

Words on Wellness

Music and Brain Health



A growing body of research suggests that music may be more than just entertaining but is also health-promoting and helps manage certain disease symptoms. Performing or listening to music activates the parts of the brain involved in sensation, movement, thinking, and emotions. By engaging our brains in this way, music can evoke emotional reactions and memories, promote social bonds, and even changes our brain's physical structure.

Early research shows that music-based therapy has positive effects on physical, cognitive, social, and emotional needs. Music therapists are trained health professionals who provide music therapy in settings like hospitals, nursing homes, and schools. Music therapy may involve activities like music listening, performance, and improvisation. People with anxiety, depression, dementia, Parkinson's disease, and multiple sclerosis may benefit from music therapy.

Enjoying and creating music with others is also a wonderful way to increase social and community connections. When we sing or play music with others, we support brain health while having fun!

For more information on music and health research, visit the [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health](https://www.nccih.nih.gov), www.nccih.nih.gov.

20-Minute Chicken Creole

Serving Size: 1 cup | Serves: 8

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 chicken breasts (skinless, boneless)
- 1 can diced tomatoes (14 1/2 ounces)
- 1 cup chili sauce
- 1 green pepper (chopped, large)
- 2 celery stalks (chopped)
- 1 onion (chopped)
- 2 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions:

1. Heat pan over medium-high heat. Add oil and chicken and cook until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°F (3–5 minutes).
2. Reduce heat to medium and add tomatoes with juice, chili sauce, green pepper, celery, onion, garlic, basil, parsley, cayenne pepper, salt.
3. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, for 10–15 minutes.
4. Serve over hot, cooked rice or whole wheat pasta.

Nutrition information per serving:

77 calories, 3g total fat, 0g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 21mg cholesterol, 255mg sodium, 6g total carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 3g sugar, 8g protein

Source: [MyPlate](https://www.myplate.gov), www.myplate.gov

Camping Food Safety

Summertime is perfect for outdoor activities like camping, but we need to keep our food safe during those hot summer days. Follow these quick tips to keep your food safe at the campsite:

- Use shelf-stable foods such as canned goods, nuts, whole or dried fruits, dehydrated foods, and uncooked pasta and brown rice.
- If you are packing perishable foods, make sure that food remains cold to avoid spoilage. Food items such as raw meat, dairy, eggs, leafy greens, and cut melons must stay at 40°F or below to avoid bacteria growth. Plan ahead to keep these foods cold and use equipment such as coolers with ice or gel packs.
- Bacteria can multiply rapidly at 40–140°F. This is known as the “Temperature Danger Zone.” Perishable foods should not be left out of refrigeration for more than 2 hours, and only 1 hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90°F.
- If possible, use separate coolers for raw meat and ready-to-eat items. If they need to share a cooler, put the raw meat on the bottom and ready-to-eat foods above.
- Bring drinkable water and biodegradable soap for proper hand- and dishwashing.
- Bring appropriate cooking equipment and a thermometer to check final internal cooking temperatures.
- Discard any food that is suspected of contamination or exceeding time and temperature requirements. Better safe than sorry!

For more information about food safety during outdoor recreation activities, visit the [USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service](https://www.fsis.usda.gov), www.fsis.usda.gov.

Gear Up for Biking

Bicycling is a great way to be physically active and improve mental health. Health benefits include stronger muscles, better coordination and mobility, reduced body fat, and lower stress. Bicycling is a lower-impact activity compared to running and causes less stress to feet, knees, and hips.

Bicycling is versatile. It can be enjoyed alone, with a small group, or as part of big bicycling events like RAGBRAI. Bicycling can be a way to save money on gasoline costs, as a fun way to enjoy an adventure, or as a thrilling way to enjoy competitions such as the Iowa Games or Special Olympics.

Be safe when biking. Always wear a helmet. Use bike paths and lanes when available. Obey traffic rules. Be careful around cars. Do not let distractions like loud music or alcohol put you in danger.

Stay safe, have fun, and get pedaling!

For more information on the health benefits of bicycling, visit the [Harvard School of Public Health](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu), www.hsph.harvard.edu, and for more information about bicycling in Iowa, visit the [Iowa Department of Transportation](https://www.iowadot.gov/iowabikes) website, [iowadot.gov/iowabikes](https://www.iowadot.gov/iowabikes).

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If you or someone you know is skipping meals, going hungry, or choosing between food and medicine, call 1-855-944-3663 to apply for assistance today.

Call Iowa 2-1-1 or Iowa Lifelong Links, 1-866-468-7887, for additional resources.

