Allegany COUNTY New York

Receive this from a colleague? Get Wellness Without Walls to your county email, sign up here!

Wellness Without Walls

Volume 3 | Issue 1 January – April 2025 – Allegany County Employee Wellness

BY THE NUMBERS

Have you been screened? According to **CDC data** for **Allegany County**, the following represents adults who have had health screenings:

- **Colorectal Cancer: 67.1%**
- **Mammography: 76.5%**
- **Cholesterol: 83.9%**
- **Annual Checkup: 79.5%**
- **Dental Visit: 62.9%**

Be sure to ask your health care provider about recommended preventative health screenings at your next appointment!

4 Steps to Overcome Barriers to Better Health.

We've all done this before. Ignored or delayed those hard-but worthwhile habit changes in favor of some ultra-specific, niche magic bullet that's supposed to "change everything."

Spent hours of research on the ultimate, most optimal workout instead of devoting those hours to just doing the basic workout you already know how to do. Waited to feel more inspired, motivate, or just less busy. **Why do we do this?**

Buying new gear or a popular supplement *feels* like making progress. Consuming YouTube videos or articles about stuff you can change *feels* like you're doing something. And waiting until the "right time" *feels*, well, right. **Except, nothing actually changes until we take real, consistent action.**

In this article, we'll explore how to take an honest and compassionate look at why you might be distracting yourself from taking impactful action.

The stuff you know you should do (but probably aren't doing consistently) We all know what those basic, fundamental health habits are:

- ▶ **Exercising, ideally 30 minutes a day**
- ▶ **Eating mostly nutritious, minimally-processed foods**
- ▶ **Eating enough protein to support muscle mass, appetite regulation, and body re-composition goals, if you have them.**
- ▶ **Prioritizing getting seven to eight hours of quality sleep.**
- ▶ **Avoiding or at least reducing excessive consumption of alcohol or drugs, including cigarettes.**

Most Americans *aren't* doing the basics. Yet, these foundational behaviors also help us achieve a long list of common goals, whether that's reaching a healthy weight, improving athletic ability, or just living a longer, healthier life.

So why do we struggle so much to *do* them? Here are three common barriers, plus potential solutions to overcome them.

Basics Barrier #1: You have ambition overload.

Maybe you've decided you want to be healthier. So, you declare that, starting Monday, you're going to exercise for an hour every day *and* "eat clean" at every meal *and* sleep eight hours every night. (Currently, you don't have a regular exercise habit, don't particularly like vegetables, and regularly stay up past midnight.)

Now, let's be honest: **You're asking yourself to change a lot of stuff at once.**

When we feel frustrated or stuck in our current situation, making a plan filled with idealistic dreams can provide us temporary relief. There's a powerful, instantaneous comfort that comes with overloading our future self. (Because after all, we won't start the plan until Monday.)

The problem with this is: **Big, complex plans often don't fit into our already busy, complex lives.** We under-estimate how many smaller tasks are hidden in the bigger plans.

"What if we don't change at all ... and something magical just happens?"

Basics Barrier #2: You think only hardcore, "industry-secret," or "cutting-edge" stuff works.

This barrier comes from the following common belief: **"If getting healthy just took eating, sleeping, and exercising moderately well, then everyone would be healthy."** Because everyone *knows* they should eat their vegetables, get seven to eight hours of sleep per night, and stay active, right?

Part of the reason we're attracted to new diets or "magical" supplements is because we just want something more interesting to try. That's especially true if we've already sort of tried the "eat more vegetables" thing and it didn't "work" for us in the way we expected. With something new and cutting-edge, there's also the possibility of a new outcome, a new us. And of course, that's incredibly appealing.

Basics Barrier #3: You think your efforts (and your results) have to be perfect.

Another lie in the health and fitness industry is that you have to be "perfect" to maintain great health. You know, eat only organic salads and chia seeds, be able to run a marathon, and wake up at 5 am every day to meditate and write in your gratitude journal.

