

Staying Healthy

Tips for living a healthy lifestyle.

What You Can Do to Maintain Your Health

Healthy living ... easier said than done, right? But did you know that adopting a healthy lifestyle is easier than you might think? There are many steps you can take to improve your health, prevent health problems, or take your healthy lifestyle to the next level. Learn what you can do to take the next step in your journey of healthy living

Regular preventive medical & dental services.

A preventive service might be a test, or it might be advice from your doctor. Preventive services can detect disease or help prevent illness or other health or dental problems.

Maintain a healthy weight.

Many Americans are overweight. Carrying too much weight increases your risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, certain cancers, gallbladder disease and arthritis in the weight-bearing joints. Maintaining a healthy weight can help you prevent or control many conditions and diseases.

Eat healthy.

A healthy diet has many health benefits. Heart disease, certain cancers, stroke, diabetes and damage to your arteries can be linked to what you eat. By making healthier food choices, you can also lower your cholesterol and lose weight.

Stay hydrated.

It's important to make sure you get the right amount of water. Water regulates your body temperature and lubricates your joints. It also helps transport nutrients to give you energy and keep you healthy. If you're not properly hydrated, your body can't perform at its highest level.

Exercise.

Exercise can help prevent heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis and depression. It can also help prevent colon cancer, stroke and back injury. You'll feel better and keep your weight under control if you exercise regularly.

Reduce stress.

We all feel stressed, frazzled or depressed from time to time. But when is it too much? Taking care of your mental, emotional and spiritual health is just as important as taking care of your physical health. Learn how stress, grief and mental illness can affect you, and what you can do to cope and feel better.

Get some sleep.

Everyone needs to get enough sleep. Sleep helps keep your mind and body healthy. Getting a good night's sleep won't grant you immunity from disease. But study after study has found a link between insufficient sleep and some serious health problems, such as heart disease, heart attacks, diabetes, and obesity.

Don't smoke or use tobacco.

Smoking and using tobacco are very dangerous habits. Smoking causes 440,000 deaths in the United States every year. More preventable illnesses (such as emphysema, mouth, throat and lung cancer, and heart disease) are caused by tobacco use than by anything else. The sooner you quit, the better.

Limit how much alcohol you drink.

This means no more than 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women. One drink is equal to 1 can of beer (12 ounces), a 4-ounce glass of wine or a jigger (1 ounce) of liquor. Too much alcohol can damage the liver and contribute to some cancers, such as throat and liver cancer.

Making health benefits & preventative care services work for you.

How can my doctor help me stay healthy?

In addition to treating you when you are sick, your doctor can follow a program designed to help you stay healthy. This program tells the doctor which preventive services you need depending on your age, medical history and family history.

What is a "preventive service"?

A preventive service might be a test, or it might be advice from your doctor. Preventive services can detect disease or help prevent illness or other health problems. Preventive services can include the following:

- Tests (also called screenings) to check your general health or the health of certain parts of your body
- Regular measurements of weight and blood pressure
- Advice about diet, exercise, tobacco, alcohol and drug use, stress and accident prevention
- Immunizations ("shots") for both children and adults
- Special tests at certain times in your life, such as during pregnancy and beginning at age 50

Will my doctor tell me which preventive services I need?

Yes. Follow your doctor's advice about checkups, about healthy lifestyle choices and about medicines that prevent health problems, such as blood pressure medicine. Preventive services are sometimes offered in your community (for example, blood pressure tests at the local shopping center). If you're not sure you need the service being offered, ask your doctor.

What preventive services do women need?

Adult women should have their weight and blood pressure checked regularly. They should also have a Pap test at least every 3 years to screen for cervical cancer starting at age 21 or approximately 3 years after they have sex for the first time. Women age 65 and older should be tested for osteoporosis; women younger than age 65 who are at risk should also be tested.

Women should have a mammogram for early detection of breast cancer. Women who have risk factors for breast cancer, such as a family history of breast cancer, may need to have mammograms more often or start having them sooner. Please check with your doctor for a mammogram schedule that is right for you. Women should be tested for colorectal cancer beginning at age 50 and continuing until age 75. Certain people may need to continue being tested for colorectal cancer until age 85.

These are routine tests that everyone should have. If your doctor orders these tests for you, it does not mean he or she thinks you have a health problem. Your doctor will also make sure you have all the shots you need.

Your doctor may give you advice about exercise and diet. For example, your doctor may tell you how much calcium you need to prevent bone problems, or he or she may talk to you about taking folic acid before you get pregnant. Your doctor may also give you advice about alcohol and drug use and sexually transmitted infections, as well as lowering the fat and cholesterol in your diet. Your doctor may also talk to you about injury prevention practices, such as using seat belts and having smoke detectors in your home.

What preventive services do men need?

Adult men should have their weight and blood pressure checked regularly. Men age 35 and older should have their cholesterol levels checked regularly. Beginning at age 50 and continuing until age 75, men should be tested for colorectal cancer. Certain people may need to continue being tested for colorectal cancer until age 85. If your doctor orders this test, it does not mean he or she thinks you have cancer. This is a routine test that everyone should have. Your doctor will also make sure you have all the shots you need.

Your doctor may talk to you about the importance of diet and exercise, and avoiding alcohol, tobacco, drugs and sexually transmitted infections. Your doctor may also talk to you about injury prevention practices, such as using seat belts and having smoke detectors in your home.

What can I do to keep myself healthy?

The choices you make about the way you live are important to your health. Here are some choices you can make to help yourself stay healthy:

- Don't use any form of tobacco.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Exercise regularly.
- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all.
- Don't use illegal drugs.
- Practice safe sex.
- Use seat belts (and car seats for children) when riding in a car or truck.
- See your doctor regularly for preventive care.

Mouth and Teeth: How to Keep Them Healthy

Taking good care of your mouth and teeth throughout your whole life can help prevent problems as you get older. Taking care of your teeth means brushing and flossing every day and seeing the dentist regularly.

