

HEALTHY *You!*

Your Source for a Happy and Healthy Lifestyle

March 2026

THIS EDITION FEATURES:

Live long, live well

Eating locally
and seasonally

Go with your gut

Financial spring
cleaning

Create to feel great

Heart-healthy hiking

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Independence 





Ever wonder why some people seem to thrive with age, staying active, joyful, and sharp well into their later years? In certain parts of the world, people regularly live well into their 90s and beyond — often in good health. These areas are known as Blue Zones, where communities naturally support longer, healthier lives through everyday habits. Researchers have studied these places to understand what residents are doing right, and the answers are surprisingly simple.

The good news is that you don't have to move across the globe to benefit. You can start by incorporating a few of these healthy habits into your routine:

Eat mindfully

Blue Zone residents don't diet. They eat until they're about 80% full and focus on mostly plant-based foods. Mealtime is an experience savored with others. Slow, mindful eating helps prevent overeating and boosts digestion.

Move naturally

No gyms, no marathons — just easy, organic movements built into every day. Whether it's gardening, walking to visit a neighbor, or cooking from scratch, physical activity is part of life, not a chore.

Live intentionally

Knowing your purpose can add up to seven years to your life. Purpose brings structure, motivation, and joy to each day.

Belong to something bigger

Almost all Blue Zone centenarians are part of a faith-based or spiritual community. Participating even once a week has been linked to longer life expectancy.

Nurture connections

Strong family ties and friendships are key. Social circles that encourage healthy behaviors also provide emotional support and help reduce stress.

Eating locally and seasonally



What we eat plays a huge role in how we feel. One simple but powerful habit to boost your health and support your community is to eat locally grown foods in season. Depending on where you live, that could mean enjoying fresh spinach, carrots, leeks, citrus fruits, and early spring greens very soon.

Seasonal produce is harvested at the peak of freshness, when food tastes its best and is packed with nutrients. Locally sourced food travels fewer miles, which reduces environmental impact. Plus, buying from nearby farmers' markets or local growers helps create a sense of community and strengthens the local economy.

Eating in tune with the seasons can also inspire you to try healthier recipes and connect with nature's rhythms. It's a small shift with big benefits for you, local farmers, and the planet.

If you're not sure what's in season near you, check out your local farmers' market. Making a few seasonal food swaps each week can make a meaningful difference.





Go with your gut

When you hear “fiber,” you might think of breakfast foods like bran muffins or oatmeal, but this humble nutrient is a quiet hero in our daily diets. Fiber does a lot more than just keep things moving (if you know what we mean!). It supports gut health, keeps you feeling fuller longer, helps balance blood sugar, and even lowers your risk for heart disease.

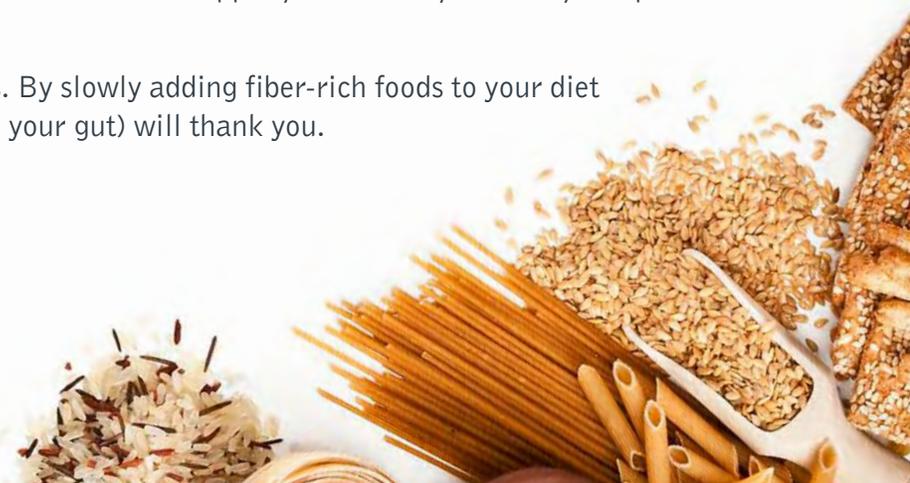
There are two types of fiber: soluble (which dissolves in water and helps lower cholesterol and blood sugar) and insoluble (which helps food move through your digestive system). Both are important and easy to find in everyday foods.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, you should aim for about 25 – 38 grams of fiber per day. Most people only get about half that. So, how do you hit that goal without overhauling your entire diet?

