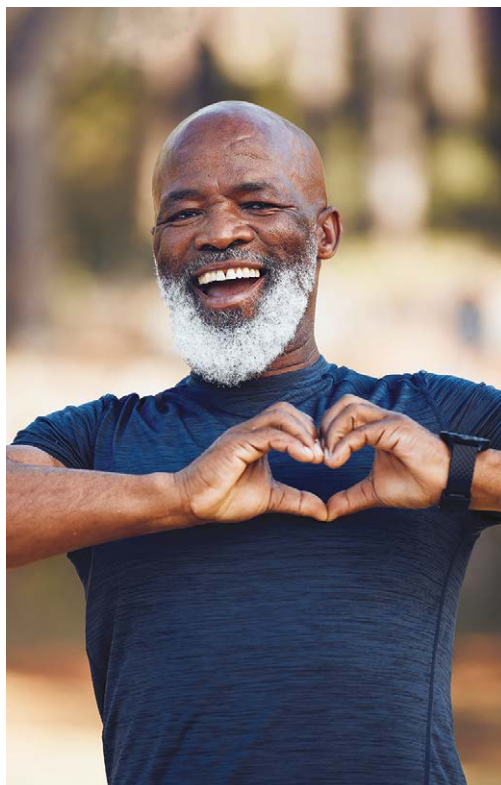




Healthy Lifestyle is the primary guideline for lowering cardiovascular risk.

Revised Cholesterol Testing

For decades, doctors have urged us to help protect our cardiovascular health by routinely checking our cholesterol levels. Recently, the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association updated guidelines for cholesterol levels.

Here's what you may expect your health care provider to do:

Assess your risk earlier. Updated tools now estimate your 10- and 30-year risk of heart attack and stroke starting in your 30s — using your cholesterol, blood pressure, age and health habits — so elevated risk can be caught and addressed sooner rather than in middle age.

Set a target for your LDL ("bad") cholesterol based on that risk. The new guidelines bring back specific LDL goals — see the desirable levels in the box at right.

Start with healthy lifestyle habits — a healthy weight, regular activity, no tobacco and good sleep — then add a cholesterol-lowering medication such as a statin earlier than in the past if your numbers stay above goal.

Consider added tests when your risk is unclear, such as a one-time lipoprotein(a) measurement or a coronary calcium scan, which can help your provider decide whether medication is warranted.

A standard cholesterol test measures several fats (lipids) in your bloodstream.

Desirable levels include:

- Total cholesterol lower than 200 mg/dL.
- LDL cholesterol lower than 100 mg/dL.*
- HDL cholesterol higher than 40 mg/dL.
- Triglycerides lower than 150 mg/dL.

* Under 70 mg/dL if your risk is high, and under 55 mg/dL if you've had a heart attack or other cardiovascular event.

For lowering cardiovascular risk, lifestyle remains primary. The new guidelines emphasize regular exercise, healthy sleep and tobacco cessation, as well as treating obesity.

September is Cholesterol Education Month.



best bits



Here's a reminder during Healthy Aging Month to practice personal wellness measures throughout your life.

In addition to eating and sleeping well and staying physically active, stay connected. Social connections are vital for healthy aging. Stay in touch with family and friends; join groups with activities that interest you. Volunteer in your community, and keep learning to keep your mind sharp and engaged. It may help prevent cognitive decline and improve your overall well-being. Know your family history of chronic diseases; ask your health care provider about steps to reduce your risk.



Bone and Joint Health National Action Week runs October 12 to 20.

Bone, joint and back ailments, such as chronic pain, arthritis and osteoporosis, are among the most common health problems worldwide. Poor bone and joint health can lead to disability, falls and injuries. Check with your health care provider about bone density testing as well as any joint issues that concern you.



Don't be one of 48 million Americans sickened by

foodborne illness each year. During Food Safety Education Month in September, learn some smart food handling tips. **First step:** Keep raw meats, poultry, seafood and eggs separate from other foods — don't place cooked food on a plate or cutting board that previously held raw animal products.

Gut Health and the Microbiome

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



tip OF THE month

Family Meals

Family meals are a time when children can learn important life skills, including table manners, communication and how to recognize and enjoy a wide variety of foods. A recent study shows that sharing leisurely meals as a family can also help increase a child's vegetable and fruit intake. Researchers found that just ten extra minutes at the dining table can help kids eat about three to four more bites of fruits and vegetables compared to rushed or shorter meals.



Did you know that your digestive system is home to trillions of live bacteria, viruses and other microbes? Together they make up your gut microbiome. These microbes are very important: they aid digestion and support immune health.

