



Health & Wellness



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Activities that can promote cardiovascular health



Exercise is one of the most effective tools for strengthening the heart and avoiding various illnesses.

Resolving to be physically active is an important step towards heart health and overall well-being. Exercise is one of the most effective tools for strengthening the heart and avoiding various illnesses, including high cholesterol, that can affect cardiovascular health, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Although any exercise can be beneficial, there is a fitness recipe designed to be the most effective for strengthening the heart and helping it to work to its full potential. Here are the guidelines recommended by the American Heart Association and Johns Hopkins Medicine.

- Get 150 minutes per week or more of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or a combination of both. These activities can include run-

ning, cycling, swimming, and others that will get the heart pumping.

- Incorporate moderate-to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity at least two days a week.

- Strength training should be designed to work the entire body. It doesn't have to be traditional weightlifting, either. Body weight exercises, yoga, Pilates, and even tai chi can build strength and offer additional benefits like improving balance.

- Consider HIIT exercises. HIIT stands for high-intensity interval training, which involves exercising as hard as one can for a short period, and then resting briefly before exercising hard again for a short period. While there are many different HIIT programs, UT Southwestern Medical Center says a popular one involves exercising

hard for four minutes, followed by three minutes of recovery time, for four cycles total.

- While stretching, flexibility and balance exercises do not directly affect heart health, they do help one stay flexible and free from joint pain and other issues that can sideline a person from exercise. Doing what one can to protect against falls and reduce risk of being sedentary will benefit the heart in the long run.

- Don't discount everyday activities in relation to how they can enhance heart health. Walking, gardening, playing with children, or tossing a ball to a family pet are beneficial aerobic activities.

Heart health is something to take seriously, and exercise plays a key role in strengthening the heart.

The link between physical activity and healthy weights

Anyone aspiring to lose weight is likely aware that there are no shortage of approaches promising to bust belly fat and slim waistlines. Weight loss fads come and go, but daily physical activity remains a reliable and effective approach to shedding extra pounds.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that physical activity provides both short- and long-term benefits. Among the more long-term benefits of regular exercise is the link between physical activity and how it facilitates an individual's ability to maintain a healthy weight. Though people may experience some notable initial weight loss after they begin a fitness regimen,

they also can maintain that weight loss if they remain committed to exercise over the long haul.

The CDC notes that more physical activity increases the number of calories a body uses for energy. If individuals looking to turn over a healthier leaf couple a commitment to exercise with a healthier diet that includes consuming fewer calories, they can create a calorie deficit that ultimately contributes to weight loss.

The link between exercise and long-term weight loss is worth noting, as the CDC notes that research has found the only way to maintain weight loss is to remain engaged in regular physical activity. Individuals attempting to lose weight for a particular

reason, such as an upcoming wedding or a vacation, should know that exercise and a healthy diet can help them accomplish that goal. However, it's highly likely they will regain that weight if they do not continue to exercise after reaching their target weight loss goal. If the thought of regaining lost pounds is not enough to compel people to maintain their commitment to exercise, and honor all the hard work and determination required to lose the weight, perhaps a rundown of health risks associated with being overweight or obese might provide the motivation necessary to stay the course. According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney

Diseases, being overweight or obese increases a person's risk for a host of diseases and conditions, including:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Metabolic syndrome
- Fatty liver diseases
- Certain types of cancer, including cancers of the breast, liver, kidney, pancreas, and ovaries, among others
- Gout
- Fertility problems
- Sexual function problems
- Mental health problems

Routine physical activity is a great way to help people shed extra pounds so they can reach and maintain a healthy weight.



Among the more long-term benefits of regular exercise is the link between physical activity and how it facilitates an individual's ability to maintain a healthy weight.

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How routine physical activity affects mental health

The physical changes people experience after committing to routine physical activity are visible to the naked eye. After making such a commitment, particularly if one is accustomed to a sedentary lifestyle, people may shed a noticeable amount of weight, move more quickly and even appear younger, a change that is perhaps related to the positive effects exercise has on sleep.

Less noticeable but no less advantageous are the mental health benefits associated with routine exercise. According to the Mental Health Foundation, physical activity releases chemicals in the brain that positively affect mood, thus making exercise a tool anyone can utilize to improve their mental health. As individuals ponder the benefits of physical activity, they can keep the following ways exercise affects mental health in mind.

· **Exercise and stress reduction:** A 2022 Gallup poll found that 40 percent of adults worldwide experienced a lot of stress. The poll asked adults in 142 countries and areas, which underscores the significance of stress as a legitimate global

health concern. The MHF notes that the most common physical signs of stress include difficulty sleeping, sweating and loss of appetite, symptoms that are triggered by a flood of the stress hormones adrenaline and noradrenaline released in the body. Those hormones increase blood pressure and heart rate. Exercise can help to alleviate stress, and the MHF notes that adults who are highly active have been found to have lower rates of stress than those who live more sedentary lifestyles.

· **Exercise and self-esteem:** A 2022 study published in *The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness* compared 352 participants between the ages of 20 and 40 who regularly exercised at least two days per week for the previous six months with 350 similarly aged sedentary individuals. The study assessed various characteristics of each group and researchers ultimately concluded that those who exercised had higher levels of self-esteem than those who did not. As a result, the authors behind the study recommended exercise as a preferred method to increase



Researchers ultimately concluded that those who exercised had higher levels of self-esteem than those who did not.

self-esteem.

· **Exercise and depression:** A systematic review and network meta-analysis of randomized control trials found that exercise is an effective treatment for depression.

That review and analysis, published in the peer-reviewed medical journal *The BMJ* in 2024, reviewed 218 unique studies involving more than 14,000 participants. Walking, jogging,

