

# PANHANDLE PATH TO HEALTHY LIVING

February 2022



## Getting Your Year in Financial Order

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Financial health is a term used to describe the state of one's personal monetary affairs. There are many dimensions to financial health, including the amount of savings you have, how much you're putting away for retirement, and how much of your income you are spending on fixed or non-discretionary expenses.

Millions of "financially vulnerable" Americans have grown even more vulnerable during COVID-19, with lower-income households more likely to have experienced lost wages or job loss, and added medical expenses. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and Mississippi State Extension have brought to light a few recommendations to managing personal finances during COVID-19.

Keep the most important thing the most important thing, your health. We can do our best to follow the CDC's health guide-lines by washing our hands often, practicing social distancing, and getting our household plan in place.

In addition to physical health, we need to stay vigilant in protecting ourselves in today's digital economy. However, online security is even more important during a downturn. Remember, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is. Scammers are active amid COVID-19, especially through robocalls pretending to be from the Social Security Administration, fake coronavirus tests for Medicare recipients, and scams baiting small-business owners into buying bogus listing services. Do not answer phone calls that may be potential scammers, and hang up immediately if you do answer a scam call. Do not click on links you do not recognize! If you are uncertain about the legitimacy of a phone call, such as from the Social Security Administration, hang up and find the phone number listed on an official website ([ssa.gov](https://ssa.gov)). Never call back using a number left by a robocall. Identity theft happens when others open accounts, file tax returns, or make purchases in your name. While identity theft can happen to anyone, there are some things you can do to reduce your risk. If you think someone is using your personal information to open accounts, file taxes, or make purchases, visit [IdentityTheft.gov](https://IdentityTheft.gov) to report and recover from identity theft.

Finally, make plans ahead of time. Having a plan for emergency funds, life insurance, disability insurance, and estate planning before a crisis occurs makes living through one much smoother. When looking for someone to help you manage your finances, look for someone who is a fiduciary. A fiduciary is someone who must put the interest of the client first. While this might seem like a no-brainer, remember that people go into business to make a profit, and some are willing to put their profits before a client's best interest.



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# Path to Food Safety

## Safely Storing Food

APRIL 25, 2019 BY DINNER TONIGHT

For most, grocery shopping is the easy part. However, storing and putting your food away, that can be tricky! Here's an excellent resource provided by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

**FREEZER (0°F or below):** Wrap and label meat, fish and poultry that you plan to freeze.

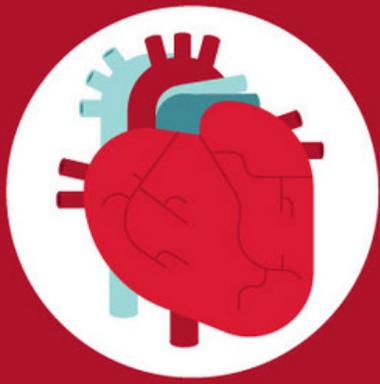
**FRIDGE (34°F – 40°F):**

- Dairy and eggs should be stored in the coldest part of the fridge, usually near the back and away from the door.
- Put meat in the meat drawer or on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator.
- Use the crisper or produce drawers for veggies!
- Olive oil and nut oils go rancid quickly when exposed to light and heat, which puts the kibosh on their healthful qualities. Refrigeration may cause these oils to become cloudy, but they'll clear up when they return to room temperature.
- Cheese may be best served at room temperature — but, like all animal-derived food, still needs to be stored in the fridge. Take it out a short time before serving for the best flavor. Perishable foods, including cheese, should be thrown out if they are kept out of the refrigerator for two or more hours. In the warmer months, that amount of time will be less.
- Butter should be kept cold. Your grandma may have kept her butter in a crock on the counter to keep it nice and spreadable. However, keeping butter refrigerated avoids risky bacterial contamination. If you want soft butter, remove it for a little while before serving to let it soften.

**PANTRY or COUNTERTOP (50°F – 70°F):**

- Canned goods last 2+ years but can be damaged by temperatures above 100°F.
- Mayo and similar condiments can be stored in the pantry; move them to the fridge when it's been opened.
- Honey is very shelf-stable and will last a long time. Also, if you chill honey it becomes hard to pour, so keep it in your pantry.
- Tomatoes fare better when kept out of the fridge, where they can become mealy. It's true that they spoil faster when stored on the counter. If you won't be eating them within 1 to 2 days, store ripened tomatoes in the refrigerator for 2 or 3 days. However, keep in mind that once you cut into a tomato (or any fruit or vegetable), it needs to be refrigerated to slow the growth of harmful bacteria.
- Potatoes and Onions like the same conditions, but they should not be stored together. Potato starch turns to sugar when refrigerated. Potatoes and onions should be stored in a cool, dry place such as the bottom of your pantry. Remove any potatoes and onions that go bad in the pantry from the rest.
- Bread can stale quickly in the fridge due to the dry circulating air. If you're afraid your bread will become moldy because your kitchen is hot or humid, or because you won't be eating it quickly, freeze it. You can remove only what you need and thaw it on the counter or in the toaster on the "defrost" setting.
- Peanut butter becomes difficult to spread when it's cold, so store it in your pantry if you will use it within 2 to 3 months. Store in the refrigerator for 4 to 6 months. However, if you buy natural peanut butter, check the label; some brands recommend refrigeration to keep the natural oils from separating.
- Fruits with pits, like peaches and plums, should be placed in a closed paper bag until ripe — then refrigerated. Keep tomatoes in the pantry only if they'll be eaten within 1-2 days — otherwise, they go in the fridge.





# FIVE IMPORTANT TIPS TO KEEP YOUR HEART HEALTHY

## 1 EXERCISE

Keep it simple. Try walking for 30 minutes a day. Any activity that gets you up and moving is good for your heart.



## 2 EAT HEALTHY

Eat a wide range of foods to ensure you're getting a balanced diet and all the right vitamins and minerals.

## 3 DON'T SMOKE

Smoking increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases, which includes coronary heart disease and stroke.



## 4 GET ENOUGH SLEEP

A good night's sleep is just as important as regular exercise and a healthy diet. Poor sleep has immediate negative effects on your body.



## 5 GET YOUR TEETH CHECKED

Research shows that gum disease is a marker for heart disease. So, practice good dental hygiene and see a dentist regularly.



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“Panhandle Path to Healthy Living” is a Family Community Health Information resource for area families in the Texas Panhandle Counties. The newsletter is published monthly. Readers are encouraged to read the newsletter and then pass it on. Any information may be reproduced for education purposes in any form and credit cited appropriately.

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Enjoy Healthy Recipes  
[dinnertonight.tamu.edu](http://dinnertonight.tamu.edu)

## Slow Cooker Taco Soup

### Ingredients:

1/2lb extra lean ground beef  
1 large yellow onion chopped  
2 (15 ounce) cans Ranch style beans  
1 (15 ounce) can low sodium kidney beans  
1 (15 ounce) can low sodium kernel corn  
2 (15 ounce) cans low sodium stewed tomatoes  
1 (10 ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chilies  
1 packet of low sodium taco seasoning

### Directions:

Cook ground beef with chopped onion; drain grease. Add to large crock pot. Clean tops of all canned goods before opening. Then add other ingredients (including liquid from vegetables) to the meat mixture in the crock pot. Stir well. Simmer in crock pot on low for 6-8 hours or on high for 4 hours. Top with shredded cheese and enjoy!



*Its getting a little cooler and now, it's time for soup! Try this easy slow cooker soup for dinner. Just add your ingredients, set the clock and go! Having meals ready when you get home is a great way to save on the food bill. Meals at home are always better than eating out!*

