

Disease-proof Your Body

Reader's
Digest

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EAT TO BEAT DISEASE

Expert opinion is unanimous: The single most important thing we can do to prevent disease is to eat more fresh fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, and whole grains. Adopt these healthful eating strategies today and fight disease with your fork!



When planning your weekly menu, be sure to include lots of these SUPERSTAR FOODS:

Fruits and vegetables are rich sources of disease-fighting antioxidants—molecules that neutralize harmful free radicals. Antioxidants help protect cells from damage that can lead to cancer and heart disease. Aim to include 5 to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables in your diet each day. A serving is a half-cup of raw or cooked vegetables, a cup of leafy salad vegetables, or a half-cup of juice.

Broccoli and its cabbage cousins, like brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and kale, are loaded with vitamins and fiber. They also contain plant chemicals that protect against a variety of diseases. Studies suggest that these compounds help to ward off a wide range of cancers by stimulating the liver to boost production of cancer-fighting enzymes. Broccoli is especially rich in sulforaphane, one of the most powerful of these protective compounds yet discovered.

Tomatoes and tomato sauce contain lycopene, a potent antioxidant that reduces the risk of prostate cancer and may help ward off cancers of the lung, pancreas, and digestive tract, as well as heart disease. Fresh tomatoes are delicious and rich in vitamin C, but only cooking releases the lycopene from tomato cell walls so our bodies can absorb it.

ANTIOXIDANT SUPERSTARS

Deeply colored fruits and vegetables are rich in antioxidants, which help fight chronic illness and may even slow down aging by neutralizing harmful molecules known as free radicals. Here are the ones with the highest antioxidant potential.

FRUITS

1. Blueberries
2. Strawberries
3. Raspberries
4. Plums
5. Oranges
6. Red grapes
7. Cherries

VEGETABLES

1. Kale
2. Spinach
3. Brussels sprouts
4. Broccoli florets
5. Beets
6. Red bell peppers
7. Yellow corn

Soy foods are amazing healers. Studies have shown that people with high cholesterol who add 25 grams of soy protein to their daily menu can expect to lower LDL or “bad” cholesterol by as much as 15 percent. And in Japan and China, where soy is a diet staple, rates of breast and prostate cancer are one-quarter what they are in the United States.

Fish should be eaten at least twice a week. Omega-3 fatty acids, plentiful in fatty fish like salmon, tuna, mackerel,

sardines, or herring, are especially beneficial in controlling inflammation (a significant contributor to heart disease) and the pain of rheumatoid arthritis. There is also mounting evidence these fats protect against diabetes and heart disease. One study found that people who ate 8 ounces or more of fish per week lowered their risk of a fatal heart attack by 40 percent compared with people who ate less fish. Choose wild fish instead of farmed fish when possible to consume less mercury.

Garlic contains sulfur compounds that may stimulate the immune system’s natural defenses against cancer, and may have the potential to reduce tumor growth. Studies suggest that garlic can reduce the incidence of stomach cancer by as much as a factor of 12! Garlic can even lower your cholesterol and help prevent dangerous blood clots.

Berries—blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries especially—are rich in antioxidants that protect against heart disease, various

TOP 10 PHYTOCHEMICALS

PHYTOCHEMICAL	MAY BE USEFUL FOR	WHERE TO FIND IT
anthocyanins	cancer	apples, beets, berries, cherries, grapes, plums, potatoes
carotenoids	cancer, immune deficiency, memory loss, eye diseases, prostate problems, heart disease, high cholesterol	apricots, broccoli, carrots, melons, peppers, spinach, corn, kiwifruit, peas
catechins	cancer	green tea, pomegranates
flavonoids	cancer, hemorrhoids, high cholesterol, memory loss, rheumatoid arthritis	apples, berries, citrus fruit, leeks, onions
glucosinolates	cancer	broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale
phenolic compounds	cancer	apples, berries, green tea, pomegranates
phytoestrogens	cancer, osteoporosis, hyperthyroidism	soy foods, flaxseeds, grains, legumes, olive oil
resveratrol	cancer, stroke	red and purple grapes, peanuts, red wine
sulfur compounds	cancer, high cholesterol	chives, garlic, leeks, onions, shallots
terpenes	cancer	caraway, cardamom, citrus zest (colored portion of peel), coriander, mint, cherries

eye diseases, and cancer, and may even slow down the aging process. And blueberries and cranberries may guard against urinary tract infections by preventing the bacteria that cause them from attaching to cell walls.

Lentils are a miracle food. A single cup is packed with 16 grams of fiber—over half the amount we should be getting every day. Lentils are also an abundant source of folic acid, which helps protect your heart and your bones by keeping levels of homocysteine in check.

Nuts, rich in “good” fats, may lower your risk of heart disease. Almonds and walnuts are especially heart-healthy because the fat they contain is almost entirely unsaturated. Nuts also contain an ingredient that helps the body make nitric oxide, which relaxes blood vessels and increases blood flow. Nuts are also good sources of vitamin E, an antioxidant. Best of all, studies show that people who eat nuts tend to be thinner than those who don’t.

Avocados are rich in the same type of “good” fat found in olive oil and nuts. Ounce for ounce, they also have more soluble fiber than any other fruit. Food chemists recently discovered that avocados are spilling over in a plant sterol that helps prevent cholesterol from being absorbed through the intestines. That means less cholesterol makes its way into your bloodstream.