Try small swaps like trading white bread for whole grain bread, snacking on fruit instead of chips, or tossing beans into your salad or soup. The skin of foods like apples, cucumbers, zucchini, and potatoes is also high in fiber, so don't peel that away.

Fiber is a key player in your overall wellness. By slowly adding fiber-rich foods to your diet and drinking plenty of water, your body (and your gut) will thank you.

Sources:
[nutrition.gov](https://www.nutrition.gov)
[nutrition.ucdavis.edu](https://www.nutrition.ucdavis.edu)





RECIPE

Turkey and spinach meatballs

Ingredients

1 lb. ground turkey	1 tsp. garlic powder
1 cup spinach, finely chopped	1 tsp. Italian seasoning
½ cup breadcrumbs	½ tsp. salt
1 egg	¼ tsp. pepper

Directions

1. In a bowl, mix turkey, spinach, breadcrumbs, egg, garlic powder, Italian seasoning, salt, and pepper.
2. Roll mixture into 1-inch balls and place on a lined baking sheet.
3. Bake at 400°F for 15 – 18 minutes until browned and cooked through.
4. Serve with pasta, zucchini noodles, or your favorite dip.



When was the last time you picked up a paintbrush, wrote a poem, or danced just for fun? Creativity isn't just for artists — it's a powerful way to support your overall well-being.

Good for your health

Creative activities like journaling, painting, or playing music help reduce stress, improve clarity, and regulate emotions. They boost dopamine, the brain's "feel-good" chemical, and activate reward centers that enhance mood. Creative pursuits can even ease anxiety and improve cognitive function.

Finding time to be creative

Busy schedule? No problem. You only need 15 minutes a day. Doodle during a break, try a new recipe, or create a photo collage.

Get everyone together

Plan a night with friends or family where everyone makes a small craft. Social media craft sites are great for inspiration. Creativity doesn't need to be perfect or productive — it just needs to be yours.

You don't have to be "an artist"

You don't need advanced artistic skills to enjoy creative time. The simple act of making something just for yourself can bring joy, calm, and lasting emotional benefits.

Heart-healthy



hiking

You don't have to live near a mountain to enjoy the benefits of hiking. Whether you're in a big city, small town, or somewhere in between, hiking is one of the most accessible, low-cost ways to support your mental and physical health.

Moderate-intensity activities like brisk walking and hiking can lower your risk of heart disease, strengthen bones and muscles, and boost mood. Even better, you don't need rugged trails or fancy gear to get started. A tree-lined city park, community garden, or walking path in your neighborhood can offer the same stress-relieving benefits as a remote forest.

Spending as little as 20 minutes in nature can reduce stress hormones like cortisol, improve focus, and ease symptoms of anxiety and depression. Hiking also encourages mindfulness: the sights, sounds, and fresh air can keep you grounded in the present. Or you can listen to music or a podcast, or chat with a friend. It all counts.

You can also vary your routes by checking out nature preserves, urban parks, waterfronts, local green spaces, and country roads. Lace up your sneakers and enjoy the many pathways to peace.

MONTHLY QUIZ

1. Which of the following best explains eating habits in Blue Zones?

- A. Eat every two hours
- B. Eat until you're 80% full
- C. Eat until you're full
- D. Never eat alone

2. Which of the following is NOT a benefit of eating seasonal produce?

- A. Fresher taste
- B. Longer shelf-life
- C. More nutrients
- D. Smaller environmental footprint

3. Which of the following is a benefit of regular financial check-ins?

- A. Better sleep
- B. Increased credit score
- C. Reduced stress
- D. All of the above

4. Which of the following is NOT a proven benefit of hiking?

- A. Improved focus
- B. Increased blood pressure
- C. Lower stress
- D. Stronger bones

1. B, 2. B, 3. D, 4. B

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Independence 

Independence Blue Cross is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your health care providers, not replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.