The truth is, perfection definitely isn't required. Depending on how you look at this, this could be a relief to hear, or a disappointment. Any number of obstacles, distractions, and competing demands make it impossible for perfection to be maintained with any kind of consistency.

Which is why we need to let go of the illusion that a "perfect" self exists—the one who always has the energy, will, and option to make the ideal choice—and support what our *real* self wants and needs.

4 steps to start taking effective (and realistic) action

Step #1: Explore the why before the how.

Before you start undertaking something you want to change, it's helpful to understand your deeper motivations first. When you know *why* you want to change something, and you're clear on the consequences of *not* taking action, you'll be more likely to feel that deeper, more sustaining push to keep going, even when things get tough.

Step #2: Prioritize the most effective actions.

We can do all the things!! Really!! We just can't do all the things… all at once. Prioritize what is an essential action and do that first, and consistently.

Step #3: Make sure you can take action, even on your worst day.

If you've been struggling with consistency, set a pathetic goal. So easy that you can obviously do it.

Ask yourself: What can I do on my absolutely worst day where everything goes wrong? How much time, effort, or enthusiasm will I realistically have?

5 minutes of walking, 10 push-ups, one extra portion of veggies. Doing the bare minimum *isn't* failing. It's succeeding, in the context of a real, messy, beautiful life.

Step #4: Create an ecosystem that supports you.

Many people assume that good intentions and willpower will be enough to carry them through. We often forget about the context and environment that *shapes* our behaviors — making certain actions more likely or less likely to occur. Think about the goal you want to achieve, and the behaviors that support it. Then, evaluate how you might make small changes to your environment by:

- **Using a trigger**: Sometimes called a "cue" or a "prompt," a trigger is simply a reminder to do a desired action. For example, you might block the door of your home office with a kettlebell, reminding you that, every time you leave or enter the office, you have to do ten kettlebell swings. If you're trying to cut down on mindless phone time, you can install an app that reminds you to shut things down after 20 minutes on social media.

- **Decreasing "friction"**: Supermarkets put candy next to the checkout, making it easy to slip that chocolate bar into your cart while you're standing in line, likely bored and hungry. You can be equally sneaky about encouraging positive behaviors too, such as putting fruit on your counter, ready for a quick snack, or packing your gym bag the night before, so it's ready to grab on your way out the door before you change your mind.
- **Constraining available options:** Whether it's deleting time-sucking apps off your phone, removing foods you know you lose control around from your kitchen, or heck, creating a capsule wardrobe so you waste less time in the morning getting dressed, constraint can actually *free up* a lot of time, brain power, and energy.

Invest your energy building the ecosystem that nudges you to make desired actions the *obvious* choice. This requires a little more work on the front end, but the payoff will be greater for less overall work.

Living a healthy, meaningful life means constantly striving to do our best—while also allowing for flexibility, mistakes, and bad days (or seasons).

You'll be surprised at how much better "good enough" is than nothing. Especially in the long run. ~**For the full article from Precision Nutrition CLICK HERE <==**

The Importance of Gratitude:

Random Acts of Kindness Week is February 9th – 15th

As the study of happiness and emotional well-being gains popularity in psychological and scientific study, there is increasing research on the nature of gratitude and its potential consequences for health and mental/emotional well-being. This article is a review some of the recent findings about the relationship between gratitude and health, and will then outline some ways to increase the experience and expression of gratitude in your life.

