



# Friday Facts

November 1, 2024

## Stay Active This Winter

As the days grow colder and shorter, it's easy to fall into a more sedentary lifestyle. But staying active during the winter months is essential for both your body and mind. Here's why:

### 1. Boosts Your Immune System

Exercise increases circulation, helping your immune cells move through the body more efficiently. Staying active during winter can help fend off seasonal colds and flu by keeping your immune system strong.

### 2. Improves Mood and Fights Winter Blues

With less sunlight and more time indoors, many people experience the "winter blues" or even Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Physical activity stimulates the production of endorphins and serotonin—chemicals that boost mood and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. Even a brisk walk outside can make a big difference.

### 3. Maintains Healthy Weight

The holiday season is notorious for indulgence. Regular exercise helps to balance those extra calories and prevents winter weight gain. Plus, working out helps to maintain muscle mass, which can naturally decrease in colder months if we become too inactive.

### 4. Enhances Sleep Quality

Exercise can improve sleep by helping you

fall asleep faster and enjoy deeper rest. Better sleep supports cognitive function and emotional resilience, making it easier to tackle winter's challenges.

### 5. Increases Energy Levels

Even though it may seem counterintuitive, regular activity actually boosts your energy. It helps combat the sluggishness often felt during colder months, keeping you alert and motivated.

### 6. Supports Heart Health

Winter weather can sometimes lead to increased heart strain, especially if we're not as active. Regular exercise strengthens the heart, improves circulation, and helps maintain blood pressure, which is crucial during colder months.

### Tips for staying active:

- Bundle up and embrace outdoor activities like walking, running, or hiking.
- Try indoor workouts such as yoga, strength training, or online fitness classes.
- Join a gym or community sports group to stay motivated.

Staying active in the winter isn't just about physical health—it's an essential part of maintaining mental wellness, too. So, lace up your shoes, grab a cozy jacket, and move your body. You'll feel better inside and out!

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# Friday Facts

November 8, 2024

## Look to the Light

Sometimes also referred to as the winter blues, seasonal affective disorder is a type of depression that can affect people each year during fall and winter. Before trying anything new, we highly recommend checking in with your primary health care provider.

One treatment that has gained traction is the use of a light box, which can deliver a therapeutic dose of bright light to treat the symptoms of SAD. This box mimics outdoor light and is thought to cause a chemical change in the brain that lifts your mood and eases other symptoms of SAD.

Mayo Clinic's suggestions for the light box include using:

- Within the first hour of waking up in the morning
- For about 20 to 30 minutes
- About 16 to 24 inches from your face, but follow the manufacturer's instructions
- With eyes open, but not looking directly at the light

Amazon.com has a large variety of options to choose from. Generally, your light box should provide an exposure to 10,000 lux of light, as well as produce as little UV light as possible. Make sure when choosing a light box, you pick one that is specifically made to treat SAD, not skin disorders.

Here's where we would like to give a shout-out to **Dunn County's Well-Being Ambassadors** for being their BEST in helping others. HR Director Jenalee Nutter recently won a gift card and decided to use it to benefit county employees. In consultation with their Well-Being Ambassadors, Jenalee ordered 35 "happy lights" for Dunn County employees to be able to check out (just like at a library!) and utilize at home. Way to think outside the (light) box, Dunn County!

Light therapy is most effective when it is combined with an antidepressant (see your doctor first) or talk therapy. Remember you have access to four free counseling sessions through your EAP. Give us a call today to get started!



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# Friday Facts

November 15, 2024

## Gratitude Journaling

In the fast-paced, often stressful world we live in, it's easy to get swept up in negative thoughts and lose sight of the positives. That's where gratitude journaling steps in as a powerful, yet simple, tool for improving mental wellness. With just a few minutes of reflection each day, you can significantly boost your mood, reduce stress, and cultivate a more optimistic mindset.

Gratitude journaling involves regularly writing down things you're thankful for. These can be as grand as achieving a long-sought goal, or as simple as appreciating the warmth of the sun on your face or a cup of coffee in the morning. The practice is straightforward—every day, take a moment to jot down three to five things you're grateful for. Over time, this simple act rewires your brain to focus on positivity rather than negativity, enhancing your mental well-being.

Studies show that focusing on positive experiences reduces the brain's stress response and releases feel-good chemicals like dopamine and serotonin. This helps combat symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as improves overall emotional resilience.

By acknowledging even small moments of joy or gratitude, you train your brain to spot the good things in life more easily. Over time, this creates a mental shift from a scarcity mindset (focusing on what you lack) to one

of abundance, where you're more attuned to the richness in everyday life.

