

March/April 2017

The art of growing young[®]

Digestive Health
Feature Article



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Staying Active as
We Age

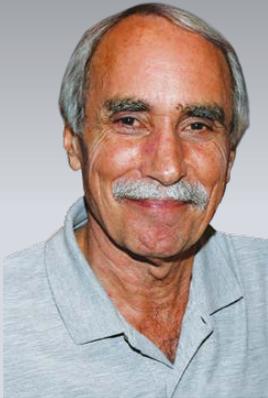
New Experiences
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Eating Well
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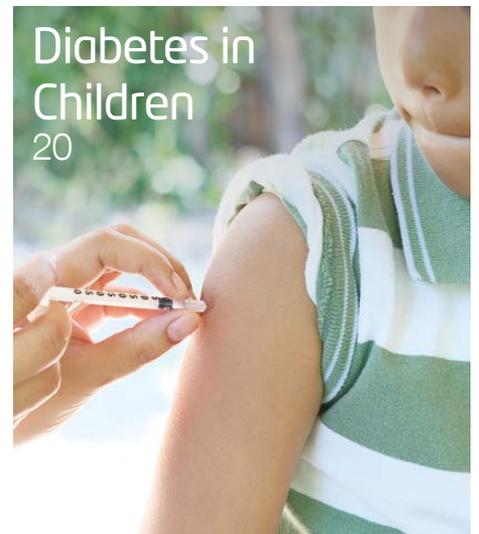
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Listening to Yourself

Lately, I've noticed a recurring message in many of the articles here in *The Art of Growing Young*. Regardless of whether we are talking about diet, exercise, mindfulness or any other topic related to your health, it's often said that you must first take the time to learn about all of your healthy options and then decide what is right for you.

It occurs to me that many of us truly don't know what is right for ourselves. That's nobody's fault. We live in a confusing age where the media, news outlets and advertisements are constantly trying to answer that question before we can even ask it.

I'd like to suggest that we try to tune out the constant barrage of suggestions from television, the Internet and other media sources so we can actually listen to ourselves. Our bodies have a lot to say if we can cut through the distractions of daily life and truly listen.

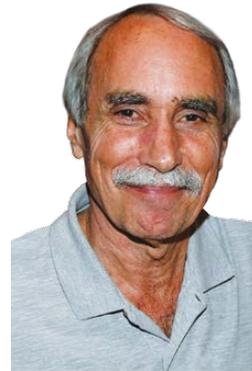
For example, only you know which foods you actually enjoy enough to eat on a regular basis. Eating a diet that you don't like because your friend says it helped her lose weight is not going to last. Training for a marathon just because a fitness reporter on television says it's healthy is not sustainable if you can't stand running.

We live in a remarkable time with so many healthy options available. Never before have humans had access to such an abundance of healthy foods in the supermarket. There

has never been a time when science and research have been able to show exactly how exercises benefit the body. With all this knowledge and availability, we can make extremely informed decisions—but we have to also listen to our own bodies' unique needs and desires.

Experimenting with these options (diet, exercise, stress management, medicine, supplements, relaxation, etc.) is a fun and fulfilling way to lead a healthier life if you let your body and common sense guide your decisions for you.

Never forget that you are a unique person with unique needs, desires, likes, dislikes and goals. Only you can know which decisions will make you healthy AND happy. If you truly listen to your body, you will be guided in the right direction toward health.



Dwight L. McKee M.D.

Dwight L. McKee
Scientific Director

Nutritional News

Walk for your brain

Evidence suggests that you can help protect your brain by walking as little as one mile a day. A nine-year study of nearly 300 adults found that walking just six to nine miles every week resulted in increases in the volume of the frontal, occipital, entorhinal and hippocampal regions of the brain, all of which lead to reduced risk for cognitive impairment. Of course, walking more miles (or engaging in any equivalent physical activity) is even better for your body.



Beat the blues with sauerkraut

Scientists have found a connection between fermented foods and happiness. Fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kombucha, tempeh and kimchi seem to protect against depression by helping limit the amount of certain toxins and inflammatory agents that enter the body through the intestines. Specifically, absorption of lipopolysaccharide endotoxin, a component of certain intestinal bacteria that has been shown to provoke symptoms of depression, is reduced.

Fat and obesity

Despite what our parents told us as we were growing up, eating fat does not necessarily lead to overweight and obesity. Like all other nutrients we consume, fat provides our bodies with essential nutrition that contributes to our overall health and well-being. It's only when we consume amounts of fat (and calories) that exceed the energy we expend throughout the day that weight gain can occur.

Toxic relationships

These may lead to a shorter life, according to the latest research. Ongoing conflict in your closest relationships can increase stress, hurt your mental health and lower immunity. But a positive, close relationship with your spouse or partner can help you stay healthier and live longer.



Sweet treats for cardiovascular health

One sweet treat may help ward off heart disease. According to research, regularly consuming small amounts of polyphenol-rich dark chocolate helps lower blood pressure and protect cardiovascular health. In the study, participants ate just 30 calories' worth of the sweet treat every day. Consuming a whole candy bar of milk chocolate and caramel will not produce the same results.



Importance of Staying Active as We Age

Staying fit and active as we age is a major contributing factor to staying healthy as we age. Research suggests that elderly people who maintain an active lifestyle have a much lower risk of suffering from heart disease, depression, diabetes and other ailments.

Muscle mass and bone mass naturally deteriorate with age unless we make an effort to stay active. This deterioration can lead to problems such as back pain, reduced range of movement, loss of balance, osteoarthritis and osteoporosis, which make it even harder to get active.

Regular physical activity slows (and can reverse) age-related loss of muscle mass, as well as helps strengthen bones, reduce joint pain, improve balance and foster better mobility.

All of this helps reduce the risk and fear of falling and suffering a serious injury.

