

THE
SASKATCHEWAN
BLUE CROSS™

wellness guide

SPECIAL ISSUE — SPRING 2026



80
years
1946
2026

*Rooted in
Saskatchewan
since 1946.*

Invested in our communities.

\$179M

recirculated
yearly into our
local economy

23+

partnerships for
Health Literacy
initiatives in 2025

139+

SK communities
supported in 2025

Total invested in
Saskatchewan in 2025:

\$828,479

Learn more: sk.bluecross.ca/community

CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF *wellness*

For 80 years, Saskatchewan Blue Cross has proudly supported the health and well-being of people across our province, helping individuals and families access the care and support they need to live healthier lives. Rooted in Saskatchewan and guided by our commitment to community, we've built a legacy grounded in compassion, reliability and putting people first.

As we celebrate this milestone, our commitment remains the same: ***to care for the people of Saskatchewan and empower healthier lives, today and into the future.***

The 2026 issue of the Saskatchewan Blue Cross Wellness Guide is a special one. As we celebrate our 80th birthday, we must also acknowledge the privilege of aging and longevity. This issue is packed with meaningful nutrition strategies, guides to mindfulness and planning, tips for staying healthy all year long and more – no matter your age.

Jump into the Saskatchewan Blue Cross Wellness Guide; **your journey to whole health and well-being begins here.**

*your partner
in wellness,*



80 YEARS OF
Empowering healthy lives.

inside the 80th birthday issue

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INVEST IN YOURSELF

mindfulness moment

As the sun returns and the days get longer, spring invites us to wake up and reconnect with ourselves. After months of winter quiet, nature begins to change — and we do too. Buds start to grow, snow melts, and we may feel our own energy slowly coming back. With more sunlight, many people notice clearer thinking and a bit more motivation. This is why spring often feels like the real new year. It can be a time to get back on track, set simple goals or make small changes.

Spring also reminds us that growth does not need to be rushed. It happens slowly, when the time and conditions are right. **This season gives us a chance to check in with ourselves, pay attention and move forward with care.**

what is mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment on purpose and without judgment. It is simply noticing what is happening inside you and around you. You do not need silence or long periods of sitting. You only need a few moments to come back to what is here, right now.

As the seasons change, mindfulness can help by letting us:

- Notice our energy rising without feeling overwhelmed
- Support clear thinking and steady emotions
- Connect with what matters to us
- Feel more grounded in daily life

a guided practice: arriving with spring

This short practice takes only a few minutes. You can do it inside or outside — anywhere you can feel the sunlight or even just imagine it.

STEP 1: ARRIVE

Find a comfortable place to sit or stand. You can also step outside for a breath of fresh air. Let your body relax into the space around you.

STEP 2: A GENTLE BODY SCAN

Imagine warm spring sunlight on the top of your head. Slowly move your attention downward, as if the light is melting away the heaviness of winter.

- Notice the warmth at your forehead
- Soften your eyes and jaw; release any tightness in your face and neck
- Let your shoulders drop as they loosen
- Notice your chest, back and ribs move as you breathe in and out
- Let your arms and hands relax and feel heavier
- Bring awareness to your belly and hips; let go of any gripping
- Move your attention down your legs, into your feet and to the ground beneath you

Take your time. Let each area soften and open, like a gentle thaw.

STEP 3: NOTICE WHAT'S AROUND YOU

Now turn to your senses, one at a time.

- **Sight:** Look for small signs of spring — more light, new colours, small changes around you
- **Sound:** Listen for birds, melting water or simple background sounds
- **Touch:** Notice the air on your skin or the surface supporting you
- **Smell:** Pay attention to any fresh or earthy scents, indoors or outdoors
- **Taste:** If you are holding or sipping something, take a moment to notice its flavour

No need to name or judge anything — just notice. If your mind wanders, return to the rhythm of your breath.

STEP 4: SET YOUR SPRING INTENTION

Take a slow, deep breath in. As you exhale, ask: *“What do I want to grow in myself this season?”*

Keep the answer simple. Let it be honest. Let it be enough.