**It's easy to incorporate powerful
DISEASE-FIGHTING FOOD STRATEGIES into your
everyday life. Just follow this simple advice:**

Never skip breakfast.

Eating breakfast is the secret to staying healthy, according to medical research. Scientists at Harvard Medical School found that skipping the first meal of the day increases your chances of becoming obese, developing diabetes, or having a heart attack. And studies show that eating breakfast—especially a whole-grain cereal—helps you eat less the rest of the day.

Choose the right cereal.

A low-fat, whole-grain cereal enriched with vitamins is a great way to get the nutrients you need. One study showed that the body was much better able to absorb and use the vitamin E contained in a fortified cereal than that contained in a vitamin capsule. Look for a cereal with 5 grams of fiber or more per serving. Fiber protects against heart disease and diabetes, helps prevent constipation and hemorrhoids, and may reduce the risk of colon cancer.

Keep a lid on fat.

To help you lose weight and also protect your heart, keep your total fat intake to no more than 30 percent of your daily calories. Focus on low-fat alternatives to red meat, such as fish or skinless chicken or turkey. Lower your intake of dairy fats by switching to low-fat or skim varieties. Or try soy milk.

Use a magic margarine.

Just by choosing a margarine that contains sterols—chemicals that occur naturally in plants—you can lower your cholesterol and also possibly gain protection from cancer and other diseases. Studies suggest that using a sterol-based margarine for two years can lower heart disease risk by 25 percent.

Pack a healthy snack.

Contrary to common wisdom, snacking is good for you. It helps keep your blood sugar on an even keel, so you avoid hunger surges that make you overeat. Easy-to-pack healthy snacks include fresh or dried fruit, nuts, single-serving cans of unsweetened fruit, and bite-sized veggies (seal in a zip lock bag), such as baby carrots, green or red peppers, and broccoli flowerets.

Eat more yogurt.

Yogurt is a rich source of calcium, which helps you lose weight as well as protecting your bones and helping to keep blood pressure in check. What's more, yogurt that contains live or "active" bacteria cultures may help suppress the growth of harmful bacteria in the gut. These "friendly" bacteria may even boost immune function. Eating yogurt regularly may also cut down on yeast infections.

SMART SNACKS

- 8 ounces tomato juice
- 5 fat-free saltines
- 1 frozen juice bar
- 3 cups air-popped popcorn
- 4 ounces fat-free pudding
- ½ cup applesauce
- 1 string cheese
- 1 handful of almonds or peanuts

Avoid trans fats.

Found in many processed foods, baked goods, and commercially fried foods, these fats are now considered a serious health hazard because they raise cholesterol. They are formed when vegetable oils are processed (hydrogenated) to improve their stability and to make them more solid. A food that lists “hydrogenated oil” on its ingredient list contains trans fats.

Switch to skim.

Not only is milk a great source of calcium and protein, there's new scientific evidence that drinking milk helps speed weight loss by encouraging the body to burn fat. Just make sure you're drinking skim milk. A cup of skim milk has only 85 calories versus a cup of whole milk, which has 150.

Skip the soda.

Sugary soft drinks like colas and fruit beverages pack a load of calories. Some experts estimate they supply as much as 10 percent of our daily caloric intake. The sugar in soft drinks activates the pancreas to produce insulin, and insulin tells the body to store fat instead of burning it, causing weight gain. Substitute sugar-free drinks, or better yet, drink plain old water, with a little lemon or lime juice added for taste if you prefer.

Halt the salt.

Going lighter on sodium can help lower high blood pressure, a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke. To do it, you may need to re-educate your taste buds. Taste foods before reaching for the saltshaker, and then if you must add salt, add half what you normally would. Check the sodium content on canned and processed foods, and choose lower-sodium versions whenever possible.

Volumize with vegetables.

By adding more vegetables to your meals you make them more filling on far fewer calories. Add extra veggies—even canned—to beef up your favorite pasta sauce, chili, lasagna, casserole, soup, or stew. Stock the freezer with frozen vegetables and use them to supplement every stir-fry or take-out meal.

Enjoy a glass of wine with dinner.

Alcohol, in moderation (up to two drinks a day for men or one for women), helps protect your heart. In one study, women who drank moderately had only half the heart attack risk of those who didn't drink at all. There's even evidence that wine can help keep blood sugar levels in check. Just don't go overboard. Heavy drinkers have an increased risk of infection, cancer, and liver disease. Alcohol also weakens the immune system's response to invaders (such as viruses and bacteria) by preventing a wide variety of white blood cells from working properly.

Barbecue the safer way.

Charcoal-grilling foods, especially fatty meats, can create cancer-causing compounds. Before grilling meat, precook it in the microwave or on the stove, then place it over the flames just long enough to get a grilled flavor. Raise the grill as far from the coals as possible. If you're using a gas grill, lower the heat setting. Turn the meat with tongs rather than a fork to avoid releasing more fatty juices that splash on coals. Scientists from the American Institute for

IMMUNE-BOOSTING SMOOTHIE

You can make a smoothie by blending low-fat yogurt, milk, or soy milk with just about any fresh or frozen berries, or fruit such as pineapple or peaches. Here's a recipe chock-full of nutrition—and 5 grams of fiber.

