

healthmatters

Spring 2024

Take on HEALTHY CHANGES one at a time



Are you a BF&M health insurance customer?

Make the most out of our free wellness programme, LiveWell. Through its engaging online platform and in-person sessions, LiveWell offers:

- ✓ Wellness assessments
- ✓ Personalised advice
- ✓ Nutrition education
- ✓ Healthy living workshops
- ✓ Mental health and lifestyle management support
- ✓ Wellness challenges with prizes

All included as part of your BF&M health insurance so you can live your healthiest life.

LiveWell with BF&M

Get started today at bfm.bm/LiveWell.

When it comes to improving your health, tackling everything at once can get overwhelming. Addressing smaller, more manageable items one at a time is much easier—and achievable.

SET YOUR INTENTION

Start by choosing one change you're motivated to make for yourself. Then set some goals. As you're doing so, be specific: Define exactly what you want to achieve, how quickly you want to achieve it, and what actions you'll take to get there.

The precision of this plan makes it more likely that you'll follow through with it. That's why experts recommend this approach over setting vague goals. Instead of aiming to eat healthier, for example, vow to add one vegetable to your dinner each day.

WATCH YOUR SUCCESSES BUILD

The fun thing about this one-goal-at-a-time approach is that as you make improvements in one aspect of your health, you will likely notice improvements in other areas.

For example:

- *If you eat more healthy foods, then you can improve your quality of sleep.*
- *If you improve your quality of sleep, then you may be better at sticking to an exercise plan.*
- *If you exercise regularly, then you can reduce your stress.*
- *If you reduce your stress, then you may eat more healthy foods.*

As you can see, taking on one personal health goal can, in turn, help you take on the rest of them. Just remember to focus on one at a time.

Quick tips for caregivers

By Amy Marchesano, LMHC, PsyD Candidate/Intern, William James College

Although it may be rewarding, caregiving can also become a source of overwhelming stress. Caregiver stress and burnout are a response to the workload and emotional factors that often accompany the role.

To address caregiver stress, focus on the four S's: self-care, studying, support, and synchronisation.

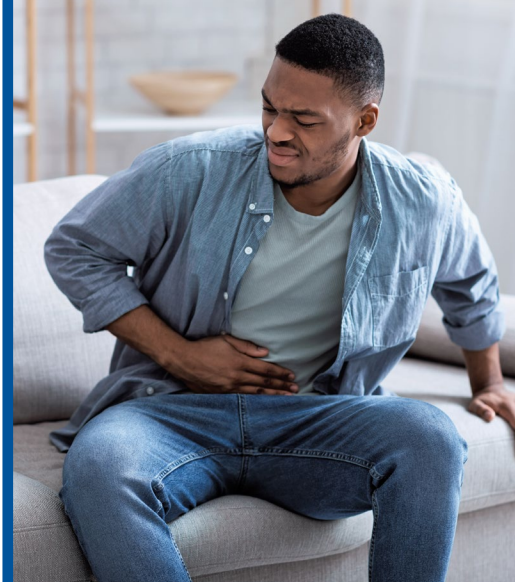
- 1. SELF-CARE:** Remember that self-care is not selfish. Prioritise your well-being by trying to keep your doctor's appointments, ensuring you get adequate sleep, and maintaining a nutritious diet.
 - Schedule respite time in your calendar as you would any other appointment. Even 20 minutes can help!
 - Talk with a therapist, employee assistance program (EAP), or your primary care physician for support.
 - You have permission to say no to others.
 - It's OK to ask for help. Ask for specific things you need, such as a meal or respite time.

- 2. STUDYING:** Educate yourself about your loved one's diagnosis or situation. Facts can empower your decision-making and prepare you, dispelling myths and also reducing stress.
- 3. SUPPORT:** Creating a robust support network for you and your loved one is essential. Consider joining virtual or in-person support groups, leveraging resources within your community or workplace (such as an EAP), or connecting with social groups. Establishing a network can be beneficial for sharing responsibilities and finding much-needed respite to recharge your caregiver battery.
- 4. SYNCHRONISATION:** Communicate and coordinate with your family, medical providers, and supervisor at work to synchronise care and planning. Consider meeting with a special needs or elder-care attorney to organise finances and care decisions in advance.

