

Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



January-March, 2025

A Healthier Weigh

A poster for the 'A Healthier Weigh' challenge. It features a hand holding a megaphone, a scale, and a person weighing themselves. The text includes 'SAVE THE DATE', 'Participating Counties', and contact information for various counties.

Participating Counties
January 6th - April 11th
Logan, Morgan, and Yuma
January 13th - April 18th
Kit Carson, Phillips, and Washington

SAVE THE DATE

- SUSTAINABLE WEIGHTLOSS
- INCREASE MUSCLE MASS
- DECREASE BODY FAT

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Please join us for this year's A Healthier Weigh challenge. We are preparing some new lessons to help you learn and stay motivated through the course of this 12 week challenge.

You can register as a team, partnership, or individual. Once you have decided, please email your local FCS agent ASAP! They will give you an entry form, consent forms, and details about the weigh-in process.

We are looking forward to launching another challenge and helping you get through the winter by keeping in shape and focused on maintaining or improving your health in 2025!

Extension Online

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

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

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

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



GOLDEN PLAINS AREA
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

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.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)



As the seasons shift and the coziness of autumn and winter settles in, some of us look forward to the change, while others struggle with a condition known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This condition affects about 5% of adults in the United States and typically lasts for about 40% of the year. While SAD can occur at any point in life, it typically starts in adulthood and is more common in women than men. Unlike major depression, SAD is specifically linked to seasonal changes, often triggered by shorter daylight hours with reduced sunlight during the winter. These changes can disrupt your internal biological clock or circadian rhythm, making it harder to stay in sync with your daily routine. There are two types of SAD:

1. **Fall onset:** This is known as Winter Depression, where symptoms begin in late fall to early winter and ease during the summer months.
2. **Spring onset:** This is known as Summer Depression, where symptoms start in late spring to early summer and end around fall. This type of SAD is less common.

People with SAD often experience recurring mood changes that follow a seasonal pattern. Before the emotional symptoms hit, you might notice physical changes such as difficulty waking up, daytime fatigue, carbohydrate cravings, and weight gain. Once the mood shift sets in, the symptoms closely resemble those of non-seasonal depression, including low motivation, feeling withdrawn from social activities, irritability, anxiety, feeling hopeless, worthless, or guilty. The key difference with SAD is that the episodes are predictable, which means you can start implementing coping strategies even before mood changes become severe.

Self-Care for Seasonal Affective Disorder

Managing SAD involves being proactive, especially because the condition follows a predictable pattern. Implementing prevention strategies in anticipation of severe symptoms can make a big difference. Here are some self-care tips to help you stay ahead of your symptoms:

- **Get Outside:** Take a daily walk to enjoy fresh air and a change of scenery. Aim to get outside within two hours of waking up, even if it's cold or cloudy, as natural light can improve your mood.
- **Socialize:** Spend time with friends and family to boost your spirits and keep your mind engaged.
- **Don't Overload Yourself:** Set realistic goals and break large tasks into smaller steps. Prioritize what's most important and tackle tasks gradually.
- **Stay Active:** Engage in regular physical activity, including light exercise. Joining an exercise class can provide both physical and social benefits.
- **Practice Good Sleep Hygiene:** Maintain a consistent sleep schedule by going to bed and waking up at the same times each day. For those affected in fall and winter, avoid excessive napping and oversleeping.
- **Brighten Your Space:** Make your environment sunnier by opening blinds and trimming tree branches that block sunlight. Sit closer to bright windows at home or in the office to get more natural light.
- **Add Vitamin D:** Vitamin D supplement may help improve your symptoms. Talk to your provider before starting this supplement.
- **Nutrition:** Even though your body may crave starchy and sweet foods, stick to nutritious choices. Healthy foods with enough vitamins and minerals give your body the proper nutrition and energy you need.
- **Avoid Alcohol and Drugs:** Stay away from alcohol and illegal drugs as they can worsen depression and hinder your mood and overall health.

When to seek help:

SAD doesn't have to be something you "deal with" every year. If you find your seasonal symptoms are impacting your quality of life, it's critical to seek intervention as it can make a significant difference in your overall well-being. Consult your primary care physician or mental health professional to get the support you need. Your provider will talk to you about treatment options tailored to your situation. By taking proactive steps to manage your well-being, you can embrace the changing season with greater ease.

