



Crestwood Behavioral Health, Inc.

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Promising Results from Crestwood's Heart Healthy Diet

People with mental health issues face many health challenges. They are more likely to be overweight or obese, and more likely to develop diabetes. They are more likely to develop and die from heart disease. By some estimates, they have a 20% shorter life expectancy than the general population. Some of this is attributed to poor diet, inactivity, and substance use. In addition, many antipsychotic medications, while effective in alleviating the symptoms of mental health issues, can also exacerbate health problems by causing weight gain.

The Crestwood Heart Healthy Diet started in 2013 and is now used in almost all of our behavioral health campuses. One of the hallmarks of this diet is that as much as possible is made from scratch, and each meal is within a certain range of carbohydrates, making it safe for persons served who may be diabetic. We also aim to keep sodium and saturated fat low and include many sources of healthy fats.

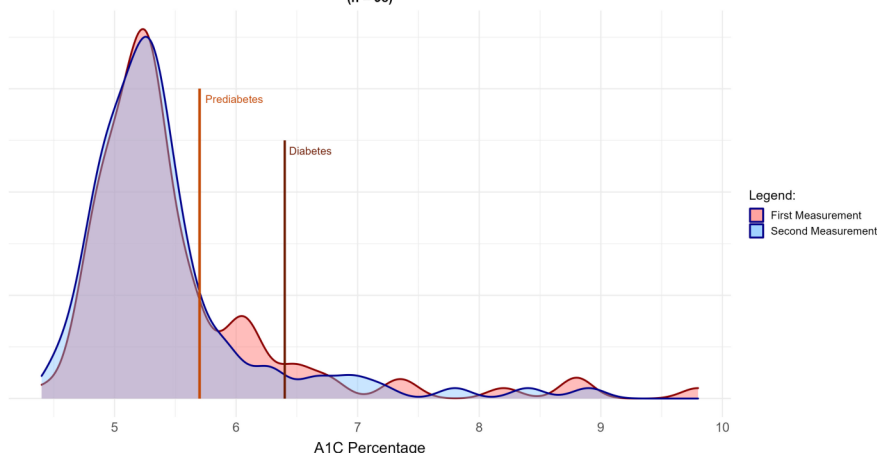
Recently, data science interns have been examining certain health markers of persons served who are on the Heart Healthy Diet, and the results suggest the diet may be improving their health.

One of the markers looked at was A1C. A1C is a test that measures blood sugar over time. Data science intern Addison Atkin looked at 98 people in our MHRCs who had A1C tests done at least 60 days apart. He performed statistical analysis on the means of the first A1C and the second A1C and found that the difference was statistically significant. This suggests that something, perhaps diet, is having an effect on A1Cs.

We have written an article on these exciting results and will be submitting it for publication. It is gratifying to learn that the Heart Healthy Diet is having real, measurable results for the people we serve. We are continuing to look at other health parameters, such as BMI, lipid profiles, and mood status.

We owe a big thank you to our Dietary Directors and kitchen staff for preparing the Heart Healthy Diet with such skill and accuracy and producing beautiful, visually appetizing meals. Our gratitude also goes to the people that we serve, who face many obstacles on their journey to health and whose perseverance is inspiring.

First and Second Measured A1C Values
(n = 98)



Welcome to the Team!

The Health and Wellness Foundational Tool Committee is expanding! Recently, we have gained several new members.

Amy Johannsen, Dietary Director for Crestwood Eureka, has joined our team. Amy has been with Crestwood for 13 years, moving from Recovery Coach to Service Coordinator/Team Lead to her current position as Dietary Director. Amy is proud of her growth at Crestwood and loves to help her staff to grow into meaningful roles as well. She recently began the Good Day Café program at her campus, in which the kitchen prepares extra meals for staff so that they can sit down and eat with persons served at lunch and dinner. It is a wonderful way to foster inclusiveness, remind persons served that the staff are right there with them on their journey, and provide tasty, convenient meals for busy staff. Amy's son, Dillon, is also part of the Crestwood family as a Recovery Coach at the Eureka campus. Welcome to our team, Amy, and thank you for all that you do!

Eric Veloz has been Dietary Director at Crestwood's Champion Healing Center since March of 2023 and comes to us with a ton of experience in health care kitchens. Being a Director and helping people are his

life goals, and he says that this is his dream job. He supports his staff in so many ways, including holding daily kitchen meetings which incorporate mindfulness and positive feedback for his staff. Eric encourages the people we serve to eat healthfully by focusing on meal presentation and offering creative options like smoothies and salad bars. He is also a proud new grandpa! Welcome to the team, Eric! We are so grateful to have you!

Laura Stewart is Administrative Assistant/Training Coordinator with the Home Office and provides support to our team. She has extensive experience in food and health, having owned and operated a personal chef and catering business for many years focusing on "healing through food." Mental health and wellness are important to her and after looking for a career change in an unstable economy, she was excited to find this role at Crestwood. She has already increased participation in our monthly Dietary Directors and Wellness Ambassador calls with exciting ideas like raffles, and she recently sent Valentine's materials to the Dietary Directors which inspired them to make some festive and beautiful treats for the people we serve. See the pictures below for some of their work. Thank you for the amazing contributions, Laura, and welcome to the team!

