

Walk Kansas

celebrate healthy living

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Yoga Builds Strength

Yoga is an exercise system that engages the mind, body, and spirit. It was developed in India thousands of years ago and continues to increase in popularity as a form of exercise in the United States.

There are many benefits from practicing yoga. The relaxation techniques can help lessen chronic pain and help to manage stress, to name a few. Yoga also engages muscles and offers a balanced approach to strength training. It helps condition your body to move in the way it was designed to move and helps you perform everyday activities such as walking, sitting, bending, and lifting.

Yoga promotes balance by toning both large and small muscles all over your body. It also increases muscle endurance because you typically hold a specific pose and repeat it several times during a session.

Chelsi Myer, a Dickinson County FCS agent, pictured at right, has been practicing and teaching yoga for nearly a decade. She says her physical and emotional health benefits from just 45 minutes of yoga two to three times a week.

“After practicing yoga, I notice an increase in energy, decrease in my anxiety and back pain, and it gives me the opportunity to refocus and find peace amidst my busy schedule. Yoga is exercise, not just stretching,” says Chelsi.



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Yoga Builds Strength

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Yoga works differently to strengthen your body than weight training does. Strength training with weights or resistance is a good way to build muscle strength, and as your strength increases you can add more weight. In this type of training, the muscle contracts and shortens. In yoga, many poses are held statically before transitioning to another pose. These transitions require the muscles to contract and lengthen. The best scenario to develop strength and balance involves both types of exercise.

An introduction to yoga, with basic beginning poses and movements, is available on the Walk Kansas website, *Steps to Fitness* page under Week 6. "Your overall health will benefit from regular yoga practice — just give it a try," Chelsi advises.

2014 Success Stories

• Keeping my flexibility, strength, and endurance is even more important at my age, 68. Walking and working out did this more than I thought.

— Thomas County

• What a fun thing to do with my daughter and grandkids — we all watched each other try to eat more fruits and veggies.

— Lyon County

Staying in Balance

Mowing the lawn with a push mower. Hiking on a wooded trail. Riding a bike down the street. Playing basketball. Walking up the stairs. Your body is balancing in almost everything you do. Most people don't think about their balance until it's too late and they fall or injure themselves. Balance isn't a concern only for the elderly, who are more prone to falls. Balance training is a must for everyone.

One of the easiest balance exercises you can do is to stand on one foot. You can do this while you are brushing your teeth, washing dishes, standing in line at the grocery store — you get the idea!

Another exercise is to walk heel to toe. Place the heel of one foot just in front of the toes of your other

foot. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady while walking. Take a step and put your heel just in front of the toe of your other foot and repeat for 20 steps.

The balance walk is a third exercise to try. Raise your arms at your sides shoulder high. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus, then walk in a straight line with one foot in front of the other. As you walk, lift your back leg so your knee is almost level with your hip. Pause for 1 second before stepping forward. This should look similar to marching in slow motion. Repeat for 20 steps, alternating legs.

These basic balance exercises, and more, are provided by the *National Institute on Aging*.

Make the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

Reduce Food Waste

The average American throws away about 20 pounds of food each month, or a total of \$28 to \$43 worth of food. About 25 million Americans could be fed if just 15 percent less food was wasted. Here are several easy ways to reduce your food waste.

- Practice FIFO. Use the first in, first out method of food storage for all stored food. Label and date packages. Keep "like" things together in your pantry and freezer and place the items that have been in storage the longest in the front so you use them first.
- Shop wisely. Plan meals and use a list when shopping. Don't buy more food than you need and evaluate bulk food purchases. While these may be less expensive per ounce, they will be more expensive overall if some is discarded.
- Eat leftovers. Plan leftovers for another meal and freeze anything you don't want to eat immediately.
- Get creative. If you have ingredients that will go bad soon, use them up. Think outside the box and get creative! These handy tools provide safe storage tips for the *refrigerator and freezer* and for *cupboard storage*.

Love Your Leftovers

Leftover food can be convenient as a meal or snack. Think of them as “planned overs” and handle food safely by refrigerating it within 2 hours of cooking. This way, you are planning to enjoy them for a second meal and will know they are safe to eat. If you are reheating the food in a microwave oven, make sure the container holding the food is microwave safe. If not, put the food on a microwave-safe plate. Leftover food should be reheated to an internal temperature of 165° F. Here are several ways to love your leftovers.

Salad as a meal. Start with a base of leafy greens and add leftover veggies, fruit (fresh or dried), quinoa or pasta, roasted chicken or steak, fresh herbs if you have them, a lite dressing, and sprinkle with nuts and cheese.

Stir-fry. This is a perfect solution when you have small amounts of various vegetables. Make a meatless dish or add cooked leftover meat. This *Pepper Steak Stir-Fry* includes a basic sauce recipe for any stir-fry dish.

Make a flatbread. This is a new trend that lets you be creative. Start with a base of thin pizza dough or puff pastry, a tortilla, pita, naan, or any type of flat bread purchased or made from scratch. The toppings

are endless, including pesto, barbeque sauce, hummus, cheese, vegetables, caramelized onions, meats, beans, fresh herbs — you name it! You can cook it on the stovetop, in the oven, or on the grill.

Wrap it up. Leftover beef, pork, chicken, or beans can be transformed into fajita or taco filling. Just reheat and add seasoning. Stir-fry peppers and onions and add additional filling such as leftover salad, corn, tomatoes or salsa, and cheese.

Make an omelet. A variety of vegetables can make a tasty omelet filling such as peppers, onions, celery, corn, spinach, asparagus, and tomatoes. In fact, almost anything can be turned into omelet filling. Try leftover pizza toppings, cheese, turkey, avocado, leftover taco meat, and taco filling. Omelets are not just for breakfast. They make a quick lunch or dinner.

Make soup. Keep a covered “soup” container in your freezer and add leftover vegetables, meat, rice, salsa, tomato paste, etc. The recipe below is called “Thursday Night Soup” because traditionally factory workers were paid on Friday and Thursday night’s meal was made from whatever you had. Regardless of the night or your payment schedule, this is a smart way to use leftover food and stretch your budget.

Thursday Night Soup

These ingredients are merely suggestions and will vary with what leftover prepared food and ingredients you have available.

Ingredients:

- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2 to 3 tablespoons oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 small can tomato paste, tomato sauce, leftover salsa, or marinara sauce
- 4 cups water, chicken, beef, or vegetable broth
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 to 3 cups leftovers (chopped vegetables, cooked meat, rice, pasta, potatoes, etc.)
- 1 to 2 cups additional liquid, such as vegetable juice, gravy, wine, broth, etc.

Salt, pepper, and other seasonings to taste (add just before serving)

Directions:

1. In a large stockpot over medium heat, heat the oil. Sauté the onion in the oil until lightly browned, about 10 minutes. Add garlic. Stir in the tomato paste, sauce, salsa, or marinara. Add water/broth, bay leaf, and thyme. (If you are adding lentils or uncooked pasta, add at this time.) Cook 5 minutes, uncovered.
2. Add leftovers and additional liquids. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until heated through.
3. Taste and season. Seasoning options can include salt (if needed) or salt-free seasoning, black pepper or red pepper flakes, sugar, paprika, Worcestershire sauce, or favorite herbs. Cook 5 minutes more before serving.