1 cup plain nonfat yogurt

¾ cup carrot, orange, or red grape juice

1 ounce silken tofu

1 medium apple, peeled, cored, and diced

1 cup frozen berries

¼ cup chopped ice

Combine yogurt, juice, and tofu in a blender. Add fruit and ice and blend until smooth. Makes 2 to 3 cups

Cancer Research recommend marinating meat before cooking it to cut the creation of carcinogens during grilling.

Take up a tea habit.

The healing powers of green tea have been valued in Asia for thousands of years. In the West, new research reveals that it protects against a variety of cancers as well as heart disease. Some scientists believe that a chemical in green tea called ECGC could be one of the most powerful anticancer compounds ever discovered. And there's more. People who drink tea are less likely to die of a heart attack or stroke. Tea also fights tooth decay. Don't care for green tea? No problem. Black tea also contains health-protective antioxidants.

Indulge in a little chocolate.

Chocolate is a mood enhancer because it elevates levels of feel-good chemicals called endorphins. Better still, it contains flavonoids, disease-fighting antioxidant chemicals also found in red wine and some fruits and vegetables. Choose dark chocolate, which contains more antioxidants and less saturated fat than milk chocolate. A 5½-ounce bar of dark chocolate offers about the same amount of antioxidant protection as a 5-ounce glass of Cabernet.

Get the “whole” truth.

Just because bread looks brown or contains seven different grains or even “stone-ground wheat” doesn't mean it's made from *whole* grains—and if it's not, it's lacking important vitamins and minerals, not to mention disease-fighting fiber. Make sure the word “whole” is in the first ingredient.



SUPPLEMENT YOUR EFFORTS

Scientists are learning that even mild deficiencies of many vitamins and minerals may increase your risk for a variety of ailments—a strong argument for taking a daily multivitamin. And herbs have been helping people improve their health for thousands of years. Check with your doctor before taking any herb or other supplement.



Scientific evidence suggests you should mind your VITAMINS AND MINERALS.

Start with a multivitamin.

If you take no other supplement, be sure to take a multivitamin every day, without fail. It will help boost immunity, counter depression, lower high blood pressure, and protect against heart attacks.

Count on calcium.

Calcium does far more than protect your bones from age-related fractures. Believe it or not, it also helps keep blood pressure in check. And people who consume enough calcium actually have an easier time losing weight. Aim to get plenty of calcium from low-fat dairy foods, then supplement your diet by taking one 500- or 600-milligram calcium pill twice a day. Make sure the pill also contains vitamin D, which works in tandem with calcium and is vital for calcium absorption.

Avoid Alzheimer's with antioxidants.

A recent study found that people age 65 and older who took supplements of both vitamin C and vitamin E daily for three years were a whopping 78 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than those who didn't. The effective dose

was 500 milligrams of vitamin C and 400 IU of vitamin E. Vitamin C may also help lower blood pressure.

Stave off diseases with D.

Vital for calcium absorption, vitamin D may also play a key role in preventing colon polyps, certain cancers, and even multiple sclerosis. It is essential for bone health and may slow the progression of arthritis. Deficiencies have recently been linked with widespread musculoskeletal pain, so make sure you get enough. Aim for at least 400 IU a day, especially in the winter, when the body makes less of this “sunshine vitamin.”

B good to your heart.

If you want to protect your heart, your mind, and your bones at the same time, take a B-complex supplement every day (follow the dosage directions on the label). B vitamins lower levels of homocysteine, an amino acid linked with heart attacks. Lowering homocysteine also has the welcome effect of keeping older bones strong and reducing the risk of osteoporosis. Getting enough vitamin B₁₂ even makes you less likely to suffer from age-related memory loss.



Try these popular MEDICINAL HERBS to help prevent many ills.

Guard your eyes with bilberry.

Bilberry, an extremely potent antioxidant, can be used to treat or prevent various eye disorders including macular degeneration, as well as night blindness and poor vision from daytime glare. It also appears to strengthen veins—useful if you have varicose veins. Check the label for dosage information.

Boost your immunity with echinacea.

A natural antibiotic and infection fighter, echinacea helps to kill bacteria, viruses, fungi, and other disease-causing microbes. During cold and flu season, take echinacea daily for up to six weeks, then stop for a week before resuming. Because echinacea comes in many different forms, check the bottle for the correct dosage.

Prevent migraines with feverfew.

The herb feverfew reduces the frequency and intensity of migraines by preventing the release of prostaglandins, hormone-like compounds that dilate blood vessels and cause inflammation. Though it can prevent a migraine, it cannot relieve one once it starts. Check the label for dosage instructions.

Remember ginkgo biloba.

This herbal remedy is said to improve memory problems related to aging. Recent studies show that it increases blood flow to the brain, as well as to the arms and legs, by regulating the tone and elasticity of blood vessels. Current research is looking at whether ginkgo's ability to prevent blood clots may help prevent heart attacks and stroke. As a general memory booster and for poor circulation, take 120 milligrams of ginkgo biloba extract daily, divided into two or three doses. Don't take ginkgo if you're taking a blood thinner.

Avoid angina with hawthorn.

Hawthorn is an herb that directly benefits the workings of the heart. It was used in the past as both a diuretic and a treatment for kidney and bladder stones, and is currently one of the most widely prescribed heart remedies in Europe. It can dilate blood vessels, increase the heart's energy supply, and improve its pumping ability. The recommended dosage of hawthorn extract ranges from 300 to 450 mg a day.