What you eat affects the microbes in your gut. To support a healthy gut microbiome, include these in your meals:

Plant foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts and beans. The fiber and other nutrients in these foods support gut health.

Prebiotic-rich foods, which contain fermentable fibers that feed the beneficial gut microbes. Prebiotics may help improve digestive function, support the immune system and improve mineral absorption. Prebiotic-rich foods include:

- Asparagus.
- Garlic.
- Onion.
- Jerusalem artichokes.
- Bananas.
- Wheat and rye.
- Beans, soy and peas.

Fermented foods contain live microbes that can support gut balance. Examples include yogurt, kefir (an effervescent dairy beverage), kombucha and pickled vegetables such as sauerkraut and kimchi. Eating fermented foods regularly may improve the diversity of gut bacteria.



Look for fermented foods that specifically state they contain “live active cultures.” They will most likely be refrigerated to preserve the bacteria. Choose sauerkraut and kimchi from the fridge instead of shelf-stable versions.

Do any foods harm gut health? Alcohol and sugary, ultra-processed foods may lower the diversity in your gut microbiome or promote overgrowth of less-healthy bacteria. New studies also suggest that artificial sweeteners may harm gut health over time.

Do probiotics supplements help? It depends. Probiotics are live bacteria found in supplements. Some specific probiotic strains have been shown to help with certain conditions, such as irritable bowel syndrome or diarrhea. But for effectiveness, you need to take the right amount of a particular probiotic strain that's been clinically tested for a certain health condition. Those are listed at usprobioticguide.com, or speak with your health care provider.

easy recipe

Rainbow Oven-Roasted Vegetables

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 red pepper, seeded and diced (1 inch) | 3 cups purple cabbage, diced (1 inch) |
| 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced into rounds | 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil |
| 1 yellow pepper, seeded and diced (1 inch) | 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar |
| 3 cups broccoli florets | ½ tsp salt |
| | 1 tsp oregano |
| | ¼ cup crumbled goat cheese |



Preheat oven to 400°F. **Line** baking tray with parchment or foil. **Add** vegetables in rows according to the rainbow: red pepper, carrot, yellow pepper, broccoli and cabbage.

Drizzle with olive oil, vinegar, salt and oregano. **Roast** in oven 20-25 minutes, until vegetables are tender-crisp. **Top** with goat cheese and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving:

142 calories | 4g protein | 8g total fat | 1g saturated fat | 3g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 17g carb | 9g sugar (0 added sugar) | 6g fiber | 355mg sodium

Q: Keys to self-motivation?

A: Whatever you hope to achieve in life, staying motivated can help you succeed. You are bound to hit bumps in the road, and knowing how to keep pushing forward is vital.

How to stay on track?

- Be sure that your goals are clearly defined and realistic.
- Break down big, long-term goals into smaller, more manageable tasks that you can check off along the way.
- Give yourself appropriate deadlines for each checkpoint.
- Write down your plan and share it with others.
- Celebrate and reward yourself as you reach your short-term milestones.
- Know that your journey will be challenging sometimes. If you have setbacks, ask yourself: *What did I learn? How can I do better next time?*
- Ask others for suggestions or seek professional advice if you get stuck.
- Take breaks as needed to recharge.
- Surround yourself with cheerleaders who encourage you and believe you can succeed.

— Eric Endlich, PhD



Memorizing 988 could save a life.

Suicide is often not discussed openly, but it should be. Suicide is a leading cause of death in the U.S., resulting in about one death every 11 minutes, according to the CDC. September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, a time to learn about immediate help available 24/7 for someone who may be in crisis and contemplating self-harm. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) urges using these free resources for assistance if you or someone you know is possibly suicidal: Call or text **988** to the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** to be connected with crisis counselors for emotional support and other services. Help is also available via web chat at **988lifeline.org** and immediately by texting 741741 to reach a free, trained counselor.

Addiction: What You Need to Know

Addictions can develop not only to illegal drugs such as heroin and cocaine, but also to legal substances such as alcohol and certain prescription medications. Over time, excessive use can lead to cravings, ability to tolerate higher doses and withdrawal symptoms when the substance is taken away. Addictions appear to be triggered by multiple factors, including:

Genetics: Having a close blood relative with a history of substance abuse can raise one's risk for addictions. Exactly how this works has yet to be determined.



Other mental health issues: Conditions such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder can increase the chances that someone will turn to addictive substances to cope.

Environment: Being around others who abuse substances, or having ready access to habit-forming drugs, can increase the chances of developing an addiction.