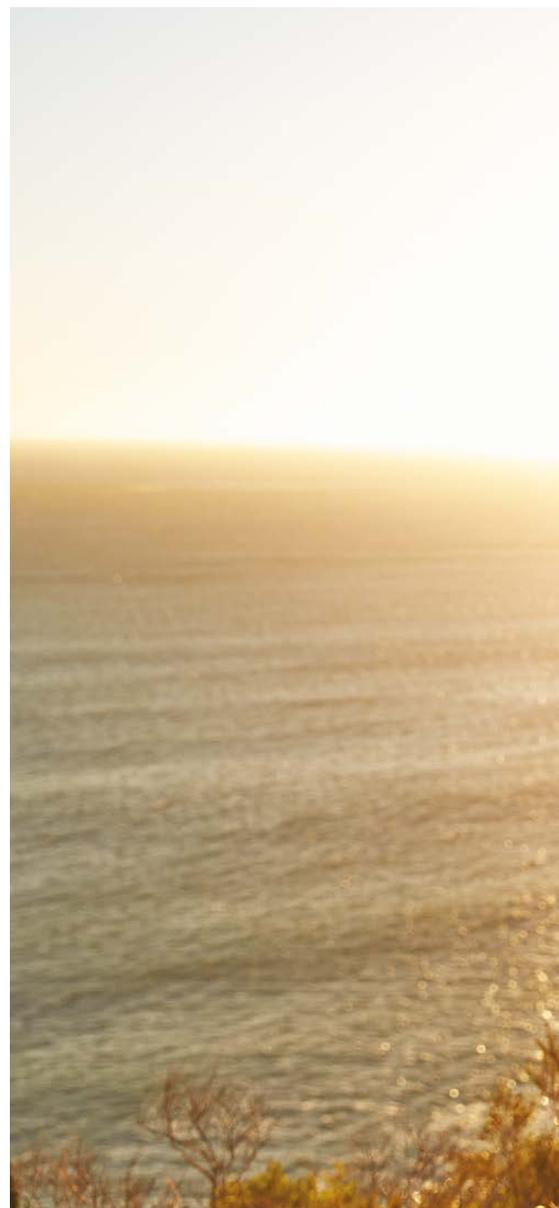
Not long ago, many doctors still told patients that strenuous exercise was necessary to improve health and gain these benefits. However, today we know that people of all ages can experience wonderful health-boosting results from as little as 30 minutes of moderate physical activity—that includes walking! Moderate exercise is great, but for those who are just starting out after a long period of inactivity, even low-intensity workouts will improve health.

With all of this in mind, walking clubs and sports are popping up all over the world. Sports are no longer for just the young. Elderly and aging people who want to get or stay fit but know their limits are adapting to fit their needs to sports that traditionally were for the young. Walking soccer (or walking football, as it is known throughout most of the world) teams are becoming increasingly popular. These new clubs let less physically able individuals get together and enjoy competitive team sports they loved as youths without the high-impact, strenuous level of activity.

These walking sports generally have the same basic rules as their standard versions, with minor adjustments to fit the abilities of people over 50. Generally, this means running is not allowed. To get to the ball, the next base or goal line, all players must walk, meaning one foot must be on the ground at all times. To keep the playing field even, penalties are imposed on anyone who runs.

These new walking sports are wonderful because they are open to everyone who wants to stay active as they age—men and women play alongside each other, as do people of multiple ability levels.

Because of the unique rules, everyone is able to play and enjoy the sport while experiencing the benefits of mild to moderate exercise!



Joining or founding a walking sport club gives the elderly another tool to stay young—social interaction. Loneliness is a major factor contributing to depression in the elderly. When people get together to play sports, they are able to combat loneliness and socialize. This also helps give the brain exercise, as the social interaction and sports strategies required to play games require the brain to use problem-solving skills, which are great for helping maintain healthy cognitive function.



If sports aren't your thing, there are plenty of walking clubs as well. These offer the exact same benefits as a walking sport but don't require people to play a game. They are simply groups of people who want to exercise and know involving themselves in a group helps keep them motivated to get out and stay active.

Many older people simply don't realize how important it is to stay active. Unfortunately, this often means that as they age they become less and less active, which leads them to become more and more afraid of injuring themselves. This leads to even less activity and even more muscle atrophy. Walking sports may help stop this cycle by luring some of these people out of their homes and into physical activity.



Life at any age is much more enjoyable when you are not confined to a chair for fear of falling or because it is no longer comfortable to move around. Walking is nature's original form of exercise. It's easy, safe, low impact and healthy. Whether you do it alone, as a group or as part of your favorite sport, your mind and body will benefit.

Changing Our Relationship with Food

All around the world, people are increasingly adopting different diet choices, such as vegan, vegetarian, flexitarian, ovotarian, lactovegetarian, lacto-ovotarian and even pescatarian.





People change their diets because of health concerns, religious beliefs, ethical principles and more. Unfortunately, a lot of people just go with what they read in magazines and hear on the news. With each change comes a new stage in our relationship with food.

Our relationship with food is constantly evolving. At birth, the relationship is simple: food is nourishment provided for us by our mothers (especially if we were lucky enough to be breastfed).

As we grow, the relationship becomes more and more complex as our tastes change and we associate food and eating with other areas of life. We change our diets to fit our goals. We eat different foods as a reaction to our health status.

On a larger scale, populations adopt new diets based on environmental factors, especially rain, temperature and soil conditions; changing food availability; technology allowing food to stay fresh while traveling longer distances; and the influence of large corporations and marketing firms on our buying habits.

Making drastic changes to what we eat is a natural and healthy part of life if it is guided by evidence and made with well-informed decisions. Vegetarianism and veganism are on the rise worldwide, due to a widespread desire to reject “factory farming” of food animals and processed man-made foods and to return to a more natural diet. Recently, the World Health Organization classified processed and preserved meats as Level 1 carcinogens, which is the most dangerous classification of environmental substances that can generate cancer in humans. This desire to return to a more natural diet is backed up by medical experts and nutritionists who now understand a good deal more about the way nutrients from fruits, vegetables and herbs work in the body than was known even a decade ago.

Beyond Being Hungry

We eat for a variety of reasons, not just because our bodies signal a need for nutrition with feelings of hunger. We eat for emotional support, to bond with friends, for stimulation when we’re bored, for adventure and more. Changing your relationship with food requires a better understanding of not just why you eat but also why you choose a particular food at a particular time.

From brushing your teeth to running a marathon, everything you do during the day is powered by the food you eat. When you experience hunger, your body is telling you it needs fuel to continue accomplishing these tasks. This is the most basic and healthiest reason for eating.

Think about the last few times you ate. Was it simply because your body signaled it was hungry, or was something else influencing you? Food is a powerful mood-altering substance, and certain processed foods (such as cookies) have been shown to be highly addictive for a subset of the population. Did you turn to food because you were upset or feeling stressed? Emotional eating is one of the most common reasons people eat when they are not hungry. Perhaps you were not emotionally upset but just bored. How many times a week do you find yourself wandering into the kitchen for a snack simply because you don’t have anything else to do? We eat for social reasons as well. Think about the many times you’ve gone to a restaurant for a date, a gathering of friends or a family night out.

To change your relationship with food for the better, be mindful and always ask yourself why you are eating. Is it because you are hungry or is something else going on?

Our relationships with food can be complex and, unfortunately, even negative. Give yourself permission to enjoy what you’re eating. Regret and self-anger are negative emotions that will attract more negativity to your life.

