



March Is Sleep Awareness Month

March 2021

The latest health and wellness news, tips, and updates from the Lay Benefits Department of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston

LOOKING AHEAD...

Daylight Savings Time

Don't forget to reset your clocks March 14th!

Wellness Webinars

Discover new webinars offered this month

COVID-19 Vaccinations

Find out more information on the vaccine and locations offering vaccinations near you

Winter Exercise

With snow and ice on the ground, what can we do to work out safely?



Improve Your Snooze

This month we are celebrating Sleep Awareness! In a 2020 [study](#), the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) found that 62% of Americans reported feeling sleepy an average of three days a week. Limited sleep not only affects our mood, but can affect our work performance, relationships, level of physical activity, and mental focus. Increased stress also leads to poor sleep, impacting our ability to react to stressors throughout the day. The CDC also [found](#) that the role of sleep is crucial in lowering our risk and the management of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. Sleep can help encourage innate and adaptive immunity. Innate immunity is the body's first line of defense that helps to keep harmful materials from entering our bodies. Adaptive immunity builds over time through exposure and the production of antibodies. These immunities work together to help increase our body's inflammatory response, which helps fight infection and even improves the effectiveness of vaccines. With 7-9 hours of sleep as the recommended average, what can we do to improve our sleep each night?

Lenten Reflection

During this season of reflection and preparation of Easter, it's important to remember that the season is not just about practicing self-control, fasting, or giving up our luxuries. This Lenten season, let us give to others through acts of kindness, sharing our talents, lending our time, and giving alms to those in need. Take some time this month to reflect on what you are grateful for after this difficult year, the obstacles you have overcome, the strengthening of your faith, and the promise of a wonderful year ahead.

Daylight Savings Time

Time to spring forward an hour! On March 14th, we re-enter Daylight Savings Time (DST). First proposed in 1895, DST is the practice of adding an hour in the Spring and losing an hour in the Fall so that night falls later in the day. Not widely implemented until World War I, DST has become a yearly practice for less than 40% of countries around the world to take advantage of more daylight throughout the summer. With extra daylight comes more Vitamin D to help keep our bones, teeth, and muscles healthy!



Easy Tips for Better Sleep

Create a sleep-inducing bedroom. Purchase blackout curtains to limit the amount of light coming into the room, ensure proper neck support from pillows, find a comfortable room temperature, and even spritz a relaxing scent like lavender in the room to help ease you to sleep.

Redesign your bedtime routine. Make sure to schedule time just for sleep. Set a bedtime alarm, try to wake up at the same time every morning, and avoid taking naps longer than 30 minutes at a time. Small adjustments can be made over a few weeks to help you sleep better and longer.

Limit smart devices. It's easy to get carried away binging our favorite shows or scrolling social media, but did you know that blue light from our devices actually keeps us awake long after we put our phones or tablets down? Blue light suppresses melatonin, the sleeping hormone. Avoid bright screens two to three hours before bedtime, consider wearing blue light glasses when looking at screens for long periods of time, and try out the Night or Dark Mode on your mobile device!

Rethink that late afternoon caffeine. Caffeine can affect us for up to six hours after consumption. While sometimes that 2 p.m. slump urges us to get a coffee or tea, it's important to avoid caffeinated drinks later in the evening to prevent sleep disruption.

Get moving! While it can be hard to fit in physical activity when we're tired or exhausted, physical activity helps us fall asleep and stay asleep, decreasing insomnia while also improving overall health. Try out some gentle stretching videos on YouTube or hit the treadmill at a time that best fits your schedule.

[Sleep Awareness Week is March 14th-20th](#)

Wellness Webinars

Employees and spouses enrolled in one of the RCAB Health Plans and registered for the Blue Cross *AHealthyMe* program will earn \$20 toward their Healthy Equity HRA account for attending a wellness webinar. Points are awarded for a maximum of five wellness webinars/family activities per Plan Year.

Beyond Sleep Hygiene: Best Sleep Practices Friday, March 12th @ 12 pm

Participants will learn the best tips and tricks to improve their sleep, fall asleep faster, and wake up feeling more refreshed.

[Click Here to Register](#)

Immunity Boosters: Beat Colds and the Flu with Superfoods

Monday, March 15th @ 4 pm

Nutrition plays a large part in strengthening our immune systems to fight off illnesses and infections, but what are antioxidants and phytonutrients? Where can we find them? This webinar is designed to inform participants of superfoods that can help our immune systems perform their best.

