



Pennington Biomedical Scientists Share Small Shifts You Can Make in the New Year

When the calendar flips from December to January, many people set goals and resolutions for the upcoming year. A number of those resolutions involve nutrition, exercise, and mental health. While drastic lifestyle changes can be overwhelming and difficult to maintain, research conducted at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center shows that subtle adjustments to habits and choices are easier to adopt, integrate into your life, and stick with over the long term.

Here are five tips provided by researchers at Pennington Biomedical on ways to make subtle lifestyle choices that have an impact in 2024:

- *“Prior to a busy week, plan your meals and snacks for each day and shop accordingly. If you indulge or overeat on occasion, it’s okay. Just make sure the meals that follow are good for your health.” – Candida Rebello, Assistant Professor in Clinical Science and Director of the Nutrition and Chronic Disease Program*
- *When starting a new exercise routine, remember to start slow. A couple of days of exercise at a light effort is a great way to start. Gradually increase the number of days, amount of time, and the intensity of your exercise over a month or more. This will help to prevent soreness and help you set reasonable goals that you can achieve. – Robert Newton Jr., Professor of Physical Activity & Ethnic Minority Health*
- *“If you are planning to lose weight in the new year, make sure you eat a healthy diet with enough protein included, and keep up a good exercise program.” – Steven Heymsfield, Professor of Metabolism & Body Composition*
- *“Sleep is free! It’s the easiest thing you can do to improve your health. If you focus on improving sleep, then depression and anxiety levels go down. You’re able to feel happier and see an improved quality of life.” – Prachi Singh, Director of the Sleep and Cardiometabolic Health Laboratory*
- *“Be kind to yourself when things don’t go as planned. Guilt and discouragement can’t undo what’s been done. Instead, regroup and identify achievable steps to move forward.” – Alyssa Button, Postdoc in Pediatric Obesity and Health Behavior*

Portion Control

It’s no secret that portion sizes have gotten bigger over the past 20 years and those larger portions add up! Just 100 extra calories per day can lead to a weight gain of 10 pounds per year. Maintaining a healthy weight is a balancing act — balance calories in with calories out. Here are a few tips to assist with portion control:

- **Start with a glass of H₂O** – Drink a big glass (16 ounces) before you eat. Filling your belly with water will naturally make you less likely to overeat.
- **Use smaller dishes** – If you downsize your portion size and feel it looks too small, serve it on a smaller plate so it looks larger. Using a smaller plate or bowl can also help you eat less.
- **Don’t skip meals** – If you are starving, you are more likely to eat an extra-large portion. For most people, the best plan is to eat three well-designed meals and one snack.
- **Eat slowly** – Taking your time while eating increases enjoyment and decreases portions. Remember to chew slowly, put down your fork between bites, and sip water to make your meal last longer.
- **Don’t eat from the bag or box** – When you purchase snack foods, divide them into smaller serving sizes. For example, if you buy a bag of pretzels or nuts that has 10 servings, divide the contents of the container into 10 smaller baggies ahead of time.
- **Know your “rules of thumb”** – Did you know that three ounces of lean meat is equivalent to a deck of cards? And one cup of breakfast cereal is about the size of a fist?
- **Develop good “eating out” habits** - First, fill up your plate with green veggies, and get full on those before eating other food. Then, when ordering, ask the server to bring you a “to go box” right away and place half of your meal in there.

For more tips on portion size and healthy eating in general, visit www.choosemyplate.gov.



Live Better Louisiana

The 2024 Wellness campaign has come to a close. We thank everyone who has participated in the Live Better Louisiana program. Catapult is currently scheduling clinics for the 2025 wellness credit. We will share those dates as we get them. Additionally, there is a new Primary Care Provider form for the 2025 wellness credit. You can access that form on the OGB website by clicking [here](#).

Romaine Calm and Carrot On with Laura and Katherine

What's for dinner? How many times a week do you think about what to fix that is healthy and easy? Our Registered Dietitians Katherine & Laura are in the kitchen with several ideas for you and your family. Did you know Blue Cross has registered dietitians as part of our in-house team of clinical professionals? They work with our members on how to eat healthy and use food choices to improve their outcomes for conditions like diabetes or heart disease. Visit www.bcbsla.com/stronger to connect with a Blue Cross dietitian or health coach. Blue Cross OGB members can call 800-363-9159, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. to connect with a Blue Cross health coach.



Louisiana Marathon – 2023

When: January 13-14, 2024
Where: The State Capitol
Downtown Baton Rouge, LA
Times: Saturday: 8 am – 5k and Quarter Marathon
10 am – Kids Marathon
Sunday: 7 am – Full and Half Marathon

Louisiana is well known for its festivals, where we celebrate with food, music and dancing. The Louisiana Marathon adds running to that mix for a truly unforgettable weekend. Come run a fast, flat, and fun race course with runners from 50 states and over 36 countries. Then enjoy a true Louisiana Festival featuring local musicians and some of the best southern cuisine around. Participants can choose from a full, half, a quarter marathon, a 5K, and kid's marathon, click [here](#) to register.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana members can receive a 25% discount by entering BCBSLA25OFF when registering.



Winter Superfoods

Winter may be cold, dark and bleak, but it is peak season for some of the plate's most powerful produce, also known as superfoods. They are natural products that come from the earth. Choose to add a few of the following rich, nutrient-dense foods to your diet this winter.