WITH LARISSA BAYET

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this spring, give yourself permission to begin again

Whether you are restarting a routine, trying a new goal, or simply checking in with yourself, mindfulness can help you move forward in a calm and steady way.

Presence is always here for you, just like the returning sunlight — one breath at a time.

Move well for life

6 ESSENTIAL MOVEMENTS TO SUPPORT
STRENGTH, LONGEVITY AND HOW YOU
FEEL IN YOUR BODY

WITH
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the foundation

Movement is more than exercise; it's how we support ourselves through every season of life. When we return to the fundamentals, we build strength that lasts, move with more ease and create a stronger connection to our bodies.

These six foundational movement patterns form the base of how we move every day. Practiced consistently, they help us stay strong, capable and resilient over time.

- **Squat:** Stay strong through every stage of life, moving with ease from sitting to standing
- **Hinge:** Support your spine and move with confidence in everyday patterns
- **Push:** Build strength to meet the demands of daily life
- **Pull:** Create balance, improve posture and support shoulder health
- **Rotate:** Restore natural movement and reduce stiffness
- **Carry:** Develop stability and strength that translates beyond the gym

a simple practice to return to

Strength that lasts isn't built through extremes — it's built through consistency and intention. When you focus on how you move, rather than simply doing more, you create progress that is both effective and sustainable.

how to use this practice

Complete this workout as a full-body strength session or integrate individual movements into your current routine. Focus on quality over quantity, and choose loads that allow you to move with control.

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complete 2-3 rounds:

MOVE WITH CONTROL. BREATHE THROUGH EACH REPETITION. PAY ATTENTION TO HOW EACH MOVEMENT FEELS.

1A Goblet Squat
10 reps



1B Dumbbell Hex Bar Deadlift
Or Romanian Deadlift – 10 reps



2A Push-Up
8 – 12 reps



2B Single-Arm Dumbbell Row
Or Bent Over Row – 10 reps



3A Rotational Medicine Ball Toss
Or Cable Rotation – 8 reps/side



3B Farmer Carry
30 – 45 seconds

Movement doesn't need to be extreme to be effective. It can be steady, intentional and supportive. When you return to the fundamentals, you build a foundation that evolves with you; one that keeps you strong, capable and moving well for life.

Move often. Be Well.

5 tips for levelling up your self-care game

Self-care is vital for your well-being, giving you the opportunity to recharge both mentally and physically. Taking time to prioritize your needs and care for yourself helps reduce stress, improve your mood and boost overall productivity. By practicing self-care, you're investing in your long-term health and happiness, ensuring that you can give your best to yourself and to others.

Here are five tips to take your self-care game up a notch or two:

1 Disconnect when needed

It's okay to take a break from being constantly connected. While having our digital lives at hand is useful, it can affect our mental health. Consider how you can unplug, like leaving your phone at home when with friends or keeping devices in another room at night. Sometimes, self-care means stepping back.

2 Tidy up your space

Making your surroundings more comfortable by cleaning up is a great way to practice self-care. Tidying up doesn't necessarily mean a deep clean; it can be as simple as reorganizing your desk or folding laundry. Decluttered space can clear your mind.

3 Enjoy the great outdoors

Getting out of the house is literally a breath of fresh air. Soak up some vitamin D by taking a leisurely walk through the park, spending some time on your patio, or giving outdoor meditation a try to reconnect with nature.

4 Reflect and relax a little each day

Taking 5 – 10 minutes to decompress is a great way to unwind. Whether you've had a busy day working, running errands or depleting your social battery, take time each day to reflect and breathe. Take a moment to sit quietly with your thoughts.

5 Say no when your plate is too full

Remember, it is okay to say no to those extra plans. A form of self-care can also be taking a step back and doing nothing! If those Friday night dinner plans with friends are too much on top of a busy week, it's okay to reschedule for another time or suggest an alternative.

Listen to your body when it tells you that you need a little more time to recharge.



high-protein everything: NECESSARY OR MARKETING?

