

Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



November-December, 2021

Steps to Reduce Chronic Stress and Preserve Your Health

Life can present many stressful situations ranging from daily time crunches to serious financial challenges or relationship issues. Chronic stress affects our physical and mental health in many ways.

Let's consider five steps you can take to reduce stress and its harmful effects:



1. Get a grip. Identify the current problem or crisis and your physical and emotional response. Train yourself to deal with the chaos by choosing which thoughts to quiet and which to pay attention. Write down the problem and your feelings. Separate your emotions from the problem.
2. Pinpoint what you can control. Make a list of what you can control and what is beyond your control. Brainstorm options for what is within your control, and focus on steps to maintain your health.
3. Push into motion. Find the motivation to take whatever action is needed to move forward. To help with decision making, divide a piece of paper into four quadrants. Write the Benefits of Action on one, the Consequences of Action on another, the Benefits of Inaction on the third and Consequences of Inaction on the last. List as many considerations as you can. This helps to visually see the considerations and make decision making easier. Then, jot down the tasks needed to accomplish the action steps.
4. Pull back. Find your balance. Stop the worrying. Give your mind a break from overthinking. When your head is calm and clear, reflect on these questions. How am I adding stress to my life? Which of my daily habits are healthy and which are stressful? How can I simplify my habits or routines? What is important to me and are my actions aligned with that?
5. Hold on and let go. Hold on to your personality traits, characteristics, relationships and lifestyle choices you want in your life. Let go of things and relationships that prevent you from being the person you want to be and don't support your well-being.

Source: *Bottom Line Health*, August 2021

Where trade names are used, no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Colorado State University Extension is implied.

Joy Akey

Yuma County
joy.akey@colostate.edu
(970) 332-4151

Katie Seelhoff

Morgan County
katie.seelhoff@colostate.edu
(970) 542-3540

Gisele Jefferson

Washington County
gisele.jefferson@colostae.edu
(970) 345-2287

Phillips County
(970) 854-3616

Jaci Wagner

Logan County
jaci.wagner@colostate.edu
(970) 522-3200, Ext. 2

McKayla Stephen

Kit Carson County
mckayla.stephen@colostate.edu
(719) 346-5571

Extension Online

<https://goldenplains.extension.colostate.edu/>

<https://logan.extension.colostate.edu/>

<https://morgan.extension.colostate.edu>



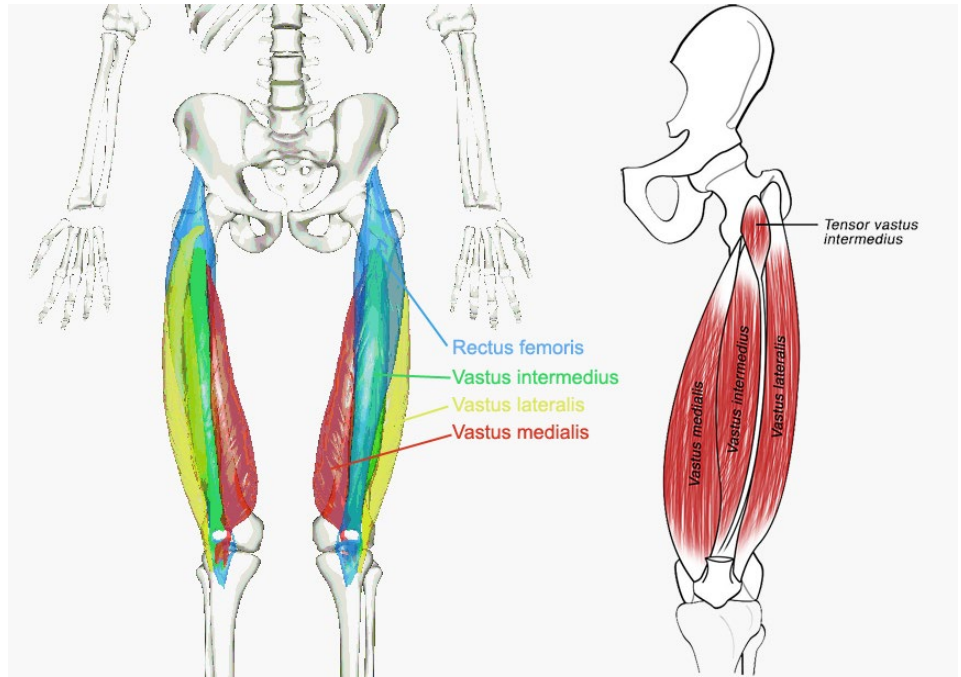
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Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Kit Carson, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma Counties cooperating.

Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

Muscle Memory

Most adult humans achieve peak muscle mass sometime during their early 40s. After that point, a gradual deterioration begins. The progressive loss of skeletal muscle mass that accompanies aging (sarcopenia) and disease (cachexia) can impair muscle performance, physical function and whole-body metabolism. The declines in physical function and mobility associated with sarcopenia and cachexia can lead to falls, loss of independence, institutionalization and even death. "Without question, exercise is the most powerful intervention to address muscle loss, whether it occurs in the context of advancing age or debilitating chronic or acute diseases," explains Nathan K. LeBrasseur, Ph.D., of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.



Quadricep: The quadricep is a large group of muscles on the front of your thigh. The four muscles that compose the quadriceps are the rectus femoris, vastus intermedius, vastus lateralis, and vastus medialis. If you hear anyone talk about exercising their “quads”, this is the muscle group they are talking about. These muscles are used when you climb up stairs, when you squat to pick something off the floor, when you get in and out of your chair or car, and many more everyday occurrences. This solidifies the importance to exercise the quadricep muscle group!

At Home Exercise

Step ups- These can be done using stairs, a step stool, or some place you feel comfortable. I like the idea of doing them on the bottom step of my staircase because there is a rail built in for support. Place your two feet in front of and facing the step of your choice. Then with your right foot, step on the step and step up, and bring your left foot to the step. Step back down with either foot and alternate to your left foot and follow the same process. Complete 3 sets of 10-12 repetitions on each leg.

Single leg raises- They can be done anywhere laying down. Lie on the floor or a bed if you have a hard time getting up off the floor. Lay flat on your back and bend your left knee with your foot flat on the floor or bed. Your right leg will still be laying straight with your toes pointed toward the ceiling. Lift your right leg up, approximately 45 degrees. This will differ based on your ability level but having a goal to lift your foot so the heel is approximately 12 inches off the floor or bed is a good goal. After 10-12 repetitions alternate to the other leg by bending your right leg and lifting your left. Complete the repetitions 3 times for each leg.

For more exercises: Go4Life Exercise Videos from National Institute on Aging

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmk21KJuZUM4HTrJ7hrJ8yxhToKkJT8a8>

Reduce Food Waste



Food waste is a big problem in the United States. According to Feeding America, 25-40% of the food grown, processed, and transported in the US will never be eaten. Food is the number one source of solid waste in American landfills. Food waste is not only bad for the environment, but it also means wasted money for your family. There are steps you can take to keep waste to a minimum at your home.

Plan meals and snacks carefully. Buy what you need and make a point of using any perishable foods like fresh fruits and vegetables before they spoil. Don't know what to do with your leftovers? Utah State University has a collection of resources called "[Create](#)" that is all about making use of leftovers in new and interesting ways.

Be food safe. Store food appropriately and keep perishable products at a safe temperature. Keep your refrigerator at or below 40° F. Store raw meats in a container or dish to prevent juices from leaking.

Check for quality. Check the dates on foods when you're shopping. If you purchase meat or other perishables with a short use by date, plan to cook or freeze them quickly.

Stay organized. Keeping your refrigerator and cupboards organized will help you prevent waste. You'll be more aware of what is in it and what needs to get used quickly. Arrange supplies so the oldest items are in front so you will see and use them first. Use see-through storage containers for leftovers. Label, date, and freeze them in meal-size servings. Always check your leftover supply when meal planning so you can work them into your plan.

Freeze what you can. The [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#) has tools to help you decide what to freeze and how to do it in a way that maintains the food's quality and safety.

Donate. If you have non-perishable food that is not expired, but your family can't use it, donate it to your local food pantry.

Source: <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/>

How to Freeze Leftovers

Almost any food can be frozen. If you are making a recipe that doubles easily, if you have more leftovers than you anticipated, or if you would like to save a small portion of leftovers for later, freezing is a good option.

A large amount of frozen leftovers can be thawed and re-heated for an entire family meal when you know you will not have much time to prepare a meal. A small amount of frozen leftovers can be packed for a lunch. A leftover piece of meat or extra vegetables, fruit or grains can be frozen and used later in preparing a meal.

It is important to package leftovers properly to prevent freezer burn and drying out and to preserve the flavor, texture and color of food.

If freezing individual portions of meat, stack them between layers of freezer paper or waxed paper before wrapping. Leftovers can also be stored in plastic freezer bags. For best quality, make sure there is little air left in the bag and the seal is airtight. Press the air out or suck it out with a clean straw. Some plastic and glass containers are safe for freezing. These would be good options for freezing leftover soup or casseroles. Label and date all leftovers so you know what is in the package.

