

Cooperative Extension

Promoting Healthy Families, Schools and Communities: Making a Difference

Small Steps, Big Impact:

Exploring the 8 Dimensions of Wellness

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Staying healthy can sometimes feel overwhelming. Between eating well, being active, getting enough sleep, and managing stress, it may seem like you have to do everything perfectly to feel your best. The good news? Wellness does not require perfection – it starts with small, meaningful steps. Daily habits and routines play a significant role in long-term well-being. Small, consistent actions can lead to meaningful and lasting improvements over time.

What is wellness?

Wellness is a holistic approach that includes emotional, social, and other areas of life, all working together to support overall well-being. It is also a dynamic process, meaning it can change over time depending on personal experiences, priorities, and needs. Because of this, what works for one person may not work for another. Focusing on wellness can have multiple physical and mental benefits. It can increase energy levels, support mental health, and improve overall quality of life. It may also strengthen relationships and build confidence in managing your health.



The 8 Dimensions of Wellness

One way to understand wellness is through the *8 Dimensions of Wellness* model. These dimensions are interconnected. Progress in one area can positively influence others. The eight dimensions that contribute to overall well-being include:

- ◆ **Physical wellness:** Taking care of your body through regular movement, balanced nutrition, and adequate rest.
- ◆ **Emotional wellness:** Understanding, expressing, and managing your emotions in healthy ways.
- ◆ **Social wellness:** Building and maintaining meaningful relationships.
- ◆ **Intellectual wellness:** Engaging in learning, creativity, and new ideas.
- ◆ **Spiritual wellness:** Exploring personal values, beliefs, or a sense of purpose.
- ◆ **Environmental wellness:** Creating and living in safe, supportive, and healthy surroundings.
- ◆ **Occupational (purposeful) wellness:** Participating in activities that provide meaning and satisfaction.
- ◆ **Financial wellness:** Managing resources to meet current needs and plan for the future.

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Save It, Store It, Savor It: Food Preservation Strategies

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The 2024 data reveals that among 240 million tons of food in the U.S. supply, 29% goes unsold or uneaten, referred to as surplus food.¹ This translates to 60 million tons of food waste, 10.2 million tons of recycled food, and 1.7 million tons of donated food. As displayed, a very small portion of food is donated to those in need and more is recycled, but the vast majority becomes food waste, which goes directly to landfill, incineration, down the drain, or is just left in the fields to rot. Nearly 114 billion meals are wasted annually in the U.S., costing the economy about 1.3% of GDP, not to mention the significant detrimental climate and environmental impacts.

Food preservation is one method to combat food waste. Safe food preservation

stops or slows the natural spoilage process, preventing the growth of harmful bacteria while also maintaining the nutritional value, taste, color, and texture of foods. Food preservation offers many benefits beyond reducing food waste including cost savings, opportunity



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VISIONS

is a peer reviewed newsletter published four times yearly and sent upon request, without charge.

Published by

Rutgers Cooperative Extension
Department of Family & Community Health Sciences

Editors:



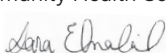
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Printed August 2026

General Food Preservation Methods:

- ◆ **Canning:** Method removes oxygen, destroys enzymes, prevents growth of undesirable bacteria, yeasts, and molds. During heating air is driven from the jar or can and as it cools a vacuum seal is formed, which prevents air from getting back in and bringing microorganisms to recontaminate the food. High acid foods (pH ≤ 4.6) are preserved through water bath canning, while low-acid foods (pH > 4.6) use pressure canning.
- ◆ **Jams & Jellies:** Consists of fruit combined with sugar that are thickened and preserved with water bath canning. All require a combination of fruit, sugar, pectin, and acid.
- ◆ **Pickling:** Uses a blend of spices, sugar, and vinegar with fruits and vegetables to create a crisp, firm texture and a pungent, sweet-sour flavor.
- ◆ **Fermenting:** Facilitated by microorganisms that break down carbohydrates and other organic compounds in the absence of oxygen; this metabolic activity creates a variety of compounds, such as acids, alcohol, and gases, which not only preserve food, but also give it unique flavors and textures.
- ◆ **Freezing:** Involves decreasing the food temperature to a point where water within it solidifies into ice, generating an inhospitable environment for microbial activity. Rapid and uniform cooling is key to successful freezing.
- ◆ **Drying:** Removes moisture so bacteria, yeast, and mold cannot grow and spoil the food and slows down the action of enzymes that cause foods to ripen.
- ◆ **Curing & Smoking:** Involves a combination of salt curing to pull out moisture and controlled smoke exposure,



Why Does Hydration Matter as We Age?

