

A HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL GUIDE

101 TIPS FOR TIP-TOP HEALTH



From the Physicians and Editors of
Harvard Health Publications



Get Motivated

1 Set a SMART goal. Experts say efforts to change are more successful if they are SMART—that is, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-based. So as you're deciding on a change, make sure it can pass the SMART test:

☑ **S Set a very specific goal.** I will add one fruit serving—that's half a cup, chopped—to my current daily diet.

☑ **M Find a way to measure progress.** I will log my efforts each day on my calendar.

☑ **A Make sure it's achievable.** Be sure you're physically capable of safely accomplishing your goal. If not, aim for a smaller goal.

☑ **R Be sure it's realistic.** It may seem counterintuitive, but choosing the change you most need to make—let's say, quitting smoking or losing weight—isn't as successful as choosing the change you're most confident you'll be able to make. Focus on sure bets, such as eating an additional serving of fruit every day rather than overhauling your diet at once: if you picture a 10-point scale of confidence in achieving your goal, where 1 equals no confidence and 10 equals 100% certainty, you should land in the 7-to-10 zone.

☑ **T Set time commitments.** Pick a date and time to start—Wednesday at breakfast, I'll add frozen blueberries to cereal—and regular check-in dates: I'll check my log every week and decide if I should make any changes in my routines to succeed. When setting commitments, outside deadlines can be really helpful. Signing up for a charity run or spring triathlon on a certain date prods you to get a training program under way.

Ease Stress

2 Frequently late? Apply time management principles. Consider your priorities (be sure to include time for yourself), then delegate or discard unnecessary tasks. Map out your day, segment by segment, setting aside time for different tasks, such as answering emails, writing memos, or returning phone calls. If you get caught up online, put away distractions—no texts, tweets, emails, or games—while you dive into tasks. If you are overly optimistic about travel time, consistently give yourself an extra 15 minutes or more to get to your destinations.

3 Often angry or irritated? Consider the weight of cognitive distortions. Are you magnifying a problem, leaping to conclusions, or applying emotional reasoning? Take the time to stop, breathe, reflect, and choose.

4 Unsure of your ability to do something? Don't try to go it alone. If the problem is work, talk to a co-worker or supportive boss. Ask a knowledgeable friend, check reliable online sources, or call the local library or an organization that can supply the information you need. Write down other ways that you might get the answers or skills you need. Turn to CDs, books, or classes, for example, if you need a little tutoring. This works equally well when you're learning relaxation response techniques, too.

5 Overextended? Clear the deck of at least one time-consuming household task. Hire a housecleaning service, shop for groceries online, convene a family meeting to consider who can take on certain jobs, or barter with or pay teens—your own or local hires—for house or yard work. Consider what is truly essential and important to you and what might take a backseat right now.

6 Not enough time for stress relief? Try mini-relaxations. Slow down to pay attention to every sensory aspect of a single task



or pleasure. Or commit to one week of rising a bit early or paring down your schedule sufficiently to allow time to relax.

7 Feeling unbearably tense? Try massage, a hot bath, or a mindful walk. Practically any exercise—a brisk walk, a quick run, a sprint up and down the stairs—will help, too. When done regularly, exercise wards off tension.

8 Frequently feel pessimistic? Remind yourself of the value of learned optimism: a more joyful life and, quite possibly, better health. Practice deflating cognitive distortions. Rent funny movies and read amusing books. Create a mental list of reasons you have to feel grateful. If the list seems too short, consider beefing up your social network and adding creative, productive, and leisure pursuits to your life.

9 Upset by conflicts with others? State your needs or distress directly, avoiding “you always” or “you never” zingers. Say, “I feel _____ when you _____.” “I would really appreciate it if you could _____.” “I need some help setting priorities. What needs to be done first and what should I tackle later?” If conflicts are a significant source of distress for you, consider a class on assertiveness training.

10 Worn out or burned out? Nurture yourself. Care for your body by eating good, healthy food and for your heart by seeking out others. Give thought to creative, productive, and leisure activities. Consider your priorities in life: is it worth feeling this way, or is another path open to you? If you want help, consider what kind would be best. Do you want a particular task at work to be taken off your hands? Do you want to do it at a later date? Do you need someone with particular expertise to assist you?

11 Feeling lonely? Connect with others. Even little connections—a brief conversation in line at the grocery store, an exchange about

local goings-on with a neighbor, a question for a colleague—can help melt the ice within you. It may embolden you, too, to seek more opportunities to connect. Be a volunteer. Attend religious or

community functions. Suggest coffee with an acquaintance. Call a friend or relative you miss. Take an interesting class.



Getting together with friends on a regular basis could keep you happier and healthier.

12 Take a mental break. Stepping away from the problem in front of you can help calm fear and reduce pain. They're equally helpful in thwarting stress before an important meeting, while stuck in traffic, or when faced with people or situations that annoy you.

13 Focus on breathing. Place your hand just beneath your navel so you can feel the gentle rise and fall of your belly as you breathe. Breathe in slowly. Pause for a count of three. Breathe out. Pause for a count of three. Continue to take a few slow, deep breaths. Or alternatively, while sitting comfortably, take a few slow deep breaths and silently repeat to yourself “I am” as you breathe in and “at peace” as you breathe out. Repeat slowly two or three times. Then feel your entire body relax into the support of the chair.

14 Count down slowly. Count down slowly from 10 to zero. With each number, take one complete breath, inhaling and exhaling. For example, breathe in deeply, saying “10” to yourself. Breathe out slowly. On your next breath, say “nine,” and so on. If you feel lightheaded, count down more slowly to space your breaths further apart. When you reach zero, you should feel more relaxed. If not, go through the exercise again.

15 Do a body scan. While sitting down, take a break from whatever you're doing and check your body for tension. Relax your facial muscles and allow your jaw to fall open slightly.

Let your shoulders drop. Let your arms fall to your sides. Allow your hands to loosen so that there are spaces between your fingers. Uncross your legs or ankles. Feel your thighs sink into your chair, letting your legs fall comfortably apart. Feel your shins and calves become heavier and your feet grow roots into the floor. Now breathe in slowly and breathe out slowly for a short while.

16 Give yourself a massage. A combination of strokes you can do yourself works well to relieve muscle tension. Try gentle chops with the edge of your hands or tapping with fingers or cupped palms. Put fingertip pressure on muscle knots. Knead across muscles, and try long, light, gliding strokes. You can apply these strokes to any part of the body that falls easily within your reach.

For a short session like this, try focusing on your neck and head. Start by kneading the muscles at the back of your neck and shoulders. Make a loose fist and drum swiftly up and down the sides and back of your neck.

Next, use your thumbs to work tiny circles around the base of your skull. Slowly massage the rest of your scalp with your fingertips. Then tap your fingers against your scalp, moving from the front to the back and then over the sides.

Now massage your face. Make a series of tiny circles with your thumbs or fingertips. Pay particular attention to your temples, forehead, and jaw muscles. Use your middle fingers to massage the bridge of your nose and work outward over your eyebrows to your temples.

Finally, close your eyes. Cup your hands loosely over your face and inhale and exhale easily for a short while.

17 Practice guided imagery. Start by sitting comfortably in a quiet room. Bring your awareness to your breath for a few minutes. Now picture yourself in a place that conjures up good

memories. What do you smell—the heavy scent of roses on a hot day, crisp fall air, the wholesome smell of baking bread? What do you hear? Drink in the colors and shapes that surround you. Focus on sensory pleasures: the swoosh of a gentle wind; soft, cool grass tickling your feet; the salty smell and rhythmic beat of the ocean.

18 Perform a meditation exercise. This exercise teaches basic mindfulness meditation.

- Sit on a straight-backed chair or cross-legged on the floor.
- Focus on an aspect of your breathing, such as the sensations of air flowing into your nostrils and out of your mouth, or your belly rising and falling as you inhale and exhale.
- Once you've narrowed your concentration in this way, begin to widen your focus. Become aware of sounds, sensations, and ideas.
- Embrace and consider each thought or sensation without judging it good or bad. If your mind starts to race, return your focus to your breathing. Then expand your awareness again.



19 Practice mindful eating. Food offers comfort and pleasure as well as nourishment. Try to take the time to savor each bite. To practice mindful eating, sidestep distractions like the background drone of TV or even a propped-up book. Start by setting a place for yourself and sitting down. Close your eyes for several seconds, and inhale and exhale deeply to help yourself focus. Bring your full attention to the moment. Now, look at your food. Breathe in its aromas before you taste it. Chew slowly so you can delight in textures and flavors. Try not to rush through one mouthful to get to the next, but concentrate instead on the mouthful you're actually eating at that moment. Bringing all your senses into play can sharpen your taste for fresher, healthier foods and help break the cycle of stress-related eating.

20 Strengthen your social bonds. Given the pleasures and benefits of social ties, why not grasp opportunities to expand your social circle and deepen the ties you've already made? Here are some ways to do just that:

- If you normally wait for others to reach out, pick up the phone and propose a date.
- Explore some of the many volunteer opportunities available, from wielding tools to help spruce up affordable housing to mentoring a child or businessperson.
- Embrace technology. Email, texting, tweeting, and, yes, even old-school telephones extend your reach around the world. Social media sites like Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn can help you connect with old friends or find new work opportunities.
- Find like-minded people through intriguing classes and organizations, or by harnessing social media engines that can link you to just about anyone interested in doing just about anything.
- Religion offers enormous support to many people around the world. If that's true for you, join in on services that suit your faith. If it's hard to get to religious services, ask fellow congregants to escort you. If a significant illness keeps you away, find out if your spiritual leader makes home visits.
- Remember that social support is a two-way street. Offer assistance to friends, family, and neighbors. Accept help or a hand reached out in friendship when it's offered to you.