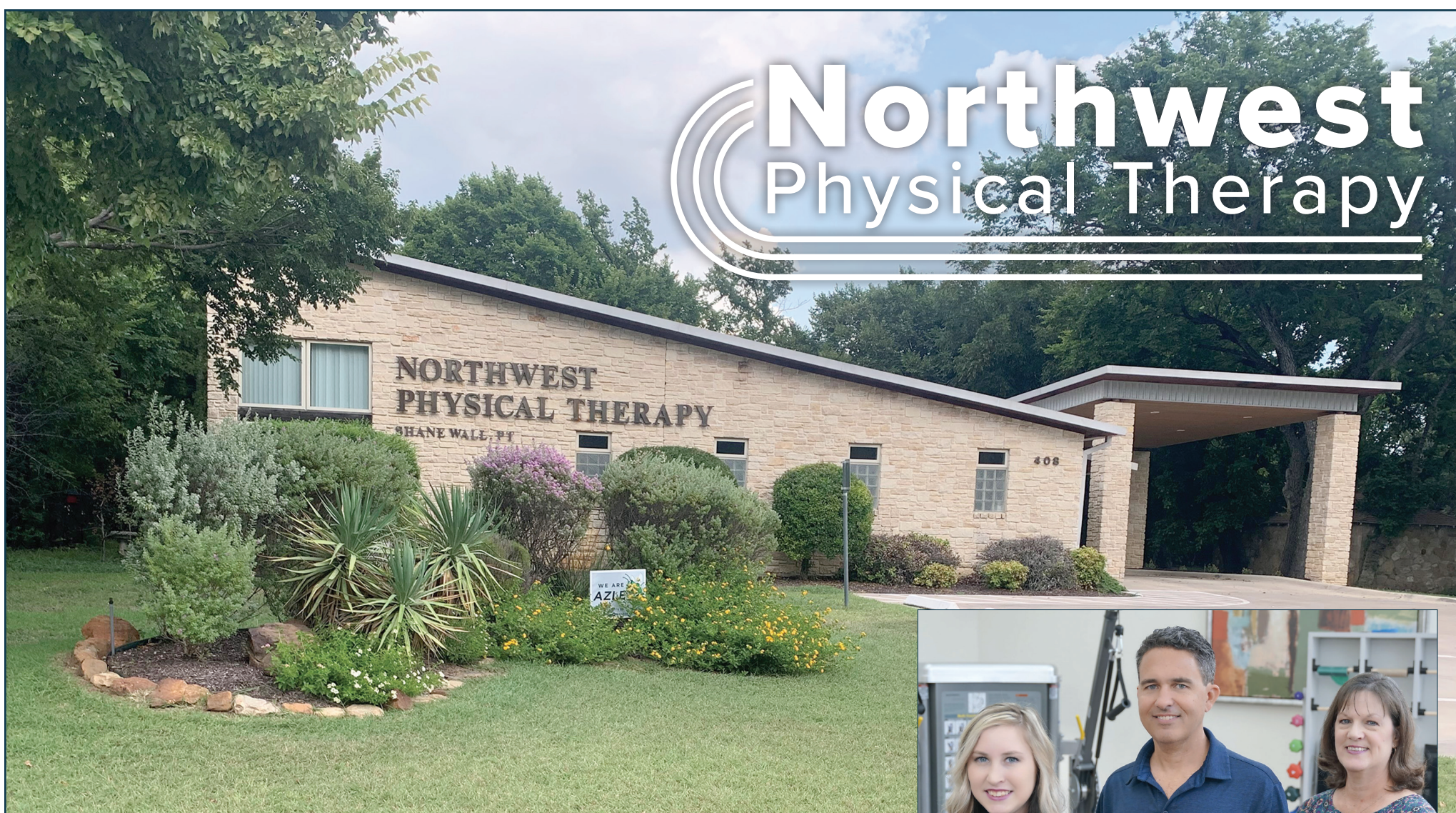
yoga, and strength training were found to be especially effective at treating depression, which the World Health Organization estimates affects about 280 million people worldwide.

The physical benefits of routine physical activity may be most noticeable. However, regular exercise also has a profound effect on individuals' mental health.



Did you know?

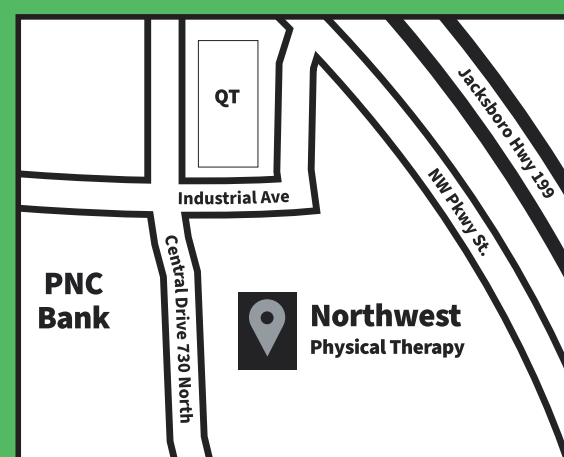
A KFF analysis of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that Black and American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) people experienced the largest increases in rates of death by suicide between 2010 and 2020. According to KFF, a nonpartisan health policy research, journalism and communications organization, AIAN and White people experience the highest rates of deaths by suicide compared to all other racial and ethnic groups, but the rates among AIAN (23.9 per 100,000) are notably higher than the rates among Whites (16.8 per 100,000). The rate increase among AIAN between 2010 and 2020 was 7 per 100,000 people, while the uptick among Blacks was 2.3 per 100,000 people. The KFF also notes that suicide-related deaths among AIAN adolescents accounted for the highest rates of deaths by suicide among that demographic. The rates among AIAN adolescents (22.7 per 100,000) were more than three times higher than the rates among White adolescents (6.3 per 100,000).



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Exercise can be good for the brain

It is well documented that physical activity can be beneficial for the body, but what about the effects of exercise on the brain? Exercise enthusiasts will be glad to learn there are some notable ways that physical activity can benefit the brain.

A 2018 study published in *Frontiers in Psychology* indicated that much evidence shows that physical exercise is a strong gene modulator that causes structural and functional changes in the brain that can benefit cognitive functioning and well-being. Exercise also seems to be a protective factor against neurodegeneration.

Dr. Scott McGinnis, an instructor in neurology at Harvard Medical School, says there is a lot of science behind exercise boosting memory and thinking skills. Exercise can encourage production of growth factors,

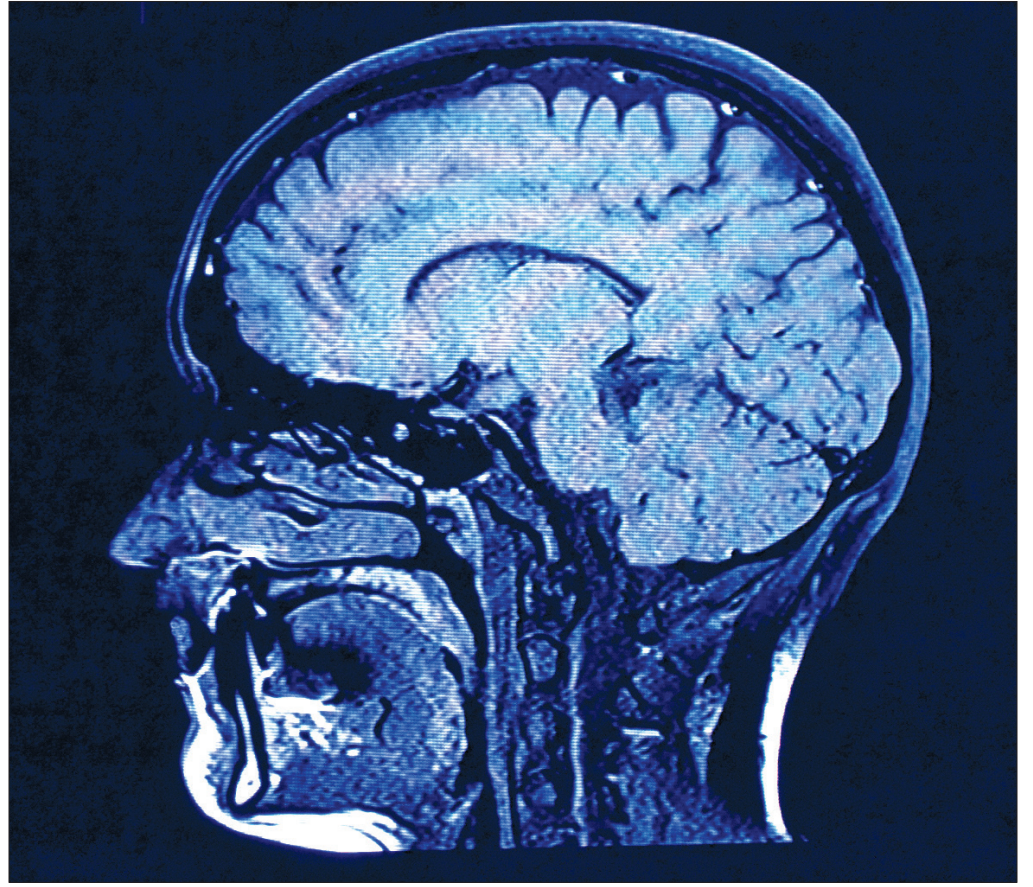
which are chemicals that affect the growth of new blood vessels in the brain and even the number of brain cells and their ability to thrive. Various studies point to exercise causing growth in the parts of the brain that control thinking and memory. The World Health Organization even notes that about two hours of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week can help improve thinking and memory skills.

