NEWSLETTER

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MARCH 2025

EMBRACING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Welcome to March!

As we enter this vibrant month, we're excited to focus on three important health initiatives:

- **National Sleep Awareness Week**
- **Brain Awareness Week**
- **National Nutrition Month**

These themes play a crucial role in supporting the well-being of our students and community and are beneficial for all of us. By embracing these health-focused initiatives, we can collectively enhance our physical and mental wellness, creating a healthier and more supportive environment for everyone.

⭐ **Suggested activity:** Track your sleep habits for three nights. Did you get the recommended amount of sleep for your age group? Discuss with your family or class what changes could be made in your schedule to improve sleep quality. Consider creating a sleep-friendly bedtime routine together.

Let's use National Sleep Awareness Week as a reminder of the importance of prioritizing rest. By adopting healthy sleep habits, we can enhance our overall health, improve our mood and productivity, and set a positive example for our students and community.



NATIONAL SLEEP AWARENESS WEEK (MARCH 12-18)

Sleep is essential for cognitive function, mood regulation, and overall health. It plays a critical role in helping the brain process information, consolidate memories, and rejuvenate for the day ahead. Here are some insights and tips for optimizing sleep. Recommended Sleep Durations:

- Infants (4-12 months): 12-16 hours per 24 hours (including naps)
- Toddlers (1-2 years): 11-14 hours per 24 hours (including naps)
- Preschoolers (3-5 years): 10-13 hours per 24 hours (including naps)
- School-age children (6-12 years): 9-12 hours per 24 hours
- Teenagers (13-18 years): 8-10 hours per 24 hours
- Adults (18-64 years): 7-9 hours per 24 hours
- Older adults (65+ years): 7-8 hours per 24 hours

Interesting Fact: According to the CDC, about 35% of adults in the U.S. are not getting the recommended amount of sleep, which can impact overall health and productivity. Poor sleep is linked to a higher risk of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

Tips for Better Sleep:

- Establish a consistent sleep schedule: Going to bed and waking up at the same time daily helps regulate your body's internal clock, making it easier to fall asleep and wake up naturally.
- Create a restful environment: A quiet, dark, and cool room can enhance sleep quality. Consider using blackout curtains, earplugs, or white noise machines to create an optimal sleep environment.
- Limit screen time before bed: Reducing exposure to screens helps the brain relax by minimizing blue light, which can interfere with the production of melatonin, the hormone responsible for sleep.

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BRAIN AWARENESS WEEK (MARCH 13-19)



Our brains are incredible organs that require nurturing and care to function optimally and support our daily activities. **Brain Awareness Week** is an opportunity to explore ways to keep our minds sharp, improve mental health, and delay cognitive decline. Keep reading to learn some ways we can celebrate and promote brain health.

Brain Health Statistics: Engaging in regular mental exercises can significantly impact brain health. Studies suggest that individuals who participate in mentally stimulating activities are 30% less likely to develop cognitive impairment. Activities like learning a new language or playing musical instruments have been associated with improved brain function, potentially enhancing memory, attention, and problem-solving skills.

Promoting Brain Health:

- Engage in brain exercises: Activities such as puzzles, chess, or Sudoku challenge the mind and encourage neural growth. Implementing these exercises into daily routines can stimulate brain activity and boost cognitive function. Even simple actions, like taking a different route to work or trying a new hobby, can foster new neural connections.
- Practice mindfulness: Techniques like meditation and deep breathing can improve focus, reduce stress, and enhance overall brain health. Mindfulness practices have been shown to increase gray matter density in areas of the brain associated with learning, memory, and emotional regulation, offering a natural way to manage stress and anxiety.
- Physical activity: Regular exercise increases blood flow to the brain, promoting the growth of new brain cells and improving memory. Physical activities, ranging from walking to aerobic exercises, have been linked to larger brain volume and a reduced risk of dementia. Encouraging regular movement, whether through school programs or community activities, supports both physical and mental well-being.

By incorporating these practices into our daily lives, we can nurture a brain-healthy lifestyle. Let's use this week to raise awareness about the importance of brain health, share knowledge, and encourage each other to adopt habits that support lifelong mental vitality.

Suggested Activity

Organize a "Brain Games Challenge" with your family or class. Choose from puzzles, memory games, or creative thinking exercises to stimulate different parts of the brain. Afterward, discuss which activities were the most enjoyable and why they might be beneficial for brain health.

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KEY NUTRITIONAL GUIDELINES

- Educate about balanced diets: Discuss the importance of including a variety of foods such as fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains in daily diets. Highlight the benefits of incorporating different food groups to ensure a comprehensive intake of essential vitamins and minerals.
- Promote healthy snacking: Encourage students and families to choose nutritious snacks like nuts, fruits, yogurt, and whole-grain options over processed foods high in sugar and unhealthy fats. Snacking wisely can help maintain energy levels and prevent overeating during meals.
- Hydration matters: Emphasize the importance of drinking enough water throughout the day, as dehydration can lead to fatigue and decreased concentration. Encourage replacing sugary drinks with water or herbal teas to support overall health.

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

Nutrition is a cornerstone of health, impacting energy levels, concentration, and overall well-being. National Nutrition Month encourages everyone to make informed food choices and develop sound eating and physical activity habits. Here's how we can emphasize good nutrition throughout the community:

Nutrition Facts: According to the CDC, only 1 in 10 adults meets the recommended intake of fruits and vegetables, which are crucial for maintaining a healthy body and mind. A balanced diet rich in diverse nutrients can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, while also promoting mental health and cognitive functioning.

Suggested Activity: Gather your family or class and create a grocery shopping list together. Ensure that everyone's favorite healthy foods appear at least once on the list. Use this as an opportunity to discuss balanced meals and the importance of including various food groups. You might even plan a healthy meal to prepare together.

By embracing these practices, we can collectively work towards a healthier community. Let's use National Nutrition Month as an opportunity to evaluate our eating habits, learn more about nutrition, and make changes that benefit our health and well-being in the long run. Encourage open discussions and knowledge sharing to create a supportive environment for healthy lifestyle changes.

National Sleep Foundation: Sleep Duration Recommendations
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Sleep and Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Nutrition Facts
Brain Awareness Week Information: Dana Foundation



CONCLUSION: March brings a focus on health and wellness with National Sleep Awareness Week, Brain Awareness Week, and National Nutrition Month. Prioritizing sleep can enhance cognitive function and overall health, while engaging in brain exercises and mindfulness can boost mental vitality. Emphasizing balanced nutrition supports energy levels and reduces chronic disease risks. By adopting these healthy habits, we can foster a supportive community dedicated to lifelong well-being. Let's work together to inspire positive changes and build a healthier future for all.