Adults

Continuing good mouth and tooth care as an adult can help you avoid tooth loss, painful gums or other problems. Here are some helpful things you can do:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss your teeth at least once a day.
- Don't smoke or chew tobacco.
- Ask your doctor if your medicines have side effects that might damage your teeth. (For example, some medicines may cause you to have a dry mouth.)
- Look inside your mouth regularly for sores that don't heal, irritated gums or other changes.
- See your dentist every 6 months for regular check-ups and cleanings.

If you have any problems with your teeth or concerns about your mouth, see your doctor or dentist right away.

Weight Management - Are You at a Healthy Weight?

Your first step to find out if you are at a healthy weight is to find out what your BMI, or body mass index, is and what your waist size is. For most people, these are good clues to whether they are at a healthy weight.

The measurements that count

Know your Body Mass Index (BMI)

Over the past twenty years, Americans have become more familiar with specific measurements related to health, such as cholesterol levels and blood pressure readings. When it comes to weight-related health risks, there are three important numbers that you should know. The first is your actual weight in pounds; the second is your Body Mass Index, or BMI; and the third is your waist measurement.

Your BMI is based on your height and weight. Doctors consider BMI to be a better measure of health risk than your actual weight in pounds. The higher your BMI, the greater your risk of developing a weight-related illness, such as type 2 diabetes or heart disease.

How is BMI calculated?

BMI is calculated the same way for both adults and children. The calculation is based on the following formulas:

Formula: $\text{weight (lb)} / [\text{height (in)}]^2 \times 703$

Calculate BMI by dividing weight in pounds (lbs) by height in inches (in) squared and multiplying by a conversion factor of 703.

Example: Weight = 150 lbs, Height = 5'5" (65") -- Calculation: $[150 \div (65)^2] \times 703 = 24.96$

How is BMI interpreted for adults?

For adults 20 years old and older, BMI is interpreted using standard weight status categories. These categories are the same for men and women of all body types and ages.

The standard weight status categories associated with BMI ranges for adults are shown in the following table.

BMI	Weight Status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.9	Normal or Healthy Weight
25.0 – 29.9	Overweight
30.0 and Above	Obese

What is your waist circumference?

Body fat that accumulates in the stomach area (described as "abdominal obesity") is more of a health risk than body fat that builds up in the buttocks and thigh areas. For this reason, your waistline provides valuable information about your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes. Doctors consider a waist circumference too high if it is 40 inches or more in men, or 35 inches or more in women.

What does it take to lose weight?

To lose weight, you have to eat fewer calories than your body uses. Calories are the amount of energy in the food you eat. Some foods have more calories than others. For example, foods that are high in fat and sugar are also high in calories. If you eat more calories than your body uses, the extra calories will be stored as body excess fat.

A pound of fat is about 3,500 calories. To lose 1 pound of fat in a week, you have to eat 3,500 fewer calories (that is 500 fewer calories a day), or you have to "burn off" an extra 3,500 calories. You can burn off calories by exercising or just by being more active. (Talk to your family doctor before you begin any type of exercise program. Your doctor can help you determine what kind of exercise program is right for you.)

The best way to lose weight and keep it off is to eat fewer calories and be active. If you cut 250 calories from your diet each day and exercise enough to burn off 250 calories, that adds up to 500 fewer calories in one day. If you do this for 7 days, you can lose 1 pound of fat in a week.

Many experts believe you should not try to lose more than 2 pounds per week. Losing more than 2 pounds in a week usually means that you are losing water weight and lean muscle mass instead of losing excess fat. If you do this, you will have less energy, and you will most likely gain the weight back.

At a Healthy weight but, unhappy?

If you're at a healthy weight but are still unhappy with your weight, you're not alone. Lots of people are.

It can be hard to be satisfied with how you look when TV and magazines show unrealistic images of what it means to be thin. Here are some things to think about:

- There is no "ideal" body shape or body size. We let society tell us what "ideal" means. But the way a skinny model looks in a magazine or TV ad is not normal or "ideal."
- Do you feel good and have plenty of energy? Can you do the activities you want to do? That's what healthy living is all about, no matter what your weight is.
- Trying to lose weight when you don't have to can actually be bad for you. Most people who diet end up gaining back the pounds they lost—and more.

Exercise

How do I start an exercise program?

First, talk to your family doctor. This is especially important if you haven't been active, if you have any health problems, if you're pregnant, or if you're an older adult.

Benefits of regular exercise

- Reduces your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, diabetes, and obesity
- Keeps joints, tendons, and ligaments flexible, which makes it easier to move around
- Reduces some effects of aging, especially the discomfort of osteoarthritis
- Contributes to mental well-being
- Helps relieve depression, stress, and anxiety
- Increases your energy and endurance
- Helps you sleep better
- Helps you maintain a normal weight by increasing your metabolism (the rate you burn calories)

What kind of exercise should I do?

The best type of exercise is one that you will do on a regular basis, so choose activities that you enjoy. Physical activities that increase your heart rate and move large muscles (such as the muscles in your legs and arms) are good choices. Walking is a popular choice and does not require special equipment, except for appropriate shoes. Other good options include swimming, biking, jogging, and dancing.

- **Aerobic exercise?**
Aerobic exercise is the type that moves large muscle groups. It causes you to breathe more deeply and makes your heart work harder to pump blood. It is also called "cardio exercise." It improves the health of your heart and lungs.
- **Weight-bearing exercise?**
The term "weight-bearing" is used to describe exercises that work against the force of gravity. Weight-bearing exercise is important for building strong bones. Having strong bones helps prevent osteoporosis and bone fractures later in life.
- **Strength training?**
Strength training builds strength and muscles. It is also called "weight training." Lifting weights is a strength-training exercise. Exercise machines can provide strength training. Push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups, and leg squats are also strength-training exercises. If you have high blood pressure or other health problems, talk to your family doctor before beginning strength training.

How much should I exercise?

Talk to your family doctor about how much exercise is right for you. A good goal for many people is to work up to exercising 5 times a week for 30 to 60 minutes at a time. If 30 to 60 minutes at a time sounds difficult to fit into a busy schedule, you can split up your physical activity into smaller chunks of time. Try exercising for 10 minutes at a time throughout your day. For example, take the stairs instead of the elevator or go for a walk during your lunch break. Remember: exercise has so many health benefits that any amount is better than none.

