

# Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



## July-September, 2025

### Aging Well – Benefits of Strength Training

Like many things, aging well doesn't "just happen." There are key components – mental, social and physical well-being – that play a vital role and need to be maintained to create aging at its finest. When it comes to physical well-being, maintaining strength is key to our daily physical performance, capabilities, and quality of life as we age.

The general perception and current statistics on aging suggest a decline in strength as our age increases. A large study showed about a 50% decline in muscle strength between the ages of 20 and 80, with a significant acceleration of loss after the age of 60. We know aging causes a decrease in the number and quality of nervous system cells (brain, spinal cord, nerves) which also produces a decrease in muscle fibers. All of this leads to some sobering points – loss of strength leads to dependence (i.e. assisted living, long-term care facility, family caregiving), declining quality of life, higher death rates from falls, and extraordinary expense to the person, family, community and government. For example, the projected medical costs in 2040 **from hip fractures alone** will be \$6 billion dollars.

The good news is that muscle weakness and loss are NOT inevitable consequences of aging! Our bodies are incredibly receptive to change, so incorporating strength training at least two times a week can help delay or even prevent the risk of frailty and dependence from aging. For example, a study of nursing home residents between the ages of 87-96 found that a progressive resistance training program increased leg strength by 170%.

Strength training as we age isn't necessarily about our outward appearance. It leads to improvements in daily life functioning such as getting in and out of chairs, climbing stairs, walking, improving balance and preventing falls, and lifting. You don't have to go to the gym. Strength training can be done at home with body weight resistant exercises, exercise bands, cans of food, and other everyday household items. It is NEVER too late to start!

To learn more, check out the *Aging & Your Neuromuscular System* webinar with Dr. Brian Tracy, Ph.D, with Colorado State University, College of Health & Human Sciences: <https://youtu.be/LSYWaRzjuQ0?si=JUBYj4fqYn6P0SJo>

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## Easy Meal Planning for Families

Meal planning can help busy families organize their evening meals. By using an organizational tool, meals can become simple, nutritious, and provide variety, all while helping save time, money and added stress. Time invested in [meal planning](#) and preparation has direct benefits related to health and cost savings, as well as time savings.

Think about your schedule for the week; consider when you are the busiest and when you have more free time. Plan meals accordingly. It is sometimes helpful if you choose a theme for a few days of the week to provide simplicity to decisions on what is going to be made. Don't be afraid to rotate family favorites every few weeks within the weekly schedule. An example of a type of themed week could be:

**Monday:** Meatless or Macaroni Monday

**Tuesday:** Tacos or Tex-Mex Tuesday

**Wednesday:** Wing it Wednesday (use leftovers to create something new or finish the leftover dish itself)

**Thursday:** Try it Thursday (Try out a new recipe or restaurant)

**Friday:** Fun Food (Pizza, Burgers, etc.)

**Saturday:** Grilling or [One-Pot Meals](#)

**Sunday:** Slow Cooker / Family Favorite

Be sure to leave room for leftovers as meals in this sort of menu planning if leftovers aren't typically used for lunches the next day. Planning for only 4-5 meals a week is a practical plan as schedules can quickly change and leftovers are often expected.

Cook once-eat twice is a motto that is valuable when meal planning. Try browning an extra pound of hamburger, cooking extra noodles, or freezing an entire dish to be used as an emergency meal when your evening gets away from you. This not only is a time saving tip but it can save money too if buying ingredients in bulk.

An easy family favorite using pantry ingredients is this simple [salmon patty recipe](#). Salmon patties are a tasty, easy, and affordable way to incorporate heart-healthy omega-3 fats into your diet. Serve on a bun as a salmon burger or as a main entrée with roasted vegetables and a side of grains. It goes great with Dijon mustard or tartar sauce.