- Consider adopting a pet. Research shows that pets can have beneficial effects on your physical and emotional health. Plus, taking a dog for walks encourages you to be active and links you with like-minded animal lovers.

Sidestep Pitfalls

What trips people up when they try to make healthy changes? And how can you learn to be nimble enough to sidestep pitfalls? These tips can help.

21 Always launch change with a plan. Map out the journey you're embarking upon. It's tempting to skip straight to the action, especially when you're feeling inspired to make a change. By winging it, though, you may ignore important issues, such as why you do—and don't—want to make this change. Make a commitment based on that knowledge, then plan a path of small steps that lead to your ultimate goal.

22 Set off at a reasonable pace. Rushing change rarely works. Few of us are designed to go from zero to 60. In the exercise world, you set yourself up for injuries; in the diet world, you get sick of nibbling only celery sticks and raw cabbage, and head for the chocolate cake. Let small, steady changes help you achieve what you hope to do.

23 Envision a happy outcome. Choose the carrot, not the stick. Rather than sternly telling yourself "I should be meditating every day" or blaming yourself for failing, try saying aloud "I feel calmer and happier when I meditate regularly." Reminding yourself why a change is worthwhile can help you over rough spots.

24 Expect lapses. Lapses are so normal, experts actually write this into the stages of change. Embrace lapses as part of the process, then brainstorm solutions to the challenges that derailed you. If necessary, whip out your plan to maneuver around lapses. And try, try again.



Doing things you used to enjoy at the beginning of your relationship may restore intimacy.

25 Live in the gray zone. Give up on all-or-nothing thinking. It's not helpful to live in a black-and-white world that dictates "I am good and am following my diet" or "I ate a fat-laden meal at lunch, so I'm doing a bad job on my diet and might as well eat anything I want." Even if you treated yourself to a double scoop of ice cream, then later enjoyed an unplanned bedtime snack, then forgot to pack a healthy lunch the next day, try not to let slipups snowball to the point where you throw up your hands and declare all of your efforts a complete loss. Realize that perfection isn't possible. Just take a deep breath, smile, and get back on track at the next opportunity.

26 Accept full responsibility for making the change. Personal responsibility is essential for lasting change. Don't expect someone else to act as food police, or push you out the door on days when you just don't feel like taking a walk. Again, remember why this change matters in your life.

Eat Better

How a food diary can help

A food diary can help you pinpoint problem-eating patterns. Do you mindlessly munch on junk food when you watch TV? You may not be aware how many unhealthy, high-calorie foods you are consuming at odd moments if you don't track your habits with a food diary. Seeing it all in black and white can help you take responsibility for changing your behavior.

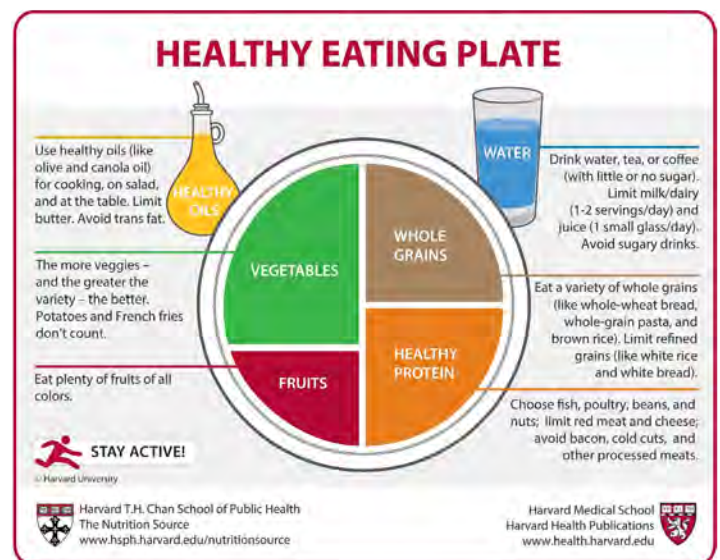
27 Don't wait to write. To get the most accurate impression of what and how much you consume, jot down what you've eaten as soon as you eat it. If you wait until the end of the day, it's likely you'll forget some of the things you ate earlier. Strive to write down every mouthful of food—even tastes, snacks, and sips—within 15 minutes of consuming it.

28 Do get the details. Record relevant important details, including the time of your meal or snack, where you ate, whether you

were doing something else while you were eating, and the type of food you consumed—whether, for example, it was a meal from scratch or fast food you picked up on the go. These added data will help reveal patterns.

29 Do record portion sizes. Record the specific amounts of each food you eat—for example, 1 cup of orange juice or 3 ounces of chicken. Measure portion sizes with standard measuring utensils and a kitchen scale. This not only helps you track your food consumption but will give you familiarity with standard serving sizes. You'll probably be surprised by what a 3-ounce serving size of chicken or a half-cup of pasta looks like on your plate. Over time, you can begin to "eyeball" servings more accurately and skip the actual measuring.

30 Let the Harvard Healthy Eating Plate be your guide. With the overload of diet advice out there, it can be hard to separate objective, scientific recommendations from those that are slanted by commercial or other agendas. That's why teams from Harvard Health Publications and the Harvard School of Public Health came up with a graphical approach to healthy eating. Harvard's Healthy Eating Plate clarifies and amplifies MyPlate from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, pointing you to the healthiest choices among the major food groups. As you'll see, half of every meal should consist of fruit and vegetables. Carbs are good, as long as they're the whole-grain variety. For protein, choose fish, fowl, beans, and nuts over red meat.



When you eat a diet packed with vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains, healthy fats, and lean protein, you not only consume the finest energy-boosting foods, but you also promote good health—an energy booster in itself.

31 Eat more unprocessed or minimally processed foods. By doing so, you'll naturally consume foods that have the amounts and combinations of fiber and nutrients that nature intended. Many factory-made foods, in contrast, are stripped of natural fiber and nutrients and filled with ingredients made to stimulate appetite and keep you eating more. Processed meats, in particular, are linked with heart disease and cancer. Unprocessed foods have no added sugar, fat, or salt. Most also have more fiber.

32 Go for novelty. You may feel as if good nutrition is boring because you only think of a few kinds of healthful foods. To get a broader range of disease-fighting nutrients, try new grains, vegetables, and fruits. Bulgur and quinoa are good grain alternatives. Novel kinds of beans, fruits, and vegetables abound. You can experiment with new recipes that rely less on meat and make use of different ingredients and herbs and spices for flavor sources.

33 Cover all your bases. Every day, strive to eat three servings of fruit, three to four servings of vegetables, some lean protein, some whole grains, healthy oils, some nonfat or low-fat dairy, and a serving of nuts or legumes. At each meal, look at your plate: about one-half should be fruits and vegetables, one-quarter lean proteins (fish, poultry, beans, or tofu), and one-quarter whole grains.

34 Stay hydrated. Because many foods contain water, most people get sufficient liquid each day without making a special effort. That said, it can be helpful throughout the day to drink water or another no-calorie liquid as an alternative to snacking or to wash down meals. Plus, as you increase your fiber content with whole-grain foods, water helps ferry it smoothly through your digestive tract and protects you from constipation. Drinking

4 to 6 cups of water a day—or water in combination with other low-calorie liquids—is a reasonable and healthful goal.

35 Keep protein portions small. For proteins like meat and chicken, 3 ounces for lunch and slightly more for dinner is a good goal. Keep in mind that 4 ounces of meat is about the size of a deck of cards. For beans, the serving size is about ¼ cup of cooked beans, which looks like the size of a golf ball.

36 Aim for at least two servings of fish each week.

Fish—especially salmon, bluefish, and mackerel—are good sources of omega-3 fats, which are good for your heart. You'll want to skip the large, predatory deep ocean fish (such as swordfish, shark, king mackerel, and bluefin tuna) because of their higher mercury content.



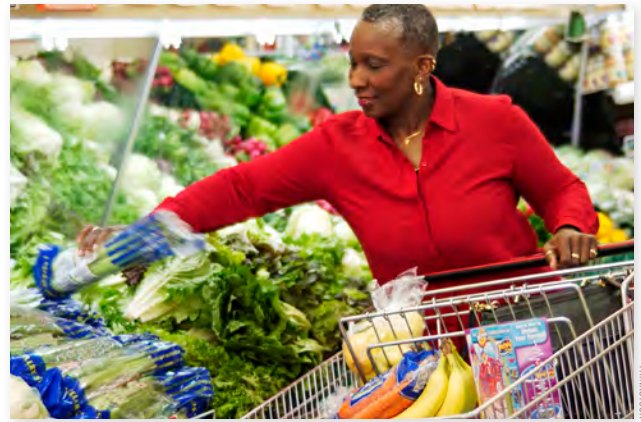
Eating two servings of salmon may lower your risk of heart disease.

37 Avoid impulse eating. If you snack, plan ahead for healthy snacks. Avoid sugary drinks and their empty calories.

38 Tips for healthy eating away from home. For some people, eating out—whether at a restaurant, a social function, or a friend's home—is always a challenge. Portions can be hefty and packed with calories and saturated fat. When you eat out, it may help to follow these simple guidelines:

- Ask how entrées are prepared, and avoid fried foods or dishes served in heavy sauces or gravies.
- Choose skinless chicken, fish, or lean meat that's broiled, poached, baked, or grilled.
- Get the server's advice in selecting healthy, low-fat dishes. Restaurants are used to dealing with special diets.

- Don't feel obliged to clean your plate. Eat a reasonable portion, and take the remainder home.
- Choose steamed vegetables and salads to accompany your meals. Request low-calorie dressings and toppings, and if they're not available, ask for all dressings, butter, and sauces to be served on the side so you can use them sparingly.
- If you take insulin and know your meal will be delayed, time your injection appropriately. You may need to eat a roll or piece of fruit to tide you over.
- If you crave a dessert, share one.