Dr. Karen Ensle, RDN, FCHS Educator Union County

Keeping hydrated as we get older is important for our overall health and wellness. Our bodies are made up of 65% water, and we need fluids from drinks and food to keep hydrated. Proper hydration supports digestion and temperature regulation while dehydration can lead to fatigue, confusion and life-threatening infections if the body becomes dehydrated.

As we age, it is more difficult for the body to hold onto water. In fact, up to 40% of adults older than the age of 65 experience dehydration. Older people feel less thirsty due to the lack of impulses stimulating the brain to drink more fluids. We also know that kidney functions decline with age and fluid loss due to urinating more often, increases the likelihood of dehydration.

Health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes can increase fluid loss and disrupt the body's ability to regulate fluids properly. Muscle mass naturally decreases and total body water content decreases causing dehydration to happen more easily. Physical limitations such as arthritis, joint pain or general mobility can make it more challenging to get a glass of water. Many common medications, including diuretics for high blood pressure, create more fluid loss and some diabetes medicines increase urine output, meaning you will lose fluids quickly and need to drink more water to stay hydrated.

Body temperature regulation can be disturbed. Research shows that men ages 56-66 have a harder time maintaining a healthy body temperature (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit) which causes them to end up dehydrated after sweating through a workout or sitting in the sun.

Good hydration needs to be a daily habit. Our bodies are made up of 65% water, so we need fluids to support important functions, including digestion and temperature regulation. Dehydration happens when we don't drink enough fluids to replace what the body loses throughout the day.

Knowing how much water to drink as you age has estimated needed amounts for men and women. The amount of water adults ages 65+ need varies from person to person, but current recommended amounts of daily fluid intake are 13 cups of water per day for men and 9 cups for women. And, while you can't stop your body from chronologically aging, you can take a proactive approach to staying hydrated.

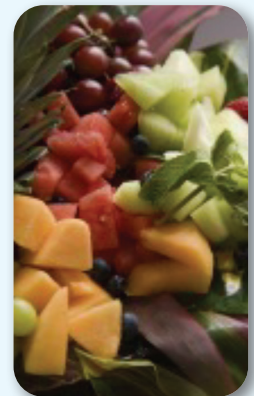


Here are some easy ways to boost your hydration as you age:

Eat water-rich foods by aiming to eat fruits and vegetables with higher water content. The amount of fluid a body needs each day can come from water, other beverages, and food. Food provides about 20% of the total water you need each day. Many fruits and vegetables are almost 100% water by weight, including cantaloupe, watermelon, cucumbers, and strawberries to name a few. Choosing broths and soups is another great idea, especially in colder months, as long as they don't conflict with dietary restrictions such as sodium.

Keep water within reach and keep a water bottle nearby whenever possible. Make water more exciting by freezing fruit, herbs, or coconut water into ice cubes. Add the cubes to your water for a slow-release flavor boost. Try sipping through a straw as many people end up drinking more fluids (without realizing it) when they use a straw. Invest in stainless steel or silicone straws you can wash and reuse.

Create healthy drinking habits and add more fruit and vegetables into your diet along with water to create a routine that promotes hydration. For example, you could drink a glass of water after you use the restroom throughout the day. You'll replace lost fluids and stay hydrated. Take small steps to stay hydrated and you will feel better and improve your health and wellness.



