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### HEALTH OBSERVANCE

## Health Literacy

*Michelle Pivec – Health Coach*

#### What is Health Literacy?

Most simply put, Health Literacy is one’s ability to find, understand, and use health-related information to make decisions for themselves and others.

Research shows that 36% of US adults have low health literacy, disproportionately affecting low-income, elderly, and non-native English-speaking populations.

#### What are the Impacts of Low Health Literacy?

We all must make daily choices about what to eat, how to move, and when to see a doctor. Individuals must know how to read labels, locate a clinic, report symptoms, understand policies and procedures, and pay bills. Unfortunately, low health literacy impacts individuals, families, and communities struggling to maintain healthy behaviors and access quality care. Ultimately, low health literacy leads to compromised public health and higher costs for us all - governments, employers, insurers, and individuals.

#### How Can Individuals Work to Improve Health Literacy?

Addressing health literacy benefits everyone. Organizations can expect increased use of preventative care, fewer emergency room visits and preventable hospital stays, increased patient satisfaction, and improved health outcomes. The quality of care we receive can become more effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable with increased health literacy rates within a population.

Organizations should be continually working to communicate their health-related information better. Still, there are steps that you as an individual can take to make more informed health choices during your next visit:

- Ask questions and make sure you understand/remember the answers.
- Bring your medications with you, including over-the-counter items and supplements.
- Tell the truth about your habits and health history.
- Bring a trusted advocate to help relay or receive information.
- Tell the clinic if you need an interpreter.
- Know your medical history.

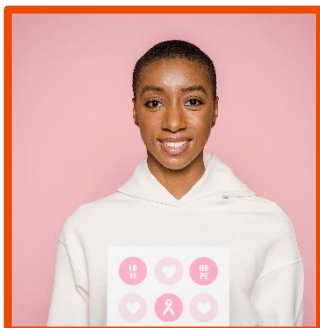


### WellBalance Health Corner

#### Changing of Seasons: Taking Time for Your Mental Health

Learn more about how to care for your mental wellbeing as the seasons change.

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### Breast Cancer Awareness

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Learn how to manage your risk.

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# WelBalance

## HEALTH TIP CORNER

### Emotional Wellbeing

## Changing of Seasons

Kellie O'Keefe – Wellworks For You

## Taking Time for Your Mental Health



As the seasons change, so do our lives in subtle yet profound ways.

This natural rhythm of transformation allows us to pause and prioritize our mental wellbeing. Just as trees shed their leaves and prepare for new growth, we also can take this time to let go of stress and nurture our minds. Transitioning from one season to another reminds us to slow down and reconnect with ourselves. Embracing the cooler days of fall or the blossoming of spring can be more than just admiring nature's beauty; it can be a chance to reevaluate our routines and assess our mental health.

This moment of stillness can be particularly important for the estimated 10 million Americans that struggle with seasonal affective disorder each year.

**During this changing of seasons, consider these practices to support your wellbeing:**

- **Reflect.** Take a moment to reflect on the past few months. What challenges have you faced, and what accomplishments have you achieved?
- **Set Intentions.** As each season has unique qualities, set intentions that align with your current needs. Whether it's embracing change, seeking balance, or fostering growth, let these intentions guide you.
- **Savor Nature.** Spend time outdoors and embrace the changing environment's sights, sounds, and smells. Nature has a calming effect on the mind and can help alleviate stress.
- **Practice Self-Care.** Engage in activities that bring you joy and relaxation. Whether reading a book, taking up a new hobby, or practicing mindfulness, prioritize self-care.
- **Connect:** Reach out to friends, family, or a mental health professional. Sharing your thoughts and feelings can provide valuable insights and emotional support.

Remember, just as nature transitions through seasons, your mental health journey is also continuous. Embrace the changing times as an opportunity to nurture your mind, prioritize self-care, and embark on a path of growth and well-being.

Source: [Seasonal Affective Disorder | Psychology Today](#)

# Breast Cancer Awareness

Dawn Koch – Wellworks for You

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month is observed each **October**. According to the American Cancer Society, many types of breast cancer exist. Carcinomas start in epithelial cells. Adenocarcinomas may start in cells in the milk ducts or glands in the breast that make milk. Sarcomas start in connective tissue. The type of breast cancer can also refer to whether the cancer has spread or not.

According to Mayo Clinic, the type of tissue where your breast cancer arises determines how the cancer behaves and what treatments are most effective. Some breast cancers are sensitive to estrogen and progesterone. Knowing this affects your treatment and prevention strategies.

According to the CDC, about 5% to 10% of breast cancers are hereditary. *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* are two genes that fight cancer by suppressing tumors. If there is a mutation or change in the genes, this raises a person's risk for breast cancer. About 50 out of 100 women with a *BRCA1* or *BRCA2* gene mutation will get breast cancer by the time they turn 70 years old, compared to only 7 out of 100 women in the general United States population.

It is important that you know your family history and talk to your doctor about screening and other ways you can lower your risk. If you have a family history of breast cancer or inherited changes in your *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* genes, you may have a higher breast cancer risk.

According to the CDC, prevention strategies may include:

- Diet and lifestyle changes
- Avoid known carcinogens
- Medication for precancerous conditions or to keep cancer from starting
- Risk-reducing surgery

**Source:**

[Types of Breast Cancer | About Breast Cancer](#)

[Breast cancer types: What your type means - Mayo Clinic](#)

[Does Breast or Ovarian Cancer Run in Your Family? | CDC](#)

[BRCA Gene Mutations | Bring Your Brave | CDC](#)



## FEATURED RECIPE

### Sweet Potato & Black Bean Chili

6 Servings – High Protein, Gluten Free, Vegetarian, Low Carb



#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium-large sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 4 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground chipotle chile
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 ½ cups water
- 2 15-ounce cans of black beans, rinsed
- 1 14-ounce can of diced tomatoes
- 4 teaspoons lime juice
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add sweet potato and onion and cook, stirring often, until the onion softens, about 4 minutes.
2. Add garlic, chili powder, cumin, chipotle, and salt, and cook, stirring for 30 seconds. Add water and bring to a simmer.
3. Cover, reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer, and cook until the sweet potato is tender, 10 to 12 minutes.
4. Add beans, tomatoes, and lime juice; increase heat to high and return to a simmer, stirring often.
5. Reduce heat and simmer until slightly reduced, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro.

#### NUTRITION

**Serving Size:** 1 slice

**Per Serving:**

**Calories:** 323

**Carbohydrates:** 55g

**Fat:** 8g

**Sodium:** 573mg

**Protein:** 13g

**Dietary Fiber:** 16g

**Saturated Fat:** 1g

**Sugars:** 13g

**Source:** [Sweet Potato & Black Bean Chili \(eatingwell.com\)](http://eatingwell.com)