Keep food safe to eat. Wrap and store leftovers quickly, not leaving food at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Choose a particular location in your freezer for leftovers, like in a freezer basket or clear plastic container. Use the leftovers within 3-4 months. Thaw leftovers in the refrigerator, in cool water or in the microwave – not out on the kitchen counter.



Budget-friendly Holiday Ideas



Holidays should be joyful! Yet, they can be super expensive if you're not careful. Instead of paying too much for the holidays, have a perfectly nice one without breaking the bank. Here are some thrifty holiday ideas to help keep spending in check.

Celebrate Small. Focus on the people in your life who are most important to you. And keep it simple! Small family or friend gatherings are often the most memorable. Invite your nearest and dearest over for a game night or whatever sounds fun to you. There are so many possibilities!

Agree not to gift. Gifting might not be necessary, even for the important people in your life. Agree to not gift and do something special together instead.

Handmade Gifts. Handmade gifts are often the most special. Use your talents and make some of your gifts. Can you sew, knit or craft? Do you bake delicious Christmas cookies? Package them in a cute container tied with a ribbon. What things do your family and friends compliment you for making? Consider gifting these things.

Gift your skills. Can you make things, fix things or clean things? Help someone with their computer, car, plumbing, electrical or HVAC problems. Are you good at painting? Bring your painting supplies and help paint a room. Offer an evening of babysitting so a friend could have a much-needed night out. Think about your loved ones need. Try to find a way you can help them meet those needs. A gift of your skills and time can be priceless.

Re-gift. Sometimes you receive a perfectly nice gift, but just not something you use. Instead of storing the item, re-gift it to someone who might love it! A little re-gifting here and there is nothing to feel guilty about. You can also re-gift gift bags. Most are sturdy enough to be used multiple times.

Shop Smart. Start by planning your gifts and setting a budget. Scout sales. Find deals. Compare prices. You can compare prices online by searching the same item on a few new tabs. Make sure if you're shopping online you're getting money back by googling for a coupon and getting free shipping. Make shopping easier by buying everything at the same place, if possible.

Build Affordable Traditions. Keep cost in mind while planning your family traditions. Think...family game night, movie night, sledding afternoon or cookie baking. It can be super fun without costing a thing! Instead of a huge holiday meal, plan a potluck. It's much more affordable and gets everyone involved. Be creative!

Use the leftovers. Don't let the holiday leftovers go to waste! Reuse them in creative ways so you're not eating the same thing over and over. Don't go grocery shopping when your fridge is full of food! Find ways to use what you have before buying more. If there's too much food to eat, freeze some! Or use leftovers to make a meal you can gift away!

Keep yourself in check. It feels great to give. Sometimes our giving gets out of control. Don't rack up credit card bills you'll struggle to pay off. Enlist your spouse or close friend to keep you accountable. Work together and keep each other on track. Share with each other when you exhibit self-control, like putting something back or walking out without buying anything. Moral support can make a huge difference!

Track those dollars. This is the most important thing you can do to prevent overspending. Track everything you spend so you know where every precious dollar is going. Use tools like a spending plan or the Notes app on your phone so you can see it all in one place. Keep receipts to track spending or to return items you don't need. Check the plan you've set ahead of time. Evaluate how you're doing and adjust as you go.

A little effort and self-control goes a long way! As you plan your holidays, make notes of what you could do different this year to save money. Pick one or two things to try. Being deliberate about what you're buying and shopping according to a plan will always result in saving money. Have a Merry Holiday!

Adapted from: <https://www.happyhumblehome.com/frugal-holiday-ideas/>

Understanding Your Home's Energy Use



A typical American family spends nearly \$2,000 per year on home energy bills. Much of that money, however, is wasted through leaky windows or ducts, old appliances, or inefficient heating and cooling systems. The Energy Saver Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Savings Projects offer easy, step-by-step instructions to home energy efficiency improvements that will save energy and money.

With the rising costs of natural gas and propane, it might be wise to see what you can do to lower your home's energy use.