Mood & Food:

Nutrients That Support a Healthy Mind

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Mood-Boosting Nutrients

Omega-3s

Magnesium

Antioxidants



Research shows that certain nutrients support better brain health and emotional balance. Nutritional psychology is the study of how the food we eat affects our thoughts, feelings, and mental health. Just like your body needs good fuel to run, your brain needs the right nutrients to work its best. Studies show that some foods can help you feel calmer, more focused, and even happier, while others may make you feel tired, anxious, or sad. This happens because food affects brain chemicals, gut health, and how the body handles stress. Eating healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats can support both your brain and your mood every day.

Let's look at some nutrients that can help boost your mood, lower stress, and improve brain function. Omega-3 fatty acids are healthy fats that your brain needs to work well. They help brain cells communicate and reduce inflammation. You can find omega-3s in fish such as salmon and sardines, and in plant foods like walnuts, flaxseeds, and chia seeds. Eating these foods can help keep your brain sharp and your emotions balanced. Studies show that omega-3s may also help reduce signs of depression and support emotional strength.

Another important nutrient is magnesium, which is often called the "calming mineral." Magnesium helps control your nervous system and plays a big role in managing stress and sleep. Not getting enough magnesium can lead to anxiety, irritability, and trouble sleeping. You can find magnesium in foods like spinach, kale, pumpkin seeds, black beans, almonds, and even dark chocolate. A handful of pumpkin seeds is an easy and healthy snack that can help you get more magnesium.

Antioxidants are important for keeping your brain healthy. They help protect brain cells from damage caused by stress and inflammation. Vitamins A, C, and E are

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Healthy Recipe

Dinner Recipe: Sheet-Pan Salmon with Sweet Potatoes & Broccoli

Hyperlink: <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/281181/sheet-pan-salmon-with-sweet-potatoes-broccoli>

A quick and nourishing dinner that supports brain health with omega-3s, fiber, and essential vitamins.

Ingredients (serves 2):

- 2 salmon fillets (about 3–4 oz each)
- 1 medium sweet potato, chopped
- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: lemon wedges for serving



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. On a large baking sheet, toss sweet potatoes and broccoli with 1 tablespoon olive oil, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Roast for 15 minutes.
3. Remove the tray, push veggies to the side, and place salmon in the center. Drizzle with remaining olive oil and season lightly.
4. Roast for another 12–15 minutes until salmon is cooked through.
5. Serve warm with lemon wedges.

Why it's great for your brain:

This anti-inflammatory dinner delivers rich omega-3s, B-vitamins, fiber, and antioxidants, which help support brain health, reduce inflammation, and stabilize energy and mood. Salmon is rich in omega-3s (the kind your brain loves), while sweet potatoes and broccoli provide B vitamins, fiber, and antioxidants to help manage stress and support mental clarity.

Nutrient Summary (approx. per serving):

- **Omega-3s:** 2g EPA/DHA
- **Magnesium:** ~60–80mg (from broccoli/sweet potatoes)
- **Antioxidants:** High- Vitamin C, vitamin K, vitamin A from veggies
- **B Vitamins:** B6, B12, folate



Mood & Food:

Nutrients That Support a Healthy Mind - continued from page 4

antioxidants that help your brain stay sharp and focused. There is no set amount you need each day, but eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables can help ensure you get enough. Try eating about 2 cups of fruit and 2.5 cups of vegetables every day. Foods like berries, oranges, bell peppers, and leafy greens are great choices. Eating different kinds of foods rich in antioxidants can help improve memory, focus, and reduce mental tiredness.

B vitamins, especially B6, B12, and folate, help your brain make important chemicals like dopamine and serotonin, which affect your mood. They also help your body create energy and stay focused. You can get these vitamins from foods like eggs, beans, whole grains, and leafy greens.

To keep your brain and mood strong, try to eat a variety of healthy foods each day. This includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, nuts, and seeds. Try not to eat too many ultra-processed foods, since they can upset your gut and lead to low energy, mood swings, and poor sleep. Healthy daily habits can also boost your mood. Spend time outside to get sunlight and vitamin D, move your body every day by walking, dancing, or doing yoga, and make sure you get enough sleep. You can also reduce stress by practicing deep breathing, journaling, or meditation.

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Save It, Store It, Savor It:

Food Preservation Strategies - continued from page 2

to use quality products, sustainability and control, and practicality. creating an inhospitable environment for harmful microorganisms while intensifying flavors.

