

NUTRITION NEWS

WRITTEN BY: SHANNON DAVIS, RD, CDN

LAYOUT BY: REGINA PIZZO

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Cancer and Nutrition

Not only is April National Cancer Control Month, it is also Stress Awareness Month. Being overly stressed can have a number of adverse effects on your health. Stress that is left unmanaged can contribute to such health problems as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes.

Stress affects your body, your mood, and your behavior. Common effects on your body include headache, muscle tension or pain, chest pain, fatigue, stomach upset, and sleep problems. Stress can also negatively impact your mood, including increasing your anxiety and restlessness while decreasing your motivation and focus. It can also leave you feeling irritable or angry, and sad or depressed. Common effects on your behavior include overeating, undereating, angry outburst, social withdrawal, and exercising less often.

The good news is you do have a certain amount of control over your stress levels. And you can manage your symptoms while still trying to decrease the stress in your life.

Some stress management activities include the following:

- ♦ Regular physical activity, such as walking or hiking
- ♦ Relaxation techniques, including deep breathing, meditation, yoga, tai chi (try one of the classes sponsored by OFA!) or getting a massage
- ♦ Keeping a sense of humor! Keep some witty reading material on hand to elicit a smile or laugh
- ♦ Socializing with family and friends— resist the urge to withdraw into yourself
- ♦ Setting aside time for hobbies, including reading, music, or going to a movie.

The physiological effects of stress can cause damage to your overall health— manage the symptoms when they become noticeable!



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Monthly Exercise

ARM SAW

With elbow bent at 90 degrees, pull backward to bend elbow more, then move arm forward, straightening elbow.

Do 5-10 repetitions on each arm.

Because April is one of the months that we focus on cancer, it is important to talk about the impacts of one of the deadliest types. Pancreatic cancer, while being relatively rare, has one of the highest associated mortality rates. While only 3-3.3% of new cancer cases are pancreatic, the percentage of cancer deaths for a year that are attributed to pancreatic cancer is 8%. Lastly, only about 12-13% of people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer survive for five years.

According to the Mayo Clinic, pancreatic cancer begins in the tissue of the pancreas. The pancreas is an organ in your abdomen that lies horizontally behind the lower part of your stomach. Your pancreas is responsible for releasing enzymes that aid in the digestion of food. It also releases hormones that help control the level of sugar in your bloodstream.

Pancreatic cancer often spreads to nearby organs before it is diagnosed because it is seldom detected in its early stages. For people with a family history of pancreatic cancer or for those individuals with a history of pancreatic cysts, early screening may detect a potential problem. One sign of pancreatic cancer can be the onset of diabetes, especially when it occurs with weight loss, jaundice, or pain in the upper abdomen that spreads to the back.



Although signs and symptoms often don't occur until the disease is advanced, they can include the following:

- ◆ Loss of appetite or unintended weight loss
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ New onset diabetes
- ◆ Blood clots
- ◆ Fatigue
- ◆ Yellowing of your skin and the whites of your eyes (jaundice)
- ◆ Pain in the upper abdomen that radiates to your back

As you can see, many of these symptoms are vague and can easily be attributed to other conditions, again making pancreatic cancer difficult to diagnose. There are some risk factors that are associated with developing the disease.

These can include:

- Chronic inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis)
- Diabetes
- Family history of genetic syndromes that can increase cancer risk, including a BRCA2 gene mutation
- Family history of pancreatic cancer
- Smoking
- Obesity
- Older age, as most people are diagnosed after the age of 65

Being aware of your risk factors and knowing the signs and symptoms can all aid in a better chance for early detection. And early detection greatly increases your chance for a better outcome.

Sugar has been blamed for everything from causing diabetes to causing cancer. While those statements are probably exaggerated, most of us are aware of the recommendations to limit our sugar intake. Of course, sugar is found in overly sweet foods, such as cookies, cakes, and ice cream. But there are many sources of hidden sugars that you may not be aware of. And these can greatly increase your overall sugar intake.