If you are trying to cultivate a positive relationship with healthy food and find yourself eating a slice of cake, do not get angry at yourself. Instead, allow yourself to experience the richness of the cake in the moment, knowing that this is a once-in-a-while treat. Then move on from the experience and focus on the delicious homemade and healthy meal you will prepare next. Don’t let worry and regret influence your future decisions.





A positive attitude is required to successfully change your relationship with food. The more negative feelings you allow yourself to dwell on, the harder you will find it to adopt the diet you wish to eat. Focusing on the positive aspects, flavors, feelings, sensations and experiences with your changing diet will help attract more successful changes.

Even the way we eat influences our relationship with food. Healthy eating habits start with mindful eating. Meals should take place while you are sitting at a table with all electronic devices off. The focus should be on your food, not on the television or a cell phone. Savor the flavors, textures and sensations slowly. Eating with family and friends also enhances our bodies' responses to food.

Pay attention to how you feel physically and emotionally about an hour after eating different foods. You'll probably find that when your diet is filled with healthy whole foods such as fruits and vegetables, you feel a whole lot better than when your diet is filled with processed, prepackaged foods.

It helps change the way you serve food too. Never sit down with an entire package—it's too easy to consume more than you want. Instead, make a habit of serving all food (even small snacks) on a plate or in a bowl. This requires more thought and preparation. It slows the eating process and eliminates the possibility of absentmindedly snacking on an entire bag of potato chips.

Eating is not an all-or-nothing experience—leftovers are perfectly acceptable. Even if you save only a few bites for later, it is often better to not finish all the food on your plate, especially if you are eating at a restaurant, where portions tend to be too large.

Remember that your body is always changing throughout your life, and so too are your nutritional needs. The relationship with food that works for you today may be different tomorrow. Embrace the changes and look forward to learning more about yourself by doing so. One of our most important survival skills in this age of an industrialized food supply is to tune into our bodies and sense which foods support the healthy functioning of our bodies and which foods don't. There's no "perfect" diet for all humanity—we each need to develop our own "custom blend" and realize that it is very likely to change over time.

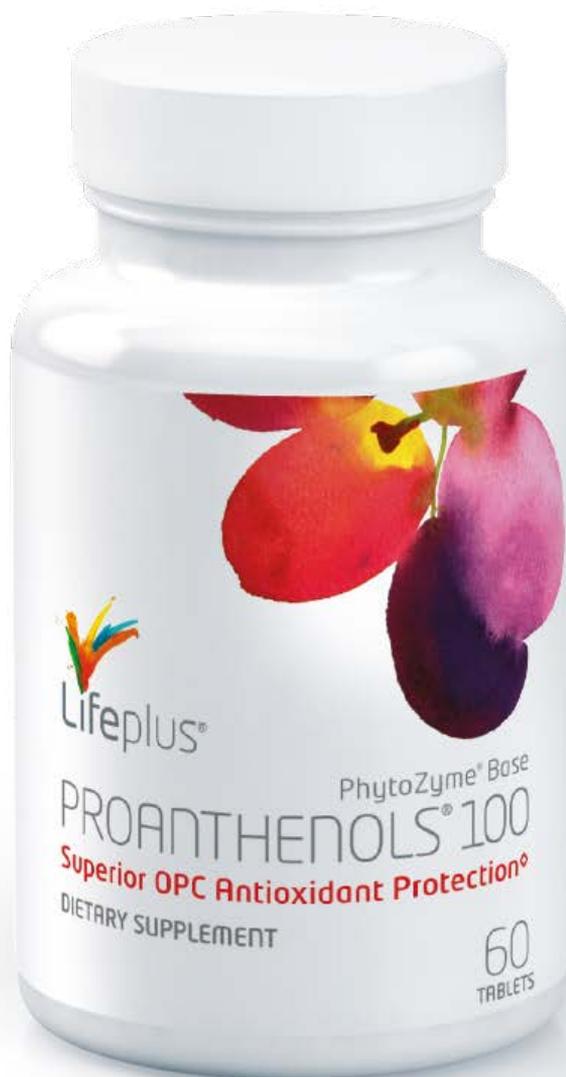
Finally, let go of the need to be perfect and to eat perfectly. Know that you are doing your best, and let your feelings be your guide to a positive relationship with food.

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New Experiences for a Healthy Mind

It was once believed that when the brain was fully formed, it was no longer capable of growing or regenerating more brain cells and/or new pathways. We now know that an adult brain is perfectly capable of making new connections (and even new brain cells) throughout life.

Every time you learn a new fact or experience a new situation, your brain builds new pathways. Many researchers believe that the secret to maintaining healthy cognitive function relies on living a life filled with new things, people, experiences and circumstances.

You're never too young or too old to benefit from new experiences.

For the very young, experiencing new things, people and situations may help speed up brain development.¹ For the elderly, it may not only protect against mental degradation but also change the way time is perceived. As adults age, a common complaint is that time goes by too fast. In his work *Principles of Psychology*, psychologist William James notes that time likely appears to speed up as we age because as adults we experience fewer and fewer memorable events. Therefore, by seeking out new experiences and creating wonderful memories, we may be able to alter the way we perceive aging from that of a depressingly fast occurrence to one of a profoundly happy and leisurely trip through life.

Seeking out new experiences has many wonderful impacts on your life, outlook and mood. There is also evidence that the feelings of personal growth and a great sense of purpose one receives from trying new experiences correlates with lower cortisol levels and improved immune function.² From gaining confidence and breaking out of boring ruts to learning new skills and forming new friendships with positive, like-minded people, actively trying new things throughout life has many benefits.

You can think of new experiences as exercise for your brain. Just like any muscle group in your body, the more you exercise it, the stronger it will become. Instead of lifting weights, the brain gets exercise by solving problems, which is an essential part of coping with new experiences.

New experiences are everywhere; there is no need to travel long distances or spend lots of money trying to boost your mental health. Small tasks such as using your nondominant hand to operate your computer mouse give the brain a boost. Similar easy tasks that give your brain more of a workout are switching knife and fork hands, driving a different route to work every day, reading a new genre of books and visiting museums or art galleries.



Even something as small as ordering something new from your favorite restaurant opens your mind to the benefits of a new experience—especially if you share that experience with a companion with whom you can discuss the results.



Trying new things often requires courage, especially if you have been living in a comfortable routine for years. But finding that courage is a reward in itself. Once you have it, it will grow and grow, allowing you to seek out even larger and more thrilling new experiences.

For those of us who need to start small, there are plenty of opportunities nearby. From the comfort of your own home you can try new recipes, learn a musical instrument, master new yoga moves, pick up a new hobby, learn computer programs and so much more.



As confidence grows, stretch yourself and look outward. No matter where you live, the world is full of opportunities for new experiences and personal growth—join a local club, plan a trip, start a supper club, volunteer for a charity.

