

Cougars Wellbeing Newsletter

June 2026 | Issue 70

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WHAT IS CORTISOL?
LEARN MORE ON PAGE 7!



APRIL & MAY RAFFLE WINNERS:

Weighted Blanket

Lori Cambron

Smart Jump Rope

Alexandra Bradley

Congratulations!

JUNE



Summer is a time for vacations, celebrations, connection, and relaxation. It's an opportunity to refuel, recharge, and focus on your wellbeing. Even in busy seasons, make time for yourself and do what is necessary to put your needs first. Whether it's traveling, resting, or simply slowing down, taking intentional personal time can help you return to work feeling refreshed, renewed, and energized.

Your feedback is important to us so continue to communicate with us through wellbeing@csc.edu about your wellbeing interests. There are more exciting wellbeing activities on the horizon.



Remember, **HR SUPPORTS YOUR SUCCESS.**

Dr. Nic

Biometric Screenings on Columbus campus



June 11 & 16, 2026
8am – 3pm | WD 4th fl
Open to all employees.

Sign up at this link:



[Wellbeing | Columbus State Community College](#)

June: Men's Health Month

[UAW: Men's Health 2024](#)

[Men's health | UnitedHealthcare](#)

[Men's preventive health tips | UnitedHealthcare](#)



Employees and spouses/domestic partners on UHC health coverage

participation in the **Wellbeing 360 Engagement Program** is necessary to maintain of the reduced healthcare premium.

(2 activities to complete by JUNE 30, 2026)

Details: [Wellbeing 360 | Columbus State Community College](#)

Visit the CSCC Wellbeing webpage for more resources and to stay

connected: [Wellbeing | Columbus State Community College](#)

(The Engagement Program does not apply to employees who are members of CSEA or Teamsters.)

Financial Wellbeing Spotlight

Avoid Debt's Undertow

1. Set a course to a better financial situation. Write down a list of all your income and expenses. Then determine which of your costs are luxuries that you can live without. Next, list your debts: total balance, minimum payment, due date, and interest rate. Use the [Create a Budget](#) activity to develop a strategy.

2. Contact your creditors. It's in their best interest to work with you. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) offers [guides on how to reply and negotiate a settlement](#).

3. Stop using your credit cards. Making it harder to access your credit card can prevent you from going deeper in debt. Explore this module on [Healthy Financial Habits](#) for more tips on spending wisely and how to avoid taking on debt.

4. Chart a plan to tackle debt List your debt in order from highest interest rate to the lowest. Make the minimum payments, and if you have extra money, our [Financial Wellness Toolkit](#) includes a debt log to help you create a debt management plan.

Look for ways to lower your costs: review insurance policies, shop around for lower premiums, and consider less expensive cell phone and internet plans. Most importantly, start building an emergency fund. This can prevent you from incurring new debt when the unexpected happens. Seek support to keep you anchored in better habits. **Meet with a certified financial coach at BMI Federal Credit Union (www.bmifcu.org/coach) BMI Federal Credit Union**





*****Wellbeing 360 Rewards Program Eligible*****

THR
JUNE
4

Kitchen Series | Summer Grilling Made Healthy

11am EST | REGISTER NOW!

Take your grilling game to the next level with healthy twists on classic favorites. Learn how to balance flavor and nutrition while enjoying outdoor meals. Recipe: Cheddar Jalapeno Chicken Burgers

WED
JUNE
17

Nutrition Series | Fats & Inflammation: Understanding Omega-6s, Seed Oils, & Health

12pm EST | REGISTER NOW!

Navigate the world of dietary fats and their relationship to inflammation in the body. This session examines omega-6 fatty acids, seed oils, and their role in modern diets while providing balanced, science-based perspectives.

THR
JUNE
25

Self-Care Series | Building Your Self-Care Blueprint (Emotional-Rewards Program)

12pm EST | REGISTER NOW!

This session helps you turn insight into action. You'll explore what motivates you, clarify what you want to focus on, and map out realistic steps you can build over time. You'll leave with a blueprint that supports your wellbeing in practical, sustainable ways.

