

Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



October-December, 2025

2026 A Healthier Weigh

A poster for the 'A Healthier Weigh' 12 Week Health Challenge. It features a green and white color scheme. At the top left is the 'A Healthier Weigh' logo. To its right is the Colorado State University Extension logo. The main title 'A HEALTHIER WEIGH' is in large white letters on a green background, with '12 Week Health Challenge' below it. A circular graphic on the right shows a person on a scale with the words 'NUTRITION' and 'HEALTH' on a sign. Below the title, a list of activities is shown with checkmarks: Educational Lessons, Nutrition Challenge, Exercise Challenges, Lifestyle Challenges, Optional In-Person Activities, Body Composition Analysis, and Cash Prizes. To the right of this list, it says 'January - April' and 'Compete as an individual, couple, or team of 4!'. Below that, a yellow box contains '\$40 per person'. Underneath, it lists 'Participating Counties' as Kit Carson, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Washington, and Yuma. At the bottom, there is a small disclaimer in Spanish and English.

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Please join us for this year's A Healthier Weigh challenge. We are developing new lessons to help you stay motivated and learn throughout the 12-week challenge. You can register as a team of four, a team of two, or as an individual. Please reach out to your local FCS Specialist to sign up! They will give you an entry form, consent forms, and information about the weigh-in process. We are looking forward to kicking off another challenge to help you stay active and committed to improving or maintaining your health in 2026!

Where trade names are used, no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Colorado State University Extension is implied.



GOLDEN PLAINS AREA
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Kit Carson, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma Counties cooperating.

Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

Diabetes Prevention



Diabetes is the fastest growing chronic disease worldwide. Not only does it affect millions of people physically, but it also has a significant financial impact, accounting for 11.5% of global health expenditures. With November being American Diabetes Month, it is essential to understand the risk factors of diabetes and how to prevent it. Learning about diabetes and its relationship with nutrition and physical activity is a vital component in managing and preventing its onset.

Early detection and awareness of diabetes risk factors are crucial. An estimated 34.2 million people have diabetes yet only 26.9 million have been diagnosed. Diabetes is diagnosed when excess blood glucose is present, either because the pancreas has stopped producing insulin or because glucose is not being absorbed by the cells. Knowing your blood glucose levels through an **A1C blood test**, along with other risk factors to watch for can help identify a problem early. **Monitoring blood pressure** is also vital to assess how hard the heart must work to pump blood through your body. A serious complication of uncontrolled diabetes is kidney damage so having an **eGFR test** annually could be important too. Knowing your cholesterol levels helps doctors understand how easily blood flows through your body and can serve as an early indication of a heart attack or stroke, making regular blood work for **LDL cholesterol** crucial. Regular health checkups with your doctor are important to monitor and assess these markers. By maintaining regular health check-ups, annual eye and foot exams, and knowing your body's numbers, you're already taking the first step toward managing diabetes.

Making simple lifestyle changes can help prevent the statistics from continuing to rise. Start slowly and make small adjustments to your diet or routine. These minor changes can help you develop healthier habits.

An important part of a diabetic diet is monitoring the carbohydrate servings in each meal or snack. Carbohydrates are broken down into glucose during digestion and then absorbed into the bloodstream. When someone has diabetes, their body does not use blood glucose as it should. You can improve your body's ability use glucose by having consistent amounts of carbohydrate-rich foods at regular intervals. Carbohydrates are an essential nutrient, but consuming too many carbs can harm your body.

While physical activity cannot cure diabetes, it can improve your overall health and help manage diabetes. Physical activity facilitates the movement of glucose into your muscle cells without the need for insulin. The larger the muscles being moved, the more glucose they will use. Exercise strengthens muscles including the heart muscle and the muscles that control breathing. Activities that you do on your feet strengthen the muscles that prevent you from falling and the muscles that protect your bones making them stronger. It can also decrease stress levels, which makes your body healthier overall and more able to fight off infections and lower the risk of chronic disease. Aiming for thirty minutes of moderate activity a day is essential. More activity than 30 minutes a day means greater benefits.