Valentine's Day Celebrations!

Laura Stewart had the wonderful idea of sending Valentine's Day goodie bags to all of our Dietary Directors, who used the contents to celebrate Valentine's Day with both staff and the people we serve. In Eureka, they made cucumber and cream cheese sandwiches, Valentine's Day cookie cups, Nutella and fresh raspberries in a phyllo dough and a festive punch. They also decorated with all types of red and pink streamers. Sonoma County Healing Center gave each staff member a red rose with a kudos card and made Valentine's Day cookie cups. Our Vallejo and Sacramento campuses also made the Valentine's Day cookie cups. And in Lompoc, Eric Veloz dressed up and passed out candy grams.



Healthy Summer Cookouts

Summer cookout season is fast approaching, and there are many holidays to celebrate these next few months, including Memorial Day, Earth Day, Passover, Eid al-Fitr and Juneteenth. If you are celebrating outside with a cookout, try these healthy tips for making your celebrations both delicious and good for you.

Bring something healthy to share. If you're not sure what options there will be, bringing your own healthy dish ensures you will have something to fall back on. (Try the tabbouleh recipe on page 6 in this newsletter!)

Fill your plate with healthy options like grilled vegetables or crudité, lean meats like chicken and fish, and fruit like watermelon or fruit salad. Enjoy the heavier items like red meat, cheese, and potato or pasta salad in smaller portions.

Everyone enjoys a cold beverage on a warm summer day, but sodas, beer, and cocktails can pack a big calorie punch. Try alternating with sparkling water garnished with fresh fruit, or a chilled tea like mint or hibiscus.

It's nice to indulge, but maybe not in everything. One strategy you can use is to choose your indulgence be-

forehand. If you are going to have a cocktail, skip dessert. If you love dessert, skip the chips and dip. It is important to not feel deprived, but also not to overindulge.

Play games! It doesn't always have to be about food. Lawn games, board games, or pool parties will keep you busy and help you enjoy the food in moderation.



Crestwood Sonoma County Healing Center's Second Anniversary Celebration!

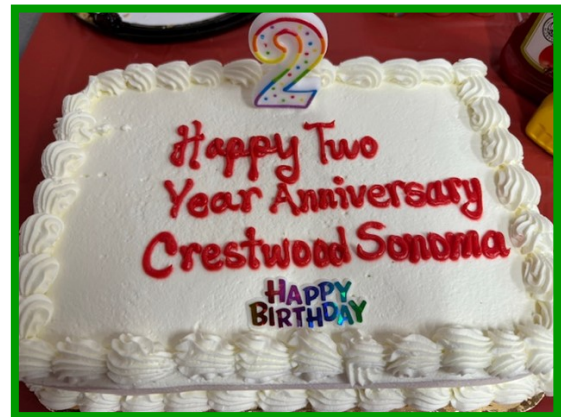


On February 15, Crestwood Sonoma County Healing Center celebrated their second anniversary of being open! Leading up to the 15th, the campus' Wellness Squad partnered with the Recreation Department and created a fun activity for staff members to participate in.

The *Leave Your Mark of Art on Campus* activity allowed staff to create their own personalized stones. These stones will be placed in front

of the building as a part of the ongoing efforts to beautify the campus. On the 15th the campus celebrated with a BBQ potluck. All staff were invited to join, including visiting county managers. The Dietary Department grilled up carne asada, hot dogs and burgers and a variety of dishes were brought by staff: carnitas, tortilla pinwheels, salsa, Filipino Spanish bread, fruit, and an array of desserts. The Sonoma County Healing Center's 2-year anniversary was certainly a festive and delicious event!

Contributed by: Francisco Palmerin-Ramirez, Director of Dietary Services and Wellness Squad Chair, Crestwood Sonoma County Healing Center



Spirituality Corner: The Importance of Connection

Connection is a large component of spirituality. From Pew Research Center's article on "Spirituality Among Americans," 24% of respondents reported feeling that the word "spiritual" is about connection. For example, they reported being connected with something bigger than themselves, with God, with their true self, with nature, with other people, and with loved ones who have passed. However, as important as connection is to our spirituality we all experience moments or periods of disconnection. What does that look and feel like and what can we do to address it and reconnect?

What does disconnection look and feel like?



For some it can feel like **being lonely**. Being lonely is not about being by yourself, in fact, you can feel lonely in a room full of people at a party.

Disconnection can feel like **comparison, jealousy** and **envy**. Envy is when you want what someone else has and jealousy is when you feel resentment that someone has something you want. As they say, "comparison is the thief of joy," and particularly in the age of social media. On one hand, social media can be a great source to experience connection, but it can also become very easy to start comparing ourselves to the carefully curated and seemingly wonderful and perfect lives of others, making us feel separate and lesser than.

