

# Spring Training

Allergies • Gardening • Financial Wellbeing

## Don't Let Allergies Get You Down

It's April and the outdoors are calling. Gardening, hiking, evening walks, spending time with family and friends... But it's hard to watch a sunset through watery eyes, and it's hard to talk to loved ones when you're sneezing your heart out—and unfortunately, it's also allergy season.

An “allergy” develops when a person's immune system overreacts to substances that generally do not affect other people. Almost anything can cause an allergy—latex, bee stings, specific medicines—and common types of outdoor allergens include tree, grass and weed pollens, as well as mold found in soil, plants and rotting wood.

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### Your April Activity: What's in Your Budget

Use a handy worksheet to analyze your income and spending. The results may surprise you!



## Allergies: True or False?

**Anyone can have an allergy.** True! More than 50 million Americans and about 2.5 million Canadians have allergies, which are the 6th leading cause of chronic illness in the U.S.

**Allergies can be prevented.** False, but you can work to prevent or manage the allergic reactions themselves. How?

- Avoid the situation. Stay indoors during peak hay fever season, avoid certain foods and keep your home free of dust mites.
- Check the pollen count before going outside. Pollen counts are a measure of how much pollen is in the air over a period of time. A higher count makes people with pollen allergies more likely to have a reaction.
- Take medication to reduce or eliminate the symptoms. This can range from a pill to allergy injection therapy. Make sure you consult your doctor before taking any medication!

**Allergies can change over time.**

True! Food allergies, for instance, are most prevalent in children and are frequently outgrown. On the other hand, adults can develop allergies later in life, or simply be exposed to something (a new medication, perhaps) that triggers an existing, unknown allergy.

**Desert air cures allergies.**

False. There are fewer pollen in the air in a desert environment, however, so allergic reactions may decrease.

**Allergies can result in death.**

True, but allergies do range of severity. Some are more bothersome (sneezing, coughing, runny nose and eyes) and others are more severe. Anaphylaxis, the most severe allergic reaction, can cause seizures, cardiac arrhythmia, shock and extreme difficulty breathing.

## Gardening for Health

Looking for a new hobby? Try gardening! A soothing and healthy outdoor activity, gardening offers a host of benefits:

### Gardening Benefits

**Sunlight provides vitamin D**, which lowers your risk for numerous diseases: osteoporosis, heart disease, multiple sclerosis and a variety of cancers, just to name a few.

**Gardening keeps you active.** New health guidelines recommend everyone makes time for at least 150 minutes of activity each week. Gardening counts toward that goal!

**Manual tasks cure your “attention fatigue.”** When you’re feeling busy or overwhelmed, a gardening break can improve your focus and accuracy. Because the manual tasks of gardening (digging, planting, weeding, etc.) require effort but not active attention, they can nudge you into a “zone,” which quiets anxious thoughts and brings a sense of calm.

**Grow nutritious food, eat nutritious food.** Plant and grow healthy foods you enjoy! This will help you continue gardening and motivate you to cook quality meals with your own home-grown ingredients.

**Make a few new friends while you’re at it.** Most towns and cities have a local gardening club — usually more than one. If you need help getting started, are looking to try something different or just want some friendly advice, join a club and have some fun with people who share a similar interest.



## The Other Kind of Green

Budgets are useful for every walk of financial life. Whether you're worried about your finances, don't know where you're at or simply looking to improve your situation, tracking and planning your spending will help you save more money.

This month's activity will help you develop your own budget. But in the meantime, here are a few tips and tricks for successful budgeting:

### Tip #1

#### **Set Aside Time to Track Your Spending**

Budgets are like New Years Resolutions —they're easy to create and easy to give up on. After you set a budget, don't keep up with it "later." Find time each day or week to track your spending. Checking your account often helps prevent spending spirals and you'll be quick to notice any irregular activity in your account.

### Tip #2

#### **Determine What's a Need and What's a Want**

You need food and shelter; you want cable TV. Remember, you can get a lot of free entertainment with a library card!

### Tip #3

#### **Write Down What You Didn't Buy**

Not buying something doesn't always feel the same as saving money. Write down items you want to purchase but don't (meals at restaurants, pizza delivery, clothes and entertainment), and track their cost. At the end of the month, ask yourself what you'd rather have: the money you saved, or a new t-shirt and a few quick meals you've already forgotten?

### Tip #4

#### **Save (at Least Some of) Your Surplus**

If you find yourself with remaining funds each month, don't spend it all frivolously. Make a plan for those funds! How much do you want to put in savings? Do you have any big expenses coming up? Is there a dream purchase you can work toward?



## April Recipe

### Down-home Chicken and Greens

*Get a big dose of vitamin C from this warm, filling and healthy chicken recipe.*

#### INGREDIENTS

- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- Non-stick olive oil cooking spray
- 2/3 cup reduced sodium chicken broth
- 6-8 cloves garlic, minced
- 3/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 lb. fresh greens (kale, Swiss chard, chicory, beet kohlrabi, collard, turnip)
- Balsamic vinegar (to taste)
- Red bell pepper slices (optional)

#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Season chicken with 1/4 teaspoon black pepper and the salt.
2. Coat an unheated, very large skillet with the cooking spray and preheat over medium heat.
3. Add chicken; cook until browned, turning to brown evenly.
4. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook for 10-12 minutes or until chicken is tender and no longer pink.
5. Remove the chicken from the skillet and cover it to preserve warmth.
6. Add broth, garlic, crushed red pepper, and the remaining 1/4 black pepper to the same skillet and bring to a boil.
7. Stir in greens and reduce heat; cook for 4-6 minutes or just until greens are tender, stirring occasionally.
8. Serve the chicken on top of the greens, drizzled lightly with balsamic vinegar; if desired, garnish with red bell pepper slices.

**Total Time (Cook and Prep):** 40 minutes  
**Servings:** 4



#### NUTRITION INFO:

*272 calories*  
*7 g fat*  
*73 mg cholesterol*  
*405 mg sodium*  
*27 g carbohydrates*  
*3 g fiber*  
*24 g protein*