



# Strengthening Oklahoma Families

## Literacy can affect a person's health

How does literacy affect a person's health? Literacy is the ability to read, write, compute and solve problems of proficiency necessary to function at a job, in the family and in society. So, what exactly is health literacy? It's the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to make informed health-related decisions and actions for themselves.

Megan Monteith, Oklahoma State University Extension health disparities area specialist, said health literacy requires a complex group of reading, listening, analytical and decision-making skills, along with the ability to apply these skills to health situations.

"Health literacy is a key social determinant of health, or factor in the environment that affects people's health. More than one-third of adults in the U.S. have low health literacy," Monteith said. "According to the National Center for Education Statistics, people aged 65 or older with self-reported poor health, have health insurance from Medicare Medicaid or have no insurance; live below the poverty level; are Hispanic or Black; and more likely to have poor health literacy skills."

The Centers for Disease Control



and Prevention indicates that nine out of 10 adults struggle to understand and use health information when it's unfamiliar, complex or filled with jargon.

"Unfortunately, limited health literacy has very real consequences on a person's health. Adults with limited health literacy have more serious medication errors; higher rates of emergency room visits, hospitalizations and death; and worse preventative care and health outcomes for their children," she said. "In addition, those adults are more likely to report poorer overall health and have poorer ability to manage chronic diseases, and they're less likely to understand their diagnosis."

Monteith also noted that individuals with low health literacy are less likely to have screenings or preventative care, tend to seek treatment in later stages of the disease and are more likely to be

## Lincoln County Extension Office

### Address

811 Manvel, Ste 2  
Chandler, OK 74834

### Phone

405-258-0560

### Email

[jessica.riggin@okstate.edu](mailto:jessica.riggin@okstate.edu)

### Website

[extension.okstate.edu](http://extension.okstate.edu)

### Social Media

Facebook: /  
[LincolnCountyOSUExtension](#)

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## Have a happy, healthy Halloween! [eatright.org](http://eatright.org)

It's easier than ever to find fun and tasty Halloween treats that also are nutritious! Store shelves are stocked with kid-friendly favorites — containing whole grains, extra vitamin C, 100% fruit juice and added fiber.

Halloween also is a great time to talk with your children about mindful eating. Discuss what it feels like to savor treats. Also, tell them how they might feel if they eat too much candy at once. Explain that you're going to spread out the candy over a period of time.

After trick or treating, have your child make a pile of personal favorites to enjoy. Agree that the rest can be donated to a local shelter or sent in a care package to those serving overseas.

This year, consider mixing up the candy bowl with some of these items that kids will enjoy and you can feel good about serving. All of these items are available in easy to distribute snack-size packages, too.

- Whole-grain cheddar flavored crackers
- Fruit snacks made with 100% fruit with added vitamin C
- Fruit leathers made with 100% fruit
- Sugar-free gum
- Animal-shaped graham crackers
- Mini rice cereal treat bars
- Cereal bars made with real fruit
- Individual fruit cups
- Low-fat pudding cups
- Mini bags of pretzels

Don't let foodborne illness ruin your Halloween party. Make sure your Halloween party buffet of perishable scary treats isn't out for more than two hours at room temperature. To keep cold food cold, fill bowls with ice and place dishes on top.

If possible, avoid snacks containing nuts so children with nut allergies can have a happy Halloween, too. When in doubt, non-food handouts, such as Halloween pencils, pens, stickers, tattoos and spider rings, are another option for your trick-or-treaters.

While trick-or-treating may bring you tons of candy, remember to stay safe and only enjoy factory-wrapped treats unless the person who is offering homemade treats is trustworthy. To avoid harmful bacteria that may contain Salmonella, always serve pasteurized products and avoid unpasteurized juice or apple cider. And don't eat any raw dough or batter when preparing Halloween treats!

### Health literacy continued from page 1

hospitalized and re-hospitalized.

Some individuals have difficulty understanding the correct dosage of medicines, misinterpret warnings on prescription labels or simply don't know when their next appointment is scheduled.

"Each day, millions of adults make decisions and take actions on issues that protect not only their own well-being, but also that of their family members," she said. "This goes beyond the traditional health care settings

such as a doctor's office or hospital. These actions take place in homes, at work and in schools across the state and country. The combination of errors made with these decisions is estimated to cost the health care system between \$50 billion and \$73 billion per year."

