

# HEALTHY OUTCOMES



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## 8 Ways to Improve Your Mental Health

By Geisinger Wellness

### Make your mental health a priority today.

Do you ever feel anxious, a little sad, drained, or stressed out? You aren't alone. In fact, mental health issues affect everyone at some point in their life. The good news is you can make some changes to help improve how you're feeling.

### First things first, what is mental health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being – it affects how we think, feel act and deal with everyday challenges. Mental health issues are common, but so is recovery – whether you seek professional help and treatment or decide to take steps on your own to improve your mental health.

“Making your mental health a priority can help your overall wellness,” says Geisinger psychologist Nicole Quinlan, PhD, who specializes in child and adolescent psychology. “Implement new habits and routines one step at a time to find what works for you. If you need extra help, don't be afraid to seek it.”

### Could your mental health use some TLC? Try working some of these tips into your daily routine.

Below are eight ways to improve your mental health – find one that speaks to you and give it a try today.

#### 1. Write down what you're grateful for.

Write down three things that you're grateful for every day – in a notebook, journal, or an app. “Expressing gratitude regularly is linked to improved well-being and mental health,” says Dr. Quinlan. So, what are you thankful for?

#### 2. Get some exercise.

Whether it's outside, in the gym or at home, try to get 30 minutes of exercise daily. Our bodies release stress-relieving, mood-boosting endorphins

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The HCQU works with intellectual disabilities and behavioral health programs in Central PA to provide health care management services for adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities or Autism. Our goal is that all people living in PA, regardless of ability, receive the finest community services available – assuring that they are as healthy as possible and can fully participate in community life. The HCQU works to enhance access to community physical and mental health care through **FREE** education, public health outreach, advocacy, and empowerment as well as to improve health care outcomes. Serving the following counties: Blair, Centre, Columbia/Montour/Snyder/Union, Huntingdon/Mifflin/Juniata, Lycoming/Clinton, Northumberland, and Schuylkill.

*The information offered in this newsletter is to increase your awareness of health-related situations. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. If you believe you or someone you support has a condition, please seek the advice of a physician.*

# Signs of Depression You Shouldn't Ignore

By Geisinger Wellness

## Are you depressed? Here are some symptoms to look for — and tips for getting help.

Everyone feels sad now and then. If you're feeling sadder than usual, or the feeling won't go away, you may wonder if you're depressed.

Dr. M. Justin Coffey, chair of Geisinger's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health, helps us spot the symptoms of this common, yet often undiagnosed mental health condition.

### What causes depression?

You may have heard that depression is simply caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, but it's more complex than that.

Research suggests it's a combination of social, psychological, and biological factors and can sometimes be triggered by a traumatic or stressful event. Abuse, conflict, and grief are common triggers, but genetic factors play a major role.

"Depression is often hereditary," explains Dr. Coffey. "In fact, researchers have identified multiple genes that can make a person more vulnerable to depression."

Research has also uncovered a link between depression and the parts of the brain that affect memory and emotions. This link suggests that depression may be related to the amount and function of serotonin, and other brain chemicals, that are

important to how our brains work and transmit messages along nerve fibers.

Serotonin is a chemical in the brain that regulates mood, appetite, sleep, memory and other vital systems. Current research suggests that the amount and how the brain cells use serotonin and other similar neurotransmitters can affect how we experience our emotions.

Depression can appear at any age and vary from person to person.

### Identifying symptoms of depression

Depression can appear at any age, and the symptoms can vary from person to person. For many who have depression, the symptoms are usually severe enough to negatively impact their day-to-day life. But this isn't always the case.

"Some of these symptoms can be a part of life's normal ups and downs," explains Dr. Coffey. "But if you're experiencing several symptoms most of the day, nearly every day,

it's more likely to be depression."

Here are 7 common signs of depression that you shouldn't ignore:

1. Avoiding friends or beloved activities
2. Feelings of hopelessness
3. Trouble sleeping or excessive sleeping
4. Low energy or loss of motivation
5. Lost appetite or binge-eating
6. Difficulty with concentration
7. Suicidal thoughts or tendencies

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## HCQU Online Course Update

We are here for your education credit needs! Our courses are great for DSPs and they are easy and informative.

