

# STAY WELL

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## Plus Program

Just a reminder about the Plus Program which allows active employees and dependent spouses the ability to be reimbursed up to \$200 a year for approved wellness and fitness activities/equipment.

- Employees and spouses must be eligible to be reimbursed.
  - There must be a current waiver on file.
  - Individuals must participate in at least two wellness initiatives per year (One in at least two different quarters).
- The item must be purchased during the 2019 calendar year.
- March 31, 2020, is the last day to turn in receipts and complete eligibility.
- There are no start or end dates on most initiatives. If there is an initiative that needs to be completed from a previous quarter individuals may go back and complete it.

## Breast Cancer and Alcohol

Did you know? According to a recent study most women understand that family history, genetics, smoking, and obesity are all risk factors for breast cancer. Few understand that alcohol consumption is also a risk factor. Several studies have shown that each alcoholic drink consumed per day increases the risk of developing breast cancer up to ten percent. If that goes up to two or three drinks consumed per day, the risk increases to 20 percent.

Suggested recommendations are one drink per day to keep health risks at bay and in some instances obtain health benefits. Another part of the study demonstrated that more than 50 percent of participants did not understand how much alcohol was in a drink. Five ounces of wine is roughly the same amount of alcohol as a 12 ounce beer.



Participants often consumed more than five ounces thinking it was considered one drink, when it actually is two to three servings and increases the risk by 20-30 percent. Understanding and staying within in the guidelines has significant health benefits.

*Focus on Healthy Aging Vol. 22 Number 12, December 2019*

## Choking it Down

The risk of choking increases as a person ages. Seventy-three percent of choking incidences in older adults, over a nine year period, was the result of taking large sized supplements (multivitamins, health supplements, etc.). Many health supplements, are larger than the recommended FDA maximum size of 17 millimeters (1/4 of inch). The problem is, the supplement industry is not regulated by the FDA, so the size recommendations are not followed. The result is a greater risk of choking. Be careful when taking large pills. Make the pills smaller by cutting the pills in half, especially for individuals who are getting older and facing swallowing issues.

## Overeating

Researchers are focusing time and effort into studying overeating and the causes. They relate it to multiple issues. One being hormones. Several different hormones stimulate the desire for food and eating. Those with more of these particular hormones tend to eat more because the hormones signal the response to eat. Researchers are studying what causes the rise in these hormones in some people and not in others. Other studies demonstrate a rewarding mechanism. When I played youth sports and we won a game we would go for shakes at a local A&W drive in. Any time I see or smell A&W food it brings back those happy memories. Research demonstrates that if foods make us feel good or brings back those responses, we tend to eat more and more often. This reward system of eating often leads to overindulgence and weight gain. Portion size is a common problem in our country. Portions, plate sizes, jumbo options and super sizing

have all led to misunderstanding of a proper healthy portion. This leads to the misconception that the



restaurant food in front of us is only one serving when in reality it is equivalent to three or four servings and is 300 to 400 percent more calories. The result is habitual overeating and health consequences.

The other day while eating dinner, my wife made an interesting observation. She said, "I am not used to you eating so slow, and finishing after me." I laughed, but self-reflection made me draw a correlation to something. Why I often over ate or had multiple servings? I wanted more flavor, and the reason was not because I was still hungry! The food tasted great, but I ate so fast, that I did not get to savor the food so, I consumed more food to enjoy the flavor. I often load the fork with a second serving and place it in my mouth before the first is chewed. I now take a bite, set the fork down, chew the food thoroughly and after swallowing, take a break before picking up the fork again. I now take 15-20 minutes to eat a healthy serving instead of less than 5 minutes to consume multiple servings. By making a conscientious effort to eat slower and enjoy the food over a longer period of time, I consume less, feel more satisfied, eat less calories and feel better. We will see what happens with the weight as I strive to continue the practice.

Tufts University Health and Nutrition Letter, Vol. 37 Number 7, September 2019  
Paleo Diet

There are many diets on the market today that are very successful to help people drop large amounts of weight easily. No long term studies have been conducted on how the diets affect long term health. One example is a recent study published in the European Journal of Nutrition. This study viewed how the Paleo diet affected gut health.

This study specifically viewed the affect and impact on cardiovascular health. Researchers looked at compounds found in the blood that raise the risk of cardiovascular disease. When the Paleo diet was followed strictly these compounds increased due to the high intake of red meats and low intake of grains.

Having higher amounts of these compounds in the gut increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Other studies have shown that consuming high protein diets lead to earlier death. This study may explain why.

Tufts University Health and Nutrition Letter, Vol. 37 Number 8, October 2019 <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/protein-consumption-linked-longevity>

Results were published on March 4, 2014, in *Cell Metabolism*

## Pre-habilitation

When a person has surgery, muscles, tendons, and sensory nerves in the skin are often cut and leads to muscle and nerve inhibition. Immobilizing the joint also leads to inhibition. Pre-habilitation is an effective way to overcome inhibition and helps the individual to have an easier recovery. This includes performing exercises prior to the surgery to stimulate neuromuscular action of nerves and muscles specific to that which will be lost as a result of the surgery. Training the muscles and going through the basics of muscle stimulation will encode the process into the brain. This helps stimulate a muscle memory response after surgery. If the process is familiar, muscle and nerve activation takes place faster and easier, assisting in rapid renewal of muscle function. A study in 2018 observed the impact that prehab nutrition may have on recovery. The study was



published in the journal Gastroenterology and focused specifically at colorectal surgery. Individuals who did a comprehensive

program of prehab exercises and nutritional prehab, spent fewer days in the hospital and returned to activity levels faster. Remarkably, the group who did the nutritional prehab, received the same reduction of days required in the hospital, demonstrating that eating a prehab recovery diet can reduce the time for recovery and exercises can restore muscle function quicker.

Mayo Clinic Health Letter, Volume 37 number 6, June 2019