The possibilities for finding new experiences are endless, and the rewards are many. Whether it's a small step such as trying a new restaurant or a huge leap like taking a vacation in a faraway land, every time you step outside your comfort zone and try something new you will give your brain a healthy boost.

¹ Yirka, Bob. "Study Shows How Newborn Neurons Associated with New Experiences Are Integrated into Existing Networks." *Medical Research Advances and Health News*. Medical Xpress, Oct. 28, 2016. Web. Dec. 5, 2016.

² Marcus, Gary. "Learn Something New - Your Brain Will Thank You." *CNN*, May 10, 2012. Web. Nov. 5, 2016.



Importance of Sports Nutrition

No matter how well you train physically for a competitive sports event, if you don't supply your body with the specific fuel it needs to perform, you won't be able to perform at your best. The foods you eat at home during training and before a big game can make or break your performance on the field.

Regardless of whether or not you are actively trying to increase lean muscle mass, all exercises rely on your muscles. If you don't eat to support your muscles, you won't be able to maximize your results. The basic building blocks of muscle tissue come from the amino acids found in protein.

Without enough protein in your diet, your body cannot rebuild and repair muscles after a workout.

Healthy dietary sources of high-quality protein include grass-fed meats, eggs and dairy products. Vegetarians and vegans can get protein from soy and quinoa (and many vegetables contain protein), as well as combinations of nuts, grains and legumes.

While proteins build and repair muscles, complex carbohydrates provide the energy needed to fuel your activity for a while, after which the body shifts to burning fat in many endurance sports, such as marathons and triathlons. Choose your carbohydrate sources wisely, as not all carbs are equal. Some will increase performance and others will hinder it.

Simple carbs will give you a quick boost of energy that fades long before the end of the game. Complex carbs, on the other hand, provide longer-lasting blood sugar levels, which correlate to longer-lasting and steadier energy. The glycemic index is a scale measuring the speed at which the body digests and absorbs carbohydrate-containing foods. Complex carbs have a low index rating. To maximize your energy on the field, consume low glycemic index foods such as whole-grain pasta and brown rice.

The specific combination of nutrients needed to maximize performance is different for every person and every activity. A low-intensity morning workout—such as a short walk, a quick bike ride or a few minutes of yoga—requires far less fuel than a more strenuous afternoon workout session involving a long run or intense resistance training.

To maximize your nutritional support, try to eat a healthy meal three to four hours before the big game or planned workout.

After your workout, rehydrate with water, and have a small, protein-rich snack if you will not be eating a meal for several hours.

A few ounces of Greek yogurt or a couple of slices of cheese with whole-grain crackers are all it takes to resupply your muscles with the fuel they need.



Essential amino acids in the right ratios are another easy-to-use source of protein to build exhausted muscles after your workout.

Regularly consuming a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables supplies the antioxidant networks needed to help protect the body against post-workout surges in free radicals. The many vitamins and minerals found in the same foods can help repair ligaments and cartilage to maintain flexibility and balance.

Bodybuilders and professionals are not the only athletes who benefit from eating right. Regardless of age, fitness level or activity, athletes at every level benefit from eating a diet that supports recovery and performance.

Digestive Health

For many thousands of years, humans ate a diet consisting largely of whole, natural foods. However, in the past century, diets have rapidly evolved to include far more premade and manufactured foods, especially with the rise of the processed food industry after World War II.



We've seen how these changes have affected our bodies on the outside by increasing waistlines, but what about the inside? How are modern diets affecting our digestive health? Ask yourself ... are we really more healthy? Are we as "lean and mean" as we used to be? Are our children as fit as they were several years ago? Interesting questions for sure.

Digestive illnesses may be on the rise. Our modern diets are affecting our digestive systems in numerous ways, from celiac disease to heartburn, Crohn's disease to irritable bowel syndrome. If you regularly experience bloating, diarrhea, gas, stomach pain, heartburn or cramps, it may be time to re-evaluate your diet.

First, it should be noted that there is no one diet that will work for everyone.

Everybody is unique, and every person has his or her own requirements. There are certain guiding principles that almost everyone can use to point us in the right direction, but we have to listen to the messages our bodies send us. Pay attention to what foods don't digest well for you (*the ones that leave you feeling uncomfortable, sluggish, bloated, etc.*) and use common sense to guide your actions. If you notice that a certain type of food leaves you feeling bloated every time you eat it, leave it out of your diet or experiment with complementary combinations of other foods. It could be that the only reason your body has trouble digesting a food is because it lacks the resources to do so. This commonsense attitude toward diet is required for healthy digestion and is easier to maintain than a strict diet with lots of limitations and rules. It's easy to give up when there are too many rules, even if that means living with uncomfortable digestive issues.

Learning to listen to your body and avoid certain foods will guide you along your unique path to wellness. But for truly healthy digestion, there are a few foods and nutrients that are necessary for almost everyone.

The digestive issues people experience take place in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. This is the stomach, small intestine and large bowel. The GI tract is roughly 30 feet long in an adult and contains many trillions of microorganisms called gut flora, also increasingly known as "the microbiome." These health-promoting bacteria perform many essential duties to help the body digest and absorb the foods we eat. They also help keep the GI tract healthy and free of harmful bacteria that can lead to uncomfortable digestive illnesses.

Scientists use powerful microscopes to observe these microorganisms and see them in action as they work to protect our bodies from the inside out. Long before we had this technology, ancient healers used sour milk and other fermented foods to preserve foods in the absence of refrigeration, and they discovered that these fermented foods often would improve gastrointestinal ailments. Ancient healers probably had no idea that tiny organisms were at work, but they did see a positive cause-and-effect relationship, which led to more use of fermented foods. Kefir, yogurt, kimchi, sauerkraut and other fermented foods containing health-boosting microorganisms used to be staple foods on the dinner table in many cultures but are now often replaced by sterile frozen meals and fast food dinners eaten on the go.

Maintaining a proper abundance of healthy gut flora in our bodies can help regulate various functions and keep our digestive systems functioning properly. There are about 30,000 different types of beneficial bacteria in the GI tract, and even with our current microbiological laboratories, we are able to grow only a small fraction of these organisms outside the human intestine. Two of the most beneficial include the probiotics bifidobacteria and lactobacillus. Without these, our bodies are not able to digest fiber. These probiotics are able to ferment fiber molecules into short-chain fatty acids, which our bodies are able to absorb and the cells that line the intestine use for fuel.

These two classes of probiotics also help improve nutrient availability, meaning our bodies are able to absorb more of the health-promoting nutrients in foods, compete for resources with harmful microorganisms and help protect the immune system.

