

To Your Health

PHYSICAL



EMOTIONAL



SOCIAL



FINANCIAL



DECEMBER 2023



Don't Let Time or Travel Limit You This Holiday Season

By Sydney Szczesniakowski, MS, NSCA-CPT, Wellness Technician

Sydney Szczesniakowski

Between family festivities and traveling, exercise can sometimes be the last thing on our minds during the holidays. Remind yourself that life is all about balance, and your health is important regardless of the time of year. Staying on track with your exercise doesn't have to take up too much of your day! [The American College of Sports Medicine](#) recommends achieving your physical activity in one of two ways: **150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week**. Short, high intensity workouts (20-30 minutes) are just as beneficial as longer, more moderate sessions.

Vigorous activity requires that your heart rate be 75-95% of your maximum. An easy way to tell if your activity is "vigorous" is the talk test. You should be out of breath and unable to hold a conversation. If you have a wearable device that gives you your heart rate, use this [target heart rate calculator](#) to better understand your range. Because high intensity exercise can be taxing on the body,

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Five Tips for Reining in Holiday Eating

By Shannon Parks, MPH, RD, CPH, Cigna Nutrition Health Coach



Shannon Parks

The winter holidays are officially here, and so is all the holiday food. Food is a major part of holiday celebrations and as such it can feel like there are sweets and treats at every turn through the winter months. Those with difficult relationships with food or those trying to manage their nutrition intake may find holiday stress can trigger unhealthy eating. Even those without particular concern for their dietary intake can experience the struggle to avoid holiday binge eating.

[Binge eating](#) is defined as consuming a large amount of food in a short amount of time, while feeling out of control of what you're eating or how much you're consuming. If you find yourself feeling out of control this holiday season, try out these tips to enjoy it without routine binges:

- **Build A Support Team:** Having your significant other, family members, or even a health coach aware of your health and wellness goals can improve your desire to make healthier choices.

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Wellness Incentive Updates

2023

Don't forget! If you would like to receive your wellness rewards for activities completed between July 1 and December 31, 2023 in cash, you must elect for cash in [myCigna.com](#) by *December 31*.

Use the [Cash Election Help Guide](#) to make the cash election or confirm that you have already elected cash.

2024

Great news! In 2024, all rewards will default to cash. If you prefer to receive points, you may elect to do so beginning January 1.

Beginning next year, the Apps and Activities challenge completions will no longer automatically update. Completions will need to be entered as self-reported goals in myCigna.



December is National Seasonal Affective Disorder Awareness Month

Summarized by [Cigna VitaMin](#)

Do the winter months get you down more than you think they should? If so, you might have seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which impacts as many as 11 million people in the U.S. each year. And while it may take a while to diagnose, the good news is that treatment is available.

SAD is a mood disorder that happens every year at the same time, usually during the winter months. While we don't know the exact causes of SAD, some theories include the following:

SAD Symptoms

- Feelings of sadness, crankiness, or hopelessness
- Less energy/fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Increased appetite and weight gain
- Desire to be alone
- Suicidal thoughts

- Certain hormones made deep in the brain trigger attitude-related changes at certain times of the year.
- Less sunlight during fall and winter leads to the brain making less serotonin, a chemical linked to brain pathways that regulate mood. When these pathways don't work the way they should, the results can be feelings of depression, along with fatigue and weight gain.

See the [full article](#) to learn about causes, additional symptoms, and treatment options.

If you feel depressed, fatigued, and cranky the same time each year, talk with your doctor or a licensed counselor through the [Employee Assistance Program](#) about your feelings and follow their recommendations for lifestyle changes and treatment.



BayCare Presents Health and Wellness
From the Experts Webinars

The Impact of Mental Health on Physical Health

Wednesday, December 13, 11:00 to 11:45 a.m.

Presented by: Jeanmarie Scordino, M.Ed.

Do disruptions within our emotional wellbeing influence how our bodies react and restore? Explore the science between the mind, body, and spirit connection. Please [register](#) in advance.

