



# BottomLine

For members of Bloom Benefits Association 2021

## Mindfulness for Your Health

### The Benefits of Living Moment by Moment

Paying attention to what's going on right this second can be hard. We often spend more time thinking about what's coming up in the future. Or dwelling on things in the past we can't change. We can miss out on experiencing the present.

It's possible to train yourself to focus on the present moment. You become aware of what's going on inside and around you—your thoughts, feelings, sensations, and environment. You observe these moments without judgment. This is called mindfulness.

"We're looking at our thoughts and feelings with curiosity, gentleness, and kindness," explains Dr. Eric Loucks, director of the Mindfulness Center at Brown University.

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist meditation. Meditation is a practice that aims to increase awareness of the mind and concentration.

In recent years, mindfulness has become a household term. Mindfulness programs are now commonly found in schools, workplaces, and hospitals.

## Also included in this issue:

Abenity Member Benefit



Annual Meeting Proxy



Crunchy Chicken Fingers with Tangy Dipping Sauce Recipe

# Being Mindful

Becoming more mindful requires practice. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- **Take some deep breaths.** Breathe in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.
- **Enjoy a stroll.** As you walk, pay attention to your breath and the sights and sounds around you. If thoughts and worries enter your mind, note them but then return to the present.
- **Practice mindful eating.** Be aware of taste, textures, and flavors in each bite. Listen to when your body is hungry and full.
- **Do a body scan.** Bring your attention to how each part of your body is feeling. This can help you connect with your body.
- Find mindfulness resources including online programs and teacher-guided practices.

Mindfulness can involve a sitting meditation that's practiced in a quiet space. In this practice, you focus on your breathing or sensations in your body. If your mind wanders—like thoughts popping in about things you need to do—you try to return your mind to the present moment.

But mindfulness doesn't have to be done sitting still or in silence. You can integrate the practice into things you do every day, like walking or eating. You can also be mindful while interacting with others.

## *Health Benefits of Mindfulness*

Studies suggest that focusing on the present can have a positive impact on health and well-being.

Mindfulness-based treatments have been shown to reduce anxiety and depression. There's also evidence that mindfulness can lower blood pressure and improve

sleep. It may even help people cope with pain.

"For many chronic illnesses, mindfulness meditation seems to improve quality of life and reduce mental health symptoms," says Dr. Zev Schuman-Olivier of Harvard University.

One of the first mindfulness-based therapies was used for depression. Many studies have shown that it can be effective for some people.

Mindfulness appears to help with depression in two ways. First, it helps you develop the ability to stay grounded in the present, explains Dr. Sona Dimidjian of the University of Colorado Boulder. She studies the use of mindfulness-based treatments to prevent relapse of depression, including among pregnant women. With depression, "your attention can get hijacked into the past or future," she explains. You spend time focusing on past negative experiences or worrying about things to come.

Second, mindfulness can help you "de-center" from such thoughts. "It's like being able to sit on the riverbank and watch thoughts floating by like leaves on a stream," Dimidjian says. "Developing the skill of mindfulness can help stop you from being pulled into any one thought and carried down the stream. People often experience thoughts like, 'nothing ever works out for me,' or 'it's always going to be this way. Over time, and with practice, you can develop the ability to stand back from these painful thought patterns."

Researchers are now studying whether mindfulness training can help with a variety of other conditions, including PTSD, eating disorders, and addiction.

Schuman-Olivier is looking at whether mindfulness can help reduce anxiety among people being treated for opioid use. This could help prevent relapse.

## *Developing Healthy Habits*

Being mindful may also help you make healthier choices. Loucks's team at Brown created an eight-week mindfulness program for people with high blood pressure.

They studied whether the program increased participants' awareness of their habits. This included how they ate. The study found that participants chose a healthier diet after taking the course.

You can bring mindfulness to your eating habits, too. Studies suggest that it can help reduce binge eating and emotional eating. Paying closer attention to your body can help you notice signals that you're full and help you better enjoy your food.

This body awareness seems to be one part of how mindfulness helps people adopt healthier habits. If you've just eaten a jelly donut, you may be more likely to notice an unpleasant sugar crash, Loucks explains. Remembering this can help you to make better food choices in the future.

This goes for positive feelings too. "With physical activity, just about everybody feels better afterwards. So, with mindfulness training we're aware of it improving our mood, and then we can use that reward to actually train ourselves," Loucks says.

Mindfulness may also help with setting a goal. "We can place our mind on being more active or eating more fruits and vegetables. And if we place our intention there, it may be more likely that we're going to carry through and make it happen," Loucks explains.

### *Learning To Be Mindful*

If you want to practice mindfulness, there are many online programs and apps. But they're not all created equal. Experts suggest looking for resources from medical schools and universities. Check to see if they're evidence-based.

Dimidjian's team developed an eight-week self-guided online mindfulness program. Her studies showed that the program helped reduce symptoms of depression more than a standard treatment alone.