Sources:

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/seasonal-affective-disorder>

<https://www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/how-fight-seasonal-depression>

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/seasonal-affective-disorder>

Avoid Slips and Falls this Winter

Sometimes sidewalks can feel more like ice skating rinks during the winter months, possibly making it a little intimidating to go out and do the things we normally do. The good news is there are actions we can take to decrease our likelihood of falling!

Before getting into those actions though, it is important to know about any potential risk factors that could increase our likelihood of falling such as reduced muscle strength and overall weakness, impaired vision, delayed reaction times, use of multiple medications, and fear of falling. If you are facing some of these risk factors, talk to your medical providers and see if they think an exercise class would benefit you. Then you can check with your local Extension Office or fitness facilities to see if they are offering any programs.



Otherwise, here are some actions we can take this winter to help prevent falls.

- Wear proper footwear – Have a pair of lightweight boots with good support. If you have a hard time finding a pair, you may be able to add snow grips to the bottoms of shoes or boots you already have.
- Take your time – Do not hurry while walking outside. Pay attention to where you are walking and walk slowly.
- Use assistance – Whenever handrails are available, use them for support. They can help you regain your balance if you step on a slick patch of ice. You could also use a walking stick, walker, or cane.
- Take small steps – Smaller steps help us to maintain our center of gravity.
- Clear your walkways – Make sure the walkways where you plan to go have been shoveled well after snowstorms. It may be helpful to add salt or sand to help improve traction on slippery surfaces.
- Consume a balanced diet – This will help ensure you are getting the nutrients you need to maintain your health. Calcium and Vitamin D are especially important to maintain good bone health.

It is important to make sure we are still spending time outside and continuing to go do the things that we love to do. This may be a little harder in the colder months, but there are still opportunities! Remember to always use your best judgement when out and about and be aware of your surroundings.

Sources:

<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/winter-weather-are-falls-and-slips-avoidable>

<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/to-your-health/2022-12-14-prevent-falls-winter>

An apple a day keeps the Dr. away...or does it?



The age old saying of an apple a day keeps the doctor away is no longer as simple as it seems. There are many different recommendations of adequate food intake from the MyPlate method to the standard dietary guidelines. These recommendations are developed to educate around the concept of proper consumption of the different nutritional food groups and the dietary needs for each of us. The challenge with each is the importance put on them and the lack of diversity that is aligned in these models. The argument of fruit and vegetables' health value can be conflicting showing merit in consumption for our overall health, but not as concrete in evidence of prevention of obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes. I, however, feel contrary to this ideology and

believe food is medicine and can be used as such in the appropriate amounts and diversity of consumption. Key words being "appropriate amounts" and "diversity in consumption". Fruit and vegetable consumption can hold a critical role in prevention of nutritional deficiency diseases.

The United States Dietary Guidelines as outlined by the USDA are not reflective of the research showing that an increased consumption of fruits and vegetables in our daily cuisine has the potential effects it does. The daily amounts outlined are not enough fruits and vegetables to have a profound effect. Nearly 90% of the population does not get enough vegetables in their daily diets as recommended. Often these vegetables are simply added to a main dish as in a casserole or on a sandwich and not consumed individually and definitely not half the plate full. The MyPlate method of half a plate full of vegetables is a recommendation for people with diabetes especially, as vegetables hold many phytochemicals and nutrients that are important to our diets and high in fiber. For someone with diabetes, this fiber does not cause a blood sugar spike and makes us feel fuller, preventing us from consuming more food. More food increases our caloric intake and risk for obesity, but also carbohydrate intake increasing our blood sugar. While these tactics to increasing vegetable consumption by adding to favorite dishes or sandwiches is beneficial, it doesn't take the place of a healthy portion of fruits and vegetables on our plate. Menus and suggested ideas on ways to add fruits and vegetables to all meals, including snacks, is an important step to educating people on simply making it part of our daily habits and routines.