For cancer-related questions: (855) 366-7700
For questions about these events: hello@mycancerbridge.com

Emotional Intelligence-Matrix

(Rewards Eligible - Emotional Wellbeing)**

Tuesday, June 23, 2026, 1:00 p.m. Virtual Session

Click on link at time of session: [Emotional Intelligence](#)

Meditation

Summer Term (June 2 and July 30)

Thursday, 1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. DH-307 (in-person/virtual)

Zoom:

<https://cscceu.zoom.us/j/96248939309?pwd=VIPPVAYUcJUObCc1ER8ViTNNEcJWYS.1>

Meeting ID: 962 4893 9309

Passcode: 168310

Professor Mark Early (mearley3@cscceu.edu)

Take a mindful pause in your week! Join Certified meditation teacher Professor Mark Earley for a low-pressure space to explore the fundamentals of mindfulness and meditation together. No experience necessary. Come learn what meditation is (and what it isn't) while discovering a simple practice you can use anytime, anywhere. This is a great opportunity to pause, de-stress, and focus on your own wellbeing



Get Involved with AccelWELL!

THU
JUNE
25

Virtual 1-on-1 Health Coaching

10:00am – 3:00pm

Wellbeing 360 Rewards Program Eligible



AccelWELL

Inspire Purpose • Drive Performance

HOW TO SIGN UP:

From your AccelWELL 3.0 [portal](#) or WellSteps app, select the **menu** in the upper right-hand corner. From there, select the **calendar tool** to be redirected to a calendar view of the month's events. Find the correct day and event and click the blue **R**. Select your reminder preference, enter your preferred phone number in which to be reached for your telephonic session, and select a timeslot that best works for you. Lastly, click **Register**.

After signing up for a time, your Coach will call you at the number you provided when registering.

Participate in 1-on-1 Health Coaching this month to earn entry into a raffle to win a [Deluxe Herb Garden Kit!](#)



If you have program questions or need assistance creating your account, please email coach@accelwell.com for support.



WORKOUT OF THE MONTH

PARTNER WORKOUT



Movement not only reduces stress in the moment, but regular exercise can lower baseline cortisol levels over time, decreasing our overall disease risk. Additionally, research shows that social connection plays an important role in regulating cortisol because positive interactions encourage the body to shift away from stress responses & toward states of calm. That's why this month's workout combines both movement and meaningful connection. Grab a friend, colleague, or family member and get moving together!

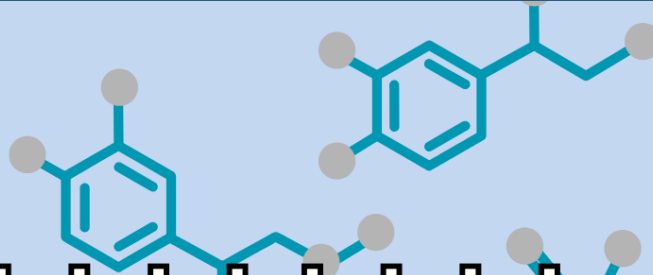
To complete this workout: Assign one person as Partner A and the other as Partner B. Partner A will start each round with a rep based move. Partner B will perform a cardio move until partner A completes their reps. They will then switch roles (Partner B completing the reps and Partner A performing the cardio move until Partner B completes their reps). You'll then move on to Round 2 working your way through all 4 Rounds. If you're both still feeling strong, try for 2-3 rounds in total and see how far you can push each other!

Partner A		Round 1:		Partner B
Squat Thrusters 15 reps			Jump Rope High Knees Can be done with an imaginary jump rope too!	
Weighted Lunges 10 reps each leg (20 reps total)		Round 2:		Jumping Jacks
Bent Over Rows 15 reps		Round 3:		Burpees
Weighted Crunches 20 reps		Round 4:		Skaters

To prevent injury, form is critical when performing all exercise. Please reach out to coach@accelwell.com if you have any questions about the movements and how to perform them correctly. It is always recommended to consult your physician to assess your individual medical status and specific needs prior to making any major changes to your dietary intake and/or exercise regimen.