Another study, led by a team of sports scientists at the University of Geneva, grouped 350,000 people in the United Kingdom according to genetic variants associated with more or less physical activity. Those who had a genetic proclivity toward being active tended to perform better on a set of cognitive tests. Additional studies have found that more physical activity correlated to better cog-

nitive performance at age 69 among individuals who had been tracked for 30 years.

Although many health professionals agree that exercise is good for the brain, the amount of exercise and where it takes place also may play a role in cognitive health. A 2023 study published in *Scientific Reports* found that time spent in natural outdoor environments led to increases in cognition similar to those resulting from acute exercises. Researchers found that when exercise and nature are combined, the impact on cognition is magnified.

Researchers have not pinpointed whether one exercise is better than another for improving brain health. Walking is one way to start, as it is accessible for people of all ages and requires little to no equipment. Anyone beginning an exercise regimen



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should discuss plans with a doctor and speak about their exercise goals. Researchers have not pinpointed whether one exercise is better than

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Did you know?

Dairy is consumed in many forms, including cheese, milk, yogurt, butter, and ice cream. The debate rages on regarding the nutritional value of dairy. As with most foods, there are pros and cons to dairy consumption. Dairy is a convenient way for many people to get the calcium, vitamin D and protein necessary to keep their bones, muscles and heart functioning properly, says nutrition research scientists with the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. A study examining 2,000 men published by the *British Journal of Nutrition* found that those who ate fermented dairy products like yogurt and cheese had a smaller risk of coronary artery disease than those who ate less. Still, there are some concerns about dairy. A 2017 study funded by the National Cancer Institute that compared the diets of women diagnosed with breast cancer to those without breast cancer found that those who consumed the most American, cheddar and cream cheeses had a 53 percent higher risk for breast cancer. Regular consumption of dairy products also may be linked to prostate cancer. The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine reports milk and other dairy products are the top sources of saturated fat in the American diet, which can contribute to heart disease, type 2 diabetes and Alzheimer's disease. Low-fat milk can reduce some of the risks of dairy consumption. Moderate consumption also may reduce any risks associated with dairy consumption.

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Improving your cardiovascular health



Regular moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity strengthens the heart muscle.

The benefits of physical activity are well-documented. Adults may be reminded of the short- and long-term benefits of exercise when visiting their physicians for annual well visits or to treat an illness. Though exercise is often viewed as a means to losing weight, it's equally important for people of all ages to recognize the many other ways physical activity benefits the body, including its role in heart health.

The World Health Organization reports that cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading causes of death across the globe. A host of variables can lead to a CVD diagnosis, and a sedentary lifestyle is among them. By including exercise in their daily routines, individuals can build a stronger heart that benefits their bodies in myriad ways.

EXERCISE, THE HEART AND LUNG FUNCTION

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute notes that regular moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity strengthens the heart muscle.

A stronger heart is more capable of pumping blood to the lungs, which the NHLBI notes ensures a stronger blood flow to the muscles.

EXERCISE AND BLOOD OXYGEN LEVELS

Exercise helps to increase oxygen levels in the blood by improving the ability of the heart to pump blood not only to the lungs, but throughout the body. That's a notable benefit, as the Cleveland Clinic notes hypoxia, a condition marked by low blood oxygen levels, can lead to adverse health conditions, such as damage to individual organ systems, including the brain.

EXERCISE AND CORONARY HEART DISEASE

Coronary heart disease is a condition marked by the buildup of plaque in the coronary arteries, which the NHLBI notes supply the heart muscle with oxygen-rich blood. Moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity has been linked to a lower risk for coronary heart disease because it can help

people lower their blood pressure; reduce a type of fat in the blood known as triglycerides; increase 'good' cholesterol levels; help the body manage its blood sugar and insulin levels; and reduce levels of C-reactive protein (CRP), which is a sign of inflammation associated with a higher risk of heart disease.

These are just a handful of the ways that exercise can help individuals build a stronger heart. Individuals who have already been diagnosed with heart disease and have lived a largely sedentary lifestyle are urged to speak with their physicians about safe ways to incorporate exercise into their daily routines. Vigorous aerobic activity may not be safe for people who have heart disease, so anyone in that situation should not simply begin exercising on their own.

A healthy heart is a building block of a long life. More information about exercise and heart health can be found at nhlbi.nih.gov.

Make meals more nutritious with simple changes

The United States Department of Agriculture Dietary Guidelines for Americans emphasizes the need for people to reduce the amount of added sugar, sodium and fat they consume, all the while increasing fiber consumption. Subtle changes may make it possible to boost beneficial nutrients and reduce the caloric load of various dishes. Here are some substitutions to keep in mind when aspiring to eat healthier.

ORIGINAL: BUTTER AND OIL

Swap: Applesauce, mashed avocado or mashed banana

Plant-based alternatives can add moisture to baked goods without increasing saturated fat. Even swapping out a portion of the butter or oil with these alternatives can make the item healthier.

ORIGINAL: FRYING IN FAT

Swap: Different cooking methods

Baking, broiling, grilling, or roasting can produce delicious results. Many people utilize air fryers that employ convection to simulate frying without the need for all the oil frying requires.

ORIGINAL: SUGAR

Swap: Maple syrup or mashed dates

Many people think they need to give up on sweets when eating healthy. Sugar is an added ingredient in so many foods, so reducing consumption can help. In addition to slashing the amount of sugar recommended for recipes, swap out sugar with maple syrup, honey or even mashed fruits. These are better options than refined sugars.

ORIGINAL: SALT

Swap: Herbs and other spices

Omit half of the salt recommended in a recipe. Replace the salt with spices or herbs to add flavor. Nutritional yeast can add a salty umami flavor to many dishes and also provide additional nutrients.

ORIGINAL: WHITE RICE

Swap: Brown rice, quinoa or couscous

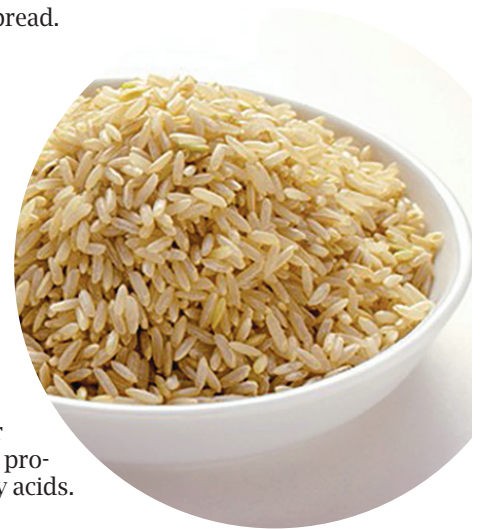
Add additional fiber and/or protein to dishes by swapping processed white rice with whole grains. Similarly, swap regular pastas with

whole grain, and white bread with whole grain bread.

ORIGINAL: BREADCRUMBS

Swap: Almond meal or milled flaxseed

Breadcrumbs impart flavor and texture, but they add calories with no nutritional value. Consider breading foods in almond meal or milled flaxseed to provide omega-3 fatty acids.