### Ingredients:

- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- ½ medium onion, finely chopped
- ½ red bell pepper, seeded, and diced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 16 oz. canned salmon, bones, and skin removed
- 1 cup whole wheat bread crumbs
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 Tbsp. plain low-fat yogurt
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, finely minced
- Pinch of salt



### Directions:

1. Heat a medium skillet over medium heat with 1 Tbsp. olive oil. Add diced onion and bell pepper and saute until softened (7-9 minutes) then add garlic and cook for 1 minute. Remove from heat.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine salmon, sauteed bell pepper and onion, bread crumbs, beaten eggs, yogurt, Worcestershire sauce, black pepper, parsley, and salt. Mix to combine. Form into 2" wide by ½" thick patties.
3. In a clean nonstick pan, heat 1 Tbsp. olive oil, then add salmon patties in a single layer. Saute 3 to 4 minutes per side or until golden brown and cooked through. If salmon patties brown too fast, reduce heat. Remove finished patties to a paper-towel lined plate and repeat with remaining oil and salmon patties.

For nutritious recipe ideas, visit Kendall Reagan Nutrition Center for a wide variety of recipes including gluten free, appetizers, desserts, and main dish meals. [Recipes - Kendall Reagan Nutrition Center](#)

## Back to School Shopping



Ready or not, back to school season is just around the corner! While this is often an exciting time, it can also come with financial concerns. Not only do kids need new school supplies required by the school, but they likely need new clothes, may have fees associated with sports or other activities they are involved in, and may want to do fun things with their friends they are reconnecting with. It can be helpful to go into this season with a plan to help prevent these costs from becoming overwhelming.

- **Create a list of items you need** – Look over your school supply list, clothing needs, activity supply needs, etc. and create one large list with everything your child needs for the start of the school year. Include things like activity fees on this list to keep everything in one place. If you have supplies leftover your child no longer needs, you may be able to sell or donate these items too!
- **Look at what you have** – Start by taking stock of the school supplies, clothing, and activity supplies your child already has. As you find these items, cross them off the list you made initially. This will help you determine what you actually need in order to be ready for the start of this school year.
- **Consider revamping supplies** – If you have binders or similar supplies from the year before, you could have your child decorate it to make it feel like new. Things like embroidering a backpack, or using a book cover could make these supplies exciting for the new year!
- **Create a budget** – Once you have a revised list consisting of only the items you need, create a budget. Estimate how much you think each of these items is going to cost to help determine how much money you will need by the time you go shopping. If you start this process early enough, you can save for a couple of months before you actually need to go shopping.
- **Get your supplies** – When it is finally time to get your supplies, there are a couple more things you can try to save some money. First, keep an eye out for back-to-school sales. Some stores (both in person and online) will offer discounted items around the beginning of the school year. You can also try second-hand stores. They may carry many of the school supplies and clothing items your child needs.
- **Buy in bulk** – If you have multiple children or can share school supplies and costs with friends or family, consider buying in bulk. Things like pencils, notebooks, and binders may be purchased in bulk for a cheaper individual cost.
- **Teach financial literacy** – Depending on the age of your child, this could be a great opportunity to teach them about financial literacy. Have them help you create the budget, look at the cost of items they want to purchase, and help them compare the prices of similar items.

Starting this process early can help you be financially prepared for the back-to-school season, reduce stress for you and your child, and set your family up for a smooth transition into the new school year. Plus, involving your child in this process helps them learn important financial literacy skills that will set them up for success!

Source:

<https://mycreditunion.gov/about/news-blog/are-you-ready-back-school-season>

## Bedtime and Your Kids

According to the National Institute of Health, insufficient sleep can result in significant health and behavioral challenges. These include anxiety, aggressive behavior, and poor conflict-solving and learning skills. Sleep influences every aspect of well-being: emotional, physical, and mental. Bedtime routines at any age are important. As a parent, you want to make sure your child is thriving; however, creating and maintaining a regular bedtime routine can be challenging especially when it comes to consistency which is crucial to ensure your child is getting enough sleep. Here are some tips to help with creating a bedtime routine.



