

A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You

Fight or flight: how your body handles stress

Stress triggers the body's "fight or flight" response, releasing adrenaline and cortisol. Adrenaline increases your blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Cortisol speeds up the body's ability to use blood sugar and slows down the digestive system. So if someone starts to chase us, we feel our heart rate go up and get a boost of energy to run away.

While short bursts of stress can often help you focus and perform better, long-term stress can put you at higher risk of health problems. These include anxiety, depression, sleep problems, heart disease, heart attacks, high blood pressure and even strokes.

The good news is there are many ways to deal with stress in a healthy manner. Experiment with these techniques to discover what works best for you!

- Eat a healthy diet with colorful fruits and vegetables.



- Exercise regularly, even with a short 10-minute walk.
- Get 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night.
- Embrace quality time with your spouse, family, and friends.
- Write down 1-3 things you are grateful for each day.
- Laugh often and share humor with others.
- Do random acts of kindness for family, friends, or strangers.
- Relax with stretching, yoga, deep breathing, massage, or meditation.
- Engage in hobbies you enjoy.
- Organize tasks, focus on priorities and delegate when possible.

Remember, you're not alone when dealing with stress. Reach out to your primary care doctor or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) when you need support. A little help can go a long way to help you manage stress and maintain a healthy mind and body.

Source: [MayoClinic.com](https://www.mayoclinic.com)

IN THIS ISSUE

Fight or flight: how your body handles stress

Heart-thumping moves

Recipe of the month

Heart-thumping moves

Get moving in February and celebrate heart health month! Cardio or aerobic-type activities are ideal for improving heart health because they boost your breathing and blood flow. Together, they help lower blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

Try these heart-thumping moves:

- Brisk walking
- Cycling
- Swimming or water aerobics

Source: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)



- Tennis or pickleball
 - Dancing or jumping rope
- But don't stop there! Strength training is also good for your heart. Building muscle can decrease your bad cholesterol (LDL) and increase your good cholesterol (HDL). You can

supercharge your strength with dumbbells, resistance machines, resistance bands, kettlebells or even your own body weight.

Keep February in motion. Look for ways to move your body each day and make your heart happy!

Sweet Potato & Black Bean Chili (Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium-large sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 4 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground chipotle chile
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 ½ cups water
- 2 (15 oz) cans black beans, rinsed

- 1 (14 oz) can diced tomatoes
- 4 teaspoons lime juice
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro

Directions:

Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add sweet potato and onion and cook, stirring often, until the onion is beginning to soften, about 4 minutes. Add garlic, chili powder, cumin, chipotle and salt and cook, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds. Add water and bring to a simmer. Cover, reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer and



cook until the sweet potato is tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Add beans, tomatoes, and lime juice; increase heat to high and return to a simmer, stirring often. Reduce heat and simmer until slightly reduced, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro.

Recipe courtesy of [Eatingwell.com](https://www.eatingwell.com); for nutritional information click [here](#).

We comply with applicable Federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-800-352-2583 (TTY: 1-877-955-8773).

ATANSYON: Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis èd pou lang ki disponib gratis pou ou. Rele 1-800-352-2583 (TTY: 1-800-955-8770).

Florida Blue is a trade name of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, Inc., an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Unless otherwise indicated, all materials, content and forms contained in this newsletter are the intellectual property of Better You. No materials, content and forms contained herein may be copied, reproduced, distributed or displayed in full or in part without expressed written permission by Better You.

February Better You Pursuit Newsletter – Florida Blue

February is American Heart Month, and this **Friday, Feb 2nd** is **National Wear Red Day[®]**. Check out the resources from the [National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute](#) for fun activities to do at work and with your friends / families to bring awareness and motivate people to adopt a heart-healthy lifestyle.

We've all heard eating healthy and getting enough exercise is good for our heart, but your mental health can impact your heart as well. Research shows that conditions like chronic stress, depression and anxiety can create harmful responses in our body that can increase the risk of heart attack or stroke. The good news is there are ways we can improve our mental well-being that in turn will help our heart.

Try this simple [breathing technique](#) you can do anywhere, anytime you're feeling tense. It helps you relax, which in turn helps your heart. Here's another [breathing exercise](#) you can use to reduce anxious feelings and regain calm and balance. Guided meditation helps lower stress, quiets the mind and creates some head space. If you're new to the practice of meditation, this [video](#) is for you.

NEWSLETTER (attached) – February 2024 highlights are:

- Fight or flight: how your body handles stress
- Heart-thumping moves
- Recipe of the month: Sweet Potato and Black Bean Chili

LIVE WEBINARS

Staying informed, getting resources and speaking with experts on a variety of health topics for a Better You is a just a few clicks away! Register today for [Florida Blue's wellness education live webinars](#). Or point your smart phone camera to the QR Code below. All times are eastern.



Upcoming topics:

- ✓ Blood Pressure Control (3-week series) – Thursdays 2/1, 2/8, 2/15 – 2:00pm – 3:00pm ET
- ✓ Heart Healthy Living – Tuesday 2/13 – 1:00pm – 1:45pm ET
- ✓ Lower Your Sodium Level (Ask the Dietitian) – Wednesday 2/14 – 1:00pm – 1:45pm ET
- ✓ Heart Health (Ask the MD – Sanitas) – Wednesday 2/21 – 12:00pm – 1:00 pm ET

Interested in a topic but cannot attend? Still register! You will receive the link to the live webinar recording the day after the event. Missed passed webinars? [Listen to past webinars recordings here](#).

FLORIDA BLUE ANSWERS

Did you know? Becoming and staying healthy can help you lower your healthcare premiums. Learn how with these tips and resources.

- [Stress Less for a Healthier Heart](#)
- [Wellness Information, Programs & Community Resources](#)
- [Money Savings Tips](#)



HEALTHY NUGGETS (Short videos) ~ FEBRUARY – Heart Health

Are you recharging your electronic devices more often than you are recharging your own batteries? With the demands of our professional and personal lives, it is common to feel overwhelmed and burned out. Taking just a few minutes for yourself throughout your busy day to “unplug & recharge” will help you stay focused, energized and calmer. Here, we are sharing ***Small Steps to a Better You*** with our healthy nuggets.

- [Quick cardio](#) (1:01)
- [Protect your heart with this breathing technique](#) (1:45)
- [Stress less for a healthier heart](#) (1:58)

FLORIDA BLUE CENTERS

Get support from our friendly team members at your local Florida Blue Center. Our community specialists and nurses can help you understand your health plan, compare costs, enroll in rewards, connect with local resources, improve your health with care management and a lot more. [Find a Florida Blue Center near you](#) and schedule an appointment (not required but suggested).

Register for [Florida Blue’s wellness live webinars](#)

JANUARY – Healthy Start

[From New Year’s resolutions to lasting results](#) (5:38)