

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

March/April • VOLUME 21 ISSUE 1

COMMUNITY WELLNESS



March Spotlight

Diabetes Alert Day & National Nutrition Month

Diabetes Alert Day (March 24, 2026) is a national reminder to assess your risk for type 2 diabetes. With millions of Americans living with diabetes or prediabetes, often unknowingly, this day encourages early detection and lifestyle changes to prevent serious complications.

National Nutrition Month, celebrated throughout March, promotes healthy eating habits and informed food choices. It's the perfect time to focus on balanced meals, portion control, and incorporating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains into your diet.

Together, these observances remind us that nutrition and prevention go hand in hand. Small steps, like taking the ADA Risk Test and making healthier food choices, can lead to big improvements in overall health.



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Healthy and Budget Friendly Eating for the Busy Schedule

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If you've ever ended a long day staring into the fridge and thinking, "I should really eat something healthy... but takeout sounds easier," you're not alone. Eating well when life is hectic can feel like a chore, but it doesn't have to be. With a few simple habits, you can nourish yourself, save money, and skip the stress.

Start Small

You don't need to make a full lifestyle overhaul. Forming habits that fit into your normal routine and preferences help make them sustainable. Think of things you can do on autopilot: grabbing a piece of fruit on your way out the door for a quick snack, keeping pre-portioned nuts or whole-wheat crackers in your desk drawer, and carrying a water bottle versus buying soda or juice.

These are all small changes that can lead to big wins in your overall nutrition without forcing you to change your whole schedule.

Blueprints

Elaborate, color-coded meal planning calendars are not needed. While they can be helpful for those who have been meal-prepping for years, they can become overwhelming for those who are new to pre-planning their weekly mealtimes. Starting with a couple meals a week will cut down on last minute over-spending for a quick pre-packaged lunch or dinner. It can also help you set achievable goals that you are able to reach.



Stock your Pantry with Staples

Keep basic, frequently used items in the house for those days when you may not have a plan. This can help create quick, well-balanced meals and eliminate the feeling to order takeout or delivery. Some items I find useful to keep around the house are frozen chicken breast, microwavable rice or pasta pouches, canned beans (look for low sodium varieties), frozen vegetables, chicken stock, tomato sauce, and a variety of spices. Buying frozen and shelf-stable lets you keep them longer, so you always have a quick meal in your back pocket.

Convenience, or pre-packed items should also be incorporated in your planning if they are cost-effective. If nutrient packed ones are selected, like pre-washed spinach and rotisserie chicken, they can be your ally in the kitchen.

Prep Time Strategies

It may seem like prepping ingredients for meals ahead of time will take hours of your day. Planning the order you prep foods in can make a big difference. While waiting for water and pasta to boil for one meal, start chopping vegetables to store for tomorrow's dinner or measure out all your spices. Cook double the pasta when making dinner and store half in the refrigerator for another meal.

Meal-planning with recipes and dishes that use the same ingredients is also a way to help cut down on costs and food waste. Roast some vegetables as a side dish with your chicken and then throw the rest together with some pasta and a light dressing for the next day's lunch. If you have leftover chicken, you can also toss that in for some added protein.

A prepping trick we use in my house is to roast/grill seasoned chicken in a larger than needed batch for dinner and cut half into strips for freezing. When we want to make a pasta salad or other pasta dish, we have some homemade grilled and ready-to-eat chicken we can easily heat up and toss in. It also tastes great on a salad for my workday lunch.



Recipe

Prep Ahead Hot Oatmeal with Fruit and Nuts



INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup rolled oats (not instant)
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp honey
- 3 dried apricots (or ½ cup fresh blueberries)
- 1/8 cup chopped walnuts
- ½ cup boiling water

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small thermos add oats, cinnamon, honey, and apricots. Close lid and set aside on counter top.
2. Put walnuts in small Tupperware container or snack sized Ziploc bag. Set aside with thermos.
3. In the morning, before leaving the house, boil ½ cup water and add to the thermos mixture. Give a quick stir and close lid. Let sit in thermos during your drive to work or other activity. When ready to eat, open thermos and mix in your chopped walnuts.

