

## FEBRUARY 2026 WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

# HEART CONNECTIONS

Social connections are vital in promoting health and preventing disease, including heart disease and stroke. This month's theme is about the healing powers of having these connections in our lives.



***"Having poor social relationships, being socially isolated, and loneliness can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke by about 30%."***

### FEBRUARY FEATURED ARTICLES

#### CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR COMMUNITY

#### START A WALKING GROUP

#### STEPS TO MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE

#### GRILLED FISH TACOS

#### MONTHLY VIDEO



#### ELEVATE YOUR EVERYDAY: ONE HABIT AT A TIME

##### **Get Moving with a Group**

Start a neighborhood or workplace walking, skiing or running group. Moderate and/or vigorous intensity physical activity with a group will benefit your heart and foster belonging.

##### **Cook Together**

Book a virtual cooking date to prepare and make a heart healthy recipe with a long distance friend or family members. Try grilled fish tacos to get started.

### SNOW DAYS EVENT

**Join Blue Cross VT on February 7th from 10am to 1pm at Lyndon Outing Club**

Enjoy access to sledding hill, sleds and tubes at Lyndon Outing Club in Lyndonville, VT. All are welcome to bring their own equipment. This event is free for all Vermonters.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Check out our [Blue Sky VT Days](#) to learn more about free events for all Vermonters- 2026 Snow Days!

# 2026 SNOW DAYS

Snow Days events are our way of helping Vermonters shake off the cold weather blues by getting outside to enjoy all the great winter activities our state has to offer.



## Snow Days In-Person Events

Join us at an in-person event to go snowshoeing, sledding, or cross-country skiing! We'll have hot chocolate and healthy snacks for everyone, and the first 50 attendees will get a Snow Days fleece hat.

- **Saturday, 1/24; 10 AM - 1 PM: Prospect Mountain, Woodford.** Enjoy free access to trails as well as cross country ski and snowshoe equipment.
- **Saturday, 1/31; 10 AM - 1 PM: Mountain Top Resort, Chittenden.** Enjoy free access to trails as well as cross country ski and snowshoe equipment.
- **Saturday, 2/7; 10 AM - 1 PM: Lyndon Outing Club, Lyndonville.** Enjoy free access to sledding hill, sleds, and tubes. All are welcome to bring their own equipment.



## Winter Community Challenge

Get out, get active, and give back! No snow required. Share photos of your winter activities with us via email ([events@bcbsvt.com](mailto:events@bcbsvt.com)), or tag [@bluecrossvt](https://www.instagram.com/bluecrossvt) in your posts on Instagram and Facebook from January 24 thru February 7. For each photo you share, we'll donate \$5 to **Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports**, a local organization making sports accessible for all bodies and abilities.



**BlueCross BlueShield**  
of Vermont

An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.



For more information, visit  
[bluecrossvt.org/snow-days](https://bluecrossvt.org/snow-days)

**HOME**



Action Steps for  
Health & Happiness

# Contribute to your community

Gallup surveys show people with higher personal well-being are more likely to say they give time, money, or help to others in their communities.

Volunteering is linked with many health benefits:

- Less chronic pain
- Lower rate of heart disease
- Lower rate of depression, especially for persons age 60 and older
- Lower death rates

Find out about many ways to help others from Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America from [nationalservice.gov](http://nationalservice.gov).



Yes 

Research the organization's goals and needs. Find out how much of your time is required.

No 

Don't over commit to projects that you cannot handle.





# Start a walking group

Walking is hands down one of the best forms of exercise. Walking with a group is a great strategy to keep you motivated. And what better way to get involved in a walking group than to start one yourself!

1. **Identify target members.** Do you want to invite the general public, only close friends, or people in your neighborhood? Know who you want to join.
2. **Choose a time.** Based on who you plan to invite, pick a regular time slot and schedule about 60-75 minutes.
3. **Plan a route (and a backup).** A good walking route is free, safe, well-maintained, and near your home or work. Also, select a backup indoor location, such as a mall or walking track, for when the weather is poor.
4. **Spread the word.** Reach out to your target members with flyers, social media, phone calls, or emails. Aim for between 5 and 15 members.





