

# Healthy Workplace

Your monthly Anthem wellness newsletter



## January is Thyroid Awareness Month!

Up to 20 million Americans suffer from a thyroid condition, and more than half don't know it. Women are five to eight times more likely to have thyroid problems, the causes of which remain largely unknown.



The thyroid is located in the middle of the lower neck, where it produces hormones T3 and T4, both of which affect every cell in the body. Here's what they do:

- Control body temperature and heart rate
- Regulate the rate at which calories are burned, affecting weight loss or gain
- Slow down or speed up the heartbeat
- Influence the rate that food moves through the digestive tract
- Control the way muscles contract
- Control the rate at which dying cells are replaced

If the thyroid is producing too much or too little T3 and T4, those conditions are known as:

**Hyperthyroidism:** occurs when the thyroid produces too much T4. It also can result in Graves disease, a type of hyperthyroidism affecting about 1 percent of the population. This genetic autoimmune condition can cause the tissue and muscle behind the eyes to swell (Graves ophthalmopathy).

**Hypothyroidism:** occurs when the thyroid doesn't produce enough T3 and T4 hormones, or enough thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH). The most common cause of hypothyroidism is an autoimmune disorder known as Hashimoto's thyroiditis. If your thyroid is too low, it is difficult to balance your blood sugar and cholesterol or lose weight.

## Symptoms and Facts about Thyroid Disease

- Symptoms of hyperthyroidism are rapid weight loss, high blood pressure, anxiety, and insomnia.
- Symptoms of hypothyroidism are weak or slow heartbeat; muscular weakness; high cholesterol; fluid retention; constant fatigue; weight gain; depression; slow reflexes; sensitivity to cold; thinning hair; low body temperature; low sex drive thick, puffy, or dry skin; slowed mental processes and poor memory; and constipation.
- Goiter is another thyroid condition; it involves a visibly enlarged thyroid gland, often causing difficulty swallowing or breathing.



## Tests Can Reduce Complications & Allow for Treatment

It's important to have the thyroid checked during a regular physical, because undiagnosed thyroid disease can lead to serious conditions, including cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis, and infertility. If you are feeling tired for no reason or have any of the signs or symptoms talk to your doctor about thyroid health and ask about testing your thyroid.



## Wellness Tips and Strategies

More research is needed to better understand the impact of foods on thyroid health, but there's some scientific evidence for how a few foods affect the thyroid in both positive and negative ways.

### Eat a whole foods diet:

- ◇ Look for associated problems such as gluten intolerance, food allergies, and heavy metals, as well as deficiencies of vitamin D, selenium, vitamin A, zinc, and omega-3 fats.
- ◇ Choose foods that offer nutritional support for your thyroid, like eggs, sunflower seeds, whole grains, and brazil nuts. Just 1-2 brazil nuts a day can give your body all the selenium it needs!
- ◇ Adequate dietary iodine is essential for normal thyroid function, try foods such as seafood and sea vegetables (Nori, seaweed, and iodized salt) which are rich in iodine.
- ◇ Try adding in Zinc-rich foods such as oysters, beef, poultry, beans, nuts, and seeds.
- ◇ Goitrogenic foods can slow down your thyroid and promote its enlargement, known as a goiter. You don't need to avoid these foods entirely, but you should avoid regularly eating large quantities of them raw, particularly if you have hypothyroidism. These foods are raw cruciferous vegetable (broccoli, cauliflower, kale, bok choy, spinach). Eat these foods cooked instead.

**Practice good sleep hygiene:** Getting not only enough sleep, but quality sleep, can reduce symptoms associated with thyroid disorders.

**Manage stress:** Taking time to practice stress management is worth it. Not only can coping with thyroid disease add stress to your life, but stress hormones such as cortisol can alter the levels of thyroid hormones in your body. (Though results are mixed, there is some evidence that stress may play a causative role in the development of thyroid disease, as well as pregnancy-related thyroid disease.)