**Upon completion of each online course, a certificate with 0.5 contact hours that can go towards their annual human services requirement for DSPs will be awarded.**

*Available Now!*

**ALLERGY AWARENESS**

[www.geisinger.org/hcqu](http://www.geisinger.org/hcqu)

ONLINE  
TRAINING



Virtual Cook-Along Classes with Weis Dietitian, *Emily Bumgarner*

# PUMPKIN PIE DIP

**OCTOBER 14, 2021 @ 10 am**

Join Emily as we discuss fall favorite foods, seasonal flavors and be sure to tune in for a Weis Dietitian favorite, Pumpkin Pie Dip



**REGISTRATION  
NOT  
REQUIRED**

**JOIN ON YOUR  
COMPUTER  
OR MOBILE APP**

**ATTEND AS A  
GROUP OR  
INDIVIDUALLY**

**IF POSSIBLE, HAVE  
ALL INGREDIENTS  
PREPARED AND  
MEASURED IN  
ADVANCE TO SAVE  
TIME\***

Click **Zoom link** below to join the meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/93074119391?pwd=aIRINWJDOXY2WnJXc1dPUkpXalVwdz09>

## Pumpkin Pie Dip Recipe:

8 oz package Weis Quality Neufchatel Cheese, softened

½ cup Weis Quality confectioner's sugar

1 tsp Weis Quality pure vanilla extract

1 tsp Weis Quality ground cinnamon

¾ cup Weis Quality pumpkin puree

¼ tsp ground nutmeg

Combine cheese and confectioner's sugar in a medium bowl and beat with a mixer at medium speed until blended. Add pumpkin, vanilla, cinnamon, and nutmeg and beat until smooth and creamy. Cover and chill at least 30 minutes. Serve.

*Please note, there appears to be a canned pumpkin shortage. If you are planning to cook along, you have two options:*

1. Use another canned pie filling for a different flavored dip
2. Cook and puree your own pumpkin

CLOSED CAPTION IS NOT AVAILABLE. CONTACT LESLEY AT [lgmurphy@geisinger.edu](mailto:lgmurphy@geisinger.edu) FOR A CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE. HOSTED BY THE CENTRAL PA HCQU.

Check out this link that includes new COVID-19 resources from the CDC for people with IDD as well as a tip sheet for caregivers and one for health care providers."

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/humandevelopment/COVID-19-Materials-for-People-with-IDD.html>

**October is National Down Syndrome Awareness Month. Visit the National Down Syndrome Society at [www.ndss.org](http://www.ndss.org)**

## Improve Your Mental Health...

(Continued from page 1)

when we exercise, which can help boost your mental health. When possible, try to enjoy some time outdoors – exposure to sunlight and nature boosts those “feel-good” endorphins.



### 3. Say something positive about yourself.

Thinking negative thoughts about yourself can affect how you feel. Ever hear of positive affirmations? Stay with us – they’re more helpful than you think!

Affirmations are positive statements that can help you overcome negative thoughts about yourself. It may seem a little silly at first but repeating positive statements about yourself can help shift your outlook - just like that 5 a.m. workout (that you dreaded) helped you feel stronger.

### 4. Fuel your body.

Getting the right nutrition can help improve your mood. Try getting in a healthy balance of carbohydrates, protein-rich foods and fruits and vegetables. Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids such as fish, flaxseeds and nuts can also help.

### 5. Talk to a friend or loved one.

Talking to a supportive friend or loved one can help improve your emotional well-being. Opening up to someone may be difficult, but a supportive friend that you can trust can help you see new perspectives and remind you of the positives.

### 6. Write it down.

Is something upsetting or bothering you? Write it down in a journal – or wherever you prefer. “Studies show that journaling can help reduce symptoms of depression, boost your mood and enhance your sense of well-being,” says Dr. Quinlan.

### 7. Take a break.

Sometimes stepping away from whatever is stressing you out is the best thing you can do. This allows you to take a breath and come back with a fresh mindset. Do a simple breathing exercise, practice yoga, take a quick walk, watch a funny video on YouTube – whatever helps you feel better.