Addictions can have serious, even life-threatening, complications. Fortunately, there is help available. Visit **FindTreatment.gov** or ask your health care provider for a referral.

Breathing and Anxiety

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Breathing and anxiety are closely linked — the way you breathe can either reduce or fuel anxious feelings. Fast, shallow breathing, or hyperventilation, commonly occurs during anxiety and can cause symptoms such as lightheadedness, tingling, chest tightness, or a racing heart. Noticing these sensations often triggers increased worry, creating a feedback loop that can escalate into a full-blown panic attack. Panic attacks are generally harmless, though they may be quite frightening.



But there's good news: Deliberate breathing can quickly reverse this anxiety cycle. Slow, deep breathing activates the body's relaxation response and helps shut down the fight-or-flight reaction. To practice, find a quiet, comfortable spot and aim for at least five to ten minutes daily. Inhale gently for four to six seconds, then exhale slowly for six to eight seconds; focusing on a longer out-breath helps lower heart rate. Picture your belly inflating like a balloon. Lying on your back with one hand on your belly and one on your chest can help: the belly hand should rise more, indicating you're using a muscle called the diaphragm.

If you feel dizzy while practicing, pause, breathe normally for a minute, then resume with slightly shallower breaths. Progress gradually; benefits will accumulate with regular practice. Breathing techniques are a simple, portable tool you can use anywhere: during stressful moments, before sleep, or as part of daily self-care to reduce anxiety and regain a sense of calm.

Do you know the difference between **disease, disorder, condition and syndrome**?

A **disease** is a specific health or medical issue that is diagnosable; it may or may not be treatable. A **disorder** is a disruption in a normal body and the cause can be unknown and individual (e.g., sinus problems). A health **condition** refers to a physical or mental illness, injury or impairment; it can be continuous or recurring, such as allergies and headaches. A **syndrome** refers to a group of symptoms occurring together, such as chronic fatigue syndrome.



Guys, How's Your Health?

- 1] **Sound sleep** is critical to building your body's defenses against infection, illness and heart disease.
- 2] **For men,** having 15 or more alcoholic drinks per week is heavy drinking, which can cause poor sleep, poor work, chronic health problems and premature aging.
- 3] **Don't ignore signs of depression:** ongoing worry, sadness and other negative feelings.
- 4] **Take care of your ticker.** Keep your weight and blood pressure in check, and get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, such as brisk walking, each week.
- 5] **Use a minimum SPF 30 sunscreen** outdoors to help prevent skin cancer and face wrinkles.



- 6] **Strength training** can help preserve your muscle strength and manage or prevent many chronic health conditions, including arthritis and back pain. Get your provider's okay first if you have a chronic ailment.
- 7] **Add daily doses of fruits, vegetables and leafy greens.** They're packed with vitamins and minerals.
- 8] **Get routine medical and dental exams.** Maintain a strong relationship with your health care providers.

Feeling Lightheaded?

Lightheadedness is a feeling that you might faint. Most of the time, this feeling of dizziness isn't serious, and it's easily treated. Lightheadedness occurs when your brain does not get enough blood. This may occur if:

- Your blood pressure drops suddenly.
- You're dehydrated.
- You get up too fast after sitting or lying down.

Other culprits: the flu, low blood sugar, a cold, allergies, or medications that may lower your blood pressure. More serious conditions include heart problems, stroke, internal bleeding and shock.

If you tend to get lightheaded when you stand up, get up slowly, and stay seated for a few moments before standing. Hold on to something when you're standing.



Avoid activities such as driving, operating heavy machinery, and climbing until one week after your symptoms disappear. A sudden dizzy spell during these activities can be dangerous.

Call 911 or go to an emergency room if you are dizzy and have:

- A head injury or headache.
- Fever higher than 101°F (38.3°C).
- Seizures.
- Trouble keeping fluids down.
- Chest pain.
- Irregular heart rate (heart is skipping beats).
- Shortness of breath.
- Weakness.
- Inability to move an arm or leg.
- Change in vision or speech.
- Fainting and loss of alertness for more than a few minutes.

Note: Never drive yourself to the ER.

Contact your health care provider if you have:

- Dizziness for the first time.
- New or worsening symptoms.
- Dizziness after taking medicine.
- Hearing loss.



If you live with chronic pain, you aren't alone.

September is Pain Awareness Month, an opportunity to learn about chronic pain, which lasts for more than three months. It affects more than one in five Americans and can range from ongoing back and nerve pain to chronic migraines and pain from past injuries or ongoing conditions, such as arthritis and diabetes. Chronic pain can interfere with work, recreation and family relationships. If you have chronic pain, talk to your health care provider about pain-relieving procedures, medications, exercises and relaxation techniques which may reduce discomfort and, if needed, counseling to help you cope. Learn more at acpanow.com.

3 Common Fitness Questions

What's the best exercise for losing weight? When you're active, your body uses more energy (calories). When you burn more calories than you consume, you lose weight. Start with a goal of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as walking, 5 days a week. Look for ways to get physical throughout each day. **Long-term goal:** Increase the duration of your workouts and add strength training. **Note:** First get your health care provider's okay if you're unaccustomed to exercise.

What's a simple way to build strength? Beyond maintaining muscle, strength (or resistance) training is vital for losing body fat and fighting disease and disability. Plan for 2 or 3 workouts a week. Select 1 or 2 exercises for each of the major muscle groups. Work both sides of the body evenly. Do each exercise 8 to 15 times (reps) in sets of 1 to 3. Use weights that are heavy but comfortable to use — your last rep should be difficult, but not painful. Or try resistance band exercises. **To start:** Consider using a personal trainer.

What kind of exercise is best for obese or overweight people?

Try walking, water exercises, dancing or weight lifting. Anything that gets you moving — even for only a few minutes a day in the beginning — is a healthy start. Talk with your provider before starting a vigorous sport.



Reaching Overhead? Read This First

Certain work responsibilities may require us to reach overhead, which can stress our necks and shoulders. This can result in muscle and joint injuries. To prevent injury and strain, follow these ergonomic guidelines when reaching overhead:

Lighten the load. If you have to lift or lower a load from above, lighten it if possible.

Change the process. Work overhead for shorter periods of time and use work methods that are less labor intensive and that will help you spend less time reaching overhead.

Use tools and equipment that can help you, such as drill bit or screwdriver extensions. Or use a sturdy platform or an aerial lift to decrease vertical distance.

Preassemble fixtures or whatever you are fitting before installing them to minimize time spent working overhead.



Consider working in teams. One person can lift while the other assembles. Rotate the tasks until the job is complete.

Take regular and frequent breaks to give muscles time to relax.

dollars & sense

Q: Smartphones: Essential for Banking?

A: Phones are not required for banking; you can still walk into a branch, use an ATM or manage finances using a computer. However, in the modern economy, the smartphone has evolved from a convenient luxury into a practical necessity for security and speed.

The most compelling argument for smartphones is security. Modern banking relies heavily on multi-factor authentication. While some banks offer physical tokens, most default to authenticator apps directly on a device. Additionally, banking apps provide real-time defense against fraud. Instant push notifications alert you to suspicious charges when they happen, allowing you to freeze your card with a single tap.

Beyond security, smartphones bridge the gap between intent and action. The ability to check your balance in the checkout line prevents overdraft fees. Using the mobile check deposit feature turns what used to be a 30-minute errand into a 30-second task. Additionally with the popularity of peer-to-peer payments, social transactions are efficient. Without a smartphone, simple tasks, such as splitting the bill for a meal, can be cumbersome.

While it is possible to bank without a smartphone, doing so can place you at a disadvantage. You lose the ability to react to fraud and move money instantly. While certainly not a necessity, a smartphone can be easier and more efficient.

— Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, CFP, AFC, RSSA



safety corner

Rooftop Cautions

Falls Prevention Awareness Week is September 21 to 25.



Falls are the leading cause of death in construction (other than highway collisions); falls from roofs are the main source, according to OSHA. Also, fall protection continues to be among the Top 10 most frequently cited standards by OSHA. These standards have specific requirements depending on scope of work and height. Learn more at [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov).

Get proper training to work at heights and prevent falls from roofs by following these guidelines:

- **INSPECT** fall protection equipment for wear and damage before use. Never use defective equipment.
- **WEAR** a good-fitting harness.
- **USE** a lifeline or guardrail.
- **STAY** connected to the lifeline while wearing your harness.
- **GUARD** or securely cover all holes, openings or skylights. Don't work around unprotected openings.



Protect Yourself Against Cancer

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the U.S. after heart disease. And the total number of new cancers diagnosed each year is increasing. Three primary reasons: (1) tobacco use, (2) the increased use of screening and testing to detect cancer earlier and (3) changes in risk factors, including increased obesity, alcohol use and certain viral infections.

