



July 2023

Summer is in Full Swing!

Many things happen in the summer season - both seen and unseen. You see flowers blooming and the hazy hot skies of the season. What you can't see, however, is how increased sunlight and stepped-up activity can silently boost Vitamin D and serotonin levels, often making for happier vibes and a new-found enthusiasm for life. Enjoy this issue of the *Healthy State of Iowa Employees* newsletter which highlights some of the activities we enjoy most this time of year, including opportunities to make a difference in the community.



Summertime Activity Improves Mood While Sunshine Aids Vitamin D's Benefits

Summer is a favorite season for many. The longer days, fragrant flowers, garden bounties, and fun activities on both land and water encourage us to seek a healthy balance of sunshine and shade. To avoid getting too much sunlight, early morning is a favorite time to walk furry friends and get in some exercise before the temperatures rise. Later afternoon pool time lowers UV exposure while cool water makes the heat more tolerable.

Physical activity during higher heat and humidity isn't always appealing. Be creative finding things to do while still enjoying the outdoors. Some ideas include visiting state parks, planning a shady picnic at a local park, going shopping instead of ordering online, finding a recreational activity league, checking out local festivals or live music, and heading out on a clear night to stargaze from a hilltop.

Getting adequate sunshine boosts moods and exposed skin allows the body to produce its own vitamin D, which is essential for good health. Vitamin D helps keep bones strong, improves mental health, and aids in sleep among other important processes. People who live further from the equator or who have conditions that prevent sun exposure may not get enough vitamin D and could benefit from added food sources, such as fish. Fatty fish - salmon, trout, tuna, and canned herring or sardines - are particularly beneficial.

Studies don't show that vitamin D deficiency causes depression. What they do show is that those at high risk of depression may also be deficient in vitamin D. Symptoms may cause individuals who suffer from depression to spend less time outside and lack the sun exposure needed to process enough vitamin D. If you are experiencing depression or are concerned about vitamin D deficiency, a health care professional may help with options.

Iowans Help. It's What We Do.

Would you consider yourself a volunteer? What if you knew it could be as simple as mowing a neighbor's lawn when you mow your own, or picking up trash during your evening walk? This is what is known as informal volunteering - the informal help you provide in your community or neighborhood. Most Iowans already volunteer in this way - in fact, Iowa has one of the highest informal volunteer rates in the nation!

Interestingly enough, informal volunteering has many of the same health benefits as formal volunteering. So whether it's house sitting, lending a tool, weeding a community garden patch, bringing soup to a sick friend, or random acts of kindness, keep helping. And if you're looking for more formal ways to volunteer in the community, check out www.volunteeriowa.org to search for more opportunities to make a difference.

Staff Spotlight



Name: Ashley Wos

Current Position: Environmental Engineer, Mines and Minerals Bureau

Years with the State: 5 years

My Healthy Choice: Healthy Eating

"I've always enjoyed cooking at home, but once the pandemic hit, I took home cooking to a whole new level. I started making many things from scratch not only to avoid going to the grocery store, but also to help have control over every ingredient I used. In the long run, it saved money and cut down on my costs of eating out.

Things have mostly gone back to normal, but very few of my habits have changed. By cooking and eating healthfully, I feel better than ever. Some ways I've accomplished this is by including lots of vegetables and grains in every meal. I once heard a quote that if you eat at least five colors of fresh food a day, you will always be healthy!

With summer in full force, I've been visiting the Des Moines farmer's market and collecting lots of fresh local grown items to incorporate into my diet, as well as having a few "meatless" meals a week. Overall, cooking and eating well at home is a great way to take control of your health by tailoring your diet to your needs and lifestyle, and it can have a significant impact on your overall well-being."

Capitol Complex Farmers Market and More!

The State Capitol Complex Farmers Market is back! Vendors and farmers will be on-site through September 26. See the [DAS website](#) for more information.

Not on the State Capitol Complex? Check out [this list](#) of other farmers markets in the state, or consider supporting a local farmer who offers a [Community Supported Agriculture \(CSA\)](#) program!



Well-Being Webinars Offered

Through the work of the Healthy State of Iowa Employees team, the Department of Administrative Services has partnered with Wellmark to provide on-demand well-being webinars throughout 2023. These webinars focus on physical activity, the benefits of social connection, financial security, and emotional balance.

Webinar links will be sent to agency Wellness Champions to share with co-workers each quarter, and may also be accessed through this newsletter. Visit the [DAS Health and Well-Being web page](#) for previous editions of the *Healthy State of Iowa Employees* newsletter.

Here are the three webinars currently available for 2023:

- [Fitness at All Ages and Abilities](#) (40 minutes)
 - [Sleep 101](#) (50 minutes)
 - [Sustainability and Health](#) (35 minutes)
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Take Action!

- Registration for Live Healthy Iowa's *The Next Step* challenge opens soon! For more information or to register your team, click [here](#).
 - [SEHARC](#) (State of Iowa Health and Recreation Committee) connects you with offers for discounted tickets to area events and hosts fun activities throughout the year. If you are interested in receiving information on these opportunities, complete this [form](#) to be added to SEHARC's mailing list or follow them on Facebook!
 - Check out the DAS [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) for a number of on-demand seminars covering various topics related to health and well-being. EAP also offers confidential resources at no cost to help employees and eligible family members address challenges.
 - For more great information, be sure to check out these Wellmark publications - [Wellmark Blue Magazine](#) and [Blue at Work](#).
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To learn more about how Healthy EmployeesSM Powered by Wellmark is working with the State of Iowa to make the healthy choices easier for you, visit the [DAS Health and Well-Being webpage](#).