[Click Here to Register](#)

To Have or Not to Have Caffeine? That is the Question

Friday, March 26th @ 12 pm

Whether you're a coffee person or a tea person, participants will learn about the effects of caffeine on their bodies, how much caffeine is really too much, and what we can do to make better choices.

[Click Here to Register](#)

Relax and Unwind with James Parker-Ashley Wednesday, March 31st @ 5 pm

For Sleep Awareness Month, join James Parker-Ashley in a light class that focuses on stretching, range of motion, and flexibility to get a head-start on a good night's rest!

[Click Here to Access Zoom Class](#)

Email Kayla Fuller at kfuller@rcab.org to report your attendance.



In Case You Missed It...

You can still view the recorded webinars from February listed below. After viewing these webinars, please self-report your viewing to Kayla Fuller, Benefits Assistant, at kfuller@rcab.org and you will earn 20 HRA points if you are registered in *AHealthyMe* and have not yet exceeded the maximum number of wellness webinars/family activities for the current Plan Year (max of 5).

Disease Prevention Webinar- Solutions for Heart Health

[Click here to Access Webinar](#)

Intermittent Fasting - Health and Harmony

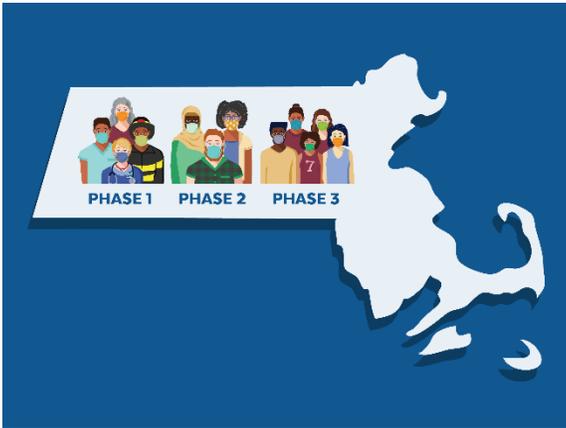
[Click Here to Access Webinar](#)

Nutrition Education Webinar- Build a Heart Smart Pantry and Cook for Wellness

[Click Here to Access Webinar](#)

Low Impact Cardio Fitness Class - James Parker-Ashley

[Click Here to Access Zoom Class](#)



COVID-19 Vaccination Information

As COVID-19 vaccines become more available across the country and Massachusetts over the next few months, it's important to stay informed!

To find out more information about Massachusetts vaccine qualifications and facts, please visit <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine>.

To find out more information regarding COVID-19 vaccines, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/index.html>.

Were you exposed to someone with COVID-19? Are you experiencing symptoms? To find a COVID-19 testing site near you, visit <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-testing>.

Until the vaccine is more readily available, please visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-resources-for-residents> to find out more information on what you can do to stop the spread and keep you, your families, and the community healthy.

Additional information from Blue Cross Blue Shield, which is accessible [here](#), helps you prepare for the vaccine and learn more about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. Health Plan members using CVS for the vaccine should show their CVS ID cards; those using a mass vaccination site or a doctor's office/hospital should show their Blue Cross ID cards.

We Have Some Winners!

Congratulations to everyone who participated in the RCAB European Expedition Steps Challenge, which ended on February 21. We hope you enjoyed your European travel! Kayla Fuller will contact the winning team and top participants about their Fitbit prizes once the participation report is available in early March.

Stay tuned for news on the next Challenge...





Winter Exercise

Colder temperatures often mean more time inside. What can we do to combat a sedentary lifestyle?

- Working from home? Exercise on your lunch break! - Your workout doesn't have to be a high-intensity circuit or involve running for 30 minutes outside. You can set up a workout station in the living room to follow an easy YouTube video. Try stretching out the muscles that shorten when you sit for long periods of time.
- Take a walk - Bundle up with a hat and gloves to go walking outside for 30 minutes around your neighborhood. Don't forget to bring some motivating music with you!
- Did it snow? Shoveling counts as exercise! - Shoveling is a great way to fit in workout minutes. However, because shoveling snow can cause pain and injury when proper body mechanics are not used, consider the following tips:
 - o Use a Curved Shovel - A curved handle is ergonomic and allows you to use a wider grip for lifting snow.
 - o Keep Your Spine in Alignment - Try to keep your head in line with your spine. Keep your back straight and avoid lifting weight using only your back muscles. Always keep a soft bend in your knees and lift the snow as if you're picking up a heavy box from the floor.
 - o Avoid Twisting - Back injuries can occur from throwing snow over your shoulders or from using a twisting motion to shovel snow. Pick up lighter piles of snow, stand up straight, and pivot or turn to where you want to place the snow.

In good health,

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Benefits Department