

# Family and Community Health “Connections” in McCulloch County



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Each February, we celebrate American Heart Month by motivating Americans to adopt healthy lifestyles to prevent heart disease. Focusing on your heart health has never been more important. People with poor cardiovascular health are also at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Research shows that we're more successful at meeting personal health goals when we join forces with others. When we take care of our hearts as part of our self-care, we set an example for those around us to do the same. Inspire and motivate yourself and those you love to make heart health a regular part of your self-care routine.

## 7 Days of Heart Health Self-Care

<p><b>#SelfcareSunday</b></p> <p>Create your self-care checklist for the week</p> 	<p><b>#MindfulMonday</b></p> <p>Know your blood pressure numbers and other heart stats</p> 	
<p><b>#TastyTuesday</b></p> <p>Try a tasty, heart-healthy recipe</p> 	<p><b>#WellnessWednesday</b></p> <p>Put your heart into your wellness routine</p> 	<p><b>#TreatYourselfThursday</b></p> <p>Treat your heart to some relaxation and fun</p> 
<p><b>#FollowFriday</b></p> <p>Share who inspires you to show your heart more love</p> 	<p><b>#SelfieSaturday</b></p> <p>Post about your favorite way to take care of your heart</p> 	

Source: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/education-and-awareness/american-heart-month/about>

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# Stress symptoms: Effects on your body and behavior

Stress symptoms may be affecting your health, even though you might not realize it. You may think illness is to blame for that irritating headache, your frequent insomnia or your decreased productivity at work. But stress may actually be the cause.

## Common effects of stress

Stress symptoms can indeed affect your body, your thoughts and feelings, and your behavior. Being able to recognize common stress symptoms can help you manage them. Stress that's left unchecked can contribute to many health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

## Common effects of stress:

On your body	On your mood	On your behavior
Headache	Anxiety	Overeating or Undereating
Muscle tension or pain	Restlessness	Angry Outbursts
Chest Pain	Lack of motivation or focus	Drug or alcohol misuse
Fatigue	Feeling overwhelmed	Tobacco use
Change in sex drive	Irritability or anger	Social withdrawal
Stomach upset	Sadness or depression	Exercising less often
Sleep problems		

## Act to manage stress

If you have stress symptoms, taking steps to manage your stress can have many health benefits. Explore stress management strategies, such as:

- Getting regular physical activity
- Practicing relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, tai chi or massage
- Keeping a sense of humor
- Spending time with family and friends
- Setting aside time for hobbies, such as reading a book or listening to music



Aim to find active ways to manage your stress. Inactive ways to manage stress — such as watching television, surfing the internet or playing video games — may seem relaxing, but they may increase your stress over the long term.

And be sure to get plenty of sleep and eat a healthy, balanced diet. Avoid tobacco use, excess caffeine and alcohol, and the use of illegal substances.

# Seven Steps For Making Your New Year's Resolutions Stick

Maybe you plan to quit smoking, lose weight, exercise more, not sweat the small stuff. And maybe these resolutions sound familiar — maybe just like the ones you made a year ago!

So how can you ensure that your determination to get healthier in 2021 sticks around past Valentine's Day? By creating new habits!

Creating new habits takes time and energy. A new behavior won't become automatic overnight, but you may enjoy some of its benefits fairly quickly. Also, as you start to take walks regularly or engage in stress-soothing practices frequently, you'll find you won't feel quite right if you stop. That's a great incentive to continue. So, keep nudging yourself in the direction you'd like to go. And try the following seven tips to help you create long-lasting change.

## Step One: Dream Big

Audacious goals are compelling. Want to compete in a marathon or triathlon? Lose 50 pounds or just enough to fit into clothes you once loved? With perseverance, encouragement, and support, you can do it. An ambitious aim often inspires others around you.