You'll find most **healthful, least-processed food options** around the perimeter of the grocery store.

Food Shopping Smarts

There's a list of healthful foods, so you know what to look for in the market, but here are some other tips for helping ensure you fill your cart with them:

39 Start at the perimeter of the grocery store. That's where you'll find the most healthful, freshest, least-processed options. Try to shop the produce, fish, lean meat, low-fat dairy, and bread sections of the store as much as possible to avoid the temptations lurking in the aisles containing snack cakes, chips, sodas, and other packaged and processed foods. Concentrate on filling your basket with healthful fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean protein. After you've shopped the outer boundary of the store, use your list to navigate the rest of the aisles. Look above and below the center shelves for the most healthful selections.

40 Don't shop on an empty stomach. We all know what happens when you go to the grocery store when your stomach is rumbling! Everything looks good, especially those quick, easy-to-eat snacks. If you're hungry, have a healthful snack or meal before shopping. You'll be less tempted to fill your cart with impulse items.

41 Get organized. Make a list of foods you need. Do your menu planning for a

week at a time, and do your grocery shopping on the same day of each week. A simple routine eliminates the need for midweek trips to the store, which may tempt you to buy food that's not on your list.

42 Become a comparison shopper. Decide what's most important to you when selecting foods, whether it's sodium, fiber, sugar, calories, or healthful fat, and then home in on that nutrient by reading labels. You probably won't find the perfect food, but you will surely make better decisions by comparing labels. If you're trying to lose weight, pay particular attention to calories and the serving size listed. Ignore the calories from total fat, though. A calorie is a calorie. (But do try to avoid foods whose fat comes mostly from trans fats or saturated fat.)

43 Becoming label-savvy. Most of the truly healthful foods like fruits and vegetables don't have nutrition labels on them. Packaged foods, on the other hand, do, and reading the label is your best guide to choosing the most healthful options. How can you tell whether one breakfast cereal, for example, is better than another? Compare them by checking the Nutrition Facts panel.

44 Foods and nutrients to increase. Try to meet the following recommendations as part of a healthy eating pattern while staying within your calorie needs.

- Increase vegetable and fruit intake.

- Eat a variety of vegetables, especially dark green, red, and orange vegetables, and beans and peas.
- Consume at least half of all grains as whole grains. Increase whole-grain intake by replacing refined grains with whole grains.
- Increase intake of fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, or fortified soy beverages.
- Choose a variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Increase the amount and variety of seafood by choosing seafood in place of some meat and poultry.
- Use oils to replace solid fats where possible.
- Choose foods that provide more potassium, dietary fiber, and calcium, which are nutrients Americans may not get enough of. These foods include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and milk and milk products.

45 Foods and food components to reduce.

There's a growing realization that excess sodium can harm health. Reduce daily sodium intake to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) or even further to 1,500 mg among people who are age 51 and older and those of any age who are African American or have hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes, or chronic kidney disease. The 1,500 mg recommendation applies to about half of the U.S. population, including children and the majority of adults.

- Consume less than 10% of calories from saturated fatty acids (mainly from animal fat) by replacing them with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids (mainly from vegetable oils).
- Consume less than 300 mg per day of dietary cholesterol (mainly found in animal-based foods).



- Keep trans fat consumption as low as possible by limiting foods that contain synthetic sources of trans fats, such as partially hydrogenated oils, and by limiting other solid fats.
- Reduce the intake of calories from solid fats (mainly animal fat) and added sugars.
 - Limit the consumption of foods that contain refined grains (such as white flour and white rice), especially refined-grain foods that contain solid fats, added sugars, and sodium.

46 Sensible Breakfasts.

Morning routines are hard to break. If your idea of breakfast is grabbing a coffee and a doughnut on your way to work, finding time to eat healthfully in the morning may seem daunting. With a little

planning, however, it's easier than you think. Here are some healthful breakfast suggestions, which follow the basic formula of equal parts whole grains + lean protein + fruit:

- whole-grain cereal (at least 5 g of fiber and less than 5 g sugar) + milk (skim or 1% milk or soymilk) + a small banana or ½ cup berries
- ½ cup cooked oatmeal with cinnamon + 2 tablespoons nuts + ½ cup berries
- a slice of 100% whole-grain bread + 1 tablespoon natural peanut butter + a small banana
- breakfast sandwich: 100% whole-wheat English muffin or whole-grain mini bagel + an egg or a slice of low-fat cheese + an orange
- breakfast burrito: 1 small whole-wheat tortilla + a scrambled egg or a slice of low-fat cheese and salsa + sliced mango
- 2 slices of whole-grain toast or 1 whole-grain English muffin + ½ cup low-fat cottage cheese + ¾ cup pineapple
- toast + milk + ½ cup berries

47 What's for lunch? Once you've set your breakfast, you'll need to decide what to eat for lunch. Need help getting started? Here are some lunch ideas to rotate through:

- 1 serving whole-grain crackers, baby carrots, ½ cup hummus, and an orange
- 1 whole-wheat tortilla, topped with ½ cup low-sodium canned black or pinto beans, 1 ounce low-fat shredded cheese, and 1 tablespoon salsa, heated in the microwave and rolled up, with some chopped lettuce and tomatoes
- 2 slices whole-grain bread with ½ recipe tuna salad with curry and apples plus plenty of tomatoes and romaine lettuce
- California turkey wrap (whole-wheat tortilla, 4 ounces turkey, hummus, sprouts), plus a fresh fruit cup
- 1 whole-grain roll, 1 cup bean and lentil soup, grape tomatoes, and a peach



Tomatoes and olive oil may help fight inflammation.

- peanut butter sandwich made with 2 tablespoons peanut butter on whole-grain bread with a side of carrot sticks, plus a small banana
- chicken Caesar wrap (whole-wheat tortilla, chicken, and romaine lettuce with 1 tablespoon Caesar dressing), plus an orange
- 1 cup chili made with lots of vegetables and ground turkey
- 1 cup whole-wheat pasta salad made with 4 ounces chicken or tuna and vegetables

- 1 cup low-fat or nonfat plain Greek yogurt with berries or fresh fruit and 2 tablespoons nuts
- vegetable quesadilla made with 1 whole-wheat tortilla, 2 ounces part-skim mozzarella, and vegetables
- veggie burger with lettuce and tomato on a whole-wheat bun, with a small green salad
- hard-boiled egg with a green salad and ½ pear
- whole-grain crackers or bread with ¼ cup hummus and 2 ounces low-fat cheese and sliced vegetables on top

48 Salad bar survival. A trip to the salad bar is a convenient way to load up your lunch with vegetables. But while salads sound healthy, they can quickly add hefty doses of calories and artery-clogging saturated fat. Regular salad dressings, cheeses, mayonnaise-based salads (such as tuna, chicken, and egg salads), and desserts (such as rice pudding and ambrosia) drive up calorie counts. The good news? Many salad bars have so much variety now that it's easy to work around these potential diet pitfalls without feeling deprived.

Take these steps to raise your next visit to the salad bar to a more healthful level.

- **Build a vegetable base.** Most salad bars have two sizes of tins—large and small. Go for the large tin at lunch and load it up with leafy greens and raw or grilled vegetables. By getting the large-size salad, you'll eat more produce when the pickings are plentiful.
- **Add some protein.** To your veggie base, add a couple spoonfuls of garbanzo and kidney beans, or three-bean salad—typical salad bar offerings. Beans are an excellent source of disease-fighting fiber—and they're filling! Add some grilled chicken, low-fat cottage cheese, or chopped eggs to complete the picture of a fulfilling lunch.



- **Add a small amount of healthy fat.** Sprinkle on the nuts and seeds. They are high in heart-healthy unsaturated fat and healthy protein, give you a feeling of fullness, and help food stay in your stomach longer.
- **Avoid large cheese chunks or use them only sparingly.** Cheese packs a calorie and saturated fat wallop. A light sprinkle of a strongly flavored cheese like feta or Parmesan can deliver flavor with fewer calories. Feta, especially, is so flavorful that you can add less of it.
- **Creamy salad dressings have the most saturated fat, so oil-based dressings are a better option.** To limit calories, use dressing sparingly or dilute it with a little vinegar, or opt for a light or nonfat dressing. If you choose a high-fat dressing, skip nuts, seeds, or cheese on your salad.
- **Bypass the bacon bits.** They're high in fat, they don't offer much nutritionally, and they're processed—the worst kind of meat.
- **Finish with whole grains and fruit.** Look for whole grains like barley or bulgur wheat to sprinkle on top. Or add a few slices of fruit.
- **Many salad bars also offer rice pudding, ambrosia salad, and other treats.** Even though they're available, don't kid yourself. They're dessert, not salads. If you're trying to control calories, choose fresh fruit instead.



Diets that emphasize vegetables, whole grains, and legumes may help slow or even reverse heart disease.

lunch, now's your chance; why not load up on fruits and vegetables to meet your produce quota? Dinner is the time to make up for any lack of nutrients earlier in the day. Plus, piling on the produce means there's less room in your dinner for unhealthy options. Here are some sneaky ways to work more produce into dinner.

- **Roast vegetables along with whatever entrée is in the oven.** Roasting is a great way to let the deep, rich flavors of vegetables shine through

because their starches start to convert to sugar at around 375° F, releasing a deep, nutty sweetness. To roast, just bake cut-up vegetables at 375° F for 20 to 25 minutes or until they're lightly browned. Any vegetable is a roasting candidate—from mushrooms, onions, eggplant, and zucchini to tomatoes, broccoli, and carrots—so don't limit yourself.

