Welcome to Small Steps to Be Well 2013! This GHI/SEIU Wellness Committee sponsored program will give you the tools you need to make small health and well-being changes in your life. We’ll send you just what you need every month to help lead you on a path to improved health in 2013.

We are committed to helping you improve your health and well-being. You will also find this information as well as the goals and activities for each month on myPartner (Be Well column via the Life & Career tab).

**February Health topic of the month: Nutrition/yumPower**

According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Nutrition is essential to keep our bodies running at their best. A well-balanced diet filled with whole grains, fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, low-fat dairy and lean protein is important for health and wellness.

**February weekly activities**

1. Educate yourself by sizing it up
2. Kick the can
3. 5-a-day challenge
4. Meatless Monday

**Feb. 1-8: Educate yourself by sizing it up**

Compare your portion sizes with the recommended portion size. Measure portions of foods like pasta, bread, meats and cheese. The more fruits and vegetables you consume, the better. These should fill half of your plate while the other half should be filled with whole grains and lean proteins. You can begin to identify changes to more closely align your food choices with the recommended serving sizes.

Here are some recommended portion sizes for common foods:

- Cereal (1 cup) = baseball
• Salad dressing (2 Tbsp.) = shot glass
• Cheese (1 oz.) = ping-pong ball
• Hamburger (3 oz.) = mayo jar lid
• Peanut butter (1 Tbsp.) = tip of your thumb
• Beef (3 oz.) = bar of soap
• Rice (1/2 cup) = ice cream scoop
• Potato = computer mouse
• Fruit (1/2 cup) = tennis ball

Feb. 9–15: Kick the can
This week, challenge yourself to cut out soda (if you not a soda drinker, pick one other beverage to cut back on this week). Regular and diet sodas have been linked to several health concerns such as obesity, kidney damage and osteoporosis, to name a few. Both regular and diet sodas also present a risk to tooth enamel and may increase the acid load and have a negative effect on the skeleton, creating a lower bone mass density in women.

By cutting out soda, you will not only save yourself from empty calories but also make an impact on your budget. If you eliminate a $1 soda every weekday, you will save $260 in one year.

Feb. 16–22: 5-a-day challenge
Including five servings of fruits and vegetables per day is associated with lower health risk and healthier weight. This week, challenge yourself to eat five servings of fruits or vegetables every day. Studies show that frequency of eating fruits and vegetables is more important than worrying about portion size. Track your progress using our 5-a-day tracker. [5-a-day challenge tracker](#)

Feb. 23–28: Meatless Monday
End this month’s challenges by continuing your push for more fruits and vegetables. Plan for your meatless Monday meal the weekend before and then follow through on Monday, Feb 25. Visit the yumPower website for great ideas for meatless meals.

**Tips to avoid weight gain**

The term “creeping obesity” refers to a condition that impacts many people as they age, a gradual adding of body fat.

The addition of body fat is usually not that dramatic, but if you add two to three pounds in a course of a year, that translates to a 10-pound gain in just three or four years.

Here are some tips to help avoid creeping obesity:

Be aware of liquid calories. The average person consumes 450 calories per day from beverages alone. This can add up to almost one pound every week.
Skip late night eating. This is the time of day many people exceed their daily caloric intake. After 8 p.m. your metabolism slows down.

When indulging, share. If you want to indulge in dessert when eating out, share a dessert with your dinner companions.

**Tools**

**yumPower**

One excellent resource on your path to Be Well is yumPower. It’s all about finding tasty, good-for-you foods that power your body and help you live the best life possible.

To learn more about better-for-you options when dining out or preparing food, visit yumPower’s iPhone application or website (http://www.healthpartners.com/yumpower) and, learn more about smart snacking made simple.  

_yumPower Smart Snacking Made Simple_

__For questions regarding monthly Small Steps to Be Well content, please contact Tony Mrnak, SEIU Employee Wellness Program Coordinator, Anthony.G.Mrnak@HealthPartners.com.  

Thank you to Beth Macias, Registered Dietitian, Licensed Dietitian, HealthPartners Health Promotion Department, for contributing to the content of this month’s Small Steps to Be Well communication.  

Please note: To qualify for your $25 Target gift card, please complete your health assessment along with self-report completion of your two months via the Health & Well-being page on HealthPartners.com. Your two months of Small Steps to Be Well activities does not need to be consecutive.