Important General Guidelines:

- ◆ **Recipes:** Use only scientifically tested recipes to ensure safety
- ◆ **Produce:** Always start with fresh, firm fruits or vegetables free of spoilage
- ◆ **Measuring:** Weigh or measure amounts carefully
- ◆ **Amounts:** Most methods benefit from storing in single-service sizes for your family
- ◆ **Storage:** Follow recommended methods and storage times for the highest quality products



To learn more, visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation.

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Make Informed Choices with the Nutrition Facts Label

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The Nutrition Facts label shows the nutritional content of packaged foods and drinks. It's a helpful tool for understanding what is in the foods you eat every day. In this article, you will learn how to use the Nutrition Facts label to make informed choices, compare products, and identify options that better support your health.

What to Look for on the Label

The Nutrition Facts label includes several key pieces of information that can help guide your decisions. Understanding these basics is a great first step toward making healthier choices when shopping and eating.

- ✓ **Serving Size:** This reflects the typical amount people eat in one sitting, but it's not a recommendation for how much you should eat.
- ✓ **Servings Per Container:** This tells you how many servings are in the package. Many items contain more than one serving, so be sure to double check!
- ✓ **Calories:** The number listed is for one serving. If you eat more than one serving, remember to multiply the calories accordingly.
- ✓ **% Daily Value (%DV):** This shows whether a nutrient is low or high in a food. Use these quick tips:
 - 5% or less = Low
 - 20% or more = High

What Is a Calorie?

A calorie is a unit of energy that your body uses to function, from breathing and digestion to physical activity. The calories listed on a Nutrition Facts label tell you how much energy you get from one serving of a food or drink. Nutrition labels are based on a standard 2,000-calorie daily diet, but your individual needs may be higher or lower depending on your age, activity level, and overall health.

Take a Closer Look at Nutrients

Some nutrients help your body stay strong and healthy, while others should be limited.

Focus on getting enough of these:

- ✓ **Fiber** – supports digestion and helps you feel full longer
- ✓ **Vitamins and Minerals** – support your immune system and help maintain strong bones

Limit these nutrients: Eating too much of these can increase the risk of conditions like heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

- ✓ **Sodium**
- ✓ **Saturated fat**
- ✓ **Added sugars**

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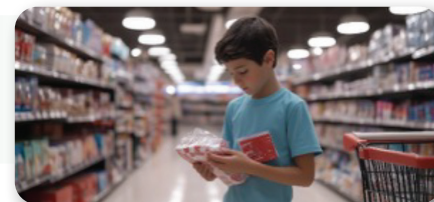
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Make Informed Choices

with the Nutrition Facts Label - continued from page 6



Putting It All Together

By paying attention to serving sizes, calories, and key nutrients, you can make more informed choices for yourself and your family. Explore the resources below for more guidance.

- ✓ **How to Understand and use Nutrition Facts Label:** A guide that breaks down each part of the label and shows you how to use it in everyday food decisions.
- ✓ **Understanding the Nutrition Food Label:** An overview that explains key components like serving sizes, calories, and nutrients in simple terms.
- ✓ **What's on the Nutrition Facts Label:** An outline of each element on the label, including what it means and why it matters for your health.
- ✓ **Basics of the Nutrition Facts Label:** An introduction to reading labels, perfect for building foundational knowledge and confidence.

Quick Tips for Shopping Smart

- ✓ Choose foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium (5% DV or less)
- ✓ Choose foods high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals (20% DV or more)

Small Steps, Big Impact:

Exploring the 8 Dimensions of Wellness - continued from page 1



Where to Begin?

Starting a wellness journey does not have to feel daunting. The key is to begin small. Choose one area of wellness that feels most important to you right now. Then, take one simple step toward improving it. Over time, these small actions can build into lasting, healthy habits. Your needs and priorities may change over time, and that is okay. Paying attention to how you feel and adjusting your habits accordingly is an important part of maintaining well-being.

