

THE HEALTHY CPA

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March 2022

The Wonders of Walking

You've been doing it since you were a toddler — and it's now labeled as “the closest thing we have to a wonder drug,” offering important health benefits. Regular, brisk walking can:

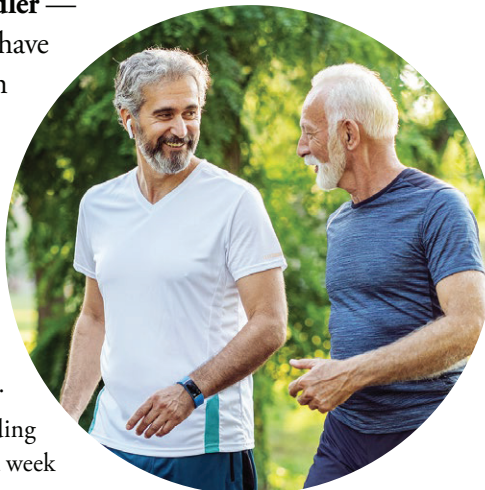
Boost immunity. Studies show routine exercise walking can help protect you from illness during cold and flu season.

Reduce the risk of developing breast cancer.

An American Cancer Society study on walking found that women who walked seven or more hours a week had a 14% lower risk of breast cancer.

Protect your joints and reduce joint pain, according to several studies — and walking five to six miles a week can even prevent arthritis from forming.

Walking can also improve your cardiovascular fitness, muscle endurance and sleep, reduce stress and strengthen your bones and muscles. The faster, farther and more frequently you walk, the greater the benefits. And walking can be a very pleasant way to get fit. Invite a friend to join you.



Just starting? Try walking briskly at three miles per hour (walking a mile in 17 minutes), beginning with ten minutes per day for the first three weeks. Slowly increase the time you walk by five minutes per week until you are able to walk 30 minutes per day, six days per week. If you are already in good shape, start at this level.

“If you feel rooted in your home and family, if you're active in your community, there's nothing more empowering. The best way to make a difference in the world is to start by making a difference in your own life.”

— Julia Louis-Dreyfus

BEST bits

- Are you at risk for pandemic posture? This refers to poor posture from slouching at a desk or in a chair, causing back and neck pain — a problem that has increased during the pandemic, often related to longer periods of sitting and working at home. To help reduce your backache, get some daily aerobic exercise — walking or using an exercise machine. Stand up frequently and stretch. Also, get up and move every 20 to 30 minutes. A physical therapist can show you ways to strengthen and stretch the muscles needed for long periods of sitting.
- Do you wear contacts? Protect your eyes from infection, which is most often caused by bacteria on the lenses. The most common condition, keratitis, is infection of the cornea (the clear dome covering the colored part of the eye). Symptoms include eye pain and redness, blurred vision, tearing and eye discharge. If you have symptoms, remove your lenses and contact your eye care professional promptly. Stay aware of ways you can keep your contact lenses clean and safe:
 - Wash your hands well before touching your lenses.
 - Don't spit on your lenses to clean them.
 - Keep creams and makeup away from your lenses.
 - Keep your lens case clean.
- March is National Kidney Month, an opportunity to learn about keeping these vital organs healthy. About 26 million Americans have kidney disease, but most don't know it. And one in three American adults is at high risk for kidney disease. Talk to your health care provider about kidney disease screening and control blood pressure and blood sugar, maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly and avoid excess pain medication use to lower kidney disease risk. Visit [kidney.org/kidney-basics](https://www.kidney.org/kidney-basics) to learn more.



The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, **Garden Shape-Up**, is at personalbest.com/extras/22V3tools.

Coping with Post-COVID

Some people who become ill with COVID-19 go on to experience symptoms that can last for weeks or months. This is called **post-COVID** (also **long COVID**) and those who suffer from it are known as **long haulers**. Symptoms can be new, returning or ongoing health problems, which include:

- Fatigue and fever. • Chest or stomach pain.
- Joint or muscle pain. • Dizziness. • Diarrhea.
- Respiratory difficulty and shortness of breath.
- Altered sense of taste or smell.
- Psychological issues — depression, anxiety, sleep and mental trouble.

Symptoms of post-COVID develop four weeks or more after a person is infected. Many of these long haulers — from teenagers to people in their 50s — typically suffer just mild initial effects.