Consider coenzyme Q₁₀.

Coenzyme Q₁₀ is a natural vitamin-like compound that the body produces. It helps to maintain general good health, as well as treat heart disease and a number of other serious conditions. Coenzyme Q₁₀ may play a role in preventing cancer, heart attacks, and other diseases linked to free-radical damage. It's also used as a general energy enhancer and anti-aging supplement. Because levels of the compound diminish with age (and with certain diseases), some doctors recommend daily supplementation beginning about age 40. The dosage generally recommended is 50 milligrams twice a day. Take with food to enhance absorption.

ADD YEARS TO YOUR LIFE WITH EXERCISE

How many hours a day do you spend sitting? It's time to get up and move! Exercise slashes the risk of heart disease, cancer, and stroke, which together account for 80 percent of deaths in this country. Get active at least three to five days a week, and right away both your brain and your body will begin to feel renewed. Within six to eight weeks, you'll have far more energy and much less stress.



Explore fun and easy ways to GET A TOTAL BODY WORKOUT and send your calorie burn sky-high.

Walk yourself fit.

If you want an exercise that improves your health, fits easily into your life, doesn't cost anything, and can be done almost anywhere, anytime, then walking is for you. Walk for at least 15 to 20 minutes each day, and you'll see results fast. Move fast enough so you're breathing hard, but not so hard that you're out of breath. Remember to stand tall, keep your shoulders back, and swing your arms naturally as you walk.

Ride a bike.

Bicycling, whether on an ordinary bike or a stationary one, is a calorie-burning, heart-rate-raising activity that most people can easily find the time to do. Riding your bike for approximately 20 to 25 minutes three times per week is an excellent workout that is gentle on your joints. As you become better conditioned, pedal for longer periods of time and increase your bike's gear tension, or include more hills in your route.

Swim to good health.

Swimming is an ideal low-impact aerobic exercise. It uses all the major muscles—upper body and lower body—and depending on your stroke and speed, burns between 300 and 1,000 calories an hour. Swimming, in addition to its cardiovascular benefit, increases muscle flexibility and strength without jarring bones or joints, and is therapeutic for people who suffer from heart disease, arthritis, or back problems.

Skip the elevator, climb stairs.

According to a Johns Hopkins study, you can add two years to your life by climbing stairs for just six minutes a day. To get more from step climbing, try this technique: Begin by pushing off the inside of your left foot, then plant your entire right foot on the next step, pushing down into your heel to lift all your weight on your right leg. That way you're using your weight for resistance. By using this technique you'll develop stronger inner thighs, hamstrings, and buttocks.

Buy a pedometer.

You'll be more motivated to take the stairs instead of the elevator and walk instead of drive to the corner store if you wear a pedometer—a small device, which you clip to your waistband, that counts the number of steps you take. A Johns Hopkins University research study shows that people who wear one walk an average of 40 minutes a day—about 11 minutes more than those who don't. You can buy a pedometer at your local sporting goods store.

Think activity, not exercise.

You don't have to spend a fortune on a gym membership or exercise equipment to be fit. Golf, hiking, yoga, basketball, badminton, or gardening, and even house cleaning also count as exercise. Any

CALORIE COUNTER

Activity	Calories burned per hour
Vacuuming	175
Food shopping	245
Raking leaves	280
Mopping	315
Walking the dog	324
Digging in the garden	350
Scrubbing the floor	385

physical activity—even doing something as simple as walking a friend’s dog—will do you good.

Put on some music and dance!

It’s fun, it’s great exercise and, there’s no need to leave home, you can do it anywhere. Just pop in a CD, crank up the volume, and dance to your heart’s content! Dancing helps to cut stress, increase energy and bone density, and improve strength and coordination. For starters, just move to the music. If you want to add fancier steps, you can always take lessons later on.

Don’t waste your tube time.

Most of us spend hours each week glued to the television. There’s no reason you can’t get in some gentle stretching or even march in place while you watch your favorite show or the evening news.

SLEEP WELL TO LIVE LONGER

Sleep is critical to the proper functioning of your brain and body. As research shows, losing even one night of sleep can lead to weakened immunity, increased stress hormones, less efficient glucose metabolism, and impaired cognitive functioning.



Develop STRATEGIES TO PREVENT SLEEP PROBLEMS, like tossing and turning or waking up too early, that can jeopardize your health.

Become a creature of habit.

A nighttime routine can be very effective in letting your body know when it’s time to sleep. Go through whatever rituals help

you get mentally prepared for sleep. Read a few pages of your novel, spend 5 to 10 minutes on personal grooming, meditate, or stretch. It's also critical to go to bed and get up at the same time every day—even on weekends.

Make your room a haven for sleep.

Your room should be quiet and sufficiently dark, because darkness prompts the pineal gland to produce melatonin, the hormone that induces sleep. Heavy drapes can help keep the light out, and a fan or white-noise machine can help drown out any annoying sounds. Cool temperatures help you sleep, so set your thermostat appropriately. Try adding a few drops of lavender oil to a diffuser to fill the air with this sleep-inducing scent.

Tame your tummy.