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Turn to your plate for vitamins and minerals

Health is a multibillion dollar industry. People who may be short on time may look to the most efficient routes for maintaining health and wellness. For some, that could mean turning to supplements to ensure they are consuming the recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals. But is supplementation the best way to fuel the body?

According to MyProtein.com, a supplement and nutrition company, the average American spends close to \$56 per month on supplements, which include protein powders, vitamins and more. Those expenditures are in addition to their other health spending, which may include gym memberships and meal plans. However, leading health experts point healthy individuals in the direction of getting their vitamins and minerals from eating nutrient-rich foods instead of taking supplements. According to VNS Health, a New York-based home and community health care organization, people in good health are bet-

ter off getting the majority of their daily nutrients from food.

Harvard Health seconds that advice, saying vitamin and mineral supplements cannot match all of the biologically active compounds available through a varied diet. There are 13 vitamins in total, and eight belong to the B group. Together with minerals, these nutrients are essential for bodily functions like wound healing, regulating hormones and fighting infection. Nutrients that are consumed through foods are often easier for the body to absorb. Furthermore, it is much less likely one will experience toxicity from getting too many vitamins and minerals through diet alone, whereas it can be easy to go over the recommended daily values when using supplements.

Although vitamins and minerals consumed via a balanced diet are generally the best bet, there are some instances when supplementation may be necessary.

A health care provider can guide people as to when supplementation might be necessary. Individuals with Crohn's disease, Celiac disease or irritable bowel syndrome should know that each condition can make absorbing nutrients challenging. Those with osteoporosis or age-related macular degeneration also may find supplementation or eating fortified foods can be advantageous.

Individuals should keep in mind that many supplements are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or other countries' government regulators. Such products may contain hidden ingredients or vitamins and minerals in levels not deemed safe. Also, some supplements can interact with medications. Again, it is best to consult with a healthcare provider before supplementation to



Experts say vitamin and mineral supplements cannot match all of the biologically active compounds available through a varied diet.

find out if it is necessary.

People concerned about their vitamin and mineral

intake should first turn to food to get all of the nutrients they need, and then dis-

cuss supplements with their physicians if they still have deficiencies.

What to know about eating before a workout



An examination of the dynamic between eating and exercise can help athletes find a formula that works for them.

Each person approaches exercise in their own unique way. Some can't wait to get to the gym every day, while others exhibit significantly less enthusiasm about exercise. Some medical professionals say the best approach to exercise is the one that inspires a consistent commitment to physical activity, but various factors, including food, merit consideration when designing a workout routine.

Food provides energy for the body, so it makes sense to eat before a workout. But eating prior to a workout may not be so straightforward for all exercise enthusiasts. An examination of the dynamic between eating and exercise can help athletes find a formula that works for them.

WHY EAT BEFORE EXERCISE?

The Hospital for Special Surgery recommends eating before exercise if it's been two or more hours since your last meal or snack. Doing so can help to restore energy stores prior to an intense or lengthy workout. The HSS notes this approach is especially beneficial for individu-

als who work out early in the morning, before lunch or after school or work, each of which are times of day when it's typically been awhile since a person has eaten.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I EAT BEFORE EXERCISING?

It's unlikely anyone is going to want to eat a large meal before a workout. Doing so will undoubtedly affect performance in a negative way, particularly if you're eating shortly before a workout. The HSS notes that the further away a workout is from the time a person eats, the larger and more mixed that meal can be. According to the HSS, the general guideline around eating and exercise is:

- A full meal three to four hours before exercising
- A higher carbohydrate snack two hours before exercising and/or a small, easily digested carbohydrate right up until the start of a workout

WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD PRE-WORKOUT SNACK?

If you won't be eating a full meal before a workout, vari-

ous mini snacks can provide energy without adversely affecting performance. Pre-workout snacks that are low in fat and fiber are ideal, as the body can digest such foods quickly. The HSS notes half a banana, a small serving of applesauce or a handful of crackers or pretzels are a good pre-workout mini snack. A larger snack eaten a little further away from a workout can include some hummus or peanut butter. The Mayo Clinic notes yogurt, a fruit smoothie or a low-fat granola bar also make good pre-workout snacks.

SHOULD I EAT DURING A WORKOUT?

The HSS notes it can help to consume some carbs during workouts that last 60 minutes or longer. Doing so can help individuals prolong their endurance and can even help with their timing and concentration.

The relationship between eating and exercise is complicated. Individuals who want to learn more are urged to work with a nutritionist.

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Foods that can affect long-term health and wellness

The phrase 'you are what you eat' can serve as a warning that the foods a person consumes greatly affect his overall health. Although eating a cheese-laden burger with a side of deep-fried potatoes every so often will not turn a person's health on its head, repeatedly making poor dietary decisions may be a recipe for chronic health problems.

Health experts say foods (and beverages) can affect hearts, waistlines and brains. Foods that are grouped under the category of 'junk food' tend to be the largest dietary offenders. The term 'junk food' refers to foods that contain high levels of fats, sugar or salt, and lack nutrients such as fiber, vitamins and minerals. Some of the foods that fall into the junk food category include cakes; processed meats like bacon and lunch meats; chips; chocolate and candies; sugary drinks; and fast food, like burgers and pizza.

Here's a more in-depth look

at certain foods or ingredients and what they can do to the body.

- **Industrial and processed seed oils:** According to Harvard nutritionist Dr. Uma Naidoo, highly processed oils are usually extracted from soybeans, corn, rapeseed, cottonseed, sunflower, and safflower seeds, and contain a lot of omega-6 fatty acids. Excessive consumption of omega-6 fatty acids can trigger inflammation in the body and the brain. Inflammation is recognized as a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease. Olive, coconut or avocado oils are healthier alternatives.

- **Processed foods:** Foods are processed to keep them shelf stable longer. Heavily processed foods like crackers, baked goods, and jarred pasta sauces are potentially unhealthy. It is estimated that more than half the calories in the average American diet, and around 48 percent of the Canadian diet, come from ultra processed foods, advises the Laborers' Health

& Safety Fund. A five-year study of more than 100,000 people found that each 10 percent increase in consumption of ultra processed food was associated with a 12 percent higher risk for cancer.

- **Sugar:** Foods and beverages with added sugar can be problematic. A high sugar diet can contribute to excess glucose in the brain that can cause memory impairments, and the National Institutes of Health indicates studies have show that individuals who consume greater amounts of added sugar tend to gain more weight and have higher risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.

- **Saturated fat:** Eating too much red meat can be bad for the heart and brain. WebMD says red meat is high in saturated fat and can contribute to cardiovascular disease. The same can be said for butter and full-fat cheeses. Opting for low-fat dairy and alternative protein sources can be beneficial.



Some of the foods that fall into the junk food category include cakes; processed meats like bacon and lunch meats; chips; chocolate and candies; sugary drinks; and fast food, like burgers and pizza.

- **Mercury-containing fish:** While eating fish is generally touted as a healthy move, swordfish and tuna lose points because they can contain high levels of mercury.

WebMD says mercury is a neurotoxin, which means it is toxic to the brain and can cause memory loss.

Certain foods can compromise long-term health.

Careful dietary planning that emphasizes nutritious meals over junk food and processed foods can promote both short- and long-term health.

Did you know?