HEALTHY HILLSBOROUGH

December 3rd Steering Committee Update

The fourth quarter meeting was hosted hybrid at the West Tampa Library and Microsoft Teams. Discussion topics (see below) included subcommittee updates, community partner highlights and networking opportunities.

If you are interested in joining the Healthy Hillsborough Collaborative or a subcommittee please scan the QR code or reach out to Marissa Khan at Marissa.Khan@FLHealth.gov



Healthy Hillsborough Steering Committee members met in-person and online to discuss upcoming activities.

Community Partner Highlight

Ybor Youth Clinic (USF Health)

As part of the USF Pediatric, Adolescent and Young Adult HIV Program.

Ybor Youth Clinic focuses on providing STI/HIV testing and treatment, mental health services, PrEP, and referrals to community resources.

Service locations

Chalsty Pediatric Clinic

13101 Bruce B Downs Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33612

Ybor Youth Clinic

1315 East 7th Ave., Suite 104
Tampa, FL 33605

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any queries or questions, contact Marissa.Khan@FLHealth.gov

Please scan the QR code if you are interested in becoming a subcommittee member.



Priority Area Updates

Behavioral

The committee's goal is to improve quality of life for youth and young adults. They launched a project to create a wellness room for Morten Elementary School. They began by painting the room and adding furniture.



Social & Economic

The committee addresses awareness and access to local resources by strengthening social resources. They volunteered at Metro Ministries and Trinity Cafe to help with food preparation and distribution.



Environmental

The committee is working to create more green space, food access and transportation. Coordinating with partners to achieve their goals, they toured a community garden hosted by Tampa Family Health Centers.





Diabetes Alert Day

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

▶ What is Diabetes Alert Day?

Observed annually on the fourth Tuesday in March, this day is a national wake-up call from the American Diabetes Association to take their free 60-second risk test and learn your chance of having prediabetes or type 2 diabetes.

▶ Why It Matters

- Over 38 million Americans have diabetes, and 8.7 million are unaware.
- 97 million U.S. adults have prediabetes, with 90% unaware of their risk.
- Early detection through simple screening can help prevent serious complications, like heart, kidney, eye disease, nerve damage, and stroke.

▶ How to Take Action

- **Take the ADA Risk Test:** [Type 2 Diabetes Risk Test](#)
- **Know the symptoms:** Thirst, fatigue, blurred vision, frequent urination—don't ignore them.
- **Start healthy habits:**
 - Hydrate with water, skip sugary drinks
 - Move daily — walk, play, exercise
 - Eat more plant-based foods, fewer refined carbs
 - Manage weight and quit smoking
- **Explore diabetes and chronic disease prevention** resources offered by the Florida Department of Health (see page 12 for more information).

Early awareness and simple lifestyle changes can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes—and that truly makes a difference.

Nutrition Month

Discover the Power of Nutrition

This year's National Nutrition Month® theme focuses on how smart food choices can transform your health. Nutrition is more than just eating, it's about fueling your body, preventing chronic diseases, and improving overall well-being. By choosing nutrient-dense foods, practicing balance and variety, and making mindful decisions, you can boost energy, support immunity, and enhance quality of life.

Power Your Day With Nutrition

- Choose nutrient-dense foods from all five food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and dairy.
- Include a variety of colors on your plate. Each color offers unique vitamins and minerals.
- Pair good nutrition with regular physical activity for optimal health and energy.

Avoid Fad Diets

- Quick-fix diets often lack essential nutrients and can lead to unhealthy eating patterns.
- Focus on balanced, sustainable habits that fit your lifestyle and cultural preferences.
- Remember: Healthy eating is about progress, not perfection.

Seek Professional Guidance

- Registered dietitian nutritionists provide personalized nutrition advice based on your health needs, goals, and preferences.
- They can help with meal planning, managing chronic conditions, and creating realistic strategies for long-term success.

Practice Mindful Eating

- Slow down during meals, savor flavors, and listen to your body's hunger and fullness cues.
- Reduce distractions like screens while eating to improve digestion and satisfaction.

Support Local and Community Nutrition

- Shop at farmers' markets or join a community garden to access fresh, seasonal produce.
- Volunteer for local food programs to help others make healthy choices.

