

# Living Well

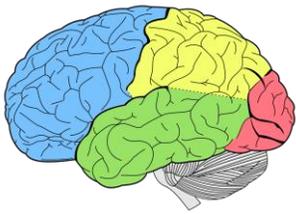
FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



## September – October 2021

### Brain Breaks

Regular short breaks in the classroom along with longer breaks of lunch and recess aren't just down time for students. These breaks are important factors in increasing productivity and providing opportunities to develop creativity and social skills.



Students, particularly young ones, often struggle to stay focused for long periods of time. Research shows downtime increases attention as well as decreases stress, increases productivity, boosts brain function and provides opportunities for children to learn social skills. Our brains are still hard at work

during break time and utilize different regions than when we are focused on the outside world. They are processing memories, reflecting on past experiences, planning for the future and helping us make sense of what we experience. Breaks keep our brains healthy and play a key role in cognitive abilities such as reading comprehension and the generating or making sense of novel ideas. When it comes to physically active breaks, whether short ones in the classroom or recess time, benefits are also seen in cognitive development and academic success. Along with benefiting our psychological well-being, breaks can be an effective way to reduce disruptive behavior and increase ability to stay on task.

Although most of us can't control our child's break time during the school day, we can encourage them to take breaks after school and before and after homework time. Engaging in something physically active is ideal. Physical activity increases blood flow and oxygenation in the brain. It also boosts neural connectivity and stimulates nerve cell growth in the area of our brain related to learning and memory. Along with improved attention, memory and cognitive function, exercise enhances mood and the ability to cope with stress.

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Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Kit Carson, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma Counties cooperating.

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## 9 Simple Health Habits to fit into your Busy Schedule



Building healthy habits into your life can be difficult even without taking a busy schedule into consideration. When it comes to building healthy habits however, making some small adjustments can add up over time. Here are some simple habits that you can fit into almost any schedule.

1. Use stairs and furniture as makeshift gym equipment – Finding time to go to the gym can be difficult, but you can turn items around your house into your own gym equipment! For a cardio workout, walk up and down your stairs repeatedly lift the milk carton multiple times, or use kitchen chairs for planks and tricep dips.
2. Drink an extra glass of water a day – We all know there are health benefits to drinking water such as temperature regulation, protecting your spinal cord, and getting rid of waste. Drinking one more cup will not take up any more of your time and have some great benefits.
3. Replace diet soda with carbonated water – Research suggests the brain reacts to artificial sweeteners much like it does to sugary sweets. Switching to carbonated water helps you to rid your body of those sweeteners and help you wean yourself off of soda. If you are not a fan of carbonated water, try drinking unflavored tea, coffee or fruit and vegetable infused water.
4. Take a 10 minute walk – If you are at work, walk to the farthest bathroom and take the stairs if you can. Even if you are only adding a couple of extra steps each time you go to the restroom, those steps add up and help improve your cardiovascular health.
5. Go to bed ½ hour earlier – Many people do not sleep 7-8 hours straight through the night. Going to bed ½ hour earlier can help ensure you get a full 7-8 hours of sleep even if you wake up through the night. The 7-8 hours of sleep do not have to be consecutive. You can try fitting in a short 30 minute nap early in the day to catch up. Make sure not to sleep too long though because that might impact your ability to fall asleep at the end of the day. .
6. Incorporate balance exercises into your routine – Balance on one leg for 10 seconds at a time, then switch to the other leg. This can be done while brushing your teeth or standing in line. This exercise is part of neuromotor training which helps improve your balance, agility, and mobility.
7. Weigh yourself every week – To keep your weight from creeping up on you, set a weekly maintenance or loss goal for yourself. Write it down and check yourself against the goal. Make sure you wear the same amount of clothing for consistency.
8. Start off your day with a healthy breakfast – Eat something that is high in fiber and includes protein to help keep you full and energized. Starting the day off this way helps you eat healthier all day, reduces brain fog, and improves heart health! Try mixing up oatmeal toppings, burrito fillings, and omelet ingredients to keep your breakfast new exciting every time.
9. Find creative substitutions for unhealthy foods – Work to eliminate foods high in calorie and low in health benefits. Try using low-fat dairy, whole grains, healthy oils (like avocado and olive oil) and natural sweeteners like fruit.