- **Poach veggies in low-sodium chicken broth and white wine.**

Add garlic, basil, or tarragon for a flavor bonus. To poach, boil enough liquid to cover the vegetables. When it boils, add

the vegetables. Turn down the heat to just below boiling and cook the vegetables for about five to seven minutes, until they're brightly colored and tender-crisp.

- **Smuggle fresh cut vegetables into main dishes.** Try adding mushrooms, peppers, zucchini, onions, or carrots into pasta sauce, casseroles, soup, stews, scrambled eggs, and chili. And pureed cooked vegetables can easily be used as sauces, soups, spreads, and toppings.

- **Make it your goal to have a salad with dinner most days.** Stock your salad with dark green leafy lettuce and toss in petite peas, tomatoes, onions, celery, carrots, and peppers. Bonus: in addition to the nutrient bonanza you'll get, studies show that starting meals with a low-calorie salad can help you consume fewer calories at the meal, as long as the salad is no more than 100 calories.

49 **What should you snack on?** Try keeping a bunch of grapes or a tangerine handy. This way, you'll see it before reaching for the calorie-dense chips or cookies. Have small containers of nonfat plain yogurt or applesauce with no added sugar within easy reach.

50 **Sneaky ways to get in more fruits and vegetables.** Dinner is typically the largest meal of the day, and it's also your last chance to strike a healthful balance of foods for the day. If you didn't eat many or any fruits and vegetables at

- **Choose fruit—fresh or frozen, stewed or baked—for dessert.** It all counts toward your daily produce quota. Dried fruits are healthy but high in calories, so eat them sparingly.

51 **Smart, easy dinners.** Here are some quick dinner ideas to try:

- Spread low-fat refried beans on a whole-wheat tortilla, add thawed shrimp or leftover chicken, sprinkle with chopped green peppers, add a spoonful of salsa, roll up, and bake for 15 minutes.
- Slice a tofu block into large slices (about three slices per block) and place in a baking pan; add chopped scallions, garlic, and a little low-sodium soy sauce. Meanwhile, toss vegetables such as strips of red pepper in olive oil. Roast tofu and vegetables in the oven for 20 minutes at 375° F. Serve with brown rice or whole-wheat couscous.
- Add ½ can of black, white, or garbanzo beans (buy low sodium or rinse regular canned beans), or salmon chunks to a tossed salad. Serve it with a dressing of oil and balsamic vinegar plus a hearty chunk of whole-wheat bread and olive oil.
- Whip together a two-egg omelet (two eggs plus a teaspoon of water) and fill with any leftover vegetables you have around, such as steamed broccoli from last night's dinner and some chopped tomatoes. Season with pepper. Or sprinkle on your favorite herb combination, like Herbes de Provence or bouquet garni.



Coffee and camaraderie are two easy and enjoyable ways to boost your health.

can reduce your perception of fatigue because your brain, which has very few energy reserves of its own, needs a steady supply of nutrients. Some people begin feeling sluggish, headachy, or light-headed after just a few hours without food. But it doesn't take much to feed your brain—a piece of fruit or a few nuts is adequate.

53 Avoid crash diets. If you need to lose weight, do so gradually, without skimping on essential nutrients or starving yourself of the calories you need for energy. Poor nutrition and inadequate calorie intake can cause fatigue. And remember to eat regularly throughout the day, even when you're dieting. Your brain needs a steady supply of glucose from food. When the brain's glucose levels are low, some people feel hungry, fatigued, or both, which can then trigger a bout of overeating.

54 Use caffeine to your advantage. Caffeine can increase or decrease your energy level, depending on when and how much of it you consume.

Caffeine does help increase alertness for an hour or two after consumption, so having a cup of coffee before going to a meeting or starting on a project can help sharpen your mind. But it can also cause insomnia, especially when consumed in large amounts or after 2 p.m. (or even noon, if you're caffeine-sensitive).

55 Limit alcohol. If you're going to drink, do so in moderation at a time when you don't mind having your energy wind down.

The sedative effect of alcohol is especially strong at midday, when you normally feel a bit lethargic anyway, so one of the best hedges against the midafternoon slump is to avoid alcohol at lunch. Similarly, avoid the five o'clock cocktail if you want to have energy in the evening to pursue a hobby, stay awake through a movie, spend time with your family, or finish that report for work the next day.

Getting Your Energy Back

52 Eat small, frequent meals ... but don't overeat. Where energy is the issue, it's better to eat small meals and snacks every few hours than three large meals a day. This approach

- That said, many experts advise against having a nightcap just before going to bed. Though alcohol initially relaxes you and causes drowsiness, several hours later it begins to stimulate the brain—particularly the sleep/wake centers.
- If you do choose to drink alcohol, a glass with dinner is a reasonable choice. And stay within the limits of moderation: no more than two drinks a day for men and one for women.

56 Drink water. What’s the only nutrient that has been shown to enhance performance for most activities? It’s not some pricey sports drink. It’s water. If your body is short on fluids, one of the first signs is a feeling of fatigue.

How much water do you need? The Institute of Medicine recommends that women consume a total of about 91 ounces of fluids a day (about 11.5 cups) and men about 125 ounces (16 cups). These fluids can come from a combination of drinks (such as water, milk, coffee, tea, or soda) and solid foods that contain water (such as fruits and vegetables), so you don’t actually need to drink 16 cups of fluid a day: five to eight is good enough.

Exercise Regularly

Pay attention to how much activity you’re getting—even climbing the stairs

Exercise is the energy booster that is so counterintuitive, most people don’t even think of it. But it’s a proven way to increase your vim and vigor. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per week (for example, half an hour five days a week) or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, or a mix of the two. The guidelines also advise engaging in two to three strength training sessions per week. Allow at least 48 hours between these muscle-building workouts to give your body time to recover. Whether you are doing aerobic exercise or strength training, start each



QUICK TIP | How fast is brisk?

A brisk walk is generally 3 to 4 miles per hour. But since humans don’t come equipped with built-in speedometers, you need some way to measure your walking speed. One way is to count your steps per minute. Provided you’re walking on level ground, you can use the following as general guidance to gauge your pace:

- ▶ Slow = 80 steps per minute
- ▶ Moderate to brisk = 100 steps per minute
- ▶ Fast = 120 steps per minute
- ▶ Race walking = More than 120 steps per minute

exercise session with a five- to 10-minute warm-up. Stretching is also essential at the end of a session to work out muscle kinks and improve range of motion and balance.

57 Aerobic activity. The most convenient and affordable form of aerobic activity is walking. Studies have shown that brisk walking for at least half an hour, five times a week, has nearly the same health benefits as more vigorous exercise. People who take brisk walks have a lower risk for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, colon cancer, osteoporosis, and perhaps other diseases. Even mental health problems are less frequent in regular walkers. Although it hasn’t been studied, many regular walkers also believe that this exercise makes them more energetic.

58 Strength training. Resistance exercise, such as weight lifting, is especially beneficial for people in their 60s and older because it builds muscle mass. Weight lifting doesn’t have to involve heavy barbells. Lifting light hand weights can provide adequate resistance, as can using strength training machines at the gym.

- Be sure to exercise all of the major muscle groups of the legs, trunk, arms, and shoulders.

- Choose weights as light as 2 pounds for your first few strength training sessions, so you can concentrate on good form—you want to isolate muscles by trying to move only those that you’re exercising. After that, add enough weight so that the maximum number of repetitions you can do per set is about eight to 12. The last few repetitions in each set should require a good deal of effort. Aim for two to three sets per exercise, breathing out as you lift and breathing in as you lower the weight. Rest between sets for a minute to reap the best strength gains.

59 Yoga and tai chi. Yoga and tai chi can enhance energy, too, because they are proven stress busters with substantial benefits for the mind. A 2013 study published in the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* found that doing 20 minutes of yoga postures led to better cognitive functioning—specifically, an improved ability to focus and take in and use new information—than 20 minutes of aerobic exercise.

60 Rhythmic, repetitive activities. Rhythmic exercises, such as walking, jogging, swimming, or bicycling, can be calming and relaxing. Once you get under way, become aware of how your breathing complements the activity. Breathe rhythmically, repeating a focus word, phrase, or prayer you’ve chosen. Remember to adopt a passive attitude. When disruptive thoughts intrude, gently turn your mind away from them and focus on moving and breathing.

61 Go outside. Anyone who enjoys the outdoors, whether for gardening, hiking, or taking walks along the beach, knows that getting outside can help restore body and soul. There aren’t any scientific studies documenting that communing with nature can actually fight fatigue, but scientists are beginning to explore this theory.



Some research suggests that being in nature can have therapeutic and restorative effects. This supports a theory developed by Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson known as “biophilia,” which holds that humans have an innate connection to the natural world and to other living things, and that contact with nature can benefit your health.

62 Six tips for safe stretches. Everyone—with medical conditions or not—should use these tips to help protect muscles and joints while ensuring flexibility gains.

- **Warm up first.** Much like taffy, muscles stretch more easily when warm. You can begin by marching in place with arms swinging for five minutes or dancing to a few songs. Moist heat packs or a warm shower are effective first steps, too.
- **Feel no pain.** Stretch only to the point of mild tension, never to the point of pain. If a stretch hurts, stop immediately! Reset your position carefully after checking the instructions, then try again.
- **Pay attention to posture and good form.** Posture counts whether you’re sitting, standing, or moving. Good form translates to better gains in flexibility and less likelihood of injury when stretching tight muscles.
 - **Focus on the muscle being stretched.** You’ll notice that one side of your body often is tighter than the other. Work on balancing this over time.
 - **Breathe comfortably while stretching, or use yoga breathing.**
 - **Practice often.** You’ll make the best gains if you stretch frequently—daily, or on as many days of the week as possible. At the very least, aim to do stretches two or three times a week.