Sneak exercise into your day

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Go for a walk during your coffee break or lunch.
- Walk part or all of the way to work.
- Do housework at a brisk pace.
- Work in your yard or garden.

Is there anything I should do before and after I exercise?

You should start an exercise session with a warm-up of about 5 to 10 minutes. Start by slowly stretching your muscles and then gradually increase the intensity of your activity. For example, begin walking slowly and gradually pick up the pace.

After you are finished exercising, cool down for about 5 to 10 minutes. Stretch your muscles and let your heart rate slow down gradually. You can use the same stretching exercises you did during your warm-up period.

A number of warm-up and cool-down stretching exercises are described at the end of this handout. If you are going to exercise your upper body, be sure to use stretching exercises for your arms, shoulders, chest, and back.

How hard do I have to exercise?

Measuring your heart rate (beats per minute) can tell you how hard your heart is working during an activity. You can check your heart rate by lightly pressing the tips of your first 2 fingers on the inside of your wrist to take your pulse. Count your pulse for 15 seconds, and multiply the number of beats by 4. To time the 15 seconds, use the timer function on your smartphone or a watch or clock with a second hand.

Most people will get the greatest benefit and lower their risks if they keep their heart rate between 50% and 85% of their maximum heart rate when exercising. To figure out your maximum heart rate, subtract your age (in years) from 220. This number is your maximum heart rate. To figure out your target heart rate range, multiply that number by 0.50 and 0.85.

For example, if you are 40 years of age, subtract 40 from 220 to get your maximum heart rate of 180 beats per minute ($220 - 40 = 180$). Then, multiply 180 by 0.50 and 0.85 to get your target heart rate range of 90 to 153 beats per minute ($180 \times 0.50 = 90$ and $180 \times 0.85 = 153$).

When you first start an exercise program, aim for the lower end of your target heart rate range. As your exercise program progresses, you can gradually build up to a higher target heart rate.

If you are taking medicine to treat high blood pressure, you have a heart condition or you are pregnant, talk to your family doctor to find out what your target heart rate should be.

How can I stick with an exercise program?

The following are some tips that will help you stick with an exercise program:

- **Choose an activity you like to do.** Make sure it suits you physically, too. For example, if you have arthritic joints, swimming might be a good option.
- **Get a partner.** Exercising with a friend or relative can make it more fun. An exercise partner can offer support and encouragement. Also, you will be less likely to skip a day of exercise if someone else is counting on you.
- **Vary your routine.** You are less likely to get bored or injured if you have some variety in your exercise routine. Walk one day. Ride your bicycle the next. Consider activities like dancing and racquet sports, and even chores like vacuuming or mowing the lawn.
- **Choose a comfortable time of day.** Don't work out too soon after eating or when it's very hot or cold outside. If you're too stiff to exercise in the morning, wait until later in the day.
- **Don't get discouraged.** It can take weeks or months before you notice some of the benefits of exercise, such as weight loss.
- **Forget "no pain, no gain."** While a little soreness is normal after you first start exercising, pain isn't. Take a break if you are in pain or if you are injured.
- **Make exercise fun.** Read, listen to music, or watch TV while you ride a stationary bicycle, for example. Find fun activities, like taking a walk through the zoo. Go dancing. Learn how to play a sport you enjoy.

Make exercise a habit

- Ask your doctor to write a “prescription” for your exercise program that describes what type of exercise to do, how often to exercise, and for how long.
- Stick to a regular time every day.
- Sign a contract committing yourself to exercise.
- Put “exercise appointments” on your calendar.
- Keep a daily log or diary of your exercise activities.
- Check your progress. Can you walk a certain distance faster now? Are you at your target heart rate?
- Think about joining a health club or community center. The cost might give you an incentive to exercise on a regular basis.

How can I prevent injuries?

To avoid injuring yourself during exercise, don't try to do too much too soon. Start with an activity that is fairly easy for you, such as walking. Do it for a few minutes a day, several times a day. Slowly increase the amount of time and the intensity of the activity. For example, increase your walking time and speed over several weeks.

Start every workout with a warm-up. This will make your muscles and joints more flexible. Spend 5 to 10 minutes doing some light stretching exercises and brisk walking. Do the same thing when you're done exercising until your heart rate returns to normal.

Pay attention to your body. Stop exercising if you feel very out of breath, dizzy, faint, or nauseous, or if you feel pain. Talk with your family doctor if you have questions or think you have injured yourself seriously.

Health Guides: Health is a State of Mind and Body

Be Your Own Expert

A Real Approach to Eating

- **Balance** – Balance what you eat to meet your need for nutrition and enjoyment.
- **Variety** – Enjoy all kinds of foods while keeping the key food groups in mind (like fruits & vegetables, lean sources of protein, low-fat dairy and whole grains).
- **Moderation** – Focus on feeling comfortable instead of being too full after you eat. Use moderation when choosing less nutritious foods.

Think about...using a food & activity journal to help you understand your eating patterns and find ways to make some simple, healthy changes. Ask your family doctor about how to get started.

People sometimes turn to popular diets to achieve quick weight loss. However, for lasting changes, there are some simple keys to eating healthy.

All Foods Fit...

Diets usually tell you WHAT you should or should not eat. Instead, focus on understanding WHY you eat in the first place.

- **Questions to ask when you feel like eating:** Are you really hungry? Are you reacting to a mood (stress, boredom, anger)? Is there something else causing your urge to eat?
- **Rather than trying to follow "the rules" of a diet,** BE IN CHARGE of making the best choices for you.
- **No foods are off limits.** Instead of looking at foods as good or bad, take a non-diet approach and remember that all foods fit when you use the keys of balance, variety and moderation.
- **Talk to your family doctor** to help make the best choices and create an approach that works for you.

Am I Hungry?

Hunger signals your body when it needs to be nourished. Let hunger guide when you need to eat and how much to eat.