**Quit smoking:** Chemicals in cigarette smoke are dangerous for anyone but particularly those with thyroid disease. For example, among people with Graves' disease, smoking both increases the risk of thyroid eye disease and makes treatment less effective.

**Live a resilient life:** Living is challenging enough at times without thyroid disease, but resilience can help. Learn how to laugh even in the midst of troubles. Carry a positive attitude. Lean into your positive relationships and eliminate negative ones. Practice reframing, a skill that entails looking at the same situation in a different light.

Sources:  
1. <https://www.healthstream.com/resources/blog/blog/2020/01/27/use-thyroid-awareness-month-to-raise-awareness-boost-screenings>  
2. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/hypothyroidism/in-depth/hypothyroidism/diag-treat/20096924>  
3. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/nutrition-tips-for-thyroid-wellness-4067153>  
4. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/thyroid-disease-coping-3231191>

# Winter Glow Bowls with Lemon Tahini

Each ingredient in these bowls has been specifically selected for their levels of dietary fiber and vitamin B3 as well as being generally delicious. The focus in this meal is on vibrant, colorful and wholefoods, and it tastes delicious. A Buddha bowl of cumin roasted sweet potatoes and red onions, garlicky black beans, quick pickled cabbage, cooked quinoa, green spinach leaves, crunchy walnuts, sweet apple and pomegranate and creamy lemon and miso tahini dressing.



## Bowls:

- ¾ cup quinoa
- 1 medium sweet potato
- 1 red onion
- ½ tsp cumin
- 1 cup red cabbage, shredded
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 cups black beans, drained
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp cumin
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar

## To Serve:

- 1 apple, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup walnuts
- Fresh herbs, chopped
- Pomegranate
- Lemon Tahini:
- 3 tbsp tahini
- 1 tsp miso paste
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- Salt and black pepper

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 and line a baking tray with parchment paper. Chop the sweet potato and red onion into small chunks and toss with some olive oil, ½ tsp cumin and some salt and black pepper. Roast for 30 minutes or until tender. Add the walnuts to the edge of the tray for the final 10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, cook the quinoa according to packet instructions, drain and leave to one side and fluff with a fork before serving.
3. Add the shredded cabbage to a bowl with 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar, 1 tbsp lemon juice and a pinch of salt. Massage with your hands for a couple of minutes. Leave to one side.
4. Heat a small frying pan with some olive oil, add in the black beans, garlic, ½ tsp smoked paprika, ½ tsp cumin and 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar and cook for a couple of minutes. Season to taste.
5. Prepare the lemon tahini dressing by stirring together all the ingredients until smooth, adding 3-4 tbsp water to reach a pourable consistency. Season with salt and black pepper.
6. Divide the spinach between two bowls, top with the quinoa, roasted vegetables, red cabbage, garlicky beans, sliced apple, walnuts, some fresh herbs, pomegranate and the lemon tahini.

## Wellness Corner

Hello everyone! Cerina from Connecticut here. One of the new habits I took on during this pandemic is a quick 20 minute morning yoga routine. Not only can yoga improve your flexibility and increase your strength, it can also improve your energy levels, reduce stress and anxiety, and aid in weight management.

If you ask me, there is no better way to start the day than with a morning yoga routine. It helps me feel grounded and more energized for my day. I find that turning to yoga before a busy or stressful day goes a long way toward feeling more balanced and centered.

**Check out these 12 basic yoga poses!**

## 12 basic yoga poses



# Wellness Bites for your Quick Wellness Needs!

This past year tested us in more ways than we can count—yet we endured. Let's begin 2021 with a fresh mindset and a renewed commitment to health and well-being! Keep these seven steps in mind as you make your News Years resolution.

## Seven steps for making your New Year's resolutions stick

Maybe you plan to ring in 2021 with a new resolve to quit smoking, lose weight, exercise more, or not sweat the small stuff. And maybe these resolutions sound familiar — maybe just like the ones you made a year ago! How can you ensure that your determination to get healthier in 2021 sticks around past Valentine's Day? By creating new habits.