Protein has become the nutrient of the moment. From protein powders and bars to protein cereals and cookies, it suddenly seems like everything at the grocery store is “high protein.” While protein is important for health, the marketing around it can be misleading.

why protein matters

Protein plays many important roles in the body. It helps:

- Build and maintain muscle
- Support immune function
- Increase satiety
- Stabilize blood sugar

As a dietitian, I recommend prioritizing protein-rich foods. Especially for those who are physically active, pregnant, trying to lose weight or working to build or preserve muscle!

look for natural protein

Choose foods that naturally provide *at least* 15 grams of protein per serving. These foods often don't need marketing claims to highlight their protein content.

Examples include:

- Eggs
- Poultry
- Fish and seafood
- Meat
- Greek yogurt or cottage cheese
- Tofu
- Lentils and beans

Natural protein sources also provide vitamins and minerals that support overall health and blood sugar balance. If choosing a lower-protein food (e.g., oatmeal), try adding a whole-food protein such as Greek yogurt, milk or an egg on the side.

what about protein powders?

Protein powders can be useful, but they shouldn't replace whole foods. They may benefit athletes with higher protein needs, busy mornings when a smoothie is practical or individuals struggling to

meet protein needs through food alone.

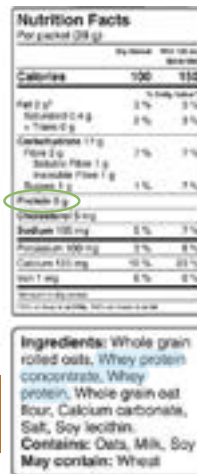
Protein powders are best used as a supplement to a nutrient-dense diet, ideally with guidance from a Registered Dietitian to select the best one for you and your goals!

summary

Focus on foods that naturally contain protein. If a package heavily markets protein, it may simply be a cue to take a closer look at the ingredient list. Real food protein sources are simple, satisfying and often more nutritious than heavily marketed protein products.



The “protein” marked oatmeal contains just 6g of protein — only 2g more than the regular version. This small difference comes from the addition of whey protein concentrate and whey protein powder.



watch for the protein “health halo”

Food manufacturers know protein sells. When consumers start paying attention to a nutrient, companies often add it to foods that didn't traditionally contain much protein. This can create what I call a “protein health halo.”

For example, a cookie doesn't suddenly become a health food because it contains added protein powder. These products are often still high in refined sugars, oils or carbohydrates. In some cases, there isn't much protein in the product at all, as the claim “source of protein” can be made with as little as 5 grams.

Being aware of marketing tactics helps you make informed choices. If you enjoy a protein-added product, there's nothing wrong with including it. However, you may find the “real thing” (like a homemade cookie) more satisfying than a processed version with added protein.



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meet the expert

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What is osteopathy, and how does it support overall wellness?

Osteopathy is a hands-on, client-centred approach to care that views the body as an interconnected whole. Rather than focusing on isolated symptoms, osteopaths work with the body's natural ability to self-regulate and heal. Using skilled palpation and gentle manual techniques, treatment helps restore ease of movement, balance and overall function.

What are the most common reasons people seek osteopathic care?

People come to osteopathy for many reasons, including:

- Neck and lower back pain
- Headaches and migraines
- Postural strain and mobility restrictions
- Sport and overuse injuries
- Chronic tension, pain and stress-related discomfort
- Pregnancy and postpartum support

Many patients also seek care for broader well-being concerns such as fatigue, digestive discomfort, stress or hormonal transitions.

What can someone expect at their first appointment?

An initial visit focuses on understanding the whole person. It typically includes a detailed health history, a hands-on assessment and individualized treatment. Sessions last about 45 to 60 minutes and are gentle and collaborative. Patients may also receive guidance on movement or self-care to support progress between visits.

What misconceptions about osteopathy do you wish more people understood?

A common myth is that osteopathy only focuses on bones or joint alignment. In reality, it works with muscles, fascia, organs and the nervous and fluid systems. Another misconception is that treatment is something "done to" the patient. Osteopathy is collaborative and supports the body's own healing processes long after a session ends.



What are simple daily habits that support musculoskeletal health?

Supporting your body does not need to be complicated. Helpful habits include:

- Regular, varied movement throughout the day
- Paying attention to early signals of strain
- Staying well hydrated and nourished
- Prioritizing quality sleep
- Making space for rest, especially during periods of stress

Small, consistent changes can have a meaningful impact over time.

