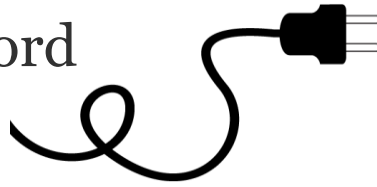


The Extension Cord



Health and Human Sciences

January & February 2023

Hello,

Happy New Year to all. I hope this newsletter finds you and yours well and excited for the upcoming year. January seems to be a month of ‘regrouping’ for me, both professionally and personally. Adjusting back to reality, operating on days with least amounts of daylight, and planning for things to come seems to take majority of my energy.

For this reason, the first article I’ll share with you all is just as much for my benefit as I hope it is for you. Much like the batteries in toys that eventually run out of energy, our bodies can experience a similar effect. I challenge us to find one activity or routine that helps us recharge. Ideas are shared below!

One of the ideas is staying connected with family and friends. Family meals are a passion of mine because of my nutrition background but also because sitting together at the table is where some of my most fond memories are with family and friends. Whatever family looks like for you, check out the many benefits to prioritizing mealtimes together.

Lastly, I can’t let February pass without mentioning that it is heart health month. While the month also includes Valentine’s Day, these aren’t the hearts I’m referencing. I’m going to share a little information about what heart disease is, some of the common risk factors, and beginning tips to be more heart smart.

-Jessica Riffle

Recharging your patience, taking care of you.

When caring for others, whether it is children, aging parents, or other family members, we also have to take care of ourselves. Just like airlines say to put on our oxygen mask before putting the mask on a child, we need to care for ourselves to provide better care for others. If we feel overwhelmed it is okay to take time to recharge. When we feel recharged, we are able to have more patience and tolerance with others. Find ways to recharge that work for you.

1. Establish new routines – routines offer a way to promote health and wellness. Having routines provide a feeling of having control through structure and organization.

2. Stay connected with family and friends – the feeling of loneliness can be associated with depression and cardiovascular disease. Make social connections with other adults a priority through video chats, phone calls, emails, or text messages.

3. Exercise – find ways to exercise at home. Try to duplicate what you do at a gym with things that you have at home such as using canned goods for weights if you do not have standard weights. You can do yoga, Pilates, Zumba or just dance to some fun music. Find routines on the internet that you enjoy doing.

4. Go outside - studies show being outside in nature reduces stress, depression and anxiety. Take a walk, run, hike, or bike ride in nature either by yourself or with your family. Do fun activities with your children such as blowing bubbles, sidewalk chalk, or kicking a soccer ball.



5. Adjust your expectations – set reasonable expectations for yourself and family. Or even lower your expectations during this time. Eliminate or reduce some tasks/ activities at this time to create expectations that work with you instead of against you.

6. Mindfulness – being aware of our thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. Several websites and apps provide steps in learning how to focus on our body at a moment in time.

7. Alone time – find time to be alone to decompress from family demands, separation from family members, and have some quiet time for prayer, meditation, journal, or just to process thoughts.

8. Give yourself a break - indulge in something that you enjoy which is positive and helps you relieve stress and relax. Allow yourself to engage in activities that you enjoy, such as soaking in a bathtub, reading books you have been wanting to read, binge watch your favorite TV show, watch your favorite movies again, do puzzles, bake, coloring etc.

9. ‘Pet your stress away’ – ten minutes of playing, interacting, or petting your dog or cat reduces stress hormone cortisol and can reduce stress, anxiety, and loneliness.

10. Laughter – is still a good medicine for your health to reduce physical tension. A good laugh can relieve some physical symptoms of stress, reduce pain, and increase personal satisfaction.

Article adapted from Barb Beaulieu & Allison Hillis, Purdue Extension

Carry Mindfulness into Mealtimes.

A “family meal” is when the people you live with come together to eat and talk. It can include everyone or just you and your child. Family can also include friends and neighbors you are close with. Family meals don’t have to be fancy, and they can be eaten at home or away. Meals are best when you talk and listen to each other with no distracting electronic devices. Family meals are a simple way to build healthy relationships and promote health. Coming together as a family to share meals is associated with many benefits. Here are four:

Connection: Children and adults thrive on human connection. Eating meals together provides a great opportunity to connect with family and friends. Children— even teenagers! — thrive on having a mealtime routine they can count on. To make the most of the opportunity, turn off televisions, cellphones and other distractions. Gather at a table or somewhere you can focus on one another.

Emotional well-being: Families who eat together have children who are less likely to be depressed and less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors, such as smoking, drugs, and drinking alcohol. Family meals are also associated with a reduced risk for eating disorders.

Academic success: At meals, children practice important social skills, such as taking turns and engaging others in conversation. Children increase their vocabulary and learn how to express ideas at family meals. These benefits help explain why children who eat family meals more frequently are found to do better in school.

Healthier eating habits and weight: Meals planned and prepared for family meals are generally more nutritious than meals eaten alone or on the run. Family meals also provide an opportunity for parents and adults to model good eating habits and attitudes about food. Family meals are associated with healthier weights in children and adults.

Families can succeed at having meals together by trying some of the following tips:

1. **Make family meals a priority** – Parents and children make time for what is important to them. Prioritize family meals over other activities as often as possible. Schedule them on the family calendar, even if only once a week.
2. **Plan for family meals** – Look at your schedule and determine the days and times that eating together is possible. Decide what you will prepare; make sure you have what you need on hand. A weekly menu plan prevents last-minute worries about what to cook. Shopping for the week saves time and money — and reduces stress. Use time-saving strategies, such as doubling a recipe and freezing half for a future meal.
3. **Share preparation tasks** – Involve everyone in age-appropriate tasks.
4. **Make meals enjoyable** – Create an atmosphere where everyone feels relaxed and valued. Engage everyone in conversation.



February is Heart Health Month.

Heart disease vs. cardiovascular disease?

- Heart disease, often called coronary heart disease, includes a number of conditions that impact the heart and blood vessels.
- Cardiovascular disease generally refers to conditions that involve narrowed or blocked blood vessels.

What is the most common cause of heart disease?

- **Atherosclerosis** is the most common cause of heart disease.
- This condition develops when plaque builds up in the walls of the arteries causing **arteries to become blocked**.
- The narrowing of the arteries makes it harder for blood to flow.

What are some risk factors that influence heart health?

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---------------------|---|
| • Blood Pressure |  | • Smoking |  |
| • Cholesterol |  | • Blood sugar level |  |
| • Weight |  | • Family history |  |
| • Eating behaviors |  | • Age |  |
| • Inactivity |  | | |

Those risk factors listed with a check mark mean they are controllable. Family history and age are not in our control, they are uncontrollable risk factors.

Beginning heart smart steps, the heart is a resilient muscle!

- Be familiar with your risk factors for heart disease
- Know the heart health histories of your family members
- Make healthy lifestyle choices that will improve controllable heart health factors

Upcoming Public HHS Programming

Date	When	Where	What
Jan. 18	11:00 am	Kewanna Public Library	DIY Bath Product using Herbs
Feb. 15	11:00 am	Kewanna Public Library	Shrimp, Small but Mighty
Feb. 22	12:00 pm	Fulton County Public Library	Heart Health- Beneficial Nutrients