



Presented by Holmes Murphy & Associates, Inc.

## April Is Awareness Month for Autism Spectrum Disorder

April is designated as National Autism Awareness Month, and April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day. These observances are intended to raise awareness about autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 88 children in the United States have ASD, and the diagnosis is far more common among boys than girls. Despite autism being so common, many people do not know exactly what autism is.

According to the CDC, ASDs are a group of developmental disabilities that cause social, communication and behavioral challenges. "Spectrum" refers to the wide range of symptoms and levels of impairment that those

diagnosed with ASDs can have. The National Institute of Mental Health lists five autistic spectrum disorders: autistic disorder (classic autism), Asperger's disorder (Asperger syndrome), pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), Rett's disorder (Rett syndrome) and childhood disintegrative disorder (CDD).

Research has yet to pinpoint the cause of ASDs, but studies suggest that both genes and environment are likely contributing factors.

**Genes.** Although family history does not seem to affect or predict an ASD diagnosis, once one sibling is diagnosed with an ASD, other siblings have 35 times the usual risk of

also developing an ASD.

**Environment.** The environment includes anything surrounding your body that can affect your health, including water, air, food, medications and other materials you may come in contact with. Environmental influences on ASDs are still being researched, but various factors may each play a small role in ASD development.

There has been some concern that childhood vaccines cause ASDs. Although there may be other unknown causes of ASDs, the CDC states that there is no causal relationship between childhood vaccines and ASDs. Several regulatory bodies, including the CDC, continue to monitor vaccines for safety and effectiveness.

Early detection and diagnosis of an ASD is essential for providing the most effective treatment. Make sure an ASD screening is part of your child's wellness checkups.

**Whether you choose an app, online calculator or automatic transfer, budgeting doesn't have to be painful.**

## Budget Tools: Make It Easy

If you don't enjoy crunching numbers and sticking to budgets, there are a variety of budgeting tools available that can help make budgeting—and improving financial health—easy, and maybe even fun.

**Apps** – Easy and convenient, an app on your mobile device can help you track your budgeting and savings goals. Many different apps are available—for example, Mint ([www.mint.com](http://www.mint.com)) tracks expenses according to category, and Check (<https://check.me>) helps you meet bills' due dates.

**Online calculators** – Basic online budget calculators can help you see where your money goes. You can spend a few minutes entering numbers into budget categories to give yourself a good overview of your finances. Simply search online for "budget calculator" to find a calculator that works for you.

**Automatic transfers** – The easiest way to increase your savings is to make it automatic and painless. Simply set up an automatic deposit to a savings account and then check in from time to time to see how a little bit each month can add up to great savings.

Provided by:

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# Rescue Old Produce

The bananas on the counter have turned brown, the apples are no longer crisp and the tomatoes have definitely seen better days. You might be tempted to just throw old, shriveled fruits and vegetables in the trash or compost bin, but pause before you do. Even when they're past their prime, many fruits and veggies can still be put to nutritious use. In some cases, older fruit and veggies might even be better. For these delicious dishes, you won't need any tools that you don't already have sitting in your kitchen.

**Applesauce** – Applesauce is made by cooking chopped apples in a small amount of water on the stovetop. Simmer and mash apples with a potato masher until they reach desired chunkiness. You can add strawberries, pears or other fruits for different flavors, as well as cinnamon or a splash of vanilla.

**Breads** – Bananas, apples and zucchini are just a few of the fruits and vegetables that can be incorporated into bread or cake recipes. Grate or mash and add to a more traditional recipe, or search for a recipe that is built around a particular fruit. Shredded apple and zucchini are also great pancake additions.

**Pies** – Traditionally, pies can be made with any type of filling inside a pastry. Use a pre-made or homemade crust and mix together a fruit filling with those soft apples, berries or other fruits. Check out a cookbook for more ideas.

**Smoothies** – For a cold, nutritious treat, blend a variety of fruits and vegetables into smithereens. Any type of fruit or vegetable can be thrown into the blender and churned into a cold treat. Alter the ratio of different fruits, and try adding milk, yogurt, ice, vanilla or honey to change up the flavors.