Dairy is consumed in many forms, including cheese, milk, yogurt, butter, and ice cream. The debate rages on regarding the nutritional value of dairy. As with most foods, there are pros and cons to dairy consumption. Dairy is a convenient way for many people to get the calcium, vitamin D and protein necessary to keep their bones, muscles and heart functioning properly, says nutrition research scientists with the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. A study examining 2,000 men published by the British Journal of Nutrition found that those who ate fermented dairy products like yogurt and cheese had a smaller risk of coronary artery disease than those who ate less. Still, there are some concerns about dairy. A 2017 study funded by the National Cancer Institute that compared the diets of women diagnosed with breast cancer to those without breast cancer found that those who consumed the most American, cheddar and cream cheeses had a 53 percent higher risk for breast cancer. Regular consumption of dairy products also may be linked to prostate cancer. The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine reports milk and other dairy products are the top sources of saturated fat in the American diet, which can contribute to heart disease, type 2 diabetes and Alzheimer's disease. Low-fat milk can reduce some of the risks of dairy consumption. Moderate consumption also may reduce any risks associated with dairy consumption.

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Boost your diet with these powerhouse foods

A nutritious diet is a key component of a healthy lifestyle. That's an important thing to remember for people looking to turn over a healthier leaf and accomplish their long-term wellness goals.

Avoiding certain ingredients, like saturated fats and added sugars, and choosing foods known for their nutritional benefits is one way individuals can utilize diet to live healthier. Although such foods cannot entirely eliminate risk for certain diseases or make a person invincible, eating more of them certainly can benefit individuals' overall health.

- **Kale:** Kale long has had a place on healthy eating lists. Kale is a good source of vitamins A, C and K, and also contains alpha-linolenic acid, which is an omega-3 fatty acid. According to Britannica, studies show kale can help combat heart disease and cancer, and also boost eye health by reducing risk for cataracts and macular degeneration. Kale is not the only dark, leafy green vegetable

that has earned superstar status. Swiss chard, spinach, collard greens, and turnip greens are equally beneficial.

- **Berries:** There is strong antioxidant capacity associated with berries that helps reduce the risk of heart disease and other inflammatory conditions, says Healthline. That's why blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, and cranberries are so revered by nutritionists. They're also great sources of fiber, vitamins and minerals.

- **Honey:** This natural sweetener is a powerful ally to animals and insects. Honey is one of the most appreciated and valued natural products, according to the study 'Honey and Health: A Review of Recent Clinical Research,' published in 2017. Since ancient times, honey has been used therapeutically due to its antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and antiproliferative effects.

- **Walnuts:** Studies have found that those with higher nut consumption have im-

proved cardiovascular risk factors and lower rates of cardiovascular disease. Nuts are an important part of the Mediterranean diet, which has been found to be heart healthy as well, according to Harvard Health. Walnuts are a particularly good choice for lowering LDL cholesterol, triglycerides and apoprotein B (a protein linked to cardiovascular disease).

- **Legumes:** Legumes, also known as pulses, include beans, lentils, peas, peanuts, and alfalfa. Legumes are full of nutrients, like minerals, protein, fiber, and B vitamins. Healthline notes legumes also improve feelings of fullness, which may help people eat less at each meal.

- **Teff:** Not too many people have heard of teff, which is a very small grain that is a dietary staple in parts of eastern Africa. Teff is high in the nutrients iron, magnesium, zinc, calcium, and vitamin C. Teff also contains ample protein and fiber. Teff also is gluten-free, so it can be ground and used in place of



Avoiding certain ingredients, like saturated fats and added sugars, and choosing foods known for their nutritional benefits is one way individuals can utilize diet to live healthier.

other flours in cooking, says Britannica.

- **Kefir:** Fermented foods and beverages have garnered increased attention recently because of their effect on helping maintain gut health.

Kefir is loaded with vitamins, minerals and nutrients, says the Cleveland Clinic. It is a fermented milk that boasts higher concentrations of probiotics than some other fermented foods, like yogurt.

Kefir has approximately 12 active probiotic strains.

These nutrient-rich foods can make great additions to health-conscious individuals' diets.



The nutritional benefits of blueberries

Are you ready to dig into a bowl of delicious blueberries? Perhaps you're adding a handful to your morning smoothie? Regularly eating blueberries is not only tasty, it can be excellent for your overall health.

While the term 'superfood' has become controversial because it is now seen as a marketing ploy and there's no standardized list of criteria to designate a food as 'super,' blueberries have often been touted as especially nutritious. That's because blueberries are not only low in calories, they're full of nutrients the body needs to thrive.

Healthline indicates blueberries are among the most nutrient-dense berries. A cup contains only 85 calories, and in that serving a person can enjoy 3.6 grams of fiber, 16 percent of the daily value (DV) of vitamin C; 24 percent of the DV of vitamin K; and 22 percent of the DV of manganese.

One of the main benefits of blueberries is that they are rich in antioxidants. Produced as a natural result of metabolism or exposure to pollution, cigarette smoke and alcohol, free radicals are molecules that damage cells over time. Antioxidants create barriers around cells to help protect them from damage by free radicals.

The Cleveland Clinic says that the high soluble fiber content of blueberries can make them strong allies in the fight against cholesterol. Soluble fiber binds to bile in the gut. Bile is made of cholesterol and other substances that need to be removed from the body. Lowering cholesterol helps prevent or reduce risk of heart disease.

In relation to heart health, blueberries also may help reduce blood pressure, which can be beneficial for the heart and brain. Healthline reports that in an eight-week study, people with obesity who had high risk of heart disease noted a 4 to 6 percent reduction in blood pressure

after consuming two ounces of freeze-dried blueberries per day. Additional studies have uncovered similar blood pressure-lowering abilities of blueberries.

Individuals concerned with keeping their brains sharp may want to consider adding blueberries to the mix of foods they eat regularly. A study in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition uncovered cognitive function improved when participants ate about 3/4 cup of blueberries per day. Since blueberries lower blood pressure, more blood can flow to the brain, which improves cognitive function.

BBC Good Food says blueberries also are low in sugar and high in fiber, which gives them a low glycemic index. This means blueberries can potentially control blood sugar levels.

Blueberries are powerhouses of nutrition and people of all ages can benefit from consuming them regularly.

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BEAT THE HEAT

Strategies to stay cool and healthy this summer while enjoying the outdoors

Heat stroke or heat exhaustion?

Really warm days, which can arise as spring gives way to the dog days of summer, can be both uncomfortable and unhealthy. Such days also can prove deadly. Despite that threat, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that heat-related illnesses are preventable. Harmful outcomes also are preventable when people learn to distinguish between heat-related illnesses. Heatstroke and heat exhaustion are easily confused, but the two conditions produce noticeably different symptoms. Recognition of that can help anyone stay healthy or help someone in need as the mercury rises this summer.



HEATSTROKE SYMPTOMS

- Elevated body temperature, typically 103° F or 104° F or higher
- Hot, red, dry, or damp skin
- Fast, strong pulse
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Loss of consciousness

HEAT EXHAUSTION SYMPTOMS

- Heavy sweating
- Cold, pale and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Feelings of tiredness or weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Fainting

Anyone experiencing these or other abnormal symptoms on hot days is urged to immediately move to a cool place and seek medical help. The CDC notes that heatstroke is a medical emergency, so individuals who suspect they or someone in their presence is experiencing heatstroke should call 911 immediately. If heat exhaustion is suspected, seek immediate medical help if a person is vomiting, experiencing symptoms that are worsening or sticking around for one hour or longer. More information about heat-related illnesses is available at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

6 tips for staying hydrated this summer

Summer is marked by hot and humid conditions. After all, the band The Lovin' Spoonful didn't sing, 'Hot town, summer in the city. Back of my neck getting dirty and gritty' because the summer weather is crisp and cool. Although summer temperatures can make a day at the beach or in the pool ideal, that rising mercury also can contribute to dehydration.

The Mayo Clinic advises that water is critical to every cell, tissue and organ in the human body. The body relies on water to function properly. Water helps to regulate body temperature, flush waste from the body, lubricate and cushion joints, and promote healthy digestion. And that's just the start. So when temperatures climb and the body begins sweating to cool off, it is vital to replenish lost fluids at a faster rate. The U.S. National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine says women should consume 2.7 liters of fluid per day, while men need 3.7 liters. These amounts increase if one is exercising, sweating, has an illness like a fever, or is vomiting.

The following are six ways to stay properly hydrated to avoid adverse reactions during hot summer days.

1. Consume a glass of water when you wake up. Start the day off with some water to give you an energy boost and get your metabolism moving.

2. Coffee and tea count toward fluid intake. Drinking your favorite tea or coffee is another way to take in fluids. A 2016 meta-analysis



An electrolyte-infused beverage can help replenish these lost substances. Working out in the heat or sweating profusely can unbalance electrolytes in the body.

published in the Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport found that caffeine doesn't contribute to dehydration for healthy adults, so having a cup or two should be fine.

3. Certain foods are hydrating as well. Hydrating foods include cucumbers, celery, tomatoes, watermelon, strawberries, grapefruit, and peppers. The Mayo Clinic says the average person gets 20 percent of his fluid intake from food.

4. Make water more fun. Add unsweetened flavoring to water if you find plain water too bland. You can squeeze in lemon or lime

juice, or float cucumber or apple slices in the water for some flavor.

5. Reach for calorie-free beverages before food. It's easy to mistake the signs of dehydration for hunger. By drinking a glass of water or another unsweetened beverage prior to every meal, you can stay hydrated and reduce the amount of food you eat. This can be part of a healthy weight loss plan.

6. Occasionally consume electrolyte powders and drinks. Working out in the heat or sweating profusely can unbalance electrolytes in the body. The Cleveland

Clinic says electrolytes are substances that help the body regulate chemical reactions and maintain balance between fluids inside and outside of your cells. They include sodium, calcium and potassium. An electrolyte-infused beverage can help replenish these lost substances.

Staying hydrated is essential at all times, but it's especially important when summer temperatures can make loss of body fluid more significant.

Making the switch to early-morning workouts



Beat the heat by getting up before the sun rises to exercise outside.

One of the common complaints among people who want to be more active is that they can't seem to fit exercise in when work, school or family responsibilities get top billing. According to the Better Health Channel, lack of time is a common perceived barrier to physical activity, with men age 30 to 50 saying they are typically too busy with work and family commitments to exercise regularly. And when leisure time is limited, they'd much rather choose recreational activities over heading to the gym.

There are many ways to make exercise fit into a busy schedule, and one of them is

to switch when you exercise. Opting for early-morning workouts can free up time later in the day. Plus, there are some benefits to getting a fitness fix in while the sun is rising. Get started with these tips.

· Skip afternoon caffeine and evening alcohol. Getting up early to exercise will likely require an adjustment period. One way to make it easier to rise and shine a few hours earlier is to limit behaviors that can make it hard to get out of bed. Coffee and other caffeinated products can make it challenging to fall asleep at night if consumed too late in the day. Alcoholic

beverages, while they may cause you to fall asleep faster, adversely affect sleep quality. When sleep is compromised, you may be more inclined to hit the snooze button.

· Gradually move your wake-up time. Progressing slowly by waking up about 15 minutes earlier each week can help you achieve your goal without it being a big shock to the system. As you build up to the new wake-up time, fit in short workouts in this newly acquired free time.

· Consider a home gym set-up. If the thought of venturing out to a gym or another facility in the wee hours of

the morning his unappealing, think about outfitting a space in your home with workout equipment. Doing so may facilitate an early fitness routine.

· Prepare workout gear the night before. The lifestyle experts at Real Simple suggest laying out workout gear and other items needed for the day the night before. This way you can get up and out quickly without forgetting things.

· Enlist a buddy to exercise as well. Having someone to whom you are accountable can help keep early workouts on the docket. A workout pal can motivate you to get

exercise in, and you can do the same for your partner. If someone is counting on you, you'll be less likely to skip a workout.

There are benefits to early workouts. Healthline says that early morning workouts are best when the heat rises during the day and you'll be doing outdoor activities. A 2018 study published in the International Journal of Obesity found that those who exercise first thing in the morning often choose healthier foods and eat less the rest of the day. Many who exercise early report greater overall energy and focus throughout the day as well.



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4 stretches that can help to alleviate lower back pain

Lower back pain is a big problem. Though that's likely no surprise to people who suffer from lower back pain, the scope of the problem is perhaps wider than many may realize.

A recent study conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington found that lower back pain affects 619 million people across the globe. Researchers behind the study, which was published in *The Lancet Rheumatology* in 2023, estimate that 843 million people will suffer from lower back pain by 2050.

Lower back pain can have an adverse effect on quality of life. The good news is that people are not helpless against lower back pain. In fact, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons notes roughly 90 percent of lower back pain cases are temporary and treatable without surgery. Stretching can help individuals alleviate lower back pain,

and the following are four stretches that can be performed at home without expensive equipment.

1. Knee-to-chest stretch: This stretch is straightforward. Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Grab one leg beneath the knee with both hands, interlocking your fingers, while keeping the other leg flat on the floor. Pull the knee up toward your chest, holding the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. New York Presbyterian advises keeping the lower back pressed to the floor for the duration of the stretch, which can be repeated with the opposite leg. Perform the stretch between two and four times for each leg.

2. Trunk rotation: When beginning a trunk rotation, lie on your back and bring the knees up toward your chest. The online medical resource Healthline notes the body should be positioned as if you're sitting in a chair. Extend arms out to the sides

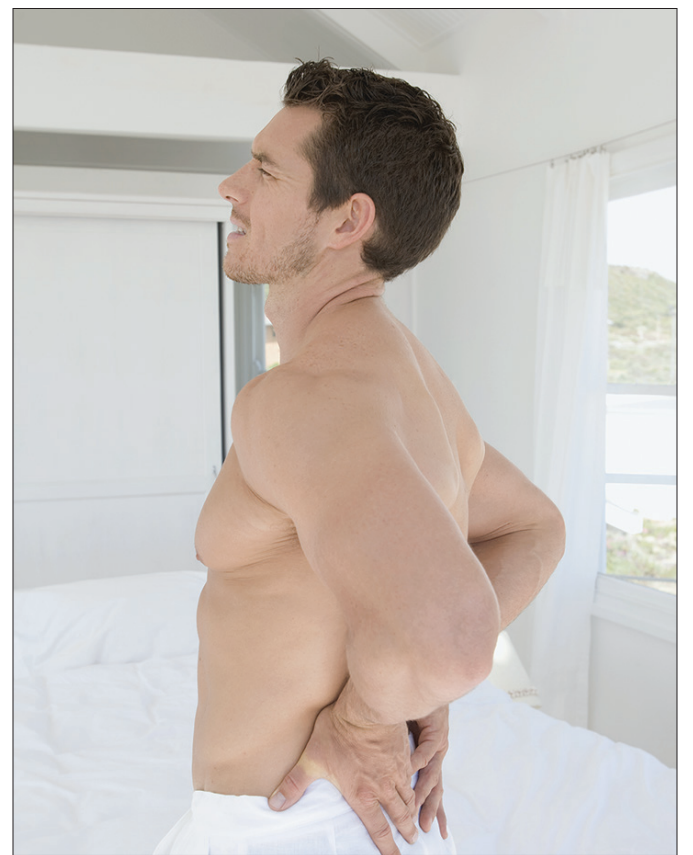
fully, with palms facedown on the floor. With knees together and hands on the floor, roll both bent knees to one side and hold for 15 to 20 seconds. Return to the starting position and then do the same for the opposite side, repeating several times for each side.

