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Antibiotic
Resistance

Feature Article



In this Issue...

Which Massage Is
Right for You?

Why Nutritional
Values Vary

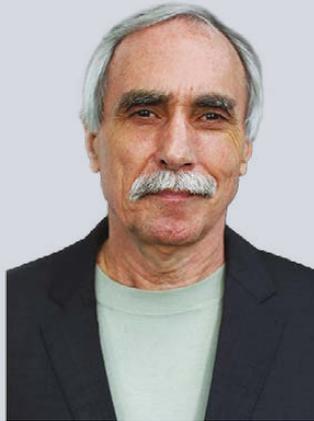
Soothing Tired
Muscles



In this Issue...

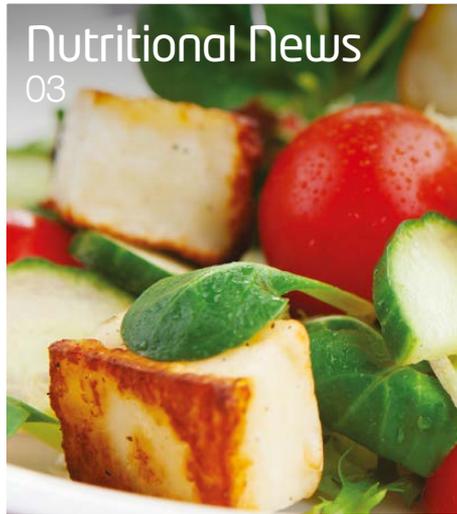
Spring into Health

02



Nutritional News

03



You Can't Out-Exercise a Bad Diet

04



Why Nutritional Values Vary

12



02 **Spring into Health**

03 **Nutritional News**

04 **Fitness**
You Can't Out-Exercise
a Bad Diet

06 **Feature Article**
The Rise of
Noncommunicable
Diseases

10 **Lifestyle**
Which Massage Is
Right for You?

12 **Nutrition**
Why Nutritional
Values Vary

14 **Feature Article**
Antibiotic Resistance

18 **Herbs and
Supplements**
Chili Peppers

20 **Family Health**
Small Changes—
Big Results

22 **Family Health**
Soothing Tired Muscles

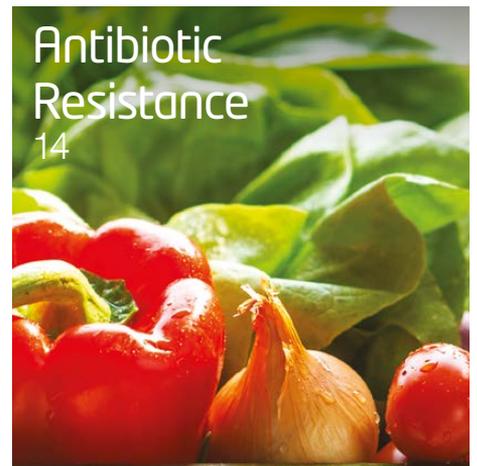
24 **Family Health**
The Right Amount
of Exercise for Seniors

26 **Family Health**
Benefits of Reading to
Your Kids

29 **Ask the Expert**

Antibiotic Resistance

14



Small Changes— Big Results

20



Spring into Health

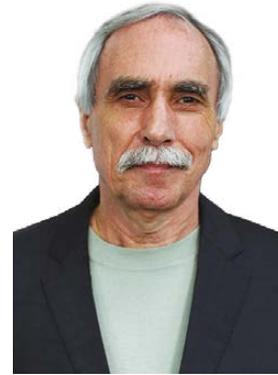
It's springtime for those of us in the northern hemisphere. Spring is a season of fresh air, warmer weather and new beginnings. It's also the time of year farmers plant their crops—the very beginning of a new harvest still months away.

That's a great way to look at health as well. The seeds we plant now will grow into something life-giving later. At least they will if we take care and nourish those seeds along the way. For just as a farmer must nourish his crops with water and compost, we must nourish our healthy lifestyles.

How does one nourish the seeds of a healthy lifestyle? Maintaining a positive attitude is one way. Finding a partner with similar goals is another. Other ways are trying new things and experiences, experimenting with a wide variety of healthy foods, engaging in stress-management exercises, giving yourself grace for “slip ups,” reading this magazine and generally doing anything else that helps you stay positive and focused on your health goals.

If your goal is to be fit enough to run a 5K, but you have hardly been off the couch all winter, now is the perfect time to spring into a healthy new routine. In this case, the seeds of change you plant may start with something as small as walking around the block. But when you stay focused and nourish your goal with a positive attitude, gradual but steady increases in activity level, and a true desire to be healthy, you will find yourself running races in no time.

What seeds will you plant for yourself this spring? A new exercise routine? Adopting a healthier style of cooking and eating? No matter what new beginnings you embark on this spring, remember to nourish your goals and dreams in order to see them flourish.



Dwight L. McKee M.D.

Dwight L. McKee
Scientific Director

Nutritional News

Struggling to lose weight ?

The biggest reason you struggle to lose weight may be your outlook. Researchers based in the United Kingdom recently published a study in *International Journal of Obesity* showing that people who think of themselves as being overweight often subconsciously sabotaged their efforts. The study found that people who believed they were overweight tended to gain more body mass than did people who didn't think of themselves as overweight. These findings underscore the importance of maintaining a positive mental outlook.



Eat tofu to help protect your skin

Tofu is made from soy, which is rich in aglycone, an isoflavone that may help reduce wrinkles in skin. A recent study of middle-aged women showed that women who took regular soy-derived aglycone isoflavone supplements displayed a noticeable diminishment in fine wrinkles around their eyes. Aglycone isoflavone is among several plant estrogens found in soy. Other estrogens in soy have shown promise in protecting women from age- and menopause-related changes in skin (and also bone), making tofu a beneficial, as well as delicious, food that women should consider including in their diets. Be sure to obtain tofu made from organic non-GMO soybeans.

Stress has negative effects

When it comes to stress, knowing your limit can be a health saver. Decades of research findings have shown that too much stress has negative effects on our physical health. But everyone has a different tolerance for stress. Knowing and understanding your own mental health, maintaining a positive attitude, taking a balanced approach to life's ups and downs, and developing relaxation exercises are just a few of the ways you can help protect yourself from the damaging effects of stress.

Protect your vision

There's a new and surprising way to help protect your vision—physical exercise. A 20-year study, only recently published in the journal *Ophthalmology*, concludes that three particular actions can help protect vision—quit smoking, limit alcohol intake and increase physical activity. These three actions have long been associated with improved overall health. Now researchers have shown that they help protect vision as well.



Walk your way to better health

Since a recent study showed it took only 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days a week to reduce mortality risks by up to 20 percent, many researchers are saying simple exercises can have a dramatic impact on health. Biking, dancing, swimming and any other activity that causes your heart rate to rise are all helpful.



You Can't Out-Exercise a Bad Diet

Put simply, there are two sides to healthy weight control: diet and exercise. Both are important. You can't be fully healthy without regular physical activity, and exercise cannot compensate for a bad diet.

Despite what some publications want us to believe, both diet and exercise have an equal effect on health; and to be truly healthy, you must find a balance between the two.

An unfortunate debate started in August 2015 when a major soft drink manufacturer provided financial and logistical support to an American group promoting the argument that weight-conscious people are too fixated on diet and not thinking enough about exercise. The message has turned into an idea that a person should not worry about eating junk food or drinking too much sugary soda, but should instead focus on exercising more.