Making small lifestyle changes, adopting healthier diet choices, and increasing physical activity can lead to significant health benefits.

[Diabetes globally | Diabetes Australia](#)
[Dining with Diabetes National Extension Curriculum](#)

From Barn to Boardroom: The Many Faces of 4-H Involvement

Many people think you must have the resources to raise livestock to be involved in the 4-H program, but that is not the case. Colorado State 4-H offers 42 projects, each with multiple units, across various topic areas including Animal Science, Communication, Arts & Leisure Sciences, Family and Consumer Sciences, Mechanical Sciences, and Natural Resources. Some of the most popular projects include Veterinary Science, Photography, Cake Decorating, Woodworking, Robotics and Shooting Sports. Any youth can find a topic they are passionate about on this list of projects to help them get started on a journey of growth and learning through 4-H.



Youth learn many life skills through a variety of aspects of the 4-H program in addition to what they learn through completing their projects. During club meetings, they learn responsibility, communication and teamwork skills. Each club is responsible for completing at least one community service project each year. Youth can learn a great deal about their community and the importance of being involved through these events. Your youth may even decide to join the officer team where they can learn leadership skills in a positive environment.

4-H programs in most counties also offer a county level club where youth will represent their county's 4-H program in various ways such as representing them at district, state, and national events, planning and hosting events for all 4-H members in their county, and completing additional community service projects.

Another way 4-H fosters positive youth development is through a variety of State and National conferences. Colorado State 4-H offers two conferences each for the intermediate age members (ages 11-13) and senior age members (ages 14-18). During these conferences, the Colorado State 4-H team, elected senior age members, offer a variety of learning opportunities to participants focusing on project exploration, career readiness, leadership, and more.

Youth are also able to attend several National 4-H conferences focused on civic engagement, STEM, Leadership, and more. Participants are exposed to diverse perspectives through workshops designed to encourage youth to communicate with other 4-H members and leaders from across the nation. 4-H members who attend these conferences enjoy a fun and motivating experience while building their resumes, expanding their support network, and gaining other benefits.

If you are looking for ways to help your youth build life-ready skills, discover their passions, and encourage personal growth, 4-H could be exactly what you are looking for. It is a trusted and proven program that helps connect young people with caring adults providing a safe environment for them to learn and grow. And one of the best parts is youth are often too busy having fun to notice the work they are putting in to learn these skills!

If you are interested in enrolling your youth in 4-H or have questions, contact your local extension office today!

Family Thanksgiving Leftover Challenge



The Thanksgiving feast may be done, but the kitchen fun has just begun! Instead of reheating the same plate of leftovers, invite your family to try the Thanksgiving Leftover Challenge. It is a fun way to practice creativity, teamwork, and food safety (while also stretching your holiday budget). The best part having fun in the kitchen with your family and turning leftover turkey, stuffing, or veggies into something exciting beyond the classic sandwich.

The goal of this challenge is to experiment with flavor combinations, learn new cooking techniques, and present creations in a fun and festive way. With a bit of imagination, one turkey can become sandwiches, soups, casseroles, or even quesadillas for days after the big feast.

Kid Tips:

- Let children design the menu name for their creation.
- Let them gather ingredients or prepare the final plate.
- Encourage them to share one new skill they learned during the challenge.

Food Safety Reminders:

- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within 2 hours of cooking.
- Use shallow containers (max 2 inches deep) to cool food quickly.
- Eat within 3-4 days (fridge) or 2-6 months (freezer).
- Reheat to 165°F before serving.

For more food safety tips, follow the USDA guidelines: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/leftovers-and-food-safety>

How the Challenge Works:

1. **Choose Your Star Ingredient** – Turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, or roasted veggies.
2. **Brainstorm Together** – What new dish can you make? Will it be sweet, savory, or surprising?
3. **Create & Cook** – Assign kitchen tasks to each family member.
4. **Give It a Name** – “Stuffing Supreme Pizza” or “Cranberry Explosion Wraps.”
5. **Taste Test & Vote** – Use Categories such as: *Most Creative*, *Best Use of Cranberries*, *Tastiest Overall*, etc.