## Step Three: Understand why you shouldn't make a change

That's right. Until you grasp why you're sticking like a burr to old habits, it may be hard to muster enough energy and will to take a hard left toward change. Unhealthy behaviors like overeating and smoking have immediate, pleasurable payoffs as well as costs. So, when you're considering a change, take time to think it through. You boost your chance of success when the balance of pluses and minuses tips enough to make adopting a new behavior more attractive than standing in place. Engaging in enjoyable aspects of an unhealthy behavior, without the behavior itself, helps too.

## Step Five: Give yourself a medal

Don't wait to call yourself a winner until you've pounded through the last mile of your big dream marathon or lost every unwanted ounce. Health changes are often incremental. Encourage yourself to keep at it by pausing to acknowledge success as you tick off small and big steps en route to a goal. Blast your favorite tune each time you reach 5,000 steps. Get a pat on the back from your coach or spouse. Ask family and friends to cheer you on. Look for an online support group.

## Step Two: Break big dreams into small-enough steps

Now think tiny. Small steps move you forward to your ultimate goal. Look for surefire bets. Just getting to first base can build your confidence to tackle — and succeed at — more difficult tasks. Don't disdain easy choices. If you start every plan with "make list," you're guaranteed to check one box off quickly.

## Step Four: Commit yourself

Make yourself accountable through a written or verbal promise to people you don't want to let down. That will encourage you to slog through tough spots. One intrepid soul created a Facebook page devoted to her goals for weight loss. You can make a less public promise to your partner or child, a teacher, doctor, boss, or friends. Want more support? Post your promise on Facebook, tweet it to your followers, or seek out folks with like-minded goals online.

## Step Six: Learn from the past

Any time you fail to make a change, consider it a step toward your goal. Why? Because each sincere attempt represents a lesson learned. When you hit a snag, take a moment to think about what did and didn't work. Maybe you took on too big a challenge? If so, scale back to a less ambitious challenge, or break the big one

## Step Seven: Give thanks for what you do

Forget perfection. Set your sights on finishing that marathon, not on running it. If you compete to complete, you'll be a winner even if you wind up walking as much as you run. With exercise — and so many other goals we set — you'll benefit even when doing less than you'd like to do. Any activity is always better than none. If your goal for Tuesday is a 30-minute workout at the gym, but you only squeeze in 10 minutes, feel grateful for that. It's enough. Maybe tomorrow will be better.

## Italian Sausage Stuffed Zucchini

This recipe yields 4 servings and takes a total of 35 minutes to make!

### Ingredients:

4 large zucchini, halved lengthwise  
2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil  
4 links chicken sausage links, thinly sliced  
1/2 c. Italian breadcrumbs  
3/4 c. shredded mozzarella  
1/2 c. shredded fontina  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1/4 c. chopped fresh basil



### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Score zucchini (like you're dicing an avocado) and scoop out insides into a large bowl.

In a large skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add chicken sausage and cook until seared, 6 minutes.

Transfer to a large bowl and add breadcrumbs, 1/2 cup mozzarella, fontina, garlic, and basil.

Spoon mixture into zucchini and top with remaining 1/4 cup mozzarella.

Bake until zucchini is tender and cheese golden, 15 minutes.

Source: <https://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a48829/italian-sausage-stuffed-zucchini-recipe/>

## County News

Mediterranean Online Cooking School:  
February 15-19. Register at  
<https://forms.gle/LKdGJoGNKoxkzdDJA>

Early Childhood Education Certification hours  
are being offered monthly:

\$25 for all 9 remaining classes (1 hour each)  
on the 4th Tuesday of each month OR

\$25 for each 3 hour session on the  
following Saturdays from 9-noon: :2-20, 3-27,  
4-17, 5-15, 6-26, 7-10, 8-7, 9-18,  
10-9, 11-13, and 12-4.

Fresh Start to a Healthier You online classes  
start in March. Call asap to reserve spot.

Next Healthy West Texas online class will be  
April 21 at 12:15 pm. Topic:  
Clean is the Foundation of Everything!

**Call the extension office to get a link to any  
of the above classes. 325-597-1295**

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