

# Diabetes *Views*

## Spotlight: Activity Tracker Pilot

Do you use an activity tracker? Dr. Rajani Laroocca from the Charlestown HealthCare Center recently piloted a program showing FitBits and social connection are powerful tools for encouraging healthy lifestyle changes.

Lifestyle change is ultimately in the hands of the individual, and our job as medical providers is to find a way to empower people to make those changes. It's an old problem, but the question is: how do we get there? And can new technology help us solve the problem in new and innovative ways?

In spring 2013, I ran a series of six weekly group visits with a group of my patients at MGH Charlestown HealthCare Center. The group was originally created for those with metabolic syndrome. We found that the majority of the patients that signed up already had Type 2 Diabetes. The focus of the visits was to educate the group on making healthy lifestyle changes through motivation and support.

Each session focused on a different healthy topic; nutrition, exercise, stress reduction, and social connection. An important part of each session was removing the all-or-nothing way of thinking that many people do when they are trying to be healthier. Instead, they focused on taking one step at a time and forgiving past mistakes.

During the meeting in which we discussed exercise, all group members were given a FitBit activity tracker to wear. Once the trackers were on, the group went on a short walk through the neighborhood. Many were surprised to learn they didn't have to walk far to reach 1,000 steps.

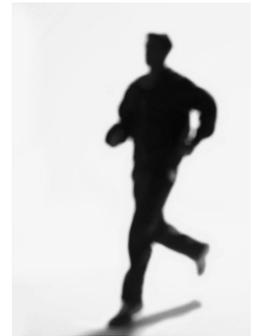
Each meeting would begin by reviewing the Fitbit data. Interestingly, everyone liked the Fitbits – even those who didn't have ready internet access or who weren't really internet-savvy. Because the trackers had a display which

showed results in real time, everyone could tell whether they were reaching their goals on a daily basis. While there was some friendly competition among participants, most were only competing against themselves, trying to beat their totals from the previous week.

After the program ended, the participants were allowed to keep their FitBits, and some were still wearing them eight months later. Many of those who stopped wearing them said it was because they had included their new habits into their routine and didn't need the tracker anymore. When asked how he would keep up with his daily walks during the winter, one gentleman responded "I'll wear a coat!"

Electronic trackers like the FitBit make developing healthy lifestyle habits more fun, but we can't underestimate what the social connection of the group did to foster people's success. The participants really enjoyed the group setting, especially the sense of community that developed and the confidence they gained from learning that others face many of the same challenges.

Living with a chronic disease can feel very isolating, but in this group people realized that they *were not alone*.



Article written with the help of Chrisanne Sikora. If you have a story you'd like to share for a future issue of *DiabetesViews* or on the DSME blog, e-mail [diabetesviews@partners.org](mailto:diabetesviews@partners.org)

# Spring Clean Your Health

By Eileen B. Wyner, NP

Bulfinch Medical Group

I think it's safe to say (knock wood) that winter is over and spring has arrived in Boston. I seriously believe in "spring cleaning" because my mother drilled it into me as a kid, and as an adult I see her point about cleaning. I'd like to put another spin on "spring cleaning" and share some tips on how you can apply this idea to your health and improve your diabetes control.

This was a very hard winter even by New England standards. The bad weather may have made it difficult to keep up with your health. I know personally as well as from what my patients have shared with me that the cold, ice, and snow make it very hard to keep up things like exercise and doctor appointments. Now is the time learn from past and make those improvements.

## Medication Review

- \* Go through all of your medications to check for any that have expired or that you no longer take. This includes both prescription and non-prescription medications. Check with the Department of Health or your local pharmacy to find the safe way to throw away your medications.

- \* Look through your diabetes testing supplies and check test strips for their expiration date. Check that you have an extra, working glucometer battery. If you have glucagon in your cabinet check that it is up to date.
- \* Keep an updated medication list with you at all times. Check to see that all of your prescribed medications are current with your pharmacist and let the doctor's office know if you need updated prescriptions.

## Diet Review

- \* Take some time to reflect on your eating habits. If you aren't eating as healthy as you should be, set up an appointment with your RD CDE. Don't feel upset or guilty if you need extra help - we've all been there! The important thing is that you recognize the need to make changes.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Spring Word Search

P O S T P R A N D I A L M  
P Y T Q M L M R D X X K R  
B L O O D P R E S S U R E  
H Y P O G L Y C E M I A M  
R V I P M N J P C R N Y P  
P G M N H T Z M D L S K T  
R A K T S W K L P V A I Y  
R M N W V U A C K M L D R  
P W L C R T L T T W T N R  
T L N R R W T I E C B E J  
M T H R E E F K N R R Y L  
H C T G P Q A P M C W S N  
B I C Y C L E S Y T L W L

www.WordSearchMaker.com

Use the clues to figure out the words in the grid.  
Words can go across, down, and diagonally.

- Get active outside this spring by going for a ride on one of these
- The force of blood against the walls of your blood vessels (two words)
- Another word for low blood sugar
- A hormone used by the body to convert sugar into energy
- These organs filter blood as it circulates through the body
- Insulin is produced in this organ
- This refers to blood sugar levels after a meal
- Herbs and spices are a great way to add flavor to food without this
- A1C measures your average blood sugar for the past \_\_\_\_ months

**Exercise Review**

- \* Now is the time to get exercising again. If the winter weather slowed you down, start slow and increase your activity at a pace you can handle.
- \* Wear comfortable clothes and make sure your sneakers fit well.
- \* Check your blood sugar often while exercising to make sure it isn't too low (hypoglycemic).

