

A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You

## Fight or flight: how your body handles stress

Stress triggers the body's "fight or flight" response, releasing adrenaline and cortisol.

Adrenaline increases your blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Cortisol speeds up the body's ability to use blood sugar and slows down the digestive system. So if someone starts to chase us, we feel our heart rate go up and get a boost of energy to run away.

While short bursts of stress can often help you focus and perform better, long-term stress can put you at higher risk of health problems. These include anxiety, depression, sleep problems, heart disease, heart attacks, high blood pressure and even strokes.

The good news is there are many ways to deal with stress in a healthy manner. Experiment with these techniques to discover what works best for you!

- Eat a healthy diet with colorful fruits and vegetables.



- Exercise regularly, even with a short 10-minute walk.
- Get 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night.
- Embrace quality time with your spouse, family, and friends.
- Write down 1-3 things you are grateful for each day.
- Laugh often and share humor with others.
- Do random acts of kindness for family, friends, or strangers.
- Relax with stretching, yoga, deep breathing, massage, or meditation.
- Engage in hobbies you enjoy.
- Organize tasks, focus on priorities and delegate when possible.

Remember, you're not alone when dealing with stress. Reach out to your primary care doctor or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) when you need support. A little help can go a long way to help you manage stress and maintain a healthy mind and body.

Source: [MayoClinic.com](https://www.mayoclinic.com)

# Heart-thumping moves

Get moving in February and celebrate heart health month! Cardio or aerobic-type activities are ideal for improving heart health because they boost your breathing and blood flow. Together, they help lower blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

Try these heart-thumping moves:

- Brisk walking
- Cycling
- Swimming or water aerobics

Source: [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)



- Tennis or pickleball
  - Dancing or jumping rope
- But don't stop there! Strength training is also good for your heart. Building muscle can decrease your bad cholesterol (LDL) and increase your good cholesterol (HDL). You can

supercharge your strength with dumbbells, resistance machines, resistance bands, kettlebells or even your own body weight.

Keep February in motion. Look for ways to move your body each day and make your heart happy!

## Sweet Potato & Black Bean Chili (Serves 4)

### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium-large sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 4 teaspoons ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground chipotle chile
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 ½ cups water
- 2 (15 oz) cans black beans, rinsed

- 1 (14 oz) can diced tomatoes
- 4 teaspoons lime juice
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro

### Directions:

Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add sweet potato and onion and cook, stirring often, until the onion is beginning to soften, about 4 minutes. Add garlic, chili powder, cumin, chipotle and salt and cook, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds. Add water and bring to a simmer. Cover, reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer and



cook until the sweet potato is tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Add beans, tomatoes, and lime juice; increase heat to high and return to a simmer, stirring often. Reduce heat and simmer until slightly reduced, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro.

Recipe courtesy of [Eatingwell.com](https://www.eatingwell.com); for nutritional information click [here](#).

We comply with applicable Federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-800-352-2583 (TTY: 1-877-955-8773).

ATANSYON: Si w pale Kreyòl Ayisyen, gen sèvis èd pou lang ki disponib gratis pou ou. Rele 1- 800-352-2583 (TTY: 1-800-955-8770).

Florida Blue is a trade name of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, Inc., an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Unless otherwise indicated, all materials, content and forms contained in this newsletter are the intellectual property of Better You. No materials, content and forms contained herein may be copied, reproduced, distributed or displayed in full or in part without expressed written permission by Better You.