Enhance Mobility and Independence

Balance exercises. Muscles and bones need to be challenged or else they deteriorate. The same is true of balance. Fortunately, balance and coordination can be maintained with practice and even improve over time.

Many types of physical activity challenge the balance system. If you do yoga, dance, or tai chi, you're giving your balance system a workout by putting your body in challenging positions. However, if most of your exercise is using a stationary bike or weight machines, or simply walking on a path, you may be missing out on a chance to build up your balance abilities along with your muscles and cardiovascular fitness.

63 Heel-to-toe walk. Position your heel just in front of the toes of the opposite foot as you walk forward for eight to 12 steps. Heel and toes should actually touch each time you take a step. If necessary, steady yourself by putting one hand on a counter as you walk at first, and then work toward doing this without support. Repeat two to four times.

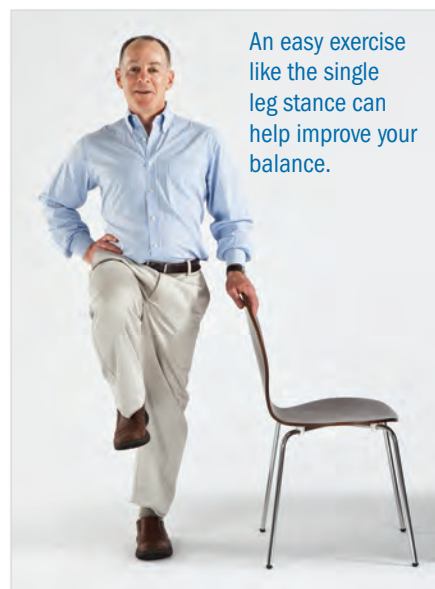
64 Single leg stance. Stand on one foot for up to 30 seconds. Put your foot down and repeat on the opposite side. Perform two to four times on each leg. If this is too hard, steady yourself by holding on to the back of a chair at first, then work toward doing this without support. For an added challenge, you can add ankle weights.

65 Reducing the risk of falls. To what extent can falls be prevented? This topic has been an important target of research. In brief, many direct interventions to prevent falls seem to be helpful. These include exercises to improve muscle strength, balance, and gait; physical therapy; and taking 800 IU of vitamin D a day. The American Geriatrics Society also recommends programs that

help people assess and modify the safety of their homes and improve their ability to perform daily tasks safely.

The first step toward keeping yourself or a loved one from falling is to know when there's a problem. Look for these warning signs:

- difficulty climbing stairs without leaning heavily on a rail
- fatigue when performing basic tasks like housework
- leaning on furniture to cross a room
- hesitancy walking and negotiating steps and uneven surfaces
- requiring more assistance getting in and out of chairs, a car, or a shower or bath



- changes in gait—excessive slowness, favoring one side over another, shuffling
- fear of falling (paradoxically, people who are afraid of falls become increasingly hesitant and sedentary, which only weakens their bodies and puts them at further risk)
- avoiding bathing, changing clothes, or other basic tasks, because of fear of falls or injuries.

If you notice any of these, a conversation with a doctor is in order. A physical therapist or other clinician can create a program to reduce your fall risk.

66 Fall proof your home. The following tips will help you to safely navigate inside and outside your home:

✓ Throughout the home:

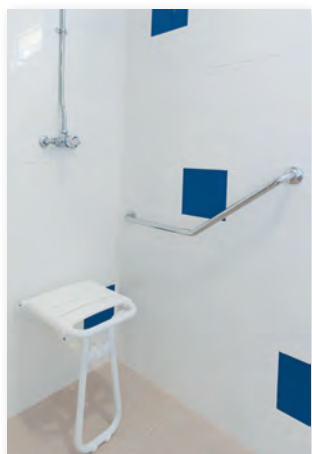
- Use flooring that is smooth, nonglare, and slip-resistant. A slippery floor is a fall waiting to happen. Also, carpets and rugs should have a pile that's less than half an inch deep, and rugs

should have nonskid pads or backings to keep them from sliding or folding over. Keep floors clear of clutter that someone could trip on.

- Keep hallways well lit, and put night lights in bedrooms, bathrooms, and connecting hallways.
- Keep electrical cords for floor lamps, TVs, phones, and other devices tucked away from where you walk or against the walls.
- Make sure stairs have a handrail that runs the full length of the stairs and just past them, and a light switch at the top and bottom. For extra safety, install handrails on both sides of staircases.
- Install a high-tech security system that can directly contact police, fire, and emergency medical services.

✓ Bathroom:

- Add grab bars (which are sturdier than towel bars) to your shower or bath.
- Consider adding a bathing stool or shower seat, along with a handheld shower head attached to a hose. These make it easier to bathe sitting down.
- In the tub, install a nonslip surface, or add a nonslip mat. On the floor, consider using textured tiles, which tend to be less slippery when wet.
- A contrasting border on the edge of the bathroom countertop can make it easier to see.



A simple handrail in the shower prevents injuries.

✓ Kitchen:

- Rearrange cabinets and drawers so you can reach food, dishes, pots, and utensils without straining. Store the heaviest items in places

where you don't have to bend down or reach high.

- Keep a sturdy step stool on hand if you have high cabinets that are difficult to reach.
- Install single-lever faucets, which are easier to operate, and counters with rounded corners.

✓ House exterior:

- For general safety, install lighting at doorways, porches, and walkways. Motion detector lights are best for lighting the way when you come home at night.
- If you live in an area that gets snow, keep supplies like shovels and melting salt handy, and consider paying for a service to clear walkways of snow and ice if it's difficult for you.
- Keep walkways in good repair, with an even surface. Uneven pavement is easy to trip on.

Improve Sleep and Sex

67 **Tips for a better night's sleep.** For many people with chronic sleep issues, simple lifestyle changes can help. These good habits are known as “sleep hygiene,” because they represent scientific thinking about maintaining healthy sleep patterns.

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends.
- Use the bed only for sleeping or sex.
- Forgo naps, especially close to bedtime.
- Limit the time you spend in bed. Turn in only



when you're sleepy. If you don't fall asleep within 15 minutes or if you wake up and can't fall back to sleep within that amount of time, get out of bed and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again.

- Avoid caffeine-containing beverages (coffee, many teas, chocolate, and cola drinks) after 2 p.m., or noon if you're caffeine-sensitive.
- Avoid eating foods that contribute to heartburn.
- Don't drink alcohol for at least two hours before bedtime.
- Limit fluids before bedtime to minimize nighttime trips to the bathroom.
- Exercise regularly (but not within two hours of bedtime).
- Keep the bedroom cool, dark, and as quiet as possible.

68 Consider cognitive behavioral therapy.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) teaches people new ways of thinking about and then doing things. CBT has proved helpful in treating addictions, phobias, and anxiety—as well as insomnia. CBT for insomnia aims to change the negative thoughts and beliefs about sleep into positive ones. People with insomnia tend to become preoccupied with sleep and apprehensive about the consequences of poor sleep. This worry makes relaxing and falling asleep nearly impossible. The basic tenets of this therapy include setting realistic goals and learning to let go of inaccurate thoughts that can interfere with sleep.

69 Six all-natural sex tips.

Looking for natural ways to sidestep or help reverse erectile dysfunction? Skip the supplements and try these tips for a better sex life and general health. Improved mood and quality of life are added bonuses.

- **Start walking.** Just 30 minutes of walking a day was linked with



Lifestyle changes, such as exercising and eating a healthy diet, can help boost sexual activity without medication.

a 41% drop in risk for erectile dysfunction, according to one Harvard study, while a separate trial reported that moderate exercise can help restore sexual performance in obese middle-aged men with erectile dysfunction.

- **Eat right.** Go bullish on fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and fish, while downplaying red and processed meat and refined grains, a diet that lessened the likelihood of erectile dysfunction in the Massachusetts Male Aging Study.
- **Check your vascular health.** Signs that put you on the road to poor vascular health include soaring levels of blood pressure, blood sugar, LDL (bad) cholesterol, and triglycerides; low levels of HDL (good) cholesterol; and a widening waist. Check with your clinician to find out whether your vascular system—and thus your heart, brain, and penis—is in good shape or needs a tune-up through lifestyle changes and, if necessary, medications.
- **Measure up.** A trim waistline is one good defense—a man with a 42-inch waist is 50% more likely to have erectile dysfunction than one with a 32-inch waist.
- **Slim down.** Tip the scales at a healthy weight. Obesity raises risks for vascular disease and diabetes, two major causes of erectile dysfunction. And excess fat tinkers with several hormones that may feed into the problem, too.

70 Tips for making sex more comfortable.

If sex is uncomfortable, here are some things you can do to reduce your discomfort and enhance your pleasure.

- Relax and practice Kegel exercises to make sure you aren't tightening up.
- If you are postmenopausal, consider using low-dose vaginal estrogen therapy.
- Use plenty of lubricant with both sexual stimulation and intercourse and consider regular use of long-acting vaginal moisturizers.

- Use a topical anesthetic gel with a 5% concentration of the local anesthetic lidocaine to ease burning during intercourse. You can get this with a prescription from your health care provider.
- Use lubricated, graduated vaginal dilators regularly, if your vagina tightens involuntarily when intercourse is attempted (vaginismus), or if your vagina feels like it has become short or narrow over time.

... Ahem, Matters of Plumbing

71 Know the foods and drugs that can cause heartburn. Diet can contribute to lower esophageal sphincter (LES) dysfunction. For example, alcohol can loosen the LES (and irritate the esophageal lining), as can coffee and other caffeine-containing products. Coffee, tea, cocoa, and cola drinks are all powerful stimulants of gastric acid production. Mints and chocolate, often served to cap off a meal to aid in digestion, can actually make things worse. Both relax the LES and can induce heartburn, as can fried and fatty foods. If you notice that a particular food leads to episodes of heartburn, by all means, stay away from it.