How you listen and care for yourself makes a difference.

How does osteopathy complement other therapies like physiotherapy or massage?

Osteopathy works well alongside other forms of care. It can improve mobility to support physiotherapy, address broader body patterns alongside massage therapy and contribute to a more integrated wellness plan. That said, too many approaches at once can sometimes be counterproductive, so coordination matters.

When should osteopathy be considered as part of a recovery or prevention plan?

Osteopathy can be helpful after injury or illness, during periods of high physical or emotional stress or as part of a proactive wellness routine. It can also provide support during life transitions such as pregnancy, menopause or changes in activity level.

What should people look for when choosing an osteopathic practitioner?

In most provinces, manual osteopathy is not yet regulated, which makes training standards important to review. Look for a practitioner who has completed a recognized osteopathic program aligned with Canadian standards, belongs to a professional association and clearly communicates their scope of practice. Feeling heard, respected and safe is essential to effective care.

What is one piece of advice you share most often with patients?

Your body is always working toward the expression of health and balance. Your role is to support that inherent process through small, consistent lifestyle choices and priorities. How you listen and care for yourself makes a difference.

This means listening and paying attention to early signals, making adjustments and trusting that change happens over time. Health is not about perfection. It's about supporting your system in a consistent, sustainable way.

Three signs someone might benefit from seeing an osteopath:

- Ongoing or recurring pain or tension
- A feeling of restriction or reduced mobility
- A general sense of being “out of balance” physically or emotionally

These signs may indicate the body is under strain and needs support to restore its adaptability.





changing seasons:

THE HEAVY-LIFTING OF HEALTHY AGING



BY
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As a woman in my early 30s, society tells me that aging means becoming smaller, quieter and more fragile. I spoke with two women who not only challenge this notion but argue that healthy aging might actually mean taking up more space, not less.

THE LATE 30S: FINDING CONTROL IN THE CHAOS

At 37, Cassandra — a musician, business owner and homeschooling mother of two — describes being in the “eye of the storm.” For her, self-care is a tool for emotional regulation and long-term survival.

“I think of how important it is for aging females to lift heavy things,” she says. While male physiological changes tend to be gradual, female physiology faces a sudden shift during menopause. “On the other side is that risk of the fall, broken hip, care home pipeline — it’s so real.”

Lifting is one of the most effective ways to maintain bone density and prevent problems before they start. The benefits are also neurochemical, and Cassandra relies on movement’s immediate payoff, “You get all of the good ones with exercise: the endorphins, serotonin and dopamine.”

Her running practice is a 12-year pillar of her identity. She often runs with nothing — no music, no podcasts. “I joke, but it’s sometimes a nice feeling to run away,” she says. Waking up before the kids, spending time on her movement goals and getting away from it all is a reliable way to settle the frenetic energy for the day.

For those looking to start, consider lowering the barrier. “Run or jog for one song; walk for two. With habit building, it’s not about the quantity; it’s about the predictability in your schedule. Even two minutes a day is enough to trick yourself into doing it.”

She emphasizes using identity-based language rather than action-based language to simplify decision-making and help build lasting habits. Instead of saying, “I will try to exercise,” say, “I am someone who exercises.”

THE MID 50S: FROM INVISIBLE TO SEEN

For Ramona — a mother, educator and former crisis worker — the transition into menopause brought a level of fatigue she had never known.

“Breastfeeding three kids while working shift work for seven years straight, I was tired,” she says. “But I had never experienced fatigue like this. Aches and pains throughout my body without cause. It was crushing.”

Ramona describes those early symptoms of perimenopause as a strange “circle of life.” “There’s a level of stability with your kids for a long time,” she notes, “but when they become teenagers, things change.” As her children went through one hormonal upheaval, she was experiencing her own.

She began researching, discovering her “brain fog” was a common, distressing symptom. “I can’t find another word for it, but I felt stupid because I couldn’t access things in my own brain.”

Used to being a steady rock for others, the emotional shift was jarring. “I can’t parcel emotions anymore, and I’m not pleased with that change. It’s a loss of identity.” Hearing others’ stories became vital to understanding that loss and realizing she wasn’t alone.