### 8. Get a good night’s sleep.

“Research has shown that lack of sleep can have a significant negative effect on our mood,” says Dr. Quinlan. Try going to bed at the same time each night and aim for seven to nine hours of sleep.

Have issues getting to sleep? Try cutting back on caffeinated drinks in the afternoon, shutting down all screens an hour before bed or relaxing activities before bed – like a warm bath or a cup of herbal tea.

### It’s okay to not be okay. Don’t be afraid to seek help for your mental health.

Just like we need routine checkups and wellness visits to look after our physical health, we need to monitor and maintain our mental health. If you’re struggling with mental health issues, support is available – reach out to a friend, your doctor, or resources in your community.

“Don’t be afraid to ask for help,” says Dr. Quinlan. “Seeking help will get you the treatment and support you need to start feeling better.” ■

## Signs of Depression...

(Continued from page 2)

Symptoms of depression can vary in severity and may appear in short bursts or persist over weeks.

## Seeking treatment for depression

Do you have some of the symptoms — or know someone who does? There’s good news, according to Dr. Coffey. Treatment is available and can help you feel better.

“Depression can be treated with psychotherapy (or talk therapy), medication or brain stimulation,” he explains. “For many people, combining talk therapy with medication or brain stimulation is the most effective approach.”

Most antidepressants can take between two and four weeks to make an impact. But once your ideal medication is found, you should start to feel more like yourself.

Psychotherapy can take the form of cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, or other forms of therapy.

With cognitive behavioral therapy, a therapist will help you identify unhelpful thoughts and teach you how to challenge and modify them for better outcomes. While interpersonal therapy is a short-term treatment that focuses on the triggers of depression, improving interpersonal relationships and social anxiety.

“There are many safe and effective treatment options available, including different approaches to talk therapy,” says Dr. Coffey. “You may need to try a few options before finding the right fit for you, but don’t let that be a deterrent. Your happiness — and life — are worth it.” ■

## UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS

Test your knowledge and see how many words taken from the newsletter you can unscramble:

SCUDILIA \_\_\_\_\_

TWEES TOOTPA \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRINE \_\_\_\_\_

PERTHAY \_\_\_\_\_

MENDORYS \_\_\_\_\_

TRIOPIRY \_\_\_\_\_

DAMPREVE \_\_\_\_\_

SHIPENNORD \_\_\_\_\_

CREMPOUT \_\_\_\_\_

FIRSTFAMONIA \_\_\_\_\_

TAVITOMION \_\_\_\_\_

SIRENPOSED \_\_\_\_\_

ANSWERS TO WORD SCRAMBLE:

*Suicidal, Sweet Potato, Drained, Therapy, Syndrome, Priority, Revamped, Endorphins, Computer, Affirmations, Motivation, Depression*



## HCQU's New Website Design!

If you haven't been to our website lately, you must go and check us out! We have revamped the whole site and given it a crisp, clean, new look. It's easier to maneuver around in and you will find it more informative!

Check us out at

<https://www.geisinger.org/hcqu>

# Cooking Corner

## Black Bean and Sweet Potato Chili

Submitted by Kristy Campbell

2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 small onion, diced  
2 small sweet potatoes, peeled, chopped  
2 medium carrots, sliced  
1/2 red bell pepper, chopped, optional  
1 (15-oz) can black beans  
1 (15-oz) can diced tomatoes, or tomato sauce  
1/2 cup water, or vegetable broth  
1 tablespoon chili powder  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon cayenne, or to taste



1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper  
Fresh cilantro, for garnish

Heat olive oil in Dutch oven or soup pot, over medium heat. Add garlic and onions; sauté for 1 to 2 minutes. Add sweet potatoes, carrots, and bell pepper to pan and cook until onions are soft, 5 to 6 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low and add remaining ingredients, stirring to combine well. Allow chili to simmer, partially covered and stirring occasionally over medium-low heat, for 20 to 25 minutes, until the flavors have mingled, and the sweet potatoes, carrots, and bell peppers are soft. Serve in a bowl with desired chili toppings.

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