

# Dakota Wellness Program

## NOVEMBER 2023

Inside this issue...

**Gratitude**

**Monthly book club**

**Quality sleep**

**Giving thanks can increase happiness**

**Safer Thanksgiving**

**Healthy skin**

**Stuffed sweet potato with hummus dressing**

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

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# Ways to Improve Your Gratitude

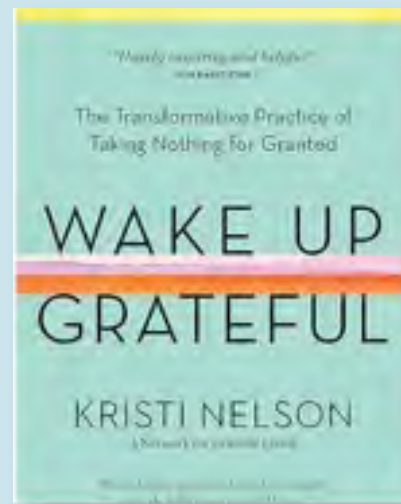
Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it. There are a variety of ways to feel and express gratitude in. An easy way to start is to simply jot down a few things, people, or events for which you are thankful - a gratitude journal.

Focusing on the positive aspects of your life instead of what is lacking, can train your brain to look for “the good” in every situation. Circling back to your journal entries in the future can be a great pick-me-up when you’re feeling stressed or depressed.

All gratitude does not need to be saved for the journal. Expressing appreciation to others, makes them feel good, strengthens your relationships, and builds a sense of community. You can express gratitude to others with a verbal “thank you” or written in a “thank you” note. Everyone is happy to hear that they are appreciated, and their positive reaction can put you in a positive mood, too!

Writing a gratitude letter conveys appreciation and effectively communicates the impact someone has had on our lives. You may take the gratitude letter a step further by visiting the person and reading it aloud to them.

Last, but not least, practice mindfulness meditation by taking a few moments to focus on your breath and be present in the moment. Notice the sights, sounds, and sensations around you and appreciate them for what they are.



## Book Club

### **Wake Up Grateful** by Kristi Nelson

“Wake Up Grateful” by Kristi Nelson is an inspiring exploration of gratitude’s transformative potential. Drawing from personal experiences and heartfelt anecdotes, Nelson delves into the profound impact of gratitude on our lives. She illuminates how embracing gratitude can infuse our existence with joy, resilience, and deeper connections with others. The book encourages readers to cultivate gratitude as an essential daily practice, unveiling the beauty that often hides within life’s challenges. It’s a powerful reminder that gratitude isn’t just a fleeting feeling but a life-altering perspective. This book prompts introspection on the role of gratitude in our own lives and invites us to harness its incredible power to navigate adversity and enhance our overall well-being.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. How has practicing gratitude influenced your own life and perspective?**
- 2. In what ways can gratitude help individuals navigate difficult times and adversity?**
- 3. How can we incorporate the principles of “Wake Up Grateful” into our daily routines to enhance our overall well-being?**



# Ask the Expert

## **Question:**

***Quality sleep is crucial for overall well-being, and several factors can impact it. What can I do to improve my quality of sleep?***

One of the key factors in enhancing sleep quality is maintaining sleep hygiene and consistency. Establishing a regular sleep schedule, where you go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, helps regulate your body's internal clock and promotes better sleep.

Relaxation techniques can be very effective. Practices such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or meditation can reduce stress and anxiety before bedtime, making it easier to fall asleep.

If you suspect a sleep disorder like insomnia or sleep apnea, it's essential to consult a healthcare professional. They can assess your condition and recommend therapies or treatments tailored to your specific needs.

Diet plays a role in sleep quality. Avoid heavy, spicy, or caffeine-containing foods close to bedtime. Instead, opt for sleep-friendly snacks like herbal tea or a small serving of complex carbohydrates to promote better rest.

To optimize your sleep environment, keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet. Invest in a comfortable mattress and pillows that support your sleeping position. Also, minimize screen time before bed, as the blue light from screens can interfere with the production of melatonin, a hormone that induces sleep.