### How to Start Your Gratitude Journal

Starting a gratitude journal is easy and requires minimal effort. Here's a quick guide to help you get started:

- **Choose your medium.** Whether you prefer an actual notebook, an app, or a digital document, choose a format that feels most natural to you.
- **Set a routine.** Consistency is key. Try writing in your gratitude journal at the same time each day, whether it's first thing in the morning or right before bed.
- **Be specific.** Instead of general statements like "I'm grateful for my family," try to be more specific: "I'm grateful for the kind text my sister sent me today."
- **Embrace the small stuff.** Don't just focus on big events or major achievements. Even something as small as enjoying a quiet moment with a cup of tea is worthy of gratitude.

Gratitude journaling is an easy, accessible way to boost your mental wellness. It's a small daily habit with big rewards, helping you shift your focus toward positivity and enhancing your emotional health. If you're looking for a simple yet effective tool to reduce stress, improve your mood, and live a more fulfilling life, this is one wellness practice worth embracing!

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# Friday Facts

November 22, 2024

## Talking Turkey

Thanksgiving is a time to gather with loved ones and share delicious food, but it's important to prioritize health and safety while preparing the meal. To ensure everyone enjoys the holiday without any post-feast regrets, here are some essential tips for cooking a safe and healthy Thanksgiving dinner.

### **Safely thaw the turkey**

If you're cooking a turkey, make sure it's thawed properly. The safest way to do this is by thawing it in the refrigerator. Plan ahead—allow about 24 hours for every 4-5 pounds of turkey. Avoid thawing it on the counter to prevent bacterial growth.

### **Cook to the right temperature**

Use a food thermometer to ensure your turkey reaches a safe internal temperature of 165°F (74°C) at the thickest part of the breast, thigh, and stuffing. Undercooked poultry can carry harmful bacteria like Salmonella.

### **Prevent cross-contamination**

Keep raw turkey and its juices away from other foods, especially those that won't be cooked, like salad ingredients or fruits. Use separate cutting boards, utensils, and wash hands frequently.

### **Manage portions and balance**

Thanksgiving often leads to overindulgence. Offer lighter, healthier options like roasted

vegetables, leafy salads, or grain-based sides. Reduce the use of high-fat ingredients like butter or cream where possible—herbs and spices can add flavor without extra calories.

### **Watch salt and sugar**

Many Thanksgiving dishes can be loaded with added salt and sugar. Use herbs, garlic, and natural seasonings for flavor in savory dishes, and opt for fresh fruit or smaller amounts of sweeteners for desserts.

### **Practice safe leftover storage**

Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours of serving to prevent bacterial growth. Store them in shallow containers to cool faster, and eat them within 3-4 days, or freeze for longer storage.

### **Stay hydrated**

Amidst the feasting, don't forget to stay hydrated. Drinking water throughout the day helps with digestion and prevents you from mistaking thirst for hunger.

### **Get moving**

After your meal, take a family walk or play a game outside. Physical activity helps digestion and keeps energy levels balanced after a hearty meal.

By following these tips, you can ensure a safe and health-conscious Thanksgiving celebration for your family.

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# Friday Facts

November 29, 2024

## Thanksgiving Pizza

What's better than pizza? A pizza made from your Thanksgiving leftovers! This dish is sure to delight your taste buds and get your family excited about leftovers.

### Thanksgiving Pizza

#### Ingredients

- 1 puff pastry sheet thawed according to the instructions on the package
- 1/2 cup mashed potatoes
- 5 tablespoon gravy , divided
- 1/4 cup corn
- 1/4 cup green bean casserole
- 1/2 cup chopped turkey
- 1/2 cup stuffing
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup French fried onions
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Basil parsley, or thyme, for garnish

#### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Gently press puff pastry sheet into a greased 9-inch tart pan (or use a 9-inch pie pan). Trim the corners and use them into fill in any empty spaces along the sides of the pan.
3. Spread the mashed potatoes over the bottom and drizzle with two tablespoons of gravy.

4. Sprinkle with corn and green bean casserole.
5. Top with turkey, stuffing, and three tablespoons of gravy.
6. Sprinkle with shredded cheddar cheese.
7. Bake at 400 degrees for 18-20 minutes.
8. Sprinkle with French fried onions and bake for an additional 3-5 minutes.
9. Garnish with basil, parsley or thyme and freshly ground black pepper.

(Recipe and photo from CountryLiving.com)



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