True Hunger Signals

- Hunger pangs, gnawing, growling or rumbling in your stomach
- Weakness or loss of energy
- Slight headache or trouble concentrating
- Irritability or crankiness

False Hunger Signals

- **Thirst** may cause you to think you are hungry—try drinking a glass of water
- **Cravings** or urges don't always mean you are hungry
- **Emotions** like anger, sadness or feeling lonely may trigger an urge to eat
- **External cues** like mealtimes or social events may create an urge to eat

Let Your Instincts Be Your Guide

- Relearn to listen to your hunger signals so you can determine when to eat and how much food is right for you.
- Make mindful decisions about eating by paying attention to how you feel.
- Don't use diet "rules" to restrict what, when and how much you eat. Instead, learn to trust your body to tell you when it needs food.

I Am Hungry, So What Now?

When you are hungry and decide to eat, think about these simple questions:

- ***What do I want?*** When you are hungry something may come to mind—a certain food, flavor or texture. As you listen to your true hunger signals, you may realize what type of food or taste will satisfy you.
- ***What do I need?*** As you decide what to eat, think about what your body may need. Think of food that may be both healthy and enjoyable—instead of what is "good" or "bad." Keep in mind balance, variety and moderation.
- ***What do I have?*** Plan ahead to have a variety of foods available as you learn to let hunger guide your choices. This way you can enjoy foods that are both satisfying and healthy.
- ***How much do I need?*** Eat enough to satisfy your hunger and stop eating before you feel too full. There is no need to clean your plate. The goal is to feel energetic and comfortable after eating.

Healthy Food Choices

It can be difficult to navigate your way through the maze of food choices available today. Sometimes even the food that seems healthy is loaded with extra calories. Learn how to choose healthy snacks, plan healthy meals, and make healthy eating a part of your life.

What is a “nutrient-rich” food?

A nutrient-rich food contains many vitamins and minerals (also called micronutrients) but not very many calories. Vitamins and minerals nourish your body and help to keep you healthy and reduce your risk for chronic diseases. You can get these micronutrients through a variety of healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, and lean meats and fish. Getting vitamins and minerals through food ensures that your body is able to absorb them properly.

What happens if I don’t get enough nutrient-rich foods in my daily diet?

If you don’t eat a variety of nutrient-rich foods, you may not be getting all the micronutrients your body needs. In fact, Americans tend to eat foods that are high in calories and low in micronutrients. These foods often also contain added sugar, sodium (salt), saturated fat or trans-fat. Choosing these high-calorie, low-nutrient foods contributes to weight gain and chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

What might be missing?

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), adult Americans may not get enough of the following nutrients:

Nutrient	Food Sources
Calcium	Low-fat and fat-free dairy and dairy substitutes, broccoli, dark leafy greens, sardines
Potassium	Bananas, cantaloupe, raisins, nuts, spinach and other dark greens, fish
Fiber	Legumes (dried beans and peas), whole-grain foods and brans, colorful fruit and vegetables, apples, strawberries, carrots, raspberries, seeds
Magnesium	Spinach, black beans, almonds, peas
Vitamin A	Eggs, milk, carrots, sweet potatoes, cantaloupe
Vitamin C	Oranges, strawberries, tomatoes, kiwi, broccoli, red and green peppers
Vitamin E	Avocados, nuts, seeds, whole-grain foods, spinach and other dark leafy greens

What foods are nutrient-rich?

You’ll find most nutrient-rich foods around the perimeter (outer circle) of the grocery store. Fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds, whole grains, lean meats and fish and low-fat milk products are excellent choices.

The amount of nutrient-rich food each person needs depends on their daily calorie needs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's website ChooseMyPlate.gov offers good information on nutrition for adults and children.

Following are some ways to make healthier food choices.

Grains

Whole-grain foods are low in fat; they're also high in fiber and complex carbohydrates, which helps you feel fuller longer and prevents overeating. When you choose bread or cereal, look at the ingredient list and check to see that the first ingredient says “whole” in front of the grain. For example, “whole wheat flour” or “whole oat flour”; enriched or other types of flour usually have the important fiber and nutrients removed. Look for whole-grain foods that have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.

Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat. They add flavor, nutrients and variety to your diet. Look for colorful fruits and vegetables, especially dark green and orange vegetables. If you can, choose organically grown produce and fruit, as it can be more nutritious and should be free of pesticides.

Meat, Poultry, Fish and Beans

Fish

Fresh fish should have a clear color, a moist look, a clean smell and firm, springy flesh. If good-quality fresh fish isn't available, choose frozen or low-salt canned fish. Poaching, steaming, baking and broiling are the healthiest ways to prepare fish. Wild-caught oily fish, such as salmon, tuna, mackerel and sardines, are the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids, but all fish contain some amount of this healthy fatty acid.

Poultry

Remove skin and visible fat before cooking. Chicken breasts are a good choice because they are low in fat and high in protein. Baking, broiling and roasting are the healthiest ways to prepare poultry.

Beans and other non-meat sources

Nutrient-rich, non-meat sources of protein can also satisfy the protein recommendations. A quarter-cup of beans, 1 tablespoon of peanut butter or ½ ounce of nuts or seeds counts as an ounce toward your protein needs.

Beef, Pork, Veal and Lamb

Choose low-fat, lean cuts of beef or pork. Trim outside fat before cooking. Trim any inside, separable fat before eating. Lean beef and veal cuts have the word “loin” or “round” in their names. Lean pork cuts have the word “loin” or “leg” in their names. Baking, broiling and roasting are the healthiest ways to prepare meat. It is best to limit how often you eat beef, pork, veal and lamb, because even lean cuts contain a lot of fat and cholesterol when compared to other protein sources.

Good examples include:

- Wild-caught salmon and other oily fish, haddock and other white fish
- Wild-caught tuna (canned or fresh)
- Shrimp, mussels, scallops and lobster (without added fat)
- Turkey bacon
- Ground chicken or turkey
- Legumes (chickpeas, kidney beans, soy beans, edamame, lentils)
- Nuts and seeds, including nut butters
- Lean beef (round, sirloin and loin)
- Lean pork (tenderloin and loin chop)

Dairy and Dairy Substitutes

Choose skim milk, low-fat milk or enriched milk substitutes. Try swapping evaporated skim milk for cream in recipes for soups, sauces and coffee.

Try low-fat or fat-free cheeses. Skim ricotta can replace cream cheese as a spread or in desserts and dip recipes. Use part-skim cheeses in recipes and try 1 percent cottage cheese in salads and for cooking. String cheese is a low-fat, high-calcium snack option.

