

Dakota Wellness Program

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Inside this issue...

Community and social well-being

Monthly book club

Ask the expert

Women's health

Safe supplementation

Preventive health

Crispy peanut butter balls

Join Sanford Health Plan Wellness team member for our monthly 15-minute wellness webinar.

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NORTH DAKOTA
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
RETIREMENT SYSTEM

SANFORD
HEALTH PLAN

Community and social well-being

In our pursuit of good health, we often focus on diet, exercise, and medical care, sometimes overlooking the essential role that community and social well-being play in our overall well-being. Numerous studies have highlighted the significant impact of strong social connections and a supportive community on our physical and mental health. Here's how community and social well-being can contribute to our overall health and well-being.



Emotional Support:

A robust social network provides us with emotional support during challenging times. Having friends, family, or a community to lean on reduces stress, lowers the risk of mental health disorders, and enhances our ability to cope with adversity.



Healthy Behaviors:

Communities that prioritize well-being foster a culture of healthy behaviors. Engaging in physical activities, such as group exercises or sports, becomes more enjoyable and motivating when done with others. Social interactions can also positively influence our lifestyle choices, including nutrition, smoking cessation, and adherence to medical treatments.



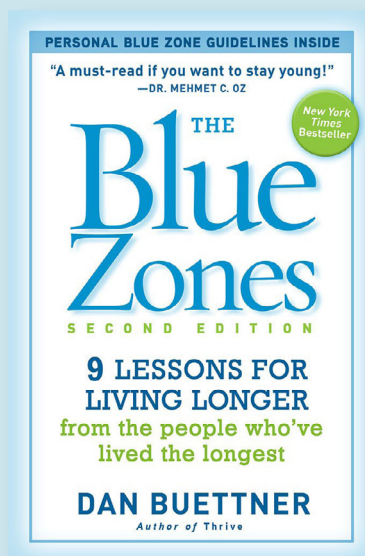
Social Determinants of Health:

Community and social well-being also intersect with social determinants of health, such as access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. Strong community networks can advocate for better resources, services, and policies that address these determinants, leading to healthier environments and improved health outcomes for all.



Sense of Belonging:

Being part of a community provides a sense of belonging, which promotes positive mental health outcomes. Loneliness and social isolation, on the other hand, have been linked to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline. Feeling connected to others and having a purpose in life contributes to better mental and emotional well-being, leading to improved overall health.



Book Club

The Blue Zones: 9 Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who've Lived the Longest

by Dan Buettner

A long, healthy life is no accident. It begins with good genes, but it also depends on good habits. If you adopt the right lifestyle, experts say, chances are you may live up to a decade longer. Buettner has led teams of researchers across the globe – from Costa Rica to Sardinia, Italy, to Okinawa, Japan and beyond – to uncover the secrets of Blue Zones. He found that the recipe for longevity is deeply intertwined with community, lifestyle, and spirituality. People live longer and healthier by embracing a few simple but powerful habits, and by creating the right community around themselves. In *The Blue Zones, Second Edition*, Buettner has blended his lifestyle formula with the latest longevity research to inspire lasting, behavioral change and add years to your life.

Region by region, Buettner reveals the “secrets” of longevity through stories of his travels and interviews with some of the most remarkable – and happily long-living people on the planet. It's no coincidence that the way they eat, interact with each other, shed stress, heal themselves, avoid disease, and view their world yield them more good years of life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. The book discusses the importance of purpose and community in the Blue Zones. How does having a strong sense of purpose and social connections impact one's overall well-being and longevity? Can you think of ways to cultivate these aspects in your own life?**
- 2. Based on the Blue Zones' examples, what are some practical steps you can take to adopt healthier habits and create an environment that promotes longevity in your own life and community?**
- 3. Which Blue Zone featured in the book resonated with you the most? Why did it stand out to you, and what aspects of their lifestyle do you find particularly inspiring or intriguing?**

Ask the Expert

Registered Dietitian

Question: What are benefits and drawbacks of caffeine?

On the positive side, caffeine has been found to increase alertness, improve mood, and enhance cognitive performance. It has also been linked to a reduced risk of several diseases, including Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and liver disease. In addition, caffeine has been shown to increase athletic performance.

However, excessive consumption of caffeine can lead to negative side effects such as insomnia, anxiety, and palpitations. It can also interfere with the absorption of certain minerals and lead to addiction and withdrawal symptoms.