The U.S. Department of Energy offers these tips:

- Check your home's insulation levels. Look in your attic, exterior and basement walls, ceilings, floors and crawl spaces. Energy costs are typically higher if your home's insulation levels are less than R-22. Attic insulation is recommended at R-38 to R-49 in most homes. In older homes, check to see if it has been increased to a sufficient level.
- Locate air leaks. Holes or cracks in or around walls, ceilings, windows, doors, light and plumbing fixtures, switches and electrical outlets cause costly drafts. The potential energy savings for making your home more airtight is 5 to 30 percent per year. Air leaks are a large source of heat loss during winter. A common place air leaks occur is under the door leading from the house to the garage because they are often not as well sealed as doors leading directly to the outside. Install a door sweep to seal the gap between the bottom of your door and the threshold to prevent cold air from coming in and warm air from escaping. This will keep heated indoor living space more comfortable and prevent increased energy bills.
- Heat and cool efficiently. Up to half of your energy bill goes for heating and cooling. If you have a forced-air furnace, examine filters and replace as needed. If your furnace is more than 15 years old, consider replacing it with a new energy-efficient unit.
- Cut the lights. Energy for lighting accounts for about 10 percent of your electric bill. Consider using dimmers or timers. Replace incandescent or fluorescent lights with LED lights.
- Adjust the thermostat or install a programmable thermostat to automatically adjust the temperature and save money.
- Replace single-pane windows with double-paned, low-emissivity coated glass windows. Storm windows can also reduce winter heat loss by up to 50 percent.

The updated Energy Saver Guide in English and Spanish is available to download as a PDF or e-book:

<https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/energy-saver-guide-tips-saving-money-and-energy-home>

Additional resource: https://www.energystar.gov/products/energy_star_home_tips

<https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/home-energy-audits/do-it-yourself-home-energy-audits>

<https://www.energystar.gov/campaign/home-energy-yardstick>

<https://www.familyhandyman.com/list/100-home-repairs-you-can-do-yourself/>

Tips for Healthy Cooking Around the Holidays

The holidays often involve lots and lots of great food, making it challenging to eat healthily. Rather than skipping or cutting out some of your favorite dishes, here are some small changes you can make to help create healthier recipes.

- Swap ingredients:
 - Use whole grains instead of white grains, such as using whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, or whole wheat bread in all of your dishes.
 - Cut back on the amount of cream. For a creamy soup, try blending white beans with chicken or vegetable stock and adding a splash of cream. It still makes a creamy soup but is much healthier.
 - Try cutting the amount of oil and butter in half.
 - For already sweet dishes (like sweet potato casserole), try cutting the sugar in half. Think of it as a flavor enhancer rather than the source.
- Include more fruits and vegetables:
 - Think about the colors of food on your plate. Take note of what colors are missing and find a vegetable to fill that void.
 - Add a side salad or roasted, stir-fried, or sautéed veggies with spices.
- Cut down on salt:
 - Season with crushed red pepper, black pepper or herbs.
 - Garlic and ginger also enhance flavor.
- Make sweet treats healthier:
 - Reduce the sugar, and add vanilla, cinnamon or nutmeg for flavor.
 - Substitute whole wheat pastry flour for all-purpose flour.
 - Substitute Greek yogurt for sour cream.
- Making kid-friendly healthier meals:
 - Pick a variety of fruits and vegetables to expose kids to different kinds and help them find ones they like.
 - Ask kids to take the number of bites of vegetables equal to their age. For example, if they are five years old, ask them to take five bites.
 - Pureeing fruits and vegetables can help you add them to meals. For example, make pancakes with whole-grain flour and top them with apple sauce or pureed pears. Make a quesadilla with veggies and cheese.
- Choose healthy options while shopping:
 - Choose low sodium option if available.
 - Buy frozen vegetables instead of canned.
 - Stick to the perimeter of the store where the fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein foods are sold.
- Make holiday cooking less stressful:
 - Plan in advance.
 - Meal prep as much as possible ahead of time so you can spend more time with family.



Source: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/blog/healthy-holiday-cooking-tips>

Proven Ways to Reduce Holiday Stress



While the holidays can create some of the happiest moments in your life, they can also cause a great deal of stress. On top of your typical schedule of work and managing your home and kids, there is shopping to do, menus to plan, and food to prepare. Moreover, there is the possibility of having to deal with family disagreements, schedule conflicts, and financial issues. While this all may seem overwhelming, there is good news. **You can still reduce holiday stress, even with all the extra activities and preparations.** Here are proven strategies to decrease stress and tension. Some may be so effective you'll choose to use them

all year and not just during the holidays!

Acknowledge Everything Doesn't Have to Be Perfect. The holiday commercials and movies on television really do miss the mark when it comes to realistic portrayals of family gatherings.

Purchase Your Gifts Early. When holiday shopping is done early, it prevents last-minute pressure of dealing with other shoppers during peak shopping times and making split-second decisions on gifts.

Scale Down Your Holiday Plans. Because adults can sometimes have an overly idealistic view of the holidays that springs from their childhood experiences, this strategy can be a challenge. Scaling down your plans involves being more flexible in your thinking about the holidays.