Disconnection can also feel like **loss**. Life changes are a normal part of the human experience: new job, new city, new relationships, relationships ending, death, and grief.

Feeling **stressed** and **burnt-out** are other ways we may experience disconnection. When we feel like our

cup has run dry and our resources are spent, it is difficult to engage in the things that help our wellbeing and help our feeling of connectedness to others.

Disconnection can also feel like there is a barrier between you and others. Often this can be the result of hiding our true selves from others because of a **fear of shame, judgment, or rejection**.

What can we do to reconnect?

The most important tool starts with first noticing the feeling of disconnection and practicing nonjudgmental curiosity and mindfulness.

A mindful practice of **deep breathing, body scanning, or loving-kindness meditation** can help provide moments of connection according to Calm.com. Incorporating a short, consistent practice can be helpful to your overall mental health.

Utilize your **social support system**. Initiate and reach out to friends and family who you trust just to check in and say hello. Take it one step farther, **be intentional by making plans, cultivating relationships, and joining groups**. Making friends can be more challenging in different stages of life, so explore resources like Meetup.com to help introduce you to new people with similar interests, volunteering, or attending church or community groups. Whatever you choose, be active and do not sit and wait for others to reach out to you.

Continued on page 5



Spirituality Corner Continued...

If you notice feeling disconnected while using social media and electronic devices, consider limiting your use of them. One way to limit use is to make social media sites more inconvenient to access by deleting convenient apps and accessing them via website instead; not storing passwords so you need to re-enter them; or setting up a schedule to log on (for example, only in the evenings, only on weekends, etc.). **Explore if a social media detox makes sense for you.**



Schedule self-care into your routine. If you use a paper or digital calendar, schedule appointments for yourself to block out time to engage in a self-care activity, an activity that helps you feel good, or helps you build mastery in an area that is important to you. Maybe that means strumming on a guitar, making a craft, or reading a good book.

Reconnect by getting out in nature. You can get your hands dirty in the garden, go for a nature walk, take a bike ride, or head to a park. If you have access, head to the beach and watch the waves crash on the shore, head to the top of a tall hill or mountain, or stare up at the stars in the sky. Wherever you are, pause to notice your senses: what you're seeing, smelling, touching, tasting and hearing.

Get in touch with your body through movement. Pay attention to the sensations as you move. **Try gentle movement like stretching, yoga, or walking.**

Sleep is the foundation of our wellbeing. Try to incorporate adjustments so you are getting 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night. Take a look at your nightly routine and see where opportunities exist for a calming wind-down before bed. Or, if you share a bed with a partner, consider trying the Scandinavian Sleep Method where you each have your own blanket or duvet instead of sharing one.

If you notice the feelings of disconnection are persistent, impact your daily life, or feel more like an unreal or out of body experience you may need the mental health support of a professional.

The longest study on human happiness, Harvard Study of Adult Development, has been exploring factors contributing to happiness for more than 80 years. **The research shows that the greatest factors impacting happiness are close relationships and social connections**, which help protect against stress and support overall health. By prioritizing connections in your life, you can reap powerful long-term benefits.



“Connection: Connection is the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment.

Belonging: Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.”

- Brené Brown, Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead

This article was contributed by our Wellness Ambassador, **Erin Lubniewski**, Occupational Therapist at Crestwood Treatment Center Fremont.

(If you are interested in becoming a Wellness Ambassador for your campus, please contact Margaret at mclayton@cbhi.net.)

Tabbouleh

Tabbouleh (pronounced and sometimes spelled tabouli) is a Middle Eastern salad full of fresh herbs, whole grains, and bright with lemon juice. It is incredibly light and refreshing while still being satisfying and filling. Tabbouleh happens to be vegan and dairy-free, but it is also a great accompaniment to grilled meats. On its own, it makes a nice light lunch when served with bread or pita chips. If you avoid gluten, the bulgur can be replaced with quinoa for an equally light and healthy dish. You can also vary the herbs depending on what you have on hand, but parsley is essential! This recipe makes about 6 servings.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup lemon juice
- 1 tsp salt (or to taste)
- 1/4 cup fine bulgur
- 1 cup diced cucumber
- 1 cup diced fresh tomato
- 3 bunches of parsley
- 1/3 cup mint
- 1/3 cup green onion/chives



Combine the olive oil, lemon juice, and salt and whisk to combine. Add the bulgur and let sit until the bulgur is tender and has absorbed some of the dressing. (If using a coarser bulgur, pre-soak the bulgur in water or follow package directions.) Meanwhile, finely chop the herbs or chop them in a food processor. Combine the chopped cucumbers, tomatoes, and herbs with the bulgur and stir to combine. Keep chilled until serving.

“To ensure good health: eat lightly, breathe deeply, live moderately, cultivate cheerfulness and maintain an interest in life.”

-William Londen

Any Health and Wellness News Questions?

Contact Margaret M. Clayton, M.S. at:
mclayton@cbhi.net