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How to Manage Holiday Stress

By BayCare

'Tis the season for holiday gatherings, shopping, food and fun. With the holiday festivities also comes stress, worry, and exhaustion.

To help you have stress-free holiday festivities, Dr. Laura Arline, chief quality officer for BayCare, provides useful tips on navigating through the busy season.

- Stay active
- Get enough sleep
- Eat better
- Spend time with loved ones
- Take a vacation
- Be realistic
- Get help



[Read the complete article on BayCare's website.](#)



No-Cost Financial Counseling

Get two free calls with a licensed financial planner to discuss retirement, debt, budgeting, investment, etc. with EAP.

Visit www.pinellas.gov/EAP.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): Providing counseling and so much more to all Pinellas County employees.



December and January Wellness Activities



Impact of Mental Health

[Register here](#) for a 45-minute webinar on **December 13 at 11:00 a.m.** to learn about the impact of mental health on physical health. Explore the science between the mind, body, and spirit connection.



Tobacco Cessation

If you are on the medical plan and use tobacco, complete an [eligible tobacco cessation program](#) between now and March 31, 2024 to avoid the \$500 tobacco premium. Virtual cessation programs are available.



Donate Blood

Help save lives by donating blood! We partner with OneBlood to bring the Big Red Bus to a location near you. View a list of [upcoming blood drives](#).



Stepping Into Your Health Challenge

Coming soon! Step into your health with the annual walking challenge beginning in January 2024. More details to come.

NEW: Solely Strength Class Now Offered Twice a Week



Join Wellness Technician Sydney on Tuesday and Thursday nights for a pumped-up strength training class. See the [group fitness class schedule](#) for details. All classes are at the Wellness Center in Clearwater, except Urban Line Dancing which is held at Parks/Extension Services.

- Cardio Bootcamp
- Core & Balance
- Full Body HIIT
- Restorative Yoga
- Solely Strength
- Spin
- Step 'n' Sculpt
- Urban Line Dancing
- Walk & Talk

Wellness Weekly Breaks: Just 15 Minutes a Day

Meditation Mondays



Build a healthy habit and start the week off with the right mindset. Pop in [every Monday](#) morning at **9:00 a.m.** and/or afternoon at **3:00 p.m.** for a 15-minute guided live meditation.

Decompress to Stress Less on Wednesdays



Join Onsite Nurse Health Coach Brittany [every Wednesday](#) at **2:30 p.m.** for 15 minutes to enjoy word games, trivia, stretching, and more to give your brain a break.

Friday Stretch



Sitting for long periods of time can play havoc with your posture and health. Pledge to move more by dropping in [every Friday](#) at **10:00 a.m.** to take a quick 15-minute stretch wherever you are.

Bookmark [Wellness Classes and Activities](#).



Get Ready, Get Set, GOAL!

By Brittany Hartup, BSN, RN, Cigna Nurse Health Coach



Brittany Hartup

Every December, millions of people begin thinking about their resolutions for the upcoming year. How many times have you set a New Year's resolution? How many times would you consider yourself successful a year later? What if part of the key to achievement is reframing your

thinking and approach?

First, consider swapping the word "resolution" for "goal." You may also find longer-lasting dedication if you replace "New Year" with "2024." After all, the year is only new for the first month or so; but working towards your goals should extend way beyond January. So, let's talk about creating some goals for 2024!

[Studies](#) show that unclear, abstract, or overwhelming goals may increase the likelihood of abandonment and procrastination, leading to disappointing results and feelings of failure. Instead of vaguely saying, "I want to lose weight," formulate a [SMART](#) goal. SMART is an acronym that stands for *Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound*. A SMART goal helps you see not just the *what* you want to work towards, but also *why, how, and when*.

The *specific* parts of these goals are what will get done. In the examples above, "strength train," "schedule a dental exam," "eat at restaurants," and "spend 30 minutes

reading," are all *specifically* stating what you would like to do. The number of times you will complete the action is what is measurable, such as "2 times weekly."