What is CORTISOL?

How do we manage it?



Although it is typically known only as the “**stress hormone**,” cortisol has many important effects in the body including helping us **manage our metabolism and circadian rhythm**. If cortisol becomes out of balance, it can have negative effects.

IMPACTS OF HIGH CORTISOL



What can cause high cortisol?

- Chronic stress - Long-term stress does not allow cortisol levels to fluctuate normally (work pressure, caregiving, relationship conflict, etc.) This is the main cause of high cortisol.
- Sleep disorders - Untreated sleep apnea and chronic insomnia can raise cortisol, especially at night.
- Tumor growth either on your adrenal glands (release cortisol) or elsewhere that secrete the precursor to cortisol
- Taking high doses of cortisol medications

Symptoms:

- Weight gain in the face or abdomen
- Thinning skin that bruises easily
- Muscle weakness
- Severe fatigue
- High blood pressure
- Osteoporosis and bone breaks
- High blood sugar, typically leading to Type II Diabetes
- Irritability or anxiety
- Irregular or absent menstrual cycles in women
- Low libido

IMPACTS OF LOW CORTISOL



What can cause low cortisol?

- Addison's disease- autoimmune disorder in which your adrenals are attacked and therefore insufficient in cortisol production
- Hypopituitarism or pituitary tumor- under-active pituitary glands, causing low levels of cortisol
- Stopping Steroid Medications Too Quickly - Long-term use of corticosteroids (like prednisone) suppresses ACTH production. If the medication is stopped abruptly, the adrenal glands cannot restart cortisol production fast enough. This is one of the most common real-world causes of low cortisol.

Symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Low blood pressure
- Unintentional weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Low blood pressure or dizziness
- Nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain
- Low blood sugar
- Salt cravings (more common in Addison's disease)

***Important note:** Symptoms of both high cortisol & low cortisol are **nonspecific**, meaning they can overlap with other conditions. While a single symptom is rarely meaningful, experiencing several of the characteristic symptoms together may raise suspicion for cortisol issues and warrants medical evaluation.

HIGH CORTISOL COMPARED TO LOW CORTISOL IN TODAY'S SOCIETY



Clinically significant high or low cortisol caused by tumors or autoimmune disorders is **very rare**.



Cortisol changes related to medications are **common**, and these should always be managed in partnership with your doctor.



That leaves **stress-related cortisol patterns**, which overwhelmingly show up as **elevated** cortisol rather than low cortisol.

Since **elevated** cortisol is our society's main problem, check out ways we can lower our cortisol levels to keep them in a healthy range on the next page.



5 ways to manage CORTISOL

Due to its heavy involvement in our **stress responses**, tactics to manage cortisol are similar to those used to manage stress.



01

Sleep

Sleep is important for **every aspect** of our functioning as humans. This includes our cortisol management. There has been a link observed between prolonged sleep issues like insomnia or shift work sleep disorder and increased cortisol.

- **Sleep Recommendations:** Adults should aim for 7–9 hours of sleep each night. Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule - going to bed and waking up at roughly the same time each day (within about 30 minutes) - helps regulate your circadian rhythm and improve overall sleep quality.



02

Movement

Movement is beneficial to our health in many ways, and one of these is that it helps our body balance our cortisol levels. Whether it is strength training or yoga, **any form of intentional movement has research to back up its positive impact on cortisol levels.**

Find the movement that you enjoy and works with your schedule.

- **Movement Recommendations:** For optimal health, adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity (ex: brisk walking) or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity (ex: jogging) aerobic activity weekly. This should be combined with muscle-strengthening exercises for all major muscle groups at least two days a week.



03

Deep Breathing

Practicing deep breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is referred to as the **“rest and digest”** nervous system. This **lowers your heart rate, relaxes your muscles, and helps to reduce your cortisol levels.** There are many techniques to try. Find one that feels comfortable and natural to you.

- **Deep Breathing Exercise Example:** Pursed Lip Breathing - Relax your neck and shoulders. Inhale for two counts through your nose while your mouth is closed. Purse your lips as if you were going to whistle. Exhale slowly through your pursed lips for a count of four. Repeat as many rounds as needed to feel calm and relaxed.



04

Enjoyment

Research has shown that participation in enjoyable activities is inversely correlated with total cortisol levels. **The more time we spend doing the things we love, the lower our cortisol is.** These “enjoyable activities” are typically leisure activities performed in free time, and include things like sports, spending time outside, and socializing with others.

- **Enjoyment Recommendation:** Make space each week for at least one activity you truly enjoy - whether it's a hobby, time outdoors, movement, or connecting with others. Treat it like a non-negotiable appointment. Scheduling enjoyable activities not only boosts your mood but also supports lower cortisol levels over time.



05

Healthy Relationships

Healthy, supportive relationships play a meaningful role in lowering cortisol. Research shows that **shared positive emotions** within close relationships such as enjoying time together, laughing, or engaging in meaningful conversations have been linked to both **immediate and lasting reductions in cortisol throughout the day.**

- **Healthy Relationship Recommendation:** Prioritize regular time with the people who make you feel supported and uplifted. This could mean scheduling weekly catch-ups, sharing a hobby with a partner or friend, or simply being more intentional about expressing appreciation and positive emotions in your relationships.

ACTIVITY OF THE MONTH



COMBAT YOUR CORTISOL

Each week this month, try a new approach to lowering your cortisol levels. Track your progress with the calendar below, and learn more about each approach at the bottom of the page.

SLEEP		1	2	3	4	5	6
MOVEMENT	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
DEEP BREATHING	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
ENJOYMENT	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
RELATIONSHIPS	28	29	30				

SLEEP	Sleep is crucial to controlling your cortisol levels. To better your sleep habits, start by making sure you are getting at least 7 hours of sleep each night. Also try to limit your screen time as much as possible before bed. Finally, set up a bedtime routine that optimizes your sleep.
MOVEMENT	Movement of all kinds has been shown to reduce cortisol levels. Whether you like to run, lift, dance, or do something else , just get in that daily dose of movement , even if it's just 20 minutes! Chances are it will leave you feeling a lot better at the end of each day.
DEEP BREATHING	Breathing deeply helps to calm you down and can be easily done throughout the day . Look up different methods if you're not aware of a technique you enjoy. Try to incorporate deep breathing at 3 different times throughout each day.
ENJOYMENT	It is crucial to have hobbies and things you enjoy to sprinkle into your days. If you aren't sure what you like to do, try something new this week. Some ideas include camping, drawing, or cooking . If you have a hobby you enjoy, make sure to take time for it this week .
RELATIONSHIPS	Spending time with the people you love can be a very easy way to decrease your cortisol. This week, make sure to incorporate time with loved ones , even if it's just a phone call. If you can, also take a look at the relationships you have right now: what could be better?



SOUTHWEST CHICKPEA BLACK BEAN SALAD

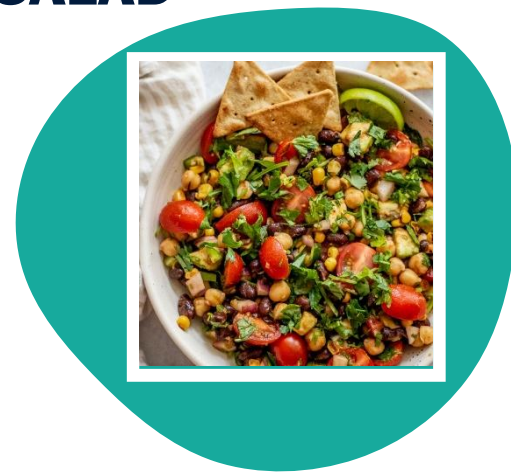
Ingredients (Serves 6)

Salad Base

- 1, 15 oz can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1, 15 oz can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup frozen fire roasted corn, thawed
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 small red onion, finely diced
- 1 jalapeno, finely diced (optional)
- 1/4 cup cilantro, minced
- 1 avocado, cubed