Fruits and vegetables include a diverse group of plant foods that vary greatly in content of energy and nutrients. Additionally, fruits and vegetables supply dietary fiber, and fiber intake is linked to lower incidence of cardiovascular disease and obesity. The remarkable phytochemicals that act as antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents for our bodies are critical in the nutritional makeup of our diets. These nutrients and minerals are key components that help build our immune system and overall health.

Fruit and vegetable consumption could be an aid in prevention of hidden hunger. An estimated 5.6 and 7.8 million premature deaths worldwide in 2013 may be attributable to a fruit and vegetable intake below 500 and 800 g/day, respectively, if the observed associations are causal. The lack of consumption daily is not only a prevention of disease concern, but an overall life concern. The accessibility and availability of fruits and vegetables for everyone is an important piece of the hidden hunger struggle.

The evolutionary tree of plant-based foods eating from different botanical families daily along with a substantial increased consumption of fruits and vegetables in our daily cuisine is an important health tool. The diversity of nutrients and vitamins received in this cuisine benefits our overall health but could also aid in the prevention of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer. A dream of mine for doctors to prescribe fruits and vegetables as medicine and for insurance companies to support such prescriptions would be surreal. It can be expensive to eat such a high fruit and vegetable diet daily, but so could the health implications if we don't. It is not a one size pill that can be prescribed for each of us however, and lacks a time element cure consumers are looking for. It is not a simple fix button. The old saying of an apple a day keeps the doctor away has truth for sure, but maybe we should adapt it a bit...a pound of apples (and other fruits and vegetables) a day keeps the doctor away!

It's Cold Outside but Get Outdoors!

It is just as important to enjoy time outside in the winter as it is in the summer. Spending time outdoors helps boost your immune system, aids your body in gaining essential nutrients like Vitamin D, and gets your blood pumping. Research has linked spending time outdoors in nature to many positive results such as: reduced levels of depression and anxiety, decreased inflammation, improved motor skills, increased stress resilience, lower rates of obesity, better problem-solving skills, decreased blood pressure, and enhanced attention and focus. Letting kids play and explore in the natural world has proven psychological and cognitive benefits, plus increases curiosity, creativity, and problem solving abilities.



So don't let the shorter days and colder temperatures of winter keep you from going outdoors. With some planning and preparation, you can get immediate benefit from stepping outside. Here are some fun ideas to get the whole family outdoors!

Take a Senses or Gratitude Walk – Refuel and recharge yourself by taking a walk. As you walk use your senses to observe the beautiful natural world around us. Reflect and give thanks to every person and living thing in our natural world. Look for signs of animals and identify different plant species. Recognize the sounds you hear. Take a deep breath and notice the smell. Feel the cool breeze or warm sun.

Build a Shelter or Fort – Practice your building skills and use natural materials to make a shelter or fort. If there are trees around, use branches or trunks to create the structure. If snow is in the forecast, use materials around your house such as wood pallets or buckets to help create a sturdy snow fort. You can use your imagination and build a small structure for a small creature or fairy with leaves or twigs.

Leaf or Nature Rubbings – Collect leaves, pine needles, or flat rocks. Place a piece of paper on top and use a crayon to rub across the item to reveal the pattern. Repeat with different items and colors of crayons to create beautiful impressions and collages.

Make Nature Confetti or Frozen Suncatchers - Collect different leaves and use a hole punch to punch out pieces. Collect the punch outs and then celebrate the winter solstice or any holiday by going outside and throwing confetti. There is no need to clean up this type of confetti! For the suncatchers, gather natural items such as branches, berries, leaves, flowers, and twigs. Lay out a plastic lid, paper plate, or pie plate for a mold. Fill the mold with water and add the natural items to the water. Leave outside for a few hours or overnight to freeze. Carefully remove the suncatcher from the mold and hang from a tree branch or around your house. Tip: Boil water before adding it to the mold to create crystal clear ice.

Ice Skating, Sledding, Skiing, or Snowboarding – Enjoy the outdoors while gliding on an outdoor ice rink. Or get your thrills as you are swooshing down the snowy hills on a sled, skis, or snowboard. Remember to wear proper clothing and safety gear.