Attainability and *relevance* aren't always obvious, but they're just as important as the other parts of our goal.

Setting goals that are *realistic* and *attainable* prevent us from setting ourselves up for failure.

Telling ourselves we will go to the gym 7 days a week is not attainable. We are imperfect humans, after all!

Next, think about what makes your goal *relevant*; *why* is this goal important? Do you want to read more often to spend less time on social media? Have you avoided going to the dentist for a few years and suspect you have a cavity? Are you spending too much money on fast food? It's also critical to map out how you will accomplish these goals; be sure to read Jane's article on mini habits below.

The *timeliness* of your goal is for you to decide. Set both short-term and long-term goals, taking into consideration your starting point. Goals can and should be updated to reflect your progress or navigate unexpected obstacles.

The new year and your health are yours for the taking! What goals will you set to achieve the best version of yourself? See some examples on [page 6](#). If you want help with your goals, [contact me](#) and we'll schedule time to talk.



Cigna Nurse Health Coach [Brittany Hartup](#) provides coaching on preventing and managing chronic conditions.

Mini Habit Magic

By Jane Grannis, Wellness Manager

When our goals are SMART, we have clarity on where we want to end up, but if we don't identify smaller goals to achieve the greater goal, we're destined for failure. Motivation and willpower are fickle friends that get us only so far.

Have you ever started a new habit and then fell off the wagon not long after? That's happened to all of us. Why did we fail? We



Jane Grannis

probably relied on good intentions and motivation and when those wavered, the habit wasn't sustainable.

Daily, repeated actions eventually become habits that, over time, establish long term behaviors for lifelong change. The secret sauce to making habits stick is ensuring that actions are actually attainable (the A in SMART).

To do that, let's change our thinking and train our brains to approach change in a way that focuses on seemingly insignificant actions that over time, create exponentially big results. Enter, the mini habit.

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limit workouts to 3-4 days a week with plenty of rest in between.

Vigorous exercise is relative to your fitness level, so focus on what you can do rather than what you can't. A high intensity workout can feel intimidating if you've never done it, but you can make modifications

and take longer rest periods. On the flip side, if you're an exercise veteran, make movements more advanced, do more than 75 minutes/week, or go for one more round!

High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) workouts, jump rope, running, or dancing are great training options and require little to no equipment which means they're also ideal when travelling.

If you prefer to exercise in a gym, an [Active&Fit Direct](#) membership gives you access to 12,200 standard gyms and 5,800 exercise studios across the country (including many in the Tampa Bay area). The standard gym membership is \$28/month. A premium membership to specialty studios with a 20-70% discount is also available. There is a 2-month minimum enrollment period. After 2 months, participation and payment are month-to-month.

To enroll in Active&Fit, visit YouDecide at www.youdecide.com/Pinellas, enter your name as recorded in OPUS, your County email address, and the **Pinellas County client ID PC597**. Active&Fit Direct can be found under *Fitness Centers & Studios*. You can also enroll by calling toll free at (888) 746-7236.

New employees, spouses and domestic partners are eligible on the first day of the month after a 30-day waiting period from their hire date.

High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) Examples

- [HIIT Academy](#)
- [Beginner HIIT Workout](#)
- [Low Impact HIIT](#)
- [20-Minute Jump Rope HIIT](#)
- [15-Minute Dance Workout](#)



- **Don't Show Up Hungry:** If you're headed to a holiday party or event, grab a snack, or have a small bite to eat beforehand. Showing up ravenous, or consuming alcohol on an empty stomach, can lead to increased intake and risk of bingeing.
- **Set Yourself Up for Success:** Getting veggies or protein in before anything else will help stabilize your blood sugar and promote feeling fuller longer, reducing the likelihood of overeating.
- **Don't Deprive Yourself:** The more we restrict, the more we binge! Instead of avoiding foods entirely, allow yourself to have the treat, enjoy it for what it is, and move on.
- **Use Smaller Plates:** Appetizer plates are perfect even at holiday mealtimes – they keep our portions in check and force us to prioritize what we have room for on our plates.