Family Fun Leftover Ideas:

- **Mashed Potato Waffles** – Crisp leftover mashed potatoes in a waffle iron.
- **Cranberry Dessert Bars** – Mix leftover cranberry sauce with oats and bake.
- **Leftover Soup Party** – Combine various veggies, turkey, or stuffing into a hearty family soup.
- **Stuffed Peppers** – Fill bell peppers with leftover stuffing, veggies, and cheese for a colorful dish.

Give one of these recipes a try:

Turkey Cranberry Quesadilla

Ingredients:

- 1 8-inch whole wheat tortilla
- 2 tablespoons shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 tablespoons cranberry sauce or dried cranberries
- 2 tablespoons cooked turkey, chopped or shredded
- 1/3 cup of spinach

Recipe from: <https://extension.msstate.edu/blogs/extension-for-real-life/the-food-factor-turkey-cranberry-quesadilla>

Skillet Sauté

Ingredients:

- 3 cups of sliced fresh vegetables
- 2 cups of diced fresh tomatoes
- One protein
 - 2 cups of dry beans or one can of beans, drained and rinsed
 - 2 cups of cooked ground beef, turkey, or chicken
 - 2 cups of cooked and diced chicken, turkey, ham, lean beef, or lean pork
- ½ cup of uncooked rice with 1 cup water or broth
- Optional spices
 - ½ cup of chopped celery
 - ¼ cup of chopped onion
 - 1-2 cloves of minced garlic
 - 1-2 teaspoons of mixed dried herbs (basil, thyme, oregano)
 - Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Heat one tablespoon of oil in a large frying pan over medium heat.
2. Add vegetables and seasoning. Stir.
3. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 5-10 minutes.
4. Stir in cooked protein, rice, and water or broth.
5. Cover and cook over low heat for 20 minutes.

Recipe from: <https://extension.umaine.edu/food-health/efnep/make-your-own/skillet-saute/>

Thanksgiving leftovers are more than just extra food; they are an opportunity to be creative, spend time with your family, and enjoy the flavors of the season in a new, fun way. Bring your loved ones together, check your fridge, and discover delicious new traditions to create!

*****Share Your Creation with our Family & Consumer Science Team** – We would love to see your family's leftover masterpieces! Snap a photo and share it on our **CSU Extension - NE Colorado FCS Facebook Page**. Include your dish's name and any fun twists you added! Just think your creation could inspire other families!

Smart Holiday Spending: Tips to Stay on Budget This Season



The holidays have a way of sneaking up on us—and so can the financial stress that often comes with them. To help ease the burden, **Fidelity Investments** shares a few simple yet effective tips to keep your holiday spending under control without sacrificing the joy of giving.

Start with a Game Plan

Begin by making a gift list that includes everyone you plan to shop for, such as family, friends, coworkers, and anyone else. Once your list is complete, set a **total budget** and break it down by individual. Have a little one you want to spoil, like a grandbaby or niece? Be

sure to factor that in so there are no surprises.

Do not Forget the Extras

Gifts aren't the only expense—remember to budget for additional costs, such as **postage and gift wrapping**. Pro tip: fancy wrapping paper isn't necessary. It gets torn up and tossed anyway! Consider using recycled materials or simple kraft paper for a creative and budget-friendly touch.

Use Online Shipping Perks

Many online retailers offer gift-sending options at **no extra cost**, making it easy to ship presents directly to loved ones—especially helpful for long-distance gifting.

Shop Smart and Early

Before you buy, do some **price comparisons**. Different retailers can have vastly different prices for the same item. And don't forget about the big sale days:

- **Black Friday**
- **Small Business Saturday**
- **Cyber Monday**
- **Green Monday**

Scoring deals during these events can make a huge difference in your bottom line.

With a little planning and some smart strategies, you can enjoy the holiday season without breaking the bank. Happy (budget-friendly) shopping!

