

TOP HEALTH[®]

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

We Care About Your Health

FEBRUARY



How to Get That Second Wind

Feeling run-down? You'll turn up the energy in five minutes if you...

REFUEL. Snack on fiber-rich munchies such as dried apricots, celery sticks, an apple or a few pistachio nuts. **Benefit:** The fiber helps control the release of glucose (a sugar) into your bloodstream and may prevent energy dips.

BREATHE DEEPLY.

Every 1-2 hours, spend 5 minutes inhaling and exhaling deeply. It will help you feel calmer and more mentally focused, with renewed energy.

TAKE A VISUAL VACATION. Close your eyes and mentally escape by imagining a peaceful scene on an island, in a meadow or by the ocean. "Seeing" yourself relaxed can be rejuvenating.

SNAP OUT OF IT. Splash cold water on your face or pop a breath mint — mint flavors are stimulating.

TAKE A "GOOD NEWS" INVENTORY.

At the end of the day, write down all the good things that happened. You'll be surprised at how much went right. Plus, you'll set yourself up for a good night's sleep ... and energize yourself for tomorrow.

Hidden Ways to Help Your HEART



DON'T SKIP BREAKFAST. Most heart attacks occur between 7 a.m. and noon — possibly because the cells that help blood to clot, called platelets, are stickiest then. Eating breakfast appears to make platelets less sticky ... and less likely to clump together and block a vital artery.



LIGHTEN UP. People who overreact to stressful situations are more likely to have heart trouble. In one study, people whose blood pressure and heart rate jumped the most during frustrating tests were also the ones most likely to have reduced blood flow to the heart.

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The **good news** about heart disease — America's No. 1 killer — is that a healthy heart is within everyone's reach. You know some of the rules: Eat less fat; eat more fruits and vegetables; and keep blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels in check. **But there are more ways to boost heart health:**

DR. ZORBA'S LONGEVITY CORNER

GO AND EAT FISH

A study reported in the *Archives of Neurology* suggests that eating fish at least once a week can keep your memory sharp. Fish is a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids essential for brain functioning and memory performance. Combined with other research, this study supports the possibility that regular fish eaters have a lower risk of dementia and stroke — and offers another reason for adding fish to your diet.

5 AMAZING ALLERGY FACTS

1 Sensitive to pollen?

Wash your hair before bedtime. **Reason:** You'll remove any pollen and keep it from settling on pillows and bedding. **Also:** Avoid irritants such as tobacco smoke, automobile exhaust, hair spray and perfume; wash your hands frequently; plan outdoor activities when pollen counts are low.

2 The best time to take an antihistamine, which helps block allergic reactions, is before symptoms start.

Just remember: Some allergy medications can cause sleepiness. So never take one when safety requires you to be alert. **Suggestion:** Ask your health care provider about antihistamines that cause less drowsiness.

3 Dust mites love to nest in area rugs and make you sneeze and itch. **If you're allergic, Australian researchers offer a simple solution:** Place area rugs outdoors in direct sunlight for a few hours until they become warm and dry. **Result:** Mites dry up and die.

4 Moving to another location is no guarantee of allergy relief. **Why:** People usually develop allergies to their new region's pollens and molds within a few years of moving. **Plus:** Most allergy-provoking grasses are widespread throughout the world.

5 As many as 20% of Americans believe they have a food allergy, but true food allergies are actually rare. What most people consider food allergies are usually signs of digestive problems, food poisoning or stress.



Healthy Food Shopping Dos & Don'ts



DO read nutrition labels.

Tip: Any food called "healthy" must contain at least 10% of the Daily Values per serving for several

important nutrients (in addition to being low in trans fat, saturated fat, sodium and cholesterol).

DON'T forget fiber's finest. Load up on whole-grain breads, rolls and cereals, as well as brown rice and dried beans. When shopping, look for the word "whole" at the top of the package ingredients list.

DO pick the greenest. When buying salad greens, select those deepest in color — dark greens and reds. *Why:* The dark color means higher concentrations of antioxidant vitamins A, C and E, folic acid, calcium and other nutrients.

DON'T dismiss frozen produce. Some frozen fruits and vegetables contain as many nutrients as fresh produce — sometimes more. One study found frozen green beans had about twice the vitamin C as fresh beans that sat on display and in a refrigerator for nearly a week.

DO select "TV" dinners carefully. Choose frozen meals that contain less than 10 grams of fat and the least amount of sodium and cholesterol.

DON'T pass up pasta. It's high in protein and contains B vitamins and iron.

More DOs: Avoid shopping on an empty stomach; choose fruit "juices" instead of "drinks"; buy skinless poultry; remember that a standard serving of meat or fish should be the size of a deck of cards.



PROTECTIVE TEA. Several studies link drinking non-herbal green, black or white tea to a lower incidence of heart disease, certain cancers and other disorders. Results seem to be better the longer people drink tea, although how much to drink for health is not clear. And decaffeinated brews contain the same protective compounds as caffeinated teas.

