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CBIZ

Wellbeing Insights

Living a Better, More Vibrant Life

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Breaking Down Vitamin D

The Sunshine Hormone

Have you ever noticed feeling more energetic, happier and healthier when the sun is shining? You're not alone, and science proves the feeling is real. Exposure to the sun's UVB rays triggers Vitamin D production in our bodies. Known as the "sunshine vitamin," adequate levels of Vitamin D can improve our moods and our health, though the name itself is a bit of a misnomer. Vitamin D is structurally and functionally more like a hormone than a vitamin.

What is Vitamin D and why do our bodies need it?

Almost every cell, organ and tissue in your body has Vitamin D receptors and therefore requires adequate Vitamin D for optimal function. It helps the body absorb and utilize both calcium and phosphorous, which are vital to bone health. Deficiency can cause rickets (soft, weak bones) in children and osteoporosis in adults. Vitamin D is also necessary for brain health, as low levels are associated with mood disorders (including depressive symptoms and seasonal depression) and insomnia and may even increase risk for dementia. Research also links low levels of Vitamin D to increased risk for autoimmune diseases,

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Breaking Down Vitamin D

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heart disease, colorectal and breast cancers, diabetes, and increased susceptibility to colds and flu.

Estimates vary, but studies show that up to 67% of American adults and nearly 50% of American children may have suboptimal Vitamin D levels. The best source of Vitamin D is time in the sun; its UVB rays trigger a three-step process whereby our bodies naturally manufacture the hormone from cholesterol. Vitamin D is found naturally in only a few foods such as oily fish like salmon, tuna and mackerel; beef and pork liver; some mushrooms; and fortified milk and orange juice.

You might be at risk for Vitamin D deficiency if you:

- have a dark skin tone.
- spend very little time in the sun and/or wear sunscreen or protective clothing.
- live north of Atlanta, GA.
- are overweight or obese.
- are an older adult.
- have inflammatory bowel disease.
- have had weight loss surgery.
- do not consume fatty fish, organ meats or fortified milk.
- take certain medications, such as some steroids or anti-epileptics.
- have certain genetic risk factors.

If you have any of the aforementioned risk factors, have experienced multiple bone fractures, have muscle weakness or pain, have seasonal depression, suffer from frequent colds or flu, or regularly have trouble sleeping, talk with your health care provider. He or she may recommend Vitamin D testing.

What should my Vitamin D level be?

A 25-hydroxy Vitamin D test assesses the amount in your blood. For adults, anything less than 20 ng/mL may be considered deficient and levels less than 12 ng/mL indicate severe deficiency. Most practitioners consider levels around 50 ng/mL to be adequate, but higher levels may be recommended for people with certain disease states or risk factors.

Should I take a Vitamin D supplement?

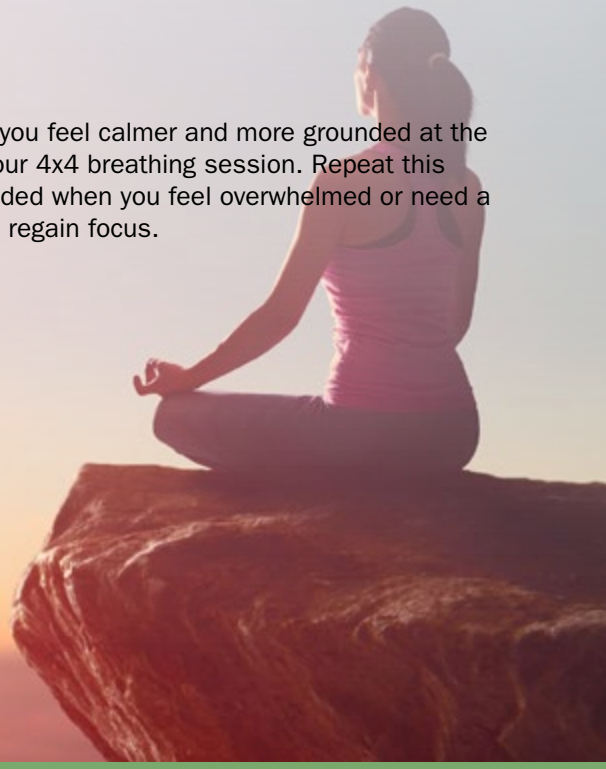
If possible, get your Vitamin D the natural way – through exposure to sunlight and Vitamin D-rich foods. For adults at risk for Vitamin D deficiency, a multivitamin with at least 1,000 IU Vitamin D3 (the active form) is recommended. Some people may require higher amounts to achieve optimal levels/function. Check with your doctor before beginning supplementation.

