Invest in the Future You

Have you ever made an investment hoping that someday it would pay off? Maybe you’ve contributed to your retirement plan or made some home improvements, hoping to get a return on your investment.

When it comes to your personal health, it can be helpful to think of your actions in terms of investments. By taking advantage of preventive health benefits and practicing healthy habits, you are making an investment for future good health.

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Americans use preventive health services at about half the recommended rate. The right preventive care at every stage of life can help you stay healthy and avoid or delay the onset of disease. They can even keep certain diseases you may already have from becoming worse.

A good place to start is having a conversation with your doctor about recommendations for preventive care based on your age and health status. This may include regular dental check-ups, an annual eye exam, or a general physical exam. Talk with your doctor about why these procedures are important. Ask any questions you may have about what is involved or what the outcomes could mean. Together, you and your doctor can come up with a health investment plan for your future. If you have questions about your preventive health benefits, contact one of our Customer Service Representatives toll-free at (888) 977-9299.

Healthy eating. What you put into your body can increase or decrease your health assets. Check out the article on page 3, for some ideas from our Registered Dietitian.

Tip: Try the recipe for Spanish Lentil Stew on page 4. With kale, lentils, sweet potato, tomatoes, and avocado, it’s a delicious way to invest in your health.

Exercise. The recommended guidelines for physical activity for adults is at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week. Don’t panic! Sometimes a number can be intimidating, but you can break this down and go at your own pace. Whether you take short walks during the day, a long hike on the weekends, or other forms of exercise, you are in control.

Health benefits of exercise include reducing your risk for heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and obesity.

Tip: Look at your calendar each night and find 30 minutes in the next day to get your activity in.

Sleep. It’s true, the body needs sleep in order to recharge and fight illness. Good sleep can also help reduce stress, regulate certain hormones in your body, improve your mood, and lower your risk of heart disease and diabetes. Adults need between seven and eight hours a night.

Health investments you can make now

Eating a healthy diet, getting enough exercise, sufficient sleep, and avoiding substances like alcohol and tobacco are all ways you can invest in your future. If you’re looking for the biggest bang for your buck, focus on these five areas.

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Future You
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Tip: Turn off electronics and dim lights at least one hour before bedtime.

Alcohol. Drinking alcohol not only has short-term effects on your health, but can have negative long-term effects as well. By avoiding heavy alcohol use, you can help protect yourself from damage to your heart, brain, liver, and pancreas. Talk with your doctor about your alcohol consumption and what the recommended limits are.

Tip: When you do drink, pace yourself. Sip slowly, and eat some food so the alcohol will be absorbed into your system more gradually.

Tobacco. Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. If you smoke, here’s some encouraging information: Just 12 hours after quitting, carbon monoxide is lowered, allowing blood oxygen to increase to normal levels. One month after quitting, the lungs begin to repair. And just one year after quitting, excess risk of heart disease is half that of a continuing smoker.

Tip: Take advantage of tools available from your healthcare provider or PacificSource to get support if you need.

My Health Investment Plan — Writing down your goals can help you reach them. What’s your plan?

What I want my health to look like in the future: ____________________________

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Being Proactive Pays Dividends
Diabetes and weight issues run in Courtney’s family. She’s seen firsthand the serious side effects of poorly controlled diabetes, such as kidney disease and loss of limbs, and she realized she might be heading down a similar path. At some point, Courtney thought “enough is enough,” but had doubts as to whether her actions could impact her health.

Early this year, Courtney began working with a new endocrinologist to create the best treatment plan for her diabetes and has met with a sleep specialist to manage sleep apnea. She joined our Condition Support program and began working with a health coach for information and support in making lifestyle changes. Using a pedometer, she started tracking her steps with a goal of continuous improvement. She also started logging her daily food intake in My Fitness Pal and uses the information to help with mealtime insulin dosing.

None of this came easy. It has been a lot of effort, but is an investment that is paying off! So far Courtney has lost about 12 pounds and dropped her A1C (average glucose level) by two points! She has more than tripled her monthly steps and once again feels like it’s possible to positively impact her health.

Courtney has some concerns because she’s tried these changes before with limited success, but she feels this time is different—this is for life. “I’ve allowed myself to not be perfect. I log everything I eat and look at it as information rather than feeling ashamed,” Says Courtney. “The choices I make are informed choices, and I’m being proactive versus reactive.” This time, she’s also leaning on her faith and asking for support in a way she had not done in the past.

When asked if she has any advice for others who may relate to her situation, Courtney says, “It’s never too late. Never give up.”