Going to bed either hungry or too full can disrupt your sleep. Don't have a big meal too close to bedtime or the digestion process might keep you awake. Also, if you lie down after stuffing yourself you can end up with acid reflux—stomach acid backing up into the esophagus. If you're hungry, have a snack rich in carbohydrates, which trigger the release of the brain chemical serotonin, associated with relaxation. Try a graham cracker with milk or a slice of turkey, both rich in the amino acid tryptophan, which also induces sleep.

Cut the caffeine.

Too much caffeine throughout the day can contribute to fitful slumber. Once you hit 50, your metabolism slows, so caffeine may stay in your system longer—up to 10 hours. So limit your caffeine consumption accordingly.

Turn to melatonin.

Melatonin is a natural hormone produced by the brain's pineal gland. During the day, our blood levels of melatonin are fairly low, but come bedtime, this gland revs up production, releasing more of the hormone into the blood. Though it doesn't make you fall asleep directly, melatonin may initiate changes in your body that set you up for sleep. Evidence shows that taking a 1- to 3-milligram supplement before bedtime may help you fall asleep faster.

Tap the exercise answer.

It's a simple fact: If you're physically tired at the end of the day, you'll sleep better. In a study from Stanford University School of Medicine, a group of 50- to 76-year-olds who had complained of sleep problems began moderate exercise for about half an hour four times a week. They slept an average of one hour more each night, took less time to fall asleep, spent less time napping, and reported an overall improvement in sleep quality versus a group that didn't exercise.

Soak it up.

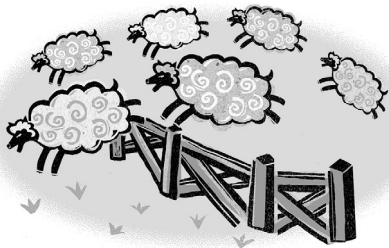
Take a warm bath an hour or two before bed. Your body temperature will slowly drop after you get out of the tub—a biological signal that it's time to snooze. One study of older women found that those who bathed in water temperatures of about 105°F spent more time in deep, slow-brain-wave sleep, the kind you need to recover from fatigue.

Don't toss and turn.

If 30 minutes go by and you haven't fallen asleep, don't lie in bed feeling frustrated. Get up and do something relaxing, like listening to soothing music or flipping through a magazine. Or make yourself a cup of warm milk.

Buy the right bed.

A bed that's too soft can cause poor sleep postures (which can also lead to muscle stiffness and back problems). If you're leaving a divot in the mattress when you get up, it's too soft. Replace your mattress if it's more than 10 years old, and buy one that's as firm as you can tolerate but is still comfortable.



GIVE STRESS THE BOOT

The “fight or flight” response can be a blessing in an emergency, but if you trigger it too often, it can undermine your health, increasing your risk of heart disease, depression, sleep problems, and chronic skin conditions. If stress sends you spinning, don’t let it wear you down. Instead, take preemptive action to get it under control—before it controls you.



Don't let stress run your life or ruin your health. Try 10 SIMPLE WAYS TO NIP STRESS IN THE BUD.

1. Lean on other people.

Studies on both animals and humans show that social contact can help tone down the body's physical response to stress. It can even boost immunity. So cultivate a network of people you can turn to. Share what's bothering you with a friend and ask for some advice. Avoid people who always need something without giving back or who are constantly moody or depressed.

2. Try progressive muscle relaxation.

Sit or lie down in a comfortable place. Curl your toes as hard as you can for 10 seconds, then relax them. Next, tense and relax your feet, then your calves, and so on, until you've "worked" the tension out of your entire body.

3. Get more vitamin C.

In one study, under-pressure people who took 1,000 milligrams of vitamin C had milder increases in blood pressure and brought their stress hormones back to normal more quickly than people who didn't take the supplements.

4. Keep a journal.

Reflect on your day, your emotions, and your personal goals. Include everything that stresses you, so you can start to recognize patterns and take appropriate action. Writing is also a great way to relax and put things into perspective.

5. Get organized.

Set aside a place for bills, paperwork, and letters. Store items you use most often in accessible places. Spend five minutes straightening your office or main living area at the end of the day. Keep a long-range calendar and a short-range to-do list. Check off items as you finish them.

6. Get a massage.

Massage not only relaxes tense muscles, it decreases the level of stress hormones in the bloodstream and stimulates the release of serotonin, a brain chemical associated with relaxation and a feeling of well-being. Studies show that massage can even lower your heart rate and blood pressure.

RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF STRESS

● **Behavioral**

Drinking too much, eating too much or too little, fidgeting, fist clenching, talking too fast

● **Emotional**

Anger, defensiveness, depression, irrationality, listlessness, mood swings

● **Mental**

Confusion, memory problems, poor concentration, vivid dreams

● **Physical**

Cold hands and feet, teeth grinding, headaches, heart palpitations, indigestion, itching, sore neck, tense muscles, weight loss or gain

7. Chop your to-do list in half.

Most of us set the bar too high. After you've written your to-do list, decide what's most important to you in the long run, then cut the list in half. If you can't eliminate certain tasks, try to have someone else do them. For instance, hire a teenager to do yard work, or skip cooking and order in.

8. Carve time for yourself.

Give higher priority to your "relax and renewal"

time. Include it in your schedule at least every other day. If you have to cut out an activity to make time for your hobby—or a warm bath—then do it. Or spend some time alone reading or listening to music you love.