This is why it's so important for individuals to know how to read, write, compute and solve problems. In Oklahoma, 43% of the residents are unable to perform more than simple,

everyday literacy activities. On average, about 24 percent of students starting high school as a freshman drops out of school prior to graduation. Also, 59% of Oklahoma students live in poverty.

"A rise of 1% in literacy scores leads to a 2.5% rise in labor productivity," Monteith said. "The higher the literacy scores, the more likely individuals are of having a better understanding of health issues and treatment."

## Enjoy the holidays with mindfulness (source: [childmind.org](http://childmind.org))

As soon as the Halloween costumes have been tucked away, and the candy is disappearing, suddenly we realize that the holidays are coming....FAST. Thoughts of presents, turkeys, cards, relatives, parties, and shopping begin to dizzyingly swirl in our heads. And so the holiday rush begins, and we often find ourselves becoming champion multitaskers.

But in the rush to get everything accomplished, we often lose our connection with the present moment — how we feel, what we're thinking. We become so future-focused that we sometimes miss out on the little things that make life beautiful as it is — a compliment from a stranger, a warm smile from a child, a beautiful sunset. And we find ourselves pausing on Thanksgiving Day to remind ourselves of what we are thankful for, when in fact the reminders are there each and every day for the noticing.

Contrary to common belief, one effective way to cope with the holiday madness is to SLOW DOWN and take a little time each day to cultivate and practice mindfulness. Perhaps you've heard about this concept, which is rooted in Zen Buddhism, and has recently become more popular in Western society. Research has demonstrated that practicing mindfulness is associated with improvements in well-being, physical and mental health, relationship satisfaction, and attentional focus. In addition, the practice of mindfulness has been shown to help reduce stress and associated negative emotions such as anxiety and sadness.

So, what is mindfulness? Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, internationally known for his work in bringing mindfulness into Western medicine and society, defines the concept as “awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a sustained, particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally”. When we practice mindfulness, we are focusing our full attention on the moment as it is, letting go of the past and future-directed thoughts, and allowing all of our senses to experience this moment, right now.

You may be asking, “Okay, so on a practical level, how can I be mindful?” In reality, there are infinite opportunities to practice mindfulness during each day. Here are some suggestions to get started:

- Find a quiet place for just a few minutes (I sometimes recommend the bathroom, as for some people this is the only quiet spot!). Get yourself into a comfortable sitting position with your feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing only. Do this for a few minutes. Listen to the sound of your breath and notice how your body feels during this time. When thoughts of other moments come racing into your mind, acknowledge them and let them go by as if they are on a conveyor belt, and refocus your attention on your breath again. Do this over and over.

- Spend a few minutes each day writing down five things you are thankful for that day.
- When you are walking outside, focus on one of your senses. For example, for vision, notice the colors of objects around you or for hearing, listen to the sounds around you and label them nonjudgmentally (eg “That building is gray,” or “I hear a horn honking”).
- Get the kids involved! One favorite thing I like to recommend is good old fashioned bubble blowing. Make a game out of it and instruct them (and yourself) to silently watch the bubbles float around the room. Resist the urge to pop the bubbles and see where they go.

By taking a few minutes each day to be mindful, perhaps even more than once a day, we can give ourselves the space to get in touch with ourselves, to fully experience the meaningful moments that often pass us by, and to take time to practice gratitude for what we have in our lives. This way, by the time Thanksgiving arrives, we will not be scrambling to think about what we are thankful for! Instead, we can experience gratitude daily, reduce our stress, and be more in touch with the little things that make all the difference.

## Butternut Squash Risotto (serves 6)

- 5 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1 medium butternut squash (about 2 1/2 pounds), peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces (about 4 cups)
- 1.5 tablespoons chopped fresh sage leaves
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 1 large shallot, finely chopped
- 1.5 cups arborio rice
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese (about 2 ounces), plus more for serving

Toss butternut squash pieces in olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Spread on a cookie sheet in single layer and roast at 425 for about 20 minutes.

