

## Bone-Building Exercises

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD

**The saying “use it or lose it” applies not only to your muscles, but also to your bones.** Low bone density, or osteoporosis, afflicts 54 million people in the U.S. To maintain bone mass and prevent osteoporosis, the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases recommends the following physical activities for adults.

**Weight-bearing exercises:** The stress placed on bones during weight-bearing exercises stimulates bone formation and repair. Jogging, brisk walking with or without weights, stair climbing, step aerobics, racquet sports, and dancing are excellent activities for promoting stronger bones. Aim to get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise every week.

**Resistance training:** The pull of muscle against bone signals your bones to get stronger and denser. Weight-lifting machines, free weights, calisthenics and resistance bands are popular options. Include two to three sessions each week of at least moderate-intensity strengthening exercises of all major muscle groups.

**Balance activities:** They are especially important for older adults and can improve your balance and prevent falls. Walking on an unstable surface, such as a wobble board or foam mat, can help. So can shifting your body weight backward and forward while standing with both feet together or on one foot. Step-ups, lunges and walking backward are other ways to improve your balance. The martial arts practice of tai chi can help, too.

**Older people and those with low bone density are at increased risk** from activities that compress the spine, such as jumping, deep forward bending and heavy lifting. Consult your health care provider before increasing your level of exercise; ask if any physical activities are unsafe for you. Then get moving for healthier bones.



### BEST bits



#### ■ May is Asthma and Allergy

##### **Awareness Month.**

Asthma and allergies have much in common. Although different ailments, they often occur together and allergy triggers are frequently linked to asthma symptoms. An allergic response occurs when your immune system detects a harmless substance, such as pollen, as an invader and releases chemicals, resulting in a stuffy nose, sneezing, watery eyes and other symptoms. For those with asthma, this reaction affects the airways and lungs, causing wheezing. **Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month** is an opportunity to learn about reducing exposure to pollen and other triggers for both ailments. Talk to your health care provider about medications, including new treatments, that can help asthma and/or allergy symptoms.



#### ■ May is Skin Cancer and Prevention

##### **Awareness Month.**

Skin cancer is the most common malignancy in the U.S. Every day, about 9,500 Americans are diagnosed with the disease. Most types of skin cancer, if found early, can be treated successfully, even potentially deadly melanomas.

**Important:** Check your skin regularly. Report any skin changes, especially changes in the shape or color of moles, to your health care provider. To help prevent skin cancer, the American Academy of Dermatology recommends seeking shade instead of sun bathing, wearing sun-protective clothing, and using a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Avoid tanning beds. Tanning is a sign of skin damage, not good health.



# TIA's: Warning Strokes

A TIA (transient ischemic attack) happens quickly, causing stroke-like symptoms. TIAs can cause weakness or numbness on one side, vision disturbances, a severe headache, and difficulty speaking. These symptoms result from a temporary blockage of blood flow to the brain due to a blood clot which quickly dissolves or moves.

**TIA symptoms often disappear in a few minutes (although they can last up to 24 hours).**

But the quick return to feeling normal after a TIA doesn't mean the episode should be ignored. While a TIA doesn't cause permanent damage, it's a warning that a full-blown stroke could be ahead.

**In fact, nearly one in five people who have a TIA suffer a stroke within 90 days,** according to the American Stroke Association. What's more, when people who have experienced TIA symptoms are given appropriate imaging tests, scans reveal about two in five have had strokes instead of TIAs.

**Call 911 immediately if you have TIA symptoms or head to an emergency room.**

When possible, a comprehensive evaluation, including imaging of blood vessels in the head and neck, should be done within 24 hours of a TIA, according to Cleveland Clinic stroke specialists. A neurologist will use these, other tests, and your health history to assess your risk of a future stroke.

**Good news:** You can work with your health care provider to lower the risk of a future stroke by treating high blood pressure, controlling blood sugar if you have diabetes, keeping weight under control and not smoking.

## Balance Lessons

**Balance is key to performing your best at almost anything.**

Whether you're playing sports, reaching for an item on a grocery shelf or just walking, balance is involved. It's your ability to manage your center of gravity, and stay upright — and it involves not only coordination between your muscles, but with your eyes and brain, too.

**Whether you walk daily, hit the gym regularly to lift weights, or admit to being a couch potato,** there are some simple but effective ways to improve balance. Harvard University balance experts advise using a few of these exercises two or three times a week for best results:

**Practice standing on one leg.** When you feel unsteady, switch to the other side. Repeat several times, until you feel muscle fatigue.

