

# Be Well, Live Well

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## After a Break in Exercising—Starting Again

Has it been awhile since you've exercised? Life can get in the way of your physical activity routine. Whether it's a vacation, illness, or other commitment that interrupted your exercise schedule, you can start again and be successful.

If you've stopped your exercise routine, here are some tips to help you start again:

- ◆ Don't be too hard on yourself. Just try to get back to your activities as soon as possible.
- ◆ Think about the reasons you started exercising and how much you've already accomplished.
- ◆ Start again at a comfortable level and gradually build back up.
- ◆ Try an activity you've never done before.
- ◆ Believe in yourself!

The next time a break in your routine occurs, try these strategies to help you stick with your physical activity plan:

- ◆ When you're on vacation, get out and see the sights on foot or visit the hotel fitness center.
- ◆ Caring for an ill spouse or child can understandably interrupt your exercise routine. Ask a friend to help out for a while so you can go for a brisk walk.
- ◆ If your exercise buddy moves away, sign up for an exercise class at a nearby senior center or fitness center. This is a great way to meet other active people.
- ◆ Hip surgery can affect the types of exercise you do. Talk to your doctor about the best activities for you to try.
- ◆ Be flexible and creative. If your family comes for a visit, reschedule your exercise for a time that they are busy or, better yet, take them with you on a walk.

For more tips on adding exercise and physical activity to your daily life, visit the *Go4Life* website at [www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life](http://www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life). *Go4Life* is an exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging at NIH. It has exercises, success stories, and free materials to help you get ready, start exercising, and keep going.



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## Cook Once, Eat Twice

Want to cut your preparation time and get dinner on the table quickly? Then try the “cook once, eat twice” technique developed by the University of Nebraska Extension. By planning ahead, you can make some of your dinner tasks you’re constantly juggling easier. Spend a few extra minutes planning complimentary menus where you “cook once and eat twice.”

Here’s how it works. Plan meals based around key foods prepared in larger amounts for use in one recipe the first night and an entirely different recipe within the next night or two. This is different from making large batches and eating leftovers.

Here are two quick and easy examples of “cook once, eat twice.” Modify according to your family preferences and add your own ideas for the different food categories.

- ◆ Chicken and turkey. Cook extra chicken breasts or turkey cutlets. Cover and refrigerate half. Top the remaining half with your favorite seasonings or sauce for serving immediately. For the second meal, slice the plain cooked chicken or turkey into strips and combine with lettuce and Caesar salad dressing for a main dish salad. Another idea: cook sliced onions and bell peppers until soft; add chicken or turkey strips and heat for fast fajitas.
- ◆ Beef and Pork. Cook a roast for the first evening and enjoy part of it. For the second meal, cube the roast and add potatoes, carrots and seasonings for stew. Or add mushroom gravy to the cubes and serve over noodles or rice. I also like to bake several pork chops at a time. I serve some the first evening; for the second meal, I slice or cube and toss into a salad or make quesadillas.

See how easily this works! You can also cook rice and pasta until done; use some for the first meal and refrigerate the rest for a second meal. The USA Rice Council recommends that you reheat leftover rice thoroughly before serving. For each cup of cooked rice, add 2 tablespoons liquid, cover and microwave about 1 minute. Pasta may be served cold or combined with other ingredients and heated. If you add a little oil (1-2 teaspoons per pound of pasta) after it’s cooked and before refrigerating, it will keep cooked pasta from sticking.

Cooking once and eating twice works at my house. It just takes a few minutes to plan ahead as well as prepare extra food. But it really helps out on those nights when time is short and everyone is hungry.



# Tax Refund?



Have you prepared your taxes? Even though April 17 (April 15 is a Sunday and Monday is a holiday, so we have two extra days) is still several weeks away, most people are at least getting started. I spent several hours recently organizing records and completing the worksheet that my tax preparer uses. At this point, I don't know what the outcome will be but I'm hoping for a minimum payment ... maybe even a refund.

Of course, a tax refund is always welcome. What are your plans if you get a refund? New computer? Vacation? Before you spend your refund, try to think through all the options, even the ones that aren't as much fun.

Dr. Joyce Cavanagh, Associate Professor and Extension Family Economics Specialist with Texas AgriLife Extension Service, has three suggestions for smart uses for your tax refund:

1. Plan ahead before spending your refund. Without a plan, you may use your money on the first thing that you think and then later realize something else was more important. Plan ahead and involve the family so that you can identify all the possibilities and decide which ones are the most important.
2. Devote a portion of your tax refund to build long-term financial security. Should you make a deposit to your emergency savings account or open an IRA? Maybe you should pay off a debt such as a high-interest credit card. Do you need to save for needs in the coming months such as insurance premium or new tires? Maybe you need to save for a down payment for a new car or house. There are several options so decide which works best for you and your family.
3. Don't throw away part of your refund on preparation fees and/or loan fees. Did you know that those companies that offer "quick refunds" are just giving you a loan? It's a high-cost, high-risk loan. Look for free tax preparation programs like VITA (<http://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/>) and AARP's TaxAide ([www.aarp.org/taxaide](http://www.aarp.org/taxaide)). Trained volunteers can assist in preparing your return and file it electronically for free. By using one of these free programs and having your refund direct deposited into a checking or savings account, you can get your refund in 7-10 days.

If your refund is more than \$1000, consider lowering your withholding so you will receive more take-home pay each payday. The additional dollars in your paycheck can be used to meet monthly expenses and could be the difference between making ends meet or not. To change your withholding, file a new W-4 with your employer.

While most of us think of a tax refund as a bonus or windfall, it's a great way to have a little fun now as well as help out in the future. At my house, we always have a "wish list" just in case we get a refund. We'll decide how much we will save for future needs and how much we'll spend now. It's always exciting to get a refund. What are your plans if you get one?

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The Texas A&M university System, US Department of Agriculture,, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas

## Dinner Tonight!

This is a great way to use the cook once, eat twice method. Cook several chicken breasts and serve some for one meal. Then use the rest in this recipe, which can easily be halved. This is one of the recipes featured on our weekly Dinner Tonight website (<http://healthyliving.tamu.edu>) so check it out for more healthy and economical recipes. To receive the weekly email that announces a new recipe, contact me at [c-brazeal@tamu.edu](mailto:c-brazeal@tamu.edu).

### Chicken and Broccoli Alfredo

8 ounces linguine pasta  
1 cup fresh or frozen broccoli florets  
2 cups cooked, chopped chicken  
1 10.5 ounce can 98% fat free cream of mushroom soup  
1/2 cup skim milk  
1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Prepare linguine in boiling water according to package directions in 3 -quart saucepan. Pasta will take 9-10 minutes to cook. Add broccoli during the last 4 minutes of cook time. Drain pasta and broccoli well in colander.

Stir chicken, soup, milk, cheese and black pepper in saucepan until combined and smooth. Add pasta and broccoli. Cook until mixture is hot and bubbling, stirring often. Serve with additional parmesan cheese if desired. Serves 4.

**Nutrition facts per serving:**  
Calories: 459  
Total Fat: 10 g  
Cholesterol: 97 mg  
Sodium: 680 mg  
Total Carbohydrate: 51 g