After this news broke, many health experts became alarmed, believing the messages were a calculated effort to deflect criticism about the role sugary drinks have played in the spread of obesity and type 2 diabetes.

In reality, studies performed by government and independent bodies overwhelmingly conclude that in order to be healthy, a person must engage in regular physical activity AND eat a healthy diet.

Focusing on diet is important not just because it supplies the body with vital nutritional support, but also because poor diet can add far more fat and calories than many people realize. Worse still, many people are unaware of how much exercise it would take to burn those extra calories in

order to prevent weight gain. To burn off the number of calories in a single 20-ounce bottle of soda, a person would need to walk nearly three miles. If your midday snack consists of two cookies and a bottle of soda, it's easy to see why you can't out-exercise a bad diet.

A large part of our lives revolves around food. Breakfast, brunch, lunch, dinner, snacks, dessert, meetings, get-togethers, parties—we are constantly thinking about, preparing and consuming food, and the choices we make every time we sit down to eat can affect our health.

It is possible to lose weight by limiting caloric intake alone, but it is much harder to do. This method (dieting alone) also tends to fail and, worse yet, often leads to regaining more pounds than the person originally lost. It also doesn't take into account the many and varied benefits of regular physical activity—reducing cardiovascular disease risk, boosting mood, strengthening bones, growing muscle mass, increasing independence, increasing flexibility, reducing risk of falls, reducing “bad” cholesterol and strengthening heart muscle, to name just a few.





Nutrition and healthy eating doesn't have to be a complex subject. We need to eat more healthy food. We need to eat less unhealthy food.

To be truly healthy, it takes a combination of both healthy diet and regular physical activity.

The most important aspect of the diet and exercise combination is finding out what works for you and sticking with it. Every single person on this planet is a unique individual with unique needs. Some people are more prone to carbohydrate sensitivity,



others have trouble digesting lactose and still others are allergic to gluten. Similarly, some people like to swim but hate running.

Whether you are looking to follow a diet or wish to make healthier meal choices, if you educate yourself, use common sense and set realistic goals, you will find yourself living a healthier, happier life in no time.

The Rise of Noncommunicable Diseases

With all the many benefits modern technology and lifestyles have to offer us, this new way of living has also given rise to sedentary jobs, unhealthy manufactured foods, food deserts where nutritious options are not available to many city-dwellers, high-stress living and more.



These negative aspects of modern life have helped create a new epidemic that is affecting developed nations all over the globe—the rise of noncommunicable diseases.

According to the World Health Organization, noncommunicable diseases are the leading killer today, and they are still on the rise. These diseases include heart disease, strokes, chronic lung diseases, cancers, diabetes, autoimmune diseases and other ailments that cannot be caught from another person or an animal.

Of these, cardiovascular diseases account for most deaths caused by noncommunicable diseases. Following cardiovascular disease in prevalence are cancer, respiratory diseases and diabetes.

Instead of being contracted, these diseases originate from unhealthy choices such as tobacco use, physical inactivity, excessive alcohol consumption, exposure to environmental contaminants, poor diet and stress, among others.

Chronic noncommunicable diseases affect more than just the sufferer. They cause billions of dollars in losses of national income every year and result in millions of people living below the poverty line. On an individual and societal level, something must be done.

One of the reasons developed countries are seeing a rise in noncommunicable diseases is the prevalence of convenience foods combined with busy lifestyles.

The resulting combination of poor diet and little exercise is causing a rapid increase in waistlines for people of all ages. With the added body fat comes the increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease—and obesity is as large a risk factor as smoking for many types of cancer.

Fortunately, for most people, there are only two things necessary to help stave off these preventable illnesses: eating healthy and engaging in regular physical activity. Stress management practices, depending on how stressful your life may be at certain times may also be beneficial.

Choose foods that are high in fiber and contain amounts of fat that are proportional to your fitness level. The less active you are, the less fat and fewer calories your body requires. Focus on a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Variety will help provide your body with a broader range of nutritional support while at the same time preventing taste bud boredom.

Avoid eating junk foods, premade meals and fast foods. These foods tend to be very high in fat, calories, salt and man-made ingredients. At the same time, they are generally very low in micronutrients. If eaten too often, this combination can affect your waistline (and your heart and brain) faster than you might think possible.

Just as important as a healthy diet is for protecting against noncommunicable diseases, is living a lifestyle that includes regular physical activity. Modern lifestyles in developed areas of the world tend to involve desk jobs, long commutes, late nights at the office, busy schedules and little time for exercise. But just 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity most days of the week is enough to impact your health in a multitude of positive ways. Your waistline won't be the only thing that improves, as exercise has been shown to have a beneficial impact on mood, cardiovascular health, flexibility and more—all related to the prevention of noncommunicable diseases.





When it comes to fighting against noncommunicable diseases, any time spent engaged in moderately vigorous physical activity will help.

Along with proper diet and regular physical activity, quitting bad habits can also help safeguard your health. Excessive alcohol consumption and tobacco use are both risk factors for developing noncommunicable diseases.

Stress management exercises may also help protect you. If we're not careful, the daily stresses of modern life can pile up in a hurry, leading to all manner of problems. People who are not aware of positive ways to deal with stress often turn to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or sweets and other unhealthy comfort foods for relief. These behaviors can all compound problems associated with stress and the rise of noncommunicable diseases, so it is vitally important to adopt healthier means of dealing with stress.

Keep a positive perspective; don't let the small things get to you. Be grateful for everything you have in your life already.

When things feel like they're getting tough, remind yourself that you are a wonderful being with the potential to do anything you want. That should put a smile on your face. If you need a little more help shedding stress, other good options are meditation, massage, exercise, listening to music and deep breathing. Nearly any activity that relaxes you or puts a smile on your face can be used as an effective stress buster.

While deaths from noncommunicable diseases mainly occur in adulthood, exposure to risk factors begins in childhood, and risk will build up throughout life. Children who are not taught the importance of living a healthy lifestyle will be more likely to struggle with weight as they age. As they grow older and more unhealthy options become readily available to them, such as fast food, it is vitally important that they understand what they are putting into their bodies.

Global trends in population expansion, unhealthy food consumption, lifestyle changes, rising stress and urbanization accelerate the noncommunicable disease pandemic. For many people around the world, noncommunicable diseases are entirely avoidable with moderate lifestyle changes.

In the course of a day, 30 minutes is not a lot of time. And when you evaluate what that small amount of time can help protect you from, there is no reason not to make sure you spend it on the move. Just taking a brisk walk around the neighborhood is enough. If it sounds simple, that's because it is. If you feel especially rushed during the week, riding a bike to work, if you live close enough, is a creative way to get regular exercise that won't take extra time out of your schedule.

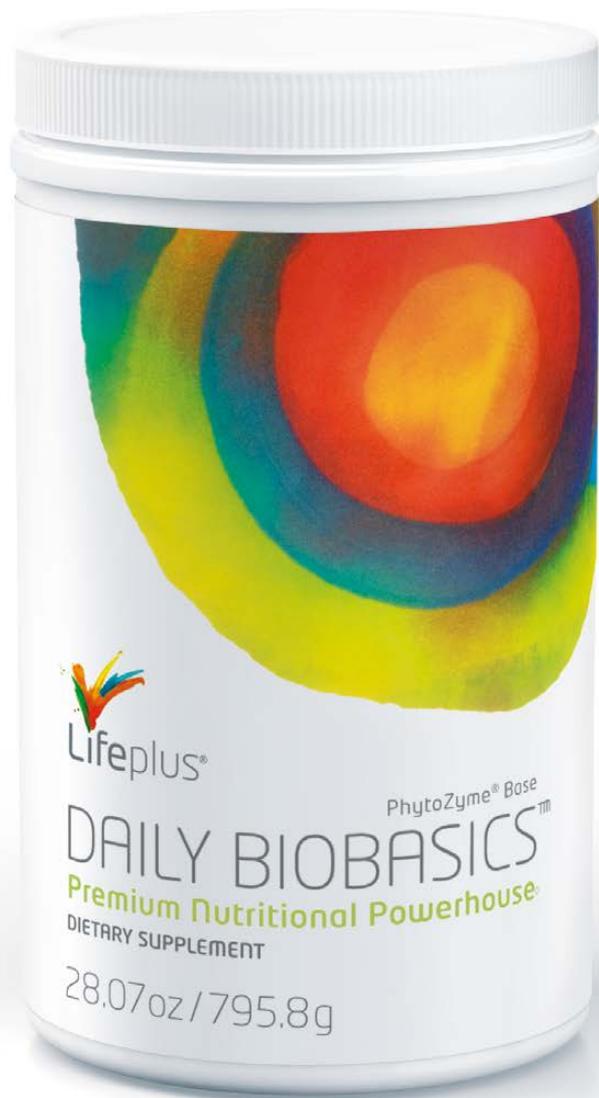
Best of all, those 30 minutes don't need to be consecutive. Even switching from the elevator to the stairs can count as part of your 30 minutes—the time is cumulative. Every minute counts!

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Which Massage Is Right for You?

Everybody enjoys the occasional back rub from a spouse, but there is so much more to massage than that.

Massage is considered part of complementary and alternative medicines. It's increasingly being offered alongside standard treatments. Some health insurance companies even cover massages before illness strikes because it is seen as a proactive method of staying healthy.

According to the world-renowned Mayo Clinic, studies have shown the benefits of massage include effective treatment for reducing stress, pain and muscle tension.

Therefore massage is often used by people suffering from anxiety, digestive disorders, chronic pain disorders, headaches, sports injuries, joint pain and much more. No matter why you may choose to try a massage, there is a specific practice right for you—sports, hot stone, shiatsu, Thai, reflexology, prenatal or others! Exploring the various types and their specific benefits is a wonderfully relaxing way to help take care of your body.

There are many different types of massage, each developed for a specific purpose. Some are meant to work out muscle tightness or joint stiffness, while others are geared solely toward relaxing the client. Here are a few of the more common types of massage and why they may be of benefit to you.

Effleurage

One technique known for its relaxing nature is effleurage massage. Effleurage uses long, gliding strokes with open hands to calm and relax the body. It is often used in combination with other styles, being performed first to relax the body and prepare for deeper tissue work. Some people enjoy effleurage massage because it often creates a sense of comfort and relaxation, which can help alleviate stress.

Hot Stone

Another relaxing technique is hot stone massage. This massage is centuries old and was practiced by ancient civilizations around the world. Smooth stones are heated in hot water and carefully placed on the body to relax muscles and nerves. The stones may be incorporated into other massage techniques or simply left on the body to heat and soothe.

Reflexology

Reflexology is a therapy based on the principle that all parts of the body are linked to the feet and hands, and that by stimulating the corresponding points with touch, it is possible to improve health. Reflexology has its roots in ancient Asia, and has been an integral part of traditional Chinese medicine for centuries; but over the years it has evolved and been improved upon by doctors and physiotherapists around the world.

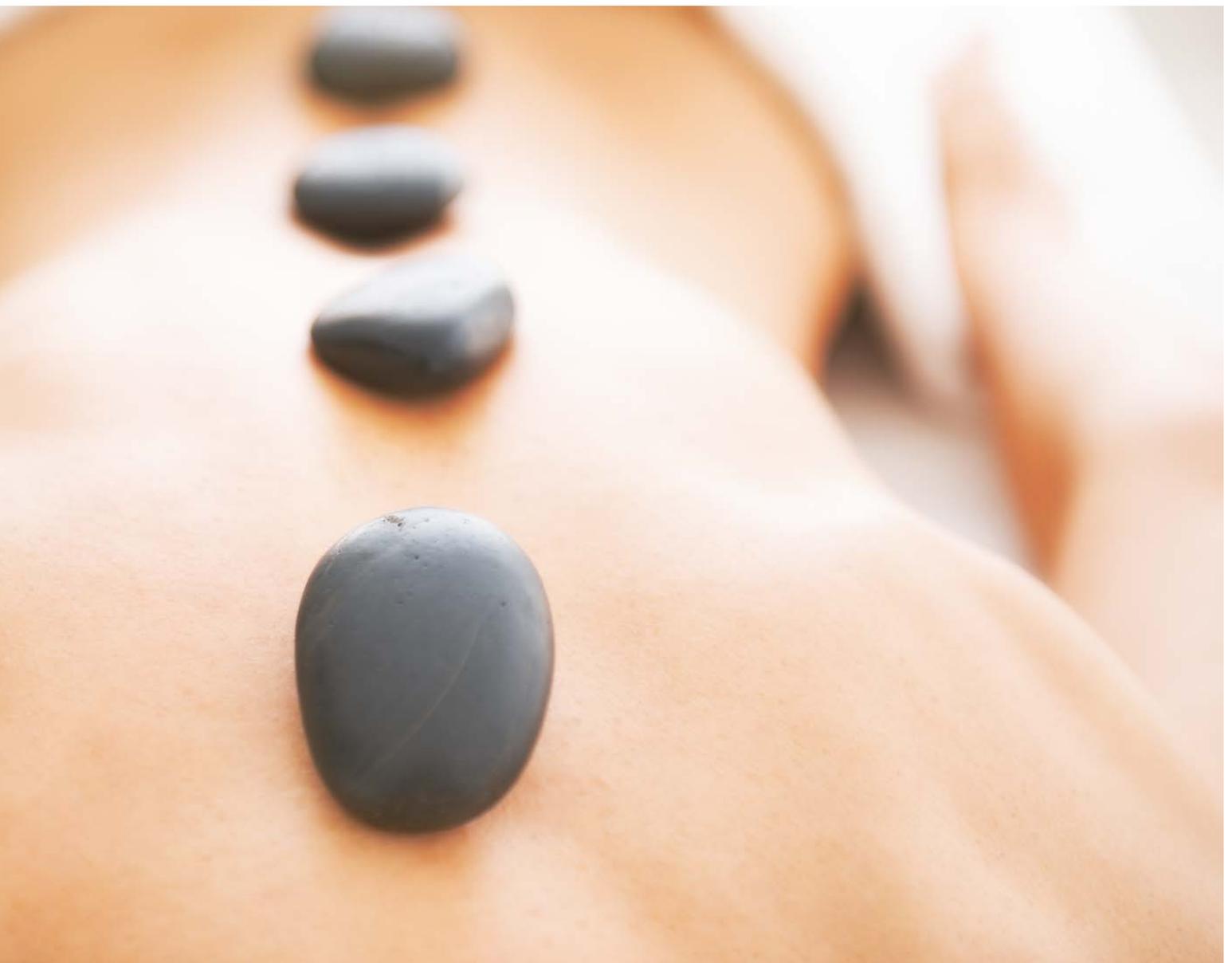
A typical session is performed only on the feet, though it can also be done on the hands and ears when injuries to the feet prevent access to specific areas, or what the reflexologist would describe as “zones.” What you can expect to feel is akin to a soothing foot massage, but the reflexologist will actually be applying pressure to specific zones in order to help either the whole body or any area where you feel discomfort.

The effects of reflexology treatment can be felt immediately. During treatment clients often report feelings of comfort, relaxation and drowsiness. Afterwards patients feel deeply relaxed, with a marked reduction in stress. Feeling revitalized and having improved circulation and improved homeostasis are also lasting characteristics of treatment.



Shiatsu

Similar to reflexology, shiatsu (which translates to “finger pressure”) massage seeks to positively affect the body by physically manipulating specific points. Shiatsu is based on the holistic system of traditional Chinese medicine in which illness is often thought to result from imbalances in the natural flow of energy. To accomplish this, shiatsu therapists use their fingers, thumbs and palms to apply pressure in continuous rhythmic sequences. If the thought of probing for a massage makes you uncomfortable, shiatsu may be a good starting point. Unlike many of the other forms discussed here, shiatsu massage doesn't use oil and may be performed on a fully clothed person.



Prenatal Massage

Massage therapy during pregnancy is a wonderful complementary choice for prenatal care. Prenatal massages are a healthy way to reduce stress and promote overall wellness during pregnancy. Prenatal massages generally focus on relieving many of the normal discomforts experienced during pregnancy, such as backaches, stiff neck muscles, leg cramps and headaches.

Prenatal massages can also help women deal with the ways increased weight can be felt on their joints. The relaxing nature of the massage also encourages blood and lymph circulation, as well as promotes relaxation. Like other massages, prenatal massage may help people dealing with depression and/or anxiety—two frequent and unfortunate effects of pregnancy caused by hormonal changes.



These are just a few of the more common forms of massage you can find. Regardless of which you choose, the endorphins (natural “feel good” chemicals) released by the body during a one-hour massage are roughly equivalent to 20 minutes of exercise or several hours of sleep. Figuring out which type of massage is right for you could be one of the most relaxing “challenges” you ever undergo.



Why Nutritional Values Vary

It would be nice if we could assume that a carrot grown in one area of the world would have roughly the same nutritional value as a carrot grown in another. But that's not always the case.

The nutritional values you may see on labels or in various databases are often the averages of many measurements. Some of the values vary quite a bit. This is natural and to be expected when factoring in growing conditions, soil type, species of plant, types of fertilizer and other variables. All of these factors influence the amount of nutrients a given plant is able to absorb.

According to recent research, modern farming techniques may be affecting nutritional values as well. The December 2015 issue of the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* printed the results of a study in which 43 garden crops were studied for their nutritional content.

The study, performed at the University of Texas at Austin, suggests that nutritional value in crops has been declining over the past few decades.

The study goes on to suggest this may be due to cultivation of plants to improve other traits, such as greater yield, adaptability to foreign climates or resistance to pests.

Some fruits have been bred to be sweeter and therefore more appealing to palettes conditioned to sugary foods. According to information taken from the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, between 1950 and 1999 cantaloupe nearly doubled in sugar content.

Similar variations can be seen in animal products as well. For example, nutritionists often recommend opting for wild-caught salmon over farmed-raised salmon because of how much the fish's diet can affect its nutritional content. Wild salmon are rich in omega-3 fatty acids because of their diet.

However, farmed fish are often fed a diet of soy and grains (often GMO), which does not contain the same nutrients.

A similar difference in nutritional content can be seen in beef when cows are allowed to graze in a pasture rather than being fed a grain-based diet.

Some people who are concerned about nutritional values are attracted to foods labeled "natural" and "organic." Because the terms are used so often and in so many different ways by different people and products, understanding what natural and organic actually mean can be very confusing.

When it comes to supermarket purchases, the organic label signifies non-GMO foods produced without the use of man-made pesticides or herbicides, and grown in soil that has been enriched with compost rather than with synthetic fertilizers.

Many government bodies require producers to obtain special certification based on government-defined standards in order to market food products as organic. Germany, the United States, Switzerland, China and Japan are just a few of the many countries around the world that require such certification.

While the specifics of the laws may vary from region to region, the intent is the same—if a product is marked as organic, it should not contain synthetic pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers, nor be from a GMO seed source.



Other savvy eaters who are particularly concerned about their nutrient intake choose to take vitamin and mineral supplements. But of course these also vary greatly in nutritional content. Much of that variation is due to the manufacturing process and how a company chooses to formulate its supplements.

It would be nice if everything we consumed was natural and organic, but sometimes that just isn't feasible. In other cases, it's not even recommended. Some nutrients produced by microbial fermentation in an industrial laboratory setting may be preferable to their natural counterparts. After all, a laboratory offers high-quality processing techniques and reliability, and excellent quality control with little to no environmental contamination.

To give your body all the nutritional support it needs, it always pays to read nutritional labels carefully and do your best to know exactly where your food is coming from.

Antibiotic Resistance



It was only 70 years ago that we lived in a time when a common infection from a simple scratch could prove fatal. Then came the miracle of antibiotics, and the world changed.



According to some dire predictions, we may be on the verge of another world-changing event with the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Antibiotic resistance is a natural phenomenon that many believe has been sped up with the overuse of antibiotic drugs. When an antibiotic is used to treat a bacterial infection, some bacteria may be naturally resistant. When the other bacteria die, this “stronger” strain may continue to live and proliferate. Over time, this process can create a strain of bacteria that common antibiotic drugs cannot kill.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in the United States alone, at least 2 million people become infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria every year. At least 23,000 of those people die as a direct result of the hard-to-treat infection.

The danger of overusing antibiotics isn't a new discovery. Almost 20 years ago the watchdog group NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) warned that a quarter of all antibiotic prescriptions were unnecessary. Today, doctors and researchers are seeing the results—antibiotic-resistant superbugs that are becoming harder and harder to treat.

It's no surprise that antibiotic use is on the rise. New techniques allow for safer, more accessible surgeries. From hip replacements to heart transplants to tonsillectomies, antibiotics are essential to prevent and treat infection. The more life-improving surgeries doctors are able to do, the more antibiotics they will prescribe.



Overuse of antibiotics is not limited to humans. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, 80 percent of antibiotics sold in the United States are used on livestock. Most of those are not even used on sick animals. It has become normal practice in the meat industry to mix antibiotics into livestock food in order to make chickens, pigs and cows grow faster and larger.

The overuse in farm animals has the same result as in humans. It kills off weak bacteria and creates the perfect environment for antibiotic-resistant bacteria to multiply and thrive. Drug-resistant bacteria can then make their way off the farm and infect humans.

A compounding factor in all of this is that the general public views antibiotics as a quick and easy way to get over illness. Many patients demand their doctors prescribe them a course of antibiotics for non-life-threatening illnesses simply because it is the easier route—but often the underlying illness is viral in origin, and antibiotics will have no effect, except that of negatively impacting the good bacteria in the body (the microbiome), which are important to immune system function—our ultimate antiviral defense. So antibiotics taken for a viral infection can actually retard our ability to recover.

If this is the case, then could the answer be avoiding the circumstances in which antibiotics would be prescribed? If so, how is that possible?

Perhaps one of the best methods of avoiding an overdependence on antibiotics is to avoid health conditions in which antibiotics are necessary.

In other words, stay healthy. We all know this isn't always possible, and at times in your life you will most likely need to take medications in order to regain your health. Occasional use of antibiotics when necessary is fine. It's when we rely on them too often that problems occur.





Fortunately, there are steps you can take to help keep your immune system strong and your body healthy.

Incorporating regular physical activity into your daily life and eating a healthy diet full of fresh fruits and vegetables are simple and effective ways to help keep your body healthy. And healthy bodies simply require fewer surgeries and tend to have more robust immune systems.

You can also fight bad bacteria with good bacteria. We tend to think of bacteria as a cause of disease to be avoided (or treated with antibiotics). But that's not always the case. There are many beneficial types of bacteria that you should not only not avoid, but actually eat!



Your gastrointestinal tract relies on a complex relationship with bacteria in order to perform its duties—which are more than simply digesting food. One of the most important jobs that the digestive system performs is one many people are never aware of. That is to help stimulate the immune system to keep it strong and functioning.

It is possible for your gut to have both beneficial and harmful bacteria. At various times in their lives, most people will experience shifts in the ratio of good to bad bacteria due to diet, illness, contaminated food and other factors.

Of the roughly 200 different types of beneficial bacteria in the body, two stand out—Bifidobacteria and Lactobacillus. These probiotics provide numerous benefits in the digestive process, including improving nutrient availability (which helps the body stay healthy), competing with harmful microorganisms for resources (which helps prevent harmful bacteria from thriving), guarding against certain health problems (including antibiotic-associated diarrhea) and, of course, aiding the immune system.

Fermented foods such as yogurt, sauerkraut and kimchi tend to help protect your immune system because these foods are full of healthy bacteria that may help safeguard against illness.

The health, balance and amount of beneficial bacteria contained in your gut can affect far more in your body than your ability to absorb nutrients. Supplying your body with the probiotics in fermented foods has far reaching benefits from affecting inflammation to supporting immune function to preventing diarrhea.

Spending a little more time outdoors may help prevent illness, and therefore lessen the need for antibiotics. Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays causes the body to create vitamin D, which it uses to keep a healthy immune system functioning properly. Consequently, during cold and flu season it may be especially prudent to spend time in the sun and/or supplement with vitamin D. Studies have shown that populations in higher latitudes that receive less sun tend to experience more cases of illness during the winter.

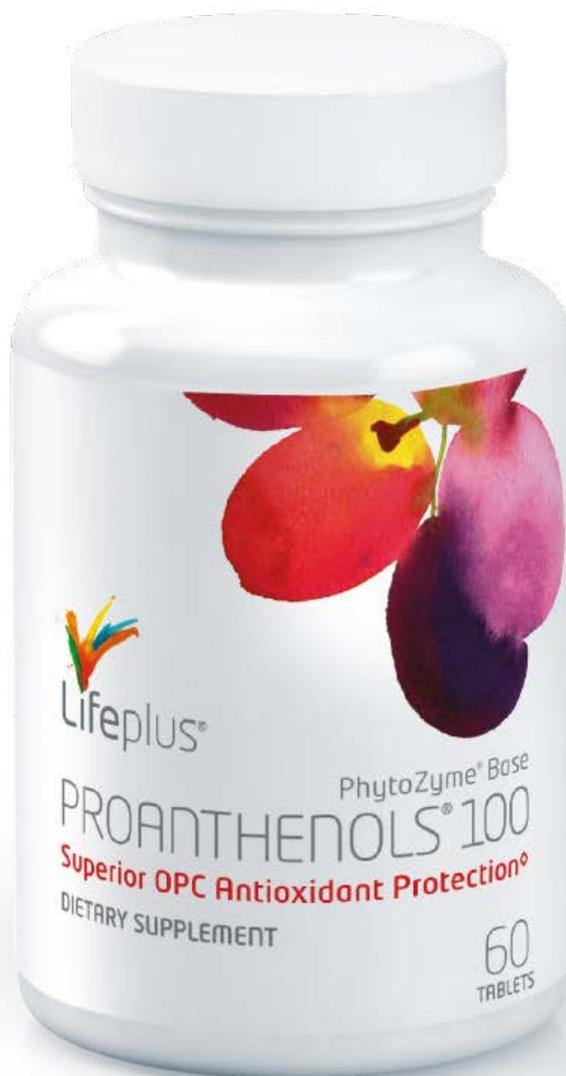
Antibiotic drugs save lives. Without them, routine surgery and childbirth could be much more hazardous. We simply use antibiotics too much—often for non-lifesaving and even non-useful purposes, such as treating the flu or trying to raise cheaper livestock.

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Chili Peppers

New research is giving spicy food lovers something to smile about.

The beneficial role of spices in health due to their bioactive components has been shown time and time again in a variety of studies. However, until recently evidence relating daily consumption of spicy foods to mortality from prospective cohort studies has been lacking.

A recent Chinese study¹ concluded that the “habitual consumption of spicy foods was inversely associated with total and certain cause specific mortality (cancer, ischemic heart diseases, and respiratory diseases), independent of other risk factors of death.”

In layman’s terms, thanks to this new study, spicy food lovers now have evidence that their chili-pepper-rich diets may be helping to protect their bodies .

The new study following nearly half a million participants from 10 geographically diverse areas across China reported that the participants who ate more spicy foods saw a decrease in total and certain cause specific mortality, independent of other risk factors of death, compared to participants who consumed fewer spicy foods.

China is a good location for such a study, as chilli pepper is among the most popular spicy foods consumed nationwide.

The reasons why chilli peppers may be producing these effects are vast and varied.

This phenomenon can help protect against obesity, which is a major risk factor for developing heart disease, diabetes, stroke and other maladies.

It’s been shown that consuming red pepper helps to decrease appetite and therefore energy intake in people.



Spices such as dried chilli peppers have been shown in clinical studies to exhibit antibacterial activity and positively affect healthy gut flora populations. In humans this translates to reduced risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and liver cirrhosis.

At least one study has even shown that diets rich in spicy food may help guard against certain cancers.²

The same compound that gives chili peppers their signature heat, capsaicin, has a number of medicinal uses, both traditional and cutting edge. From ancient Ayurvedic practices that used curry for traditional medicinal purposes to revolutionary scientific studies using isolated components of peppers, spicy food has been proven again and again to be healthy food. Capsaicin is a

potent inhibitor of substance P (a peptide composed of a chain of 11 amino acid residues). Substance P is associated with inflammatory processes. As inflammation is a common health concern linked to many illnesses, capsaicin may be at the root of many of purported health benefits of chili peppers.

It’s a common worry that tongue-burning, ultra-hot peppers do more damage than good, especially in the stomach. But contrary to popular belief, spicy peppers and the capsaicin found in them do not cause ulcers. In fact, the opposite is true—if you can take the heat, hot peppers have shown great promise in preventing and healing ulcers. When capsaicin enters the stomach, instead of eroding the walls as was once believed, it actually inhibits acid secretion and promotes both alkaline and mucus secretions. The resulting decrease in acidity creates an environment in which the bacteria *H. pylori*, one of the most common causes of ulcers, cannot live.

In general, the hotter the chili pepper, the more capsaicin it contains. Jalapenos are a common pepper with high capsaicin content, but the hottest varieties include habanero and Scotch bonnet peppers. Milder varieties include Spanish pimentos and Anaheim and Hungarian cherry peppers. No matter which peppers you use to spice up your dishes, the evidence is clear: spicy foods are good for your health.