Dressing

- Zest of one lime
- Juice of 2 limes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 large clove of garlic, crushed or 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp chili powder or Tajin
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/4 tsp salt



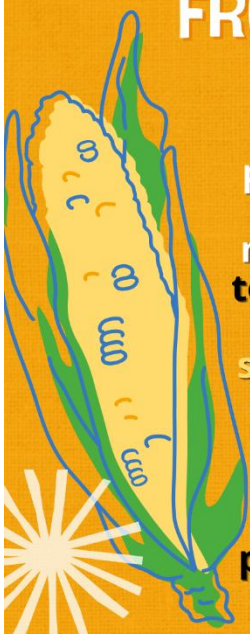
[Salad Recipe](#)

Instructions

1. In a medium mixing bowl, combine beans, corn, tomatoes, red onion, and cilantro.
2. In a separate cup or bowl combine lime zest, lime juice, oil, maple syrup, and remaining seasonings. Whisk the vinaigrette together and pour dressing over beans and gently toss everything together to coat.
3. Place bean mixture in the fridge to chill for at least an hour before serving. When ready to serve, mix in your avocado and make sure to toss again, then enjoy!

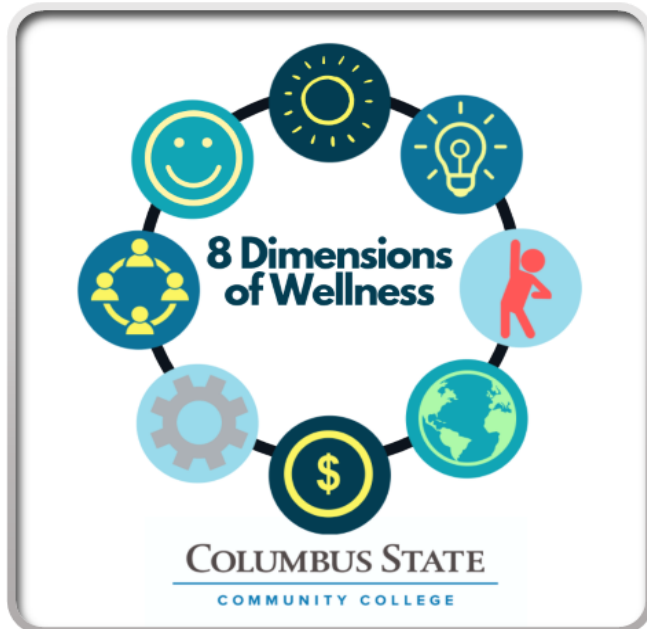
FRESH VS. FROZEN PRODUCE: WHICH IS BETTER?

Every fruit and vegetable has their prime growing season. During this time, produce has been shown to have its most robust nutrient content compared to the off season. If you are consuming a fruit or vegetable in its prime growing season, fresh is a great choice! If you are buying produce in its off season, it may be best to buy it frozen because it is more likely to be picked at its peak freshness. Corn will not quite be in its peak season yet, so using frozen like the recipe suggests is a good idea!



Your Wellbeing Advisory Committee:

Nichole Bowman-Glover, PhD, Wellbeing Benefits Analyst



Tommy Tucker, Mitchell Hall

Vena Hill, Human Resources

Jason Love, Human Resources

Yvette Johnson Veterinary, Imaging & Surgical
Technology Department

Terrence Lawrence, Inclusive Advising Innovation

Shawntera Hollinshead, Police Communications &
Admin

Join us on Microsoft Teams: **“Cougars Living Well”** **Join Us Today!**

Cougars Living Well is a place for you to engage in conversations about health and wellness, share resources and words of encouragement, and receive updates about all the wellbeing services and resources available to you. To join this public Team, **log into Teams, click “join or create a team,” search for *Cougars Living Well* and click “Join Team.”** If you have questions or need assistance joining *Cougars Living Well*, please reach out to Nichole Bowman-Glover/Vena Hill.

We'd love to connect with you on [LinkedIn](#) & [Instagram](#)!



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