## **FEATURED RECIPE!**

# **Grilled fish tacos**

### **Ingredients**

#### FOR THE SALSA:

- 1 can of peach halves
- 1/2 red bell pepper
- 1/4 red onion
- 1 whole jalapeno pepper
- 1 Tablespoon fresh cilantro
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

In a medium bowl, stir together chopped peaches, bell pepper, onions, jalapenos, cilantro and lemon juice; cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

#### FOR THE FISH:

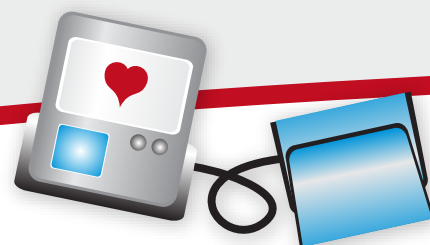
- 4 tilapia fillets (about 1 lb)
- 1 Tablespoon chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon low-sodium adobo seasoning
- 1 packet low-sodium sazón seasoning
- 8 flour tortillas (6" diameter, warmed)

### **Directions**

1. In a small bowl, stir together chili powder, adobo seasoning and sazón packet. Rub fish with spice mixture to coat completely.
2. Place fish on hot greased grill grates.
3. Cook, flipping once until fish is opaque and flakes easily with a fork (145 degrees Fahrenheit), about 8 minutes.
4. Thinly slice fish. To serve, fill each tortilla with 1/2 fish fillet and about 1/3 cup of salsa.

*Serves 4: Per serving: Calories: 330; Total Fat: 5 g; Saturated Fat: 2 g; Sodium: 380 mg; Total Carbohydrate: 44 g; Dietary Fiber: 3 g; Protein: 27 g*

*Source: What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl*



# Simple Steps to Improve Your High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

There are lots of easy ways to help improve your high blood pressure. Even one small change can make a big difference. Below you will see a list of options grouped into categories to help you find what works best for you. Take a look and check off any actions you are already doing or ones you would like to try. Starting with just one is a great step forward.

	Lifestyle Change	Approximate SBP Lowering Range	Recommendation	Doing Now/ Try Next
<b>Manage Weight</b>	<b>Manage weight</b>	6–8 mm Hg	Maintain healthy body weight (BMI=18.5–24.9 kg/m <sup>2</sup> ).	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Eat Better</b>	<b>Follow a DASH-style eating plan</b>	5–8 mm Hg	Follow a DASH-style eating plan, rich in fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and low in fat.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Lower sodium intake</b>	6–8 mm Hg	Lower sodium intake to <2,300 mg per day, moving toward an ideal limit of 1,500 mg per day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Consider salt substitutes</b>	5–7 mm Hg	Consider replacing cooking/table salt (100% sodium chloride) with salt substitute (25%–30% potassium chloride, 65%–75% sodium chloride, and 0%–10% flavoring agents) as an alternative to cutting out salt all-together.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Increase potassium intake</b>	6 mm Hg	Increase potassium intake by aiming for 3,500–5,000 mg per day with foods like yams, spinach or bananas unless you have kidney problems or take certain medications. Check with your health care professional first.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Be More Active</b>	<b>Aerobic exercise</b>	4–8 mm Hg	Aerobic exercise is any activity that gets your heart beating faster and makes you breathe a bit harder, like walking, running or swimming. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Dynamic resistance</b>	2–7 mm Hg	Dynamic resistance means your muscles are working while you move, like squats or push-ups. Aim for 90–150 minutes of 6 exercises, 3 sets/exercise, 10 repetitions/set per week.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Isometric resistance</b>	5–10 mm Hg	Isometric resistance means your muscles are working without moving, like holding a plank or a wall sit. Aim for 3 low-intensity sessions/week with a 1-minute rest between exercises.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Lower Alcohol</b>	<b>Lower or avoid consumption of alcohol</b>	4–6 mm Hg	No more than 2 drinks/day for men and 1 drink/day for women.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Manage Stress</b>	<b>Meditation</b>	5–7 mm Hg	Aim for two 20-minute sessions/day while seated comfortably with eyes closed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Breathing control</b>	5 mm Hg	Work on breathing control by slowing your breathing to less than 10 breaths/minute for 15 minutes/day.	<input type="checkbox"/>

BMI = Body mass index • SBP = Systolic blood pressure • DASH = Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension