

the

REACHline

a newsletter of REACH Employee Assistance, Inc.

Social Media and Your Health

Social media influencers can be persuasive, but relying on their health advice without consulting a health care professional or reputable source, such as the CDC, could pose serious risks to your health.

Consider the trend about drinking borax to combat inflammation and joint problems. This is a dangerous suggestion and can cause vomiting, diarrhea and skin rashes — even fatal poisoning. Yet thousands of people follow misleading medical advice daily.

Influencers sometimes push products because they're getting paid — not because it's good advice. They often promote unrealistic body images, fad diets, risky behaviors and inaccurate medical advice.

Teens are especially vulnerable to social media influencers. Many follow health advice from these online personalities, but they aren't always health experts who provide science-based advice. Recent research highlights several effective ways to help teens choose quality information, including teaching them critical thinking skills for recognizing and disregarding misinformation. You can also take steps to protect your teen and yourself from deceptive content.



Here's how:

Fact-check before sharing or listening to advice. Make sure the information is supported by scientific research. Don't rely just on the influencer's content.

Consider the source. Is it credible? Consult your health care provider or credible sources, such as public health agencies, nonprofit research and health advocacy organizations (e.g., the American Heart Association or American Cancer Association) or hospital systems (e.g., Mayo Clinic) and research universities (e.g., Harvard). Subscribe to social media provided by these resources.

Watch out for too-good-to-be-true language. Some of the most common claims are "cure-all," "miracle cure," or "this food is toxic." Another pervasive claim: "Doctors don't want you to know" about an "amazing" health hack or product. When in doubt, ask your provider.

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What is Reach?

Submitted by: Dr. Marcus Dayhoff, Clinical Director

REACH is your employee assistance program and work/life service benefit. Because we all experience personal and work-related stressors one time or another, your employer cares that you get the right type of assistance for these problems. That's why REACH is contracted by your employer as a pre-paid benefit for you and your immediate family.

REACH professional staff provides short-term counseling, assessment and referral services and will assist you toward problem resolution. All services are confidential by law and the REACH staff will only ask for information necessary to assist you with your concern.

You can contact REACH by calling our 800 number or emailing us through our web site both mentioned below. REACH can assist you with all kinds of personal and work-related concerns, such as:

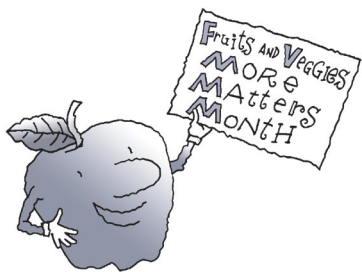
- Relationships: Family, Marital, Child
- Addictions: Substance Abuse, Gambling, Sex, Smoking
- Emotional: Depression, Anxiety, Stress
- Workplace: Co-worker, Supervisor, Coaching
- Legal: Family, Personal Injury, Trust
- Financial: Credit and Planning
- Career: Planning, Guidance
- Elder Care: Caregiver Support, Retirement, Placement
- Parenting: Single, Step



REACH
Employee Assistance & Work Life Services

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, [Keep Your Wits About You](#), is at personalbest.com/extras/25V9tools.

REACHline: 1-800-273-5273
Web Site: www.reachline.com



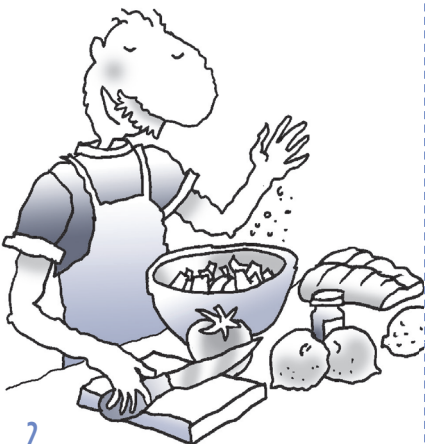
TIP of the MONTH

September is Fruits and Veggies — More Matters Month



Fruits & Veggies — More Matters Month is a good time to check on your fruit and vegetable intake to make sure you are getting enough. There is a chance you are falling short, since about 90% of Americans eat too few vegetables, and 80% don't eat enough fruit.

The Dietary Guidelines recommend aiming for 2½ cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit per day (in the average 2,000-calorie diet). Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit at every meal to reach this goal. Getting enough produce helps reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease and dementia. **Tip:** Fresh, frozen or canned are all good — eat what you can access, afford and enjoy.



eatingsmart

Food Waste No More

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

In the U.S., people toss more than \$473 billion dollars worth of food annually. That's equal to about 145 billion meals.

And it's happening on many levels — at grocery stores, restaurants and in individual households.

The loss is known as *food waste*, which is when edible and safe food gets thrown out instead of eaten. Food may be wasted because it is:

- Close to an expiration date.
- Overproduced or unsold.
- Left over after a meal.
- Damaged or misshapen.

Be part of the solution. You can reduce food waste at home by making better decisions when you shop, prepare and store food. Here are some things you can do:

Grocery tips:

- Shop with a list and stick to it. Make the list after looking through your fridge and pantry, so you avoid buying duplicates of food you already have.
- Buy only enough food you can use before it spoils.
- Make your list based on how often you will eat at home each week.
- Avoid buying in bulk if the food will spoil before you can finish it.
- Check the day-old or imperfect section of the store for reduced prices on perfectly good food. That will help the store reduce food waste, too.



Preparation and storage tips:

- Store fruits and vegetables separately. Fruit naturally emits a gas that causes vegetables to ripen more quickly.
- Freeze bread as well as fresh meat, poultry and fish so they last longer.
- After meals, instead of tossing food, store leftovers in the fridge (if you will eat them in two to three days) or freezer.
- Set up a compost bin to repurpose food scraps for garden use or use your city or county composting service, if available.
- Donate surplus food to a local food bank.

Fish with Fresh Peach Salsa

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 large tomato, diced | ½ tsp salt, <i>divided</i> |
| 1 cup diced fresh peaches | 1½ tsp dried oregano |
| ¼ cup finely diced red onion | 1 tsp paprika |
| 1 jalapeño pepper, finely chopped | ¼ tsp cayenne pepper (optional) |
| 1 tbsp lime juice | 2 lbs tilapia or other white fish |
| ¼ cup fresh chopped cilantro | 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, <i>divided</i> |



In a small bowl, combine tomato, peaches, onion, jalapeño, lime juice and cilantro. **Stir well.** **Salt** to taste. In a second small bowl, combine oregano, paprika, remaining salt and cayenne pepper (if using). **Brush** fish with 1 tsp oil. **Sprinkle** with spice mixture. **Add** remaining oil to nonstick pan set over medium heat. **Pan-fry** until fish flakes easily with fork (10 minutes per inch of thickness). **Serve** fish topped with peach salsa.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 276 calories | 46g protein | 7g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 3.5g mono fat | 1g poly fat | 7g carbohydrate | 5g sugar (0g added sugar) | 2g fiber | 410mg sodium

Minimize Fear of Flying

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Fear of flying, also known as aerophobia or aviophobia, is fairly common. Although flying is one of the safest ways to travel, plane crashes tend to be widely publicized, leading people to have a distorted view of the actual level of danger involved in flying. This fear can result in a great deal of distress as well as avoidance of air travel, which is sometimes highly inconvenient.

To manage this fear:

Identify your triggers. For example, some people react to air turbulence, worrying that it's a sign of danger rather than realizing it's as normal as the bobbing of a ship on the sea.

Educate yourself. Learn about how planes work and the steps involved in ensuring passenger safety.

Stay clear-headed. Caffeine, alcohol and other drugs can intensify fear.

Face your fright. It's tempting to avoid things you fear, but doing so worsens matters. You can only build confidence by proving to yourself that you can handle the feared situation.

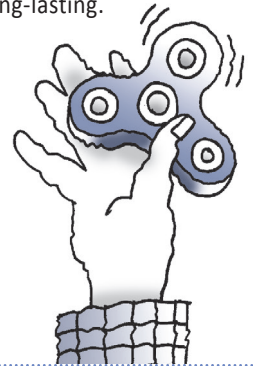
Take small steps. Look for gradual ways to become used to flight-related cues, such as watching flight videos, watching planes take off and taking short flights. It's okay if these steps cause mild anxiety, but don't push yourself too quickly or you could trigger full-fledged panic.

Consider professional help. Various forms of treatment, including exposure therapy or cognitive behavioral therapy, can be effective. Virtual reality or flight simulators may be part of therapy, or you can try them on your own. In extreme cases, your health care provider may prescribe pre-flight medication for you.



Do fidget toys work?

Maybe. These small handheld toys (which come in shapes, including balls, cubes and spinners) have gained in popularity with adults who claim manipulating them reduces stress and anxiety. Researchers are taking an interest and studying whether the toys could help people with generalized anxiety disorder, anxiety attacks, autism and other related conditions. A study published in *Nature* concluded fidget toys may play a role in anxiety treatment, but more research is needed to see if the anti-anxiety effects are long-lasting.



Help Children Who Act Out

When kids have temper tantrums, it can be difficult to calm them. But instead of reacting with frustration or anger, learning how to help children who act out can go far to reduce and prevent these episodes.

Before the school years even start, it is not unusual for little ones to express frustration by grabbing other kids' toys. That's because they don't have the social skills or a vocabulary for explaining how they feel, according to the American Psychological Association. The APA also notes children of all ages often act out when there is stress at home, such as parents getting a divorce or a family member being sick.

Tips from the APA to help children calm their feelings:

Cool down a little one having a meltdown about something they can't have. Hold your child's hands and gently say: "You're feeling a little angry right now. Let's take deep breaths to help us calm down."

Teach kids how to express their emotions.

When kids learn emotional words (e.g., happy,

frustrated, calm, sad, angry and patient) and link them to physical sensations, they can express their feelings in healthy ways. Share helpful phrases your children can say to themselves when frustrated, such as "I can do it. I can stay calm and patient."

Deliver and explain consequences calmly.



When a child misbehaves, it's important to explain why their behavior caused the consequence (such as going to their room for 30 minutes or losing an hour of TV time). If your child has ongoing behavioral problems, talk to your health care provider about professional counseling.

Q: Okay to expose children to chickenpox?

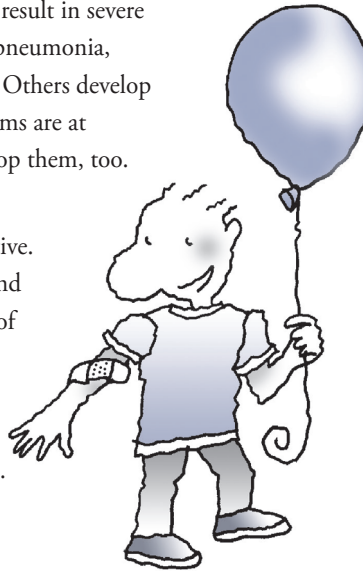
A: No. It's not a good idea to intentionally expose children to infected people or their belongings.

While childhood chickenpox is usually mild, it can sometimes result in severe complications. A small number of children with chickenpox develop pneumonia, encephalitis (brain inflammation) or septic shock, and some even die. Others develop secondary bacterial infections. Children with weakened immune systems are at increased risk for these complications, but normal children may develop them, too.

Vaccination is the best way to protect children from chickenpox.

Extensive studies have shown the chickenpox vaccine is safe and effective. Children receive two doses: the first at 12 to 15 months, and the second at four to six years. The vaccine prevents chickenpox more than 90% of the time. Children who get the disease despite vaccination usually have much milder symptoms. Potential vaccine side effects include localized soreness and swelling. Rarely, a fever or rash may occur. Talk to your child's health care provider about the chickenpox vaccine.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



Knee replacement surgery can ease pain from injured or worn knee joints. Arthritis is the most common reason for knee replacement surgery (arthroplasty). To see if knee replacement is needed, your health care provider will check the knee's range of motion, strength and stability. Imaging tests are used to reveal specific damage and whether a partial or full knee replacement is indicated. The procedure replaces parts of damaged knee joints with artificial metal and plastic joints. While complications may occur, most people who have knee replacements enjoy a better quality of life with their new knees, which last at least 15 to 20 years.



When you visit your health care provider for a check-up or a health concern, ask questions. If you aren't feeling well or tend to be anxious at health care appointments, it helps to come prepared with your concerns. But what questions should you ask?

Ask Me 3, an educational program provided by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the National Patient Safety Foundation, is designed to help patients become more active in their health care by encouraging open communication with their families and health care professionals.

Every time you talk with a health care provider

ASK THESE 3 QUESTIONS

1

What is my main problem?

2

What do I need to do?

3

Why is it important for me to do this?



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The program gets its name from the three important questions you should always ask all of your health care providers. It's a good idea to write down or download these questions and bring them with you to all health care appointments:

- 1 What is my main problem?
- 2 What do I need to do?
- 3 Why is it important for me to do this?

You should ask the same questions of a physician, nurse practitioner, pharmacist or other health care providers, whether you are having an examination, preparing for a medical test or procedure or picking up medication.

But what if you ask a question and don't understand the answer? Don't be anxious or embarrassed. Instead, tell your provider you need more clarity. If you don't understand the explanation, say something like, "Will you explain that to me one more time?"

Remember, health care providers are there to help and educate you. Knowledge is power — to feel better and stay well.

Loans to Family and Friends

Loaning money to people you know can be tricky. While lending money to loved ones, whether it's a sibling or your best friend, may seem generous and supportive, it comes with both financial and emotional risks.

First, it's important to clearly communicate expectations. Before lending money, discuss how much is being borrowed, when it should be repaid, and if there will be interest or a formal agreement. Having these details in writing, even if it's a simple document or an email, can help avoid misunderstandings.

Another consideration is whether you can afford to lend the money. Sometimes, lending to people close to you may strain your finances, especially if the loan isn't repaid as agreed. It's important to only lend money that you can afford to lose, as there's always a chance the borrower might not be able to pay it back on time, or at all.

Emotions can also come into play. Lending money can alter the dynamics of relationships, especially if there are disagreements or delays in repayment. If the loan isn't paid back as promised, it could lead to resentment or tension.

To minimize risk, some people choose to treat loans to family and friends as gifts, especially for smaller amounts. If you expect repayment, it's wise to ensure there's clear communication and a mutual understanding of expectations. Always put the loan terms in writing.

Overall, while loans to family and friends can offer needed support, it's crucial to approach them thoughtfully, with well-defined terms and an awareness of potential consequences.

— Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, CFP, AFC, RSSA

Workplace Emergency Action Plans

Whether you work in an office building or an industrial site, knowing your company's emergency plan is important. Here are some basic guidelines:

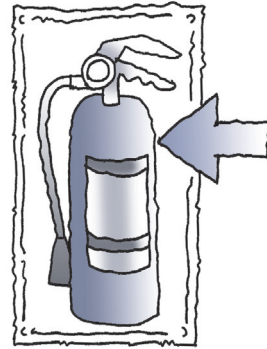
Know how and whom to alert if an emergency situation occurs. **Note:** In some cases this involves sounding an alarm, calling someone internally or calling 911.

Find out where emergency equipment is located (e.g., a fire extinguisher, AED, etc.).

Know how to assess risks when it comes to emergencies. For example, if a small kitchen fire ignites in a trash can, can you or another employee safely extinguish it?

Study your worksite's emergency plan and policies before an emergency. If you don't know them, talk to your supervisor about training or documents that cover what you should do in an emergency. Include emergency escape and evacuation routes and procedures. Sometimes evacuation procedures involve shutting windows, turning off equipment or closing doors. **Note:** OSHA states that the plan doesn't need to be written and may be communicated orally if there are ten or fewer employees.

Review OSHA **Evacuation Plans and Procedures** at [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov) for more information.



TAKE ACTION: Warning Signs of Suicide

Unfortunately, suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the U.S. According to the CDC, more than 49,000 people died by suicide in 2023. There are some warning signs when people are contemplating suicide.

If you recognize any of these signs or if you feel this way, don't hesitate to suggest or seek professional help:

- Talking about attempting suicide or recent fascination with death.
- Feeling unbearable pain.
- Feeling hopeless.
- Feeling guilt, shame or anger.
- Feeling like a burden to others.
- Using alcohol or drugs more frequently.
- Withdrawing from family and friends.
- Losing interest in personal hygiene.
- Saying goodbye to family and friends.
- Giving away prized belongings.
- Changes in behavior such as increased anger or rage, becoming violent or reckless.
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns.

How to help:

- Talk to the person and let them know you care.
- Ask the person if they are considering suicide.
- Listen to the person and don't judge them.
- Offer to help them connect to professional help.

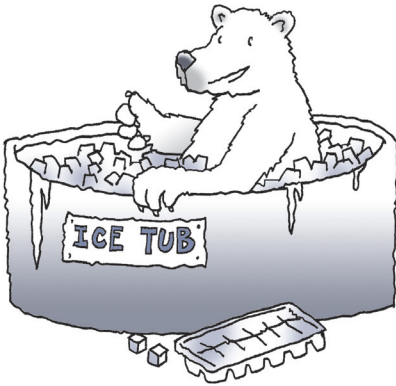
If you recognize the following behaviors, immediately connect the person with professional help by calling or texting **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or chatting at **988lifeline.org**:

- Talking about immediate harm to themselves.
- Planning to attempt suicide by searching online or asking about how to attempt suicide.
- Behaving in an erratic way that poses a threat to their safety.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month.



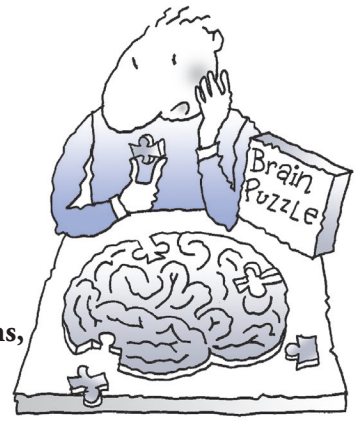
Are ice baths effective? While ice baths and cold plunges may temporarily boost alertness and reduce inflammation, their long-term health benefits are unclear. Cold water constricts blood vessels, reducing muscle soreness, which is why athletes use it post-workout. However, claims of better sleep, stress relief, immune support and reduced chronic inflammation remain unproven. Consult your health care provider before incorporating ice baths into your routine, especially if you have a cardiovascular condition.



body&mind

Q: PTSD therapies?

A: After enduring a terrifying or life-threatening event, some people experience temporary symptoms, such as disruption in sleep, appetite or concentration, which eventually subside. Others may develop a more lasting condition, post-traumatic stress disorder. Although PTSD impacts daily functioning, there are effective treatments available, including:



Cognitive behavioral therapy, which aims to modify the thoughts, feelings and behaviors associated with PTSD. Therapists may encourage gradual exposure to the trauma (e.g., by thinking, talking or writing about it) or may guide individuals to think about the trauma differently through cognitive restructuring.

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, which involves guided eye movements while recalling the trauma in a carefully monitored fashion.

Medication, which can provide some relief from symptoms, such as anxiety or depression for individuals with PTSD, often in combination with other therapies.

If you believe you may be dealing with PTSD, contact your health care provider, health plan or employee assistance program (EAP) for referrals.

— Eric Endlich, PhD

Your Digestive System Needs Exercise

Regular physical activity is important for total health, including your digestive tract. You may be eating a healthy diet and possibly taking probiotics to benefit digestion. But exercise, it turns out, is also one of the most important things you can do for your digestive system.



Muscles in your digestive tract are key for moving food and nutrients in your body. But if there's a lack of adequate exercise, those muscles can lose strength over time. That raises the risk for chronic constipation, gas, bloating and indigestion. Regular exercise, on the other hand, helps regulate and strengthen your digestive system. It also makes peristalsis (your gut's contractions) more effective at emptying waste smoothly and completely.

In fact, exercise boosts circulation throughout your body and, when your digestive tract has good blood flow, it not only becomes stronger but it is more likely to have an optimum balance of healthy bacteria.

What kind of exercise helps your digestive system? Almost any type of regular exercise is beneficial to your digestive health and your health overall. It's a good idea to incorporate more than one type of exercise, when possible, for optimal benefits. They include:

- **Aerobic activities** — Whether it's brisk walking, swimming, bike riding or jogging, all stimulate the digestive tract and promote a healthy microbiome and regular elimination.
- **Abdominal exercises** — These include sit-ups and crunches. They strengthen the core muscles that support the digestive organs.
- **Strength training** — Lifting weights or using exercise machines strengthens core muscles.
- **Yoga and gentle stretching** — They can reduce stress and improve gut motility.

Note: Always talk to your health care provider before starting any new exercise regimen, especially if you have an ongoing health concern.

2025 Cancer Update

This year, new cancer diagnoses in the U.S. are expected to surpass two million for the second year in a row. While the overall cancer death rate has steadily declined in the past 30 years — saving an estimated four million lives — rising diagnoses of some more common cancers could threaten this progress.

The increase is largely driven by an aging and growing population, as well as a rise in six of the ten most common cancers: breast, prostate, endometrial, pancreatic, kidney and melanoma. In total, more than 618,000 new cancer deaths are projected for 2025.

Notably, colorectal cancer is now the leading cause of cancer deaths in men under 50 and the second-leading cause in women under 50. While health experts don't know exactly why there is an increase in colon cancer for

younger people, evidence points to more sedentary lifestyles, obesity, consumption of processed and high-fat, low-fiber foods, smoking and high alcohol use in this age group. If you notice any change in your bowel movements, rectal bleeding or unusual stools, consult your health care provider as soon as possible.

While some cancers are increasing overall, others are surging in specific groups, including:

- Colorectal cancer in adults younger than 55.



- HPV-related oral cancers.
- Cervical cancer in women ages 30 to 44.

The following are American Cancer Society screening guidelines for average-risk people, with the exception of lung cancer. If you aren't average-risk (e.g., you have had any type of cancer, or have a family history of cancer), your health care provider may recommend more frequent or screening at an earlier age.

Screenings for Everyone

Colorectal Cancer

Start at age 45 and repeat as advised and continue through age 75. Screening can be a colonoscopy or stool-based test. Your provider will determine which type of test is best for you.

Lung Cancer

Annual low-dose CT (LDCT) scan for ages 50 to 80 who smoke or used to smoke and have smoked at least one pack a day for 20 years or two packs a day for ten years.

Skin Cancer

Exam by your provider during your annual wellness visit.

For Men

Prostate Cancer

Start at age 50 if advised. Discuss the risks and benefits of the PSA test with your provider.

For Women

Breast Cancer

- Begin mammograms at ages 40 to 44, if desired.
- Continue annually from ages 45 to 54.
- For ages 55+, every 1 to 2 years.

Cervical Cancer

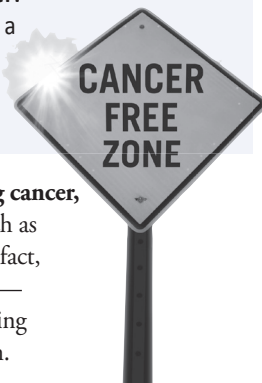
- Ages 25 to 29: HPV* test every 5 years (preferred).
 - HPV-Pap cotest every 5 years (acceptable).
 - Pap test every 3 years (acceptable).
- *Human papillomavirus.

Ages 30 to 65:

- HPV test every 5 years (preferred).
- HPV/Pap cotest every 5 years (acceptable).
- Pap test every 3 years (acceptable).

Ages 65 and older:

- No screening if a series of prior tests were normal.



While a family history of cancer can increase your chances of getting cancer, there are many non-genetic factors that can contribute to your risks, such as a sedentary lifestyle, excess drinking, smoking and being overweight. In fact, excess weight is a major risk factor for six of the fastest-growing cancers — endometrial, liver, kidney, pancreatic, colorectal and breast — highlighting the need for prevention efforts, such as losing weight and early detection.

To prevent or detect cancers, pay attention to your body and see your provider if you notice anything unusual, such as chronic fatigue, pain, discharge, new and irregular-shaped moles or lumps. Here are some other ways to help reduce your cancer risk:

- ➔ Know your family history.
- ➔ Get age-appropriate cancer screenings (at left) in addition to regular checkups.
- ➔ Stay active. First, get your provider's approval. Then gradually build up to at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise a week. **Tip:** Take a brisk walk daily.
- ➔ Eat a healthy, balanced diet of vegetables, fruit, whole grains and protein-rich foods such as fish, chicken and legumes. Limit highly processed foods and sugar.
- ➔ Maintain a healthy weight, and if you need to, lose weight with your provider's guidance.
- ➔ Limit alcohol. Consider abstaining, or if you drink, keep these guidelines in mind: no more than one drink daily for women and no more than two drinks daily for men.
- ➔ Do not use tobacco. If you do, consult your provider about a tobacco-cessation program.
- ➔ Use a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with at least SPF 30 when you're outdoors.

STUDY: Night Eating and Teens

A new Brown University study looked at the appetite of teenagers and examined how circadian rhythms (the body's natural sleep-wake cycle) influences their eating patterns.

Fifty-one volunteers ages 12 to 18 participated in the study, which lasted ten nights in a controlled sleep research lab. The environment had no clocks or natural light, so researchers could examine internal circadian rhythms.

Results showed food intake was highest in the late afternoon and evening for all teens, regardless of body weight. However, teens with obesity ate more calories during the evening compared to their normal-weight peers.

The study suggests food intake is regulated by the internal body clock, not just behavior or environment. Future studies will examine ways to influence circadian timing, perhaps by dimming evening light and enhancing bright morning light. This may help change circadian rhythms and affect appetite.

STUDY: Exercise and Dementia Risk

Regular physical activity may do more than keep your body in shape. It might lower the risk for developing dementia. Johns Hopkins researchers studied the weekly activity of almost 90,000 adults, mostly middle-aged, who wore physical activity trackers on their wrists for three years. Then the research team tracked the participants' health for another four years.

The study found only 35 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity weekly, compared to zero minutes per week, was associated with a 41% lower risk of developing dementia. Even frail older adults significantly lowered dementia risks with weekly exercise. About 140 minutes of exercise weekly was associated with a 70% lower dementia risk.

Note: Association does not prove cause.

Just because two factors happen together doesn't automatically mean one causes the other, because there are people who exercise regularly and still can develop dementia. However, this study provides data for further research.

Dr. Zorba's corner

Quitting smoking saves lives.

A recent American Cancer Society study reveals that since 1970 when the Surgeon General started the national anti-smoking campaign, a whopping four million lives have been saved because so many kicked the habit. Another 76 million years of lives were gained, too. One in five adults in the U.S. still smoke — too many. Certainly all of them know it's unhealthy and costly, and many of them would like to quit. Using prescription medications — such as bupropion, along with nicotine patches and other smoking cessation aids — triples your chances of gaining independence from nicotine, one of the most addictive stimulants known to science. If you smoke and want to stop, give it a try. It takes many people more than one time to say goodbye to cigarettes for good. — Zorba Paster, MD

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