"The trouble with life in the fast lane is that you get to the other end in an awful hurry."

— John Jensen

ADD PEP WITH PEPPERS! With a mild flavor and crunchy texture, bell peppers can brighten a salad or make a quick snack. Plus they are rich in essential nutrients — green bell peppers have twice as much vitamin C by weight as citrus fruits, while red bell peppers have three times as much.

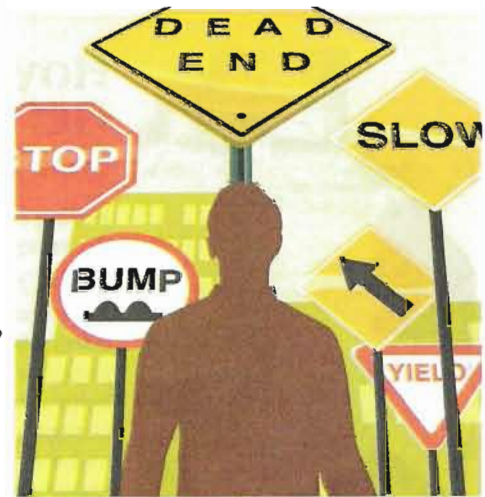
Signs You Shouldn't Ignore

Thanks to advances in medicine and education, self-care can remedy many health issues. But some conditions warrant a call to your health care provider.

Examples:

- 1. Mysterious changes.** Physical symptoms that should be discussed with your provider include continued, unexplained weight loss; persistent or unusual headaches; a sore that won't heal; a change in the color or size of a mole; or a lump or thickening in the breast.
- 2. Bleeding.** Rectal bleeding, blood in the urine, or blood when you vomit or cough can be signs of something simple (such as hemorrhoids in the case of rectal bleeding), but they can also signal something more serious, such as cancerous growths.
- 3. Blues you can't beat.** If, for a period of two weeks or more, you feel sad or irritable and have lost interest in activities that once gave you pleasure, you may be suffering from depression. Although serious, it is highly treatable, so speak to your provider without delay.

While it's natural to hope something will just go away, early detection of what could possibly be a serious problem can save your life.



HEART ... (continued)

- MEET THE "A's."** You may have heard about the antioxidants — vitamins A, C and E, and beta-carotene — that appear to slow plaque formation in the arteries.
- KICK TOBACCO IF YOU ARE USING IT.** Smoking affects more than your lungs. Fact is, within a few years of quitting, you'll cut your risk of heart attack by at least half, similar to those who never smoked.
- GET OFF THE COUCH.** Sedentary living — not high cholesterol — is one of the greatest risk factors in heart attack deaths. *Tip:* Just a half hour of moderate physical activity most days of the week can deliver fitness benefits similar to traditional exercise routines. So walk briskly. Take the stairs. Play actively with kids. Live longer!

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OCTOBER

Earth's Easiest Exercise

Walking can add years to your life and life to your years. And it couldn't be easier. You don't need to join a health club, wear special equipment or go into training to reap the rewards:

THE CONDITIONER: Walking conditions your heart and lungs and improves your body's ability to use oxygen more efficiently. **Fact:** In one study, women who walked briskly (3-4 mph) at least three hours a week cut their risk of heart attack and stroke by more than half.

THE PROTECTOR: Walking helps beat other health problems too. It reduces your risk of some forms of cancer and osteoporosis. It fights the battle of the bulge, reducing body fat and building muscle. Walking can even help people with diabetes reduce or eliminate their need for medication.



THE JOINT-SAVER: Walking can burn about as many calories per mile as jogging does. But it delivers less of the jolt, so it's much easier on your joints and muscles.

THE DE-STRESSOR: Walking is easy on your mind too, since it lessens stress and lightens depression. Beginning walkers usually report that they feel and sleep better, and that their mental outlook improves.

THE WINNER: Best of all, walking has the lowest dropout rate of any form of exercise. So you're more likely to stick with it and get all these benefits and more, like better digestion, improved regularity and lower blood pressure.

There's nothing to it: Just put on a sturdy, comfortable pair of shoes and go. **Smart moves:** Walk to the store for the Sunday paper; park a few blocks from work or get

off the bus or train one stop early and walk from there; use the stairs instead of elevators or escalators; on bad weather days walk in a mall or on a gym treadmill.

5 Common Headache Triggers

Headache sufferers spend more than \$4 billion a year on over-the-counter pain relievers. But prevention costs you nothing. **Here are five leading headache culprits to watch out for:**

1 Stress: Frayed nerves are a frequent cause of "tension" headaches and may also trigger migraines. **Ideas:** Take 30 minutes a day just to daydream, meditate or otherwise relax. Daily exercise also helps ease stress and tension.