3. Cat-cow: Various yoga exercises, including the cat-cow, can help to alleviate lower back pain. The British Heart Foundation recommends beginning slowly when attempting to alleviate lower back pain, doing the cat-cow 10 times, once or twice a week. Kneel on all fours with hands flat on the floor and arms positioned straight under the shoulders and knees directly below the hips. Breathe in as you drop your stomach toward the floor, arching the back and looking up to the ceiling. Hold for one to two seconds, then reverse. Breathe out as you pull your stomach back toward the back, rounding your back upwards and

dropping the head toward the floor.

4. Seated hamstring stretch: The seated hamstring stretch can be beneficial because Healthline notes tight hamstrings are believed to be a common contributor to lower back pain. Stretching the hamstring muscles helps to release tension in the spine. Sit on the floor with one leg out in front of you and hook a bath towel around the heel of your foot. Gently bend forward at the hips, bringing the belly down to the thighs. Keep your back straight as you grab the towel so you can bring the belly closer to your legs. Healthline advises keeping the stretch until you feel mild tension in the lower back and the back of the leg. Hold for 10 seconds, rest for 30 seconds and repeat three times for each leg.

Lower back pain is a common but treatable problem. These stretches and more can help people overcome lower back pain and improve their quality of life.



Roughly 90 percent of lower back pain cases are temporary and treatable without surgery.



Stretching may help improve athletic performance; a person's ability to perform daily activities; increase blood flow to muscles; and enable muscles to work most effectively.

Steps for safe and effective stretching

Stretching is one component of maintaining flexibility throughout life. Flexibility is important because it can reduce injury risk. The Mayo Clinic says stretching can help improve range of motion, and this can benefit the body in many ways. Stretching may help improve athletic performance; a person's ability to perform daily activities; increase blood flow to muscles; and enable muscles to work most effectively.

Stretching is key but it should be done correctly. Harvard Health says that while it might be tempting to jump right into stretches, safety is needed to maximize flexibility and reduce the chances of being injured by stretching inappropriately. These tips can help individuals stretch effectively.

- Stretching is not a warm-up. A person can get injured if he stretches cold muscles. Before stretching, warm up with light walking, jogging or biking at low intensity for five to 10 minutes; otherwise, stretch after the workout when muscles are warm and ready.

- Don't be pained. Stretching should only be done to the point of mild tension, and never to the point of pain. Always stop stretching immediately if there is any pain.

- Stretch daily. If possible, stretch daily to keep up with flexibility and maintain range of movement.

- Move slowly into stretching. Gradually move into stretching positions, and never jerk or snap suddenly into position.

- Aim for stretching symmetry. Stretch both sides of the body similarly. It's a goal to have equal flexibility side to side, but keep in mind that genetics may make one side more flexible than another.

- Don't bounce. Bouncing while stretching can injure muscle and actually contribute to tightness.

- Breathe while stretching. Always breathe through stretching; do not hold your breath.

- Pay attention to form. Poor posture can cause muscles to shorten and tighten. Therefore, do not counteract stretching by using poor posture while sitting, standing or moving. Those who have concerns about posture can work with a physical therapist to learn strategies for improving posture and flexibility.



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Participation in pickleball grew by 159 percent between 2019 and 2022.

Recreational sports that make for a great workout

Billions of people across the globe share a passion for sports. Whether it's youngsters playing on sandlots, adolescents competing in scholastic sports or even professional athletes locking horns at the highest level, there's no denying that sports appeals to people of all ages.

The thrill of competition undoubtedly compels many athletes to engage in sports, but playing a sport also makes for great exercise. That's even the case for various recreational sports,

which many athletes look to after their more formal playing days have ended. In fact, the following recreational sports are not only fun, but also make for a great workout.

PICKLEBALL

Perhaps no recreational sport has enjoyed a surge in popularity as significant as pickleball in recent years. The 2023 Topline Participation Report from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association indicates participation in pickleball grew by 159 per-

cent between 2019 and 2022. Pickleball is something of a hybrid sport that combines elements of tennis and ping-pong to form a fun activity that's also great exercise. An ongoing examination of pickleball by Apple has found that participation in the sport helps players reach moderate to vigorous heart rate zones, which cardiologists note can improve cardiac fitness. In addition, a 2023 study published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* found that pickleball players enjoyed significant improve-

ments in happiness, life satisfaction and personal well-being after taking up the sport.

BASKETBALL

Basketball is among the more accessible recreational sports, as it's not uncommon for players to find a pickup game at their local park on a nice spring or summer afternoon or evening. Basketball combines various components of a great workout, including cardiovascular exercise, coordination and balance and weight-bearing activity. A 2018 study pub-

lished in the *Journal of Sport and Health Science* found that both half-court and full-court basketball helped to increase lean body mass, bone mineral density and oxygen uptake, each of which helps to make recreational basketball a great way for players to improve their overall health.

GOLF

The serene setting of a typical golf course can make it easy to see the sport as fun but not necessarily a great workout. But that's a misconception, as a round of 18

can make for great exercise. A 2016 study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* noted that golf can be a useful ally in the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases such as heart attack, stroke, certain cancers, and diabetes, among other conditions. Walking the course, as opposed to renting a cart during a round, makes for excellent cardiovascular exercise as well.

Athletes may embrace recreational sports for fun, but these physical activities also can make for a great workout.

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What to know about pinched nerves



Few medical conditions can be as uncomfortable as radiculopathy, commonly referred to as a pinched nerve. Anyone can suffer from a pinched nerve, which is why it behooves people from all walks of life to understand this painful yet often preventable condition.

WHAT IS A PINCHED NERVE?

The medical experts at Cedars Sinai note that the spine is made up of bones called vertebrae. The spinal cord runs downward through the center of these bones, and nerve roots branch off the cord and go between each vertebra. A pinched nerve occurs when problems affect those nerve roots.

WHERE DO PINCHED NERVES OCCUR?

Cedars Sinai notes that a pinched nerve is most likely to occur in the lower back. However, pinched nerves can affect other areas of the body, including the neck, arms and legs.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A PINCHED NERVE?

People who have experi-

enced radiculopathy may identify pain as the most notable symptom of a pinched nerve. Cedars Sinai notes such pain may manifest in different ways depending on which part of the body is affected. Pain-related signs of a pinched nerve in the lower back include:

- Sharp pain in the back that may travel down to the feet
- Pain that worsens when sitting or coughing
- A pinched nerve in the neck may produce:
 - Sharp pain in the arm
 - Pain in the shoulder
 - Feelings of numbness or pins and needles in the arm
 - Worsening pain when the neck moves or the head turns

ARE THERE RISK FACTORS FOR PINCHED NERVES?