Team, F. H. (2020, November 2). *11 simple health habits worth Adopting into your life*. Health Essentials. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/11-simple-health-habits-worth-adopting-into-your-life/>.

## Tips on Improving Your Home Internet

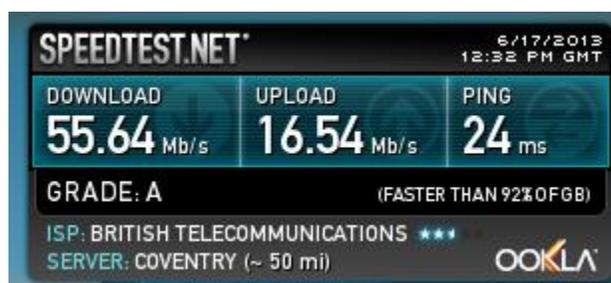
Over the past 18 months, most Americans have learned the importance of home internet service to connect with family, friends and work. Many people struggled with poor internet service as they tried to do school and work from home. In a recent Consumer Reports survey 70 percent of Americans agree internet service is an



important public utility for daily life. Consumer Reports, August 2021 issue has some tips for improving home internet service.

Let's first understand how the emails, social media, online meeting/classroom or streaming movies get to you. All this electronic data is funneled by your internet service provider (ISP) through a series of cables and wires to your home. If something is not working, the problem may lie outside your home and may require a call to the company to fix it. Or, the trouble could be with your home WiFi network, which distributes information (data) wirelessly to your computers, TVs, smart phones and tablets.

Start by testing your internet speed to know how fast data moves into and out of your home. Go to <https://speed.measurementlab.net> or <https://speedtest.net>. With a click or two, you'll learn your download speed (data coming into your home) and your upload speed (data like your end of a Zoom or online classroom). The speed, measured in megabits per second (Mbps), will vary a bit each time. If possible, first run a test with a computer that is physically plugged into your router using an Ethernet cord. If the result is much slower than the maximum speeds promoted by your ISP, call the company. Then do the same test wirelessly throughout the house using a wireless device. If you find the WiFi speeds are much slower, focus on the router to find a solution. It is very common to have the download speed to be much faster than the upload speed.

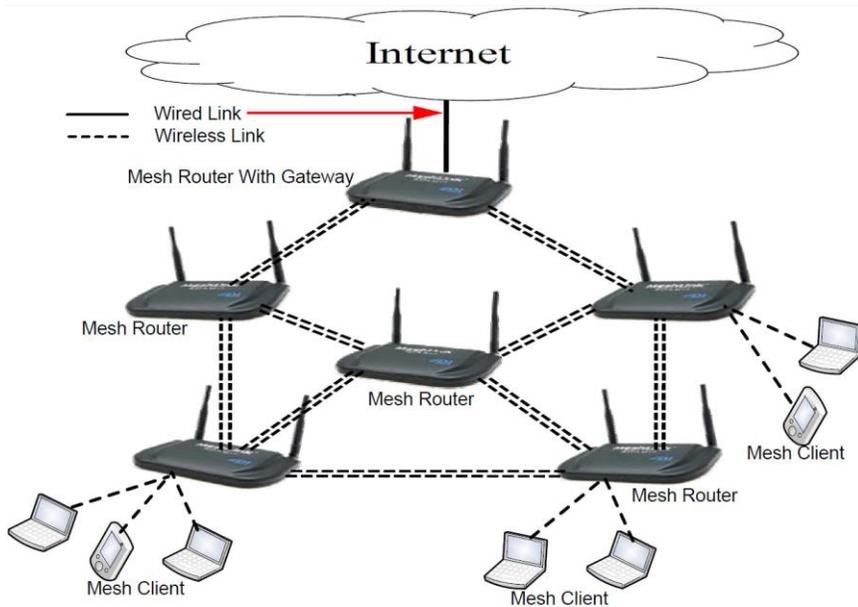


ISPs usually offer several service plans with different range of speeds. The faster the connection, the more you pay. What level of service do you need? To listen to music takes around 1 Mbps. A Zoom call uses about 4 Mbps; while watching a movie or streaming video uses about 25 Mbps. The numbers are cumulative. If two TVs are streaming movies, they are using 50 Mbps. Don't pay for more internet service than you really need.

