



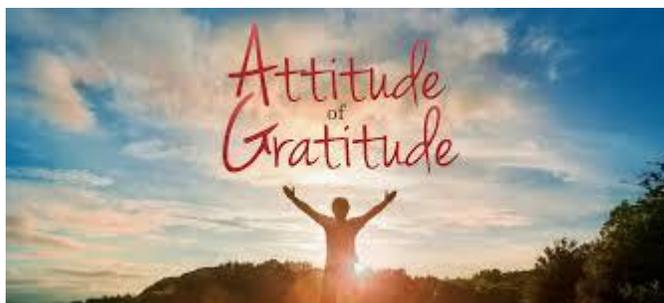
November is Gratitude Month

Gratitude. The word is derived from the Latin word *gratia*, which means thankfulness, grace, and gratefulness. In the midst of a pandemic, some may find it challenging to find something for which they are grateful. Our way of life has changed, we may have lost loved ones, and the prospect of the unknown may be anxiety-provoking. Yet the Thanksgiving holiday, even this year in its potentially abridged version with fewer family members and friends at our table, still gives us the chance to count our blessings.

This month, when we are likely to indulge during the Thanksgiving holiday, the Archdiocese of Boston Benefits Department is focusing on another means of improving wellness and wellbeing. Cultivating an attitude of gratitude can be beneficial to our physical and mental health!

According to neuroscience studies at the National Institutes of Health, when we feel gratitude, our brain: (1) increases activity in the hypothalamus, which improves sleep and nutrition and decreases depression; and (2) activates dopamine. Dopamine is a type of neurotransmitter or chemical messenger that plays a role in how we feel pleasure. Robert Emmons, Ph.D, an expert on the science of gratitude, conducted a multitude of studies on the link between gratitude and wellbeing. In conducting research for his book *Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier*, he discovered “scientific proof that when people regularly engage in a systemic cultivation of gratitude, they experience a variety of measurable benefits: psychological, physical, and interpersonal.” His research confirmed what seems obvious, that gratitude makes people more happy.

Research has also shown that gratitude can decrease stress, improve our moods, strengthen relationships, enhance empathy, and reduce aggression. Given the widespread benefits of practicing gratitude, which doesn't take much time, we should give thanks not just during the Thanksgiving holiday but year-round.



How can we practice gratitude? Here are a few tips:

1. Keep a journal of things for which you are thankful. You can review your list on a regular basis to remind yourself.
2. Send a thank you note. Expressing gratitude to others makes them feel appreciated and improves relationships.
3. Count your blessings. Be intentional about setting aside time every week to contemplate your blessings, however small or seemingly insignificant.
4. Express thanks to other people, including people with whom you work. When people feel appreciated for their work, they tend to work better – an added benefit!
5. Practice mindfulness. Mindfulness is a state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences, which can be brought on through practice. When we are more mindful, it is easier to experience gratitude because we are aware of the good things in life.



Eat Smart Month

While we look forward to our favorite and sometimes decadent foods during the Thanksgiving holiday, we often use this holiday as an excuse to indulge in foods that may not be the best choices for our overall health. Consider the following tips from the American Heart Association, which designates November as **Eat Smart Month**.

1. **Swap ingredients.** Reduce your sodium intake by replacing salt with herbs and spices. Try substituting lower-sodium canned and frozen products. About 70% of the sodium Americans consume comes from processed, prepackaged, or restaurant foods.
2. **Add more fruits and vegetables to your usual dishes.** They add crucial vitamins, minerals, and fiber to your diet.
3. **Don't rush.** Take your time as you savor your meals. Avoid reading or watching television while eating.
4. **Choose healthy snacks.** Try not to succumb to unhealthy choices, and instead choose foods that are nutrient-rich and contain fewer sugars.
5. **Choose** lean meats, fat-free, or reduced fat dairy products, and healthy oils.
6. **Hydrate.** Staying hydrated is critical to heart health. A well hydrated body helps your heart pump blood more easily from your blood vessels to muscles. Drinking water rather than sweetened beverages works best for staying hydrated.



Don't Forget Your Flu Shot!