National Nutrition Month reminds us that healthy eating is a lifelong habit. Small, consistent changes, like choosing balanced meals, can boost health and prevent chronic disease. Discover the power of nutrition and share it with your community!



Mosquitoes are active in Florida most of the year, with activity ramping up from March through October once temperatures rise above 50°F, and peaking in the warmest, wettest months (upper 70-90s°F).

When are they most active?



Pre-dawn to early morning



Dusk through early night



Some species bite during the day, especially in shaded or vegetated areas, with peaks in early morning and late afternoon.

Why it Matters

Mosquito-borne diseases can be spread through the bite of infected mosquitoes. These illnesses may be caused by viruses or parasites, and symptoms can range from mild to severe. Several mosquito species in Florida can transmit diseases to humans, horses, and other animals. Common mosquito-borne diseases in Florida include West Nile virus disease, Eastern equine encephalitis, and St. Louis encephalitis.

Hillsborough residents who travel internationally (Caribbean, South America, South Central/Southeast Asia) may also be exposed to diseases such as Oropouche, malaria, dengue, chikungunya, yellow fever, and Zika virus. Travelers should consult a healthcare provider or visit a travel clinic before departure to learn about risks and preventive measures. Medications are available for malaria, and vaccines exist for yellow fever. Avoiding mosquito bites and using repellent are strongly recommended when traveling to affected areas.



Protect Hillsborough: Your Mosquito Safety Guide

Mosquito prevention works best when everyone participates. The Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County recommends the following actions to reduce mosquito breeding and protect yourself from bites:

1. Eliminate Standing Water

- Empty containers that hold water (buckets, flowerpots, pet dishes).
- Keep flower pot saucers dry and avoid overwatering plants.
- Empty and scrub flower vases twice weekly.
- Change water in bird baths, fountains, wading pools, rain barrels regularly.
- Keep swimming pool water treated and circulating.
- Clear drains and ditches of weeds and trash so water drains properly.



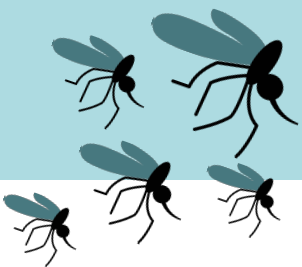
2. Remove Mosquito Habitats

- Clean roof gutters and eaves often.
- Keep grass cut short and shrubbery trimmed.
- Fill or drain low spots in your yard (puddles, ruts).
- Repair leaky pipes and outdoor taps.
- Inspect and repair gaps in septic tanks; cover vent pipes with mesh.

3. Protect Yourself from Mosquito Bites

- Wear loose-fitting long sleeves and pants when outdoors.
- Use EPA-registered insect repellents with DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Install or repair window and door screens.
- Cover baby carriers and beds with netting (do not use repellent on babies under 2 months).





Stay Bite-Free on Your Travels

Before Your Trip



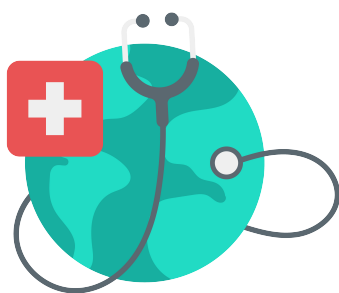
- Visit a travel clinic or your health care provider 4–6 weeks before traveling to review country-specific recommendations, health notices, and warnings.
- Get available immunizations or prophylactic medications (e.g., malaria, yellow fever).
- Choose lodging with window and door screens or air conditioning when possible.
- Make a checklist of everything you'll need for a safe and enjoyable vacation.

During Your Travels

- Use EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
- Wear long sleeves and pants when outdoors.
- Sleep under mosquito nets if screens or AC are not available.



After Your Trip



- If you develop fever, headache, muscle/joint pain, or rash, see your healthcare provider immediately and share your travel history.
- Even if you feel well, prevent mosquito bites for 3 weeks after returning to avoid spreading viruses like dengue, chikungunya, and Zika to local mosquitoes.

For more information on mosquito-borne disease prevention and travel health, visit [CDC.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel).