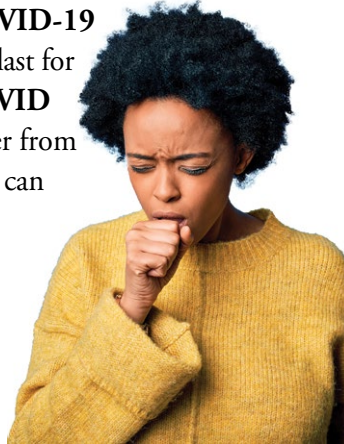
The reason some of us continue to have symptoms and illness due to COVID-19 is not always clear, but here are some contributing factors:

- Damage to lungs caused by the virus. • Inflammation of the brain caused by the virus. • Reduced immunity. • Lingering stress from hospitalization or intensive care. • Decline in physical strength following long periods of bedrest and inactivity.

These symptoms can significantly impact ability to work, study, manage your household, make decisions and enjoy social activities.

How long does the syndrome typically continue? Many people are very slow to recover. It can take three to 12 months to get back to your normal level of energy and improved breathing. The symptoms and potential long-term effects can leave you feeling overwhelmed.

Continue your regular medical care. If you have ongoing physical and mental symptoms, work closely with your health care provider, who can guide you through your recovery period and help keep things in perspective. Your provider can identify and help relieve physical symptoms and monitor serious complications, such as those listed above.



Sleep Studies

If you never seem to feel rested, a sleep study can help pinpoint why. Then, with a diagnosis, you can get appropriate treatment. Not getting enough quality sleep is linked to several chronic health problems, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, depression and obesity. Sleep deprivation also can lead to driving mishaps and mistakes at work.

Without a sleep study, why you toss and turn all night or wake up feeling like you haven't slept at all may be a mystery. For example, many people with sleep apnea (which interrupts deep, restorative sleep) have no idea they stop breathing for brief periods. But a sleep study can help your health care provider diagnose sleep apnea, sleep-related seizure disorders, restless legs syndrome and other sleep robbers.

Sleep studies are usually done at a sleep center in comfortable bedroom settings. Removable sensors are placed on your scalp, face, eyelids, chest, legs, and a finger to record your heart rate, brain waves, breathing (including periods of stopped breathing), oxygen levels, and muscle movements before, during and after sleep. Some sleep studies, primarily those testing for sleep apnea, may be performed at home using a portable monitor, which is easy to use. A sleep technician or your provider will explain how to set it up.

Your provider or a sleep specialist will review your sleep study results and develop a treatment plan for any diagnosed sleep disorder which may include lifestyle changes and/or medication.



HEALTHY STEPS

If you're not fully vaccinated, including a booster, then you might get COVID-19 again. Vaccination can reduce your risk of reinfection.

If you smoke, quit. Smoking reduces lung function, lowering immunity and worsening your symptoms of long COVID. While quitting can be tough, it can quickly improve your circulation and breathing to aid your recovery.

Wear a mask when you're out in public to reduce your risk of reinfection. Keep your hands clean. Avoid crowds and areas where vaccination isn't required for admission.

Get seven to nine hours of sleep daily or nightly. Adequate sleep helps your body heal and relieve fatigue and stress.

Eat a well-balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables; avoid alcohol.

To boost your energy and reduce depression, take breaks from your routine and enjoy some light exercise, yoga, meditation, deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. Take it easy whenever you can and follow your provider's instructions.



TIP of the MONTH Depression-Food Link

Here's another great reason to get enough vegetables and fruits: New research shows men and women who ate more fruits and vegetables — at least 250 grams or four servings per day — had a 20% lower risk of developing depression. What's the link? Fruits and vegetables contain antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that may help lower oxidative stress and inflammation in the brain. The research followed 4,105 participants in the Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study.





Spring Forward with Care

Plan ahead to adjust to Daylight Saving Time (DST), which begins on Sunday, March 13. It's easy to move the clock up an hour on the night before the change, but you can't reset your body's internal clock that quickly. And lack of sleep can take a toll on your productivity and even raise the risk for accidents and some illnesses.

While some people adjust more easily than others to the time change, these strategies recommended by sleep experts can help.

- **Gradually change your bedtime a few days before DST begins.** Go to bed 15 minutes earlier than usual. Then increase the early bedtime by 15 minutes every few nights. Also set your clock to wake up 15 to 20 minutes earlier than usual, as you slowly adjust to springing forward.
- **Set your watch and household clocks the night before DST begins (your phone and computer will update automatically).** Although the time change doesn't officially occur until 2 a.m., waking up to all devices set at the new time can help you get used to the change faster.
- **Step outside and get some sunshine, especially on days immediately after the time change.** Daylight helps your body's internal clock adjust to your new timing of sleeping and waking.
- **If you feel extra sleepy until you adjust to DST, short catnaps may help.** But the Sleep Foundation advises only napping for 20 minutes or less to prevent feeling groggy.

Vitamins on Your Plate

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

eating smart

March is Nutrition Month.



While sales of vitamin supplements continue to skyrocket, the best source of vitamins doesn't come from a pill. *It comes from your plate.* The foods you eat — from vegetables to eggs to fish to whole grains — are filled with the essential vitamins your body needs.