Source: <https://www.fidelity.com/learning-center/smart-money/how-to-save-on-holiday-gifts>

Emotional Challenges Around the Holidays and How to Support Mental Health

Some people feel melancholy during the holidays and struggle to feel the holiday cheer. They might be remembering a loved one who has passed, stressed over holiday traditions, or want to avoid social gatherings. These emotions are tough to wade through alone, so here are a few ideas on how to support your mental health around the holiday season.

Reach Out for Support – No matter the time of day or night, there is always someone to talk to who will help you through this challenging time. Connect with family members or friends. Your medical providers or doctors have specialized training and can direct you to the mental health resources you need. Reach out and find a support group to help you manage your feelings and promote mental health wellbeing. There are numerous mental health resources available online, by phone, or in person.

Self-Compassion and Self-Care – Acknowledge your emotions and be kind to yourself. Reflect on and make changes to your sleep habits, your diet, and exercise routine. Limits might need to be set for social media. You need to take care of yourself before you can take care of someone else. Avoid alcohol or other substances to help regulate your emotions.



Be Mindful of Grief – If you are missing a loved one or are dealing with a recent loss, remind yourself that it is okay to feel grief and sorrow. There is no time limit on grieving and sometimes grief hits you unexpectedly. According to AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), if your grief is disabling, you feel emotionally numb, struggle to relate to others, intensely feel sad or angry, and have these symptoms most days, you may need support from a professional.

Keep Realistic Expectations – Avoid comparisons with other people or families and their extravagant holiday plans or traditions. Focus on your own needs instead of trying to please others. You know yourself and your family, so do what will make you feel good.

Create New Traditions – Give up traditions that leave you stressed or leave you feeling negative or emotionally drained. Brainstorm and create new traditions with your loved ones. This could be the start of your own family tradition that is enjoyable and gives you positive vibes.

If you are struggling, ignoring, or running away from the issue will only prolong the problem. Your mental health is as important as your physical health. Learn techniques to help manage your mental health struggles. Reach out and remember you are not alone.

Mental Health Resources:

- Talk Saves Lives – <https://afsp.org/talk-saves-lives>
- National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline – <https://988lifeline.org/>
 - Call 988 for help 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Crisis Text Line – <https://crisistextline.org>
- Text HOME to 741741
- The Colorado Agricultural Addiction and Mental Health Program (CAAMHP) – <https://www.caamhpforhealth.org>
- Colorado Crisis Services – call 1-844-493-8255 or Text: “Talk” to 38255
- Second Wind Fund – <https://thesecondwindfund.org> for children up to 19 years old
- Centennial Mental Health – <https://www.centennialmhc.org>

References:

<https://mind.help/topic/mental-health-and-holidays/>
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/logged-in-and-stressed-out/202211/minding-your-mental-health-holiday-season?msockid=33551957698b664b022d0a8a68b16739>
<https://www.aarp.org/cargiving/medical/coping-prolonged-grief/>

Aging and the Power of Positive Thinking

The concept of the “power of positive thinking” has been studied by psychologists for years and has long been acknowledged for its transformative effects on various aspects of life. One of these aspects is aging. Positive thinking offers numerous benefits as we age, including improved mental health and overall well-being, enhanced physical health, increased longevity, boosted resilience, improved cognitive function, and stronger social connections.