72 Self-help for heartburn. Modifying diet and lifestyle remains the foundation for treating the symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). In particular, for mild GERD symptoms or for GERD symptoms that are not relieved by acid-reducing medications like proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), lifestyle changes are the primary treatment. Here are some prevention tips for people troubled by symptoms.

- **Eat smaller meals.** A large meal remains in the stomach for several hours, increasing the chances for GERD. Therefore, anyone who suffers from this problem should distribute his or her daily food intake over three, four, or five smaller meals.
- **Relax when you eat.** Stress increases the production of stomach acid, so make meals

a pleasant, relaxing experience. Sit down. Eat slowly. Chew completely. Play soothing music.

- **Relax between meals.** Relaxation therapies such as deep breathing, meditation, massage, tai chi, or yoga may help prevent and relieve heartburn.
- **Remain upright after eating.** You should maintain postures that reduce the risk for reflux for at least three hours after eating. For example, don't bend over or strain to lift heavy objects.
- **Avoid eating within three hours of going to bed.** Do not eat bedtime snacks.
- **Lose weight.** Excess pounds increase pressure on the stomach and can push acid into the esophagus.
- **Loosen up.** Avoid tight belts, waistbands, and other clothing that puts pressure on your stomach.
- **Stop smoking.** Nicotine stimulates stomach acid and impairs LES function.
- **Chew gum.** It can increase saliva production, soothing the esophagus and washing acid back down to the stomach.
- **Consult your doctor about your medications.** Drugs that can predispose you to reflux include aspirin and other NSAIDs, oral contraceptives, hormone replacement therapy, narcotics, certain antidepressants, and some asthma medications.
- **Raise your bed's head at night.** If you're bothered by nighttime heartburn, elevate the head of your bed by placing a wedge (available in medical supply stores) under your upper body. But don't elevate your head with extra pillows. That makes reflux worse by bending you at the waist and compressing your stomach.
- **Exercise wisely.** Wait at least two hours after a meal before engaging in vigorous physical activity, giving your stomach time to empty.

73 Consider herbal alternatives for heartburn. Some people have found herbs and other natural remedies to be helpful in the treatment of heartburn symptoms.

- **Chamomile.** A cup of chamomile tea may have a soothing effect on the digestive tract. People with ragweed allergy should avoid chamomile.
- **Ginger.** The root of the ginger plant is another well-known herbal digestive aid and has been a folk remedy for heartburn for centuries.
- **Licorice.** This remedy has proved effective in several studies. Licorice is said to increase the mucous coating of the esophageal lining, helping it resist the irritating effects of stomach acid. Deglycyrrhizinated licorice, or DGL, is available in pill or liquid form. It is considered safe to take indefinitely.
- **Other natural remedies.** A variety of other remedies have been used over the centuries, but not enough scientific studies have been done to confirm their effectiveness. Catnip, fennel, marshmallow root, and papaya tea have all been said to aid in digestion and act as a buffer to stop heartburn. Some people eat fresh papaya as a digestive aid. Others swear by raw potato juice, three times a day. However, these remedies are not reviewed for safety or effectiveness by the FDA.



severe incontinence and 95% of people with occasional accidents try to cope on their own and therefore miss getting the help that is available. Your primary care physician is likely to be a good place to start. You can help by being prepared to answer detailed questions:

- When did the incontinence start?
- Is it getting worse over time? Does anything seem to make it better or worse?
- How often do you have an accident? What happens? Do you lose a large or small amount of stool? Do you have any warning? Does anything seem to bring it on (such as physical activity, stress, time in menstrual cycle, particular foods)?
- When your rectum is full, can you distinguish whether it is solid, liquid, or gas? Do you sometimes think you are passing gas, only to be surprised that stool has come out?
- When you feel the need to have a bowel movement, how long can you wait? After you defecate, do you feel like there is stool left inside?
- What are your regular bowel habits? Do you often have diarrhea or constipation? Do you often have cramps or see blood in your stool?

74 Ask your doctor about bladder training.

You might be teaching your bladder some bad habits—habits that can gradually result in incontinence or frequent bathroom breaks. Luckily, old bladders can learn new tricks. Bladder training, a program of urinating on a schedule, enables you to gradually increase the amount of urine you can comfortably hold. Bladder training is a mainstay of treatment for urinary frequency and overactive bladder in both women and men, alone or in conjunction with medications or other techniques. It can also help prevent or lessen symptoms of overactive bladder that may emerge after surgery for stress incontinence.

75 ...and fecal incontinence. A surprising number of people with fecal incontinence don't seek medical attention. Half of those with

76 Eliminate foods that may cause diarrhea.

Try eliminating or reducing the foods listed below, doing so one at a time for several days each, to determine whether one of them might be causing diarrhea.

- alcohol
- caffeine
- cured or smoked meats
- dairy products
- fatty and greasy foods
- fruits
- spicy foods
- sweeteners (sorbitol, xylitol, mannitol, fructose, found in many diet drinks, fruit drinks, sugarless gum, and candies)

Matters of the Heart

77 **Keep your cholesterol in check.** About 14% of Americans have cholesterol levels that are greater than 240 mg/dL—higher than is healthy for a person’s heart. But if you take steps to reduce high cholesterol, you can bring down your chances of having a heart attack. For every 10% drop in your cholesterol level, your heart attack risk falls by 20% to 30%.

- **Total cholesterol.** This number is the sum of cholesterol carried in all cholesterol-bearing particles in the blood, including HDL and LDL. The NCEP guidelines advise aiming for a total cholesterol level below 200 mg/dL. Reducing your total cholesterol level by 10% reduces your risk of dying from heart disease by 15%. And with lifestyle changes and current cholesterol-lowering medicines, one can reduce total cholesterol levels by much more than 10%.
- **LDL** Your particular LDL target depends on your cardiovascular health and your odds of having a heart attack in the next 10 years.
- **HDL** Healthy HDL cholesterol lowers heart disease risk. The NCEP guidelines consider levels of 60 mg/dL or above protective against heart disease, while levels of less than 40 mg/dL are regarded as too low and increase your risk.
- **Triglycerides** The main form of stored fat—both in the food we eat and in the body’s adipose (fat) tissue—is triglycerides. In general, triglyceride levels have less impact on heart disease risk than LDL or HDL levels. The NCEP guidelines define normal fasting triglyceride levels as below 150 mg/dL.

78 **How to improve your cholesterol profile.** You can’t change your age or family medical history, both of which can affect your cholesterol levels. However, you can lose weight and



boost physical activity, which will help lower your cholesterol. Probably the most important step, though, is changing the way you eat. Pay special attention to avoiding foods that boost unhealthy LDL and those that lower healthy HDL.

- **Focus on fats.** Avoid saturated fats, which increase unhealthy LDL levels, and steer clear of trans fats, which both raise LDL and lower protective HDL. Instead, substitute healthier unsaturated fats, which are found in fish, nuts, and vegetable oils.



High-fat, high-sugar foods like burgers, fries, and sodas can contribute to inflammation in the body.

- **Choose whole grains.** Whole-grain breads, pasta, and cereal help prevent a blood sugar roller coaster and make you feel full longer. Many of these foods contain fiber that lowers LDL levels.
- **Make other healthy choices.** Eat more fruits and vegetables, especially if you substitute these for processed foods like potato chips. And make healthy dairy substitutions: fat-free milk instead of whole milk, or low-fat yogurt instead of sugar-laden versions.
- **Take a medication.** If lifestyle changes aren’t enough to lower your cholesterol to healthy levels, then talk with your doctor about taking a cholesterol-lowering drug. Most often, these are statins, which are by far the most effective. If you can’t take a statin, other options exist.

79 **Keep blood pressure within healthy limits.** Your blood pressure reading has two parts. The first and higher number (systolic blood pressure)

represents the pressure while the heart is beating and shows how hard the heart works to push blood through the arteries. The second and lower number (diastolic blood pressure) represents the pressure when the heart is relaxing and refilling with blood between beats and shows how forcefully arteries are being stretched most of the time. If either your systolic or diastolic pressure is high, you have hypertension. The higher your blood pressure, the greater your risk of suffering a heart attack, heart failure, stroke, or kidney disease. Keeping blood pressure within normal limits, or getting treatment if your blood pressure rises too high, will improve your health.

80 How to lower your blood pressure. Lifestyle changes may be enough to lower your blood pressure if it is only mildly elevated (in the prehypertension category). But once people develop high blood pressure, medication is usually necessary.

- **Eat less salt.** Salty foods can raise your blood pressure. People over age 50 and African Americans tend to be more salt-sensitive than others. Food with less salt may taste bland at first, but most people adjust to a low-salt diet with time.
- **Get more potassium.** This nutrient, found in bananas, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and salmon—to name just a few sources—helps to lower blood pressure.
- **Take medication.** Blood pressure medicines include thiazide diuretics, ACE inhibitors, angiotensin-receptor blockers, beta blockers, and calcium-channel blockers. These five categories of drugs work in different ways, but are equally effective. Still, most people need to have the dosages adjusted—or need to try a new drug—before they get their blood pressure under control.

81 How to lose weight. The only way to shed pounds is to consume fewer calories than you burn off. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to help you to lose weight—and keep it off.

- **Set a realistic goal.** To avoid getting discouraged, start by trying to lose a reasonable amount of weight and then trying to maintain it. For many men, a realistic goal is to lose 5% to 10% of starting weight.