### Choose a Time and Location for Bed

Set a bedtime and be consistent, even on the weekends and in summer. Start getting ready about 30 minutes to an hour before bedtime. Provide an area that is quiet, safe, and a space with few interruptions. The bedroom should be dark and cool to promote sleep. If your child fears the dark, you can use a dim nightlight.

### Select Bedtime Steps or Activities

Select three or four steps or activities to get “ready for bed.” Some activities could include picking out pajamas, bath time, brushing teeth, quiet activity of reading a book, listening to soft music, or quiet conversations or story time. Try not to introduce more than one change at a time to the bedtime routine. When your child is sleepy, but not asleep, the bedtime routine culminates with a goodnight kiss and lights-out.

### Adjusting Your Child’s Bedtime Routine

Gradual adjustments can be made to the bedtime routine to meet the needs of your growing child. If there are other changes happening with your family, consider delaying changes to their bedtime routine (example: moving to a new house or starting school). As your child’s sleep needs change, shift bedtime by 15-minute increments. If the bedtime routine isn’t working or needs adjustments, listen to your child’s concerns and adapt the routine if necessary. It may take some trial-and-error to find out what works best for your family.

### Common Challenges

*Trouble Falling Asleep* – A busy mind or racing thoughts. Try calming techniques such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation, or guided imagery. Make sure your child is getting lots of exercise, sunlight, and outdoor time during the day.

*Waking Up Frequently* – Sleep is interrupted during the night. Keep the bedroom dark and quiet and avoid stimulating activities. Give your child strategies for falling back to sleep on their own, like taking deep breaths or snuggling with a stuffed animal.

*Bedtime Resistance in Children* – Delaying or refusing to follow the bedtime routine. Build small choices to give your child a sense of control, such as picking out pajamas. But ultimately, you are in charge.

*Back to School or Travel Leads to Earlier Bedtimes* – Bedtime needs to be adjusted to an earlier time. About a week before an early bedtime, start adjusting the bedtime routine about 5 to 10 minutes earlier each day. Then the earlier time won’t seem so hard to adjust to.

Along with promoting better sleep, bedtime routines help children develop self-care habits and support the development of cognitive skills like working memory and attention. These routines also strengthen the parent-child relationship and can lead to improved mood, reduced stress, and better behavior. Over time, these positive effects contribute to greater school readiness, stronger academic achievement, and enhanced social skills. Establishing a bedtime routine early on makes it easier to maintain healthy habits as your child grows.

### Resources

[Resources US Dept. of Health and Human Services - Sleep and Your Child: How You Can Build Healthy Sleep Routines | HeadStart.gov](#)

[Sleep Foundation - https://www.sleepfoundation.org/children-and-sleep/bedtime-routine](https://www.sleepfoundation.org/children-and-sleep/bedtime-routine)

## The Power of Magnesium



When it comes to essential minerals, calcium often gets the spotlight, especially for bone health, but magnesium is just as critical. This powerhouse mineral supports over 300 functions in the body, from building strong bones to helping you sleep better. Yet, despite its importance, nearly half of U.S. adults do not get enough magnesium in their daily diet. This deficiency can affect how we sleep, think, move, and age.

**Why Magnesium Matters: Key Health Benefits:** Magnesium plays a vital role in nearly every major system in the body. Here is how it supports your health:

- **Bone Health:** About 60% of the body’s magnesium is stored in the bones. It supports bone-building cells that help activate vitamin D, which improves calcium absorption. Without adequate magnesium, calcium cannot do its job properly, increasing the risk of osteoporosis.
- **Sleep & Stress:** Magnesium has a calming effect on the nervous system and muscles. It may improve sleep quality by supporting neurotransmitters that regulate relaxation. Supplementing before bed is often used to ease restlessness, anxiety, and insomnia. Many people also find relief from restless legs and night-time muscle cramps. However, the type of magnesium you use can make a big difference.
- **Blood Sugar & Diabetes:** Magnesium is essential for insulin function and glucose metabolism. Diets low in magnesium are linked to a greater risk of type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Getting enough may help the body use insulin more effectively.
- **Migraines & Mental Health:** Magnesium helps regulate brain chemicals and nerve signals. Low levels are associated with a higher risk of depression, anxiety, and migraines. Some clinical studies suggest magnesium supplementation may help reduce migraine frequency and improve mood.
- **Heart Health & Blood Pressure:** Magnesium plays a key role in maintaining a steady heartbeat and regulating blood pressure. Low magnesium levels are linked to an increased risk of hypertension and cardiovascular disease.
- **Muscle Function & Cramps:** Magnesium helps muscles contract and relax properly. It is commonly used to reduce cramps, twitching, and spasms, especially for active people, older adults, or those with restless leg syndrome.

**Are You Low in Magnesium?** Some people are more likely to experience magnesium deficiency. Risk factors include:

- Age of 60 or older
- Digestive conditions such as IBS, Crohn’s, or celiac disease
- Diuretics or acid-blocking medications (PPIs)
- High intake of caffeine or alcohol
- Diets high in processed foods and low in whole grains, legumes, and vegetables

**Signs of Magnesium Deficiency include** muscle cramps or twitching, fatigue or poor sleep, anxiety or irritability, headaches or migraines, numbness or tingling, and irregular heartbeat.

### Magnesium-Rich Foods

You can get magnesium naturally from various foods, especially plant-based and whole foods – concentrate on:

Food Group	Examples
Leafy greens	Spinach, Swiss chard
Legumes	Black beans, lentils, chickpeas
Nuts & Seeds	Almonds, cashews, and pumpkin
Whole grains	Quinoa, oats, brown rice
Other	Avocado, tofu, soymilk, dark chocolate (in moderation), Fortified cereals, fish, poultry

## Choosing a Magnesium Supplement

If food sources are not enough, supplements may help – choosing the right form is essential.

Magnesium Type	Best For
Glycinate	Sleep, anxiety, gentle on the stomach
Citrate	Digestion, constipation relief
Threonate	Brain health, cognitive support
Malate	Muscle pain, fibromyalgia
Taurate	Blood sugar & pressure, heart health
Orotate	Energy, athletic performance
Oxide (common)	Poor absorption, mainly a laxative

### Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA):

Group	RDA (mg/day)
Adult Men	400-420 mg/day
Adult Women	310-320 mg/day
Pregnancy	350-360 mg/day

**Supplement Safety Tip:** Magnesium from food is safe, but high doses from supplements (above 350/day) may cause side effects like diarrhea, nausea, or low blood pressure, especially in those with kidney issues. Always consult a healthcare provider before starting supplementation.

Magnesium powers the body's most vital functions – from heart rhythm and bone strength to mood balance and restful sleep. Yet nearly half of U.S. adults are not getting enough of this essential mineral. The good news? Small, intentional changes such as adding magnesium-rich foods or the right supplement can make a big difference. Whether you are looking to ease stress, support your bones, stabilize blood sugar, or sleep more soundly, boosting your magnesium intake could be a simple step toward feeling your best.



**Adapted from:** <https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/magnesium/>

**Sources:** <https://www.uhhospitals.org/blog/articles/2025/04/which-type-of-magnesium-is-right-for-your-symptoms>  
<https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Magnesium-HealthProfessional/>

## Handwashing: The Simple Habit That Makes a Big Difference

One of the easiest and most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs—and something that’s often overlooked—is handwashing. This simple act helps stop the transmission of respiratory and diarrheal infections, which can easily occur in everyday situations such as:

- Preparing food
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Treating wounds
- Using the toilet or changing diapers
- Blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- Touching animals, animal feed, or animal waste
- Handling garbage



Our hands are constantly in contact with surfaces and substances that can carry harmful bacteria and viruses. Because hands often touch our eyes, nose, and mouth, they can act as direct pathways for germs to enter the body.

