

MAY 2024

PLAN FOR HEALTH NEWSLETTER

THIS MONTH'S TOPICS:

- **Mental Health Month**
- **Benefits of Physical Fitness**
- **May Recipe: Cucumber Pasta Salad**

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

The Mental Health America organization founded Mental Health Month in 1949 declaring May as the month of observance.

The stigma around mental health and treatment has long existed, even though this has started to change. Still, people hesitate to seek help or even talk about it with their loved ones for fear of being judged and facing unnecessary backlash. Simple logic dictates that if we are hurting, we must seek treatment to get better. This applies to both our mental and physical well-being.

This year's theme is Where to Start: **Mental Health in a Changing World**. The world is constantly changing – for better or for worse – and it can be overwhelming to deal with everything going on around you. While society is getting more comfortable discussing mental health, it can still be hard to know “Where to Start” when it comes to taking care of your own well-being.

This May, Mental Health America is here to help people:

- **LEARN** how modern life affects mental health with new resources to navigate our changing world.
- **ACT** by building your coping toolbox so you can manage stress, difficult emotions, and challenging situations.
- **ADVOCATE** to improve mental health for yourself, your friends and family, and your community.

What's Planned for Mental Health Month?

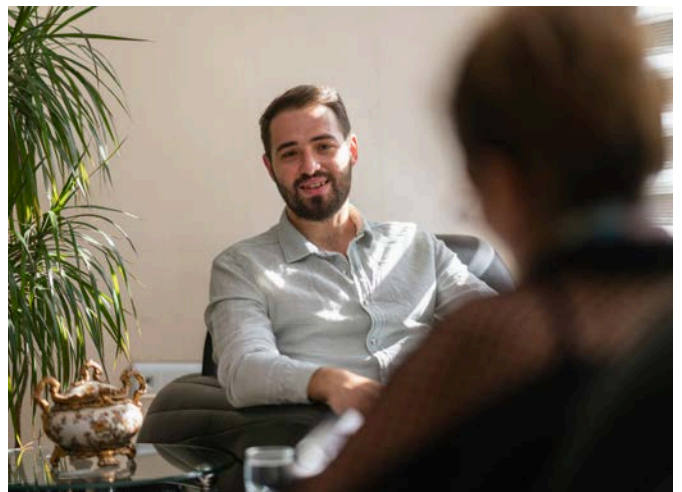
- You can access various Toolkits from reputable Mental Health Awareness websites with resources to help you plan Mental Health Month activities and improve your mental well-being.
- During the month of May, there is the **Light Up Green** initiative to illuminate buildings and landmarks across the country with the color green (the color of mental health awareness) to mark the beginning of mental health month and encourage the public to learn about their well-being and to schedule a mental health screening.

Other organizations have joined the cause, hosting awareness campaigns and events that coincide with Mental Health Awareness month. National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is just one example of additional resources that are available.

To learn more, please visit:

<https://www.mhanational.org/mental-health-month>

<https://www.nami.org/Home>



Benefits of Physical Fitness and Its Impact on Mental Health

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. Being physically active can improve your brain health, help manage weight, reduce the risk of disease, strengthen bones and muscles, and improve your ability to do everyday activities. Some of the benefits of physical activity on brain health occur immediately after a session of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity such as reduced feelings of short-term anxiety, improved sleep, and improved aspects of cognitive function.

With regular physical activity, improvements can also be seen in long-term anxiety, deep sleep, and components of executive function, including the ability to plan and organize, monitor behaviors, initiate tasks, and control emotions.

Compared to inactive people, people who do greater amounts of moderate- or vigorous-intensity physical activity may experience improvements in cognition, mental processing speed, memory, and executive function.

Physical activity also lowers the risk of developing cognitive impairment, such as dementia that includes Alzheimer's disease. Improvements from physical activity are present for people who have normal as well as impaired cognitive health, including conditions



such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), schizophrenia, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and stroke. Physically active adults and older adults are likely to report having a better quality of life, including those who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia and related disorders. Anxiety and anxiety disorders are the most prevalent mental disorders. Participating in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity over longer durations (weeks or months of regular physical activity) reduces symptoms of anxiety in adults and older adults. Major depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States and is a leading cause of disability for middle-aged adults in the United States. The prevalence of depressive episodes is higher among females, both adolescents and adults, than among males. Engaging in regular physical activity reduces the risk of developing depression in children and adults and can improve many of the symptoms experienced by people with depression.

To learn more about the impact of physical activity on brain health, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/index.htm>

You are not alone – Don't be afraid to speak up and reach out:

- Contact your health plan for resources
- Call or text 988 for the suicide and crisis lifeline
- Connect with people you can trust

Program Highlight: Mental Health 101

This program discusses mental health from a holistic perspective. Get to know your mental health and explore how it can help you take care of your body, form fulfilling relationships, find balance, and prioritize the things you value most. Go to your member app or website and explore the Program Library on the Journey tab to learn more.

May Recipe: Cucumber Pasta Salad



This light and tangy cucumber pasta salad is fresh and bright. The orecchiette pasta holds the dressing for flavor in every bite, but you can use another small pasta shape if you like. This easy salad is perfect for a warm day or to serve as a lunch dish for company! For a fruitier flavor, try apple-cider vinegar in place of white distilled vinegar.

Ingredients

- 12 ounces whole-wheat orecchiette pasta
- 1 medium English cucumber, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup thinly sliced red onion
- ¼ cup chopped fresh dill
- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons white vinegar
- 1 ½ teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper

Prep Time: 45 Minutes
Servings: 12

Directions

1. **Cook pasta according to package directions. Rinse with cold water; drain well and transfer to a large bowl. Stir in cucumber, tomatoes, onion, and dill.**
2. **Whisk mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper in a small bowl; add to the pasta mixture and toss to coat. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 8 hours.**



Stay tuned for June's topics:
National Safety Month
and Ergonomics