Though anyone can experience a pinched nerve, various conditions can increase a person's risk for radiculopathy. Such factors include, but are not limited to:

- Poor posture
 - Poor body position: Crossing the legs when seated can pressure the spine and increase risk for a pinched nerve
 - Herniated disc
 - Slipped disc
 - Arthritis in the spine: Rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis can contribute to a narrowing of nerve openings and stiffness in the spine. Each of those conditions can increase pressure on the nerves, potentially leading to a pinched nerve
 - Weight gain
 - Pregnancy
 - Post-surgery scar tissue: People who have previously had spinal injury might be at greater risk for a pinched nerve due to the formation of scar tissue that affects a nerve root along the spinal cord.
- Pinched nerves are painful but treatable. Individuals who suspect they are experiencing a pinched nerve are urged to contact a physician immediately.



Possible migraine triggers

Migraine headaches can be debilitating, and chances are many families include at least one person who is fully aware of that reality. In fact, the American Migraine Foundation notes that migraines affect more than 37 million people in the United States, while the World Health Organization includes migraines among its 10 most disabling global illnesses.

No one is immune to migraine headaches. Indeed, the AMF reports that 10 percent of children experience migraine headaches, which the Cleveland Clinic notes can lead to mood changes, difficulty concentrating, trouble sleeping, and nausea, among other symptoms. The unpleasant side effects of migraines and the reality that no one is immune to them makes it worth anyone's time to learn about possible triggers of these often debilitating headaches.

• Stress: The AMF indicates research has found that between 50 and 75 percent of people had a significant association between

their daily stress level and their daily migraine activity. Though elevated stress levels do not always lead to migraines, stress is a trigger for nearly 70 percent of people who experience them. Identifying sources of stress and then finding healthy ways to overcome it might help people avoid migraines or reduce their frequency.

• Changes in sleeping habits: The AMF notes the link between sleep and migraines is substantial and points out that nearly 50 percent of all migraines occur between 4 a.m. and 9 a.m. Maintaining a regular sleep schedule, including on weekends, may help to lower migraine risk and frequency. In addition, the AMF recommends people avoid watching television, texting, reading, or listening to music while in bed.

• Weather: If migraine sufferers feel the weather plays a role in their headaches, they're not necessarily wrong. According to the Mayo Clinic, weather changes can produce chemical imbalances in the brain that can trigger a migraine.

Weather-related triggers may include bright sunlight, extreme temperatures, high humidity, and barometric pressure changes, among others. Individuals who feel certain types of weather have triggered past migraines are urged to stay indoors when similar conditions arise.

• Dehydration: Dehydration can contribute to a host of adverse side effects, including migraines. According to the AMF, roughly one-third of people who suffer migraines report dehydration is a trigger for their headaches, with some noting that even slight dehydration can quickly cause debilitating head pain. Drinking sufficient amounts of water each day may help reduce migraine risk and frequency.

A number of variables can trigger migraine headaches. Learning those triggers and doing your best to avoid them may help people avoid migraines or reduce their frequency.




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Are there ways to prevent Alzheimer's disease?

Researchers around the globe continue to investigate Alzheimer's disease, the most commonly diagnosed form of dementia. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive form of dementia that affects around 6.5 million people in the United States. Since AD affects parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language, notable symptoms include memory loss and difficulties communicating.

AD can be a debilitating condition, so naturally people want to do all they can to avoid it. Right now there are no proven prevention strategies nor a cure. However, the Mayo Clinic says there is strong evidence that healthy lifestyle habits may play a role in reducing AD risk, as well as risk for other types of dementia. The Alzheimer's Association and the Mayo Clinic recommend these strategies to help reduce dementia risk.

- Reduce risk for heart disease. Some autopsy studies show that as many as 80 percent of individuals with AD also have cardiovascular disease. Lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels may, in turn, help individuals reduce their risk for AD.

- Eat a balanced diet. Many doctors recommend the Mediterranean diet, which is rich in vegetables, fruits and lean protein coming from sources containing omega-3 fatty acids. This diet also is heart-healthy.

- Embrace physical activity. Regular physical activity may lower the risk of AD as well as vascular dementia. Exercise can boost blood and oxygen flow in the brain. Cardiovascular exercise is an



Healthy lifestyle habits may play a role in reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease, as well as risk for other types of dementia.

essential part of any wellness plan.

- Quit smoking. Quitting smoking can help maintain brain health and reduce the risk for various diseases.

- Avoid head injuries. Always wear protective safety equipment when participating in sports or while riding motorcycles or other motorized vehicles. Fall-proof your

home and wear seatbelts while riding in cars.

- Maintain social connections and activity. A number of studies indicate that maintaining strong social connections

and keeping mentally active as people age might lower the risk of cognitive decline as well as AD.

- Keep a healthy weight. Manage weight through diet

and exercise.

Although there is no guaranteed way to avoid a dementia diagnosis, certain lifestyle changes may help people reduce their risk.

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"Anxiety-free" & Sedation Dentistry

The American Dental Association estimates that about 20% of the population does not see a dentist because of fear and anxiety. A dentist has two paths to address these concerns: anxiety addressing medication or sedation.

What is "Anxiety-free" dentistry?

Every dentist at Azle Dental Care can provide oral medications to take the "edge off" a patient's anxiety. As an extra option, each of our dentists are certified to provide patients inhalation agents in-office like nitrous oxide (laughing gas.)

What about Sedation Dentistry?

Sedation dentistry is when intravenous sedation or general anesthesia is used to sedate a patient. Only a doctor with anesthesia training can perform intravenous sedation. We have a general anesthesiologist who works in conjunction with our dentists twice a month for all sedation cases.

When using either oral medication or sedation, will I feel any discomfort after the procedure?

In both cases, there will be some tenderness in the proceeding hours. Our doctors provide a 24-hour emergency number to help patients manage discomfort after any dental visit.



Dental Implants

Implants are the closest replacement for your natural teeth available. Over the last few years, implants have become a more economical choice for patients who want to keep their teeth.

What are dental implants?

Using the same principle and material used in joint replacement surgery, our lead dentist, Dr. Porter is certified to securely anchor dental implants into bone. The implant post is then attached to either a single or multiple replacement teeth. Dr. Porter is finding high success in anchoring patients full-mouth dentures as well.

What would dental implants feel like in my mouth?

Implants feel more comfortable, secure, and more natural than removable tooth replacements such as a partial or a denture.

Will implants slip out of my mouth like my dentures?

No, implants give you the confidence to laugh and smile with ease.



Veneers

Are your front teeth poorly spaced, stained, chipped, or crooked? Let's talk about veneers.

What are they?

Veneers are strong, thin shells of acrylic or porcelain, which are bonded to the front of your teeth.

How much time and money is involved?

Veneers are economical and can usually be applied in two office visits.

How long will they last?

Veneers last for years and are very resistant to stains and chipping.



Whitening

Would you like a whiter, brighter smile? Achieve it with Whitening!

How is it done?

Dr. Porter or one of her associate doctors will apply either a whitening gel during an office visit or give you a custom-fitted tray to wear in the comfort of your own home.

Will it last?

Whitened teeth can re-stain with exposure to staining agents or darken over time. If so, touch-ups can help maintain your smile at its brightest!

How long does it take?

It depends on the severity of the discoloration. You may notice a difference after only a few applications.