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Tips for living well

Health is a lot more than how one looks and feels. Conversations about health should include all eight dimensions or areas of wellness—that is mental, social, emotional, spiritual, financial, occupational, environmental, and intellectual. That's the focus of Living Well Month, a national event in March promoting overall wellness and the education provided by Family and Consumer Sciences professionals to improve the lives of people, families, and communities.

"The Illinois Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences works through University of Illinois Extension to offer information that will help families achieve a positive, healthy lifestyle," says Cheri Burcham, Family Life Educator. "Whether you are trying to manage your diabetes through meal planning and exercise, make decisions about health care and insurance, or get tips on effective parenting techniques, Extension FCS has a research-based answer."

To make every month a "Living Well Month," consider these tips:

1. Engage children in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. Adults need at least 30 minutes of physical activity. Play sports or recreational games, turn on some music and dance, hula hoop, or make an obstacle course. Take a walk or a bike ride in your neighborhood. All movement counts.

2. Start planning a garden now to work in the spring and summer. Gardening is great physical activity. This activity could also nurture your mental and environmental wellness.

3. Rethink your drink. The average adult human body is approximately 60 percent water. Water regulates every living cell's process and chemical reactions. It transports nutrients and oxygen. Water also helps to maintain normal bowel habits and prevent constipation. Reduce the amount of soda and fruit drinks consumed daily.

4. Eat a variety of healthy foods. Eat colorful fruits

and vegetables every day. Most people need to increase their fruit and vegetable intake. Have a sliced banana on cereal for breakfast. Enjoy a sandwich loaded with vegetables at lunch. At dinner, steam some vegetables and prepare a fruit parfait with yogurt for dessert. Try new fruits and vegetables. If there's a kind you don't like, try preparing it in a different way. See www.choosemyplate.gov for more information about nutrition for yourself and members of your family.

5. Read, read, read. Go to the library and check out books. Keep the mental stimulation flowing throughout the year regardless of your age. This will stimulate your intellectual health.

6. Talk to a friend or start a journal to get your thoughts and feelings off your chest. Staying in check with emotional health can be tough, but it's important.

7. Check out parenting, finance, nutrition and/or food preparation classes offered by your Extension office. See www.extension.illinois.edu for more information about upcoming offerings.

8. Maintain a healthy home. Check that your smoke detector is working correctly and test for the presence of Radon. Help manage allergies and/or asthma by cleaning and vacuuming regularly to reduce allergy triggers in the home. Avoid accidental poisonings by keeping medications locked up, and cleaning agents and other poisons out of reach of children.

9. Keep your family finances in check. Track your expenses and update your budget regularly. Eat at home often because meals outside of home usually cost more. Plan your menus and use coupons as a planning tool. Creating and sticking to a budget, along with paying off debt are great first steps to financial wellness.

All eight of the dimensions or areas of wellness are connected and support each other. Evaluate your overall wellness and take small steps to improve your health during Living Well Month and all year long.



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Social Security 'Slam the Scam' Day March 9

On National Slam the Scam Day and throughout the year, the Social Security Administration gives tools to recognize Social Security-related scams and stop scammers from stealing your money and personal information. Share scam information with your loved ones. Slam the Scam!

Recognize the four basic signs of a scam:

1. Scammers pretend to be from a familiar organization or agency, like the Social Security Administration. They may email attachments with official-looking logos, seals, signatures, or pictures of employee credentials.

2. Scammers mention a problem or a prize. They may say your Social Security number was involved in a crime or ask for personal information

to process a benefit increase.

3. Scammers pressure you to act immediately. They may threaten you with arrest or legal action.

4. Scammers tell you to pay using a gift card, pre-paid debit card, cryptocurrency, wire or money transfer, or by mailing cash. They may also tell you to transfer your money to a "safe" account.

Ignore scammers and report criminal behavior. Report Social Security-related scams to the SSA Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

Visit www.ssa.gov/scam for more information and follow SSA OIG on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to stay up to date on the latest scam tactics. Repost #SlamtheScam information on social media to keep your friends and family safe.



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