Mindful Minute

The holiday season is here, and along with the cheer of excellent food and company of loved ones can come a bit of chaos. Between work, family, planning and running errands, we can tend to feel a little scatterbrained and stressed out at times. If you notice your mind wandering a little too much and you are having trouble focusing on the task at hand, try this **4x4 breathing exercise** to bring yourself back to the present moment.

1. Set a timer for 1 to 4 minutes before you begin the exercise.
2. Sit in a comfortable position with your feet flat on the floor, begin your timer and close your eyes.
3. Inhale through the nose for 4 seconds, then exhale through the mouth for 4 seconds.
4. Continue this rhythmic breathing, focusing on the 4 count of each and the sensation of the chest and belly rising and falling until your timer goes off.

You may notice you feel calmer and more grounded at the conclusion of your 4x4 breathing session. Repeat this exercise as needed when you feel overwhelmed or need a mental break to regain focus.



On the Menu

Turnips

Commonly mistaken for other fall or winter root veggies, turnips are actually a member of the cruciferous family with relations to kale, Brussels sprouts and broccoli. While turnip greens are sometimes discarded, as the roots are typically what's prepared, they are actually even more nutrient dense than the bulbous portion of the plant and are similar to mustard greens in flavor.

The turnip originated in Asia and then made its way to Europe during the Middle Ages where it was a staple for the lower economic class of society. Now turnips are available almost everywhere and can be enjoyed in a variety of ways, as their bulbous roots and leafy greens are very versatile.

Here are four reasons why turnips should make an appearance in your fall and winter meal plans:

1. They're high in fiber, which has been shown to reduce inflammation of the colon and prevent constipation.
2. Cruciferous vegetables are rich in a compound called sulforaphane, which is known for its cancer-fighting properties.
3. Turnip greens are rich in calcium, which can help strengthen bones as we age.
4. They contain potassium, which has been seen to decrease blood pressure and help arteries dilate.

Keep It Fresh

Turnip roots can be stored in a refrigerator crisper drawer for up to several months. The greens can be cut off, rinsed and stored in plastic food storage bags in the refrigerator for up to five days.

Mashed Turnips & Sage

Ingredients:

- ☐ 4 large turnips, peeled and cubed
- ☐ 1 large russet potato, peeled and cubed
- ☐ 1 cup milk
- ☐ 2 shallots, chopped
- ☐ 3 Tbsp. butter
- ☐ 2 Tbsp. fresh sage, chopped
- ☐ Pinch of salt and pepper

Directions:

Place turnips and potatoes in a large pot of cold, salted water and bring to boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until soft, about 20 minutes. In a small saucepan, add the butter over medium-high heat. Once melted, add the shallots and sage until tender and fragrant. Season with salt and pepper. Add the milk and bring to a simmer. Drain the turnips and potatoes and add them back into the large pot they were cooked in. Add in the hot milk and roughly mash the vegetables. You can also use an immersion blender if you prefer a smoother texture.

Nutrition Info

Per Serving (1/6 of recipe)