Plain nonfat yogurt can replace sour cream in many recipes. (To maintain texture, stir 1 tablespoon of cornstarch into each cup of yogurt that you use in cooking.) Try mixing frozen nonfat or low-fat yogurt with fruit for dessert.

Do I need to change what I eat?

If you answer yes to any of the following questions, you may need to talk about improving your nutrition with your doctor:

- Has your doctor talked with you about a medical problem or a risk factor, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol?
- Did your doctor tell you that this condition could be improved by better nutrition?
- Do diabetes, cancer, heart disease or osteoporosis run in your family?
- Are you overweight?
- Do you have questions about what kinds of foods you should eat or whether you should take vitamins?
- Do you think that you would benefit from seeing a registered dietitian, a member of the health care team who specializes in nutrition counseling?

Won't it be hard to change my eating habits?

Probably, but even very small changes can improve your health considerably. The key is to keep choosing healthy foods and stay in touch with your doctor and dietitian, so they know how you are doing. Here are a few suggestions that can improve your eating habits:

- Find the strong points and weak points in your current diet. Do you eat 4-5 cups of fruits and vegetables every day? Do you get enough calcium? Do you eat whole-grain, high-fiber foods regularly? If so, you're on the right track! Keep it up. If not, add more of these foods to your daily diet.
- Keep track of your food intake by writing down what you eat and drink every day. This record will help you see if you need to eat more from any food groups (such as fruits, vegetables or dairy products) or if you need to eat less of a food group (such as processed or high-fat foods).
- Think about asking for help from a dietitian, especially if you have a medical problem that requires you to follow a special diet.

Can I trust nutrition information I get from newspapers and magazines?

Nutrition tips and diets from different sources often conflict with each other. You should always check with your doctor first. Also, keep in mind this advice:

- There is no "magic bullet" when it comes to nutrition. Short-term diets may help you lose weight, but they are hard to keep up and may even be unhealthy in the long run.
- Good nutrition doesn't come in a vitamin pill. Only take a vitamin with your doctor's recommendation, as your body benefits the most from eating healthy, whole foods.
- Eating a variety of foods is best for your body, so try new foods!
- Stories from people who have used a diet program or product, especially in commercials and infomercials, are advertisements. These people are usually paid to endorse what the advertisement is selling. Remember, regained weight or other problems that develop after someone has completed the program are never talked about in those ads.

What changes can I make now in my diet?

Almost everyone can benefit from cutting back on unhealthy fat. If you currently eat a lot of fat, try just one or two of the following changes, or those suggested in our handout on healthier food choices:

- Rather than frying meat, bake, grill or broil it. Take the skin off before eating chicken or turkey. Eat fish at least once a week.
- Cut back on extra fat, such as butter or margarine on bread, sour cream on baked potatoes, and salad dressings. Use low-fat or nonfat versions of these condiments.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables both with your meals and as snacks.
- When eating away from home, watch out for "hidden" fats (such as those in salad dressing and desserts) and larger portion sizes.
- Read the nutrition labels on foods before you buy them. If you need help reading the labels, ask your doctor or your dietitian.

Nutrients & Nutritional Info

In order to maintain a healthy diet, it's important to be able to understand the nutritional information of the foods you eat. You should be able to get the majority of vitamins, minerals and nutrients your body needs from a healthy variety of foods. Learn what food you should be eating - - and what you should be avoiding - - to ensure you're getting the most from your diet.

What is a Nutrition Facts Label?

The Nutrition Facts Label helps you determine the amount of calories and nutrients in one serving of food. Nutrients include fats, carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, and minerals. This information helps you know whether you're eating a healthy, balanced diet.

The label, which is included on every packaged food product, lists the amount of:

- Fat
- Total fat
- Saturated fat
- Trans fat
- Cholesterol
- Sodium
- Total carbohydrate
- Dietary fiber
- Sugars
- Protein
- Vitamins and minerals

What is a serving size?

Serving size is the first piece of information listed on the label. A serving size is the amount of food that is typically eaten in one serving. It is listed as a general household measurement, such as pieces, cups or ounces (for example, 7 potato chips or 1/2 cup of cereal).

Serving size is an important part of a healthy diet. Eating very large servings (or portions) can contribute to weight gain because as you eat larger portions, you eat more calories.

It's important to compare the serving size listed on the container to the amount of that food that you normally eat. For example, the label may list a serving size as 7 potato chips or 1 ounce of cake. If you usually eat twice that amount, you are also eating twice the amount of calories and nutrients.

What is the Percent Daily Value?

A healthy person should consume a certain amount of fats, carbohydrates (especially fiber), protein, and vitamins and minerals each day. Certain ingredients, such as saturated fats and trans fats, are considered unhealthy and should only be eaten in very small amounts. The nutrition label provides a list of percentages (called the Percent Daily Value) that compares how much of a certain nutrient one serving of food contains to how much of that nutrient you should consume daily.

One serving of food with 5% or less of the daily value is considered low. One serving of a food with 20% or more of the daily value is considered high.

The Percent Daily Value is based on a daily diet of 2,000 calories. You will need to adjust the percentages if you eat more or less than 2,000 calories per day. For more information on calorie allowances, read our handout on determining calorie needs.

What ingredients should I limit in my diet?

- **Saturated fat.** Saturated fat can increase your risk of heart disease and high cholesterol. The average adult should consume no more than 20 grams of saturated fat per day.
- **Trans fat.** Trans fat also increases your risk of heart disease. Ideally, you should get 0 grams of trans fat per day. When you read a nutrition label remember that companies are allowed to list the amount of trans fat as “0 grams” if it contains less than .5 grams of trans fat per serving. This means that your food can contain some trans-fat even if the nutrition label says “0 grams” per serving! Always check the ingredient list for trans-fat, which may be listed as “hydrogenated vegetable oil” or “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil.” Trans fat is usually found in commercially prepared baked goods, fried foods, snack foods and margarine.
- **Cholesterol.** You should eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol per day (and less than 200 milligrams per day if you have heart disease). For more information see Cholesterol.

What ingredients should I get more of in my diet?

