

## FEBRUARY RECIPE

### CHICKEN STIR FRY



Celebrate Heart Month and Chinese New Year with a delicious stir-fry recipe. The key to stir-fry cooking is to prepare all ingredients before you start to cook your dish. Remember to cut your proteins (meats/poultry) and your vegetable choices into bite-sized pieces.

#### INGREDIENTS

##### Marinade:

- Low sodium soy sauce or tamari
- White Pepper
- Ginger - minced/grated
- Garlic - smashed/minced
- Dry Sherry/Wine (drinking, not cooking)

## SNEAK IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING A SEDENTARY WORK DAY

Too much sitting around can bring heart health risks, but when your job has you sitting all day, what do you do?



"Sit less, move more," is the simple advice from Deborah Rohm Young, chair of the panel that wrote a 2016 American Heart Association advisory published in the journal *Circulation*. The AHA recommends adults get at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week. "Take those smaller breaks throughout the day so you're not sitting all at once."

In all, U.S. adults spend an average six to eight hours a day being sedentary. But whether it's based at home or at the office, the work must get done. So Young, a director of behavioral research at Kaiser Permanente Southern California, suggests setting a timer to remember to move around for five minutes every hour, or 10 minutes every two hours.

Here are other ways to introduce movement:

- Walk during breaks, and use longer breaks to stroll outdoors, whether down the street or laps around the building.
- A midday walk during a lunch break can help the mind to focus on the afternoon's work.
- Stand during meetings.

## RECIPE (CONT.)

### Stir-Fry

- 1/4 cup low sodium soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced/grated
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced/smashed
- 1 pound chicken breast, thinly sliced (other protein choices may be substituted)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup broccoli florets ( other vegetable choices/combinations may be substituted)
- 1/2 cup onions, julienne sliced
- 1/4 cup sweet peppers, julienne sliced (use red/yellow to add color to your dish)
- 2 stalks green onions/scallions, sliced into 1/2 inch cuts
- 2 tablespoons canola oil, divided
- 1/2 cup chicken/vegetable broth
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch, divided
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil (optional)

### PREPARATION

1. In a large bowl, mix the soy sauce, one (1) tablespoon cornstarch, minced ginger, garlic, sherry and white pepper together.
2. Add the sliced chicken and coat the pieces well with the marinade. Set aside.
3. In a large skillet or wok, add one (1) teaspoon canola oil on medium high heat. Add the salt and when the oil is sizzling, add onions. Stir fry pushing them from the

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk to talk with a co-worker in person rather than using the phone or electronic messaging.
- Take public transportation to work instead of driving. It likely involves walking to and from the transit stop.
- Use standing or adjustable height desks to avoid sitting while on the phone or at the computer.
- Exercise at your desk, with squats or jumping jacks.

Though the cost of sedentary behavior has not been quantified in dollars, the costs of poor health and ensuing productivity loss in the workplace has. It's about \$225.8 billion overall per year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Legislation under consideration in Congress, called the PHIT Act, would classify gym memberships and exercise class costs as medical expenses for tax purposes, Young said. The proposal, in the works for about a decade, centers on pre-tax medical accounts. The end-of-year government shutdown ran out the clock on a key Senate vote for the bill, so the legislation will have to be re-introduced in the House and Senate in 2019.

More companies are using workplace wellness programs to encourage employees to boost their physical activity and take other steps that contribute to better cardiovascular and overall health. On-site gyms and fitness classes at work can give those who might not otherwise seek out an exercise program a way to explore one.

But programs also must be encouraging and welcoming so that all workers, not just the "fitness buffs" feel comfortable enough to participate, Young said. "Just getting in that door can be intimidating."

Source: American Heart Association

## RECIPE (CONT.)

center of the pan outwards to the sides of the skillet. Add the other vegetables one at a time into the center of the pan and pushing outwards to mix them together. Stir-fry for one minute. Remove vegetables to a bowl/plate and set aside.

4. Add the remaining oil to the skillet/wok on medium heat. Add chicken using a slotted spoon to drain the marinade as you put it into the pan. Stir fry the chicken until just cooked through, about 2-3 minutes on each side using the same technique of pushing the chicken from the center to the outside of the pan. Add marinade to coat the chicken and stir well.

5. Mix broth with remaining one (1) tablespoon cornstarch to make a slurry, stirring well to dissolve cornstarch.

6. Add vegetables back into the pan with the chicken. Add broth/slurry stir-frying chicken and vegetables together. Cover for 1 minute. Remove from heat. Serve with steamed rice.