Holiday Lights Walk or Star Gaze – Find an area where houses or businesses display holiday lights and stroll down the sidewalks to enjoy the festive lights. Or bundle up and sit outside on a clear night. Look up and enjoy locating different stars and constellations across the night sky.

Observe Snowflakes and Snow Paint – If the weather is predicting a snowstorm, take advantage and enjoy the beauty of snowflakes. Use a magnifying glass or zoom in with a camera to take a closer look at snowflakes and find their unique characteristics. For some extra fun, put food coloring or watercolor paints in water inside a spray bottle. Then create a picture with the colored water in the snow.

Make Colored Icicles, Ice Blocks, or Ice Globes – Even if you don't have snow, you can add some magic to your outdoor space. Add a few drops of food coloring to a small water bottle and attach yarn so the water drips down the yarn to create colorful icicle masterpieces. Or make various sized ice blocks by putting food coloring in ice cube trays or larger plastic containers. Freeze the water to create various sized blocks and let the building begin. Lastly add a few drops of food coloring to water balloons, fill the balloon with water, and let it freeze. Then pop the balloon and make different creations with the frozen colored water.

Winter Scavenger Hunt – Scavenger hunts can be enjoyed year-round. Winter scavenger hunts are extremely fun because you can see more without the tree leaves. Make a list of items that can be found in nature during the winter. For example frozen puddles, pinecones, dried berries, feathers, and animal tracks.

The mental, physical, and emotional benefits of spending time in the natural world are numerous. So what are you waiting for? Set a goal to spend time outdoors with these fun activities the whole family can enjoy. Dress appropriately and go outdoors to embrace the beauty of nature and gain the amazing benefits!

Resources:

- <https://healthcare.utah.edu/healthfeed/2022/01/physical-and-mental-benefits-of-getting-outside-winter>
- <https://mcpres.mayoclinic.org/mental-health/the-mental-health-benefits-of-nature-spending-time-outdoors-to-refresh-your-mind/>
- <https://runwildmychild.com/outdoor-winter-activities-for-kids/>

High Elevation Food Prep

It can be frustrating when you are testing a delicious recipe, and although follow it precisely, it doesn't turn out the way it was supposed to. Elevation can play a part in this, and you might need to make a change in cooking time, temperature, or even ingredients. Fun fact: Athletes who train at higher elevation have the upper hand if competing at a lower elevation. The reason behind this is the same reason why the food we prepare might need some modifications. The atmospheric pressure changes as the elevation does. At a lower elevation we have more atmospheric pressure vs a high elevation.

If you are standing on the ground, how many books can you stack in your hands? If you stand on a step stool, can you stack the same number of books? The answer is no, you stack less books. This scenario helps show the change in atmospheric pressure. The air at 10,000 feet is a lot thinner than at sea level. Because of this, water boils at lower temperatures, breads expand quicker, and cooking times may be longer or shorter. Although water boils at a lower temperature, it might take longer for your eggs or whatever you are boiling to cook because of the lower temperature. If your bread rises too fast or is over proofed, it can cause a heavy, dry or collapsed loaf. Depending on where you live will vary the adjustments you need to make. It is important to make adjustments as needed to ensure food safety too. When canning to preserve produce, it is crucial to have the appropriate time and pressure settings for your elevation to ensure adequate heat penetration of the product in the jar. Otherwise, it can lead to life threatening food-borne illness. Minor modifications can go a long way to making a perfect product and keeping your food safe!

Check out this fact sheet for more information: <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/nutrition-food-safety-health/high-altitude-food-preparation-p41/>

Money Smart Strategies for 2025



The path to financial success can seem daunting, but building wealth doesn't require winning the lottery or having a rich relative to pass on their inheritance. It's about being consistent and disciplined with your actions over time. There is no better time than the new year to start implementing money-wise strategies to help build your wealth.

Live Below Your Means

Although it's tempting to splurge on the newest vehicle, latest gadget, or trending fashions and décor, spending less than what you make is key to building wealth. This doesn't mean you have to deprive yourself, but make intentional choices about where your money goes. One helpful strategy is to "pay yourself first". Set aside a percentage of your income to tuck away in savings before paying for anything else.

