

PANHANDLE PATH TO HEALTHY LIVING



Spring Into Healthy Living: *Small Steps for Big Impact!*

Happy Spring!

Spring is a season of fresh starts. As the days grow longer and the weather warms up, it's the perfect time to refocus on healthy habits that support both your body and your mind. The good news? You don't have to make big changes to see big results.

Small, consistent steps—like moving more, eating more fresh foods, and spending time outdoors—can have a powerful impact on your overall health.

This quarter, we're focusing on simple ways you and your family can “spring into healthy living” with practical tips you can start today.

Enjoy these bright Spring days!

Joan Gray-Loria

Path to Wellness: Move More, Stress Less

Stress is something we all experience, but how we respond to it can make a big difference in our overall health. While a small amount of stress can be motivating, ongoing or unmanaged stress can impact both physical and mental well-being.

The good news? One of the most effective ways to manage stress is also one of the simplest—movement.

Why Movement Helps

Physical activity helps your body release chemicals that improve mood and reduce tension. It can also:

- Improve sleep
- Boost energy
- Reduce anxiety
- Support heart health

The key is consistency—not intensity.

Simple Ways to Move More

You don't need a full workout to see benefits. Try:

- A 10–15 minute walk each day
- Gardening or yard work
- Stretching while watching TV
- Parking farther away
- Playing outside with kids or grandkids

Even small amounts of movement throughout the day add up.

Recharge & Reset

Managing stress also means taking time to care for yourself:

- Connect with family and friends
- Get enough sleep (7–9 hours for most adults)
- Spend time outdoors
- Do something you enjoy

Sometimes, a short break can make a big difference.

Start Small

Choose one simple change this week—like a daily walk or stepping outside for fresh air. Small, consistent steps can improve your mood, energy, and overall well-being.



Path to Nutrition

Spring is the perfect time to refresh your eating habits. With more fresh foods available and longer days ahead, it's easier to make choices that support your energy, health, and overall well-being. Healthy eating doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, focusing on a few simple habits can make a big difference.

Build a Better Plate

A simple way to create healthy meals is to include a variety of food groups:

- **Half your plate fruits and vegetables**
- **Lean protein** like chicken, beans, or eggs
- **Whole grains** when possible
- **Dairy or dairy alternatives**

This balance helps your body stay fueled and satisfied throughout the day.

Eat What's in Season

Spring brings a variety of fresh, flavorful foods that are often more affordable and nutritious. Fresh foods can add color, flavor, and important nutrients to your meals.

Try adding:

- Strawberries
- Spinach
- Carrots
- Cucumbers
- Bell peppers

Small Changes That Add Up

You don't have to change everything at once. Start with a few easy swaps:

- Choose water instead of sugary drinks
 - Swap white bread for whole grain
 - Snack on fruits, nuts, or yogurt instead of chips
- These small changes can improve energy levels and support long-term health.



Don't Forget Hydration

As temperatures begin to rise, staying hydrated becomes even more important.

- Drink water throughout the day
 - Carry a reusable water bottle
- Add fruit like lemon, berries, or cucumber for flavor

Keep It Simple

Healthy eating doesn't have to be perfect—it just needs to be consistent. Focus on making one or two small changes and build from there. Over time, those small steps can lead to lasting habits for you and your family.

Source: General nutrition guidance based on Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Did You Know?

Most adults don't eat enough fruits and vegetables each day. Adding just one more serving can improve overall health.

Path to Protection: Stay Safe as Temperatures Rise



As the weather warms up, outdoor meals, picnics, and cookouts become more common. While these are great ways to enjoy time with family and friends, warmer temperatures can also increase the risk of foodborne illness.

Taking a few simple precautions can help keep your food safe and your family healthy.

Keep Food at Safe Temperatures

Bacteria grow quickly in warm conditions, so it's important to keep foods at the right temperature:

- Keep cold foods **cold (below 41°F)**
- Keep hot foods **hot (above 135°F)**
- Use ice packs or coolers when eating outdoors

Follow the 2-Hour Rule

Perishable foods should not sit out for more than:

- **2 hours** at room temperature
 - **1 hour** if it's above 90°F
- When in doubt—throw it out.

Source: *USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service*

Cook Food to Safe Temperatures

Using a food thermometer is the best way to ensure food is safe:

- Chicken: **165°F**
- Ground meats: **160°F**
- Steaks: **145°F**

Keep It Clean

- Wash hands before and after handling food
- Clean surfaces and utensils
- Keep raw and cooked foods separate

Stay Safe This Season

Food safety doesn't have to be complicated. A few simple habits can help prevent illness and keep your spring and summer gatherings enjoyable.

Path to Health: Stay Safe in the Sun

As we spend more time outdoors this spring and summer, it's important to take a few simple steps to protect your health. Warmer temperatures and increased sun exposure can put added stress on your body if you're not prepared.

Protect Your Skin

Spending time outside is great for your health, but too much sun exposure can lead to sunburn and increase the risk of skin damage.

- Use sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
- Reapply every 2 hours
- Wear a hat and sunglasses
- Seek shade during peak hours (10 a.m. – 4 p.m.)

Stay Hydrated

Your body needs more fluids as temperatures rise.

- Drink water throughout the day
- Don't wait until you feel thirsty
- Carry a reusable water bottle
- Choose water over sugary drinks

Watch for Heat-Related Illness

Early signs can include:

- Dizziness
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Nausea

If you notice these symptoms:

- ⇒ Move to a cooler place
- ⇒ Drink water
- ⇒ Rest

Enjoy the Season Safely

Outdoor activities are a great way to stay active and connect with others. By taking a few simple precautions, you can enjoy everything spring and summer have to offer—while keeping your body safe and healthy.

Source: CDC Sun Safety & Hydration Guidelines



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Path to Plate

Balsamic Chicken and Spinach Salad

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 3 teaspoons honey
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 6 cups spinach
- 1 cup strawberries sliced
- 1/4 cup pecans toasted and chopped
- 1/4 cup sweet onion thinly sliced

Directions:

1. Wash spinach and strawberries and set aside.
2. Heat balsamic vinegar and honey in a saucepan to make Balsamic glaze. Heat until boiling and then reduce and simmer for approximately 15 minutes until thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.



Set aside and let cool.

3. Baste chicken breast with balsamic glaze, reserving some to drizzle over finished salad, and then grill or oven roast until it reaches an internal temperature of 165°F.
4. Prepare the salad by placing spinach, sliced strawberries, and thinly sliced onions in a large bowl.
5. Toast chopped pecans in a dry skillet for 2-3 minutes.
6. Slice the chicken breast and place on top of the salad, add toasted pecans, and drizzle of the balsamic glaze.

Source: *Dinner Tonight*