¹[Jun Lv, Lu Qi, Canqing Yu, et al, “Consumption of spicy foods and total cause specific mortality: population based cohort study,” *BMJ* 2015;351:h3942 | doi: 10 .113 6/bmj.h3942].

²[Aggarwal BB, Van Kuiken ME, Iyer LH, et al, “Molecular targets of nutraceuticals derived from dietary spices: potential role in suppression of inflammation and tumorigenesis,” *Exp Biol Med* 2009;234:825-49].

Small Changes— Big Results

Between family, friends and careers, modern women are busier now than ever before—sometimes they are so busy that they forget to make time for themselves to relax.

It's becoming harder and harder to make time for a trip to the gym after work, and it's easier to pick up fast food on the way home than actually cook a healthy meal. Here are a few small changes any woman can make to live a happier, healthier life.

One of the hardest yet most beneficial small changes a woman can make is simply saying no more often. Women feel pulled in many directions. Job duties, friendships, children, spouses—sometimes it feels like every person we know asks for something. Sometimes it's hard to say no to a request for help or an invitation to a fun night out. But if you never say no, your life can quickly fill up to the point that you become overwhelmed.

Understanding your limits and learning to take on less can greatly reduce chronic stress, which we know is bad for the body and ultimately makes it harder to accomplish personal and professional goals.

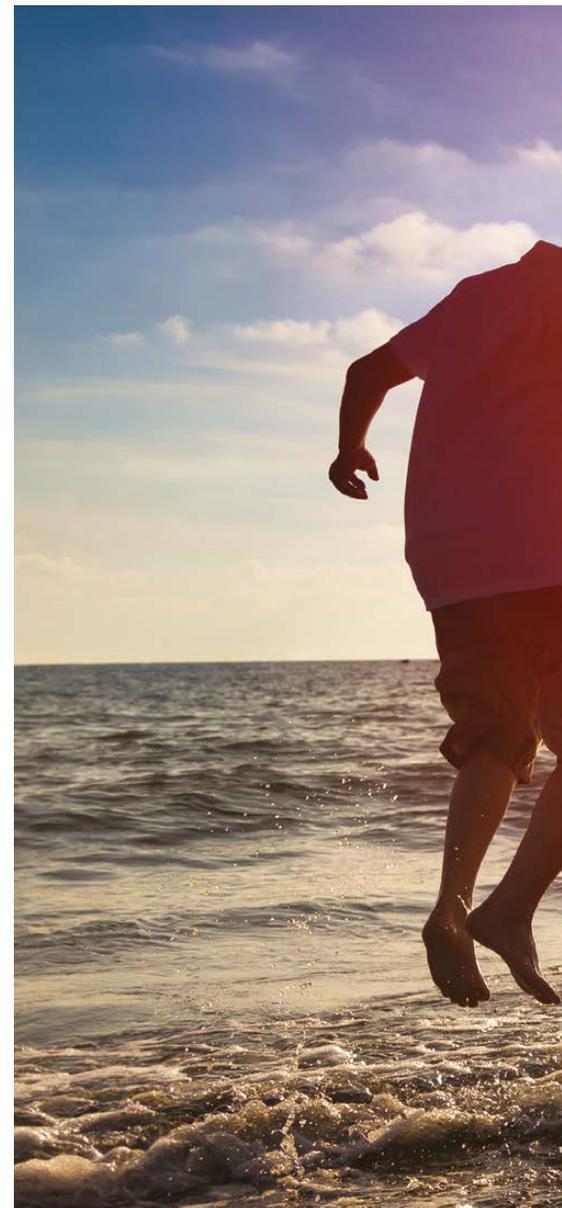
Dealing with stress in a constructive manner is essential for any modern woman.

Women can avoid chronic stress and its complications by committing to regular relaxation times and practices. Getting into the habit of practicing yoga or meditating regularly before entering a stressful time can help prevent stress overload from occurring. If your life is already in a place that has brought on stress-related complications, it isn't too late to teach your body how to relax. It only takes a few minutes out of your busy day (although longer is better if you have the time) to relax and shed stress. Try listening to calming music in a quiet room for

just 15 minutes. Or, you can simply close your eyes to picture a quiet, relaxing scene in your mind. Make it as vivid as possible.

Sometimes all it takes to reduce stress levels is taking a quick mental vacation somewhere peaceful.

Leave work at work. There is no quicker way to add stress and tension to your house than bringing work home with you. With smartphones, tablets and email, many women stay connected to their jobs 24 hours a day. Often this happens without our fully realizing it. But if you even glance at your work email account while at home, you are taking yourself out of a loving, nurturing environment and entering a stressful one. This can be especially off-putting when on vacation. Everyone needs to get away from time to time, but a vacation isn't really a vacation if you're constantly on your phone or checking your business email. Make it clear to your boss that while at work you will do your absolute best to help the company, but



family life and vacations are your time to relax and recharge. That way you will have more time with your family and come back to work refreshed and ready to go.

Separating work and play does more than just help you recharge your mental batteries. According to the Framingham Heart Study, women who take a vacation only once every six years or less are nearly eight times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than women who take a vacation at least twice a year.

If you find yourself going out to lunch every day, switching to packed lunches can be another small change with big results. Taking a sack lunch is cheaper, healthier and quicker than going out to lunch. Taking a lunch with you also saves time in the middle of the day—time you can use to run errands or



exercise by walking around the office building, or time you can use to relax or spend time alone.

It may seem counterintuitive, but cooking bigger meals is another small change with big results. Everyone has nights when they are too tired or too stressed to make dinner. It's tempting to order in on those nights; but what if you had a cache of healthy dinners in your freezer? When cooking meals, make a few more portions than you will actually need. Take the leftovers to work for lunch, or freeze them for a day when you're running behind but don't want an unhealthy convenience meal.

Still on the topic of meals, research has shown that eating breakfast may be important in weight control. A lot of women skip breakfast because they don't think they have the time or they think it will help them lose weight—but it can do the exact

opposite. When your body wakes up in the morning, it's hungry. When you skip breakfast in order to consume fewer calories as a weight-loss tactic, your body, not understanding it was intentional, enters "starvation mode." When this happens, your body preserves energy by slowing your metabolic rate. A slowed metabolic rate makes it even harder to burn off the calories ingested the next time you eat. Breakfast is the first chance you have to get the fuel you need to work through the day.

There are countless small changes a woman can make that will lead to big results. Reducing stress, eating regular healthy meals and learning to politely say no to some activities can help any woman improve her health and happiness.



Soothing Tired Muscles

It's nearly impossible to be health conscious and not have to deal with tired and sore muscles occasionally. From accidentally overdoing it at the gym to pushing your personal limits running a marathon, there are many reasons we may end up with aching muscles.

Regardless of the activity that caused your aches and pains, the underlying causes are generally the same—too many repeated movements, dehydration or accidental strains. Fortunately, there are steps that can be taken both before and after exercise to help soothe tired and sore muscles.

Proper hydration before any strenuous activity is vital to your athletic performance and health. Your muscles contain a lot of water. If you are not drinking enough, your muscles will suffer during and after a workout.

Even if you are not worried about sore muscles after a workout, proper hydration has been shown to contribute to increased athletic performance.

To soothe your muscles after a workout, you might try drinking tart cherry juice. Not long ago, British researchers discovered that drinking just one ounce of concentrated cherry juice twice daily helped people bounce back faster from their workouts. It doesn't take long for the effects of cherry juice to be seen—these results were found after less than two weeks of drinking the juice!

The researchers involved in the study believe the results are due to tart cherries containing high levels of antioxidants that reduce exercise-induced muscle damage by helping the body handle inflammation faster and more normally.

Eating complex carbohydrates about 20 minutes before a workout can help provide your body with a long-lasting, steady source of energy that may help reduce muscle protein breakdown during exercise. The less damage done, the quicker your body is able to recover from exercise.

Stretching exercises are an important part of any physical activity program. Incorporating stretching and flexibility activities into your regular fitness routine promotes more freedom of movement and helps protect against muscle strain.

Flexibility exercises done independently of other workouts can help protect against muscle pains before they occur. Flexibility exercises help maintain joint stability, keep muscles limber and, depending on the activity, also improve balance. From basic stretches to intricate yoga poses, these activities impact nearly every area of life by simply allowing you the range of movement needed to tie your shoes or reach a book on the top shelf.

According to a study published in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, one of the best ways to soothe sore muscles is to use them. The small study involved 20 Danish women who performed shoulder exercises. Two days later the women received a 10-minute massage on one shoulder and performed 10 minutes of similar exercise with the other shoulder. The women felt the same amount of relief in each shoulder.

Previous research has also shown that increased blood flow speeds delivery of nutrients to damaged muscles, makes tissues more elastic and increases range of motion—all of which can help ease aches and pains.

Even though it may seem like the opposite of what you want to do with an aching muscle, the surest way to increase blood flow to your sore muscles is to exercise them.

On the other hand, resting overworked muscles and relaxing during a sports massage can be helpful too. If you are unsure of which method is right for your particular situation, or if you have muscle pain that lasts for more than a few days, ask your doctor or a physical therapist for advice.

Ginger and other inflammation-managing foods can help reduce soreness as well. Ginger is rich in inflammation-managing compounds, such as gingerols, which may help soothe sore muscles after a workout. Methyl-sulfonyl-methane (MSM) 1-2 grams, taken before and/or after exercise, has likewise been shown to significantly reduce delayed-onset muscle soreness from workouts.

There are many ways to help soothe muscle aches and pains before, during and after a workout. Which ones work best for you and your lifestyle is a personal choice. Whichever you choose, taking care of your sore body will help get you back in the gym for another invigorating workout in no time.





The Right Amount of Exercise for Seniors

It's never too late to start getting in shape. Staying physically active as we age is one of the most important things seniors can do to preserve their health, happiness and independence.

Unfortunately, many older people don't realize this, and as they age they become more and more afraid of injuring themselves, so they become less and less active. This leads to increased muscle atrophy and even less activity. The cycle causes health problems and fears of slips, trips and falls that can cause seniors to be even less mobile.

Sedentary lifestyles don't just affect a person's physical health, they affect cognitive abilities as well.

Why does being physically active positively affect cognitive function? Physical exercise promotes brain health in a number of ways, including increasing blood flow, which helps improve cerebrovascular health. Exercise also prompts the release of neurotrophic factors like BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor), which help stimulate new neuron growth. Physical activity also increases glucose and lipid metabolism, which helps to nourish the brain.

Additionally, a relatively new study undertaken at Beckman Institute at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign saw a positive link between physical activity and the microstructures of white matter in the brain. White matter integrity is linked to faster neural conduction between brain regions and superior cognitive performance.

When it comes to healthy brains, how much exercise is enough? The answer may not be what you would expect. In a recent study,¹ researchers recruited 101 sedentary older adults at least 65 years of age, and studied how their cognitive abilities changed with varying levels of exercise.

The volunteers were split into four groups and assigned levels of regular exercise from none to 225 minutes per week. All but the sedentary group saw noticeable improvements on tests designed to score how well they could remember and think.

What was startling was that there was only a fractional difference in cognitive ability between the people who only exercised a little and those who exercised the most (ranging from 75 minutes per week to 225 minutes per week).

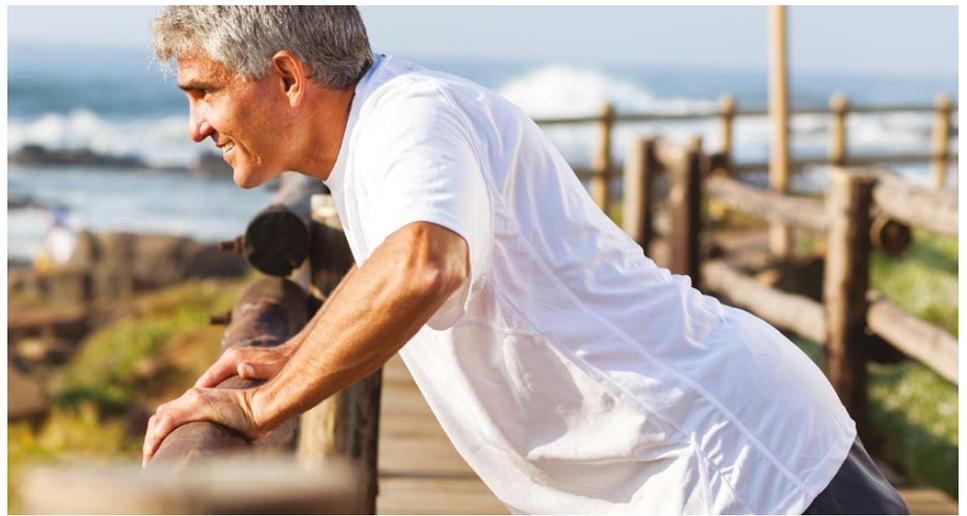
It appears that in terms of boosting mental abilities, the right amount of exercise does not vary much after a certain point. However, physical capabilities (which could also be linked to confidence and therefore mood) are definitely improved with more time spent being active.

The same study found that the more an elderly person exercised, the more his or her endurance increased. This is hardly shocking. But it is evidence that more is not always better depending on personal goals. Are you working out in order to train for a marathon, or are you working out to maintain your current physical state and cognitive function?

Exercise of any kind can also help boost mood. When the body is physically active the brain releases natural feel-good



¹[Vidoni ED, Johnson DK, Morris JK, Van Sciver A, Greer CS, Billinger SA, et al. (2015) "Dose-Response of Aerobic Exercise on Cognition: A Community-Based, Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial," PLOS ONE 10(7): e0131647. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0131647]



chemicals. When seniors are able to stay active they feel better mentally and physically. These positive feelings further help them stay focused on all the positive aspects of an active lifestyle. When you view exercise as a way to maintain a positive mental outlook, you may again decide that more is better.

There is also evidence that there may be a direct correlation between muscle mass and the immune system. Combined with all the great health benefits that come from a fit body, it appears that maintaining lean muscle mass throughout life may be a very helpful tool in fighting the aging process. The more resistance training a person engages in, the larger his or her muscles become; but you don't need to look like a professional body builder to gain these benefits. Again, how much you choose to exercise should be dependent on your personal goals.

You're never too old to start exercising. And with the many physical and mental benefits that come with regular physical activity, there is no reason not to start today! If you are nervous about getting active at your age, consult your doctor and physical therapist first. They can help you find a program that offers the right amount of physical activity to meet your goals.