In 2024, American Cancer Society researchers found that 40% of cancers and about one half of deaths in the U.S. in adults 30 years and older could have been prevented by risk factors that can be changed, such as smoking. Controllable lifestyle and environmental factors cause most cancers. We can often prevent cancer by recognizing the risks and taking action to lower our risks. The list below includes the most-studied known or suspected risk factors for cancer.

How can you reduce your risk of cancer? An abundance of scientific evidence shows that you can significantly lower your cancer risk through healthful, protective habits. These include the following common behaviors and conditions:

Avoid or quit tobacco use. Tobacco products and secondhand smoke have many chemicals that damage DNA, potentially leading to leukemia and cancers of the lung, larynx (voice box), mouth, esophagus, throat, bladder, kidney, liver, stomach, pancreas, colon and rectum and cervix.

Avoid heavy alcohol use (more than one or two drinks per day), which raises your risk of several cancers (liver, breast, mouth, throat, larynx (voice box) and esophagus). The more you drink, the higher your risks.

Avoid obesity to lower your risk of several cancers, including cancers of the breast (in women past menopause), colon, rectum, endometrium, esophagus, kidney, pancreas and gallbladder.

Avoid excess sun exposure and tanning to reduce ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which causes early skin aging and damage that can lead to skin cancer, such as melanoma. Reduce exposure to cancer-causing environmental substances, such as asbestos, benzene, cadmium, formaldehyde and radon.

Consider vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV). Check with your health care provider or search for HPV vaccine on [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Move as often as possible. According to the ACS, getting regular physical activity is associated with a lower risk for several types of cancer, including breast, prostate, colon, endometrium and possibly pancreatic cancer.



Diet? Scientists continue to research how diet may guard against cancer. There is strong evidence that eating whole grains and other foods rich in dietary fiber protects against weight gain and obesity, factors which can increase your risk of several cancers.

Learn more at [cancer.gov](https://www.cancer.gov).

Cancer Screening Saves Lives

FOR WOMEN

Breast Cancer: Begin at ages 40 to 44, if desired.

Ages 45 to 54: Annually.

Age 55+: Every 1 to 2 years.

Cervical Cancer: Begin at age 25 or as advised.

FOR MEN

Prostate Cancer: Start at age 50 if advised.

FOR EVERYONE

Colorectal Cancer: Start at age 45 and repeat as advised.

Skin Cancer: See your health provider if there's a change in your skin, including a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal or a change in a mole.

Zorba's corner

Advice Worth More Than a Grain of Salt

Worried about salt? A teaspoon of salt is about 2,300 mg of sodium, the main component of salt. That's about all you need. The problem is processed foods — soups, chips, frozen entrées and restaurant meals — are often loaded with salt. For some, especially those with high blood pressure, cutting salt is the way to keep that blood pressure in control. For home cooking, use pepper, herbs and spices and other no-salt flavorings to those dishes. You'll be much healthier. And if you are diagnosed with high blood pressure, cutting back on salt is one of the easiest things you can do.

— Zorba Paster, MD



Study: Early-Onset Colorectal Cancer

People younger than age 50 are getting colorectal cancer, and scientists are trying to figure out why. In one study, researchers found that increased stiffness of tissue may signal that colorectal cancer is likely to develop in patients under 50.

This study does not explain exactly why a changing tissue might make it easier for cancer to begin. The colon normally functions as a flexible tube that moves waste through the body using coordinated muscle contractions.

But this research could point toward strategies to prevent or treat the disease. There was a time when colorectal cancer mostly struck older adults. But in the past few years, rates of early-onset have risen so much that it is the major cause of cancer death in people younger than 50 in the U.S., according to the American Cancer Society.



Q: What is cardiomyopathy?

A: Cardiomyopathy is a heart muscle disorder. The condition can weaken your heart muscle and make it harder to pump blood throughout your body. Viral illnesses, heart attacks, heart valve problems and high blood pressure can cause cardiomyopathy. Other culprits include obesity, diabetes, thyroid disease and drug or alcohol abuse. Genetic factors may play a role.



Signs and symptoms: Cardiomyopathy can cause shortness of breath, swelling of the legs or feet, abdominal bloating and coughing or trouble breathing while lying down. Other symptoms include fatigue, chest discomfort, palpitations or dizziness. Contact your health care provider if you have these symptoms. Call 911 if you experience severe breathlessness, fainting or chest pain lasting more than a few minutes.

Health care options: Treatments for cardiomyopathy include medications, surgery or, more rarely, heart transplantation. Lifestyle measures can help manage this condition. Losing excess weight, quitting smoking, restricting salt, avoiding alcohol and exercising with your health care provider's guidance may provide protection and benefits. — Elizabeth Smoots, MD

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