

# PANHANDLE PATH TO HEALTHY LIVING



TEXAS A&M  
AGRILIFE  
EXTENSION

## Get Ready For Outdoor Activities!

Sunshine from Spring and Summer is so delightful ! It brings moderate and great outdoor temperatures. There is also more daylight so the days begin to last longer. Birds begin to return from migration. Leaves begin to appear on trees again. Plants begin to grow, gardens are flourishing, and flowers begin to bloom. Grocery stores begin to carry a larger variety of local fresh fruits and vegetables. This is the perfect time to start your journey to a healthier lifestyle.

As we welcome the new warmer season, let's implement some new healthy habits for you and your family. Find the path that will lead your family to a healthier way of life. Get outdoors and find the joy and hope that your family has been waiting for!

*Lizabeth Gresham*

# Path to Mental Wellness

## 4 Ways Being Outside Can Boost Your Mental Health

<https://www.eatingwell.com/article/7871527/how-going-outside-can-improve-mental-health/>

### 1. It Improves Work and School Performance

Have trouble focusing on the task at hand? Research suggests that typical indoor work and school environments negatively affect the brain's ability to filter important stimuli from less-important ones. The effect is that many people have trouble focusing and remembering things in these types of environments.

However, spending time outside in a green space before starting on tasks appears to help by improving working memory and our ability to concentrate and focus. Can't get outside? Research suggests there are benefits from sitting where you can see trees and green space out a window while working.

### 2. It Regulates Sleep

A lack of natural light triggers melatonin production. This is why you may get drowsy mid-afternoon when you've spent the day inside. Going outside in the daylight, even if it's overcast, suppresses melatonin production. This is because sunlight regulates circadian rhythms to align with our body's internal clock. The result is that going outside for a few minutes helps to keep you awake and alert during the day, which makes it easier to go to sleep at night and to get better sleep.

### 3. It Boosts Mood and Eases Depression and Anxiety

Exposure to natural light stimulates the body's production of vitamin D and serotonin, both of which play key roles in boosting moods. These are key reasons why even small amounts of time spent outside are associated with an increase sense of overall wellbeing and a decrease in anxiety and depression.

Green space also appears to slow "rumination," the process in which individuals with depression or anxiety may replay negative instances over and over making the depression and anxiety worse and harder to recover from.

### 4. It Instantly Lowers Stress

Going outside is also a pretty immediate stress reliever. According to a 2019 study, salivary cortisol levels significantly decreased when time was spent in nature with the greatest impact coming from spending 20 to 30 minutes outside. Exposure to green space appears to increase parasympathetic nervous activity, which is the system that relaxes or "undoes" the effects from stress caused by the sympathetic nervous system. The result is in a sense of calmness, along with lower heart rate and blood pressure.

# Path to the Great Outdoors!

## How to Spend More Time Outside

- Spend 10-15 minutes in the morning meditating outdoors or take your pup on a walk around the block.
- Take regular activities—like working on your laptop or reading—outside. If you don't have a mobile job, take your lunch break outside or go on a lunchtime walk.
- Try an outdoor workout or yoga class.
- Have a picnic lunch or dinner. Take a walk after dinner as a family.
- Take up gardening (which also boasts plenty of mental and physical health benefits)
- Move your desk by an open window where you can see greenery & breathe fresh air.



# Path to Healthy Sunshine Habits...



Help prevent chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer with these 8 healthy habits for spring.

## Move More, Sit Less



Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (e.g. at least 20 minutes a day or 30 minutes on 5 days) every week, plus muscle-strengthening activities at least 2 days a week.

## Eat a Healthy Diet

Try healthy food choices like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products.



**TIP**  Make half your plate fruits and vegetables and half your grains whole grains.

## Rethink Your Drink




Substitute water for sugary or alcoholic drinks to reduce calories and stay safe.

## Get Enough Sleep

Adults need at least 7 hours of sleep per night.



**DID YOU KNOW?**  Kids 6-12 need 9-12 hours of sleep per night. Teens 13-18 need 8-10 hours of sleep per night.

## Be Sun Safe

Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses and use broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 15.



**TIP**  Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays for the best protection.



## Brush Your Teeth



Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.

## Don't Use Tobacco

You can do it!  
Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free support.



## Learn Your Health History



Talk to your family and your doctor about your family health history.



# Path to Healthy Pets...

## May is National Pet Month

### Walking With Your Pet

Walking is healthy for you and your dog. Not only is it physical activity, but it's mental stimulation for your dog to smell, see and hear beyond the limits of your yard. Walking helps preserve your pet's muscle tone and joint movement. If your pet is overweight or obese, walking can be a great way to shed those extra pounds. The following tips can help you design a safe walking program for your dog...or even for your cat. (Yes, it is possible to train a cat to accept a harness and go for walks!)