- **Fiber.** Fiber helps your body digest the food you eat, and it can help lower your risk of diabetes and heart disease. A food is considered high in fiber if it contains 5 grams of fiber or more per serving. Men 50 years of age and younger should get at least 38 grams of fiber per day, while women 50 years of age and younger should consume at least 25 grams of fiber per day. Fiber is found in foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Look for the words “whole grain” on the package and ingredient list.
- **Vitamins and Minerals.** The nutrition label lists vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron. You should try to get more of these nutrients in your daily diet, as well as other vitamins and minerals that are not listed on the label. You can learn more about vitamins and minerals [here](#).
- **Drink no- or low-calorie beverages,** such as water or unsweetened tea. Sugar-sweetened drinks, such as fruit juice, fruit drinks, regular soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, sweetened or flavored milk and sweetened iced tea can add lots of sugar and calories to your diet. But staying hydrated is important for good health.

The Importance of Good Hydration

Why is it so important to stay hydrated?

Whether you're a serious athlete or a recreational exerciser, it's important to make sure you get the right amount of water before, during, and after exercise. Water regulates your body temperature and lubricates your joints. It also helps transport nutrients to give you energy and keep you healthy. If you're not properly hydrated, your body can't perform at its highest level. You may experience fatigue, muscle cramps, dizziness, or more serious symptoms.

A simple way to make sure you're staying properly hydrated is to check your urine. If your urine is consistently colorless or light yellow, you are most likely staying well hydrated. Dark yellow or amber-colored urine is a sign of dehydration.

How much water should I drink while exercising?

There are no exact rules for how much water to drink while exercising because everyone is different. You need to consider factors including your sweat rate, the heat and humidity in your environment, and how long and hard you are exercising.

The American Council on Exercise has suggested the following basic guidelines for drinking water before, during, and after exercise:

- Drink 17 to 20 ounces of water 2 to 3 hours before you start exercising
- Drink 8 ounces of water 20 to 30 minutes before you start exercising or during your warm-up
- Drink 7 to 10 ounces of water every 10 to 20 minutes during exercise
- Drink 8 ounces of water no more than 30 minutes after you exercise

What about sports drinks?

For most people, water is all that is needed to stay hydrated. However, if you will be exercising at a high intensity for longer than an hour, a sports drink may be helpful. The calories, potassium, and other nutrients in sports drinks can provide energy and electrolytes to help you perform for a longer period of time.

Choose a sports drink wisely. They are often high in calories from added sugar and may contain high levels of sodium. Also, check the serving size. One bottle may contain several servings. If you drink the entire bottle, you may need to double or triple the amounts given on the Nutrition Facts Label. Some sports drinks contain caffeine. If you use a sports drink that contains caffeine, be careful not to get too much caffeine in your diet.

What are the signs of dehydration?

Dehydration happens when you lose more fluid than you drink. When your body doesn't have enough water, it can't work properly. Dehydration can range from mild to severe. Symptoms of dehydration can include the following:

- Dizziness or lightheaded feeling
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Dry mouth
- Lack of sweating
- Hard, fast heartbeat

Symptoms of severe dehydration can include mental confusion, weakness, and loss of consciousness. You should get emergency medical attention immediately if you have any of these symptoms.

What is heat illness?

Heat illness can occur when the body is dehydrated and can't cool itself effectively during exercise in hot or humid weather. There are 3 stages of heat illness:

1. Heat cramps
2. Heat exhaustion
3. Heatstroke

Symptoms of heat cramps include painful muscle spasms in the legs, stomach, arms, or back. Symptoms of heat exhaustion are more serious. They can include faint or weak feelings, nausea, headache, fast heartbeat, and low blood pressure.

The most serious heat-related illness is heatstroke. Symptoms can include high body temperature (higher than 104°F), fast heartbeat, flushed skin, fast breathing, and possibly even delirium, loss of consciousness, or seizures. You should get emergency medical attention immediately if you experience any of the symptoms of heatstroke. Untreated heatstroke can lead to death.

What is hyponatremia?

Hyponatremia is a rare condition that happens when there is too little sodium in the body. It can occur in athletes who drink too much water. Athletes who participate in endurance activities (for example, marathons or triathlons) have a higher risk of hyponatremia. When sodium levels in your body are too low, your cells begin to swell with water. This can cause your brain to swell. It can also cause your lungs to fill with fluid. Symptoms of hyponatremia can include confusion, headache, vomiting, and swelling of the hands and feet.

How much water is too much?

This depends on your body and the kind of activity you are doing. Talk to your family doctor if you have questions about the right amount of water to drink while exercising.

Mind/Body Connection: How Your Emotions Affect Your Health

What is good emotional health?

People who have good emotional health are aware of their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. They have learned healthy ways to cope with the stress and problems that are a normal part of life. They feel good about themselves and have healthy relationships.

However, many things that happen in your life can disrupt your emotional health and lead to strong feelings of sadness, stress or anxiety. These things include:

- Being laid off from your job
- Having a child leave or return home
- Dealing with the death of a loved one
- Getting divorced or married
- Suffering an illness or an injury
- Getting a job promotion
- Experiencing money problems
- Moving to a new home

“Good” changes can be just as stressful as “bad” changes.

How can my emotions affect my health?

Your body responds to the way you think, feel and act. This is often called the “mind/body connection.” When you are stressed, anxious or upset, your body tries to tell you that something isn’t right. For example, high blood pressure or a stomach ulcer might develop after a particularly stressful event, such as the death of a loved one. The following can be physical signs that your emotional health is out of balance:

- Back pain
- Change in appetite
- Chest pain
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Dry mouth
- Extreme tiredness
- General aches and pains
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Insomnia (trouble sleeping)
- Lightheadedness
- Palpitations (the feeling that your heart is racing)
- Shortness of breath
- Stiff neck
- Sweating
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss

Poor emotional health can weaken your body's immune system, making you more likely to get colds and other infections during emotionally difficult times. Also, when you are feeling stressed, anxious or upset, you may not take care of your health as well as you should. You may not feel like exercising, eating nutritious foods or taking medicine that your doctor prescribes. Abuse of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs may also be a sign of poor emotional health.