9. Avoid crowds.

Schedule your commute to avoid traffic, go for lunch 15 minutes before the usual rush, make Thursday, not Saturday, your night out, shop for groceries on a weeknight, and order your clothes through the mail.

10. Laugh a little.

When you laugh, you send chemicals called endorphins to your brain that ease pain and enhance your feeling of well-being. Laughter also stimulates the heart, lungs, and muscles and boosts your resistance to infection. If you laugh for 20 seconds, your body gets the same amount of beneficial oxygen—good for stress relief—as it does in three minutes of aerobic exercise. Plus, it's nearly impossible to stay tense while you're laughing.

STEER CLEAR OF GERMS

You can't see, hear, or feel germs, but billions of microorganisms—from bacteria to viruses to fungi—surround us 24 hours a day. They are in the air we breathe and in the water we drink, and just about everything we touch. They are even in our mouths! Luckily, less than one percent of them are nasty enough to make us ill. But there are ways to minimize your risk of exposure to those that could harm you.



STOP THE SPREAD OF COMMON GERMS with these simple steps.

Wash your hands thoroughly and often.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hand washing is the single most important means of preventing the spread of infection. One study of naval recruits found they cut their incidence of respiratory illness by 45 percent when they washed their hands five times a day. Good hand washing requires a generous squirt of liquid soap, warm running water, and lots of friction—vigorously rub your hands together for about as long as it takes to recite the alphabet. Then rinse and dry thoroughly.

Don't forget to floss.

More than 400 species of bacteria can exist in plaque. Left unchecked, these bacteria carve out tiny pockets between gums and teeth. The germs themselves or the toxins they release then may enter the bloodstream, where they can trigger an immune reaction that contributes to clogged arteries. Plaque also contains

types of bacteria that can infect the respiratory tract, causing bacterial pneumonia. Floss at least twice a day to prevent plaque buildup.

KNOW WHERE THE GERMS ARE

Research shows that we tend to pick up infectious illnesses like colds from the most contaminated surfaces in public places:

- Public phones
- Public rest-room counters
- Bank pens
- Chair armrests
- Elevator buttons
- Escalator handrails
- Shopping-cart and grocery-store refrigerator handles

Beware the perils of public rest rooms.

Public bathrooms are fertile grounds for germs. When you use one, choose the stall closest to the door; it is usually the least used and therefore the cleanest. More important, wash your hands thoroughly when you're done. If paper towels are available, use them instead of automatic hand-dryers—bacteria thrive inside hot hand-dryer nozzles. Don't touch the faucet

directly when you turn it off; hold a paper towel over it while you turn it instead. Use the same paper towel trick on the bathroom doorknob when you leave.

Remember food safety.

To avoid food-borne illness, refrigerate or freeze all perishables within two hours of purchase or preparation. If the weather is hot, reduce that time to one hour and use a cooler for perishables. As a general rule, keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. And always thaw frozen food in the fridge, not on the counter.

Wash your produce.

Carefully scrub all fruits and vegetables—even organic ones—especially if you intend to eat them raw. Herbs and lettuce leaves should be rinsed individually under cool tap water. Root vegetables should be scrubbed, even if you plan to peel them later. After all, they were grown underground. Rinse delicate fruit, such as strawberries, in a colander, and remove leafy stems, which provide good hideouts for bacteria.

Clean counters and cutting boards.

To avoid bacterial contamination, it's important to clean equipment and work surfaces used in preparing raw meat, poultry, or seafood before you allow any cooked food to come into contact with them. The average cutting board carries 200 times more fecal bacteria (primarily from raw meat) than a toilet seat. For maximum cleanliness, use two cutting boards: one for raw meats and a second for produce and cooked foods. Blast away bacteria by rinsing work surfaces with a solution of one tablespoon chlorine laundry bleach to one gallon of hot water.

Be sponge savvy.

What's the dirtiest item in your kitchen? Your sponge, thanks to the bits of food and moisture it holds on to day after day. Using the same sponge for several different tasks—washing dishes, cleaning counters, and wiping down oven knobs—spreads the germs around. As a countermeasure, sanitize your sponges daily by microwaving them on high for one minute.

Be eggs-act when handling eggs.

Store eggs in their dated carton in the main part of the refrigerator, which is cooler than the shelves on the inside of the door. Store the pointed end of the egg down, so that the yolk remains centered in the shell away from the air pocket at the larger end. To avoid salmonella poisoning, don't eat raw or partially cooked eggs. And always wash your hands after touching raw eggs.

KEEP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Scientists learn more every day about the link between your mind and your health. Stress, depression, and anger have all been shown to pave the way to illness and disease. On the other hand, if you feel good about yourself, have a positive outlook, and maintain an active involvement in life, you're more likely to be happy—and healthy.



STAY UPBEAT, because the mind and body are joined in marriage, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health.

Take time for yourself.

Read the paper, keep a journal, or go for a swim. This is especially important for women, who are often so busy nurturing others that they neglect their own needs and interests. Allow yourself time for reflection and soul-searching. Remind yourself of your best qualities and count your blessings.

Stay connected.

Isolation breeds poor health. In one study, women who didn't have many opportunities for social contact were found to have

higher blood pressure than those who did do so. Social interactions can help protect the body from some of the negative physical effects of stress. And people with strong social support demonstrated less need for pain medications and faster recovery from illness.

Laugh your way to better health.