- People who keep gratitude journals on a weekly basis have been found to exercise more regularly, have fewer physical symptoms, feel better about their lives as a whole, and feel more optimistic about their upcoming week as compared to those who keep journals recording the stressors or neutral events of their lives.
- Daily discussion of gratitude results in higher reported levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, attentiveness,

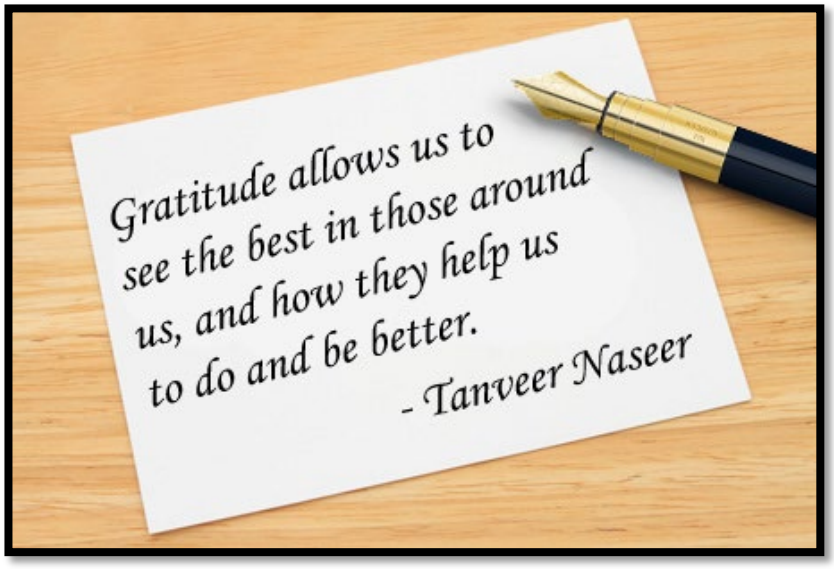
energy, and sleep duration and quality. Grateful people also report lower levels of depression and stress, although they don't deny or ignore the negative aspects of life.

- People who focus on gratitude daily are more likely to report having helped someone with a personal problem or offered emotional support to another person.
- Those with a disposition towards gratitude are found to place less importance on material goods, are less likely to judge their own or others success in terms of possessions accumulated, are less envious of wealthy people, and are more likely to share their possessions with others.
- Emerging research suggests that daily gratitude practices may have some preventative benefits in fending off coronary artery disease.

How does this work? There is a complex relationship between thoughts, moods, brain chemistry, endocrine function, and functioning of other physiological systems in our bodies. Suffice it to say that thoughts can actually trigger physiological changes in the body that affect our mental and physical health. Basically, what you think affects how you feel (both emotionally and physically). If you increase your positive thoughts, like gratitude, you can increase your subjective sense of well-being as well as, perhaps, objective measures of physical health (like fewer symptoms of illness and increased immune functioning).

There are some simple ways to increase your experience and expression of gratitude. Increasing our conscious awareness of gratitude may require that we train ourselves to think differently. This can be done by incorporating some simple exercises into your life. For example, you might begin to keep a gratitude journal. Gratitude journals can take many forms, but one way of doing this is to simply write down one thing that you are grateful for each day. It can be something that happened that day, something you felt, or someone in your life who has made a positive impact on you. There are great gratitude apps for your smart phone.

Verbalize your expressions of gratitude. You can engage someone in a daily discussion about what you are grateful for. This might take the form of questions like, "What was the best part of your day today?", or "What is one thing that made you feel really happy today?" This kind of discussion not only helps to increase your own awareness of all that you have to be grateful for, but can also promote positive connection and



experiences in your relationship. Basically, gratitude promotes gratitude.

If you find that you're very busy and unable to stick to a regular gratitude practice, **see if you can train yourself to notice things, in the moment, that you are thankful for**. They can be small things: maybe you notice that your bed is very comfortable, your lunch is tasty, a good friend said something nice to you, etc. It's easy to take these kinds of experiences for granted and not direct our conscious awareness to them, but training yourself to feel grateful for situations or events in your life can help increase your own experience of happiness.