- Up to 100 Mbps is sufficient for a couple people with routine needs including Zoom calls, some movie watching and gaming – not all at the same time.
- 100 – 300 Mbps may work for a busy family that has multiple people online at the same time – watching movies or videos and gaming and working.
- 300 Plus Mbps would be for the most demanding internet household and would be pricey.

So, if you determined the service plan is adequate for your needs and you are still having internet glitches, you need to look at your WiFi network. This includes your router and all your connected devices.

The router should be in a central location to cover your entire home. It should be in the open, away from corners and high in the room, as the signal tends to be stronger below the router than above it. Many objects can interfere with the WiFi network, including masonry walls, fish tanks, and microwave ovens.



Mesh routers can help move the signal around obstacles. A mesh router uses multiple units – a hub and 1 or 2 satellites – that work together to spread the WiFi signal from one end of your home to the other. If you find a dead zone, move one of the satellites or add another one to your system. There are highly rated three-piece models for less than \$200. WiFi extenders are a cheaper way to boost the signal; but the catch is they usually cut the internet speed in half.

For your TV, streaming video box or gaming device, it's best to connect them directly to the router using an Ethernet cable for a more stable signal.

**Avoid Overpaying.** Research the ISP options in your location and compare their service plans and costs. Bundling your service with your TV or phone usually saves money. Start with your current ISP and try to negotiate a better deal. Call on a weekday to access higher level reps with the best discount codes. Don't be too quick to say yes to their first offer as they usually can make a better one. Threaten to go to a competitor or cut your TV or phone service from them. When you get an offer you like, get it in writing through email – so you have confirmation of the service plan and cost. Don't lease routers and modems – buy them outright to save money.

Small ISPs lease excess wireless capacity from one of the major cell phone carriers (AT&T, T-Mobile and Verizon). Within towns, the ISPs may bypass the leased cell tower networks and use their own WiFi hotspots to provide service and save some money. However, when the network traffic is high, your service may get slowed while cell carriers prioritize their own customers. And the ISPs might reduce you to 2G or 3G speeds when you reach a monthly data cap – even if you have an unlimited plan.



Caps are becoming more common on internet plans, too. Many fiber and cable-based ISPs set caps at 1.25 terabytes of data, while DSL and satellite plans are commonly around 150 gigabytes. If you exceed the cap, you are charged an overage fee or your connection is throttled – meaning slower service until the month's end. It was noted last April by one ISP that 20 percent of its broadband customers reach or exceed that threshold. Some ISPs suspended their caps during the pandemic; but are now reinstating them. People could soon pay more for going over their limit or have to consider upgrading to an unlimited data plan.

Source: Consumer Reports, August 2021

## Pickled cucumbers fused with health promoting compound



Jars of pickles. (Photo by

Researchers at the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and North Carolina State University (NCSU) recently found that a stable, naturally occurring, health-promoting compound called  $\gamma$ -aminobutyric acid (GABA), was generated through the fermentation of brined cucumbers. Previous research studies demonstrate that consumption of GABA from foods or supplements has positive health benefits like reducing blood pressure, improving decision making, reducing anxiety, and boosting immunity.

Researchers determined low-salt fermentation enhances GABA content in pickled cucumber products. Also, fermenting them in lower salt brines and storing them in their original fermented juices increases the GABA levels.

Other well-known foods where GABA content has been enhanced through fermentation are sourdough bread, soy sauce and dairy products like yogurt, kefir, and certain cheeses. Most often the healthfulness of fermented foods is associated with probiotic microbes. But many fermented foods contain few to no microbes when consumed. Current research shows the health-promoting potential of lactic acid fermented cucumbers reaches far beyond the world of probiotics. This opens the door to more research into health-promoting compounds made during fermentation of fruits and vegetables.

