

# PANHANDLE PATH TO HEALTHY LIVING

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AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION



## Get Ready For Spring!

Why would some say that Spring is the most delightful season? It could be because springtime brings moderate 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 and flowers begin to bloom. Grocery stores begin to carry a larger variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Springtime can bring joy and hope after a cold winter. This is the perfect time to start your journey to a healthier lifestyle. As we welcome the new spring season, implement some new healthy habits for you and your family. Find the path that will lead your family to a healthier way of life. Go out and find the joy and hope that your family has been waiting for!

“In the spring,  
at the end of the day,  
you should smell like  
**DIRT.**” —Margaret Atwood

*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 class.
- Have a picnic lunch or dinner.
- Take up gardening (which also boasts plenty of mental and physical health benefits)
- Move your desk by a window where you can see greenery.



# Path to a Healthy Spring

CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

## 8 Strategies for a Healthy Spring



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 Walk Across Texas

## Join Walk Across Texas Today!

Staying physically active can improve and support your overall health! Join Walk Across Texas & increase physical activity, reduce chronic disease and feel great!

Walk Across Texas! is an eight-week program designed to help Texans establish the habit of regular physical activity using a fun and motivating team approach.

Each team may include up to 8 (can have less) team members, all working together towards the goal of 832 miles!

Watch your team's progress and how you compare to other teams as you go on our online portal!

To start a team, contact:

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## Keep on Moving

Beginning a new activity can be easy. Continuing that activity is the hard part. It's easy to lose motivation, especially when you're doing the same activity. This week, try something new. Spicing up your normal routine could give you the needed motivation to kick the repetitiveness of your exercise. Here are some ideas to help you and your family keep moving.

**Exercise with friends and family.** If you plan to meet with someone, it will give you the motivation to not let them down



**Choose an activity you like.** If you are getting tired of walking, try biking or swimming.



**Add music to your workout.** Listening to music makes the activity much more fun.



**Give yourself a reward** when you reach your goals. When you set a goal and reach it, you have done a great thing.

**Take a break.** It's okay to miss a few days, especially if you are sick or go on vacation. Remember to start again slowly until your body has readjusted to being active.



### IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

- Bicycling
- Park further away from the store
- Gardening and yard work
- Rent exercise videos from the library
- Aerobics
- Clean out or organize the house
- Yoga
- Volunteer for your community
- Have a water balloon fight
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator
- Running/Jogging
- Use the self-checkout at stores
- Dancing
- Find local trails or hikes in your hometown.



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## WALK ACROSS TEXAS GREEN SMOOTHIE WHAT'S INSIDE ??



2 C. Fresh Spinach

1/2 C Frozen Pineapple

1/2 Ripe Avocado



1/2 C. Unsweet Almond Milk

1/2 C. Plain Greek Yogurt

2 T Chia Seeds for Topping

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Mix all ingredients in a blender until smooth and ENJOY before your Walk Across Texas!!!



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>

## HEALTHY COOKING FOR A HEALTHY TEXAS



### Enjoy Healthy Spring Recipes

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

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## Path to a Refreshing Salad

### Easy Cucumber Salad

#### Ingredients:

- 2–3 cucumbers thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 red onion thinly sliced
- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 T fresh dill



**Directions:** Season cucumbers with salt in a large bowl and let sweat 1 hour. Drain liquids and toss cumpers with onion slices.

In a small saucepan over high heat, pour in white vinegar and water and stir in sugar until dissolved and liquid turns clear, 3 to 5 minutes.

Pour over cucumbers and onions. Stir in dill. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate 1 hour. Serve cold or at room temperature.