



March is Brain Awareness Month

The latest health and wellness news, tips, and updates from the Lay Benefits Department of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston.

LOOKING AHEAD...

Brain Games

Find new ways to keep mentally sharp through games, nutrition, and head safety tips.

Wellness Webinars

This month we focus on meal planning, setting boundaries to create balance, maintaining heart health, and navigating the RCAB Wellness Program.

Hello Sunshine Challenge

Spend 100 minutes outdoors in the sunlight and earn \$50 into your HealthEquity HRA or HSA!

Lenten Reflection

A season of self-reflection and discipline to inspire you to be your best self for others this Easter.

The Wellness Corner

This month we're preparing Berry Yogurt Parfaits!



Supporting Brain Health and Avoiding Injuries

Our brains can do amazing things! The structure of the brain, or cerebrum, is split into two halves, with the left hemisphere of our brain controlling the right side of our body, and the right hemisphere controlling the left side of our body. Made up of four lobes, a cerebellum, and brain stem across two hemispheres, our central nervous systems (CNS) [control every function](#) that helps us complete daily tasks and navigate our surroundings. The frontal lobe, located behind the forehead, controls our personalities, behaviors, attention spans, problem solving skills, and motor planning. The temporal lobes, located on each side of our head, control our memories, understanding of language, hearing, and organizational skills. The occipital lobe, located at the back of our head, controls eyesight. The parietal lobe, located near the top of our head, controls our sense of touch, identification of objects we are perceiving, and depth perception. The cerebellum controls our balance, coordination, and motions. Lastly, the brain stem controls our autonomic (involuntary) functions like breathing, heart rate, and consciousness.

With all of these lobes simultaneously and continuously working with each other to help us function every day, [damage to the brain can lead to significant impacts on our daily lives](#). Injuries can lead to difficulty remembering events, visual deficits, interpreting senses, controlling emotions or behaviors, and trouble communicating, among countless other impacts to our cognitive, physical, and emotion functioning. As we age, our cognition naturally starts to decline, and can [decline faster](#) due to underlying health concerns. Our brains are also at risk for sustaining an injury. While the causes of acquired brain injuries (ABIs), like strokes or infections, and traumatic brain injuries (TBIs), such as falls or car accidents, cannot always be controlled or predicted, there are ways for us to take control of our brain health and mitigate cognitive decline as we age!

The [Mayo Clinic recommends](#) exercising regularly, getting the proper amount of sleep, eating a diet rich in plants, whole grains, and healthy fats, staying cognitively stimulated, and being social to keep our brains healthy and active. Check out the next page for some foods that help promote brain power, fun ways to engage our brains, and how to protect our brains from injury at home and in the community.

Yummy Foods to Boost Brain Power? Yes, Please!

According to [Harvard Medical School](#), there are some delicious foods that can help boost brain power and keep our brains sharp as we age. These foods also tend to be the ones that support our heart and blood vessels too!

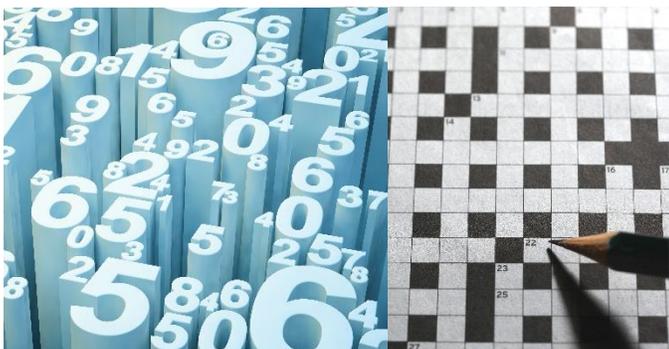
- **Berries:** Brigham and Women's Hospital conducted a study that supported a two-and-a-half-year delay in memory problems in women who consumed two or more servings of strawberries and blueberries. With berry season around the corner, make sure to eat up!
- **Walnuts:** A great source a healthy fats, Omega-3, and protein, higher consumption of walnuts have been linked to increased cognitive test scores and improved memory.
- **Fatty fish:** Whether it is cod, salmon, or canned light tuna, fatty fish are sources of high Omega-3 content. Omega-3 fatty acids are linked to a lower level of beta-amyloid, a protein that created harmful clumps in the brains of those with Alzheimer's disease.
- **Green Veggies:** Broccoli, kale, and spinach are all leafy green vegetables that contain healthy nutrients that may help slow down cognitive decline as we age.
- **Coffee and tea:** The Journal of Nutrition published a study in 2014 indicating that higher caffeine consumption was related to improved cognitive test scores. It is believed that caffeine may also help improve memory!



