



TAKING CARE OF

You



*"You have to look after yourself
first in order to have something
to offer others."*

- Tarryne West

The purpose of this toolkit is to help you take care of yourself. We will cover three important aspects of self-care over the next three months with the goal of expanding your knowledge about caring for your body.

APRIL

Sleep

For April, let's tackle sleep. Sleep plays a sizeable role in our health, and many people still don't prioritize it. For example, [a 2018 study](#) found that the lack of sleep is as detrimental to one's health as smoking. Specifically, the cardiovascular risks from insufficient sleep are comparable to smoking or having diabetes at age 50.

Let's explore why.

THE GOOD STUFF

- Sleep helps regulate several hormones in our body, including cortisol, which controls stress levels. Sleep also regulates leptin and ghrelin, which control appetite.
- Sleep significantly impacts our critical cognitive abilities (REM sleep).
- Sleep also helps our bodies fight off infection and disease.

THE NOT-SO-GOOD STUFF

- Ten percent to 30% of adults experience chronic insomnia.
- Insufficient sleep costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$411 billion annually.
- Drowsy driving causes over 6,000 fatal car crashes annually.
- Lack of sleep is associated with a higher risk for numerous diseases and medical conditions like obesity, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, poor mental health and premature death.

Statistics and facts sourced from [sleepfoundation.org](https://www.sleepfoundation.org).

MAY

Nutrition

Most people know that a balanced diet is good for you, so why doesn't everyone do it?

Health barriers often stand in our way when trying to improve our health. This month let's tackle health barriers surrounding diet. But first, let's review why good nutrition is so important.

NUTRITION FACTS FROM THE CDC:

- Healthy eating can help you live longer and reduce your risk of severe health problems like heart disease, obesity and Type 2 diabetes.
- If you already have a chronic disease, healthy eating can help manage the condition and prevent further complications.
- Fewer than 1 in 10 adults and children eat enough vegetables.

HEALTH BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS:

1. **Busy schedule** – Try meal prepping. Take an hour or two on Sundays to prepare meals you can set aside for the week. This way you don't have to prepare lunch for work or cook dinner after a long day at the office. No time to meal prep? [Try these healthy fast-food swap ideas instead.](#)
2. **Price/budget restrictions** – While there are certain health foods with outrageous prices, this barrier is sometimes over exaggerated. There are healthy alternatives at grocery stores that can actually be less expensive than their unhealthy counterparts. A great resource for this is influencer/blogger, Karalynne Call, certified nutritionist, wellness coach and mental health advocate. Just Ingredients is her wordmark. Check out her [website](#) or [Instagram](#) for healthy grocery swaps that don't break the budget.
3. **Effort and reward imbalance** – As stated earlier, a healthy diet can help lengthen your life as well as improve your quality of life. If a little more effort into planning, cooking and shopping can benefit the quality of life you have left, do you think it's worth it? Eating healthy may also save you money in the long run; if you're taking care of your body and it stays healthy, you'll spend less money on health care and medication.

JUNE

Exercise

Just like proper nutrition, exercise is one of those things people know they should do but it somehow always gets sidelined. According to the World Health Organization, a sedentary lifestyle increases the risk of all causes of mortality, doubles the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity and increases the risk of colon cancer, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, lipid disorders, depression and anxiety. This is an urgent issue considering the rise in sedentary behavior in our communities. How long do you sit at your desk every day? How much time do you spend going on walks or standing up? It's easy to fall into the habit of a sedentary lifestyle, fortunately it is just as easy to overcome it.

WAYS TO EASILY AND QUICKLY INCORPORATE EXERCISE INTO YOUR DAILY ROUTINE:

- Set your alarm for 10 minutes earlier than normal and go through a stretch routine as soon as you get out of bed.
- Park at the back of the lot at work. Small amounts of steps at a time can lead to reaching your step goal by the end of the day.
- Schedule your workouts. Make exercise an appointment like anything else in your day.
- Lift some dumbbells while you watch TV.
- Take walk breaks throughout your workday.
- Try new ways of getting active to keep things fun like swimming, tennis, crochet, basketball, pickleball.
- Stand up every 30 minutes when working at your desk.

Self-Care Mantras

During the next three months, practice repeating these mantras to yourself and remember that your self-care is important. The things we tell ourselves, even in our minds, are impactful. Make sure you're using kind words.

- 1. I deserve to take care of my body.**
- 2. I am strong.**
- 3. I can do anything I put my mind to.**
- 4. I value my body and all that it can do.**
- 5. I am important.**