From: https://www.theeappremium.com/college-life/student-wellbeing/the-importance-of-gratitude.html © 2024 Life Advantages, LLC

EAP Calendar of Resources

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
ESI's Featured Website Monthly Topic Identity Theft: What Can You Do About It?	**ESI's Featured Website Monthly Topic** Understanding Neurodiversity	**ESI's Featured Website Monthly Topic** Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Selected National Observances & EAP Resources Listed Below

› New Year's Resolutions › National Glaucoma Awareness Month › National Mentoring Month	› American Heart Month › Black History Month › National Eating Disorders Awareness Week	› National Nutrition Month › National Kidney Month › National Sleep Awareness Week

Some items require log-in to the online Self-Help Resources Center.

New Year's Resolutions

- **Self-Help Resources:** 10 Money Resolutions for the New Year
- **EAP Webinar:** Planning for Personal Success

National Glaucoma Awareness Month

- **Self-Help Resources:** Glaucoma
- **External Resource:** National Eye Institute

National Mentoring Month

- **From Training Library:** Make Mentoring Count:
- **External Resource:** National Mentoring Month

American Heart Month

- **External Resource:** Heart Smart Basics Fact Sheet:What to Know to Keep Yours Healthy
- **From Training Library:** First Aid - Heart Attacks and Cardiac Arrest:

Black History Month

- **External Resource:** About Black History Month

National Eating Disorders Awareness Week – 2/24 – 3/2

- **Self-Help Resources:** Eating Disorders
- **External Resource:** The National Institute of Mental Health Eating Disorders

National Nutrition Month

- **Self-Help Resources:** Nutrition
- **From Training Library:** Health & Wellness in the Workplace

National Kidney Month

- **Self-Help Resources:** Kidney Health
- **Blog:** Be kind to your kidneys – it's National Kidney Month!

National Sleep Awareness Week – 3/9 - 3/15

- **Self-Help Resources:** Sleep Health
- **External Resource:** National Sleep Foundation

Coaching & Counseling 24/7 – 1-888-327-1060

Need help logging into the Self-Help Resource Center/Website? Click Here

Receive this from a colleague? Get Wellness Without Walls to your county email, sign up here!

WHAT IS **HEART DISEASE?**

U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION

Heart disease refers to several conditions that affect the heart's structure and function. This includes conditions such as coronary heart disease, heart failure, and heart attack.

You are at a **higher risk** for heart disease if you are overweight or obese, smoke, or have high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol.

REDUCE YOUR RISK FOR HEART DISEASE BY:

Choosing healthy foods and drinks

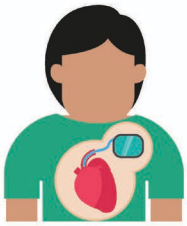
Keeping a healthy weight

Not smoking

Getting regular physical exercise

DID YOU KNOW?

A person dies from heart disease every **36 seconds**.



Heart disease can be treated with FDA-approved medications and medical devices such as pacemakers.

More than **1** in **10** adults in the United States have been diagnosed with heart disease.

For more information on health equity, visit **www.fda.gov/healthequity**.

Quick Chili

Ingredients

1/2 - pound lean ground beef

1 (15.5 ounce) can kidney beans, drained (save liquid) and rinsed

1/3 cup reserved bean liquid

1 cup "no salt added" canned tomato puree

1 tablespoon instant minced onion

1-1/2 tablespoons chili powder

Directions

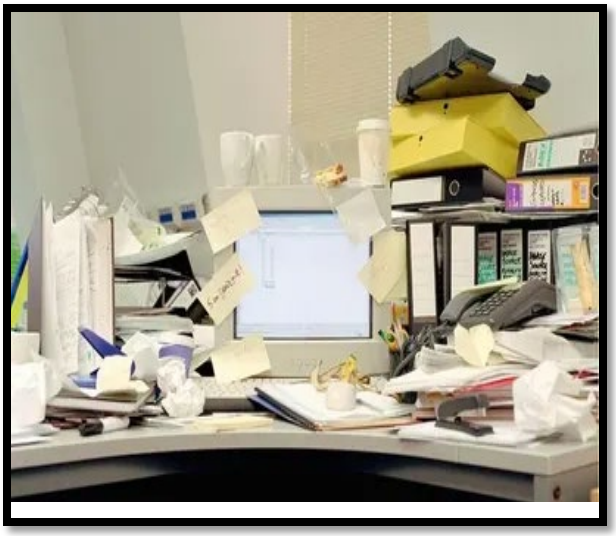
Cook beef in hot pot until lightly browned. Drain off fat.