¹ "Nutrition and Healthy Eating." Dietary Fiber: Essential for a Healthy Diet—Mayo Clinic. Mayo Clinic, n.d. Web. Dec. 14, 2016.

² US Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. Data tables: results from USDA's 1994-96 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals and 1994-96 Diet and Health Knowledge Survey. ARS Food Surveys Research Group, 1997.





Another important aspect of maintaining digestive health is fiber consumption. Put simply, fiber is the part of plants that the body is not able to digest and absorb. You may wonder why we should be eating something the body can't absorb. There are several answers, because fiber performs many tasks as it moves through the GI tract.

Fiber helps create feelings of fullness, which is why it is sometimes called bulk. This action helps curb appetite and aids in weight control. Fiber also binds with unwanted fats and carbohydrates during the digestive process. Since a lot of the fiber we consume cannot be absorbed, neither can the bound fats and carbs, further helping with weight control. This binding action can also help protect against heart disease and promote steadier blood sugar levels. Fiber is also able to bind with certain

toxins before they are absorbed into the body and thus facilitate their elimination. Fiber is also the number one nutrient source for our gut bacteria—thus, it is also called a “prebiotic,” that is, food for the probiotics.

In terms of how you feel after eating, fiber is best recognized for adding bulk to stool, alleviating constipation and facilitating regularity. Digestive concerns revolving around the bathroom are often easily counteracted by increasing fiber intake.

Modern convenience foods and mass production methods have stripped out of our diets nearly all of the fiber people once consumed on a regular basis. The current recommended daily intake for fiber is between 25 and 38 grams, depending on sex and age.¹ Studies looking at fiber consumption show many of us consume less than half of that amount²—which suggests that it may be a good idea to supplement with high-quality fiber.

Fiber comes from whole-grain (not necessarily whole wheat) products, fruits and vegetables with their skins on, beans and legumes, and nuts and seeds.

Unfortunately, modern diets have largely replaced these foods with refined versions such as canned, skinless fruits and vegetables; white breads and pastas; non-whole-grain cereals; and white rice.

Like other nutrients, dietary fiber should ideally come from multiple sources to ensure maximum benefit. Both soluble and insoluble fiber are needed because they help the body in different, equally important ways.

From the moment food enters your mouth, digestive enzymes are hard at work helping the body break down, transform and absorb nutrients. Digestive enzymes are produced in the pancreas and intestinal system. Without them, the vital nutrients in food would not be accessible to the organs, tissues and cells throughout the body.

Some enzymes come from the foods we eat—especially raw, unprocessed foods. Manufactured and/or cooked foods often contain none of these essential enzymes. Returning to a traditional diet rich in a wide variety of raw, fresh fruits and vegetables will help ensure your body receives enough of these enzymes. As with fiber, supplementation with various enzyme concentrates is often helpful.

The digestive process is highly complex and absolutely vital to good health. By paying attention to the foods you eat and how you feel after eating them, you can find the best diet for your body and feel what a huge difference that can make.



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Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fatty acids are among the group of what are considered “essential” fatty acids. The body needs them to function properly and cannot produce them on its own—they must be consumed in foods.

You may wonder how a fat could be considered essential when we’ve been told for decades to stop eating fats. The answer is simple. We were wrong. Not all fats are bad. Some are quite good for you. Among those that are good, omega-3s are the very best.

Omega-3 fatty acids are a group of three distinct polyunsaturated fatty acids: EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid), DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and ALA (alpha-linolenic acid). ALA is a short-chain, plant-based fatty acid. Unlike EPA and DHA, the largest quantities of which are found in fish, ALA is found in abundance in oils derived from seeds. The best of these sources is flaxseed oil, but nearly all seeds contain some amounts.

Our bodies have a limited ability to convert ALA into the longer-chain omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA that are especially good for the body. Oily fish such as sardines, salmon and herring are good sources of EPA, while cold-water fish such as mackerel, salmon and tuna provide higher levels of DHA. Avoid larger, longer-lived fish such as shark, swordfish and king mackerel, as they tend to contain higher levels of accumulated toxins such as mercury.

When purchasing fish for omega-3 content, seek out only sources of sustainable, wild-caught fish. Farm-raised fish are often fed corn and soy, which do not contain omega-3s. Omega-3s begin in algae. Their content is concentrated in small fish that eat the algae. When larger fish then consume those smaller fish, the concentrations become even stronger. This continues up the food chain until midsize fish such as salmon contain high levels of the health-boosting fatty acids. Farm-raised fish do not live in the same healthy ecosystem and therefore often do not have the same concentrations of omega-3 fatty acids.

Now we know where omega-3 fatty acids come from, but we haven’t yet discussed what makes them so healthy. There is a well-established connection between omega-3 fatty acids and coronary health.

Multiple studies have found links between EPA and DHA intake and a reduced risk of developing coronary heart disease.

The current belief is that these wonderful fatty acids help the body maintain healthy cholesterol and triglyceride levels.¹ They also promote healthy responses to inflammation, and we know that chronic inflammation is at the root of many degenerative diseases, including heart disease, cancer and dementia.

These fatty acids, especially DHA, are also instrumental in protecting brain health. This includes not just the formation of the brain but also protecting against cognitive impairment (including Alzheimer’s disease²) and boosting mood.³ This shouldn’t be surprising, as a quarter of all the lipids comprising brain tissue are made of DHA. And DHA concentrations aren’t limited to the brain; DHA is found in large concentrations throughout the nervous system.

Many researchers firmly believe that omega-3 fatty acids help maintain a healthy anti-inflammatory process in the body, and chronic inflammation is linked to a number of chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and several autoimmune diseases. At least one study has revealed consuming omega-3 fatty acids leads to a reduction of inflammation markers in the blood.⁴

As if all of this isn’t enough to get most people eating more omega-3 fatty acids, insufficient consumption of omega-3s has also been linked to dry and itchy eyes, dry skin, eczema, impaired memory, fatigue and weight management issues.

Fat is no longer the enemy. In truth, certain fats such as omega-3 fatty acids are among our best allies in health. (Other healthy fats include those from avocados, coconut milk and oil, olives, and olive oil.) In the right amounts (many doctors and nutritionists recommend at least one to two servings of fish per week), essential fatty acids can help protect your body in so many varied ways that there is no reason not to get healthy by eating more fats!

¹ Miller P.E., Van Elswyk M., Alexander D.D. “Long-chain omega-3 fatty acids eicosapentaenoic acid and docosahexaenoic acid and blood pressure: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials.” *American Journal of Hypertension*. 27 (7): 885–96. doi:10.1093/ajh/hpu024. PMID 24610882.