Following a naturopath’s advice to lower her cortisol levels and her own research on bone density, Ramona turned to lifting, starting with 20-pound dumbbells in her basement.

Eighteen months later, after working with a trainer, Ramona deadlifted 300 pounds — one of her proudest moments to date. “Lifting took away that crushing fatigue,” she says. “It took away all those aches and pains.”

“People tend to see you less as you age,” she says. “If I go to a restaurant, people just see the grey hair. But when I go to the gym, it’s different. I feel stronger in those circles. I feel seen.”

Practical takeaways for healthy aging

Don’t let comparing your current situation to a past “best” version of yourself keep you from making lasting changes to your routine.

- **Predictability Over Quantity:** Two minutes of a daily, predictable habit beats an hour of an inconsistent one. Focus on maintaining a routine, not on the distance covered.
- **The Identity Shift:** Transition from “trying to exercise” to “being a person who moves.” This removes the mental burden of daily negotiations.
- **Active Engagement:** True self-care requires effort. Pair activities like lifting and journaling to engage both mind and body to promote genuine growth.
- **Talk to the Experts:** Connect with experienced professionals, research your symptoms and advocate for your health.

Healthy aging isn’t about doing things “correctly.” It’s about honest, intimate conversations with others. Many things feel out of our control, but we find our strength when we stop trying to be “perfect” and start building real habits — one heavy lift at a time.



your wellness roadmap

KEY SCREENINGS TO CONSIDER AT DIFFERENT AGES

Regular screening is one of the most powerful tools we have for protecting long-term health. By catching potential issues early, routine check-ups and age-appropriate tests* can significantly improve outcomes, reduce the need for more invasive treatments and provide peace of mind.

Prioritizing these screenings and milestones can empower you to stay informed about your health and take proactive steps toward aging well.

Anyone aged 50+:

- Hearing tests – every 1 to 2 years
- Colon checks/colorectal screening – every 1 to 2 years

Anyone with a prostate aged 50+:

- Prostate exams – every 1 to 3 years

50 to
65

Anyone aged 65+:

- Eye exams – yearly
- Hearing tests – yearly
- Osteoporosis screening/bone density tests – every 2 to 5 years

age
65+

* Recommended screening ages are for *average-risk* individuals

1. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/82-625-x/2025001/article/00002-eng.pdf>

The power of early detection

Early detection can significantly improve outcomes for chronic conditions like cancer, diabetes and heart disease. For example, when caught at the first stage, the five-year survival rate exceeds 90 per cent for colon, prostate, rectal and female breast cancer¹.

Anyone aged 18+:

- Health check-ups – every 1 to 3 years
- Eye exams – every 2 years

Anyone with a cervix aged 25+:

- Cervical exam/pap test – every 3 years

18 to
40

Regular screenings also reduce anxiety and healthcare costs, giving you peace of mind so you can focus on what matters: spending time doing what you love with your loved ones.

40 to
50

Anyone aged 40+:

- Cholesterol checks – every 1 to 3 years
- Diabetes screening – every 3 years

Women aged 43+:

- Breast cancer screening/mammograms – every 2 years

your healthy aging checklist

Take charge of your health today. Whether you're booking a screening or exploring wellness therapies, every step you take is an investment in your future.

don't forget to:

- Schedule your annual screenings and check-ups
- Review your personal or group benefits plan for wellness services
- Try a new therapy like acupuncture or massage
- Check in on your mental health

Ageing well starts with awareness, action and the support of your Saskatchewan Blue Cross benefits.

healthy aging

SEVEN NUTRITION STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT LONGEVITY



BY COURTNEY BERG,
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Living longer is one thing. Living well is what truly matters!

“Longevity” isn’t just about lifespan or how long you live; it’s about healthspan. Healthspan is the length of life free from major chronic diseases. Healthy aging means maintaining strength, cognitive function, metabolic health, independence and overall well-being as the years pass! While genetics play a role, nutrition choices have a powerful impact on how we age.

