

May 2024



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and since its inception in 1949, it has been a cornerstone of addressing the challenges faced by millions of Americans living with mental health conditions. By dedicating an entire month to mental health awareness, we can break down barriers and encourage open conversations about mental wellbeing.

This month serves as a platform to educate the public about the prevalence of mental health conditions, the importance of seeking help, and the available resources for support. It also helps to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, allowing individuals to feel more comfortable seeking support without fear of judgment. By promoting mental health awareness, we can create a society that prioritizes mental wellbeing, supports those in need, and fosters a more compassionate and understanding community for all.



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WHAT IS AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM?

An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a workplace benefit that provides confidential and professional support to employees and their families that are facing personal and/or work-related challenges. The value of an EAP lies in its ability to enhance employee wellbeing, improve productivity, and contribute to a positive work environment.

BELOW ARE SOME KEY BENEFITS AND VALUES OF AN EAP:

Confidential Support. EAPs offer employees a safe and confidential space to discuss personal issues, such as mental health concerns, relationship problems, substance abuse, financial difficulties, or stress-related issues. This confidentiality encourages employees to seek help without fear of judgment or negative consequences.

Improved Mental Health. Often, you may have access to mental health professionals who can offer counseling, therapy, or referrals to specialized services. By addressing mental health concerns, you may experience improved wellbeing, reduced stress, and increased resilience, leading to higher job satisfaction and productivity.

Increased Productivity. When you are dealing with personal issues, it can impact your ability to focus and perform at your best. EAPs can help you manage these challenges allowing you to regain focus, reduce absenteeism, and increase productivity.

Enhanced Work-Life Balance. You can find a healthy work-life balance when utilizing an EAP by using the offered resources and guidance on time management, stress reduction, and coping strategies. This support helps you manage your personal and professional responsibilities more effectively.

Conflict Resolution. Mediation and conflict resolution services are often available to help you navigate workplace conflicts or difficult relationships. By addressing these issues early on, EAPs can prevent conflicts from escalating and negatively impacting team dynamics and productivity.

Support During Critical Incidents. EAPs can play a crucial role in providing support and counseling during critical incidents such as accidents, natural disasters, or traumatic events. This immediate support helps you cope with the emotional impact and facilitates your recovery process.

The value of an EAP lies in its ability to support you in overcoming personal challenges, improving mental health, and creating a positive work environment. By investing in employee well-being, organizations can foster a more engaged and productive workforce.

Questions about your employer's EAP or EAP resources available to you?

Reach out to your Human Resources Department for additional details.

MEDITATION TIPS

Meditation can be challenging and take some time to get used to. Below are some tips to help you work through the most common challenges you may encounter when beginning to incorporate meditation practices into your daily routine.

Breathe Naturally. Try not to think about the breath or alter it in any way. Allow things to unfold naturally, noticing the rising and falling sensation it creates in the body.

Get Comfortable with Discomfort. People often experience negative emotions while meditating such as anxiety, restlessness, and irritation. Give these emotions your full attention and over time your mind will recognize these emotions and not get caught up in the negative patterns of your thoughts.

Take Mindfulness With You. Before you finish meditating, form a clear idea of what you are going to do next. Try to carry the mindfulness you cultivated during your meditation with you to your next task and throughout the rest of your day.



TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Healthcare providers are trained to identify signs and symptoms of mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression. If you have concerns about your mental health, a good next step is to schedule an appointment with your provider and start a conversation.

POSSIBLE WAYS TO BRING UP MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS WITH YOUR DOCTOR:

Share specific examples of the symptoms you are experiencing and how often they occur. Describe how those symptoms are affecting your professional work, personal relationships, and day-to-day routines. Provide details about how you have already attempted to manage your symptoms, including prescription or over-the-counter medications.

Your provider may suggest lifestyle changes, self-care strategies, or medication. They may also refer you to someone who specializes in diagnosing and treating mental health conditions, such as a psychiatrist or mental health therapist.

Talking with your healthcare provider about your mental wellbeing is just like talking about any other health concern. Be honest about how you are feeling and ask about alternative treatment options if you are uncomfortable with the initial recommendations. Likewise, if your treatment plan does not seem to be working for you, be sure to circle back with your provider and ask about alternative options.

SIGNS YOU MAY NOT BE OKAY:

It is rare to feel good all the time. Most people experience periods of highs and lows throughout their lives. Knowing how to recognize when you are not okay can help protect your mental health.