**Stand up from a seated position** using your legs only, not your hands. Repeat two to three times.

*Balance Lessons, continued on the next page.*

# Make the Most of the Mediterranean Diet

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD

**The Mediterranean diet is a sensible eating and lifestyle plan** that has provided health and longevity for people in Italy, Greece and southern France for thousands of years. What benefits does it offer us today? Eating a modern version of the Mediterranean diet can help curtail some of the most common health issues in the U.S.

**The Mediterranean diet** emphasizes eating whole, unprocessed plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, nuts and seeds. These foods are low in saturated fat and high in antioxidants and phytochemicals, which may help reduce inflammation. The diet also includes moderate amounts of fish, poultry, dairy and eggs daily or weekly. Red meat is limited.

**The main source of fat is olive oil.** Sweets and baked goods are eaten less frequently; fresh or dried fruit is a preferred dessert instead. Water is the most important beverage.

**A study released in 2023 indicates nondietary lifestyle factors may play a role in the success of the Mediterranean diet.** Researchers studied 110,000 middle-aged and older adults in

England, Scotland and Wales, who adopted the diet and lifestyle habits of the Mediterranean region. Their study followed participants for nine years.

**The scientists analyzed the health effects of physical activity, relaxation, rest, and social activities in addition to diet.** Researchers started off asking many questions: How often did participants eat meals with family and friends? How frequently did they participate in physical activities with other people, such as walking or sports? How often did they get together with family and friends? How much time did they take for relaxation? How many hours did they sleep? How often did they nap?



**The results indicated that people who adhered most closely to the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle had the lowest risk of death from cancer or any cause.** Specifically, they had a 28% reduced risk of death from cancer and a 29% reduced risk of death from any cause compared to those with the lowest compliance with the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle.

**Scientists believe all of the diet and lifestyle habits** that comprise the Mediterranean foodway work together to prevent disease.

# The Truth About Weight Loss Supplements

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**Many weight loss products promise more than they can deliver. Those that “guarantee” fast weight loss may be hard to resist. Do they deliver what they promise? And are they safe?**

*Note: This article is about supplements, which are not the same as prescription weight loss drugs.*

**All dietary supplements, including those promising weight loss, are consumed by mouth and are not pharmaceutical medications.** Common ingredients are vitamins, minerals, fiber, caffeine, herbs and other plants. They may claim they can build muscle or burn fat, but they are not a cure-all for overweight and obesity.

**While dietary supplements don't require FDA approval,** if a supplement is found to be unsafe, the FDA can issue warnings or request it be withdrawn from the market. The FDA can also act against companies that make false or unsupported claims to sell their supplements.

**You also need to know that dietary supplement manufacturers rarely carry out clinical trials on these products.** As a result, we have little scientific evidence to show that they work to aid weight loss.

**Interactions with your medicines?** Some supplements can cause problems if taken along with certain medicines. For example, antioxidants, such as vitamins C and E, might make some chemotherapy medicines less effective. Taking many different supplements can increase the risk of side effects, especially when taken with medications.

**Consider these safeguards when shopping for and using weight loss supplements:**

- **Research your weight loss supplement before buying.** Check credible websites, such as those run by the U.S. Office of Dietary Supplements and the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. Also keep in mind that the FDA doesn't regulate supplements.
- **Always consult your health care provider before taking any supplement.** This is especially important if you have health problems, take prescription medications, or are pregnant or breastfeeding. Your provider may prescribe a supplement if you have a vitamin or mineral deficiency.



## Balance Lessons, continued from page 2.

**Walk heel to toe in a straight line.** You will likely only be able to walk a short distance at first before you feel off kilter. With practice, balance will improve.

**Take yoga or tai chi lessons.** Both forms of exercise involve balance and stability.

**Do bicep curls for balance.** For a more challenging balance exercise, stand with feet apart. Hold a dumbbell in one hand while you lift the opposite leg off the floor, bent back at the knee, for a few seconds. Repeat with the other side.

**If you have severe balance problems,** or an orthopedic condition, talk to your health care provider before starting any new exercise routine.

## TIP of the MONTH

### Mediterranean Diet and Alcohol

**You may know that red wine is part of the Mediterranean diet, but it's not mandatory.** When wine is consumed, it's used with meals in moderate amounts. The **2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans** define moderate drinking as two standard drinks or fewer daily for men and one standard drink or less daily for women. **A standard drink of wine is five ounces.** Recent studies suggest there is no safe amount of alcohol to drink, and research is ongoing to determine if red wine should be included in the Mediterranean diet. Amounts above the recommendations may increase the risk of liver disease and breast cancer. If you don't drink, don't start.