Few vitamins act alone. They often need to be paired with other nutrients to do their job, and these pairings naturally occur in foods more readily than in supplements. For example, the naturally occurring fat in egg yolks helps the body absorb vitamins A, D and E found in the eggs.

Vitamins from foods tend to be in smaller quantities than what's in high-dose supplements, but that's a good thing. Studies show that taking excessive amounts of vitamin supplements has no advantage in preventing heart disease or premature death and may cause and increase risk of certain cancers. More is not always better when it comes to vitamins.

Plus, foods contain a mixture of compounds that supplements can't adequately replicate, such as fiber, antioxidants and phytonutrients. Your best bet? Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit, a quarter with whole grains, and the remaining quarter with protein-rich options, such as fish, poultry and legumes. You'll get plenty of vitamins from that well-balanced plate.



There are some exceptions, such as deficiency in a certain vitamin. For example, vitamin D is found in relatively few foods (fatty fish, eggs and fortified milk are known sources), so supplements are often required, especially in areas that don't have year-round sunshine. Ask your health care provider to test your vitamin D level to see if you need a supplement.

Vibrant Salad Bowls with Lemon Tahini Dressing

EASY recipe

1 cup quinoa
¼ cup tahini (sesame seed paste)
2 tbsp lemon juice
1 tbsp maple syrup or honey
1 tbsp toasted sesame oil
Pinch salt and pepper

2 cups edamame beans, shelled and thawed
1 cup grape tomatoes
2 medium carrots, grated
1 yellow pepper, seeded and diced
2 cups shredded purple cabbage



Rinse quinoa in a fine sieve. **Bring** quinoa and 2 cups of water to a boil in a small pot. **Simmer** until water is absorbed, about 15 minutes. **Fluff** with a fork and set aside. **Add** the tahini, lemon juice, maple syrup, sesame oil, salt and pepper to a blender or food processor. **Blend** until creamy, adding water to reach desired consistency. **Divide** quinoa into four bowls. **Top** with edamame, tomato, carrots, pepper and cabbage. **Drizzle** with dressing and enjoy.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 442 calories | 21g protein | 18g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 7g mono fat | 9g poly fat | 54g carbohydrate | 8g sugar | 14g fiber | 198mg sodium

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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EXPERT advice

— Eric Endlich, PhD

Q: What is cognitive behavioral therapy?

A: **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** is a form of psychotherapy (talk therapy) shown by research to be effective for a wide variety of conditions, including depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders and relationship problems. Some studies have found the effects to be comparable or superior to those of medication, and with lower rates of side effects or dropouts.

CBT is based on the notion that certain unhelpful patterns of thoughts and behaviors contribute to psychological problems. Some common CBT approaches include:

- Recognizing and revising distorted thoughts.
- Identifying and changing ineffective behaviors.
- Improving problem-solving skills.
- Creating an activity schedule to boost one's mood.
- Gradually facing one's fears.
- Learning deep breathing and relaxation techniques.
- Reading or other assignments between sessions.

The duration of CBT is typically limited, and health insurance may cover it.

Eye Health and Safety Myths

March is
Workplace Eye
Wellness Month.



Myth: Too much screen time on your phone, tablet or computer can damage your eyes.

Fact: Your eyes won't be permanently damaged; however, you may experience eyestrain or fatigue.

Best bet: Employ the **20-20-20** rule. Look away from the screen every 20 minutes at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

Myth: Sitting too close to the TV will damage your eyes.

Fact: It won't hurt your eyes, but it can lead to temporary eyestrain and fatigue.

Myth: If you don't wear your glasses, your vision will get worse.

Fact: Corrective lenses are used to improve your eyesight; if you don't wear them, your vision won't worsen, but your eyes will have to work harder.

Myth: Reading in low light will hurt your vision.

Fact: Reading in low light can make your eyes tired, but it will not damage them.



Myth: Wearing glasses or contact lenses will worsen your eyesight.

Fact: Wearing corrective lenses will not make you dependent on them or worsen your eyesight.

Myth: Losing your vision is a part of aging.

Fact: Many vision problems can be prevented or treated so it is important to have eye exams as often as your eye care provider advises, regardless of your age.



American Diabetes Association Diabetes Alert Day is March 22.

About 95% of the 34 million Americans with diabetes have type 2. More than seven million are unaware they have the disease. Another 88 million have prediabetes. Diabetes Alert Day is a wake-up call to learn about your risk by downloading the free, short NIH Diabetes Risk Test. Search for **diabetes risk test** at niddk.nih.gov. The sooner you know you're at risk, the sooner you can talk to your health care provider about glucose testing and take steps to prevent or manage diabetes.