- **Slow down.** Eat slowly and mindfully, rather than gulping food down.
- **Find substitutions.** One way to cut calories is to make healthy substitutions, such as munching on carrot sticks rather than potato chips when you snack.
- **Get enough sleep.** A sleep debt can lead to weight gain.
- **Boost your activity.** Remember, burning off calories is just as helpful as cutting them when it comes to weight loss.

82 Alcohol in moderation. Moderate alcohol consumption can help men reduce their risk of some of the leading causes of death, such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. “Moderate” means one to two drinks per day, at most. After that, harmful effects begin to accumulate. A drink is defined as 1.5

ounces of hard liquor, 4 to 5 ounces of wine, or 12 ounces of beer.

Screening Tests and Vaccinations to Consider

83 Men: See your doctor for routine “maintenance” checks Men are less likely than women to get routine physical exams and screenings. A survey by the American Academy of Family Physicians found that 55% of men surveyed

had not seen their doctor for a physical exam in the previous year, even though 40% of them had at least one chronic condition (high blood pressure, heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, or cancer). Nearly one-fifth of men ages 55 and over said they had never undergone screening for colon cancer, and almost 30% said they “wait as long as possible” to seek medical attention when they are feeling sick or in pain.

84 Women: See your doctor for routine “maintenance” checks at midlife and beyond, good health is increasingly dependent on good collaborations with your doctors. Since you are likely to be making more medical visits,

Screening tests and immunization schedule for MEN	
TESTS/IMMUNIZATIONS	AGES 50 AND OLDER
General exam	Yearly. (Some studies have found that regular annual check-ups do not bring clear health benefits to the population as a whole, but doctors still recommend them, especially for those over 50.)
Thyroid (TSH) test	Every five years.
Blood pressure measurement	At least every two years if you have normal blood pressure; at least once per year if it is elevated or if you are at increased risk for heart disease and stroke (such as from smoking or diabetes).
Cholesterol test	Get this checked regularly; discuss with clinician, as professional recommendations vary about how often.
Bone density screen	Discuss with clinician if you are at increased risk because of previous bone fractures or other factors (see “Osteoporosis”); not recommended for other men.
Diabetes screening	Discuss with clinician if you have risk factors for type 2 diabetes, if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80, or if you use medication to control your blood pressure.
Digital rectal exam	Once a year, during a regular physical exam.
Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test	Discuss with clinician.
Sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests	Both partners should be tested for STIs and HIV before initiating intercourse.
Mental health screening	Discuss with clinician.
Colorectal screening	Before age 75, use one of these three methods: (1) fecal occult blood test annually; (2) flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years; (3) colonoscopy every 10 years. After age 75, discuss with clinician.
Complete eye exam	Until age 54, every two to four years; from 55 to 64, every one to three years; after 65, every one to two years; or as advised by a clinician.
Hearing test	Discuss with clinician.
Mole exam	Have this done during your routine physical or separately by a dermatologist.
Dental exam and cleaning	Routinely; discuss frequency with dentist.
Influenza vaccine	Yearly.
Pneumonia vaccine	One time only, at age 65.
Tetanus-diphtheria (Td) or tetanus-diphtheria- pertussis (Tdap) booster	Get a Td booster every 10 years; one booster after age 50 should be with Tdap, and the rest with Td.
Herpes zoster vaccine for shingles	Once only at age 60 or later; discuss with clinician.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Screening tests and immunization schedule for WOMEN		
TESTS/IMMUNIZATIONS	AGES 50–64	AGES 65 AND OLDER
General exam; weight and height	Discuss with clinician	
Thyroid (TSH) test	Every 5 years	
HIV test	At least once to find out your HIV status; ask your clinician if repeat testing is necessary	
Blood pressure measurement	At least every 2 years; at least yearly (or per your clinician's advice) if you have high blood pressure	
Cholesterol test	Discuss with clinician; many groups recommend screening every 5 years	
Bone density screen	Discuss with clinician	At least once; talk to clinician about repeating
Blood glucose test	Every 3 years	
Mammogram	Every 2 years; discuss with clinician	
Clinical breast exam	Discuss with clinician	
Pap smear	Every 5 years; if HPV screening is unavailable, have Pap every 3 years	Discuss with clinician
Pelvic exam	Every 1–3 years	
Chlamydia test	Obtain if you have new or multiple partners	
Sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests	Both partners should be tested for STIs and HIV before initiating intercourse	
Mental health screening	Discuss with clinician	
Colorectal health; use one of the following three methods:		
1. Fecal occult blood test	Yearly	Discuss with clinician
2. Flexible sigmoidoscopy	Every 5 years	Discuss with clinician
3. Colonoscopy	Every 10 years	Discuss with clinician
Complete eye exam	Every 2–4 years or as advised by clinician	Every 1–2 years
Hearing test	Every 3 years	
Mole exam	Clinical exam or physical; self-exam monthly	
Dental exam	Routinely; discuss with dentist	
Influenza vaccine	Yearly	
Pneumococcal vaccine	Not applicable	One time only
Tetanus-diphtheria (Td) or tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) booster	Every 10 years; one booster after age 50 should be with Tdap, and the rest with Td.	
Herpes zoster vaccine for shingles	Once only at 60 or later; discuss with clinician	

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

find a primary care physician with whom you feel comfortable. Work with your doctor to devise a schedule for screening tests and clinical exams.

Dealing with Pain

85 To ease headache pain A range of remedies and self-help strategies may help to ease your headaches. Some are things

you can do on your own—for example, avoiding the foods, activities, or situations that trigger your headaches; using mind-body techniques such as yoga or meditation to reduce your stress; or trying herbal supplements. Other approaches, like acupuncture or physical therapy, require you to seek out a specialist.

- **Aspirin and other pain relievers.** When most people get a headache, they reach for whatever painkiller they happen to have in their medicine

cabinet. And most of the time, an over-the-counter (OTC) pain reliever will do the trick. This easy, effective strategy is fine for people who have mild to moderately painful headaches once in a while. But if you need to take an OTC painkiller more than a couple of times a week, that means you're suffering from regular, rather than occasional, headaches, and you should see your doctor. Also, talk to your doctor if OTC medications fail to ease your pain. These drugs are not strong enough for many people with severe headaches; however, a prescription drug may provide relief, as described in later chapters.

86 Explore alternatives. Acupuncture has long been used to treat headaches, but until 2009, there hadn't been strong evidence that this ancient Chinese practice had any clear benefit for headache pain. Then, two reviews from the Cochrane Collaboration (an international organization that provides comprehensive reviews of health care) concluded that acupuncture appears to prevent migraines as well as or possibly better than preventive medications and may also help people with occasional or chronic tension headaches.



According to traditional Chinese beliefs, acupuncture works by affecting the flow of energy, called qi, through pathways that run through the body. The practitioner inserts very fine needles at specific points along these pathways, which are known as meridians. Although acupuncture has many variations, it typically involves four to 10 needles that are left in place for 10 to 30 minutes, while you lie in a darkened room. A course of treatment may include six to 12 sessions. Most people report that acupuncture needles cause little or no pain.

87 Ask your doctor about physical therapy. By relaxing the tense muscles that commonly accompany tension and migraine headaches, certain types of physical therapy may

provide relief. Your physical therapist may teach you daily neck and shoulder exercises you can do on your own. In addition, he or she will likely use one or more office-based treatments, such as the following:

- **ultrasound**, which uses a device that emits sound waves that penetrate the skin and warm muscle tissue
- **electrical nerve stimulation**, which employs a battery-powered device to send electrical signals to underlying nerves
- **traction**, which involves using a special device to stretch a tight muscle, usually in the neck
- **myofascial release**, which involves performing a series of massage-like techniques to stretch tight muscles.

Physical therapists often use hot or cold compresses as well. You can try the same techniques at home. To prevent headaches, for example, a heating pad applied daily can relax tense muscles in your neck and shoulders.

Taking a hot shower or bath can also help but does not work as well as using a heating pad daily. For a headache already in progress, cold is better. A cold pack can constrict blood vessels and can be especially helpful for throbbing temples.

Massage, when performed by a licensed massage therapist, can also loosen tight muscles. However, be aware that certain techniques can worsen headaches. For instance, although gentle massage can provide headache relief for some people, a too-firm or aggressive massage can actually bring on a severe headache.

88 Consider topical pain relievers for muscle aches. Topical pain relievers, which are applied to the skin, offer one alternative for mild pain relief. You can use these alone or in combination with oral analgesics. Creams containing salicylate (including Aspercreme and Bengay) and others containing capsaicin (including Zostrix) are available without a prescription. However, it's important to avoid touching any mucous membrane around the mouth, nose, or

eyes after applying the cream, in order to avoid irritation. Diclofenac, a prescription nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), is available for topical use as a gel (Voltaren Gel) and a patch (Flector Patch). Both carry some of the same risks as oral NSAIDs, but they are less likely to cause stomach and intestinal irritation because they don't enter the gastrointestinal tract. If you develop an upset stomach when taking the pill form, consider trying one of the topical versions.



89 Tackle pain with exercise.

Structured exercise programs commonly emphasize one or more of these goals. You can also work with your physician or physical therapist to develop your own exercise program that addresses them all.

- **Increase range of motion.** These exercises aim to improve the mobility and flexibility of your joints. To increase your range of motion, move a joint as far as it can go and then try to push a little farther.
- **Strengthen your muscles.** An excellent way to provide aching joints with more support is to strengthen the muscles surrounding them. Strengthening exercises use resistance to build muscles.
- **Build endurance.** Aerobic activities such as walking, swimming, and bicycling can all build your heart and lung function, which in turn increases endurance and overall health.
- **Improve balance.** Physical therapists often include improved balance in their lists of goals. There are simple ways to work on balance. For example, stand with your weight on both feet. Then try lifting one foot while you balance on the other foot for 5 seconds. Repeat on the other side. (You might want to stand by a chair that you can grab on to just in case.).