Holiday eating can be hard, but it doesn't have to be! Sometimes feeling more in control is just a matter of planning. If you're unsure where to start, reach out to your onsite health coaches today to plan for a healthier holiday season!



Cigna Nutrition Health Coach [Shannon Parks](#) provides coaching on nutrition and wellness.

EAP Wellness Webcast



We are pleased to offer national webcasts through Cigna EAP on **Wednesdays at 2 p.m.**

[Sign up now](#) and stay tuned for more webcasts throughout the year.

- **January 10 - Ditch Your Excuses. Commit to a Healthy Lifestyle.** "I'll start tomorrow!" We all use excuses to justify choices, especially about what we eat or how we exercise. Learn how to overcome common diet and exercise excuses to create a healthier lifestyle.
- **January 17 - Emotional Fitness: Practicing Self Compassion.** Are you hard on yourself when things don't go right? Discover how turning self-judgment into self-kindness can help you navigate challenges more effectively.



Mini habits are so easy, so attainable, that they may seem almost trivial. Example: Your end goal is to lose weight and you plan to start an exercise regime. One of your intermediate SMART goals is to “walk 3 miles 5 days a week.” In comparison, a mini habit might be “I will walk around the block 5 days a week.” If your gut says, “Oh yeah, I could easily do that!”, you’ve got yourself a mini habit.

Why do mini habits work? It’s a bit of a head game, actually. In the example above, preparing oneself to walk three miles physically (carve out time on the calendar, have the right clothes, etc.) and mentally (“I’ve got this!”) can feel

overwhelming and bring up excuses that derail us. We’re too tired, don’t have time, forgot our shoes, etc. But, when it’s so easy it’s silly, we don’t get caught up in emotions and excuses when it’s time to “do the thing” or guilt and negative self-talk if we “didn’t do the thing.”

An added bonus: the “might as well” effect. If you’ve gotten yourself out the door to walk, you’re more likely to think, “Well, I’m already here, I might as well do another block.” There’s no pressure to do more and you’re a winner either way. This idea works the same way whether you’re doing pushups or saving money. Over time, you’ll naturally increase distance.

Mini-habits:

- Don’t rely on willpower or motivation
- Are easy to stick to
- Don’t trigger negative self talk
- Build confidence and pride

To learn how to apply this concept in your own life, visit [Mini Habits](#) or [Tiny Habits](#).

Mini Habit Examples

- Do 1 push up
- Substitute 1 soda for water
- Pack a healthy lunch once a week
- Floss 1 tooth
- Pack my gym bag in the evening
- Switch chips/crackers for the baked version
- Increase daily step count by 100 steps

2024 Goals

Here are some possible goals for next year.

- Get CPR certified/re-certified
- Switch to using reusable shopping bags
- Start a gratitude journal or mindfulness practice
- Improve your medication/supplement compliance
- Learn a new skill (language, sewing, painting)
- Travel to a new-to-you destination in Florida (or check out a new-to-you park/beach in your town)
- Make time for creativity (drawing, dancing, playing)
- Commit to less screen time
- Read a new book a month
- Aim for 7 or 8 hours of sleep a night
- Use a pedometer to track your steps
- Work out at least 3 days a week
- Stretch daily
- Cut down your sugar intake



Tell It Well



Caregiver Corner



High Five

Share Your Good News

Are you inspired by stories of your coworkers? If so, please consider sharing your own stories and successes.

Tell It Well features stories of you or your spouse/domestic partner making healthy life changes.

Caregiver Corner shares stories of caregiving experiences including resources that you found particularly helpful.

High Five is a feature that recognizes you for something wellness-related such as completing a race, quitting smoking, joining a fitness group, etc.

