



Nutrition Bites is a newsletter that highlights helpful information on staying safe, an easy and healthy recipe to try with your family, physical activity ideas, and food resources in your area. We know you are taking extra steps to keep you and your family safe during this pandemic. Our goal is to work together to provide information to help our community maintain the safety of us all.

STAYING HEALTHY



Shorter winter days may lead to seasonal depression.

Seasonal depression is a mood disorder affecting people from the beginning of winter through spring. It changes your mood and affects how you feel, think, and handle everyday activities. Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing any form of depression. Follow these tips for reducing symptoms of seasonal depression:

- **Make healthy food choices.** Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy foods help balance chemicals in the brain, which improves mood, concentration, and alertness.
- **Reduce stimulants.** Sugar, caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol contribute to dips in mood and energy levels.
- **Be physically active.** Exercise can improve mood and help reduce stress.
- **Spend time outside.** Exposure to natural light will combat symptoms.
- **Make time for yourself.** Try activities like art, reading, cooking, and connecting with friends and family.

RECIPES AND NUTRITION TIPS



Did you know food can boost your mood?

Our [colorful quesadillas](#) are packed with spinach and red bell peppers. Dark leafy greens like spinach have folate, which helps produce serotonin, one of the happy hormones. Red and orange fruits and vegetables provide antioxidants to help prevent cell damage in the brain. The whole-wheat tortilla pumps up the fiber content and feeds the healthy bacteria in our gut. A healthy gut sends signals to our brain to increase our mood. Add sliced avocado on the side for some healthy fats for better brain functioning.

Try this salmon salad recipe for an additional way to eat mood-boosting foods: <https://youtu.be/aApc8YlyG2E>

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TIPS



Physical activity will help improve your mood and well-being.

Physical activity is a healthy way to combat seasonal depression. Exercise helps release endorphins (one of the happy hormones). Endorphins increase energy levels, help you sleep, and reduce stress and anxiety. Physical activity is important for overall physical health at any age or fitness level. Try these exercises and fight the winter blues.

- **Resistance workouts** can incorporate weights or the resistance of your own body weight, as when doing push-ups or planks.
- **High-intensity interval training (HIIT)** includes quick, intense bursts of exercise followed by short recovery periods. This training gets and keeps your heart rate up. HIIT workouts include high-and low-intensity exercises like high knees, bodyweight squats, and lunges.
- **Cardiovascular** activity refers to any activity that increases heart rate and respiration while using large muscle groups. Try a moderate-intensity cardio activity like brisk walking.
- **Gentle stretching** like tai chi or yoga can reduce stress and calm the body and mind.

For more information and how-to videos, visit <https://www.nutrition.gov/topics/exercise-and-fitness/exercise-examples-and-videos>.

FOOD ACCESS RESOURCES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Healthy Incentives Program – It's HIP to Be Healthy! Massachusetts residents can use their HIP benefits at winter farmers' markets. To locate markets near you, visit this [interactive map](#).

P-EBT provides food support to help families with children who receive free and reduced-price school meals. If you think your student qualifies but you did not receive a card or a letter in October, call the DTA Assistance Line at 877-382-2363.

Project Bread – Learn about food assistance resources available to the residents of Massachusetts. Visit ProjectBread.org or call Project Bread's Food Source Hotline at 800-645-8333. This number is toll-free and confidential. Hotline hours: Monday–Friday, 8am to 7pm; Saturday, 10am to 2pm.

SNAP – You may be eligible for the Massachusetts Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides monthly food benefits to individuals and families who qualify. Apply for [SNAP benefits](#) and learn more about recipes and healthy eating through [SNAP education](#).

The Massachusetts Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program – WIC is a free nutrition program that provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, referrals to healthcare, and other services to Massachusetts families who qualify. You can check your [eligibility](#) and [apply](#) for WIC online.

USDA extends free meals for kids through June 30, 2021. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) extends summer meal programs to continue serving free meals to all children. For more information, visit <https://meals4kids.org/find-summer-meal-site> to find free meals for kids. If you have questions about receiving meals from your school district, contact them directly.

To learn more about nutrition education lessons provided by the UMass Extension Nutrition Education Program, visit: <https://ag.umass.edu/nutrition>.