Brain Games

Here are some great ideas for stimulating your brain to help improve memory, cognition, logic, and problem-solving skills!

- *Sudoku*
- *Crosswords*
- *Puzzles*
- *Scrabble*
- *Rubik's Cube*
- *Chess or checkers*



Protect Your Brain from Injury

Our brains are susceptible to injury, which could lead to a traumatic brain injury (TBI). How can we [protect](#) our brains every day?

- 🚗 Buckle Up! You should be wearing a seat belt every time you are in the car, no matter how close you are to your destination. Most car accidents happen within five miles of home!
- 🚗 Wear a helmet when you are skiing, snowboarding, biking, riding a horse, or on a motorcycle. You can't always control what happens around you!
- 🚗 Never drive while intoxicated or under the influence of a substance that impairs your ability to drive or react.
- 🚗 Don't text and drive. It can wait!
- 🚗 Talk with your doctor about side effects of medicine that may put you at risk for a fall and remember to attend an annual vision exam.
- 🚗 Remove items off of the floor in your home to prevent tripping (ex. extension cords, dumbbells, throw rugs, dog toys, shoes, etc.)
- 🚗 Increase the lighting in rooms in your house - it can help you avoid accidental falls!
- 🚗 If you have small children, consider installing baby gates, window guards, and nonslip mats in the shower to help protect them from accidents.

Wellness Webinars

Employees and spouses enrolled in one of the RCAB Health Plans and registered in the Blue Cross *ahealthyme* program can earn \$20 into their HealthEquity HRA or HSA accounts for attending a wellness webinar. Points are awarded for a maximum of five wellness webinars/family activities per Plan Year.

NEW! Master Meal Planning

Thursday, March 10th @ 6pm

Meal planning saves us calories, money, and time, but can also feel like a complicated and overwhelming task. You will learn key time-saving strategies to streamline the approach to meal planning that will set you and your family up for success every week. Meal planning has never felt so simple!

[Click Here to Register](#)

NEW! Balance and Boundaries

Tuesday, March 15th @ 6:30pm

The pandemic has transformed our lives, creating a "new normal." With many demands on our time and challenges both at work and home, balance is one of the keys to our overall success and wellbeing. Join us as we discuss strategies to achieve balance and establish boundaries in our lives. Take your first step by registering for this new interactive virtual workshop!

[Click Here to Register](#)

Solutions for Heart Health

Wednesday, March 23rd @ 5:30pm

Join us and learn how to improve your heart health through good nutrition. Find out the best oils to use for optimal health, clear up confusion surrounding farmed fish, and learn about an array of cholesterol-lowering heart-healthy whole foods.

[Click Here to Register](#)

How to Navigate RCAB Wellness Program Platforms – Q&A with Wellness & Wellbeing Manager, Kara Lavertu

Tuesday, March 29th @ 4:30pm

Are you new to the RCAB Health Benefit Trust Wellness Program and don't know where to start? Do you participate in the program but need a refresher or have questions about our program? Look no further! Kara Lavertu, RCAB Wellness & Wellbeing Manager, will show you how to get started with the RCAB Health Benefit Trust Wellness Program and teach you how to navigate the Wellness Program websites and earn HRA/HSA dollars. A Q&A session will conclude this webinar.