- **Pomegranates** - Excellent source of fiber (7 grams per 1 cup serving), the seeds are filled with cancer-fighting polyphenols with greater antioxidant potential than red wine and green tea. Enjoy in both seed and juice form.
- **Turmeric** - Vibrant yellow spice lends a distinctly peppery, earthy flavor to curry powders. Contains curcumin that is being studied for its anti-inflammatory and cancer fighting antioxidant properties. You can grate fresh turmeric over scrambled eggs or roasted root vegetables, stir into brown rice or simmer with milk and honey for a cozy bedtime tea.
- **Cabbage** - One cup shredded has over 40% of your daily needs for cold-fighting vitamin C. Red cabbage varieties have high amounts of anthocyanin, an antioxidant known to have strong heart-healthy benefits. Cabbage can be easily chopped into slaws, salads, tacos, soups and sandwiches.
- **Beets** - Contain a hefty dose of antioxidants and 4 grams of fiber, with only 60 calories per cup. You can roast them for a sweet buttery side. If you are short on time, raw beets are a great addition to slaws and salads. If you eat the greens, they are slightly bitter. Chop them up and sauté in a bit olive oil, salt, and pepper to eat or toss into whole grains or roasted root vegetables.
- **Citrus (Oranges, Tangerines, Grapefruits, Lemon, Limes)** - Contains a powerful flavonoid called hesperidin, which provides heart healthy benefits by improving circulation and helping to lower blood pressure. A spritz of lime or lemon over roasted fish or vegetables can add a pop of flavor in place of adding salt.
- **Sweet Potatoes** - Contain more fiber and vitamins A and C than white potatoes. One serving provides 400% of your daily vitamin A, an essential vitamin that promotes better eye, tooth and skin health. Enjoy them roasted, broiled, baked, or sautéed.



New Year, New Defense

What better way to kick start the New Year than with a commitment to health and safety?

The flu, along with COVID-19 and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), continue to pose a significant risk, especially as these viruses' exhibit overlapping symptoms and can impact communities simultaneously.

Despite these challenges, we stand more prepared and more informed!

Don't forget, with the Office of Group Benefits covering 100% of your membership, you will have \$0 co-pay and no out-of-pocket expenses when you seek care at our clinics. This ensures that financial concerns don't stand in the way of your health and safety!

Stop by any Access2day Health clinic today for your FREE seasonal flu shot and let Access2day help you set intentions for a healthier, happier you.

Find your nearest clinic today at www.access2dayhealth.com/locations.

Protect yourself and your loved ones by understanding the key differences between the flu, COVID-19, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) here:

Symptoms	COVID-19	RSV	Flu
Onset	Gradual, then sudden escalation	Mild with sudden escalation	Abrupt
Severity	Mild to severe	Mild to severe	Mild to severe
Duration	7-25 days	3-7 days	7-14 days
Loss of taste/smell	Common	Rare	Rare
Trouble breathing	Sometimes (can be severe)	Common	Not common
Cough	Common (usually dry)	Common	Common (usually dry)
Sneezing	Not common	Common	Rare
Runny/stuffy nose	Not common	Common	Sometimes
Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Common
Fever	Common	Common	Common
Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Headache	Sometimes	Rare	Common
Body aches	Sometimes	Rare	Common
Diarrhea/nausea/vomiting	Sometimes	Rare	Sometimes



ACCESS²day
HEALTH

ogb

New Year, New Defense

Get your **FREE** yearly
flu shot at any
Access2day location!



New Year, Healthier You

3 Tips to Replace an Unhealthy Habit:

1

Make a list.

Think about your daily routine and write down unhealthy things you might do every day, like skipping breakfast, sitting for hours without a break, or drinking a soda every afternoon.

2

Choose one habit to change.

Pick one habit to change and make a simple plan. For example, swap out an afternoon sugary drink with water. To move more, go for a 15-minute walk at lunchtime.

3

Commit to 7 days.

Focus on the new habit for the next 7 days. If you slip, forgive yourself, and simply start over for another 7 days. Change is hard, and Omada has your back through it.



“

I tend to go back to my same bad habits. Being able to get onto Omada, with a coach, group, and learning to really get myself to good habits has made all the difference.”

—
STEVE, UTAH

Thanks to OGB, you have access to Omada in time to help with your new year goals.

If you or your adult family member are at risk for diabetes or heart disease and enrolled in an Office of Group Benefits Blue Cross health plan, the Office of Group Benefits, in partnership with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, will cover the entire cost of the program—a \$650 value.



Zero cost for eligible members



Dedicated care team with a health coach (yes, real people)



Personalized care plan tailored to each member's lifestyle



Smart devices to easily track your progress, 24/7



Omada is available at no cost when covered by your employer or health plan.

* Certain features and smart devices are only available if you meet program and clinical eligibility requirements. Images, including apps, do not reflect real members or information about a specific person.

Claim your benefit at
omadahealth.com/ogb

Sheet-Pan Shrimp Fajitas



Plan a Weeknight Fiesta with This Sheet Pan Shrimp Fajitas Recipe

Ingredients:

- 2 limes
- ½ green bell pepper, seeded and sliced
- 2 tsps. plus 1/3 cup canola oil, divided
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp paprika
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- 6 flour tortillas
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and sliced
- ½ large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic gloves
- ½ tsp chili powder
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 lb. raw shrimp, deveined and shelled
- Mexican crema, sour cream or Greek yogurt

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Juice 1 ½ limes. Cut other lime half into six wedges and set them aside.
3. Toss bell peppers and onion into the 2 tsps of canola oil until coated. Scatter them onto the sheet pan in a single layer.
4. Pour the lime juice and garlic into a blender, adding the remaining oil in a steady stream. Add the salt, spices, pulsing once to combine. Marinate the shrimp, tossing to coat in a large zip-lock bag for 15 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, roast the bell pepper and onion for 10 minutes.
6. Remove the shrimp from the marinade. Add the shrimp to the sheet pan of roasted veggies. Roast for 8 minutes more.
7. Heat flour tortillas and set out the Mexican crema or sour cream to serve with the lime wedges.

For more information, visit us at www.bcbsla.com/ogb

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