1. Prioritize protein to maintain muscle

Adequate protein, alongside strength training, preserves muscle mass and metabolic function. Muscle supports metabolism, bone health and independence¹. Furthermore, a protein-rich diet helps you recover from illness faster, manage weight more easily², improves immunity and it ensures you obtain other key nutrients like zinc, calcium and iron!

Habit: Include protein at every meal. High-quality sources include eggs, poultry, fish, meat, dairy, beans, lentils and tofu.

2. Eat until satisfied versus full

Maintaining a healthy weight is associated with improved health outcomes³. In a traditional culture known for long lifespans (e.g., Okinawa, Japan), a practice of eating until about 80% full is common. This strategy is rooted in moderation and encourages mindfulness and awareness without calorie tracking or restricting.

Habit: Eat slowly, pause between bites and stop when comfortably full rather than overfull.

3. Choose minimally-processed foods most often

Instead of focusing on what to remove, focus on adding nutrient-dense whole foods! Minimally-processed foods naturally provide protein, fibre, vitamins, minerals and polyphenols that are associated with longevity.

Habit: Opt for the less processed version of an ingredient whenever possible! For example, choosing steel-cut or old-fashioned oats instead of sugar-sweetened instant varieties.

4. Eat a rainbow of plant foods

Polyphenols from a range of colourful plant foods have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties⁴, which help to protect cells from damage!

Sources: Saskatoon and Haskap berries, leafy greens, carrots, bell peppers, tomatoes, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, dark chocolate, herbs and spices, green tea and coffee.

Habit: Include a variety of colourful plant foods each week. While fresh produce is wonderful, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables retain polyphenols and are budget-friendly and convenient. For example, add frozen berries to smoothies, canned tomatoes to soups or frozen veggies to stir-fries!

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5. Eat high-fibre foods daily

Fibre supports gut health, which is linked to aging and disease prevention⁵. Aim for 25g or more per day!

Sources: Fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, whole grains, nuts, seeds and avocado.

Habit: Read nutrition labels to select foods with ≥ 3 g fibre per serving. Additionally, prioritize naturally high-fibre foods that don't come with labels, such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

6. Include omega-3 rich foods

Traditional diets linked to longevity, like the Mediterranean or Nordic diets, include foods high in omega-3 fats! Omega-3 fats combat inflammation and support brain and heart health⁶.

Sources: Salmon, sardines, trout, mackerel, walnuts, chia seeds, flax and hemp hearts.

Habit: Include omega-3 sources at least twice per week. Budget-friendly sources include canned fish, like salmon, mackerel or sardines.

7. Supplement with vitamin D

You don't need to spend hundreds of dollars on supplements to optimize your health and longevity. However, a supplement you should consider is vitamin D!

Bone density declines with age, especially in women after menopause. Vitamin D, along with protein and calcium, is a key nutrient for optimizing bone health. Strong bones are important for preventing fractures and maintaining independence.

In Saskatchewan, sun exposure from November through March is insufficient for vitamin D synthesis. Furthermore, it is difficult to obtain vitamin D through food! Health Canada recommends adults over 51 take at least 400 IU daily⁷.

Habit: Discuss a personalized supplement strategy with your doctor or dietitian.



Summary

Longevity isn't about a single "superfood," multiple supplements or strict diets. Healthy aging is supported by consistent nutrition habits, regular exercise, social connection and access to care.

A focus on simple nutrition principles, such as a diet rich in minimally-processed sources of protein, fibre, omega-3s, vegetables and fruits, will support your body.

Small daily choices add up, and it's never too early or too late to invest in your health!

smart goal-setting

Bring your bucket list to life!

Whether you're crafting the perfect bucket list, a home renovation to-do list or just planning what you'd like to accomplish in the next year, setting clear goals is one of the most effective ways to turn intentions into action. Using this worksheet and the **SMART** goal-setting approach, we'll help you create goals that are **Specific**, **Measurable**, **Achievable**, **Relevant** and **Time-bound**.

Feel free to make copies of this sheet or use it as a reference as much as you'd like!