It is important to note that the effects of caffeine can vary depending on the individual and their tolerance level. It is recommended to consume caffeine in moderation and to be aware of its potential effects on the body and brain.



Women's Health

Throughout a woman's lifespan, the body goes through many changes and fluctuations in hormones related to the menstrual cycle, child birth, breast feeding, and menopause. Through these milestone moments, lifestyle and many other factors play a role in health maintenance. Women are at higher risk for osteoporosis and muscle loss as they age. By focusing on diet and exercise, as well as annual visits with your primary care provider, you can promote and maintain good health.

Women should consume a balanced diet containing whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean protein, dairy, and healthy fats. However, women have varying needs depending on where they are in the lifespan.

- Consume folate during childbearing years which can be found in oranges, leafy greens, beans and fortified grains
- Consume an adequate amount of calcium and vitamin D as you age to promote bone density and decrease risk for osteoporosis
- Incorporate strength training and weight-bearing activity to maintain muscle mass and promote bone density
- Try yoga or Pilates to promote balance and flexibility

Safe supplementation

Take one stroll through the supplement aisle and you'll find a pill or powder claiming to treat your every ailment. Dietary supplements are not pharmaceuticals. Drugs are tested and approved by the FDA before reaching consumers. Unlike drugs, the FDA does not approve supplements for safety or effectiveness.

In general, it is preferable to get vitamins and minerals from food. By definition – supplements are to be in addition to what we get from our diet – not to replace. There is no one-size-fits-all recommendation for supplement use.

Safety reminders:

1. Some vitamins and minerals can accumulate in the body if taken in excess or interact with pharmaceuticals.
2. Research and find a supplement brand that is verified for safety and effectiveness by a third party, such as USP, which is noted on the label.
3. Many may benefit from a daily multivitamin or Vitamin D (if living where sunlight is low, such as the Midwest), but not all need supplementation.

Talk to your healthcare provider about your specific concerns, symptoms, or to test levels of nutrients in your body before supplementing.



Preventive Health

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is known as the “silent disease” because a person doesn’t know they have it until they break a bone. As we age, our bones start to decrease in density and mass, putting us then at risk for a possible fracture.

These are risk factors that can affect the possible development of osteoporosis:

- ✓ Family history of osteoporosis
- ✓ Aging
- ✓ Being a women
- ✓ A diet low in calcium, vitamin D and protein
- ✓ Physical inactivity
- ✓ Smoking and alcohol use
- ✓ Hormone levels that affect thyroid and estrogen in women and testosterone in men
- ✓ Being underweight
- ✓ Long-term use of certain medications, such as corticosteroids, aromatase inhibitors and anti-seizure medications

Here are ways to slow down the possibility of bone loss:

- 1 Make sure to have a diet rich calcium, vitamin D and protein
- 2 Be active including weight-bearing exercises
- 3 Don't use tobacco and keep alcohol use to a minimum
- 4 Prevent falls by doing exercises that help with your balance, keep living arrangements clutter free and remove tripping hazards

Crispy peanut butter balls

Servings per recipe: 12 | Serving size: 1 ball

Ingredients:

½ C peanut butter or nut butter of choice
¾ C crispy rice cereal
1 tsp maple syrup
½ C dark chocolate chips, melted

Instructions:

Line a baking sheet with parchment or wax paper. Combine peanut butter, cereal and maple syrup in a medium bowl. Roll the mixture into 12 balls, using about 2 teaspoons for each. Place on the prepared baking sheet. Freeze the balls until firm, about 15 minutes.

Roll the balls in melted chocolate. Return to the freezer until the chocolate is set, about 15 minutes.

Tips:

To make ahead: Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 weeks.

To melt chocolate, microwave on Medium for 1 minute. Stir, then continue microwaving on Medium, stirring every 20 seconds, until melted. Or place chocolate in the top of a double boiler over hot, but not boiling, water. Stir until melted.

Nutrition Facts:

Calories: 112 | Total fat: 3g | Saturated Fat: 2g
Total Carbohydrate: 8g | Sugar: 5g | Dietary Fiber: 1g
Total Protein: 3g | Sodium: 45mg
Nutrition information compiled using MyNetDiary.com

Monthly Observances

Park and recreation
UV safety

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