[Click Here to Register](#)



In Case You Missed It...

You can still view the recorded webinars from last month below. **After viewing these webinars, please self-report your viewing to Amanda Gately, Benefits Associate, at agately@rcab.org** and you can earn 20 HRA/HSA dollars. Points are awarded for a maximum of five wellness webinars/family activities per Plan Year. **You can access webinars for 60 days following their live recording date.**

What is Mental Health?

[Click Here to Access Webinar](#). Use password *MentalHealth2021* to access the recording.

Mastering Your Gut Health

[Click Here to Access Webinar](#)

All About Antioxidants & Cancer Prevention

[Click Here to Access Webinar](#)

James Parker-Ashley Strength Training Fitness Class

[Click Here to Access Webinar](#)



*Let us know what you want to see!
Please email Kara Lavertu at klavertu@rcab.org with your webinar topic ideas or requests.*



The Hello Sunshine Challenge invites you to get out in the sun for 100 minutes (10-15 minutes at a time). Sunshine is by far the best source of vitamin D, which strengthens your immune system and builds strong bones. Help fight seasonal depression by enjoying fresh air and soaking up some rays. Complete this Challenge and earn \$50 into your HealthEquity HRA or HSA ! Sign up or access your account at catholicbenefits.wellright.com.

Don't forget - it's time to spring forward an hour! On March 13th, we re-enter Daylight Savings Time (DST). First proposed in 1895, DST is the practice of adding an hour in the Spring and losing an hour in the Fall. With extra daylight comes more Vitamin D to help keep our bones, teeth, and muscles healthy!



Lenten Reflection

During this season of reflection, it is important to remember that the season is not just about sacrificing things we love but focusing on the things we are able to give. By practicing self-discipline and spending time in prayer and gratitude, we can support others by giving them our best selves, whether that be through our time, energy, or attention. Take some time this Lenten season to appreciate what your faith has allowed you to share with the world. Here is to a wonderful year

ahead!



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If you have any questions, please contact Kara Lavertu, Wellness & Wellbeing Manager, at 617-746-5642 or klavertu@rcab.org.

You're currently enrolled in one of the RCAB Health Plans, but have you signed up for the Blue Cross Blue Shield *ahealthyme* Program? If not, you're missing out on significant healthcare cost savings! If enrolled in the Enhanced or Basic Plan, you could earn up to **\$1,000 per Plan Year**, as a contribution to a tax-free Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) account, and if in the High Deductible Health Plan, you could earn up to **\$500 per Plan Year**, as a contribution to a Health Savings Account (HSA). HRA and HSA dollars can be used to pay for out-of-pocket [IRS-approved medical, dental, and vision expenses](#), such as co-pays and deductibles. As you may already know, HRA and HSA dollars may be used by all family members who are enrolled in the RCAB Health Plans. Don't miss out on significant cost savings!

To create an account, please register at ahealthyme.com/login. **As an added incentive, if you register in the *ahealthyme* Program by March 31, 2022, you will be entered in a raffle to win one of five Fitbit Versa 2 watches!**



New health and wellness topics covering exercise routines, recipes, tips, and tricks to spark motivation in your life every month!

Berry Yogurt Parfait

Servings: 4

Prep time: 5 min



INGREDIENTS

- 2-3 cups of mixed berries (blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries)
- 1 quart of plain yogurt
- Granola of your choosing

DIRECTIONS

1. Wash and dry the berries
2. Cut strawberries into smaller pieces after removing the tops
3. Add a layer of yogurt into four glasses or bowls
4. Add a layer of mixed berries on top of the yogurt
5. Repeat layers until satisfied
6. Garnish with a sprinkle of granola

Recipe from <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/tyler-florence/yogurt-berry-parfait-recipe-1915894>.

In good health,
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Benefits Department