

wellnessSM me coaching

Information, tools and resources for a healthier you

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Issue

2

INSIDE

Reduce stress

*For the sake
of your heart*

Exercise

*Invite your
partner to join in*

Nutrition

*More than
a hill of beans*

FOR HEART'S SAKE

Avoid stress

DO YOU HAVE a great deal of stress in your life? It could affect your risk of heart disease.

Long-term stress may lead to increased heart rate and blood pressure, which eventually may damage your artery walls and contribute to heart disease. Chronic stress also may cause you to turn to unhealthy coping behaviors, such as smoking, overeating, inactivity, and drug or alcohol abuse. All of these are known to increase the risk of heart disease.

You probably try to reduce stress for a variety of reasons. For some people, it can lead to aches and pains and irritability. But, there's another good motive for keeping chronic stress under control: your heart health. More research is needed about the effect of stress on the heart. But, managing stress is part of a healthful lifestyle, which may help you lower your risk of heart disease. Here are some strategies that may help:



Avoid anxiety, when possible. For example, if your commute puts you on edge, try to find a route that has less traffic than your normal course. Or, travel before or after rush hour.



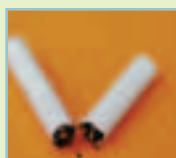
Stay active. Regular physical activity that you enjoy may help release tension. Consider a walk with your dog, for example. For safety's sake, talk with your doctor before starting a fitness routine.



Relax. Make time every day for a calming activity, such as deep breathing or yoga.



Be a problem solver. If a situation bothers you, don't just live with it. Instead, try to find an acceptable solution. For example, if the dog next door is bothering you, talk it over with your neighbor.



Make healthful choices. If you smoke, overeat, or turn to drugs or alcohol when stressed, it's important to find ways to ditch these habits. Talk with your doctor for help.

NEXT ISSUE

- Benefits of keeping a journal
- How to use medicine safely
- Creating lifestyle changes that last
- Positive thinking: Be kind to yourself
- Yoga for the beginner

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Beans: Small, yet mighty!

How a hill of beans actually amounts to quite a lot

BEANS — you could call them humble. They're inexpensive and easy to prepare. But, when it comes to nutrition, they've got no reason to be modest. Let's see...they're rich in plant protein — and they're good sources of iron, zinc, potassium, folate and fiber, too. Beans are also low in fat and have no cholesterol — but are hearty and filling. So, this makes them a great alternative to meat.

Just to clarify, we're talking about dried beans, not the green, or string, variety. Dried beans — which can be dry-packaged, canned or frozen — include kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans, black-eyed peas and chickpeas (garbanzo beans). Beans belong to a family of plants called legumes — which includes lentils and split peas, as well.

And, as nutritious as beans are, they're almost equally as versatile. You can serve them hot or cold — as a side dish or a meat-free entrée. They're also a tasty addition to items such as burritos, tacos, soups and salsas.

A gripe to air

Do you shy away from beans because of their gassy reputation? Using canned beans can help. Here are a few more beat-the-bloat tips:

- Take an anti-gas aid before your meal, such as Beano®.
- When soaking beans, change the water several times.
- Add beans gradually to your diet. Exercising and drinking adequate fluids may also help.

Beano® is a registered trademark of GlaxoSmithKline.



Spill the beans...

Here are some legume-loving secrets for your kitchen:

- Choose low-sodium canned beans — rinsing them well can also remove any excess sodium.
- Replace half the ground beef in recipes with kidney or black beans. Or, skip the meat for a meatless meal.
- Top a baked potato with beans and salsa.
- Add beans to green salads and rice dishes.
- Enjoy low-fat hummus as a sandwich spread or dip for cut-up veggies. It's traditionally made with pureed chickpeas.

Chicken and bean burritos

Use leftover chicken or turkey for this healthier alternative to traditional beef burritos.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 2 to 3 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 1 small container green chili peppers (mild or hot)
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 4 cups shredded chicken or turkey (leftover or rotisserie)
- 1 15-ounce can pinto beans
- ¾ cup low-fat grated cheese (Monterey or mozzarella)
- 2 cups shredded lettuce
- 6 10-inch whole-wheat tortillas or wraps

Directions

Heat oil in a large pan. Over medium heat, add onion and garlic. Sauté until soft, about 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in chili powder and green chili peppers. Add tomatoes and lime juice, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, and cook another 15 to 20 minutes.

Stir in chicken or turkey and beans and heat through, another 3 to 4 minutes. Divide the mixture evenly among tortillas. Top with cheese and lettuce; roll and serve.

Variation: Serve turkey mixture over ½ cup of brown rice instead of in a tortilla. Add the cheese and lettuce to the rice mixture.

Nutritional information: Makes 6 servings. Amount per serving: 395 calories; 12g total fat; 38g carbohydrate; 7g fiber; 39g protein, 650mg sodium.

Are you dreaming

IT'S BEEN A LONG, LONG

DAY filled with hectic schedules and endless to-do lists. But, finally, the time has come for nighttime rituals and that wonderful feeling of slipping between the sheets. Your head nestles down into your pillow, and you're ready for refreshing sleep. Ahh...

If only it were that simple. Perhaps, like millions of other people, you've been stealing from the night just to meet your daytime obligations. Or, maybe insomnia has been rearing its ugly head. Whatever the situation, you're finding yourself coming up short on sleep.

Necessity, not luxury

Although it might seem like your body isn't doing anything while you sleep, that's not the case. For example, sleep:

Energizes your brain. People learn better if they're well-rested. Those who get a good night's sleep also are able to remember things better than those who are sleep-deprived.

Lack of sleep can be a drag on your mood. You can feel more irritable and downright unhappy.

Although scientists don't know exactly how sleep improves learning, memory and insight, they suspect that the brain uses this time to form or reinforce neural pathways in the brain. Just as better roadways can improve the flow of traffic, better neural pathways can improve the way the brain functions.



HIT THE HAY. Research suggests that sleep is just as important to your well-being as a balanced diet and exercise.

Without enough sleep, thinking processes slow down, it's harder to focus and you're more easily confused. Activities such as driving become dangerous. In fact, people who haven't had enough sleep do as poorly on driving tests as people who are drunk.

Lack of sleep also can be a drag on your mood, making it more likely that you'll feel irritable or downright unhappy. If this goes on long enough, your risk of becoming depressed increases.

Benefits your heart. Your heart and blood vessels take a pounding every day, and sleep gives them a chance to get the rest they need. As you move into deep sleep, your heart slows and your blood pressure drops. When this doesn't happen, the risk goes up of having a stroke, chest pain, an irregular heartbeat, a heart attack and heart failure — a condition in which fluid builds up in the body because the heart isn't pumping the way it should.

Exhaustion also may trigger the release of extra adrenaline, cortisol and other stress hormones, which can keep your blood pressure from going down during sleep. And, an ongoing lack of sleep raises the level of certain proteins in your body, including C-reactive protein. This appears to increase your risk of heart disease, too.

Builds your immune system.

While you sleep, your body makes cytokines — hormones that help your immune system fight off infections. When you don't catch enough ZZZs, you're more likely to catch a cold.

Helps control your appetite and weight.

Researchers are discovering that people who sleep about five hours a night are more likely to become obese than people who consistently sleep seven to eight hours a night. One reason may be the effect of sleep on hormones related to appetite regulation. For example, during sleep the body produces more leptin, which dampens appetite, and less ghrelin,

of sleep?

which stimulates appetite.

May help protect you against diabetes. Research suggests that sleep — or lack of it — may affect the risk of developing diabetes. In one study, for example, when healthy men slept only four hours a night for about a week, their insulin and blood sugar levels began to mimic those seen in people who are developing diabetes.

Tips to help you sleep the night away

Research suggests that sleep is just as important to your well-being as a balanced diet and exercise. So, how much sleep should you get every day? That varies from person to person, but here are some general goals:

- Newborns: 16 to 18 hours
- Preschoolers: 10 to 12 hours
- School-age children and adolescents: at least nine hours (many teenagers, specifically, aren't getting enough sleep)
- Adults: seven to eight hours

To increase your chances of a good night's rest:

Establish a routine. Try to go to bed and get up at the same time every

day, including weekends. At bedtime, take a warm bath, listen to calming music or find another way to unwind.

Create a good sleep environment.

You want your bedroom to be cool, quiet and dark. Make sure your mattress and pillow are comfortable, too.

Reserve your bedroom for sleep. It helps strengthen the mental association between your bed and sleep, for example, if you avoid watching television in your bedroom.

Pay attention to eating and drinking habits. It's best to finish eating at least two hours before bedtime. Also, avoid alcohol, caffeine and nicotine, as they all interfere with good sleep.

Exercise. Physical activity helps you sleep better. Just be sure that it's regular, rather than sporadic, and that you stop exercising at least a few hours before bedtime.

Talk with your doctor. If you're thinking about trying medicines, or other products to treat sleep problems, talk with your doctor first. The problem may be a health condition that requires treatment.

Remember, a good snooze is too valuable to lose.

Can sleep medications help with my insomnia?

Sleeping pills temporarily may help some people who have trouble drifting off. But, they're not a cure for insomnia. And, they must be used with great care.

It's important to talk with your doctor before taking either over-the-counter or prescription sleep medicines to decide if they're right for you and if so, which one would be best. The cause of your sleep problem and your overall health should be considered. Age is an important factor, too. For example, sleep medicines can increase the risk of falls among older adults.

If you do take a sleep aid:

- Begin with the lowest possible dose that helps you.
- Plan on taking it only for a short time if you use it every night.
- Use it only occasionally if long-term use is required.
- Combine it with healthy lifestyle and sleep habits.



Grouch-proof your day!

WE ALL HAVE our grumpy moments when the day's stresses start to get to us. But sometimes, when a mood goes south, it can spoil what might have been a better day. It could distract you from your work — or make you impatient with loved ones or co-workers.

Practice a little prevention. You can help protect your outlook with these go-to techniques for good-mood maintenance:

6 good-mood moves

Tuck yourself in

Are you skimping on sleep? Plenty of ZZZs at night can help you avoid the grumpiness that might come with being overtired. Most adults need about seven to eight hours of shut-eye a night.

Go a little Zen

A daily calming practice can help keep crabbiness at bay. For example, do deep breathing — in through the nose, out through the mouth — for a few minutes every day. Or, try visualization. Imagine being in a peaceful, pleasant place. Use all your senses.

Hit the pavement or the gym

Even a 10-minute walk can be a mental lift. And, when you exercise regularly, you're better able to manage daily stressors.

Don't get overly hungry

Does your stomach growl by mid-morning? Hunger can affect your mood. Savor a healthful snack — for example, a few almonds and some apple slices — before you're ravenous.

Stop and stretch

This can help your muscles and your mind release tension.

Hum along

Listen to music that gives you a lift.



When you need help coping

Of course, not all bad moods are avoidable — or pass quickly. If you've been feeling down or irritable for more than a couple of weeks, talk with your doctor. Ask about screening for depression.



BENEFITS OF BUDDIES. Relationships can ease stress and keep depression at bay.

The friend factor

Social connections can give your health a boost

HAVE YOU EVER thought of a lunch date with a friend as a good health habit? Maybe not — but connecting with others can be powerful medicine.

Research shows that our friendships can help us:

Feel happier. Being connected to others increases our self-esteem and sense of purpose. And, it can ease stress and help keep depression at bay. Research has shown that good relationships are a key difference between people who report being “very happy” and those who say they are less content.

Stay healthier. Lonely adults appear to be more prone to some medical conditions, including high blood pressure, depression and dementia. But, support from others can bolster the immune system — and help people bounce back from health problems.

In fact, the people in our lives may help us live longer, too.

According to a review of nearly

150 studies, men and women with strong social and community ties are one-third less likely to die prematurely than isolated individuals.

Staying in touch

When it comes to a friendship, don’t just “set it and forget it.” Make an effort to nurture your relationships. You might:

- Set a specific date to get together with someone you haven’t seen in a while
- Try to be a good listener the next time a friend calls or wants to talk
- Tell someone how much you value the bonds you share

Mending broken bonds

Do you have a valued relationship that’s frayed? If you still cherish this person, consider how you might restore your friendship. To move forward, you may need to let go of past grievances — or take responsibility for your part in the divide.

But, keep in mind: An unhealthy friendship can do more harm than good. It may be best to leave behind any relationship that makes you feel unsafe, lowers your self-esteem, or draws you into harmful habits or behaviors.

Making new connections

Maybe you’d like to make some new friends. Perhaps you’ve just moved to a new town or neighborhood, for example. Here are some tips:

Reach out. This can be as simple as getting to know your neighbors. Make an effort to say hello and chat when you see them. You might also:

- Offer a helping hand to new parents or an older adult in your neighborhood. Or, sign up as a volunteer with a local organization.
- Take a class — and get to know others in the group.
- Find — or start — a walking group or book club.
- Attend services at a place of worship.

Be patient. If making friends doesn’t happen quickly, try not to get discouraged. Keep trying new experiences to meet people — and give it time. Remember, when you’re relaxed — and being yourself — you’ll be more likely to make a genuine connection with others.

When making friends doesn’t come easy

Some people feel very anxious in social situations. If you feel isolated by your fears, consider talking with a mental health professional.* He or she can offer treatments and strategies to help you cope with your anxiety.

*Check your benefits plan to see what services may be covered.



ARE YOU dreaming of **SLEEP?**

➔ See pages 4-5

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Dynamic duo

Encouraging your partner to exercise

AS A WAY to live longer and improve health and self-esteem, it's hard to beat the benefits of regular physical activity. However, your husband, wife or partner may not exercise much at all. As a result, he or she may gain weight and have an increased risk of heart disease and other health conditions.

So, how do you encourage fitness for your couch potato, whose idea of a great workout might be aerobic shopping or climbing aboard the riding lawn mower twice a week?

1 Lead by example. Make daily exercise a priority. As your partner sees the changes in your life, he or she may decide it's time to become more physically active, too.

2 Make a date. Invite your partner to join you — or the whole family — for walks, swims or bike rides. Togetherness and variety can help make fitness fun and motivating for everyone.

3 Offer support. Like many people, your loved one may want to exercise, but a busy schedule gets in the way. Or, maybe exercise seems daunting. You can:

- Suggest exercising in 10-minute



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bouts that add up to 2.5 hours a week. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends at least 150 minutes of moderately intense aerobic exercise, such as walking, each week. Muscle-strengthening exercises on two or more days a week are also recommended. These mini-workouts could be squeezed in before work, during lunch and in the evening.

- Point out that physical activity often improves energy, mood and

sleep. It may also help reduce everyday stress.

- Offer to watch the kids to free time for your partner to exercise.

4 Praise the effort. Finally, acknowledge your loved one's attempts to get active. It isn't always easy to make changes, and it helps to receive a little applause now and then.

Be sure you and your partner have a doctor's OK before significantly increasing your level of physical activity.