The research, recently published in the *Journal of Food Composition and Analysis*, also found that the health promoting compound GABA in pickled cucumbers did not break down during pasteurization and remained stable over at least 6-months storage time.

Source: <https://www.morningagclips.com/pickled-cucumbers-fused-with-health-promoting-compound/>

## Eggs with Cracked Shells: Still Safe to Eat?

Bacteria associated with food-borne illness (food poisoning), including *Salmonella*, can enter eggs through cracks in the shells. In a study published in the *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, eggs with large cracks in the shells were more likely to contain *Salmonella* compared to eggs without cracks or only hairline cracks (viewed with the help of light in a process called candling). So, check eggs before purchasing to avoid buying those with obviously cracked shells.



If eggs crack while transporting them home from the store, the USDA advises breaking any cracked eggs into a clean container. Tightly cover the container and refrigerate it, using the eggs within two days. If eggs crack during hard boiling, they are still safe to consume.

Keep in mind even non-cracked eggs may be contaminated with *Salmonella*. The USDA cautions us to always handle eggs safely. Only buy refrigerated eggs, and put eggs in the refrigerator as soon as you get home from the store (bacteria multiply quickly at room temperature) and cook eggs thoroughly, until both the white and yolk are firm. For more information on egg safety, visit [fsis.usda.gov](https://fsis.usda.gov), and search on "shell eggs from farm to table."

To learn more: <https://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu/food-safety/home-community-gardens-and-livestock/home-produced-chicken-eggs/>

To learn more: [USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service – Shell eggs from farm to table](#)

Source: <https://www.nutritionletter.tufts.edu/general-nutrition/eggs-with-cracked-shells-still-safe-to-eat/>

## Four Keys to a Great School Year



School has already started for some kids and will be starting soon for others. This is a great time to work together as a family to smooth out family routines for the benefit the whole family.

In his book, “The Well-Balanced Family,” Robert Myers covers four key elements to help create a supportive family environment: Connectedness, Open Communication, Fitness, and Organization.

Organization is essential to making family life run smoothly. Myers recommends regular family meetings as the best way to get and keep everyone on the same page. Hold meetings to discuss ideas about routines for school days covering mornings, afternoons, homework, and spend free time during the week and weekends.

Set up a command center in your home to help everyone stay on track. A command center is an area of your home where you post calendars, lists (chores, school assignments, etc.) and schedules. It may be a bulletin board in a central location, the side of your refrigerator or whatever works for you.

Make a routine list for each child, so they can check off each item as they complete them. Some families with young children use colored tabs to mark times on a wall clock. Place the tabs to indicate the time for homework, dinner, chores, free time, and bedtime. Keep communication open and allow everyone input on the routines and the schedule. If there are concerns, try it for a week or so. Then have another family meeting to review and revise based on everyone’s input.

Family mealtimes with all family members expected to be present, is a great way to encourage open communication and connectedness. Use the time to let each member share how their day went. The whole family may stay better connected by scheduling family time – at least weekly. These usually are evenings where everyone gets together regularly to play games, watch a movie, or engage in a hobby.

Myers suggest parents try to spend at least 15 minutes a day in one-on-one time with each child. Reading together not only promotes good reading skills, it also fosters connectedness and open communication. Playtime is great for younger children; while holding a conversation may work well with older children.

Children should also be encouraged to spend at least 30 minutes per day engaged in physical activity -- individually, with a parent or in a group activity or sport. When possible, encourage children to participate in the outside activities to promote fitness as well as a positive alternative to screen time. Research shows most children are not getting enough exercise, as well as exposure to sunlight, which may result in problems related to both physical and mental health.

Setting firm bedtimes during the school week is extremely important. Many children are not getting enough sleep, which negatively impact health and academic achievement, too. Check with your child’s doctor for recommendations based on age. Clear bedrooms of any kind of digital device. Children and adults should not be exposed to any form of screen time for at least 30 minutes to one hour before bedtime.