FIND SUPPORT

Check out these resources:

- centre.bm
- caregiver.org
- rosalynncarter.org
- ageconcern.bm



4 signs of colon cancer you shouldn't ignore

Colon cancer isn't just for older adults. In fact, cases of early-onset colon cancer, which is diagnosed before age 50, have been on the rise for decades.

Recent research shows that the most common warning signs associated with early-onset colon cancer are:



STOMACH PAIN



DIARRHOEA



RECTAL BLEEDING



IRON DEFICIENCY ANAEMIA (lack of enough iron in your body, which can be diagnosed through a blood test)

Don't delay if you have these symptoms. Talk with your healthcare provider immediately.

GET SCREENED

People at average risk for colorectal cancer should begin screening at age 45. Talk with your healthcare provider about the type and frequency of screening that is right for you.



Stress after menopause may lead to irregular heartbeat

If you've gone through menopause, stressful events or situations can increase your risk for a heart arrhythmia called atrial fibrillation.

But that doesn't mean stressed postmenopausal people are guaranteed to have an arrhythmia. There are steps you can take to protect your heart.

Atrial fibrillation, also called A-Fib, is the most common type of heart arrhythmia, or irregular heartbeat. But just because it's common doesn't mean you should take it lightly: A-Fib can lead to stroke, blood clots, heart failure, other heart problems, and even death.

Your risk of getting atrial fibrillation rises as you get older. Other risk factors include:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Obesity
- European ancestry

While some people may not feel any symptoms of A-Fib, others will experience a fluttering or thumping in the chest and could also feel weak, faint, or short of breath.

If you suspect you may have A-Fib, talk with a healthcare provider. They can perform tests to confirm a diagnosis. Treatment options include medications, surgeries, and nonsurgical procedures.

You can also focus on lowering overall stress. To do this, make sure you're eating well, getting enough sleep and exercise, and taking time to relax.

BE HEART-HEALTHY
Visit the **Bermuda Heart Foundation** at **bermudaheartfoundation.com** for more information on heart health.



Should your family go *plant-based*?

What can you feed your kids so that they grow up healthy and strong? Consider a plant-based diet.

Research suggests that children who eat diets rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole grains tend to be a healthier weight. Their risk for conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure also decreases.

A plant-based diet doesn't have to be vegetarian. But it focuses on food that grows in the ground and less that comes from animals.

To follow a plant-based diet, try to:

- Make half your plate veggies at lunch or dinner.
- Choose fruit instead of sweets for dessert.
- Eat the rainbow—offer produce of all different colors. Aim to serve leafy greens daily.
- Consume less meat, or remove it altogether, from at least one or two meals per week.
- Opt for healthy fats, such as those found in nuts, seeds, avocados, and olive oil.

Kids don't always love veggies and other plant-based foods at first. But if you serve them often—and set a good example by eating them yourself—they'll become part of your family's routine.

Preventative healthcare matters.

Remember to schedule the screenings and healthcare provider appointments to which you are entitled under your coverage, because preventative healthcare matters.

Learn more online at bfm.com/preventativehealthcare

With **BF&M** you can.



* LiveWell is intended to complement rather than substitute for proper medical advice or treatment.

EDITOR Brenda Dale, Associate Head of Wellness at BF&M

healthmatters is published four times a year by BF&M Insurance Group, P.O. Box HM 1007, Hamilton, HM DX Bermuda. ©2024. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. No material in this issue may be reproduced without written permission. The publishers do not assume responsibility for unsolicited editorial material. All articles in *healthmatters* are written and edited by professionals in healthcare communications and reviewed for accuracy by appropriate specialists. *healthmatters* does not promote any form of medical treatment, nor does it encourage the self-management of medical problems. It is meant to supplement, not replace, the advice and care of healthcare professionals. All models are used for illustrative purposes only. Developed by Krames, a WebMD Ignite solution. 5001