

# Healthy Workplace

Your monthly Anthem wellness newsletter



## Managing Back Pain

At some point, most of us will suffer from back pain. It can happen because of something as small as sleeping in a strange position. Or, it can be from something more serious like an accident or injury. With 63% of Americans now overweight or obese, back pain is on the rise due to the strain of that excess weight on the body. Back pain is one of the most common reasons people visit a doctor or miss work.



### How to avoid problems

Fortunately, there are things you can do to help with back pain:

- Exercise regularly to increase muscle strength and balance. Add total body strength training; a strong core can prevent injury.
- Use good posture and stay at a healthy body weight.
- Eat a healthy diet with plenty of calcium and vitamin D to strengthen your spine. This also helps prevent osteoporosis (thinning of bone tissue and loss of bone density over time).
- Be careful when lifting heavy objects. Be sure to support your back by keeping it straight when you do have to lift heavy objects and always lift with your leg muscles.
- Don't smoke. Smoking restricts blood flow to the discs that cushion your vertebrae, lowers calcium absorption and prevents new bone growth.
- Moderation! Don't be a weekend warrior with sports or overdo it with chores around the house.
- Try to lower the stress in your life.

### Common causes of back pain

**Injuries:** Most causes of back pain are simple muscle or ligament strains and fractures that can cause short-term or long-term (chronic) pain. Strains are tears in the ligaments that support the spine. They can happen when you twist or lift the wrong way. Fractures can be caused by osteoporosis or from falls or other accidents.

**Problems with your spine:** A common problem that happens as we age is intervertebral disk degeneration. That's when the disks between the vertebrae break down and lose their cushioning ability. Other problems include muscle spasms, tension and ruptured or herniated disks.

**Other health conditions:** Scoliosis, arthritis, pregnancy, kidney stones or infections, endometriosis, osteoporosis and fibromyalgia can all cause back pain. Spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal column, puts pressure on the spinal cord and nerves

### When is back pain serious?

Most back pain goes away on its own with the right exercise and preventive steps, but some back pain may be a sign of other health problems. Be sure to talk to your doctor if:

- Pain goes down your leg below your knee.
- Your leg, foot, groin or rectal area feels numb.
- You have fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, weakness or sweating.
- You lose control over going to the bathroom.
- Your pain was caused by an injury.
- Your pain is so intense you can't move around.
- Your pain doesn't seem to be getting better after two to three weeks.

## LOW BACK PAIN EXERCISES



Source: Anthem Time Well Spent: <https://timewellspent.anthem.com/uploads/bcb/2801ANMENABS.pdf>

## Healthy Fall Pumpkin Chili



*This Healthy Fall Pumpkin Chili is an autumn favorite. It's loaded with healthful ingredients and big bold flavors. Comforting, cozy, and deliciously savory*

### Ingredients

- 2 TB olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 7 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 TB chili powder
- 1 TB ground cumin
- 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 2 tsp oregano
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 1 lb ground turkey
- 3 TB tomato paste
- 2 green + 1 orange/yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 cans (14.5 oz each) fire-roasted tomatoes, with juices
- 3 cups chicken or turkey broth
- 2 (14 oz each) cans black beans, rinsed well and drained
- 1/2 cup pure pumpkin puree
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Shredded cheddar cheese for topping, optional

### Instructions

- ◇ In a large heavy pot or Dutch oven, heat olive oil until hot. Add onion and garlic, stirring until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add chili powder, cumin, pumpkin pie spice, oregano, and coriander. Stir to combine, 10 seconds.
- ◇ Add ground turkey to pot and sprinkle 1 tsp salt over it; cook/stir to break up into small pieces. When turkey is cooked through, add tomato paste and stir 30 seconds.
- ◇ Add bell peppers, fire-roasted tomatoes with juices, and broth. Scrape bottom of pan while stirring. Bring chili to a simmer; simmer covered for 20 minutes. Add beans and pumpkin puree. Bring chili back to a simmer for 15-20 min or until heated through. Remove from heat. Add additional kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Serve warm, with shredded cheddar cheese if desired.

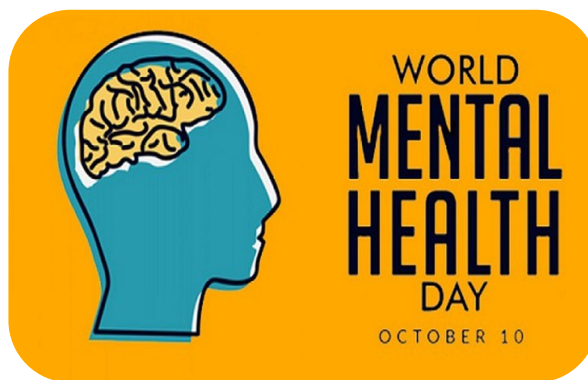
Recipe Source: <https://www.chewoutloud.com/healthy-fall-pumpkin-chili-recipe/>