Yield: 4 servings

Serving Size: 1 cup (approximately 250 calories per serving)

Source: Carol Chong, National Nutrition Advisor, Alliance for a Healthier Generation

## IF YOU FEEL THANKFUL, WRITE IT DOWN. IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH

Over this past year, lifestyle blogger Aileen Xu has kept a monthly gratitude list.

Sometimes it was the big stuff: "I'm grateful that my family is so understanding. I'm grateful so many people care."

And sometimes it was life's little blessings: "July 2018: I'm grateful for good hair after I shower."

Xu started making such lists when she was in college, "at a point when I was just not in a very good place in my life." Now, the 28-year-old lifestyle blogger and YouTuber recommends the practice to her nearly 750,000 subscribers.

It wasn't a hard sell.

"I think just over the last few years there's been more of a trend to focus on gratitude," says psychologist Laurie Santos, who teaches a course on the science of well-being and happiness at Yale.

Gratitude is being endorsed by wellness blogs and magazines. You can buy different kinds of specific gratitude journals, or download apps that remind you to jot down your blessings.

"Those types of products can remind us to take time to be grateful," Santos says. "But it's also important to remember that gratitude is free."

And noting your gratitude seems to pay off: There's a growing body of research on the benefits of gratitude. Studies have found that giving thanks and counting blessings can help people sleep better, lower stress and improve interpersonal relationships. Earlier this year, a study found that keeping a gratitude journal decreased materialism and bolstered generosity among adolescents.

In another study from August, high school students who were asked to keep gratitude journals also reported healthier eating. There's also some evidence it could lower your risk of heart disease and lower symptoms of depression for some people.

That's why gratitude features heavily in Santos' happiness class. "It's one of the practices that really wins out from the field of positive psychology," she says, because it takes very little time, and "the benefits are so powerful."

Making gratitude lists is one way of accessing those benefits. You could thank God or the universe. You could keep your gratitude private or share it with others. The best way of accessing and expressing gratitude may be different for each person.

Santos' students, in addition to keeping gratitude journals, are asked to write a thank you letter and then read it out loud to the recipient. "I can show measurable improvements in well-being even a month after you've done this," Santos says.

What works for some people may not work for others. To find your best method, "[r]eally think about what feels right and what feels natural or meaningful to you," says Sonja Lyubomirsky, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, who studies happiness and gratitude.

Some may find that a daily dose of gratitude in the morning can be transformative. "It helps me feel awake and abundantly joyful," says Sam Khazai, a 38-year-old actor based in New York, who uses a journal that prompts him to list three things he's grateful for each day.

"I know it sounds kind of meta," he says. "But practicing gratitude, it brings me so much gratitude in and of itself."

There have been times, however, when he has skipped a day or even several days when he's felt especially down. "Or if I don't skip those days, I've straight up lied to my own gratitude journal ... I've filled it with things I hoped to be grateful for," he says — but he didn't feel grateful, and forcing it felt bad.

"Gratitude is a very rich emotion, but it's also kind of a complicated one," notes Lyubomirsky. "Sometimes when you express gratitude, you could also feel humbled or indebted or embarrassed. So it doesn't always feel pleasant."

In one study Lyubomirsky and her colleagues found that counting blessings once a week boosted happiness, but doing so three times a week didn't. "That suggests that for most people, at least on average, three times a week was too much," she says. "And too much gratitude can sort of backfire."

There's also a lack of research on how gratitude exercises affect people with clinical depression, anxiety or suicidal tendencies, Lyubomirsky says. "If you're depressed, and you're asked to express gratitude ... you might have trouble thinking of what you're grateful for, or you may feel really guilty you haven't paid back that person you're grateful for."

Indeed, for all the research on the broad benefits of expressing gratitude, there's also evidence that it isn't for everyone. And it isn't a panacea — it can't make injustice, loss, or pain disappear.

What gratitude can do is give us hope. "The research shows that focusing on the positive, in addition to the negative, can boost our mood more than we expect," says Santos.

In Oakland, Calif., 31-year-old mental health counselor Zeyda Garcia agrees. During really tough times, like when she'd lost a job and was sleeping on her friend's mom's couch — she felt like she was reaching for reasons to be grateful.

But she still tried to find some. "Even if it's just — I'm grateful for the sun that's shining or being able to wake up," she says. It felt hokey, and "kind of fake, a little bit."

But ultimately, it helped. "It allowed me to ground myself," she says. "It allowed me to remember what was going well, in a world full of chaos."

Source: NPR