**Consult your veterinarian before starting any new exercise program with your pet.**

**You need to make sure your pet is healthy enough for the exercise you plan.**

Train your dog to behave on a leash, and seek help to address any behavioral problems. Obey leash laws, and always clean up after your dog.

Begin with short, frequent walks, and take frequent rests as needed. If your pet seems to want to go back home, try driving to a nearby park or less familiar area for your walks.

Remember that walks are also a means for your dog to enjoy his/her environment; allow your dog to take "sniff breaks" within reason.

Build gradually to one or more 15 minutes periods of brisk walking, then allow for cool-down time and recovery.

Avoid walks during the hottest parts of the day during warmer weather. Learn the signs of heat stress (Your veterinarian can teach you!) so you can recognize and address any problems that occur.

During warm, sunny weather, avoid hot surfaces – such as asphalt – that can burn your pet's feet.

Walk on safe footing to avoid slips, falls or injuries. Avoid deep sand or similar footing because it can cause fatigue and injuries.

If your pet shows signs of lameness, difficulty breathing, or seems to tire quickly, consult your veterinarian.



### Starting an exercise program for your pet



You've probably seen the warnings on fitness equipment that instruct you to consult your physician before starting an exercise program. The same applies to your pet, for good reason; it's best to make sure that your pet is healthy enough to begin an exercise program and that the program is tailored to fit your pet's health needs. Not sure where to start with your pet's exercise program? Start with your veterinarian! In addition to walking, there are other opportunities for exercise programs that you can do together with your pet.

If your pet is recovering from injuries, talk to your veterinarian about exercise options (water treadmill sessions, swimming, etc.) that provide no- or low-impact exercise and can be used in the short term and/or incorporated into your pet's exercise regimen.





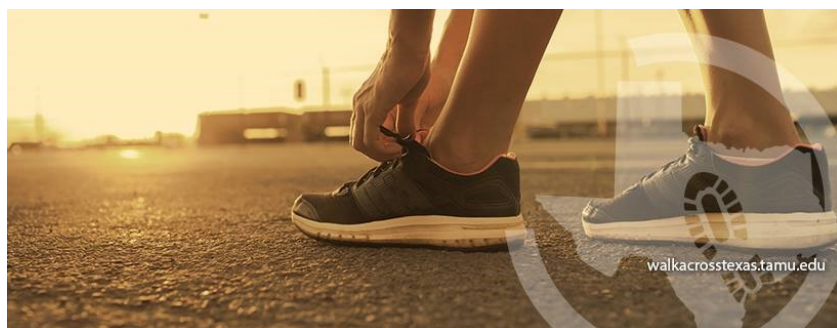
**GET READY TO GET FIT-JOIN US**

**JUNE 1st**

**Potter Summer Fitness Walk Across Texas**



**Walk Across Texas is a program that motivates people of all ages to take the first step to being fit. All you need is a team of eight friends and a desire to get moving & log 833 miles of walking or physical activity! So dust off your walking shoes and join in on the free 8 week adventure and Walk Across Texas!**



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# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

**Lizabeth Gresham** is a Family and Community Health Agent with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension **Potter** County. Family and Community Health helps Texans better their lives through science-based educational programs designed to improve the overall health and wellness of individuals, families, and communities. FCH focuses on topics such as child and adult health, nutrition, child care, financial management, and community safety, and building strong families. Our goal is to encourage lifelong health and well-being for every person, every family, and every community. <https://Potter.agrilife.org>

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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

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**DINNER  
TONIGHT**  
HEALTHY COOKING SCHOOL  
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

[dinnertonight.tamu.edu](http://dinnertonight.tamu.edu)

## Try Something New Today

### Like Riding A Bicycle!

**Cycling:**  
good for your mind  
and your body

**MIND**  
Boosts your mood

**HEART**  
Improves cardiovascular health

**JOINTS**  
Low impact exercise

**LOWER BODY**  
Strengthens the quads, calves and hamstrings



**DINNER  
TONIGHT**  
HEALTHY COOKING SCHOOL  
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## Path to the Plate..Fresh Salads!

### Strawberry Cucumber Salad

#### INGREDIENTS:

##### Salad

- 3 lg cucumbers peeled, chopped
- 3 C strawberries quartered
- 1/2 C red onion finely chopped
- 1/4 C basil leaves chopped
- 1/2 C Fat Free feta cheese
- 2 C Fresh Spinach

##### Dressing

- 1/3 C lime juice, 1 T olive oil, 2 T honey



[dinnertonight.tamu.edu](http://dinnertonight.tamu.edu)

#### DIRECTIONS:

Wash hands, rinse vegetables & fruits, In bowl combine cucumbers, strawberries, onion and basil. In bowl combine lime juice, olive oil, and honey. Whisk or shake until combined. Arrange 1 cup spinach on plate, pour dressing over the cucumber mixture and toss to combine. Top with feta cheese.

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