Why does my doctor need to know about my emotions?

You may not be used to talking to your doctor about your feelings or problems in your personal life. But remember, he or she can't always tell that you're feeling stressed, anxious or upset just by looking at you. It's important to be honest with your doctor if you are having these feelings.

First, he or she will need to make sure that other health problems aren't causing your physical symptoms. If your symptoms aren't caused by other health problems, you and your doctor can address the emotional causes of your symptoms. Your doctor may suggest ways to treat your physical symptoms while you work together to improve your emotional health.

If your negative feelings don't go away and are so strong that they keep you from enjoying life, it's especially important for you to talk to your doctor. You may have what doctors call "major depression." Depression is a medical illness that can be treated with individualized counseling, medicine or with both.

How can I improve my emotional health?

First, try to recognize your emotions and understand why you are having them. Sorting out the causes of sadness, stress and anxiety in your life can help you manage your emotional health. The following are some other helpful tips.

Express your feelings in appropriate ways. If feelings of stress, sadness or anxiety are causing physical problems, keeping these feelings inside can make you feel worse. It's OK to let your loved ones know when something is bothering you. However, keep in mind that your family and friends may not be able to help you deal with your feelings appropriately. At these times, ask someone outside the situation--such as your family doctor, a counselor or a religious advisor--for advice and support to help you improve your emotional health.

Live a balanced life. Try not to obsess about the problems at work, school or home that lead to negative feelings. This doesn't mean you have to pretend to be happy when you feel stressed, anxious or upset. It's important to deal with these negative feelings, but try to focus on the positive things in your life too. You may want to use a journal to keep track of things that make you feel happy or peaceful. Some research has shown that having a positive outlook can improve your quality of life and give your health a boost. You may also need to find ways to let go of some things in your life that make you feel stressed and overwhelmed. Make time for things you enjoy.

Develop resilience. People with resilience are able to cope with stress in a healthy way. Resilience can be learned and strengthened with different strategies. These include having social support, keeping a positive view of yourself, accepting change and keeping things in perspective.

Calm your mind and body. Relaxation methods, such as meditation, are useful ways to bring your emotions into balance. Meditation is a form of guided thought. It can take many forms. For example, you may do it by exercising, stretching or breathing deeply. Ask your family doctor for advice about relaxation methods.

Take care of yourself. To have good emotional health, it's important to take care of your body by having a regular routine for eating healthy meals, getting enough sleep and exercising to relieve pent-up tension. Avoid overeating and don't abuse drugs or alcohol. Using drugs or alcohol just causes other problems, such as family and health problems.

Can a poor diet affect my mental health?

You probably know that the food you eat affects your body. Cutting back on junk food and choosing healthier options helps you maintain a healthy heart, strong muscles and an appropriate weight. Your mood may also be affected by what you eat. For example, have you ever felt down after eating a lot of fast food? Do you have a more positive outlook after eating a green salad or some stir-fry vegetables?

Medical researchers are studying the effects of dietary choices on mood and mental health. This is sometimes called the “food-mood connection.” There are many questions that haven’t been answered yet. For example, do vitamin deficiencies make people feel more depressed? Do dietary supplements only improve the emotional well-being of people who have nutritional deficiencies? What amount of a certain supplement will improve a person’s mental health?

Mental illness is serious. In some cases, it can even be life-threatening. If you are struggling with mental health issues, talk to your family doctor. He or she can help you find the right type of treatment.

What nutrients may support good mental health?

Studies about the “food-mood connection” have been limited and have shown mixed results. Because so many questions remain, dietary changes are not recommended as a substitute for professional treatment of mental health problems like depression.

Limited evidence does suggest that certain nutrients may support emotional well-being. All of these nutrients are part of a balanced diet. Proper nutrition is likely to keep you feeling better physically and emotionally.

Omega-3 fatty acids improve heart health by reducing “bad” cholesterol in your body and increasing “good” cholesterol. Omega-3 has also shown promise for improving mental health. In some studies, people who took omega-3 supplements reported improvements in their mood. Researchers think that omega-3 fatty acids may affect the way your brain sends signals throughout your body.

Omega-3 fatty acids are found in seafood, such as salmon, herring, sardines and mackerel. They can also be found in flaxseeds, flaxseed oil and walnuts.

Tryptophan is an amino acid (a building block of protein) that your body needs so it can produce a chemical called serotonin. People who have depression often have a low serotonin level. Studies have examined the use of tryptophan to treat depression, but there is not enough scientific evidence to recommend this use.

Tryptophan can be found in red meat, dairy products, soy and turkey.

Magnesium is a nutrient that helps your body produce energy. It also helps your muscles, arteries and heart work properly. Some researchers are studying whether patients who take extra magnesium recover more quickly from depression.

Magnesium can be found in foods such as leafy green vegetables, nuts and avocados.

Folic acid and vitamin B-12 are B vitamins that play an important role in metabolism (the pace of your body’s processes) and production of blood cells. They also are related to chemicals called dopamine and noradrenalin. In many cases, people who are depressed don’t have enough of these chemicals. Increasing a person’s levels of folic acid and vitamin B-12 may increase his or her response to medicines that treat depression.

Folic acid is found in foods such as leafy greens and fruits. Vitamin B-12 is mainly found in fish, shellfish, meat and dairy products.

Mental Health

We all feel stressed, frazzled or depressed from time to time. But when is it too much? Taking care of your mental, emotional and spiritual health is just as important as taking care of your physical health. Learn how stress, grief and mental illness can affect you, and what you can do to cope and feel better.

What causes stress?

Feelings of stress are caused by the body's instinct to defend itself. This instinct is good in emergencies, such as getting out of the way of a speeding car. But stress can cause unhealthy physical symptoms if it goes on for too long, such as in response to life's daily challenges and changes.

When this happens, it's as though your body gets ready to jump out of the way of the car, but you're sitting still. Your body is working overtime, with no place to put all the extra energy. This can make you feel anxious, afraid, worried and uptight.

What changes may be stressful?

Any sort of change can make you feel stressed, even good change. It's not just the change or event itself, but also how you react to it that matters. What's stressful is different for each person. For example, one person may feel stressed by retiring from work, while someone else may not.