Courtney’s coach states, “What she’s accomplished is nothing short of amazing. Once Courtney sets her mind to it, she can accomplish anything!”

Member Corner

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Food Fuels Your Body

When you choose healthier foods, your body performs better. Healthy eating means plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and moderate amounts of low-fat dairy. Include nuts, lentils or other legumes, lean meat, fish, poultry, and healthy fats, such as olive oil, nuts, seeds, and avocado. Limit sugar, refined grains, salt, and saturated and trans-fats.

Upgrading your fuel from regular to premium

Follow the “plate method.” Fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables, one-quarter with whole grains or starchy vegetables, and one-quarter with lean protein. This will provide you with a balance of nutrients that keeps you feeling satisfied.

Go whole grain. Swap refined grains with whole foods, like brown rice, quinoa, barley, oats and whole wheat. Whole grains have more fiber, vitamins and minerals, especially magnesium. Magnesium seems to be depleted in individuals with chronic stress—which is probably most of us.

Focus on vegetables and fruits. Aim for at least 2 ½ cups of vegetables (not potatoes), and 1–2 cups of fruit (the whole fruit not juice) every day. These foods are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber and add color, flavor, and texture to your meals.

Choose healthy fat. If you want to lose weight, higher fat intake will make weight loss difficult, so moderation is key. Healthy fats include nuts, seeds, olives, fish, and plant oils. Cook with oil instead of butter, use peanut butter rather than butter as a spread, replace cheese with avocado, or eat a handful of nuts and some fruit for a snack.

Limit sugar. Sugar leads to a temporary high and then sends you on a blood-sugar roller coaster. Sugar also increases brain chemicals that slow you down. Rather than a doughnut or cookie, choose nutrient-packed, time-released carbs, such as whole grains, fresh fruits, vegetables, or low-fat granola. Combine it with a small serving of protein, such as low-fat cheese, nuts, Greek style yogurt, or cottage cheese to optimize energy.

Watch the sodium (salt). By preparing meals at home and eating fewer processed foods you can reduce your sodium intake. Read labels and aim for no more than 500 mg of sodium at each of your three meals. Surprisingly, baked goods are often high in sodium. Swap out a cookie or muffin for some fresh fruit and unsalted nuts and you’ll decrease your sodium while increasing your potassium—a win-win for your heart.

If you need help implementing dietary changes your doctor has recommended, contact our registered dietitian.

Learn more at PacificSource.com/member/condition-support-program, or email us at yoursupport@pacificsource.com.

Get a Jump on Flu Season!

Did you know it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu? This is why it’s smart to get your flu shot before winter hits.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu season can begin as early as October and last well into May. Flu activity usually peaks in January, February, or later.

While the CDC recommends everyone over six months of age have a seasonal flu vaccination, it’s especially important for people with COPD, asthma, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.

For more information, visit CDC.gov/flu. Flu benefit information is available at PacificSource.com/flu or by contacting our Customer Service Department.

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**Ingredients**

- 2 tbsp. smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 8 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup lentils (any type but red or yellow)
- 1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 8 ounces kale, stemmed and sliced into strips
- 2 large red tomatoes, cored and chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- Avocado slices
- Liquid smoke (optional)

**Directions**

1. Soak the lentils for several hours, rinse.
2. While lentils are soaking, chop onions and sweet potato, and mince the garlic.
3. Microwave the onion, paprika, oil, garlic, and cumin, stirring occasionally until the onion is softened, about 5 minutes. Transfer to slow cooker.
4. Stir in the broth, lentils, potatoes, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper. Cook for 6 to 7 hours on low, or 4 to 5 hours on high, until lentils are tender.
5. Stir in kale, cover and cook on high 20 to 30 minutes more.
6. Stir in tomatoes and season with pepper to taste.
7. Top each serving with ¼ of a small avocado, sliced.

**Makes** about 12, one-cup servings.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving**

- Calories: 230
- Total fat: 10 g
- Saturated fat: 1.5 g
- Trans fat: 0 g
- Cholesterol: 0 mg
- Sodium: 280 mg
- Total carbohydrate: 28 g
- Fiber: 11 g
- Sugars: 3 g
- Protein: 10 g

**Tips**

- Smoked paprika can vary in flavor by brand. The one we used in the test recipe was McCormick Gourmet Collection.
- This recipe freezes well (omit the avocado) for a single serving lunch or dinner.

Adapted from America’s Test Kitchen – Slow Cooker Revolution Volume 2.