Email your photos and information to wellness@pinellas.gov



1... 2: Invest in You!

Biometric Screening & Health Assessment

The deadline to have completed your biometric screening and health assessment was November 30, 2023.

You can check your completion status using the [Completion Help Guide](#).

Please note that if you submitted a Physician's Form, it may take up to 5 weeks for the form to be processed and show as completed in your myCigna portal.

Please wait until January 1 to complete these items for next year as the month of December is a "black out period" during which the biometric screening and health assessment do not qualify to earn the preferred premium.

The 2024 program will be the same as 2023. The [webpage](#) and the help guides will be updated prior to January 1.

Questions? Email wellness@pinellas.gov.

Tobacco Cessation Programs



If you use tobacco, complete an eligible tobacco cessation program between now and March 31, 2024 to save \$500 on your 2024 medical plan premium due to the [tobacco premium](#). There are a variety of ways to complete a program.

- Sign up for tobacco cessation coaching with Brittany or Shannon, our [onsite Cigna health coaches](#).
- Work with a Cigna health coach over the phone. To register, call (800) 862-3557, option 6.
- Complete an online 28-Day Quit Program on myCigna.com.
- Register for a Tobacco Free Florida class series by calling (813) 929-1000 or use the links below.

Virtual classes:

- Tuesdays, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m., Jan. 16 - Feb. 6 ([register](#))

In-person classes:

- Public Works, 22211 U.S. 19 N, Building 1, Room A230, Clearwater:
Wednesdays, 7:00 - 8:00 a.m., Jan. 10 - 31 ([register](#))
Thursdays, 7:00 - 8:00 a.m., Feb. 1 - 27 ([register](#))



Cucumbers

Cucumbers are 95% water and an excellent natural diuretic to eliminate excess water weight safely.

To learn more about nutrition, contact [Health Coach Shannon Parks](#).

Upcoming Blood Drives



Did you know that one blood donation can save up to three lives? Please consider donating! Walk-ins are welcome or [schedule an appointment](#).

- **Clearwater Courthouse**
315 Court Street, Clearwater (west parking lot)
December 14, 2023, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- **Public Works**
22211 US 19 N, Clearwater
January 18, 2024, 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **Solid Waste**
3095 114th Ave. N., St. Petersburg
January 31, 2024, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- **South County Tax Collector**
2500 34th St. N., St. Petersburg
January 24, 2024, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- **STAR Center**
7887 Bryan Dairy Road, Largo
January 25, 2024, 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- **Utilities**
14 S. Fort Harrison, Clearwater
January 18, 2024, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



Coming Soon Stepping Into Your Health Challenge

Committed to making healthy changes in 2024 but not sure how to start? One step at a time! Step into your personal health journey with an 8-week walking challenge from January 29 to March 22, 2024. Registration coming soon.



Chanukah, the Jewish Festival of Lights



The Hebrew word Chanukah (also spelled Hanukkah) means *dedication*, and celebrates the Jewish rededication of the Holy Temple, which started in the second century B.C.E. The festival of lights is an eight-day celebration commemorated nightly with a

menorah lighting, each night growing in the number of flames lit. There are ceremonial prayers, songs, and special blessings recited surrounding the nightly menorah lighting.

Since the miracle of Chanukah involves the menorah oil, it is a cultural tradition to eat foods fried in oil. A classic dish enjoyed during Chanukah and throughout the year is a potato latke (pancake) that's traditionally topped with applesauce or sour cream. Made from potatoes, latkes are fried in oil and served at Chanukah meals throughout the holiday. They often combine grated potatoes, onion, eggs, flour, and seasoning to create a patty that is crisp fried and served hot.

Potatoes get a bad rap as a starchy vegetable, but they're often overlooked for their [nutrition content](#). Rich in vitamin C, vitamin B6, potassium (more than a banana!), and fiber, potatoes are a fantastic nutrient-dense complex carbohydrate choice. We chose this recipe for its many health benefits including the use of [avocado oil](#). This nutritious healthy fat contains antioxidant properties, can help reduce cholesterol and arthritis symptoms, absorb nutrients, contribute to eye health, improve skin and wound healing and much more. We have also substituted whole wheat for white flour to increase fiber content.