Other things that may be stressful include being laid off from your job, your child leaving or returning home, the death of your spouse, divorce or marriage, an illness, an injury, a job promotion, money problems, moving, or having a baby.

Can stress hurt my health?

Stress can cause health problems or make health problems worse. Talk to your family doctor if you think some of your symptoms are caused by stress. It's important to make sure that your symptoms aren't caused by other health problems.

Possible signs of stress

- Anxiety
- Back pain
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Trouble sleeping or insomnia
- Problems with relationships
- Shortness of breath
- Stiff neck or jaw
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss

What can I do to manage my stress?

The first step is to learn to recognize when you're feeling stressed. Early warning signs of stress include tension in your shoulders and neck, or clenching your hands into fists.

The next step is to choose a way to deal with your stress. One way is to avoid the event or thing that leads to your stress--but often this is not possible. A second way is to change how you react to stress. This is often the more practical way.

Tips for dealing with stress

- Don't worry about things you can't control, such as the weather.
- Solve the little problems. This can help you gain a feeling of control.
- Prepare to the best of your ability for events you know may be stressful, such as a job interview.
- Try to look at change as a positive challenge, not as a threat.
- Work to resolve conflicts with other people.
- Talk with a trusted friend, family member or counselor.
- Set realistic goals at home and at work. Avoid overscheduling.
- Exercise on a regular basis.
- Eat regular, well-balanced meals and get enough sleep.
- Meditate.
- Participate in something you don't find stressful, such as sports, social events or hobbies.

Why is exercise useful?

Exercise is a good way to deal with stress because it's a healthy way to relieve your pent-up energy and tension. Exercise is known to release feel-good brain chemicals. It also helps you get in better shape, which makes you feel better overall.

Steps to deep breathing

- Lie down on a flat surface.
- Place a hand on your stomach, just above your navel. Place the other hand on your chest.
- Breathe in slowly and try to make your stomach rise a little.
- Hold your breath for a second.
- Breathe out slowly and let your stomach go back down.

What is meditation?

Meditation is a form of guided thought. It can take many forms. You can do it with exercise that uses the same motions over and over, like walking or swimming. You can meditate by practicing relaxation training, by stretching or by breathing deeply.

Relaxation training is simple. Start with one muscle. Hold it tight for a few seconds then relax the muscle. Do this with each of your muscles, beginning with the toes and feet and working your way up through the rest of your body, one muscle group at a time.

Stretching can also help relieve tension. Roll your head in a gentle circle. Reach toward the ceiling and bend side to side slowly. Roll your shoulders.

Deep, relaxed breathing by itself may help relieve stress (see the box to the right). This helps you get plenty of oxygen and activates the relaxation response, the body's antidote to stress.

If you want more help treating stress symptoms, ask your family doctor for advice.

Get some sleep.

Everyone needs to get enough sleep. Sleep helps keep your mind and body healthy. Getting the proper amount of sleep reduces your risk of sickness, high blood pressure and diabetes. Good quality sleep also helps reduce stress, improves your mood, and improves your decision making skills.

How much sleep do I need?

Most adults need 7 to 8 hours of good quality sleep on a regular schedule each night. Make changes to your routine if you can't find enough time to sleep.

Getting enough sleep isn't only about total hours of sleep. It's also important to go to sleep at about the same time every day and to get good quality sleep so you feel rested when you wake up.

Does it matter when I sleep?

Yes. Your body sets your "biological clock" according to the pattern of daylight where you live. This helps you naturally get sleepy at night and stay alert during the day.

When people have to work at night and sleep during the day, they can have trouble getting enough sleep. When people travel to a different time zone, they can also have trouble sleeping.

Why can't I fall asleep?

Many things can make it harder for you to sleep, including:

- Stress
- Pain
- Certain health conditions
- Some medicines
- Caffeine (usually from coffee, tea, and soda)
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Untreated sleep disorders, like sleep apnea or insomnia

Making small changes to your daily routine can help you get the sleep you need, these changes may include:

- Exercising earlier in the day, not right before you go to bed.
- Staying away from caffeine (including coffee, tea, and soda) late in the day.
- If you have trouble sleeping at night, limit daytime naps to 20 minutes or less.
- Avoiding large meals/snacks close to bedtime.
- Making sure your bedroom is dark and quiet.
- Keeping electronic devices like TVs and computers out of the bedroom.
- Go to bed at the same time every night.
- Get the same amount of sleep each night.
- Avoid eating, talking on the phone, reading, or watching TV in bed.
- If you are still awake after staying in bed for more than 20 minutes, get up.

How can I tell if I have a sleep disorder?

Signs of a sleep disorder can include; difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, sleepiness during the day, frequent loud snoring, pauses in breathing or gasping while sleeping, pain or itchy feelings in your legs or arms at night that feel better when you move or massage the area.

If you have any of these signs, talk to a doctor or nurse. You may need to be tested or treated for a sleep disorder.

Benefits of Investing in You.

- Take charge of your life and feel good about the choices you make.
- Gain energy and feel fit.
- Experience improved physical health.
- Gain a positive outlook and find more enjoyment in your life.
- Be a role model for your family and friends.

Keep in mind that any lifestyle change is a "work in progress" and lasting changes take time

Set small goals that are easy to add to your daily life and that YOU can take charge of.

Wellness and fitness involve being aware and making choices like being active, eating healthy and improving your emotional well-being. This is the most important investment you can make in your life. Strive for the best health you can have in all areas of your life by making mindful, healthy choices.

Don't Let Stress Get You Down

We all feel stressed at times. How you react to stress will determine its effect on you. Take steps to prevent stress when you can and manage it when you can't.

Taking Care of You

It is important to be mindful of the choices you make for your personal health and well-being. Nothing is more important than taking care of yourself. Set aside time every day for YOU—be active, enjoy hobbies and share time with your family and friends.

- Strive for balance in both your personal and work life.
- Make time for important relationships in your life.
- Ask for help whenever you need support from others.
- Find ways to relieve stress, like physical activity and relaxation techniques.
- Be open-minded to try something new, like a hobby or activity.
- Talk to your family doctor, who can provide resources and advice when you need it.