Heat olive oil in a cast-iron dutch oven. Sauté shallots until tender. Add in sage leaves and season with salt and pepper, cook for a minute longer. Add in butternut squash (you could make it up with a fork if you want it to be smooth or leave it in larger pieces if you want it chunky) Add in 4 cups broth and the rice. Stir and move dutch oven from stove top to a 350 degree oven for 45 minutes. Remove from oven and carefully open pot, lifting lid away from your face to let steam escape without injury to you. Stir in wine (broth could be substituted here), butter and parmesan cheese. Serve hot.

calories: 323

total fat: 11g

saturated fat: 6g

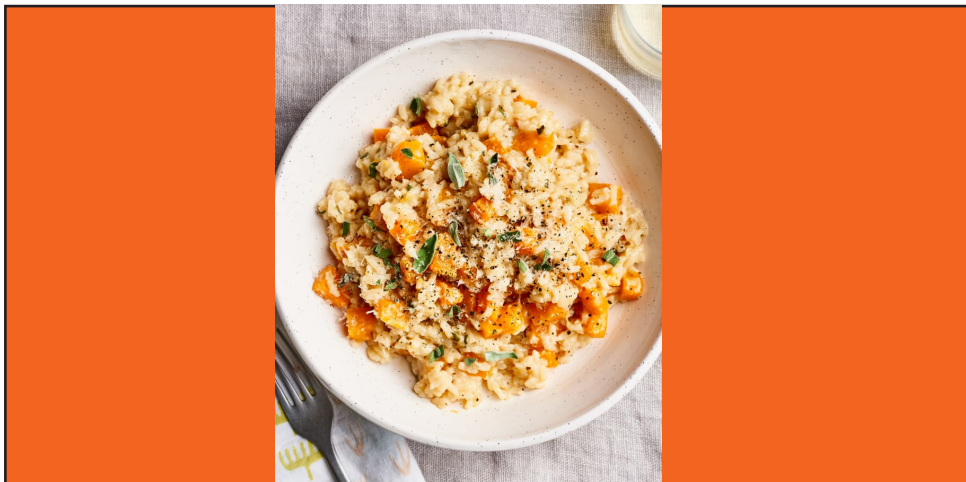
cholesterol: 30mg

sodium: 1125mg

carbs: 42g

fiber: 4g

protein: 10g





# OHCE NEWS

Virtual OHCE meets on the first Tuesday evening of the month at 7pm via Zoom. Their group name is actually “The Caring and Sharing Zoomers” and their advisor, Suzette Barta calls them “The Zoomers” for short. Any and all are welcome to join their Zooms. Upcoming meetings will be on November 1 and December 6. Like most local groups, The Zoomers have a lesson and featured craft, and of course good fellowship.

As a service project, the Zoomers plan to focus on what they can do to support the State Project of Reducing Hunger in Oklahoma. Thinking through this has been a thought-provoking exercise since several of the Zoomers are home-bound and really cannot get out to volunteer at their local foodbank or conduct a canned food drive. On October 4, a guest-speaker from Our Daily Bread Food and Resource Center in Payne County joined the Zoom and helped the group brainstorm some ideas for how they could help from home.

One popular project idea with the group is to be social media influencers for our local food banks and for the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. Here is how that will work. Each of us will “Like” our local food pantry and/or the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma on Facebook. We will then share posts made by these organizations to our own Facebook feeds. Of course, equivalent activities apply to Twitter and Instagram, but most of the Zoomers are Facebook users. We will then keep track of the number of shares we make each month.

All OHCE members are invited to participate in this project. In fact, Barta would like to challenge all OHCE groups to “share” as many food pantry posts as possible through the upcoming holiday season, October – December. If you accept her challenge, she would love to hear from your group to know how many posts you shared. Can your group share more than The Zoomers?

To keep up with what the Zoomers are doing, be sure to Like their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/virtualohce>

## Upcoming Dates:

October 20, 2022

Leader Lesson, 10:30 am  
DIY Home Repairs

November , 2022

Executive Board Meeting, 9:30 am  
Lincoln County Courthouse

2023 Yearbook review directly following the meeting.

December 1, 2022

Winter County Meeting, 10:30 am

Family & Consumer Sciences helps communities, families, youth and individuals address issues of health, wealth and well-being through research-based Extension education and programs that are proven to work.



Oklahoma Home & Community Education, Inc. is a local and state wide partner with Cooperative Extension which brings the best knowledge from OSU to its members. Join a local OHCE group and enjoy programs that help make Oklahomans be their best. [www.OHCE.okstate.edu](http://www.OHCE.okstate.edu)

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