**Appointments**

- \* Medical appointments may have been cancelled by you or your provider because of bad weather. Check and make sure you're up-to-date with your primary care visit, diabetes visit, ophthalmology check, dental, and podiatry appointments and schedule any that are due.

**Disaster Planning**

- \* Go through all your emergency supplies and check for what you have, expiration dates, water, batteries, and ALL medical supplies. Review your list to see if certain things are still needed or if new things need to be added.
- \* Review your disaster care plan at least every 6 months or sooner (especially if you've needed to use it). I like to do this in the fall and spring because of the weather. I'll be sure to have several warm blankets and fleeces within easy reach in October, but in May will probably take a few out but add more bottled water given the great danger of dehydration with high temperatures and bright sunshine. I'll also add insect repellent with DEET and sunscreen. The American Red Cross has excellent up to date data on their website for disaster preparedness so please check it out at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

OK...are you ready to tackle some spring cleaning? I have another idea....lace up the sneakers and head outside to see the daffodils bloom. Happy Spring!!!

**Apple Barley Salad**

Recipe adapted from *Real Simple*

**Ingredients:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1/2 cup lightly pearled barley, uncooked | 1/4 tsp black pepper                             |
| 1 tsp salt, divided                      | 2 stalks celery, diced                           |
| 1/2 cup plain low-fat yogurt             | 1 apple, skin intact, diced into 1/2-inch pieces |
| 1.5 tbsp olive oil                       | 1/4 cup fresh mint, chopped                      |
| 1 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice      | 2 bunches arugula (about 6 cups)                 |
| 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard                    |  |



**Instructions:**

Combine barley in a saucepan with 1 1/2 cups water and 1/2 tsp salt and bring to boil (or see directions for cooking barley on package). Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for about 30 minutes, until water is absorbed and barley is tender. Use a strainer to drain any excess water. Allow barley to cool.

Meanwhile, whisk together yogurt, olive oil, lemon juice, mustard, remaining 1/2 tsp salt and black pepper. Toss with celery, apple, mint and cooled barley. Divide arugula between bowls and top arugula with barley salad.

**Yield:** 4 servings

*Tip: Pearled barley cooks quicker than hulled barley (hulled barley still has the bran of the grain attached and takes about an hour to cook). Though pearled barley is technically not a "whole grain," it is still a good source of fiber. Avoid buying white pearled barley, it is more processed. Instead, look for the variety that is "lightly pearled." Lightly pearled barley will be tan in color and has more fiber.*

**Nutrition Information per Serving:**

CALORIES: 195 • PROTEIN: 5 g • SODIUM: 650 mg • CARBOHYDRATE: 30 g • FIBER: 6 g • FAT: 6 g • Sat Fat: 1 g



# Ask the Nutritionist

By Erin Boudreau, Dietetic Intern

Reviewed by Anne Lukowski, RD, CDE, Nutritionist at MGH Charlestown

*With the warm weather, there are so many fresh fruits and vegetables available, but they spoil so quickly. Any tips on how to store them so they last?*

Fruits and vegetables are colorful, flavorful, and nutritious, but they also spoil very quickly. They begin to lose quality and flavor the moment they are picked, so it is best to enjoy as soon as possible after purchase. Storing produce properly can help extend their life and also has a major impact on quality and taste. Remember, even with proper storage techniques, produce will still spoil quickly, so be sure to buy only as much as you can enjoy in a few days to prevent waste.

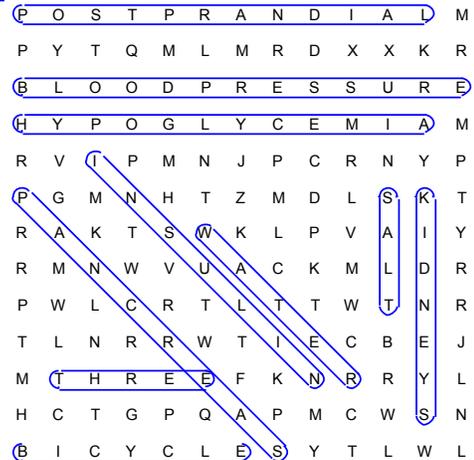
- \* Store bananas, pineapple, citrus, and other tropical fruits in a cool, dry area. They should NOT be stored in the fridge. Pineapples should be stored upside down for a day or two before eating. This allows the sugar to distribute throughout the fruit.
- \* Potatoes will keep fresh for a couple of weeks if stored in a cool, dry, ventilated place (not the fridge). Cold temperatures can turn the starch in a potato to sugar, creating a sweeter potato while warmth and light will

cause them to sprout. Sweet potatoes are more delicate and should only be kept for about a week.

- \* Garlic and most types of onions should be kept in a well ventilated area at room temperature or cooler, but not refrigerated. Vidalia onions have higher water content and can be stored individually wrapped in paper towels in the refrigerator.
- \* Tomatoes are very finicky. Refrigeration can give them an unpleasant, mealy texture, and can alter their taste and aroma. They're best stored unwashed at room temperature.

For more tips, visit [www.mghdiabeteseducation.com/freshfruitsandveggies](http://www.mghdiabeteseducation.com/freshfruitsandveggies)

## Spring Word Search Solution



Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support Programs

- Facebook.com/mghdiabetesed
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To submit a question for the nutritionist or leave comments, please e-mail: [diabetesviews@partners.org](mailto:diabetesviews@partners.org)

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Editor: Chrisanne Sikora  
Project Specialist: Communications

Reviewed by the Blum Patient and Family Learning Center for health literacy.

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