S

Specific: *What do I want to achieve?*

M

Measurable: *How can I track my progress?
How will I know when my goal has been achieved?*

A

Attainable: *Is my goal realistic and what steps are required to achieve it?*

R

Relevant: *Why is this goal important to me?*

T

Time-bound: *What is my deadline and/or timeframe for achieving this goal?*

simplify your spring

“clean-up”



WITH

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Between targeted ads and hyper-curated social media routines, our mental space is often crowded before the day even begins. This spring, I invite you to press pause. True renewal doesn't require a credit card or a lifestyle overhaul; it starts with giving yourself permission to do less.

Here are three minimalist ways to refresh your home, mind and wallet this spring:

1 Sentimental sorting

As we age, we accumulate “stuff.” Some items are essential, while others, like an inherited painting or a favourite book, may not be essential but still add meaning to our lives. The rest is likely clutter. For sentimental items — such as boxes of greeting cards or a collection of your child's milestones — try applying the concept of *döstädning* (Swedish Death Cleaning).

Ask: *Will this truly add value to my loved ones' lives later, or am I leaving them items that will become future clutter?* Keep the treasures that spark stories, and for the rest, take a photo before donating or letting them go. This way, you preserve the memory while reclaiming physical space.

2 Simplifying screentime

Digital clutter is often overlooked, but it can significantly increase our mental load. Lighten your load by spending ten minutes unsubscribing from newsletters that tempt you to spend, curating your “following” list across all platforms, deleting distracting apps and silencing notifications.

If you struggle with mindless scrolling, try putting your phone in a drawer after 8:00 p.m. or leaving it in your bag or a separate room when spending time with family and friends. Establishing this simple boundary creates opportunities for connection and allows you to engage more meaningfully with the physical world.

3 Substitutive self-care

We are bombarded by the idea that self-care must look a certain way and come at a high cost: think luxury candles and creams, expensive classes and constant comparison. This spring, consider swapping costly habits for high-value rituals.

Instead of window-shopping, go for a “forest bath” in a local park. Replace pricey treatments with a cozy night in your favourite sweats, practicing an at-home yoga routine. Sometimes, self-care is as simple as saying “no” to an expensive night out and staying in to rewatch a beloved sitcom with your cats or dancing in your living room to a nostalgic playlist.

By letting go of the non-essential, you create space for what truly matters: your own peace of mind.

from scrolling to sowing:

WHY GARDENING IS THE ULTIMATE DIGITAL DETOX



WITH
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I read recently that Canadians spend, on average, over five hours a day on screens. In response, the trend of returning to analog life is growing, with people online often using the phrase “touch grass” as shorthand for stepping away from the computer. Not only will I encourage you to touch grass in this article, but I’ll also encourage you to touch vegetables and flowers, too!

Steps for beginners

If you’re new to gardening, the first step is to decide what you’d like to grow. Herbs and tomatoes are the gateway into gardening for beginners. Other good options include lettuce, beans, carrots and potatoes. These are beginner-friendly, have few pests and have a high success rate! If you’re planting vegetables, focus on what you actually eat and enjoy that you buy at the grocery store.