### Tuscan Tuna and Bean Salad

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 can (15 oz.) no-salt-added white kidney, navy or cannellini beans, drained | 1 red onion, thinly sliced                     |
| 2 cans (5 oz. each) albacore or skipjack tuna, drained                       | 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil                  |
| 1 cup cherry tomatoes, sliced in half  | 3 tbsp fresh lemon juice                       |
| 2 tbsp capers  | 6 cups mixed greens                            |
|  | ½ cup fresh chopped basil or flat leaf parsley |
|  | Pinch each salt and pepper                     |

**In** a large bowl, combine beans, tuna, tomatoes, capers and onion. **Drizzle** with oil and lemon juice, and toss to combine. **Scatter** mixed greens on a platter and add the tuna mixture on top. **Garnish** with herbs, salt and pepper, and serve.

**Makes 4 servings. Per serving:** 290 calories | 21g protein | 12g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 8g mono fat | 2g poly fat | 26g carbohydrate | 2g sugar (0g added sugar) | 8g fiber | 356mg sodium

### EASY recipe





Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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## EXPERT advice — Elizabeth Smoots, MD

### Q: What is dyspepsia?

**A:** **Dyspepsia is the official term for an upset stomach or indigestion.** The symptoms include discomfort or a burning sensation in the upper abdomen. Feelings of fullness early in a meal or long after the meal can occur. Other symptoms include upper abdominal bloating or a feeling of nausea. Belching, vomiting or heartburn happen less often.

**Causes of indigestion:** Eating too much or too quickly can cause dyspepsia. Common culprits include gastroesophageal reflux disease, spicy or fatty foods, caffeine, alcohol, obesity, eating close to bedtime, and smoking. Other possible causes include irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers, celiac disease, gallstones, pancreatitis, stomach cancer, diabetes and pregnancy.

**When to seek medical care:** Get a medical evaluation if your symptoms last longer than two weeks. Contact your health care provider right away if the pain is severe or you have weight loss, recurrent vomiting, black stools, vomiting blood, trouble swallowing, weakness or fatigue. Call 911 immediately if you have chest pain lasting more than a couple minutes, shortness of breath, sweating or pain radiating to the arm, neck or jaw.

## 5 Outdoor Lightning Precautions

**Did you know?** About 40 million lightning strikes happen each year in the U.S., according to the CDC. Outdoor work or recreational activities can put you at higher risk of being hit by lightning, although the odds in any year are less than one in a million. Another surprising fact from the CDC: About one-third of lightning injuries happen indoors.

**Nevertheless, in a lightning storm, the best way to stay safe is to stay inside.** However, if you are caught outdoors, follow these safety rules:

**Find a safe enclosed shelter as soon as you hear thunder.** Safe places can be homes, offices, buildings or hardtop cars with the windows rolled up. Avoid open spaces, picnic pavilions, porches, gazebos and baseball dugouts. Stay in a safe shelter for 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.

**Never lie flat on the ground in a storm.** Instead, crouch down with your head between your knees.

**Avoid tall structures,** hilltops, lone trees, bodies of water, power lines, fences and concrete floors or walls. Lightning can travel through any metal wires or bars in concrete walls or flooring.

**Separate from a group** to reduce the number of injuries if lightning strikes.

**Avoid touching anything metal,** including farm equipment, motorcycles, bicycles and golf carts.

**Stay indoors** until weather forecasts announce the storm has ended.

**Most deaths from lightning happen in the summer, especially in July.** If you are with someone who is struck by lightning, call 911 immediately and follow instructions for helping the person until EMTs arrive. Learn first aid and CPR.

**Good to know:** Nearly 90% of people struck by lightning survive, according to the CDC.



**May is High Blood Pressure Education Month.** Knowing your blood pressure levels could save your life. High blood pressure (hypertension) affects one in three Americans and is one of the leading causes of death in the U.S. It's often called the silent killer because hypertension may not cause any obvious symptoms until a heart attack or stroke occurs. Make sure you get your blood pressure checked regularly by your provider. Although hypertension is dangerous, it's highly treatable with lifestyle changes, such as regular exercise and cutting back on salt, as well as medication. **Note:** It's important to take your blood pressure medications every day and don't stop them unless your health care provider says it's okay to do so.