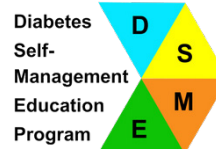
Learn more about our free health education programs by calling 813-307-8009 to register or visit Hillsborough.FloridaHealth.gov.



BP For Me

Blood Pressure Management Education Program

A five week program helps participants understand blood pressure numbers and how high BP can increase your risk for heart attack, stroke, heart disease, heart failure, kidney disease, and more. With the guidance and education from our registered dietitian, learn how to control your blood pressure through the foods you eat and how you prepare them.



Diabetes Self Management Education

A six week program that gives participants tools to monitor glucose at home, make lifestyle changes, learn about medications and insulin, and make informed choices about foods and carbohydrates to manage diabetes. The program is accredited by the Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialists and participants in the program have an average reduction in A1C of 1.15!



Diabetes Prevention Program

A year-long program (26 sessions) designed around behavior modification and resources to cope with stress, choosing healthy meals, and getting into an exercise routine. This program is great for those looking for ongoing accountability, support, and permanent lifestyle changes. This evidence-based weight loss program has a participant average weight loss of 6% of their body weight. Those who lose 5-7% of their body weight, it can reduce the risk for developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers, along with lowering cholesterol, and improving blood glucose levels.



Get Into Fitness Today

A 12-week program for health and wellness, using science-based information to reduce chronic diseases through obesity prevention. This program is great for those who already know the basics of wellness and just need a refresher and motivation to lose weight. Our GIFT program has helped 90% of participants increase their physical activity, and is for anyone who is looking for a starting point to lose weight. You'll learn tools for healthy eating and how to be more physically active.



Get Into Fitness Together – a Learning Emotional Activity Program (GIFT-LEAP)

Designed to encourage children ages 5-9 years in making healthy choices so that they can lead a healthy lifestyle into adulthood. The program is six weeks long and covers healthy eating, physical activity, and how to deal with stress and emotions. Families are welcome to join in the program.

BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER EARLY DETECTION PROGRAM

We offer **free** mammogram and Pap smear testing.
For more information and to schedule an
appointment, call 813-307-8082.

Tampa Family Health Center

To schedule an appointment, call
813-284-4529

FL♥rida KidCare

The Florida health insurance for children for those
that are eligible, birth through age 18, even if one
or both parents are working. To apply by phone, call
888-540-5437, or TTY-877-316-8748.

FL HEALTH CHARTS



Have you ever wondered about the health of your
community or state and how it compares to other
Floridians? If so, Florida Health Charts is a great
resource for accurate health data.

Learn more at FLHealthCHARTS.gov

PARKS AND RECREATION

Florida State Park
FloridaStateParks.org

**Hillsborough County Parks, Recreation, and
Conservation**
HillsboroughCounty.org

Plant City Parks and Recreation
PlantCityGov.com/ParksRec

Tampa Parks and Recreation
TampaGov.net/parks-and-recreation

Temple Terrace Parks and Recreation
TempleTerrace.com

CONTACT US

* All numbers are area code, 813, unless otherwise indicated.

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COMMUNITY HEALTH

Behavioral Health 235-3273
Breast/Cervical Cancer 307-8082
Community Health Director 307-8071
Compass Program 267-6103
Diabetes 307-8009
Epidemiology 307-8010
Health Education 307-8009
Health Literacy 307-8071
Insulin Program 307-8009
Lead Poisoning Prevention 307-8071
Office of Minority Health 307-8066
School Health 307-8071
Tobacco Prevention 559-4760
Weight Management 307-8009

DISEASE CONTROL

HIV/AIDS Specialty Center 307-8064
Immunizations 307-8077
Sexually Transmitted Diseases 307-8058
Anonymous Testing 307-8058
Tuberculosis (TB) 307-8047

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH 307-8059

HUMAN RESOURCES 307-8031

NUTRITION/WIC 307-8074

PHARMACY

(HIV/AIDS care clients only) 307-8072

PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS 307-8042

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER 307-8044

VITAL STATISTICS

(birth and death records) 307-8002

Have a question or comment, email us at
DLCHD29WebsiteDistribution@FLHealth.gov



Mission: To protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

**Florida Department of Health in
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