

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

## BE THANKFUL THIS MONTH AND ALWAYS

Has anyone ever asked you what it is you are truly grateful for? Did you know that simple question can change your health?

Research shows practicing gratitude each day (or highlighting aspects of your life that you appreciate – family, experiences and challenges) – can dramatically improve your health and wellbeing.

According to a study published in *Personality and Individual Differences*, it was reported that people who are grateful experience fewer aches and pains and feel healthier.

Grateful people also may experience improved self-esteem. Studies have found that experiencing gratitude is an essential component of feeling good about oneself, reducing social comparisons, and reducing resentment toward others for having more money or better jobs. Resentment toward others is a large factor in low self-esteem. Those who are grateful are often able to appreciate what others accomplish, too.

It is important to take time out of each day to give thanks. By reflecting on what you are thankful for, you will be more appreciative of the life you have. One way to do this is by making thankfulness a routine during dinnertime. Have each person say what they are grateful for before they eat – the answers may surprise you!

The daily practice of gratitude has many health benefits:

### STRENGTHENS YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Optimism and gratitude are good pals. Together, the two help keep your body's defenses in pristine condition, meaning your immune system functions more efficiently in the face of illness.

### EASES YOUR STRESS

Practicing gratitude can help you cope with challenges or problems much more effectively.

### HELPS YOU BE PROACTIVE

Practicing gratitude makes it easier to protect treasured areas of your life by maintaining optimum health. Those that practice daily gratitude are more likely to fit in physical activity, manage a healthy diet and schedule preventive health exams.

"A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue, but the parent of all the other virtues."

- Cicero

"How Gratitude Can Help Your Career," Peter Bregman, hbr.com, Oct. 1, 2015.

"Gratitude Makes Life Sweeter," Katherine Zeratsky, R.D., L.D., mayoclinic.com, Dec. 6, 2014.

"7 Scientifically Proven Benefits of Gratitude That Will Motivate You to Give Thanks Year Round," Amy Morin, forbes.com, Nov. 23, 2014.

"Boost Your Health With a Dose of Gratitude," Elizabeth Heubeck, webmd.com, Jan. 11, 2006.

## Diabetic-Friendly, Thanksgiving Side Dish:

# green bean casserole

Adapted from eatingwell.com

### Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons canola or olive oil, divided
- 1 medium sweet onion, (half diced, half thinly sliced), divided
- 8 ounces mushrooms, chopped
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 1/4 teaspoons salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour, divided
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- 3 tablespoons dry sherry
- 1 pound (about 4 cups) fresh or frozen French-cut green beans
- 1/3 cup reduced-fat sour cream
- 3 tablespoons buttermilk powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F. Coat a 2 1/2-quart baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add diced onion and cook, stirring often, until softened and slightly translucent, about 4 minutes. Stir in mushrooms, onion powder, 1 teaspoon salt, thyme and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until the mushroom juices are almost evaporated, 3 to 5 minutes. Sprinkle 1/3 cup flour over the vegetables; stir to coat. Add milk and sherry and bring to a simmer, stirring often. Stir in green beans and return to a simmer. Cook, stirring, until heated through,

about 1 minute. Stir in sour cream and buttermilk powder. Transfer to the prepared baking dish.

3. Whisk the remaining 1/3 cup flour, paprika, garlic powder and the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt in a shallow dish. Add sliced onion; toss to coat. Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion along with any remaining flour mixture and cook, turning once or twice, until golden and crispy, 4 to 5 minutes. Spread the onion topping over the casserole.

4. Bake the casserole until bubbling, about 15 minutes. Let it cool for 5 minutes before serving.



To celebrate American Diabetes Month and Thanksgiving, try this diabetic-friendly, revamped version of the Green Bean Casserole that skips the sodium and fat found in canned mushroom soup and French-fried onions. You can prepare this side dish ahead of time and refrigerate until it's ready to bake!



# Make This Holiday Season Feel Like a Holiday



The word “*holiday*” is synonymous with the word “vacation,” however holidays are rarely as relaxing as vacations. Once costumes are put into storage after Halloween, it seems like holiday planning is in full swing. Much of the stress associated with the season is the result of unmet expectations or an attempt to be perfect. ***Perfection isn't realistic, so let that go right now.*** Then, take time before the busyness of the season to ***prioritize what's meaningful to you and your family*** as you celebrate, from the events you like to attend to the way you prefer giving gifts. ***Determine what supplies you and your family the most joy*** and do just that. In this process, you may identify things you do every year not because you want to, but because it's simply what your family has always done. Let those traditions go. According to research, it's experiences, rather than things, that truly make us happy, so focus on experiences this season. Go to a farm to pick out your tree, or decorate cookies as a family rather than one person carrying the burden.



## ***Here are some tips for reducing seasonal stress:***

***Create new traditions.*** If grandma always made her famed stew and you feel pressure to replicate it every year, make your specialty instead.

***Revamp your rituals.*** As families continue to grow and change, so will holiday celebrations. Be flexible with family traditions. If you're unable to be together for the holidays, find ways to connect virtually.

***Embrace the idea that less is more.*** If you're hosting a party, the less you're running around attending to details, the more available you are to spend time with loved ones.

***Allocate a budget for the holiday season*** to reduce financial stress. Homemade creations or fun experiences are thoughtful gifts.

***Get creative with gift-giving.*** Draw names instead of buying for everyone or, as a family, choose a charity to support.

***Know when to say no.*** Only agree to help if you're able to do so joyfully.

***Accept differences between family members*** and let go of past hurts. Holiday celebrations are not a time to address grievances.

***Continue to exercise regularly and eat a balanced diet.*** Exercise is a great way to fend off holiday stress and anxiety. To avoid overindulging at gatherings, have a light snack beforehand so you don't show up hungry and gorge yourself on sweets.

***Don't skimp on sleep.*** Getting ample rest can boost your immune system so you stay healthy for holiday festivities.

Remember, holidays aren't about perfection; they're about community. Focus on setting the stage for creating cherished memories. Whenever you start to feel stressed, take some deep breaths. A 15-minute relaxation break can do wonders to help you proceed with holiday cheer.

“Stress, Depression and the Holidays: Tips for Coping,” Mayo Clinic Staff, [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org), Oct. 3, 2014.

“31 No-Stress Holiday Entertaining Tips,” Health Staff, [health.com](http://health.com), accessed Oct. 5, 2015.