Revisit or Create a Budget

A budget is the foundation of financial success and a roadmap to help you decide how to allocate your money. Review your monthly income as well as your fixed and variable expenses and determine your financial priorities for 2025. Currently, high inflation is requiring us to spend more on everyday items such as groceries and gas, so even if you already have a budget developed, it's important to reassess.

Check or Create Your Emergency Fund

Be sure you have adequate funds set aside for those times "when life happens". A general rule of thumb for an emergency fund is three to six months' worth of living expenses in a safe, easily accessed account, such as a savings account.

Tackle Debt

Some debt, like a mortgage, offers a good return on your investment. However, high-interest consumer debt, such as credit cards, can really drain your resources and ability to save. Even if you are good at managing debt, taking steps to reduce and consolidate it even more is helpful. For example, if you receive a year-end bonus or raise, apply the extra to balances with high interest rates. Consider consolidating debt, such as loans with varied interest rates or credit lines or cards for a potentially lower rate single loan, to reduce the number of loans you have.

Track Your Goals

Setting goals and writing them down increases your chances of success. Think about both short and long-term goals, such as paying off debt for a short-term and saving money for a house for a long-term. Try to make SMART goals – ones that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based. For example, "I will pay \$20 extra on my credit card balance each month until it is paid off." SMART goals help create an actionable plan rather than just an aspiration.

Create or Update Your Estate and Insurance Plans

If you don't have an estate plan that includes a Last Will and Testament, power of attorney, and health care proxy, make completing your estate plan a priority for the new year. This time of year is also a good time to review and update your life insurance policy to make sure it meets your current financial needs. Major life events or changes in income, debt or financial goals can significantly affect your coverage needs.

Automate Savings

Setting up recurring automatic payments or transfers makes savings an easy, set it and forget it approach. Visit your financial institution to determine what is needed to set up a direct deposit or automatic payment and watch your savings grow!

Winter Activity BINGO

Try to get 5 in a row!

Build a Snowman	Make an Obstacle Course	Play Simon Says	Stream an Exercise Video	Go on a Walk or Run
Try Yoga	Vacuum or Dust Your House	Go sledding	Have a Snowball Fight	Use Chalk to Decorate a Driveway
Paper Airplane Contest	Shovel Snow	FREE	Donate to Local Thrift Store	Plays a musical instrument
Blow Bubbles (if its cold enough they will freeze.	Shovel Snow for a Neighbor	Play Balloon Volleyball	Build an Indoor Fort	Make Snow Angels
Play Hopscotch	Do a Stretching Regimine	Have a Dance Party	Craft Something	Make a Scavenger Hunt

Submit photos of you or family participating in the activities that make a Bingo for a chance to win a prize!

New Schedule in 2025

Beginning this year, we will be publishing the Living Well Newsletter quarterly. New articles will be published in January, April, July, and October. Recently we have felt we have not been able to dedicate enough time to write the quality of articles we want to produce. Our goal with this new schedule is that it will allow us to provide you with more in-depth, valuable content going forward.



Upcoming Events!

- **A Healthier Weigh –**
 - A Healthier Weigh is a 12-week Health & Fitness Challenge – will be taking registrations for individual and team participation through the end of the year! 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!
 - Weigh-in's for Logan, Morgan and Yuma counties will be the week of January 6th
 - Weigh-in's for Kit Carson, Phillips and Washington counties will be the week of January 13th
 - Please contact your local Extension Specialist for more details.

Be sure to check our Facebook page listed below to stay up to date on all our upcoming events.



CSU Extension – NE Colorado FCS: <https://www.facebook.com/CSUExtensionNortheastFCS>

CSU Extension – Phillips County: <https://www.facebook.com/PhillipsCountyExtension/>

CSU Extension – Logan County: https://www.facebook.com/csuextensionlogancounty/?_tn=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCS5-NbtiQryVNn5X513c5--hwVu-1ZfnhynwZsPotP7AZIVStJaoCEoaVYzZjBFhCH0tHJLHaJxQuQ

CSU Extension – Morgan County: <https://www.facebook.com/extensionmorgancounty/>