Laughter not only feels good; it's good for you, too. Laughing triggers the release of endorphins, feel-good brain chemicals associated with a sense of well-being. It diffuses stress by relaxing the muscles and lowering your heart rate and blood pressure. And it lowers levels of stress hormones that wreak havoc throughout the body. Take every opportunity to watch a funny show or video, read a joke, or go see a comedian. It's just what the doctor ordered.

Think positive.

When it comes to being happy, a positive attitude helps. Researchers have documented the physical and social benefits of looking at life with a smile. For instance, studies have shown that optimists actually tend to live longer than pessimists do. Optimism means having a proactive attitude and taking steps to improve the conditions in your life.

Volunteer to be happy.

Being involved in volunteer activities could add years to your life. While gaining plenty of social benefits, you'll also take your mind off your own troubles. According to a study at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, senior citizens who volunteered showed a 67 percent reduced risk of dying during a seven-year period compared with people who did not volunteer.

Rely on pet power.

Caring for a pet can go a long way toward increasing your sense of fulfillment in life. A furry or feathered friend can help you have fun, feel adored, and have someone to talk to. Pets can boost your self-esteem; they are never judgmental and always ready to accept and love you. And pets can help you avoid feeling lonely, which can harm your health.

Beat the blues.

Everyone feels down in the dumps at times. It's perfectly normal and often an appropriate reaction to change, or a traumatic or stressful experience. But chronic depression can make you more vulnerable to illness and aggravate such conditions as heart disease and rheumatoid arthritis. The fastest way to raise your spirits is to get out and exercise. Exercise will boost your levels of endorphins, the body's feel-good chemicals. If you feel sad for more than two weeks, consult your doctor.

Tame the angry beast.

Anger can be a healthy emotion. But when you consistently repress it, it can make your life miserable—and lead to serious health problems. Anger unleashes a flood of artery-damaging stress hormones into your bloodstream, raises your cholesterol levels and heart rate, and suppresses your immune system. Repeated expressions of hostility cause a buildup of homocysteine levels in your blood that's closely associated with heart disease. If you feel you have a problem with anger, consult a health professional.

GET SCREENED FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS

“It can't happen to me.” That's not just the foolish refrain of teenagers who don't know any better; it's also the unfortunate mind-set that causes many adults to forgo simple medical screening tests that could save their lives. As a result, thousands of people die each year from diseases that could have been treated if caught early on.



Don't let serious disease sneak up on you. GET THE FOLLOWING TESTS. Your life could depend on it.

Blood pressure check

Have your blood pressure checked every two years (more often if it's borderline or high). African-Americans, people who are overweight, and those with diabetes should monitor their blood pressure more regularly.

Cholesterol measurement

A baseline cholesterol test is recommended for men age 35 to 40 and women age 40. Adults whose levels are normal should be screened every five years. If you have high cholesterol or other risk factors for heart disease, you should be tested at least every year.

Colonoscopy

This test detects colorectal cancer, the third most common cancer in men and women. If caught in time, the cure rate is over 90 percent. Get checked at age 50 and at least every 5 to 10 years after that.

Digital rectal exam

This manual exam of the anus and rectum is a quick, inexpensive way to detect abnormalities. In men, it's used to screen for prostate enlargement or nodules; in women, for growths in the uterus and bladder. Everyone after age 50 should have one annually.

Mammograms and pap smears

Women over 40 should have a mammogram every one to two years. Women at high risk for breast cancer may require them more frequently. All women who are sexually active should have a Pap test at least every two to three years to screen for cervical cancer.

Testicular exam

Men should ask their doctor how to perform this check for signs of testicular cancer, then do it regularly from age 15 to 40. (Testicular cancer almost never strikes men over 40.)

Skin cancer check

Starting at age 40 you should have a dermatologist check your skin once a year for skin cancer. From age 20 to 40, get checked every three years. And ask your dermatologist how to check your own skin and do it often in between visits.

Bone density test

The DEXA test for bone density is somewhat controversial because it is expensive. But most doctors recommend that women 65 and older be routinely screened to determine their risk of fractures from osteoporosis, which can go undiagnosed for many years. You'll need the test sooner if you have risk factors for osteoporosis.

Diabetes test

Diabetes can be diagnosed early on with a fasting plasma glucose tolerance (FPG) test or an oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT). The sooner you detect diabetes, the more quickly you can treat it and prevent serious complications like heart attacks, strokes, and kidney problems. Routine testing every three years for everyone age 45 or older, or anyone at high risk, is recommended.

DETOXIFY YOUR HOME

From donning a mask and rubber gloves when handling cleaning products to wearing earplugs to block out noise pollution, there are many ways to counteract the effects of everyday toxins that are all around us. Play it safe, and limit your exposure to protect yourself from cleaning chemicals, radiation, air pollution, carbon monoxide—even toxins from your tap water!



Take steps to **PROTECT YOURSELF FROM EVERYDAY TOXINS.**

Buy a carbon monoxide detector.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that accounts for many of the fatal poisonings in America each year. The gas can be detected with sensors similar to smoke alarms. Undetected, it causes symptoms that range from headaches and irritability to nausea and vomiting. Prolonged exposure in confined areas causes coma and death. To keep it out of your house, have your heating and hot-water systems and their flues inspected and cleaned annually. Vent all your gas appliances to the outside, never burn chemically treated wood or charcoal in the fireplace, and never idle the motor of your car in the garage.