Benefits of Reading to Your Kids

Ask any pediatrician at what age you should start reading to your child, and you'll be told it's never too early.

A growing number of studies show that the benefits of reading to children early and often are too important to skip out on. Even if you yourself do not read often, don't miss this opportunity to help your child flourish later in life.

In the September 2015 issue of *Pediatrics*, a study was published concluding that, when preschool children receive greater home reading exposure by having stories read to them, they experience increased activation of brain areas supporting mental imagery and narrative comprehension than do children who are not read to.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, when parents take time to regularly read to their children, it stimulates optimal patterns of brain development.

The act also strengthens parent-child relationships at a critical time in child development. Ultimately, these actions help a child build language, literacy and social-emotional skills that will benefit him or her for a lifetime.

To be clear, the simple act of reading to your children (even long before they are able to comprehend written language) has been scientifically shown to increase activity in the areas of the brain that support semantic language processing.

From the moment your baby is born you can begin to instill a love of reading.

Here are a few tips and tricks to help a reader-to-be at any age get involved and fall in love with literacy.

Be Consistent

Read together every day to make reading a regular activity. Take this time to cuddle close and bond over books. Infants will listen to parents' voices, smell their comforting scent and get used to the sounds of words.

Be Descriptive

Add your own comments to accompany the story, and ask your child questions to further engage her. For example, "Look at that cute brown dog. What would you name him if he was our dog?"



Be Positive

Even if you are tired after a long day of work, it's important to not act like reading time is a chore for you. Say how much you enjoy reading with your child and encourage similar behavior in him. At the same time, don't force an overly fussy child to continue reading if it is going to be off-putting. Know your child's limits.

Be Engaging

Read with expression and fun in your voice and give different characters their own voices too! You can even ask your child to help come up with voices.



Be Comfortable

Pick a spot that is comfortable and free from distractions. Turn off phones. Don't just silence them; even the soft buzzing of a vibrating phone is enough to distract a small child. Use plenty of pillows and blankets to create a cozy, comfortable atmosphere.

Be Encouraging

Your child should never feel intimidated or uncomfortable. When he or she is beginning to understand letters and words, never criticize mistakes. Instead, encourage him by reading out loud together, praising often and generally making reading a fun and safe environment.



It's never too early (or too late, if you haven't started yet) to begin reading to your child. In the beginning your infant won't be able to understand the words you are reading—but that doesn't mean your little bundle of joy won't be benefitting. From helping to build strong, healthy brains to bonding with family to promoting a lifetime of reading good books, your reading to them will benefit children of every age.

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Ask the Expert

Should I include more fiber in my diet?

We tend to think of fiber as something that helps keep us regular by aiding in the digestion process, but fiber does far more than that. It is also fermented by bacteria in the intestines, which turn it into short chain fatty acids the body can use as fuel. It also facilitates absorption of nutrients, and has been shown to help reduce the risk of developing heart disease and diabetes. Fiber, sometimes referred to as roughage or bulk, is the part of plant that is not fully digested when we eat it. It comes in two basic forms—soluble and insoluble.

You need both in your diet because they act differently in the digestion process. Beans, legumes and whole grains are all great sources of dietary fiber. So are fruit and vegetable skins, husks and seeds.



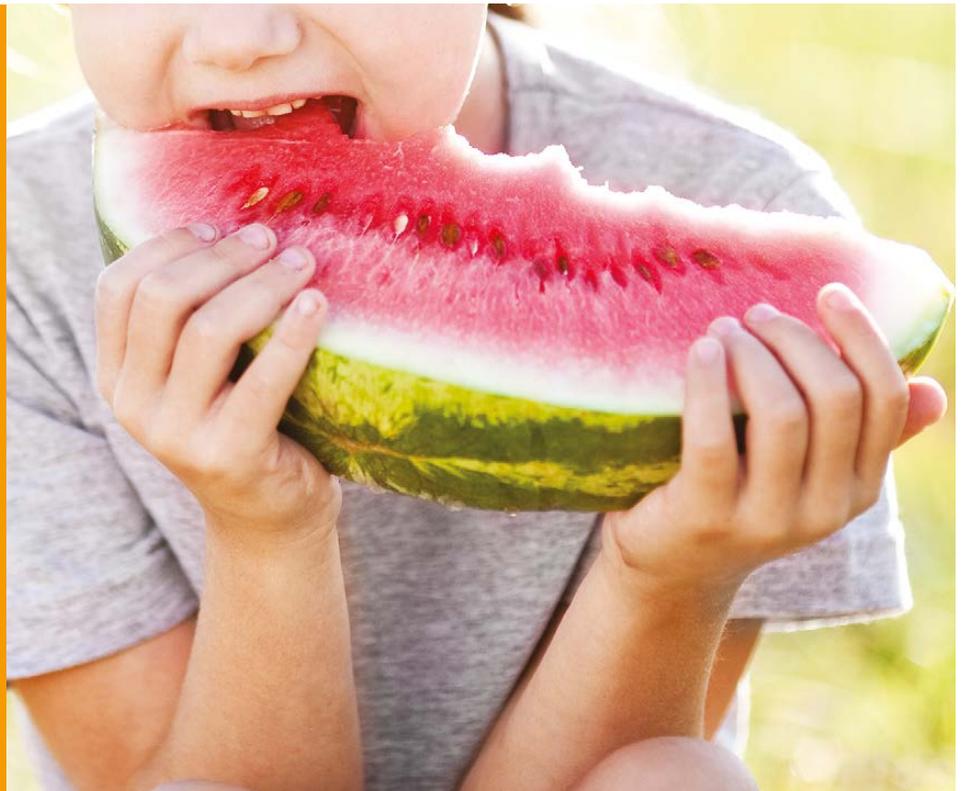
A simple way to include more fiber in a diet is to remember not to peel your food. Eat apples, pears and potatoes with the skin on. Switch from white breads and pastas to 100 percent whole-grain versions. Switching from white rice to brown rice can also help boost dietary fiber intake.

When is a person too old to get in shape?

The short answer is: never! No matter what your age or current physical condition, your body can reap the many benefits of a healthy lifestyle and regular physical activity. In fact, exercise may even become more important as we age. Without regular physical activity the body tends to lose muscle mass and flexibility. With this loss comes a loss in mobility and confidence. Therefore, maintaining muscle mass by staying active may be one of the most important things seniors can do to preserve their health as they age. Unfortunately, many people don't realize this, and as they age they become more and more afraid of injuring themselves, so they become less and less active. If it has been a while since you last exercised, it's best to be careful and consult your doctor or physical therapist first. He or she can help you find a good training regimen tailored to your needs and abilities. There are plenty of personal trainers out there who specialize in working with older adults. Start slow, be careful and have fun!

Can I serve my child a glass of juice instead of a piece of fruit?

Children like juice because it tastes good and parents like it because it's made from fruit...usually. It's true that juice can be a very healthy beverage choice, especially if it is labeled 100 percent all natural. Juices can be a good source of vitamins; but even so, there are downsides. During the juice-making process some very important nutrients (including all the fiber) are stripped out and other not-so-healthy ingredients are often added, such as sweeteners (sugars). These sugars attract bacteria, which attack the teeth and contribute to cavities. Even worse, many "juices" are little more than sugary water with added flavors. On the other hand, all-natural juices may supply your child with a whole serving of fruit along with its water content. The bottom line is all-natural fruit juices can be an occasional good source of vitamins, but should not replace real fruit.



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