Creating new habits takes time and energy. A new behavior won't become automatic overnight, but you may enjoy some of its benefits fairly quickly. Also, as you start to take walks regularly or engage in stress-soothing practices, you'll find you won't feel quite right if you stop. That's a great incentive to continue. Keep nudging yourself in the direction you'd like to go. And try the following these tips to help you create long-lasting change.

**Dream big.** Audacious goals are compelling. Want to compete in a marathon or triathlon? Lose 50 pounds or just enough to fit into clothes you once loved? With perseverance, encouragement, and support, you can do it. An ambitious aim often inspires others around you. Many will cheer you on. Some will be happy to help in practical ways, such as training with you or taking on tasks you normally handle so you free up time.

**Break big dreams into small-enough steps.** Now think tiny. Small steps move you forward to your ultimate goal. Look for surefire bets. Just getting to first base can build your confidence to tackle — and succeed at — more difficult tasks. Don't disdain easy choices. If you start every plan with "Make list," you're guaranteed to check one box off quickly. That's no joke: a study on loyalty programs that aim to motivate consumers found giving people two free punches on a frequent-buyer card encouraged repeat business. So break hard jobs down into smaller line items, and enjoy breezing through the easy tasks first.

**Understand why you shouldn't make a change.** That's right. Until you grasp why you're sticking to old habits and routines, it may be hard to muster enough energy to take a hard left toward change. Unhealthy behaviors like overeating and smoking have immediate, pleasurable payoffs as well as costs. So, when you're considering a change, take time to think it through.

You boost your chance of success when the balance of pluses and minuses tips enough to make adopting a new behavior more attractive than standing in place. Engaging in enjoyable aspects of an unhealthy behavior, without the behavior itself, helps too. For

example, if you enjoy taking a break while having a smoke, take the break and enjoy it, but find healthier ways to do so. Otherwise, you're working against a headwind and are less likely to experience lasting success.

**Commit yourself.** Make yourself accountable through a written or verbal promise to people you don't want to let down. That will encourage you to slog through tough spots. One intrepid soul created a Facebook page devoted to her goals for weight loss. You can make a less public promise to your partner or child, a teacher, doctor, boss, or friends. Want more support? Post your promise on Facebook, tweet it to your followers, or seek out folks with like-minded goals online.

**Give yourself a medal.** Don't wait to call yourself a winner until you've pounded through the last mile of your big dream marathon or lost every unwanted ounce. Health changes are often incremental. Encourage yourself to keep at it by pausing to acknowledge success as you tick off small and big steps on your way to a goal. Blast your favorite tune each time you reach 5,000 steps. Get a pat on the back from your coach or spouse. Ask family and friends to cheer you on. Look for an online support group.

**Learn from the past.** Any time you fail to make a change, consider it a step toward your goal. Why? Because each sincere attempt represents a lesson learned. When you hit a snag, take a moment to think about what did and didn't work. Maybe you took on too big a challenge. If so, scale back to a less ambitious challenge, or break the big one into tinier steps. If nailing down 30 consecutive minutes to exercise never seems to work on busy days, break that down by aiming for three 10-minute walks — one before work, one during lunch, one after work — or a 20-minute walk at lunch plus a 10-minute mix of marching, stair climbing, and jumping rope or similar activities slipped into your TV schedule.

**Give thanks for what you do.** Forget perfection. Set your sights on finishing that marathon, not on running it. If you compete to complete, you'll be a winner even if you wind up walking as much as you run. With exercise — and so many other goals we set — you'll benefit even when doing less than you'd like to do. Any activity is always better than none. If your goal for Tuesday is a 30-minute workout at the gym, but you only squeeze in 10 minutes, feel grateful for that. It's enough. Maybe tomorrow will be better.