2 Eyestrain: Focusing on one object for a long time (such as a computer screen) can cause temporary head pain. **Suggestions:** Take occasional "eye breaks" by looking out a window; consider an eye exam to see if a vision problem may be a factor in your headaches.

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DR. ZORBA'S LONGEVITY CORNER

LIVE LONG AND HEALTHY You're never too old to adopt a healthy lifestyle. In research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, seniors 70-90 years old grabbed a little more longevity when they quit smoking, fit in a daily walk, cut alcohol consumption and ate a more Mediterranean-style diet (veggies, fruit, nuts, fish and poultry — with olive oil, of course).



Taking Care of Your Back

- Lift correctly. Let your legs power the lift. Bend at your knees, not at your waist, to pick up any object, even something as light as a sheet of paper. Keep heavy items you are lifting close to your body and avoid twisting while lifting.

- Sit up straight. Sit with your back straight. If your chair does not have lumbar support, use a cushion to help support your lower back. Keep both feet on the floor. **Also:** When driving, position your seat so that you can easily reach the controls.

- Maintain a healthy weight. Extra weight, particularly around the belly, can strain your lower back. Lose weight by cutting calories and accumulating at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days (every day is ideal).

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How to Boost Your Brainpower

Do you sometimes feel as if your brain is running on empty? Here's how to keep it in shape so you can pump up your problem-solving abilities, fight forgetfulness and think more clearly and creatively:

Practice mentally.

Studies of athletes indicate that imagining a tennis serve or ski run between competitions can boost performance. **Possible**

reason: Mental rehearsals may build mental "muscle" by sparking the brain connections needed during the real thing.

Focus your attention. **To help remember "where":** If you tend to misplace your car keys, for example, say to yourself, "I'm placing the keys on the shelf by the hallway mirror." **To help remember "when":** Note the weather, the day's headline news or what you're wearing at the time of performing a task.

Use it or lose it. Research suggests that as you age, you can reverse a decline in thinking abilities by becoming more mentally active. **Smart moves:** Learn a new language, study a new subject, play games like checkers, and do crosswords and other puzzles.

Keep fit. Evidence shows that people in their 70s and 80s who stay healthy can expand their brainpower — and easily match the mental abilities of a 30-year-old. **Helpful:** Keep physically active, manage stress and maintain a positive attitude.

More mental muscle builders: Read more; eat more fruits and vegetables; use rhymes and acronyms to help remember facts and names.

FIRST-RATE CALORIE CUTTER *Here's another reason to boost fiber intake:* It may reduce the calories your body absorbs from food. One study found that women and men who doubled their fiber consumption absorbed 90 and 130 fewer calories a day, respectively. **Note:** You should increase your fiber consumption gradually. (Source: United States Department of Agriculture)

Back ... (continued)

- Condition your muscles. Aerobic exercise stretches and strengthens the muscles that support your lower back.

Other smart moves: Push rather than pull to move heavy objects; gently stretch before exercise and other physical activities; wear flat shoes or shoes with low heels and good arch support.

"Enthusiasm is contagious. Be a carrier." — Susan Robin

WRIST SAVER Relax your wrists and relieve the pain and strain that can result from typing and other repetitive motions: Rest your elbow on a desk with your hand hanging over the edge. Gently stretch your fingers back with your other hand and hold for five seconds. Repeat for the other hand.

Lower Your Breast Cancer Risk

It's true that certain risk factors for breast cancer are beyond a woman's control. **Examples:** family history and aging. Fortunately, researchers are finding that certain lifestyle choices may lower risk:

Cut the fat. Countries with high-fat diets have the highest rates of breast cancer; exactly why isn't certain. **Smart:** Choose foods high in fiber, such as beans, bran, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables such as cabbage, brussels sprouts and broccoli.

Stay active. Research suggests that exercise helps prevent breast cancer. One study found that women who exercised at least four hours a week cut their breast cancer risk by 60%, while those who worked out 1-3 hours a week reduced their risk by 30%.

Limit alcohol if you drink. More than 40 studies have linked heavy alcohol use to an increased risk of breast cancer.

Keep screening. Do monthly self-exams and see your health care provider regularly. **Lifesaver:** Ask about having mammograms — when to start and how often to have one.



Headaches ... (continued)

3 Diet: Certain foods contain substances that can trigger headache pain. **Examples:** caffeine, red wine, processed meats, chocolate, cheese, citrus fruits, lentils, snow peas and monosodium glutamate (MSG).

4 Sitting: Staying seated for long periods, especially if you're on the phone or hunched over for extended periods, can tighten muscles and lead to tension headaches. **Self-defense:** Shift positions; stretch once an hour; stand during phone conversations; take a lunchtime walk.

5 Sleep: Too little or, surprisingly, even too much sleep can bring on headaches. **Best:** Control your body's internal "clock" by going to bed and getting up at the same times each day — even when you're not working.