## Did You Know?

- ◆ Pumpkin is a type of winter squash that is commonly viewed as a vegetable, however pumpkin is scientifically a fruit.
- ◆ Pumpkin is packed with nutrients that may boost your immune system, such as vitamin A and C, E, iron and folate.
- ◆ Pumpkin has roughly 50 calories and 12 grams of carbs per cup. This makes it a nutrient-dense food. It's also a good source of fiber!
- ◆ Pumpkin, once sliced and cut, can be easily roasted, puréed into soup or baked into pies.
- ◆ Pumpkin seeds, also known as pepitas, are highly nutritious and provide about 150 calories, 15 grams of healthy fat, just a few grams of carbs, and 8 to 10 grams of plant protein in one ounce (roughly a quarter cup). They are notably high in magnesium, which most people don't get enough of in the Standard American Diet (SAD). Magnesium is needed for hundreds of chemical reactions in our bodies. Adequate levels of magnesium are important for the regulation of blood sugar levels, control of blood pressure, and health of our heart and bones.



## World Mental Health Day 2021



The overall objective of **World Mental Health Day** is to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilize efforts in support of mental health. The day provides an opportunity for all stakeholders working on mental health issues to talk about their work, and what more needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.

Source:  
1. Image Source: <https://vbjramias.com/current-affairs/world-mental-health-day/5f815a721d5d6f48a1c85b16/>  
2. Source: <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/pumpkin>  
3. Source: <https://www.nutritionandyou.com/pumpkin.html>  
4. Image: <https://markets2019newbury.com/blog/cooking-with-pumpkin/>  
5. Source: <https://www.health.com/nutrition/pumpkin-seeds-benefits>  
6. Source: <https://www.webmd.com/diet/health/benefits-pumpkin-seeds#1>

# Wellness Bites for your Quick Wellness Needs!

## Take Back Your Health



Over-consuming calories, especially from ultra-processed foods, have become magnified over the past year. A nationwide survey revealed that 100 million Americans are eating 4,000+ extra calories a week, mainly in the form of highly processed food-like substances.

**Getting your health in check is the most important thing you can do right now.**

If you don't know where to start, this is your cheat sheet. These are the four areas that are essential to take back your health.

### Eat The Rainbow

Beyond simply being a mechanism for conveying calories, food is a source of special ingredients that can prevent and treat disease and transform your health. They are called phytonutrients—special plant chemicals that are not calories, protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals, but special molecules that interact with your biology and can act like switches on your DNA to heal your body (called epigenetics).

Where do we find these phytochemicals? In colorful plant foods—blueberries, arugula, broccoli, bok choy, raspberries, purple cabbage, and more. Make vegetables the bulk of your meals, and add in a small serving of quality protein, like grass-fed meats, organic or pasture-raised poultry, or wild-caught fish, and don't skimp the healthy fats from avocado, nuts, seeds, and olive oil. I like to challenge myself to find one new vegetable to try every time I visit my local farmer's market.

### Do Not Neglect Your Sleep

Are you glued to your TV and smartphone, waiting for the next depressing bit of information to be released? This habit, amongst others, is damaging your sleep. My rule is to not look at your phone or TV for half an hour after you wake up and before going to bed. Instead, start your morning with meditation, 15 minutes of sunlight, and a huge glass of water. And before bed, write a list of 5 things you're grateful for. Other device-free ways to wind down at night include:

- Take a bath
- Practice deep breathing
- Go for a walk
- Connect with your loved ones
- Go star-gazing

Keeping your room cool and dark and maintaining a consistent sleep and wake schedule also help support a healthy sleep routine.

### Move Your Body, No Matter Where You Are

With some gyms being closed, it can be challenging to work out the way we once did. But you don't need a gym. All you need is your body and a little bit of space for some HIIT, yoga, or stretching. Grab a simple set of dumbbells and find a YouTube video or go for a walk if you can leave your home safely. Keep your body moving—this is critical.

Here are three workouts you can find on YouTube. There are a variety of videos to choose from. Choose what works best for you. They are for different levels of fitness, so *be sure to consult your trainer or physician if you're just getting started*:

- ◇ [30-minute cardio workout](#)
- ◇ [Morning flow yoga](#)
- ◇ [20-minute stretch and mobility](#)

### Reduce Stress and Anxiety

Let's face it, most people suffer with fear and anxiety especially in these current times we are in. We can't change the facts, but we can change our response to what is happening around us. Just taking the time to breathe, do a digital detox, spend time in nature, connect with loved ones, and do joyful things can significantly reduce anxiety. Eating whole, balanced meals reduces anxiety because it keeps our blood sugar balanced.

Take note of how you spend your time daily and what sorts of inputs you allow into your life. If you are constantly doing things that feed your anxiety, it's time for some habit changes. Make a list of things that reduce feelings of stress and anxiety, and make time for them daily.

Start with these four simple strategies, and you'll be surprised at how much better you feel.

**EAT WELL  
MOVE DAILY  
HYDRATE OFTEN  
SLEEP LOTS  
LOVE YOUR BODY**