

- Straight lines appear wavy
- Difficulty seeing at a distance
- Decreased ability to make out colors
- Inability to see details, such as words in a book
- Dark spots block the center of your vision

Get Fit — How Many Minutes of Exercise?

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity.

Any type of activity throughout your day is better than none. Physical activity is anything that gets you moving, burns calories, and increases your heart rate.

Healthy Tip:

Engage in 30 minutes of exercise 5 days a week.

Eat Fit — Good for Your Heart Foods

We know that adding healthy fats to our diet can help lower “bad” cholesterol numbers.

Did you know that certain fruits and beans can also help?

Add these five foods to your diet a few times a week to help improve your cholesterol numbers:

- Almonds
- Apples
- Beans
- Blueberries
- Fish



Healthy Tip:

Nutritious changes in your diet, such as including healthy fats to reduce bad cholesterol can help improve your heart health.

Live Fit — Learn to Enjoy Your Exercise Routine

- Find an exercise you enjoy
- Make exercising a habit
- Incorporate exercise into your lifestyle
- Break up the minutes of exercise into 3- to 10-minute segments
- Keep going and stay on track

Healthy Tip:

Try different types of exercise to find what best fits you.



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Tuscan Vegetable Soup

Ingredients

(makes 6 servings):

- One 15-ounce can low-sodium cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup onions, diced
- ½ cup carrots, diced
- ½ cup celery, diced
- 1 small zucchini, diced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme leaves (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh sage leaves (or ½ teaspoon dried)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 32 ounces low-sodium chicken broth or vegetable broth
- One 14.5-ounce can no-salt added diced tomatoes
- 2 cups chopped baby spinach leaves
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese, optional

Preparation:

1. In a small bowl, mash half of the beans with a masher or the back of a spoon, and set aside.
2. Heat the oil in a large soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, carrots, celery, zucchini, garlic, thyme, sage, ½ teaspoon of salt, and ¼ teaspoon of pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the broth and tomatoes with the juice and bring to a boil. Add the mashed and whole beans and the spinach leaves; cook until the spinach is wilted, about 3 more minutes.
4. Serve topped with Parmesan cheese, if desired.

Nutrition facts:

145 calories, 4g fat, 8g protein,
21g carbohydrates, 5g fiber
(Source: foodnetwork.com)