## **Giving Thanks can Increase Happiness**

The roller coaster of life certainly has ups and its downs. It is quite natural to be grateful during momentous occasions and when things are going well for you, but how do you cope when things may not be going according to plan? You have an opportunity to rise from this temporary state with the positive emotion of practicing gratitude. Try to focus on the simple daily pleasures that we often take for granted. Acknowledging and appreciating the goodness in your life has the potential to turn what little you have into abundance and change your perspective of your world in a positive way.

Practicing gratitude releases two important neurotransmitters (dopamine and serotonin) in our brains that regulate our moods and emotions, which can help us to feel happier, more content, and less stressed.

Benefits of practicing gratitude can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety levels
- Improve our sleep quality
- Boost our self-esteem
- Help us become more resilient in adversity



# Preventive Health

## Healthy Skin

The skin is our body's largest organ, it protects and maintains our overall health. It works tirelessly to shield us from harmful external factors and helps to keep us in good condition. As we get older, our skin becomes thinner, loses fat and loses its smooth and full appearance. When this happens, it makes us more susceptible to bruising and cuts that may take longer to heal. Being in the sun can also create age spots, drying, wrinkles and possibly skin cancer. Here are some tips to protect our skin as we age:

- **Use broad-spectrum sunscreen, stay in a shaded area and wear sun-protective clothing.**
- **Clean and moisturize your skin daily using a mild cleanser and a moisturizer that fits your skin type to help reduce drying.**
- **Eat a well-balanced diet, including Vitamins A, B and D needed to maintain healthy skin.**
- **Hydration is crucial. Water is the most essential nutrient that our body consumes. Eight glasses of water is recommended per day.**

## Stuffed Sweet Potato with Hummus Dressing

**Servings per recipe:** 1  
**Prep Time:** 15 mins  
**Additional Time:** 5 mins  
**Total Time:** 20 mins

### Ingredients:

1 large, sweet potato, scrubbed      ¼ cup hummus  
¾ cup chopped kale                      2 tablespoons water  
1 cup canned black beans, rinsed

### Instructions:

1. Prick sweet potato all over with a fork. Microwave on High until cooked through, 7 to 10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, wash kale and drain, allowing water to cling to the leaves. Place in a medium saucepan; cover and cook over medium-high heat, stirring once or twice, until wilted. Add beans; add a tablespoon or two of water if the pot is dry. Continue cooking, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is steaming hot, 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Split the sweet potato open and top with the kale and bean mixture. Combine hummus and 2 tablespoons water in a small dish. Add additional water as needed to reach desired consistency. Drizzle the hummus dressing over the stuffed sweet potato.

**Nutrition Facts:** Calories: 472 | Total fat: 7g | Saturated Fat: 1g  
Sodium: 489mg | Total Carbohydrate: 85g | Total Sugars: 20g  
Dietary Fiber: 22g | Protein: 21g | Vitamin A 35810IU  
Vitamin C 55mg | Folate 202 mcg Calcium 191 mg | Iron 7mg  
Magnesium 99mg | Potassium 1673mg



## Monthly Observances

**National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness**  
**COPD Awareness**  
**Diabetes Awareness**  
**Lung Cancer Awareness**  
**Pancreatic Cancer Awareness**  
**Stomach Cancer Awareness**

**Great American Smokeout - Nov. 16**  
**Antibiotics Awareness - Nov. 18-24**

### QUICK LINKS

[sanfordhealthplan.com/ndpers](http://sanfordhealthplan.com/ndpers)

### SET-UP A

[mySanfordHealthPlan](http://mySanfordHealthPlan)

### ONLINE ACCOUNT

[sanfordhealthplan.com/memberlogin](http://sanfordhealthplan.com/memberlogin)

### CONTACT US

**NDPERSwellness@**

**sanfordhealth.org**

**(800) 499-3416 (TTY: 711)**



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