

PURSUIT

Sept 2015

Florida Blue 
BetterYou 

A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You



BLOOD PRESSURE



CHOLESTEROL



BLOOD SUGAR



BODY MASS INDEX

Know Your Numbers: Preventive Care

Our lives are full of important numbers that tell people who we are. We've committed many of them to memory: phone numbers, social security numbers, PIN numbers. There are some other numbers you should be aware of – your health numbers. Knowing your numbers makes you informed and aware of lifestyle changes you may need to make to improve your health. Here are the important numbers:

Blood Pressure

High blood pressure increases your risk for heart disease and stroke, which are leading causes of death in America. Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps blood. Blood pressure is shown as two numbers: systolic (top number) is how hard the heart pumps during a heartbeat. Diastolic (bottom number) shows how hard your blood flows between heartbeats. The higher the pressure, the harder your heart is working.

- Normal blood pressure is below 120/80.
- Pre-hypertension is 120 to 139 (systolic) and/or 80 to 89 (diastolic).
- Hypertension (high blood pressure) – is 140 or higher (systolic) and 90 or higher (diastolic). High blood pressure is diagnosed after several high readings, not just one incident.



Cholesterol

Although cholesterol is often seen as 'bad', it is actually a nutrient. This soft, fat-like waxy substance is found in the blood stream and cells. HDL (good cholesterol) carries fats in the blood away from the arteries and back to the liver where it is removed. LDL (bad cholesterol) promotes buildup and blockage in arteries and can increase risk for heart disease. Triglycerides circulate cholesterol in the blood and are stored in body fat. Most of the fats we consume in food are triglycerides. Your total cholesterol should be 200 mg/dL or lower. HDL, LDL and other lipid components make up your total cholesterol number. A healthy cholesterol make-up consists of:

- HDL of at least 50 mg/dL for women, or 40 mg/dL for a man
- LDL of 100 or lower
- Triglycerides of 150 mg/dL or lower

Blood Sugar

Blood sugar measures the glucose (sugar) in the blood. Have your blood sugar tested to assess your risk for diabetes. Living with untreated diabetes can increase your risk for heart disease, kidney disease and stroke. Healthy glucose levels are:

- Fasting (nothing to eat for at least 8 hours) - Less than 100 mg/dl



- Non-fasting (something to eat or drink prior to testing) – Less than 140 mg/dl

BMI – Body Mass Index is a number calculated using a person's weight and height. A high amount of body fat can lead to weight-related diseases and other health issues and being underweight can also put one at risk for health issues.

- Underweight (BMI less than 18.5)
- Normal weight (BMI between 18.5 & 24.9)
- Overweight (BMI between 25.0 & 29.9)
- Obese (BMI 30.0 and above)

Here is the formula to calculate BMI:

$BMI = \text{weight in lbs} \times 703 / \text{height in inches}^2$
or go to heart.org and search on 'BMI calculator'.

You can get your numbers during your annual wellness exam with your health care provider. It's a good idea to schedule your blood work a week before your annual wellness exam, so your doctor has the results and can review them with you during your exam. Having an annual wellness exam can serve as a warning system to catch health problems early on. If you haven't had your wellness exam this year make it a priority and schedule it today.

Reference: Heart.org



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Yoga for Wellness

The Indian practice of yoga is thousands of years old. It is based on the idea that the mind and the body are one and the same. Yoga consists of various movements called poses that stretch the body and encourage improved range of motion. The poses are done in combination with relaxing breathing exercises.

In recent years, yoga has become popular in the United States for its many health benefits. Here are a just a few reasons yoga may be a good exercise for you:

- **Improved posture** – Practicing yoga develops strength in your core. This will help you sit taller and stand straighter.
- **Reduced Stress** – Because yoga focuses on your breathing while moving your body, many individuals find it clears their mind and reduces stress. Some yoga styles use meditation techniques which can further reduce stress.
- **Increased Flexibility** – Yoga poses stretch your muscles and over time this can help you feel less stiff. This becomes more important as we age. Being flexible can increase the range of motion through the joints, which increases stability and reduces pain and discomfort.
- **Better Heart Health** – Yoga has been shown to slow the heart rate, lower blood pressure, and lower cholesterol.

People of all sizes and activity levels can benefit from yoga. Practicing yoga is safe for most individuals, but speak with your doctor before beginning any new exercise program.

Once you have determined yoga is a good option for you, find a class that fits your personal situation and goals. Here are some suggestions for finding the right class and having a successful yoga experience:

- **Choose your style** - Choose the type of yoga that is best for you and your personal goals. Some types of yoga are more physically challenging, while others focus on relaxation or meditation.
- **Find the right teacher** – Call the yoga studio of your choice and ask for classes tailored to beginners. You can also meet with the teacher to determine if their style will work for you.
- **Go at your pace** – Yoga is an individual exercise, so resist the urge to compare yourself to others.
- **Pay attention to your body** – Modify poses as needed and ask your instructor for help to prevent overstretching and injury. Pain is not gain!

Resource: WebMD.com

Bringing Wellness Home:

Are your kids getting enough daily physical activity?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are reporting that 60 percent of Americans do not get enough exercise. For good health, adults should spend 2 ½ hours per week exercising, and kids should be playing or exercising 1 hour each day. The best way to improve our health is to make physical activity a normal part of your family's life. Here are some tips to make physical activity fun for your family:

- **Find the best times to be active as a family:** Choose times when your family is together, and track your family's activity each week.
- **Start with what you know:** Engage in fun family activities at home, go to the park, or play in your neighborhood. Find activities you all enjoy, like shooting hoops in the driveway, dancing in the living room, or walking and talking after dinner.
- **Start small:** Walk to the store or a family or friend's house or play tag in the back yard.
- **Be active together:** Schedule a social activity with family or friends that will get people moving. Plan an active birthday party with kickball, softball, or soccer as a key part of the celebration.
- **Try new things:** As a family, agree to stretch yourselves, and take a new dance class, sports class, or join a fitness class.
- **Get support:** Ask for support from family and friends as you commit to increasing your physical activity as a family.

What better team is there to support one another toward better health? Work towards being together and move whenever you can. Those who move together stay together!

Reference: CDC.gov



Fresh and Healthy Recipe of the month



PHOTO COURTESY: EATINGWELL.COM

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Black Bean Smothered Sweet Potatoes

For a quick and satisfying last-minute supper, it's hard to beat a sweet potato zapped in the microwave. The fragrant filling of beans and tomato adds protein, making it a nutritionally complete entree. Be sure to eat the potato skin; it's full of fiber.

Ingredients:

- 2 medium sweet potatoes
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed
- 1 medium tomato, diced
- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons reduced-fat sour cream
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Preparation:

1. Prick sweet potatoes with a fork in several places. Microwave on High until tender all the way to the center, 12 to 15 minutes. (Alternatively, place in a baking dish and bake at 425°F until tender all the way to the center, about 1 hour).
2. Meanwhile, combine beans, tomato, oil, cumin, coriander and salt in a medium microwave-safe bowl; microwave on High until just heated through, 2 to 3 minutes. (Alternatively, heat in a small saucepan over medium heat).
3. When just cool enough to handle, slash each sweet potato lengthwise, press open to make a well in the center and spoon the bean mixture into the well. Top each with a dollop of sour cream and a sprinkle of cilantro.

Nutrition: Per serving/potato: 351 calories; 7 g fat (2 g sat, 4 g mono); 6 mg cholesterol; 61 g carbohydrates; 0 g added sugars; 11 g protein; 12 g fiber; 468 mg sodium; 541 mg potassium.

Recipe courtesy of Eatingwell.com

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