Calories	146
Carbohydrates	19.g
Sugar	5.5g
Fiber	2.1g
Protein	3.5g
Sodium	117mg

Adapted from www.foodnetwork.com

Functional Fitness

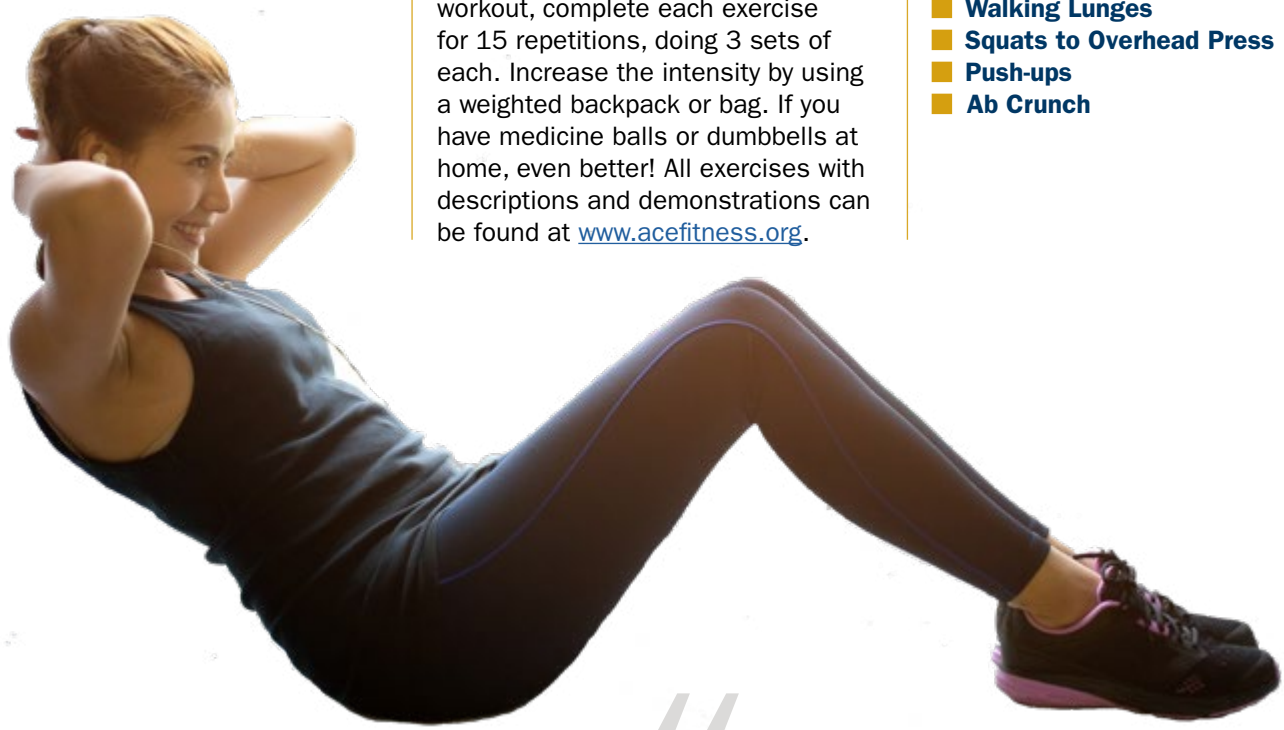
Exercises Suited for the Holiday Hustle

This time of the year can be filled with joyous activities, but it can also be a season where you feel pressured for time to fit in your regular activities or are hampered by the weather. Cutting out your usual trail run or skipping the gym can happen. Even with so much going on, there are still ways to take care of your physical health.

Functional fitness exercises are those that train your muscles to perform during life's daily tasks and are a great way to stay in shape when you're short on time and equipment. By emphasizing the upper body, lower body and core, these comprehensive workouts can support total body fitness and stability. While functional exercises can be done in a gym, they can also be done at home, which is a big bonus during the holiday season to save time and money and avoid being out in the cold. Additionally, exercise in general can boost your energy or help you combat stress.

The following exercises can be combined for a full workout or you can pick and choose which ones you would like to do at home, at the office or on the go. To build a full workout, complete each exercise for 15 repetitions, doing 3 sets of each. Increase the intensity by using a weighted backpack or bag. If you have medicine balls or dumbbells at home, even better! All exercises with descriptions and demonstrations can be found at www.acefitness.org.

- **Mountain Climbers –** Begin in a push-up position. Bring your knee to your chest, alternating legs. Continue for 15 seconds and shoot for as many reps as possible.
- **Plank –** Get into a push-up position, aiming for a straight line from the toes to the tip of your head, and hold for as long as possible (at least 30 - 60 seconds).
- **Supermans –** Lie flat on your stomach, arms extended above your head. Engage your back and glutes to lift your arms, upper body and legs off the ground. Be mindful to keep a relaxed neck.
- **Walking Lunges**
- **Squats to Overhead Press**
- **Push-ups**
- **Ab Crunch**



> The **faster** we live, the **less emotion** is left in the world. The **slower** we live, the deeper we **feel the world** around us.
>
> – STANKO ABADZIC

Spotlight On: Type 2 Diabetes

Although the threat of Type 2 diabetes is certainly very real, this condition offers a unique opportunity to take control of our future health and wellbeing. Contrary to popular belief, Type 2 diabetes is NOT genetic; heredity plays only a small role in its development. It is largely caused by lifestyle choices such as inactivity and excessive eating (especially refined carbs). In particular, it is charactarized by insulin resistance. Perhaps you have heard the notion that we are in the midst of a "diabetes epidemic." It's often tossed around and used as a reason to promote people to lose weight or get their blood sugar under control, but what does it all really mean? Let's take a look behind the scenes of Type 2 diabetes.