Take Shortcuts to Save Time. Find simpler ways to do things so there's more time for other holiday tasks and activities. One example: rather than baking pies, order them from a nearby restaurant known for its delicious baked goods.

Take Time for Yourself. While we often take time to think of others during the holiday season, we can also forget our own needs. Schedule time for yourself and concentrate on winding down. To care for others, you first have to take care of your own health and well-being.

Stay Calm. Sometimes family togetherness causes conflicts and clashing. Remain calm.

Keep Up Your Exercise Routine. The holiday celebrations can disrupt your daily routines. While a short break from exercise might not make a difference in your physique, it might make a significant difference on your stress level. Try to maintain some form of exercise. It will provide a healthy release from stress.

Watch your Nutrition. It's not fair to yourself, nor even practical, to completely avoid indulging around the holidays. At the same time, you can remain in control and focus on balance.

Buy Yourself a Present. While you've been spending money on everyone else, there's no reason why you can't buy yourself a little something.

Get Enough Rest. The holiday season is generally an exciting time. You may lose sleep due to stress, travel or even the excitement. Be kind to yourself by getting to bed at a reasonable hour.

Learn to Delegate. If you're in charge of too many things, don't pile on the stress—instead, delegate the tasks. Be wise enough to recognize when you need some help and ask for it.

This year decide to reduce your holiday stress. By shedding the urge to be perfect, beginning holiday shopping earlier, scaling down expectations, and using shortcuts to save time, you'll bring your tension level way down.

Think about what you truly want the holidays to mean to you and your family. Let go of expectations based on the past and enjoy your time together. Ultimately that's what the holidays are for—creating meaningful moments and connections with those who matter most.

Source: [11 Proven Ways to Reduce Holiday Stress - Child Development Institute \(childdevelopmentinfo.com\)](http://childdevelopmentinfo.com)

Program Highlights

The **Aging Mastery Program (AMP)** is a series of 10 classes helping participants gain skills and tools needed to manage health, remain economically secure and actively contribute to society. Classes are led by expert speakers and include goal setting, daily practices and peer support that contribute to mastering new skills helpful in the aging process. Topics include navigating longer lives, exercise, sleep, healthy eating and hydration, financial fitness, advance planning, healthy relationships, medication management, fall prevention and community engagement. Northeast Colorado FCS Agents and CSU Northeast Regional Engagement Center provided a hybrid version of AMP in May/June and September/October with 31 participants. Comments of benefits included enjoying the socialization, camaraderie and sharing with others, knowledge gained, and opportunities to attend virtually and watch the recorded class if they couldn't attend.

Upcoming Events!

- **Parenting Bootcamp** provided by Morgan County Extension and SafeCare on November 6th, 13th & 20th to parents of children ages 0-5. For more information or to register: <https://forms.gle/yBXsRcJtFhJtXh56>
- **ServSafe Food Handlers Training** – November 16th at the Morgan County Fairgrounds in Brush. Contact Joy Akey at 970-332-4151 at the Yuma County Extension Office to register. This training is acceptable for Cottage Foods licensing. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/servsafe-food-safety-for-food-handlers-november-tickets-203570353407>
- **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. Participants also learn about the most current Colorado Cottage Food Act guidelines and best practices. Cost: \$40. Several online classes available:
 - **November 30th – 12:00 – 3:30 p.m.** Registration link: <https://epcextension.eventbrite.com/>
 - **December 3rd - 9 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** Registration link: <http://cottage-food-safety.eventbrite.com/>
- **A Healthier Weigh 2022 – 12-week Health & Fitness Challenge** – will be taking registrations for individual and team participation starting in early January 2022! Registration fee \$40/person with cash prizes! Be watching for more information soon on our County Extension websites and Facebook pages. Get your teams ready before the holidays!
- **Youth Quilting workshop** - January 7th (Burlington) and 8th (Flagler) – Contact McKayla Stephen at the Kit Carson County Extension Office 719-346-5571 for more information. She also has an Upcoming 4-H Take and Bake (Date TBD)
- **Discover 4-H Cake Decorating** - January 24th-3:30-5:00 at the Logan County Extension Office. Contact Jaci Wagner at 522-3200 to register by January 13th or with questions. Wickedly Good Treats owner Jessica Brom presenting.



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January 10-13: Kit Karson, Bent & SE Area
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Weigh-Out:

April 4-8: Morgan, Logan, Washington, Yuma
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April 11-14: Kit Karson, Bent, & SE Area
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Entry Fee:

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Individual- \$40

**Entry fee due to the extension office
at the time of weigh-in**

For more information, contact your local
extension office.