- You feel like nothing matters
- You are isolating yourself from people and social interactions
- You are using more alcohol and drugs than usual
- You experience severe mood swings that affect your relationships
- You have had thoughts of harming yourself or others

TIPS TO HELP YOUR MENTAL HEALTH:

Release: Connect with a trusted friend and share what you are feeling. Be open and honest, ask for what you need, and be clear about what is not helpful in terms of support. Talking through emotions can help defuse them.

Rest: Sleep helps your body recover from the demands of daily life. If you are struggling to get good sleep, ask your doctor for guidance on self-care or sleep aid options.

Write: Poetry, freestyle writing, or journaling are all effective ways to express and sort through uncomfortable or confusing emotions.

Reprioritize: When life feels heavy, you may need to reprioritize your time based on your energy levels. Focusing on what's most important can help reduce feelings of overwhelm.

Take Action: If self-care has not helped, call your doctor or therapist, and schedule an appointment to discuss your concerns and symptoms.

If you need help immediately, call 911 or go directly to your closest emergency room. You can also call or text 988 or visit [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) to talk with a crisis counselor.

BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

CARE FOR YOUR WHOLE SELF

It's normal to experience ups and downs in life, but when your emotions or behaviors start to impact your relationships or your health, it's time to take action. Behavioral health conditions – like depression, anxiety, ADHD, trauma or overuse of drugs or alcohol – can strain your family, your job, even your finances. You don't have to go through it alone. Your primary care provider (PCP), behavioral health specialists in your community, and Blue Cross advocates are available to help. Behavioral health is part of your total health, so take good care of yourself and reach out if you need support.



HOW DO YOU ACCESS HELP WITH BCBSNC?

- [Complete this referral form](#) to get started. You can also make a referral request by calling 1-800-755-0798 for a behavioral health care navigator to assist you.
- Talk to your PCP. They can address your concerns in the office or refer you to a behavioral health provider.
- Access your Blue Connect member site to find an in-network provider. Search for keywords like: Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Social Worker, Therapist, Substance Abuse, or Counselor.
- Call the Blue Cross NC Customer Service number on the back of your member ID Card. They will help connect you to a high-quality behavioral health provider or program.
- Use your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), if available.
- Access therapy or psychiatry through your telehealth benefit, if available.

Note: Check your benefit booklet or go to blueconnectnc.com for more information on your coverage and costs.

POSSIBLE SIGNS TO SEEK HELP:

- Feeling tired, low energy
- Difficulty sleeping/sleep changes
- Appetite changes
- Decline in personal care/hygiene
- Odd or uncharacteristic behavior
- Feeling sad
- Excessive fears or worries
- Withdrawal from friends or previously enjoyed activities
- Difficulty with regular tasks, changes in grades/work performance
- Anger or irritability



CREAMY TUSCAN CHICKEN

5

Prep Time | 5 Minutes | Cook Time | 35 Minutes | Servings | 4

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 boneless skinless chicken breasts
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
- 3 cups baby spinach
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan
- Lemon wedges, for serving

NUTRITION FACTS

Calories 330
Total Fat 21g
Sodium 270mg
Carbohydrate 5g
Dietary Fiber 1.5g
Protein 31g



INSTRUCTIONS:

STEP 1

In a skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add chicken and season with salt, pepper, and oregano. Cook until golden and no longer pink, 8 minutes per side. Remove from skillet and set aside.

STEP 2

In the same skillet over medium heat, melt butter. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add cherry tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Cook until tomatoes are beginning to burst then add spinach and cook until spinach is beginning to wilt.

STEP 3

Stir in heavy cream and parmesan and bring mixture to a simmer. Reduce heat to low and simmer until sauce is slightly reduced, about 3 minutes. Return chicken to skillet and cook until heated through, 5 to 7 minutes.

STEP 4

Serve with lemon wedges.

Benefit	Vendor	Website/Email/Contact
Medical	BlueCross BlueShield of NC	https://www.bluecrossnc.com/
Blue Connect	BlueCross BlueShield of NC	Blue Connect
My Pregnancy Program	BlueCross BlueShield of NC	Download the <i>My Pregnancy through Blue Cross NC</i> app to get started
NCHIP Concierge	BlueCross BlueShield of NC	1-800-795-9402
Mental Health/Substance Abuse	BlueCross BlueShield of NC	Find a therapist Headway
Employee Assistance Program	Sentara	SentaraEAP.com password: CURRITUCK
BenefitSolver	BusinesSolver	BenefitSolver - Sign On

HAVE SOMETHING YOU
WANT TO SHARE?
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EMPLOYEE
BENEFITS