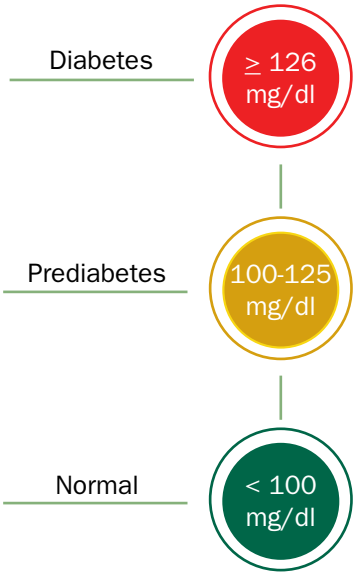
Blood Sugar 101

When we eat carbohydrates such as fruit, bread or pasta, it results in more sugar in our bloodstream, triggering the release of insulin. Insulin acts as a key for glucose (aka sugar) so that it can be taken in by cells and used as energy. However, your cells will not take in an unlimited amount of glucose. It's just like a car; once you fill up your gas tank, you must use some of the fuel before you can add more. It's no different with your muscles and sugar. The problem results when we overeat and then don't use the glucose we produce. Insulin tries to coax your cells into taking the extra glucose because the bloodstream doesn't want it. Your cells don't want the sugar either because they are not doing anything that requires the extra energy. This refusal to take in more glucose is insulin resistance. A person with Type 2 diabetes is still producing insulin, but their cells have become desensitized to its effects.

Take Control!

Type 2 diabetes rarely develops quickly; it's the result of years of sustained increasing elevated blood sugar. This slow development gives you the power to take control of your blood sugar and all of its associated conditions by knowing your risk (i.e., glucose levels) and taking action. Many folks think they don't need to worry about their blood sugar until after they reach diabetic levels. This is a costly myth! If you have a fasting glucose between 100 mg/dl and 125 mg/dl, your body may already be struggling to regulate your blood sugar; this condition is called prediabetes. You can think of this as a heads up that some improvements need to be made in your lifestyle in order to slow or altogether prevent the onset of diabetes.

Fasting Plasma Glucose*



**Recommended guidelines from the American Diabetes Association.*

The keys to blood sugar regulation and Type 2 Diabetes prevention are quite familiar:

- You must use the fuel (aka glucose) you are producing. That means activity; get that blood flowing throughout the day, particularly after large meals. Aim for activity intense enough to raise your heartrate for at least 30 minutes a day in addition to standing, stretching and moving throughout the day in short bouts as your schedule allows.
- Quit tobacco use.
- Limit refined carbohydrates, sweets and processed foods as much as possible.
- If you do eat these foods, pair them with a high-fiber food such as nuts, vegetables or beans. This will slow the rate at which your body absorbs sugars, helping to regulate the release of insulin and stabilize your blood sugar.

Fast Facts on Type 2 Diabetes

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Parenting Corner

Are Your Kids Too Busy?

Spot the difference between active and overwhelmed.

You think you're doing all the right things for your kids – soccer, piano lessons, math tutor, dance, etc. You coordinate play dates, check off homework, wash and pack the next day's sports clothes, and prep healthy lunches. By Friday (sometimes Wednesday, even) you're exhausted. Yet you trudge ahead because all this benefits your child. Right?

Active lifestyles for children are certainly favorable to a sedentary existence consumed by mindless hours of television and video games. But how do we know if we have too much in their planners? "One of the surest signs that a kid is overscheduled is when what used to be fun isn't fun anymore" says Dr. Edward Hallowell, author of *Crazybusy*. "Activities are like ice cream – they're great, but when you have too much, you get sick."

Here are a few signs that perhaps there's too much in the queue:

- Complaints of repeated headaches and stomachaches
- Feeling anxious, tired or down
- Falling behind on schoolwork or grades dropping
- Loss of friendships due to lack of availability
- Losing track of where they should be
- Zoning out in front of the television
- Trouble sleeping or falling asleep
- Most meals are on-the-go
- Most of your quality time is spent in the car
- Tantrums or loss of "equipment" when trying to leave the house
- As the parent you feel drained, overwhelmed and behind on home time

Do many of these sound familiar? If so, try these simple suggestions to restore the balance of activities with downtime:

- Schedule mandatory downtime – a few hours on the weekend – as untouchable.
- Let them miss a practice or two.
- Create family time whether on the way to practice or stopping for ice cream after; little bits add up to a lot.
- Be spontaneous. Shut down the phone, clear a day and take a drive to a favorite place or new destination.
- Let them choose. Riding a bike, taking a walk, playing a game, listening to music or just doing nothing for a while can give kids some much-needed downtime.
- Respect personal space and the need for them to have some alone time.

Fast Facts on Type 2 Diabetes

34%	Percentage of American adults with prediabetes
9 of 10	People with prediabetes who do not know they have it
30.3 Million	Number of diagnosed cases of diabetes in America
7.2 Million	Estimated number of undiagnosed cases of diabetes in America
90 - 95%	Portion of diabetes cases that are Type 2

CDC 2017 National Diabetes Statistics Report

The *Wellbeing Insights* Newsletter is prepared for you by CBIZ. The contributions included in this newsletter do not specifically reflect your employer's opinions. Consult your health care provider before making any lifestyle changes.

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