



# the CommonHealth Compass



## Spicy Bean Salsa

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 (15 ounce) can black-eyed peas
- 1 (15 ounce) can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 (15 ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1 (4 ounce) can diced jalapeno peppers
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained
- 1 cup low fat or fat free Italian-style salad dressing
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, combine black-eyed peas, black beans, corn, onion, green bell pepper, jalapeno peppers and tomatoes. Season with Italian-style salad dressing and garlic powder; mix well. Cover, and refrigerate overnight to blend flavors.
2. Serve with baked tortilla chips as a dip.
3. Can also be served as a refreshing side dish to accompany a summer meal from the grill.

## You're Stressed? Good For You

It's a common myth that all stress is negative. Wrong. As ValueOptions, the state health plan's Employee Assistance Program, reminds us, stress is what gets us moving every day.

Had something to eat today? That's stress doing its job. Stress also plays a part in helping us find shelter and do all the other little and big things called living.

Since stress is an integral part of daily life, the issue is not how to avoid it, but how to manage it and be productive.

According to ValueOptions, "by learning to plan and set priorities we can keep stress from overwhelming us. In other words, we need a stress strategy.

"For example, some people prefer to take on the biggest obstacle first. Others like working on simple problems first, solving them, and then going on to more complex difficulties. Without a strategy, all problems will seem too big and too difficult."

Here are some strategies to consider as you make stress work for, not against you:

- **Make a list of stressors.** Prioritize them and tackle them one at a time. Doing so will help to minimize feelings of being overwhelmed.
- **Expect surprises** in your life and plan and prepare in advance for problematic situations. For example, anticipate problems and develop a game plan for how to respond, including reminding yourself that the situation has occurred before and that you have survived it before.
- **Take the time to talk** with a friend, mate or child. Express feelings you might have been holding back. Listen for advice.
- **Avoid excessive alcohol**, caffeine and tobacco, all of which boost the stress response.

Don't be "myth-led." Stress is a powerful motivator when dealt with appropriately. The key is learning how to cope with the stress you confront every day.

For more information, visit <https://www.achievesolutions.net/achievesolutions/en//Home.do>.

## Something To Smile About Offered July 1 – September 30

Have you ever crawled into bed only to realize you forgot to brush your teeth? Or put off going to the dentist until the pain was unbearable? Routine dental care and good oral hygiene may actually lead to more than just a great smile, but it may even prevent a heart attack, help you better control diabetes, and help mothers avoid pre-term birth.

The **Something to Smile About** program not only reviews dental hygiene basics like brushing and flossing, but it also explores the relationship between dental health and overall health. Participants will receive a travel dental kit including a small zipper bag, a toothbrush, floss, and toothpaste.



## Downtown Social Services Group Loses 1,000 Pounds and More

Weight Watchers participants at the Virginia Department of Social Services in downtown Richmond know a lot about milestones. They've reached one already and are working toward another. This past April, the group hit the 1,000-pound mark for weight loss! That's a half ton since their at-work program, recommended by the Health and Safety Committee, began in November 2007. Commitment is the group's byword. The first 17-week session attracted 25 people, well before the Commonwealth began its partnership with Weight Watchers in 2008. Participation has continued at a level of 20 or more. Since their milestone in April, the group has lost almost 300 more pounds and is holding session 5 since the program's inception.

"The people in the group take part for the support and camaraderie, not just to take off weight," said Marcia Borton, the property and facilities manager who also serves as Weight Watchers coordinator. "They want to do something for their health, regardless of whether they are reimbursed or not."

The Commonwealth's program reimburses eligible employees 50 percent of the cost of Weight Watchers services.

DSS participants share healthy recipes and encourage each other outside of at-work meetings. Ms. Borton says many in the group report that they are no longer taking medications, are moving better and have increased confidence in what they can accomplish.

What's next? That DSS location will be moving to another building across 8th Street in the fall, so Ms. Borton plans to ask other building tenants to participate in at-work meetings. "Anything to keep going!" she said.



*DSS Weight Watchers at-work program members celebrate hitting the 1,000 pound mark for weight loss. From left to right: Susan Lloyd, Jeanne Sanders, Angela Beachy, Sandy Smith, Carla Harris and Jan Ellison.*

## Keep Your Cool When the Summer Heats Up

**Slurp up some water.** Water is the best choice to stay hydrated. If you'll be exercising heavily, a sports drink can help to replace electrolytes. Drink in proportion to how much you perspire, but remember that too much too quickly can harm you. It's best to take frequent, moderate portions. Too much sugar, as in soda, can undermine the benefits of the liquid, and alcoholic beverages can dehydrate you.

**Step into the shade.** Choose a shady spot to sit. Sip a cool drink. Take a swim. If you have heavy physical activity to perform outside, try to do it in the morning or evening, not the heat of midday.

**Slip on a shirt.** Wear light-colored, loose fitting clothing. It will keep you cooler and help prevent sunburn by reflecting the sunlight. Be aware that clothing may not block sunlight completely. In fact, an ordinary t-shirt may only be the equivalent of SPF 5. Look for clothing designed to block sun with SPF built in, if you spend a lot of time outdoors.

**Slap on a hat.** A hat with at least a 3" brim all the way around will help to keep you cool and protect your eyes from glare. Baseball caps leave the ears and neck exposed, so they are not the best choice for sun protection.

**Slop on some sunscreen** (at least SPF 30). Remember that sunscreen is not a complete solution by itself - minimizing sun exposure is your best defense against skin cancer, the most common form of cancer in America.



## CommonHealth is Working

We are here to serve you! Our Regional Coordinators are attending benefits fairs, special programs, walks and other special events in order to improve the health of Virginia's employees. Please share with us your comments, opportunities and success stories. E-mail [wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov](mailto:wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov).



101 N. 14th Street  
Richmond, VA 23219