Stir in remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer 10 minutes.

Serves 4

Each serving contains about 230 calories, 9 g fat, 15 g protein, 35 mg cholesterol, 580 mg sodium, and 20 g carbohydrates

8 Spring Cleaning Tips For Your Workspace



It's difficult to be productive in a messy workplace. A clean workspace helps to provide for a clean mind, where you can let your creativity flow and keep productivity high.

1. File away your paperwork.

Paperwork can get out of hand fast. Spend some time sorting through your paperwork. File important papers away, and shred any personal documents that you won't need anymore. Put all loose paperwork into a filing system and keep folders for any paperwork that you're currently working on. ***As new papers come in, try to deal with them right away,*** instead of leaving them on your desk for later.

2. Clean your work surfaces.

Since you'll be able to finally see the bottom of your desk, you need to take advantage of the opportunity to clean the surfaces underneath the old clutter. Also, don't forget to clean all of your desk items such as staplers, pens, and other items you touch.

3. Make your business contacts digital.

Start a list of all your business contacts somewhere on your computer, such as your address book in your email. Keep track of their business name, photos, phone number, mailing address, and email addresses. This way you can toss out their old business cards that may be piling up on your desk.

4. Deal with old reminder notes.

If you have post-it notes all around the office, sift through them and throw out the ones that no longer apply. ***Reorganize them by priority,*** or make digital files to keep track of

them. Post-its can get disorganized fast, so if you have something on a post-it that's a long-term project, it's better to keep your notes on your computer. Use an app like Google Keep, Evernote, or Notepad on your phone or computer.

5. Deal with digital clutter.

Cleaning your workspace doesn't apply only to your physical workspace. ***Is anything cluttering up your computer's hard drive?*** Go through your e-mail inbox and delete those you don't need or file them away. Clean up your computer desktop and delete old files or back them up to an external drive. **Take the time to properly back up your files often, so you never lose important work.**

6. Organize your supplies.

Gather your work supplies into one area of your desk. Keep them in that space or a specific drawer. This will give them a permanent place so they're not left out and scattered around your desk at all times.

7. Clean the areas around the room.

Don't stop at your desk! Vacuum the room around your desk and wash the windows, baseboards, and more. It's probably not an area that you often think about, which is why it's likely due for a cleaning.

8. Make a future cleaning schedule.

If spring cleaning for your workspace was a burden on you, it probably means that you let things get out of hand this year. You can prevent it from happening again by doing periodic cleaning of your workspace.

Once you have an organizational system in place, you can spend maybe 30 minutes per week keeping everything clean and organized.

It's always a good idea to keep your workspace nice and clean. It helps you be more efficient, productive, and less stressed. Plus, a clean office environment is more inviting to you, and anyone you work with. ~*https://thehalcyonhive.com/spring-cleaning-tips-for-your-workspace/*

Boost Your Energy, Beat the Afternoon Slump: Quick Desk Exercises

Feeling sluggish in the mid-afternoon? A few simple desk exercises can help you recharge and refocus without even leaving your chair! The exercises listed are easy to perform at any desk with no special equipment needed. Small movements are beneficial for improving your energy and focus, especially on long days.

- **Chair Squats:**

  Sit on the edge of your chair, with feet flat on the floor. Stand up, and then slowly lower yourself down as if you're going to sit, then push back up to starting position. Repeat 10 times.