² Mazereeuw G., Lanctôt K.L., Chau S.A., et al. “Effects of omega-3 fatty acids on cognitive performance: a meta-analysis.” *Neurobiol Aging*. 33 (7): e17–29. doi:10.1016/j.neurobiolaging.2011.12.014. PMID 22305186.

³ Perica M.M., Delas I. (August 2011). “Essential fatty acids and psychiatric disorders.” *Nutrition in clinical*. doi:10.1177/0884633611411306. PMID 21775637.

⁴ Kelei Li, Tao Huang, Jusheng Zheng, et al. Effect of Marine-Derived n-3 Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids on C-Reactive Protein, Interleukin 6 and Tumor Necrosis Factor α: A Meta-Analysis. *PLoS One*. 2014; 9(2): e88103. Published online Feb. 5, 2014. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.008810.

Diabetes in Children

Diabetes used to be a disease associated almost exclusively with people over the age of 50. Type 2 diabetes was referred to as adult-onset diabetes, but that title has recently been dropped because of a surge in diabetes rates among children and teenagers.

There are actually two types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes, once known as juvenile diabetes or insulin-dependent diabetes, cannot be prevented by diet and lifestyle. It is an autoimmune condition in which the immune system destroys the insulin-producing cells of the pancreas so that the body can no longer make insulin, which is required to regulate blood sugar.¹ Only about 5 percent of all diabetics have type 1 diabetes, according to the American Diabetes Association.

The far more common type 2 diabetes occurs when the body becomes resistant to insulin, the body does not make enough insulin or the insulin it does produce does not work well. This chronic condition affects the way your body metabolizes sugar and leads to cardiovascular problems and damage to the feet, eyes, kidneys and other areas of the body.² Unlike type 1, this form of the disease is entirely preventable in most cases.

There are multiple risk factors for developing type 2 diabetes, but the three that seem to be affecting our children the most are weight, fat distribution and inactivity—all of which are directly affected by dietary and lifestyle choices.³

Researchers agree that the rise in early-onset type 2 diabetes in children and teens is related to a shift in lifestyles.

Over the past several decades, the daily lives and diets of children (and adults) have changed. They are consuming more unhealthy foods and spending less time playing games that require physical activity. These have been replaced with unhealthy convenience foods and more time on the couch in front of televisions, computer screens and video games.

Like those of diabetes itself, rates of being overweight and obesity are on the rise. The more fatty tissue a person has, the more resistant their cells become to insulin. Due to the worldwide rise in average weight, our perceptions of what constitutes a healthy body are being skewed. You may not think of your child as obese or even overweight. Studies actually show parents are not good judges of whether or not their children are at a healthy weight.⁴

In terms of prevention of diabetes (as well as of certain cardiovascular diseases), fat distribution is also important. The risk of developing diabetes is higher in a body that stores fat primarily in the abdomen rather than in a body that stores fat elsewhere, such as the hips and thighs.

Inactivity and weight gain go hand in hand. So do inactivity and diabetes risk. Physical activity helps control weight, burns glucose for fuel and helps make your body's cells more sensitive to insulin.

It's easy to see how interrelated diet, exercise, weight and diabetes are. Each independent factor is influenced by the others. Fortunately, that means even making small changes in the everyday life of your child can have a big impact on his or her health.



Help your child stay healthy and reduce his or her risk of developing type 2 diabetes by:

Encouraging water consumption

Limit sugary sodas, juices and sports drinks to treats served once a week or less. These unhealthy drinks are full of sugar and added calories with little to no nutritional value. Instead, encourage your children to drink water or unsweetened herbal teas (hot or cold) when they are thirsty.

Snacking healthy

Serve fresh fruits and vegetables instead of chips or other junk food as after-school snacks. Keep grapes, carrot sticks, apples and other healthy snacks on the counter, where they are easy to see and eat on the go.



Dining together

Prepare healthy meals made from whole ingredients, and eat them together as a family. Avoid the temptation to order a pizza or pick up fast food on the way home from work. Everyone in the family will benefit.



Getting active

Spend family time engaged in activities that get everybody moving. Bike rides, nature walks, hikes, trips to the beach, visits to the playground—there are countless ways to get every member of the family involved in activities that promote health.

Limiting screen time

Set a limit on the amount of time children can spend in front of a screen. This includes televisions, computers, video games, tablets and even cell phones. Sitting in front of screens of any size means your child isn't being active. Encourage outdoor play as often as possible.

The rise in early-onset diabetes in our children is preventable. By encouraging (and modeling) healthy behavior for our children, we can help safeguard them against not just diabetes but also many chronic health conditions.

¹ Staff. "Preventing Type 2 in Children." American Diabetes Association. American Diabetes Association, n.d. Web. Dec. 3, 2016.

² Teresa A. Hillier, Kathryn L. Pedula. Complications in Young Adults With Early-Onset Type 2 Diabetes. *Diabetes Care*, November 2003; 26(11): 2999-3005.

³ Staff. "Type 1 Diabetes." Type 1 Diabetes Causes. Mayo Clinic, n.d. Web. Dec. 3, 2016.

⁴ James Black, MinHae Park, John Gregson, et al. Child obesity cut-offs as derived from parental perceptions: cross-sectional questionnaire. doi:10.3399/bjgp15X684385. Published April 1, 2015.

Men and Body Image

Discussions of body image and how we compare our own looks to those of movie stars and models often focus entirely on women. But men can and do experience the same frustration, stress and disorders as women do when it comes to body image.

Eating disorders and negative body image self-identification are not seen as masculine issues, yet various studies suggest that risk of mortality for males with eating disorders is higher than it is for females.¹

Clearly, men need to understand that they are at risk so they can learn to be confident about their body image.

Whereas women who experience negative feelings about their body image almost exclusively wish to lose weight, men are split between wanting to lose weight and wanting to gain weight.² The stereotypes men compare themselves with tend to be fit and muscular. Models and movie stars with rock-hard abs and bulging biceps influence how men see themselves—they may want to lose weight, but they often also want to gain muscle mass.

To avoid the pitfalls of constantly comparing their bodies to the images they see, men need to learn how to look critically at messages that push the bodybuilder stereotype. Modern culture emphasizes the V-shaped, muscular body as the ideal for men. Magazines, movies and television shows all are full of advertisements promoting products for building muscles and toning bodies. These ads tend to show incredibly fit men looking happy and confident, as if the key to happiness is attaining the perfect body.

Whether or not they realize it, men are influenced by these messages. To avoid the pitfalls of constantly comparing their bodies to unrealistic stereotypes (many of which are ‘Photoshopped’ to look better but often look impossible), men must recognize that bodies come in all different sizes and shapes. There is no one “right” body size or shape. Your body is not and should not be exactly like anyone else’s. Try to see your body as a facet of your uniqueness and individuality.