Employees and family members enrolled in one of the RCAB Health Plans can get a flu shot at any CVS Caremark network pharmacy at no cost to you. Bring your CVS prescription card and valid photo ID. To learn more about flu shots and find a pharmacy in the CVS Caremark network that administers flu shots, [click here](#).

Reminder: Children attending childcare through college in Massachusetts must be vaccinated by December 31, 2020. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Wellness Webinars

Employees and spouses enrolled in one of the RCAB Health Plans and registered in the Blue Cross [ahealthyme](#) portal will earn \$20 into their Health Equity HRA accounts for attending a wellness webinar. Points are awarded for a maximum of five wellness webinars/family activities per Plan Year. There is no need to notify the Benefits Office of your participation in these webinars because we receive attendance reports. **This month for our cooking demonstration, we are featuring our very own Carol Gustavson, Director – Benefit Trusts/Plan Administrator!**

Work & Life Balance: Time Mastery & Self Care

Thursday, November 5, 1: 00 pm

[Click Here to Register](#)

We are in a season of change, challenge and opportunity. Are you feeling overwhelmed? You're not alone. So many people are suffering from chronic exhaustion that is unhealthy, unnecessary and unsustainable. Attend this session and learn how to manage your time and amplify your results by doing less, eliminating energy drains and distractions, and connecting with your true nature. This session is taught by a Master Life Coach.

Cooking With Carol – Pre-Thanksgiving Meatless and Dairy-Free Recipes

Contact Kayla Fuller at kfuller@rcab.org to view the recorded webinar which will be available after 11/12.

Watch this delightful, one-of-a-kind webinar featuring your Director of Benefits in action and cooking some of her healthy favorites. Discover what gives Carol that healthy glow and youthful energy to serve all of your benefits needs! These recipes will appeal to the most discerning of palates.

Mastering Your Gut Health Workshop, featuring Anne Dwyer of **Health & Harmony**

Tuesday, November 17, 4 p.m.

[Click Here to Register](#)

Are you struggling with --

- Autoimmune problems (such as thyroid issues, rheumatoid arthritis, type 1 diabetes)
- Digestive issues (such as irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, or bloating)
- Sleep problems
- UTIs or yeast infections
- Skin rashes and allergies
- Sugar cravings
- Unexplained fatigue or sluggishness
- Unexplained mood disorders, such as depression or anxiety
- Unexplained weight gain or weight loss

If you experience one or more of these symptoms, you could have a gut imbalance. In this workshop, you will learn how to boost your immune system, restore your gut, and feel healthier than ever.

View Previously Recorded October Webinars

You can still view the recorded webinars listed below during the month of November. 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).

The Truth About Carbs: Blood Sugar Basics: [Click Here to Access Recording](#)

Dig Into Dark Chocolate: [Click Here to Access Recording](#)

Our Fight Against Breast Cancer: [Click Here to Access Recording](#)

How to Stop Sugar Addiction: [Click Here to Access Recording](#)

Exercise of the Month

Thanksgiving Gut Busters

Burn some calories from home with cardio exercises that can be completed anywhere.

Burpees

1. From a standing position, transition to a plank by placing your hands on the ground and stepping back or jumping into place.
2. Complete a push up or hold the plank position.
3. Walk or jump the legs towards the hands and stand back up.
4. Jump or raise the arms.
5. Repeat.
6. Try to do three sets of 10.



Alternating Lunges

1. Stand with your feet together.
2. Step forward with the right foot into a lunge position. Be sure to bring the right knee to a 90-degree angle.
3. Use your right leg to push back into the original standing position.
4. Complete steps 2 and 3 with the left leg.
5. Alternate between your right and left legs.
6. Try to do three sets of 20.

Note: raise your arms while lunging to increase your heart rate and burn more calories!



Wellness Champions

The Wellness Champion Program is well underway! Wellness Champions attended the October 6 virtual kick off meeting to learn about the program and will be meeting on a monthly basis throughout the Plan Year. These Wellness Champions are your local resource for questions about the RCAB Health Plans' Wellness Incentive Program and ongoing wellness activities.

To find out who the Wellness Champion is at your location, please contact Kayla Fuller, Benefits Assistant, at kfuller@rcab.org.

In good health,

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Benefits Department