- **Arm Circles:**

  Extend arms out to the side, palms facing down. Make large circles forward, then reverse direction. Repeat 10 times each way.

- **Shoulder Rolls:**

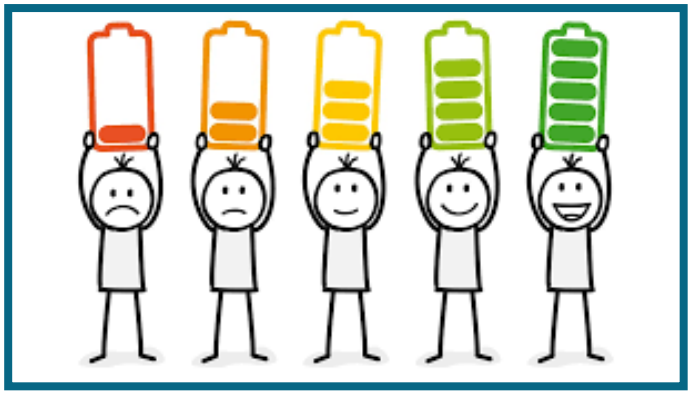
  Roll shoulders back in a circular motion, then forward. Repeat 10 times each direction.

- **Neck Stretches:**

  Gently tilt head to the side, holding for a few seconds, then repeat on the other side. Do the same with forward and backward tilts.

- **Calf Raises:**
  Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, slowly raise heels off the ground, then lower back down. Repeat 10 times.

Try these out today, you have nothing to lose! Here is what you have to gain!



- **Improved Blood Flow:** Even small movements can increase circulation, boosting alertness and focus.
- **Reduced Stress:** Physical activity helps release tension and can improve mood.
- **Increased Energy Levels:** Regular mini-workouts can combat fatigue and keep you going throughout the day.

Remember to consult your doctor before starting any new exercise routine, especially if you have any health concerns. ~

Wellness Myths and Facts

Myth: "No-Fat" or "Low-Fat" foods help you lose weight

Fact: Many no-fat and low-fat foods have added sugar and salt, and more calories. If you're watching your weight, you may be cutting back on fat. Opting for foods that claim they have little or no fat doesn't always make sense, though. Lower-fat versions of foods often replace the fat they remove with other ingredients like sugar. That means they may not be any healthier than their fuller-fat versions. You may be better off with a smaller portion of the full-fat version of the food.

Myth: Eating late at night makes you more likely to gain weight.

Fact: Eating late at night *may* make you more likely to gain weight.

People who eat late at night often eat because they're bored or because it's an established habit, as opposed to eating because they're hungry. This may make them more likely to put on weight. If you have cravings late at night, try eating more throughout the day. And keep good-for-you snacks on hand (like fruits, vegetables, unsalted nuts, and seeds) so you have something healthy to munch on should the urge strike.

Myth: Applying petroleum jelly or dish soap to a tick will cause it to release and crawl away. Burning an attached tick with a lighter will kill it.

Fact: Applying anything to a tick prior to removal is unnecessary and potentially harmful! It will NOT encourage the tick to withdraw. If the tick senses danger, it may "spit" its gut contents into the bite, making exposure to disease even more likely! Burning an attached tick is even more dangerous– the tick is protected by its strong exoskeleton, but your skin is not! To safely remove a tick, keep it simple: use fine tipped tweezers or a tick removal tool.

Share your wellness story or Send your questions to healthinfo@alleganyco.gov

Community Health Assessment

The 2025-2030 Community Health Assessment is coming up and this will be your opportunity to help paint the picture of health across Allegany County!

Your input will provide invaluable insight about the health needs of our community – including what areas need the most improvement, what are the biggest barriers to better health, and where resources are allocated for new or existing programs.

Ultimately, your participation will aid in the development of a plan to meet the health needs of everyone in Allegany County.

- **Please be on the lookout for an announcement about completing the short Community Health Assessment survey starting in February 2025.**