# National Park Week



Are you bored with getting your exercise by strolling around the neighborhood or running at the local gym? The U.S. National Park Services has preserved vast pieces of American land that are the perfect places to get outside and be active, whether it's the majestic Yellowstone National Park in the West or the lesser-known Big Bend National Park in Texas with its hundreds of bird species.

The opening weekend of National Park Week is April 19-20, and both days are get-in-free days. Visit [www.nps.gov/findapark/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/findapark/index.htm) to find a park near you or to plan a trip. With great scenery and many options, you can choose a park where you can enjoy a quiet stroll, a vigorous hike, a bike ride, or a horse ride. You can also find spots to go rock climbing and swimming.

With more than 400 spots around the nation, the national parks are some of the best pieces of American nature and history. What better way to get your family outside and moving in the spring air than by visiting a national park?



# Baked Trout

This flavorful dish takes advantage of seasonal tomatoes and healthy fish. Whether you buy fillets at the store or reel 'em in on a line, here's a great recipe to celebrate spring.

- 2 lbs. trout fillets (or other fish, cut into six pieces)
- 3 tbsp. lime juice (or about 2 limes)
- 1 tomato (medium, chopped)
- 1/2 onion (medium, chopped)
- 3 tbsp. cilantro (chopped)
- 1/2 tsp. olive oil
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. red pepper (optional)

Preheat oven to 350° F. Rinse fish and pat dry. Place in baking dish. In a separate dish, mix remaining ingredients together and pour over fish. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until fork-tender.

Yield: 6 servings. Each serving provides 300 calories, 13g of fat, 110mg of cholesterol, 200mg of sodium and 1g of fiber.

Source: USDA



# Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance specialists at Holmes Murphy & Associates

With increased age, the body breaks down alcohol more slowly, which increases its damaging effects.

## ALCOHOL-RELATED ILLNESSES

Excessive consumption of alcohol can cause many negative health effects. "Excessive consumption" means more than two drinks per day for a man under 65 and more than one drink per day for a woman under 65. In the short-term, alcohol depresses the central nervous system, lowers inhibitions, impairs speech and reduces muscle coordination. In extreme amounts, alcohol can significantly depress the vital centers of the brain and can cause a coma.

Those who drink alcohol excessively on a regular basis may experience fatigue, short-term memory loss and many other adverse health effects, including:

### Liver disorders

- Heavy drinking can cause alcoholic hepatitis (inflammation of the liver).
- After years of drinking, hepatitis can lead to cirrhosis (scarring of the liver).

### Gastrointestinal problems

- Excessive alcohol consumption can result in inflammation of the stomach lining, which interferes with the absorption of B vitamins.
- Heavy drinking can also damage the pancreas, which regulates metabolism and produces enzymes to help digest fats, proteins and carbohydrates.

### Cardiovascular problems

- Heavy drinking can lead to high blood pressure and increase the risk of a heart attack.

### Diabetes complications

- Alcohol can increase the risk of low blood sugar because it prevents the release of glucose from the liver. This is dangerous for those that have diabetes and already have problems with low blood sugar.

### Sexual dysfunction and irregular menstruation

- Heavy alcohol consumers who are male are at risk of erectile dysfunction, and female heavy drinkers can suffer from interruptions in their menstruation cycles.

### Birth defects

- Drinking alcohol while pregnant may cause fetal alcohol syndrome. This condition can cause the following birth problems: developmental disabilities, heart defects, shortening of the eye lids and small head.

### Bone loss

- Alcohol can interfere with bone growth and increase the risk of fractures.
- Neurological complications
- Heavy drinking can cause numbness in the hands and feet, and dementia.

### Increased cancer risks

- Habitual alcohol use is linked to an increased risk of esophageal, laryngeal, liver and colon cancer.

In addition to the health risks of excessive alcohol consumption, alcohol abuse is also linked to:

- Domestic abuse and divorce
- Poor performance at work and school
- Higher risk of motor vehicle crashes and drunk driving
- Greater likelihood of other injuries as a result of being impaired by alcohol
- Higher incidence of suicide