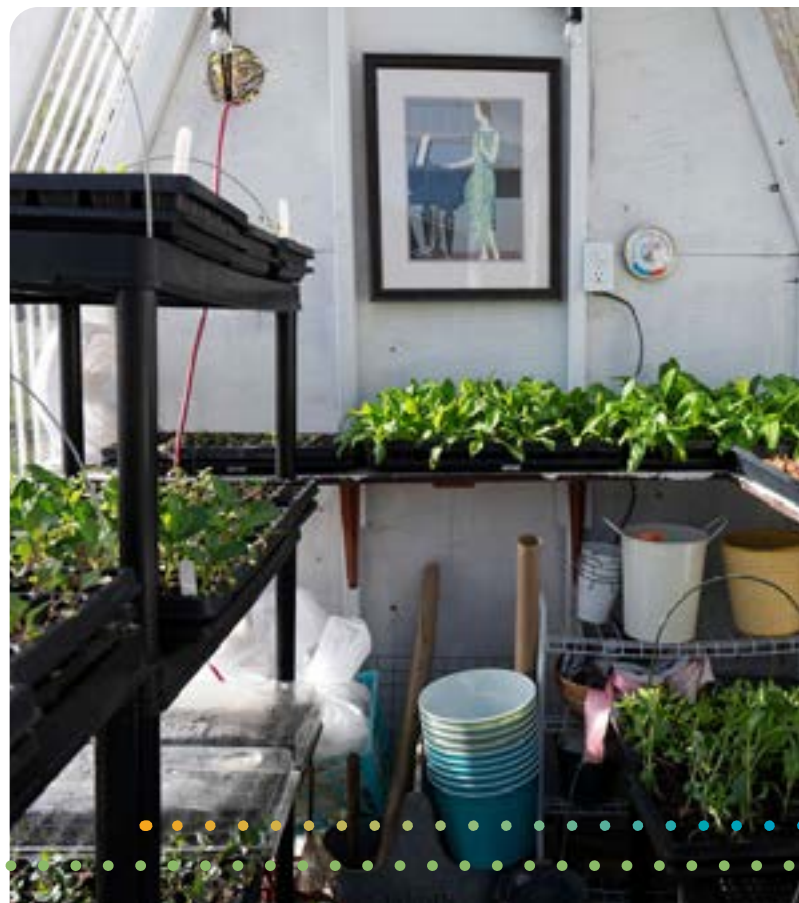
Don’t forget about flowers! The easiest flowers to grow are potted petunias, impatiens or other common bedding plants. If you have a bit more space, consider growing cut flowers or perennials! I personally love cut flowers and highly recommend growing zinnias, cosmos, calendula and bachelor’s buttons for new gardeners. You can start any of these from seed or find most of them as seedlings at garden centres and nurseries.

Where to grow and shop

Don’t be discouraged by the limited space you have. You can hang a few pots on an apartment balcony, find a spot in a community garden or build a raised bed or two in your backyard.

Try to avoid big-box stores if possible and support your local greenhouses! Saskatchewan has many locally owned greenhouses offering a wide variety of unique plants. The staff there are often able to answer your questions and help you find the best plants for your needs.

Many libraries also host free seed exchanges, and you can find seeds at local events like Seedy Saturday, Seedy Sunday and more!





The daily routine that gets you off your phone

Gardening is not a “set-it-and-forget-it” activity; it requires regular attention. Your plants will need watering most days, and if there are any pests, it’s best to deal with them quickly. Also, when crops are ready for harvest, you should pick them promptly to prevent losing your flowers, vegetables or herbs.

This routine (which I like to call the “tour of the garden”) usually takes about 15 minutes and often becomes the highlight of my day (at least it is in mine!). You can enjoy it first thing in the morning with your coffee, as I do, or, if you’re not a morning person or are busy with a 9-to-5 job, consider tending your garden after dinner while relaxing with your evening beverage.

Gardening is for everyone

If you don’t have a balcony or a convenient place to garden, you can still enjoy the benefits of gardening and touching grass. Visit a U-pick flower farm, go to a local farmer’s market, sign up for a farm or garden tour, or volunteer with Gardening at USask!

There are many ways to get off your phone and into a garden, even in an urban setting. You can even grow on your counter with an indoor plant-growing system or in little milk cartons on your windowsill (like my grandma used to do!).

There’s a speed of gardening for every grower!

“**There’s a speed of gardening for every grower!**”

pro tips:

- **Sunlight:** Find a spot that gets at least 6 hours of sun for the best results.
- **Soil:** Using a regular potting mix is ideal for container gardens to ensure good drainage. For in-ground gardens, it’s beneficial to add some compost and old leaves to your existing soil, if possible.
- **Mulch:** Mulch helps keep weeds at bay! Use a good layer, 4–6 inches deep.
- **Maintenance:** Check your plants daily and water as needed.
- **Community:** Don’t hesitate to ask for help! Chat with your neighbours, friends, or family to find out who gardens and seek advice. Check out local garden societies and seasonal garden events to meet other gardeners.
- **Resources:** Pick up a book from the library or your favourite local bookstore! Just make sure to check the author’s growing zone and whether the advice is suitable for your region. Much of Saskatchewan has a short growing season and a cold climate, ranging from Zones 1 to 3.
- **Tech Use:** If you follow local garden educators, think of gardening as your reason to quickly check your phone for tips, then get outside and get your hands dirty!



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