Male body image can also be less about weight and more about control. When a man feels he lacks control in one area of life, he may displace his anxieties and overcompensate in another area, such as obsessing over his muscles.

Body image issues in men are also linked to stress.

Many men feel pressure from work, relationships and family, but don’t feel comfortable talking about these feelings. In these cases, some men turn to the gym as a way to cope. Exercise is a great stress reducer, but sometimes men go too far and begin obsessing about their bodies instead of dealing with the root causes of the stress they feel.

Regardless of gender, talking about something as private as body image is hard to do. But it may be especially difficult for men to discuss weight issues, because society teaches them from an early age that talking about feelings is not something “real men” do.

Similarly, men who focus on the personal qualities that are not physical are able to further develop those traits and gain self-worth from knowing who they are inside rather than always judging themselves as poor by looking only at the outside. A man’s identity and worth are not defined by his appearance.

Men who are able to let go of the desire to attain a perfect, masculine physique and learn how to focus on and enjoy the positive aspects of themselves are able to live in a healthier physical and psychological state of being. This ultimately leads to more fully enjoying a healthy life.



¹ Raevuoni, A., Keski-Rahkonen, Hoek, H. A review of eating disorders in males. *Current Opinions on Psychiatry*, 27-6, 426-430, 2014.

² Drewnowski, A; Yee, D K. Men and body image: Are males satisfied with their body weight? *Psychosomatic Medicine*: November/December 1987.



Eating Well Influences Generations to Come

The diet you eat today will affect the bodies and worlds of your children and grandchildren. From epigenetics to environmental sustainability, your own eating habits—for better or for worse—will influence generations to come.

The diet you eat today creates internal and external forces that will affect future generations. Internally, diet affects our health. We all know that. But are you also aware that diet has been shown to affect us on a genetic level? DNA, the very basis of who we are and the genes we pass on to our children, is affected by diet. It makes sense that what we eat today will affect our children in the future.

Pregnant mothers are especially tasked with consuming a healthy diet, because the nutrients they consume are sent directly to the fetus.

Future fathers-to-be also have a less direct but equally important responsibility to their children. A man's diet consumed even before having children has been shown to have an effect on his children after they are born.¹

Beginning in the 1930s, Dr. Francis M. Pottenger performed a 10-year-long study examining the effects of nutrition on cats through multiple generations. Dr. Pottenger's ultimate results found that feeding cats a nutrient-poor diet resulted in nutritional damage after just one generation. After the third generation, all the cats were unable to reproduce. Despite major differences in the metabolisms of cats and humans, we can clearly infer from his study that the quality of nutrition in one generation has powerful effects on not just one generation but possibly multiple ones. If you are interested in further information, you may search the web for Dr. Pottenger.

Although this famous study focused on poor nutrition, the opposite has been observed as well.

Several studies have shown how eating well can positively influence the health of babies.

After they are born, our children and grandchildren will benefit from being exposed to a healthy diet. Children who are raised in homes where the family sits down and eats a healthy meal together on most nights are much more likely to practice the same healthy behavior later in life.

They too will make healthy family meals a priority, which in turn will be passed on to their own children.

From an external viewpoint, eating a healthy, environmentally conscious diet can affect the world future generations live in. Agriculture and farming have evolved rapidly since the end of World War II, when researchers discovered leftover nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (from explosives) made excellent fertilizers that produced enormous crop yields. Since then, selective breeding and genetic engineering have created agricultural practices far different from what our bodies and environment are used to.

While huge agricultural corporations have taken up unsustainable practices in order to produce maximum profit, a counterculture has arisen that seeks to return to a more natural way of food production. Sustainable, organic, local farming does not use synthetic pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers.





Farmers often use ancient techniques for crop and field rotation that rely on natural replacement of soil nutrients that are more sustainable than repeatedly fertilizing year after year.

Meats, fruits and vegetables from these sources tend to be a little more expensive. But due to the law of supply and demand, the more people who adopt such a diet, the lower these prices will become. The more people take an environmentally friendly approach to purchasing food, the more likely we are to give our children a healthy planet.

There is an old saying that goes “You are what you eat.” Perhaps a more enlightened version would be to say, “You, your children and your grandchildren are what you eat.” Consuming a healthy diet cultivated from sustainable sources will affect the world and the health of generations to come.

¹ Gunnar Kaati, Lars Olov Bygren, et al. “Transgenerational response to nutrition, early life circumstances and longevity.” *European Journal of Human Genetics* (2007) 15, 784–790; doi:10.1038/sj.ejhg.5201832.



Young at Heart

According to the National Institutes of Health, one in four women will die from heart disease. Coronary heart disease—the most common type of heart disease—is the number one killer of both men and women in the United States.

Cardiovascular disease is a condition in which plaque comprised of fat, cholesterol and calcium builds up on the inner walls of arteries that carry oxygen-rich blood to your heart. At this stage, the condition is called atherosclerosis.

As the plaque continues to thicken and blood flow diminishes further, chest pain and discomfort called angina can occur. If left untreated, the plaque deposits can rupture, causing a clot that blocks blood flow completely. This is the most common cause of a heart attack.

The frighteningly high prevalence of heart disease is a relatively new phenomenon. In the past—when there were fewer desk jobs, kids played outdoors more and people ate fewer prepackaged and boxed foods—heart disease wasn't as prevalent, because lifestyles were a natural preventive.

Going back to these lifestyles is not possible for most modern women, who are too busy to get to the grocery store or market and find it far easier to pick up convenience foods on the way home than to cook a meal for the family from scratch after a long day of work. However, understanding how small choices made every day affect our health can drastically reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular problems and help women at every age stay young at heart.

Certain lifestyle choices can help a great deal in safeguarding against cardiovascular disease.

A healthy diet, regular physical activity and stress management techniques all can help keep your heart healthy (as well as reduce the risk of cancer and other degenerative diseases).

The rise in cardiovascular disease directly corresponds with increased adoption of modern convenience foods. Generations ago, people ate homemade meals made mostly from whole foods straight from the garden or small stores that stocked from local sources. Today, diets are filled with unhealthy convenience foods designed to taste good and last a long time but not made to satisfy nutritional requirements. The result is a diet that provides too much fat and sugar for our activity levels and not enough vitamins and minerals.

One of the easiest, most nutritionally rewarding steps a woman can take in the fight against heart disease is to adopt a diet based on fresh fruits and vegetables.

Studies also show a direct inverse association between the amount of fruits and vegetables eaten regularly and the risk of developing heart disease.¹



Fiber is also an important dietary tool for protecting your heart. When fiber is digested, it binds with dietary fat, thereby reducing the amount absorbed by the body. This may help control cholesterol levels and prevent excess amounts from accumulating in the arteries.