Learn more about [Chanukah](#).

Traditional Potato Latkes

View the [full recipe](#).

Ingredients

- 5 large potatoes, peeled
- 1 large onion
- 3 eggs
- 1/3 cup whole wheat all-purpose flour
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3/4 cup avocado oil for frying

Directions

1. Grate potatoes and onion on the fine side of a grater, or in a food processor.
2. Strain grated vegetables through a colander, pressing out any excess water.
3. In a large bowl, combine potatoes, onion, eggs, flour, and seasoning. Mix well.
4. Heat 1/2 cup oil in a deep-sided skillet over medium heat. When oil has heated, place 1 large tablespoon batter into the frying oil at a time, allowing to cook 3-5 minutes or until golden before flipping and cooking an additional 2-3 minutes.
5. Remove from pan and place on paper towels to drain excess oil. Continue cooking the remaining batter, adding oil as needed.

Serve with sour cream or applesauce on the side. Latkes will remain fresh up to 5 days if stored covered in the refrigerator.

Yield: 6 servings


Serving size: 2 latkes

Nutritional information per serving:

Calories 178, Carbohydrate 29 gm, Fiber 3 gm, Sugar 2 gm, Fat 3 gm, Protein 7 gm, Sodium 37 mg



December 2023 Group Fitness Classes

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			6:30 to 7:10 a.m. Walk & Talk (Outdoor) Shannon (no class 12/28)	
12:15 to 12:45 p.m. Core & Balance Shannon (no class 12/25)	12:10 to 12:40 p.m. Cardio Bootcamp Sydney (no class 12/26)	12:15 to 12:45 p.m. Spin Shirley (no class 12/13, 12/20 and 12/27)	12:10 to 12:40 p.m. Full Body HIIT Sydney	12:30 to 1:15 p.m. Restorative Yoga Shannon (no class 12/8, 12/22, and 12/29)
	5:15 to 6:15 p.m. Solely Strength Sydney (no class 12/26)	Parks' Magnolia Room in Largo 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Urban Line Dancing Jolanda (no class 12/20)	 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. Solely Strength Sydney	
		5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Step 'n' Sculpt Lisa		

All classes are held at the [Wellness Center](#), 324 South Fort Harrison Ave., Clearwater, except Urban Line Dancing is at Parks & Conservation Resources, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Magnolia Room, Largo.

NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED - JUST SHOW UP

Cardio Bootcamp (30 minutes): A challenging, fun, high energy class that is modifiable for all fitness levels.

Core & Balance (30 minutes): An all-level core-dedicated workout to strengthen mid-body muscles to maintain good posture, range of motion and a healthy back.

Full Body HIIT (30 minutes): Combine strength and cardio intervals, and a variety of equipment to work your entire body.

Restorative Yoga (45 minutes): A restful yoga practice that prioritizes long holds to gain a deeper stretch and emphasizes the meditative aspect of the mind-body connection.

Solely Strength (1 hour): Build strength, lean body mass, and bone strength, while decreasing body fat.

Spin (30 minutes): A low impact cardio workout ideal for all fitness levels. Control your own resistance and speed to improve your current fitness level at your pace.

Step 'n' Sculpt (1 hour): Step your way to a healthy heart, tone your core and abs, and show your muscles some love with a feel-great stretch.

Urban Line Dancing (1 hour) (**Parks' Magnolia Room**): Dance is an excellent stress reducer, muscle toner and leg strengthener. Get moving and have some fun!

Walk & Talk (40 minutes): Get your steps in with Shannon, your [Cigna Onsite Nutrition Health Coach](#), while discussing nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.

Bookmark the [Group Fitness Class Schedule](#).