### Common Germs Spread by Unwashed Hands

Several common infections spread easily when hands are not properly washed:

- **Salmonella:** A frequent culprit in foodborne illnesses, salmonella is often transmitted by handling raw meat, particularly poultry, and then touching surfaces or ready-to-eat foods like fruits, vegetables, or cheese without washing your hands.
- **Norovirus:** This highly contagious virus can be spread when trace amounts of fecal matter are transferred from hands to food, often due to inadequate handwashing after using the restroom or changing diapers.
- **Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease:** Particularly common among young children, this illness spreads through saliva, mucus, or feces. Kids often sneeze or cough without covering their mouths and frequently touch shared toys or surfaces. Then those hands go right into their mouths. Teaching children proper hand hygiene is a powerful step toward keeping them and others healthy.

Washing your hands not only protects you from others’ germs, it also stops your germs from spreading to others.

### The Impact of Handwashing: What the CDC Says

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), effective handwashing can:

- Reduce the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by **23–40%**
- Reduce diarrheal illness in people with weakened immune systems by **58%**
- Decrease respiratory illnesses, like colds, in the general population by **16–21%**
- Lower absenteeism due to gastrointestinal illness among schoolchildren by **29–57%**

### How to Wash Your Hands Effectively

To get the full benefit of handwashing, it’s important to do it correctly:

1. **Wet your hands** with clean, warm water.
2. **Apply soap** and lather thoroughly. Be sure to scrub between your fingers, under your nails, around your knuckles, palms, the backs of your hands, and even up to your wrists and forearms.
3. **Scrub for at least 20 seconds.** Humming a song like “Happy Birthday” twice can be a helpful timer, especially for kids.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dryer.

When soap and water aren’t available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least **60% alcohol** as a convenient and effective alternative.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/about/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/data-research/facts-stats/index.html>

## **County Fairs**

- Phillips County Fair – July 21st – July 27th: at Phillips County Fairgrounds in Holyoke: Open Class entries Wednesday, July 24th 1:00-6:00 p.m. Must be pre-entered in ShoWorks. For more information or to register visit: <https://phillipscountyfair.org>
- Kit Carson County Fair – July 19th – 26th at County Fairgrounds in Burlington. Quilt entries will be accepted on Saturday, July 19th from 9:00-10:00 a.m. Special Living Arts, Foods, Living Arts, and Fabric & Needlework entries will be accepted Monday, July 21st from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Floriculture entries will be accepted on Wednesday, July 23rd from 8:00-10:00 a.m. and Garden entries will be accepted on Thursday, July 24th at 10:00 a.m.
- Sedgwick County Fair – July 23rd – July 27th at County Fairgrounds in Julesburg: Open Class Entries excluding Floriculture, Garden & Crops Wednesday, July 23rd from 8:00-9:30 a.m. and Thursday, July 24th 8:00-9:30 a.m.
- Eastern Colorado Roundup (Washington County) – July 21st - July 26th at Washington County Fairgrounds in Akron: Open Class and Horticulture entries Mon. July 21st 1:00-6:00 p.m. Baked foods, garden, and horticulture entries need to be in place by 8:30 a.m. on Tues. July 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- Logan County Fair – July 24th – August 3rd: Ticketed Events begin July 29th. Open Class entries must be preentered by July 18th online at <http://bit.ly/LoganCountyFairEntry> for no fee, late entries are accepted for a fee the day of show. For more info: <http://www.lcfair.org/>
- Morgan County Fair – July 25th – July 31st at the Morgan County Fairgrounds in Brush: Entries for Open Class Home Economics are accepted Thursday, July 24th from 7:00-8:00 p.m. and again on Friday, July 25th from 8:00-11:00 a.m.
- Yuma County Fair – July 31st – August 3<sup>rd</sup> at County Fairgrounds in Yuma: Open Class entries Wednesday, July 30<sup>th</sup> 4:00-6:00 p.m. and Thursday, July 31st 7:30-9:00 a.m.

**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/>

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