Increasing physical activity is another lifestyle choice that can help protect a woman's heart. Who has time to go to the gym five days a week while trying to hold down a job and care for a family? The good news is you don't have to. Research shows that taking 10,000 steps a day is enough to help protect our bodies. Ten thousand steps equal about five miles, or about eight kilometers. Wearing a wristwatch-type pedometer is a useful tool in reaching this goal on a daily basis.



One of the greatest aspects of trying to reach the 10,000-step goal is that the steps are cumulative. They don't all have to be taken in the same period. Making small changes such as parking at the back of the lot, walking during lunch and taking the stairs instead of the elevator all add more steps. It's amazing how much easier it is to hit the 10,000-step mark when you make a few small changes and add up all your movements throughout the day.²

A third lifestyle choice that can help reduce the risk of developing heart disease is to become more aware of stress and learn to manage it in healthy ways. Life is stressful for modern women, who are often in charge of not just their own lives but those of their children and spouses as well. All that responsibility can cause stress levels to rise and stay high for long periods of time.



It's important for women to find ways to regularly reduce stress levels. Any activity that calms you down and reduces stress will help—whether that is getting a massage, taking a hot bath, reading a book, listening to music, meditating or engaging in any other activity.

Making healthy food choices, trying to walk a little more often and managing stress all can help safeguard against cardiovascular disease to help keep any woman stay young at heart.

¹ Bazzano L.A., Serdula M.K., Liu S. Dietary intake of fruits and vegetables and risk of cardiovascular disease. *Curr Atheroscler Rep.* November 2003; 5(6):492-9.

² Tudor-Locke C., Bassett D.R. Jr. How many steps/day are enough? Preliminary pedometer indices for public health. *Sports Med.* 2004; 34(1):1-8.

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Ask the Expert

What are sources of vegetarian protein?

Traditionally, dietary protein came mainly from meat: beef, pork, chicken, fish. Proteins from these sources are known as complete proteins. Proteins from vegetarian sources are not complete, meaning they contain only some of the amino acids that form protein. It is entirely possible to consume adequate protein from vegetarian sources, but in order to do so you must know which foods to pair to create whole proteins. You don't need to consume every essential amino acid in every bite of food. You don't even need to eat them in the same meal. Many dieticians now say that consuming a plant-based diet with a wide range of foods will provide enough variety of amino acid profiles to all but guarantee a person gets all his or her amino acids.

Many experts stress that consuming plenty of legumes and grains together is a great idea because their amino acid profiles are complementary.



Some good combinations are beans and rice, peanut butter and whole-wheat bread, and stir-fries made with tofu, vegetables and rice. Eggs, milk, cheese and other dairy products are also good stand-alone sources of protein. For strict vegans, grains and legumes are good sources too. For vegetarians, vegans and meat eaters alike, some of the best, healthiest nonmeat sources of protein are quinoa and soy.

Is it possible to increase my body's ability to store energy so I can exercise longer?

Absolutely. You are probably doing it right now without even realizing it. Every time you exercise until you become physically tired, you are doing just that. Energy is stored in your body as molecules of adenosine triphosphate (ATP). When you exercise, the energy is released and used to power your activity. ATP is stored within each cell in very tiny organelles called mitochondria. Mitochondria levels are directly proportionate to the amount of physical activity you engage in. The more you exercise, the more mitochondria are in your body's cells and the more energy your body can store. The opposite is true as well. The more sedentary your lifestyle is, the lower your mitochondria levels will be, meaning your energy reserves will be low as well. If you are trying to increase your energy reserves, focus on low to moderate levels of activity, as they will allow you to work out for longer periods of time before needing to rest. As your energy levels build, your activities can become more rigorous.

Is breakfast really the most important meal of the day?

Breakfast is an important meal for sure, but it's no more or less important than any other meal. What you eat in the morning provides the basis of energy and nutritional support for the entire day. That doesn't necessarily mean you should eat a massive morning meal that will hold you over until a late lunch. Your unique body has unique needs. Some people find they are better able to control their weight, health and mood when they eat four or five small meals throughout the day. Other people feel fine sticking to the more traditional three meals a day. Still others may consume three meals and one or two small snacks. What works for you is influenced by the foods you choose to eat, as well as your metabolic rate, activity level, age, mood and other factors. Never try to skip a meal in order to lose weight. No matter how many meals you eat every day, every one is just as important as the others.

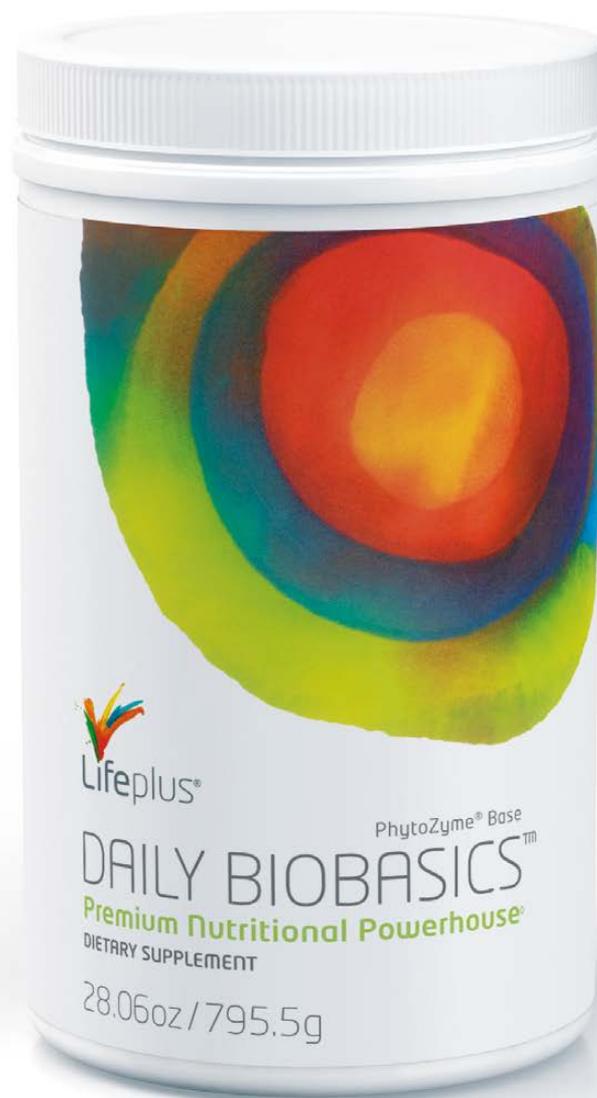


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