- **Improved Mental Health:** Positive thinking can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety and promote better mental well-being.
- **Enhanced Physical Health:** Optimistic seniors tend to take part in healthier lifestyle choices, such as regular physical activity and balanced diets, which lead to improved physical health.
- **Increased Longevity:** Positive thinkers tend to have a longer lifespan compared to those with negative attitudes towards aging.
- **Boosted Resilience:** Positive thinking allows seniors to navigate challenges with a resilient attitude and bounce back from setbacks more effectively.
- **Improved Cognitive Function:** A positive mindset has been linked to better cognitive abilities and a reduced risk of cognitive decline in seniors.
- **Stronger Social Connections:** Older adults who maintain a positive outlook tend to be more engaged in social activities and maintain strong relationships which prevents feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Cultivating a positive attitude towards aging itself is also important. Society’s stereotypes have a large influence on how individuals perceive the changes that come with aging, and unfortunately, our nation has a very negative viewpoint. Instead of regarding aging and the changes it brings to our bodies and lifestyles as an undesirable process, it is important to view them as opportunities for personal growth and wisdom. For example, our intellectual skills and emotional regulation continually develop as we age, even into our 70s, and can influence other functions in a helpful way. A large study of adults over the age of 50 found people with the highest satisfaction with aging had a lower risk of dying from any cause over a four-year period compared with those who were the least satisfied. The study also found people who were more satisfied with the aging process had lower risk for conditions such as diabetes, stroke, cancer, and heart disease; better cognitive functioning; were more likely to engage in physical activity and less likely to have trouble sleeping; less lonely and depressed; and more optimistic with a greater sense of purpose.

Everyone’s journey through aging is unique, so what works for one person may not work for another. Find strategies and approaches that resonate with you personally, and surround yourself with positive influences. This can be achieved by spending time with loved ones who uplift you or engaging in hobbies.

If you find yourself having a glass-half-empty mentality, here are a few tips to help you change your way of thinking or shift your mindset.

Negative Self-Talk	Positive Thinking
I’ve never done it before.	It’s an opportunity to learn something new.
It’s too complicated.	I’ll tackle it from a different angle.
I don’t have the resources.	Necessity is the mother of invention.
I’m too lazy to get this done.	I wasn’t able to fit it in with my schedule, but I can re-examine some priorities.
There’s no way it will work.	I can try to make it work.
It’s too radical a change.	Let’s take a chance.
No one bothers to communicate with me.	I’ll see if I can open the channels of communication.
I’m not going to get any better at this.	I’ll give it another try.

Highlight – Women's Health Summit



After the success of last year's Women's Health Summit, Colorado State University Extension is set to host their second annual event this October! This year's Women's Health Summit will be held at Wray High School. Your registration fee covers lunch, childcare, expert speakers, goodie bags, health resources from across Northeastern Colorado, and the opportunity to win door prizes! To register or learn more, visit our website at: <https://col.st/dCtGM>



Upcoming Events!

- **Women's Health Summit –**
 - Saturday, October 11th from 11:30-4:00. Wray High School. For more information or to register, contact your local Extension Specialist.
- **ServSafe Manager Training –**
 - Tuesday, October 14th from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Logan County Extension Office in Sterling. For more information or to register, contact Joy Akey at (970) 332-4151 or joy.akey@colostate.edu
- **ServSafe Handler Training –**
 - Thursday, November 6th from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Washington County Event Center in Akron. For more information or to register, contact Joy Akey at (970) 332-4151 or joy.akey@colostate.edu
- **A Healthier Weigh –**
 - A Healthier Weigh is a 12-week Health & Fitness Challenge – FCS Specialists be taking registrations for individual and team participation through the end of the year! Registration fee is \$40/person with cash prizes! Be on the lookout for more information soon on your local County Extension websites and Facebook pages. Get your teams ready before the holidays!
 - Weigh ins for Logan, Morgan and Yuma counties will be the week of January 6th
 - Weigh ins for Kit Carson, Phillips and Washington counties will be the week of January 13th
 - Please contact your local Extension Specialist for more details

Be sure to check our Facebook page listed below to stay up to date on all our upcoming events.



CSU Extension – NE Colorado FCS: <https://www.facebook.com/CSUExtensionNortheastFCS>

CSU Extension – Phillips County: <https://www.facebook.com/PhillipsCountyExtension/>

CSU Extension – Logan County: https://www.facebook.com/csuextensionlogancounty/?_tn=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCS5-NbtiQryVnN5X5I3c5--hwVu-1ZfnhynwZsPotP7AZIVStJaoCEoaVYzZjBFhCH0tHJLHaJxQuQ

CSU Extension – Morgan County: <https://www.facebook.com/extensionmorgancounty/>