Finally, plan fun family time activities for at least two weeks out of the month encouraging everyone to get out of the house. Physical activities may include a walk in the park, hiking, biking, or skating. Make a trip to your local library to select some books. Visit a museum; go on a picnic, go to a movie, play or concert together; volunteer together for a community project.

By working together as a family on the four key elements, you can improve how you interact with each other. You will also find you are having more fun and enjoying family life while encouraging a healthier lifestyle for all members of the family.

Source: <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/the-four-keys-to-unlocking-a-great-school-year-for-the-whole-family/>

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?	
Age	Recommended Sleep Time
4-12 months	12-16 hours
1-2 years	11-14 hours
3-5 years	10-13 hours
6-12 years	9-12 hours
13-18 years	8-10 hours
18+ years	7+ hours

## Program Highlights

PROSPER (**PRO**moting **School**/community, university **Partnerships** to **Enhance Resilience**) is a system approach focusing on rural communities that links Extension (both at the local level and University level), the public school systems, service agencies and community members in an effort to positively impact risk and protective factors. The over-arching goals include addressing opioid and other substance abuse, supporting proven programs that build youth life skills, strengthening families and increasing capacity for behavior and mental health promotion, and enhancing and/or increasing local resources to address behavioral health. Yuma County has been a pilot site in Wray for PROSPER. A local team along with trained community facilitators and school staff have implemented evidence-based programs (Life Skills in the school for middle school aged youth and Strengthening Families Program 10-14 for families). PROSPER will continue to be developed in Yuma County and is being expanded to other parts of the state.

## Upcoming Events!

- **Aging Mastery Online (Zoom) class series – Tuesdays and Fridays: Sept 28 -- Oct 29, 1:00 – 3:00 pm** - CSU Extension is pleased to announce an innovative, FREE ten-class health and wellness program to residents sixty and over in Northeast Colorado. The Aging Mastery Program® (AMP) was developed by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and has been successful at helping older adults build their own playbook for aging well. For more information contact: Joy Akey 970-332-4151, Gisele Jefferson 970-345-2287 or McKayla Stephen 719-346-5571 by September 14th.
- **ServSafe Food Handlers Training** – September 20<sup>th</sup> in Yuma, contact Joy Akey at 970-332-4151 – This training is acceptable for Cottage Foods licensing. Register online: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/servsafe-food-safety-for-food-handlers-september-tickets-158520078823?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>
- **Cottage Food Safety Training** - This training covers specifics of the Colorado Cottage Food Act and how to safely operate a food business from a home kitchen. Participants learn food safety guidelines and the specifics for operating a home based cottage food business from a home kitchen. Participants also learn about the most current Colorado Cottage Food Act guidelines and best practices. Cost: \$40 Several online classes available:
  - **September 15<sup>th</sup> - 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.** Registration link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/csu-extension-colorado-cottage-foods-statewide-training-online-tickets-158760351485?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>
  - **October 6<sup>th</sup> – 9 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** Registration link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cottage-food-safety-statewide-online-training-registration-137698187987?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>
- **Strengthening Families Program 10-14** – For families with youth between the ages of 10 and 14. Starting October 10 each Sunday through November 21 from 3:30 – 6:00 (meal included) in Wray. Contact the Yuma County Extension Office at 970-332-4151 for more information.



**CSU Extension – NE Colorado FCS** – In this time of no/limited personal contact, we're all using social media!

<https://www.facebook.com/CSUExtensionNortheastFCS>

<https://www.facebook.com/PhillipsCountyExtension/>

CSU Extension – Logan County: [https://www.facebook.com/csuentensionlogancounty/?\\_tn\\_=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCS5-NbtiQryVNn5X5I3c5--hwVu-1ZfnhynwZsPotP7AZIVStJaoCEoaVYzZjBFhCH0tHJLHajXQuQ](https://www.facebook.com/csuentensionlogancounty/?_tn_=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCS5-NbtiQryVNn5X5I3c5--hwVu-1ZfnhynwZsPotP7AZIVStJaoCEoaVYzZjBFhCH0tHJLHajXQuQ)

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