The average American consumes 22 teaspoons of added sugar every day. Not only could this added sugar be padding your waistline, but it could also be increasing your risk of heart disease. Excess sugar is known to increase your triglyceride level. The American Heart Association recommends limiting your added sugar consumption to 25 grams for women (about 6 teaspoons) and 36 grams daily for men (about 9 teaspoons)

Not all food labels will have added sugars listed as “sugar.” The label may also not separate the amounts of naturally occurring sugar from added sugar. For instance, sugar is found in fruits and vegetables. To identify the added sugars, look at the ingredient list. Some clues that food contains added sugars are as follows:

- ◆ It has syrup (ex: corn syrup, rice syrup)
- ◆ The word ends in “ose” (ex: fructose, sucrose, maltose, dextrose)
- ◆ “sugar” is in the name (ex: raw sugar, cane sugar, brown sugar, confectionary sugar)

Many foods that are considered healthy may actually have a lot of added sugar in them. Here are some examples.

1. Breakfast cereal: just because it says “whole grain” or “fortified with vitamins and minerals” doesn’t mean that there’s no added sugar. Try to choose a cereal with 10-12 grams or less of sugars per serving. Granola and granola bars can be heavy sources of added sugars.

2. Yogurt: if you like flavored yogurt, be sure to check the container for sources of added sugars. You may also want to be careful of artificial sugars found in yogurt, including sucralose and Nutrasweet. You could also buy a plain or vanilla yogurt and add your own fruit.
3. Condiments; ketchup, BBQ sauce, and salad dressings all have added sugars. Because these foods may also be high in calories and fat, limiting your portion size is a good way to get the flavor without all the unnecessary extras!
4. Beverages: sodas, fruit drinks, iced teas, and lemonade are all loaded with excess sugar. Sports drinks can also be quite high in sugar, even if they are marketed as “healthy.” Try seltzers with natural flavorings or buy an infuser to flavor water with your favorite fruit.

While it is recommended that you limit your sugar intake, be careful about swapping out sugar for sugar substitutes. Often, these substitutes come with their own batch of side effects, including stomach upset. And if you are using sugar substitutes to manage your diabetes, be aware that many foods that contain these alternatives are still loaded with carbohydrates. So you may not see much of a positive impact on your blood sugar levels. As with most foods, moderation remains the key!





The Office of the Aging, Youth Bureau and Working Solutions of Herkimer County are recruiting volunteers to participate in the 2026 Intergenerational Clean Up that will support older adults residing in Herkimer, Little Falls, Mohawk, Ilion, Frankfort, Dolgeville and Middleville.

DATE: Saturday, May 2, 2026 Rain Date: Saturday, May 16, 2026

DESCRIPTION: Light Yard Work including raking leaves, removing green waste, and placing them at the curb

TIME: 9:00am – 3:00pm (time may vary based on assignments)

Light refreshments will be served

If you're interested in **VOLUNTEERING** or want to learn more about the event call
Kelly Heansel – 315-867-1371
Gina Pizzo – 315-867-1421



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Antioxidants are believed to play a role in the prevention of certain cancers. And blueberries are loaded with antioxidants! This recipe is also rich in fiber and low in fat.

Blueberry Bran Muffins

- 1 1/2 cups wheat bran**
- 1 cup skim milk**
- 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce**
- 1 egg**
- 2/3 cup brown sugar**
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract**
- 1/2 cup all purpose flour**
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour**
- 1 tsp baking soda**
- 1 tsp baking powder**
- 1/2 tsp salt**
- 1 cup blueberries**

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Grease muffin cups and or use paper muffin liners. Mix together wheat bran and milk, and let stand for 10 minutes.

In a large bowl, mix together applesauce, egg, brown sugar, and vanilla. Beat in bran mixture. Sift together all purpose flour, whole wheat flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Stir into bran mixture until just blended. Fold in blueberries. Scoop into muffin cups.

Bake in preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes, or until tops spring back when lightly tapped.