90 Find some helpful gadgets if hand pain limits your activities. Simple gadgets and devices can sometimes make it easier to perform daily activities, such as cooking, gardening, or even getting dressed.

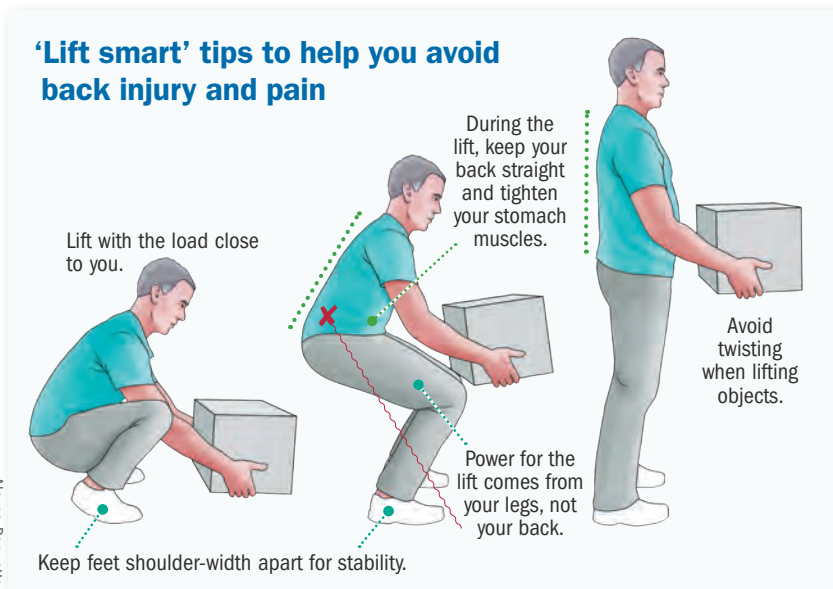
91 Develop back-healthy habits. Everyday activities, from vacuuming your house to sitting in front of the computer for hours, can take a toll on your back, particularly if you aren't schooled in proper body mechanics. You can take some of the pressure off your back by following these simple tips:

- While standing to perform ordinary tasks like chopping vegetables or folding laundry, keep one foot on a small step stool.
- Don't remain sitting or standing in the same position for too long. Stretch, shift your position, or take a short walk when you can.
- When sitting, keep your knees a bit higher than your hips and bend them at a 90-degree angle. Sit with your feet comfortably on the floor. If your feet don't reach the floor, put a book or a small stool under them.
- While driving, sit back in your seat, and if your seat does not provide sufficient lumbar support, place a rolled blanket or some towels behind your lower back. Try to shift your weight occasionally. If you have cruise control, use it when you can. Also consider using a foam seat cushion to absorb some of the vibration.
- Sleep on your side if you can, and bend your knees toward your chest a bit. Also, choose a pillow that keeps your head level with your spine; your pillow shouldn't prop your head up too high or let it droop. Choose a mattress that's firm enough to support your spine (so that it doesn't sag into the bed) and that follows your body's contours.

92 Find a good mattress. Considering that most people spend roughly a third of their lives lying in bed, choosing the right mattress is an important matter. And if you have low back pain, it can make the difference in whether you can sleep at night and function the next day. While there's not a great deal of research on this topic, a few studies offer some guidance.

93 Know the laws of lifting. Follow these six steps whenever you need to lift something:

1. Face the object and position yourself close to it.
2. Bend at your knees, not your waist, and squat down as far as you comfortably can.
3. Tighten your stomach and keep your buttocks tucked in.
4. Lift with your legs, not your back muscles.
5. Don't try to lift the object too high. Don't raise a heavy load any higher than your waist; keep a light load below shoulder level.



6. Keep the object close to you as you lift it.
- If you need to turn to set something down, don't twist your upper body. Instead, turn your entire body, moving your shoulders, hips, and feet at the same time.
 - Ask for help with lifting anything that's too heavy.

94 Learn proper stretching to find lower back pain relief. Stretching is a valuable component of any treatment plan for a person plagued by back problems. Most experts believe that supple, well-stretched muscles are less prone to injury. Indeed, shorter, less flexible muscle and connective tissues restrict joint mobility, which increases the

likelihood of sprains and strains. Stretch regularly but gently, without bouncing, as that can cause tissue injury. Beginners should start by holding the stretch for a short time and gradually build up to roughly 30-second stretches.

Understand Your Diabetes Risk

95 Should you be tested? The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends that all adults be tested for diabetes beginning at age 45. If you're between ages 18 and 45 and have a BMI of 25 or higher, you should be tested if you have one or more of the following risk factors:

- You have a mother, father, brother, or sister with diabetes.
- You are physically inactive.
- You are African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Native American, or of Pacific Islander descent.
- You have given birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds or had diabetes during pregnancy.
- You have blood pressure of 140/90 mm Hg or higher or are being treated with blood pressure-lowering drugs.
- You have abnormal blood lipid (fat) levels, such as HDL cholesterol levels below 35 mg/dL or triglyceride levels over 250 mg/dL.
- You have had impaired glucose tolerance or impaired fasting glucose when previously tested for diabetes.
- You have polycystic ovary syndrome or a history of vascular problems.
- Your HbA1c level is greater than 5.7%.

If the results are normal, the test should be repeated in three years.

96 Know your diabetes dietary targets

The ADA's nutritional guidelines include these suggested targets for various dietary components.

Saturated fat	Less than 7% of calories
Trans fat	Minimal amounts
Cholesterol	Less than 200 mg per day
Protein	15% to 20% of calories
Fiber	At least 14 grams per 1,000 calories daily
Sodium	No more than 2,300 mg per day

97 Know your blood sugar symptoms

► High (hyperglycemia)

- Blurry vision
- Excessive thirst
- Frequent urination
- Extreme hunger
- Extreme fatigue
- Weight loss (without trying)
- Bladder infections
- Recurring vaginal yeast infections

► Low (hypoglycemia)

- Nervousness
- Weakness
- Hunger
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Trembling
- Sweating
- Rapid heartbeat
- Feeling cold and clammy
- Irritability
- Confusion
- Drowsiness

- Slurred speech
- Double vision
- In severe cases, loss of consciousness, seizures, and even coma

For Stronger Memory, Activate Your Brain and Your Body

Regular physical activity helps keep your heart, lungs, and muscles in shape and can stave off the effects of aging. In much the same way, exercising your brain can help keep your mind sharp and your memory intact. Here are several ways to activate your brain.

98 Keep busy and engaged. The MacArthur Foundation Study on Successful Aging, a long-term study of aging in America, found that education level was the strongest predictor of mental capacity as people aged. The more education, the more likely an individual was to maintain his or her memory and thinking skills. Other research has shown that people who held jobs that involved complex work, such as speaking to, instructing, or negotiating with others, had a lower risk of memory loss (dementia) than people whose jobs were less intellectually demanding.



Keeping the brain busy and challenged helps preserve mental sharpness.

It probably isn't the years of formal education or the type of occupation that benefits memory. Instead, these are likely stand-ins for a lifelong habit of learning and engaging in mentally challenging activities.

Intellectual enrichment and learning stimulate the brain to make more connections. The more connections, the more resilient the brain. That's how a lifelong habit of learning and engaging in mentally challenging activities—like learning a new language or craft—can help keep the brain in shape.

99 Stay connected. Establishing and maintaining close ties with others is another way to maintain mental skills and memory. There are several ways that social engagement may do this. Social interaction and mentally engaging activities often go hand in hand (think volunteering or tutoring school kids). Social relationships can also provide support during stressful times, reducing the damaging effects that stress can have on the brain.

Social support can come from relationships with family members, friends, relatives, or caregivers, as well as from a religious community or other organized group.

100 Keep moving. Physical fitness and mental fitness go together. People who exercise regularly tend to stay mentally sharp into their 70s, 80s, and beyond. Although the precise “dose” of exercise isn't known, research suggests that the exercise should be moderate to vigorous and regular. Examples of moderate exercise include brisk walking, stationary bicycling, water aerobics, and competitive table tennis. Vigorous activities include jogging, high impact aerobic dancing, square dancing, and tennis.

Exercise helps memory in several ways. It reduces the risk of developing several potentially memory-robbing conditions like high blood pressure,

diabetes, and stroke. Exercise is good for the lungs, and people who have good lung function send more oxygen to their brains. There is some evidence that exercise helps build new connections between brain cells and improves communication between them. Finally, exercise has been linked to increased production of neurotrophins, substances that nourish brain cells and help protect them against damage from stroke and other injuries.

101 Go Mediterranean. Mediterranean-type diets highlight whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and healthy fats from fish, nuts, and healthy oils. This eating style helps promote heart health and may also lessen the risk of memory and thinking problems later in life. In a study that followed more than 2,000 people over four years, those who most closely followed a Mediterranean-type diet had a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. A later study suggested that following a Mediterranean-type diet could slow the conversion of mild cognitive impairment into full-blown dementia.

The type of fats that predominate in the diet also seem to affect memory. As part of the national Women's Health Initiative, 482 women ages 60 and older were observed for three years. They reported on their diets, and researchers tested their memory and other cognitive skills at the beginning of the study and at the end. Those who ate more unsaturated fats (which are abundant in vegetables oils and fatty fish) and less saturated fat (from red meat and full-fat dairy foods) had significantly less decline in memory than those who ate relatively little unsaturated fat.

Eating several servings of fruits and vegetables can also protect memory. Foods from plants are chock full of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients that may protect against age-related deterioration throughout the body. ♥



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