Check for radon.

The bulk of the radiation you're exposed to daily comes from radon, a radioactive gas produced from uranium in the soil or water. Outdoors, radon dissipates in the atmosphere; indoors, it can accumulate and become a health hazard. This odorless, invisible gas is second only to smoking as a cause of lung cancer. Because radon levels depend on a home's structure and location, you should check with your state housing authorities to see if your house is in a known radon hot spot. If you have any concerns, buy a radon testing kit at your local hardware store or get professional help.

Bypass benzene.

Found in everything from room deodorizers to gasoline, it poisons our white blood cells. Don't use spray air fresheners, and avoid inhaling gasoline fumes when you're filling your tank. Use pumps with vapor-control nozzles, and stand upwind for the nozzle with your face turned the other way.

Ventilate your home.

Toxic fumes can build up in your home from a variety of sources, from appliances (dishwashers, washing machines) to new carpeting. Your best strategy: Circulate as much fresh outside air as possible, especially after you've had new carpeting installed. Wait

until the dishwasher has cooled before you open it. Turn on the exhaust fan or open a bathroom window while showering. And install an exhaust fan that vents to the outdoors over your gas stove.

Don't give mold a chance to grow.

Household molds can produce substances that are toxic to the immune system. Always switch on an exhaust fan when showering. Run a dehumidifier in your basement or other humid areas in your home (don't forget to empty the tray). Change air conditioner filters often. Avoid burning damp firewood, which may release mold spores.

Have your water tested.

Before buying a home water purifier, have your water tested so you know which contaminants need to be filtered out. Contact your local public health utility and ask for information on what contaminants your tap water contains and at what levels. Possible culprits include chlorine (long-term exposure increases cancer risk), lead (picked up in old pipes, it damages organs over time), arsenic (a carcinogen that may also cause heart problems), and parasites (responsible for chronic diarrhea).

10 MORE WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Now that you have the tools to disease-proof your body, here are 10 more tips to help speed you on your way to good health.

1. Remember to drink.

No, you don't have to follow the old rule of drinking eight glasses of water a day. But you do have to drink enough so that you are urinating every few hours and your urine is pale. Remember:

By the time your body sends the signal that it's thirsty, you're already in the early stages of dehydration. Need a bigger incentive? Proper hydration may curb your appetite and reduce chronic discomfort, such as back pain, arthritis, and muscle cramps.

2. Say “no” to cigarettes.

Smoking does major damage to your health: it raises your risk of heart disease, cancer, and other ailments; it wreaks havoc on cells lining the lungs, gradually making you more susceptible to respiratory infections; and it speeds bone loss. If you're having trouble quitting, ask your doctor for advice on nicotine patches or the prescription drug bupropion. And until you quit, get extra vitamin C, since smoking depletes vitamin C levels.

3. Take restful vacations.

One study revealed that a leisurely two-week vacation does more than just clear the mind and calm the spirit; it also improves health and reduces stress levels for up to five weeks. Both during and after a good vacation, we sleep better and enjoy better mood. For a vacation to be healing, however, it must be restful and not overly structured. People who didn't have any down time on their vacations didn't enjoy the same health benefits.

4. Be a buddy.

Many of us know intuitively that having friends keeps us healthy. You might not realize, however, that researchers have been exploring the connection for decades. People who frequently interact with others, whether face-to-face or by phone, mail, or e-mail, have lower death rates in any given time period than those who live in isolation. Sociable people get sick less often, and they recover faster when they do.

5. Get a shot of prevention.

Flu shots do more than help prevent the flu. According to intriguing research from France, they also appear to lower the risk of having a stroke. And a Canadian study showed that men who'd had tetanus or diphtheria shots were 59 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease, while polio vaccinations reduced the risk by 40 percent.

6. Play that funky music.

Listening to music for 30 minutes raises the production of immunity-boosting proteins an astounding 30 percent, according to one study. And music stimulates the brain's production of endorphins—nature's painkillers—so much that some hospitals are piping in patients' favorite tunes before surgery and during childbirth. It matters less what the music is than that you like it.

7. Have sex.

It's official: Sex is not only good for the heart, it's good for your overall health. Research has shown that for women, regular sex increases estrogen levels, which can improve the condition of skin and hair and redress menopausal hormone imbalances. Regular sex (with ejaculation) has been shown to decrease the risk of prostate problems in some men. Sex boosts the immune system. It has also been found to inhibit breast cancer development.

8. Take up a hobby.

Do something for the sheer pleasure of it, whether it's knitting, collecting rocks, or bird watching. Hobbies instill self-confidence and help you connect with others who share your interests. And being engaged in numerous pursuits will help shield you from depression. Studies have shown that overall happiness depends upon how much time each person spent doing something that made him or her feel good.

9. Stay out of the sun.

Besides increasing your risk for skin cancer and making you look older, ultraviolet rays weaken the function of certain immune-system cells in the skin. So slather on sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15.

10. Take a baby aspirin every day.

Studies show that aspirin reduces the risk of heart attacks in people with heart disease—and even in healthy people. Aspirin also significantly reduces the risk of certain cancers. The recommended dose is 81 milligrams of aspirin per day. Because aspirin thins the blood and may cause stomach bleeding, check with your doctor first to make sure aspirin therapy is right for you.