Learn More

Interested in learning more about wellness and how to apply it to your daily life? Explore the resources below to get started:

- ◆ **Introduction Video:** This video provides an overview of wellness. It's a great starting point for understanding how various aspects of wellness connect.
- ◆ **What Exactly is Wellness?** This article highlights how personal choices, environments, and behaviors contribute to overall well-being.
- ◆ **Dimensions of Wellness:** This article explores the eight interconnected dimensions of wellness to better understand how each area contributes to a balanced and fulfilling life.
- ◆ **Wellness Wednesdays with FCHS:** These webinars provide easy-to-follow resources, tips, and programs designed to help you build healthy habits and integrate wellness into your everyday routine.

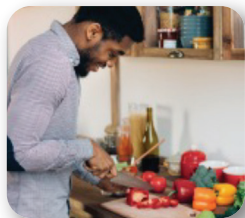
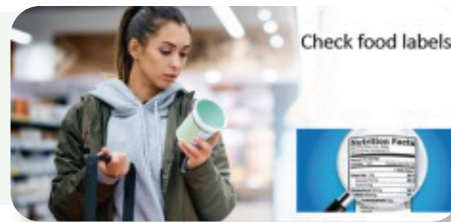
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Lose Salt, Not the Flavor

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Sodium, the main ingredient of table salt, is not only an essential nutrient required for many biological processes, but it also enhances the flavors of foods. However, consuming too much sodium over time can raise blood pressure, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Most Americans consume more sodium than recommended, often without realizing it. On average, people consume more than 3,300 milligrams of sodium per day, while federal guidance recommends less than 2,300 milligrams per day for teens and adults. The American Heart Association recommends an ideal limit of no more than 1,500 milligrams per day for most adults, especially those with high blood pressure. Individual needs can vary, so it is important to always follow personal medical advice. Here are some simple ways to build flavorful meals while being mindful of sodium. Like many cooks and chefs, you can use fresh ingredients, herbs, spices, citrus, garlic, and ginger to bring out flavor without relying only on salt.

◆ Add more fruit and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins and minerals and can add flavor, color, and nutrition to meals. Fresh, canned, frozen and minimally processed produce are great options. It is recommended to be aware of the sodium and fat levels in ready-made sauces and dressings.

◆ Check the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients

Did you know that more than 70% of the sodium most people consume comes from packaged, prepared, and restaurant foods? When choosing packaged foods, start by checking the serving size, then look at the sodium amount per serving. For additional help, see [this guide](#) on how to read the Nutrition Facts label.

◆ Use herbs, spices, citrus, vinegar, garlic, and ginger

These ingredients can help food taste bright and flavorful with less salt. Instead of adding salt to your rice, try lime, cilantro, garlic, or green pepper. For more ideas, see the article [Common Herbs and Spices: How to Use Them Deliciously](#)

◆ Spend your sodium “allowance” where it matters most

Instead of consuming highly processed salty snacks, use smaller amounts to season whole foods like vegetables, beans, whole grains, nuts, and other healthy ingredients. If using a canned soup that is high in salt, stretch it by adding water, vegetables, herbs, or spices.

Reducing sodium doesn't have to happen overnight. Give yourself time to adjust. Research has shown that salt has an acquired taste, and your taste buds can adjust gradually. Using flavor builders such as herbs, spices, citrus, garlic, and ginger can help meals stay flavorful while you reduce sodium over time. It may seem difficult at first but give it a try; you may be surprised!

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- U.S. Food and Drug Administration. *How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label*. <https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-facts-label/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label>
- University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service. *Retrain Your Taste Buds Away from Salt*. <https://www.uaex.uada.edu/counties/miller/news/fcs/herbs-spices/Retrain-Your-Taste-Buds-Away-from-Salt.aspx>

Additional Resources

- How to Track Your Sodium**, American Heart Association, <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/how-to-track-your-sodium>
- Tasty Recipes That Are Lower in Sodium and Big on Flavor**, American Heart Association Recipes, <https://recipes.heart.org/en/>
- Use Herbs and Spices Instead of Salt**, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/healthdisp/pdf/tipsheets/Use-Herbs-and-Spices-Instead-of-Salt.pdf>