"If you end up having difficulty with an app, though, don't take it personally or think that you're somehow bad at mindfulness, or it's not meant for you," Schuman-Olivier says. You can also try finding a teacher or someone with the skills to guide you in mindfulness training.

And just like any skill, mindfulness takes practice. "Just because something is simple, doesn't mean that it's easy," Dimidjian says.

Mental training can take time and dedication. Aim for a few minutes of mindfulness each day to start.

A body scan meditation can be a good way to connect with your body. It helps make you aware of how your body feels as you mentally scan from head to toe.

Start in a comfortable position with your eyes closed. Take several deep breaths. Then, notice your feet. How do they feel?

Let your scan travel up your body—legs, stomach, arms, hands, neck, and finally, head. Notice any sensations or discomfort. Try not to change or judge these feelings—you're simply checking in. Doing body scans on a regular basis can help increase mindfulness.

*Article reprinted from NIH-News In Health*



# MAS Benefits

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# NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting of the Members of Bloom Benefits Association will be held at 12444 Powerscourt Drive, Suite 500A, St. Louis, MO 63131, on Monday, December 27, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. (CST) for election of Directors and for the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting and any adjournment thereof.

The above notice is given pursuant to the By-Laws of the Association.

## **PROXY** **Bloom Benefits Association** **December 27, 2021 Annual Meeting of Members** **THIS PROXY IS SOLICITED ON BEHALF OF** **BLOOM BENEFITS ASSOCIATION**

The undersigned member of Bloom Benefits Association does hereby constitute and appoint the President of Bloom Benefits Association, the true and lawful attorney(s) of the undersigned with full power of substitution, to appear and act as the proxy or proxies of the undersigned at the Annual Meeting of the Members of Bloom Benefits Association and at any and all adjournments thereof, and to vote for and in the name, place and stead of the undersigned, as fully as the undersigned might or could do if personally present, as set forth below:

1. FOR [    ], or to [    ] WITHHOLD AUTHORITY to vote for, the following nominees for Board of Directors:  
David Wilson, Lisa Collier, and Audrey Bridges
2. In their discretion, the proxies are authorized to vote upon such other business as may properly come before the Meeting.

This proxy, when properly executed, will be voted in the manner directed by the undersigned member. If no direction is made, this proxy will be voted for the election of directors and officers.

DATED: \_\_\_\_\_, 2021

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Please date and sign and return promptly to 12444 Powerscourt Drive, Suite 500A, St. Louis, MO 63131 whether or not you expect to attend this meeting. The Proxy is revocable and will not affect your right to vote in person in the event that you attend the meeting.

St. Louis, Missouri  
November 22, 2021  
Date

# crunchy chicken fingers with tangy dipping sauce

## Ingredients

### For chicken:

1/2 teaspoon reduced-sodium crab seasoning (or substitute 1/4 teaspoon paprika and 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder for a sodium-free alternative)

1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

1 tablespoon whole-wheat flour

12 ounces boneless, skinless, chicken breasts, cut into 12 strips

2 tablespoons fat-free (skim) milk

1 egg white (or substitute 2 tablespoons egg white substitute)

3 cups cornflake cereal, crushed

### For sauce:

1/4 cup ketchup

1/4 cup 100 percent orange juice

1/4 cup balsamic vinegar



1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Mix crab seasoning, pepper, and flour in a bowl.
3. Add chicken strips, and toss well to coat evenly.
4. Combine milk and egg white in a separate bowl, and mix well. Pour over seasoned chicken, and toss well.
5. Place crushed cornflakes in a separate bowl. Dip each chicken strip into the cornflakes, and coat well. Place strips on a nonstick baking sheet. (Discard any leftover cornflake mixture.)
6. Bake chicken strips for 10–12 minutes (to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F).
7. Meanwhile, prepare the sauce by combining all ingredients and mixing well.
8. Serve three chicken strips with 1/4 cup dipping sauce.

**Yield** 4 servings, **Serving Size** 3 chicken strips, 1/4 cup sauce, **Calories** 248, **Total Fat** 2 g, **Saturated Fat** 1 g, **Cholesterol** 47 mg, **Sodium** 422 mg, **Total Fiber** 1 g, **Protein** 20 g, **Carbohydrates** 36 g, **Potassium** 303 mg



BottomLine is published by:  
**Bloom Benefits Association**

For information regarding your membership  
and association services, call or write:

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**12444 Powerscourt Drive, Suite 500A**  
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**1-800-992-8044 or (636) 530-7200**

Articles in this newsletter are meant to be informative, enlightening, and helpful to you. While all information contained herein is meant to be completely factual, it is always subject to change. Articles are not intended to provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.

Benefits may not be available in all membership levels.  
For more information, or to upgrade your membership, please call 1-800-387-9027.



**BLOOM BENEFITS**  
**A S S O C I A T I O N**