



HOPE Health Letter

“Life Is a Journey. Have Some Fun.”

DECEMBER 2019

Don't Let Your Health Take a Holiday

The busy season ahead can quickly lead to a hectic schedule. To lessen your stress, maintain energy and avoid getting sick, treat yourself well:

Take time for basic needs. That means 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep and 3 balanced meals every day, plus 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise (e.g., brisk walking) weekly — the best Rx for sustaining energy and feeling positive.

Watch for opportune exercise. Park in the back 40 of the shopping mall and walk to it.

Keep your hands clean. And keep your distance from sick coworkers and family members.

You don't have to do it all. You're not being a Grinch if you need to say *No* to family and friends to relieve stress and recharge.



Snack for energy. Have some fruit, nuts and seeds with you when working or traveling.

Quiet your mind. Check out meditation apps to create mindfulness and help you to relieve stress or pain or quit smoking.

Relax in the moment. Open your mind and your eyes to the warmth of your surroundings — listen to music or enjoy a wintry walk followed by a cup of hot tea.

Encourage others. Wear a smile, offer compliments, and be patient with those who appear stressed. When a friend seems upset or blue, lend an ear and just listen. **That's the spirit!**

BEST bits



■ **Handwashing is a do-it-yourself vaccine against illness**, says the CDC.

During **Handwashing Awareness Week, December 1 to 7**, keep hands clean in 5 steps: Wash your hands with soap and warm or cold water for at least 20 seconds; get a good lather going; clean the back of your hands, between the fingers and under the nails; and dry off with a clean towel. Always wash before preparing meals or eating and after touching objects in public spaces. You can use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, too.



■ **World AIDS Day is December 1.**

AIDS occurs when the immune system is damaged by HIV. The decline in HIV infections in the U.S. has plateaued in recent years because effective prevention and treatment are not adequately reaching those who could most benefit from them — especially people in rural areas and among African Americans, Hispanics and Latinos. Learn more at hiv.gov.

■ **Flying away for the holidays?** Follow these TSA guidelines for carry-on items, including:

❶ Don't wrap gifts before going through security; ❷ Liquids or aerosols must be no more than 3.4 ounces each and placed in 1 clear quart-size resealable bag; and ❸ You can carry on your medications in unlimited amounts if they're screened. Learn more at tsa.gov.



Give Yourself the Gift of Better Health

Whether it's the home, workplace or seasonal parties, treats are more abundant at the holidays. **Remember:** It is fine to indulge in treats, but they should not be the main part of your diet. Eat only what you enjoy the most, and savor every bite. If you have trouble negotiating treats or feel guilty about indulging (which you shouldn't), speak with a dietitian or therapist about finding balance.

Beauty isn't something on the outside. It's your insides that count! You gotta eat green stuff to make sure you're pretty on the inside.

— Takayuki Ikkaku, Arisa Hosaka and Toshihiro Kawabata

eating smart

5 COOKING TIPS You May Not Know

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



Bring some chef-inspired knowledge into your kitchen with these 5 culinary tips:

- 1 Use the right cutting board:** Choose a non-porous board made from resin, marble or glass for cutting meat, poultry and seafood. They are easier to clean, and bacteria from raw meat won't get trapped in the grooves. Porous wood boards absorb everything, so they are best for cutting bread, vegetables and fruit — not for raw meat.
- 2 Invest in good-quality knives.** You don't need many — just a chef's knife, paring knife and bread knife. And get a knife sharpener, too — sharp knives are key to making food prep easier. Avoid putting knives in the dishwasher; detergent is abrasive and damages the sharp edge.
- 3 No more tears:** If chopping onions makes you cry, try chilling them in the freezer for 10 minutes before slicing. The cold reduces the amount of sulfenic acids released into the air by the onion, thus reducing tears. Or, use a pair of onion goggles to stop the fumes from reaching your eyes.
- 4 Buy and freeze:** Enjoy a bounty of your favorite fruits and vegetables when they are in season, and freeze them for winter. You'll save money, enjoy the variety and reap health benefits, too. Frozen vegetables and fruits have just as many vitamins and minerals as fresh versions.
- 5 Keep lemons handy:** If you're not getting the best flavor from a dish, try adding a sprinkle of salt and some acid — grated lemon or lime zest, a squeeze of citrus juice or a splash of vinegar can make a dish sing.



Simple Holiday Shrimp Bake

1 lb shrimp, peeled and deveined
 3 cloves garlic, minced
 1 tbsp lemon juice
 1 tbsp olive oil
 1 tbsp unsalted butter, broken into small pieces
 Pinch each salt and pepper
 3 tbsp whole-grain panko bread crumbs
 1 tbsp Parmesan cheese
 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 400°F.

In a baking dish, combine shrimp, garlic, lemon juice, oil, butter, salt and pepper. **Mix** to coat shrimp.

In a small bowl, combine bread crumbs and cheese.

Sprinkle bread crumb mixture over shrimp. **Bake** until shrimp turn pink and opaque, about 8-12 minutes.

Sprinkle with parsley and serve with lemon wedges.



EASY recipe

Makes 4. Per serving:

194 calories | 24g protein | 8g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 4g mono fat | 1g poly fat | 4g carbohydrate | 0g sugar | 0g fiber | 298mg sodium

Staying Sane This Time of Year

Whether you have holiday plans or not, everyone faces pressure this season. Traffic, packed stores and social obligations can affect your health. Soothe body and mind 8 ways:

1. Calm your body and mind. Deep breathing, yoga and meditation reduce anxiety. So can watching a funny or heartwarming movie. Exposure to sunshine and exercise are stressbusters, too.

2. Don't shop until you drop. Create a budget and stick to it when you buy. Shop online to skip traffic and crowds.

3. Beware of overindulging. Keep in mind that overdoing it at the buffet table or cookie plate can lead to unhealthy habits that endure past the season.

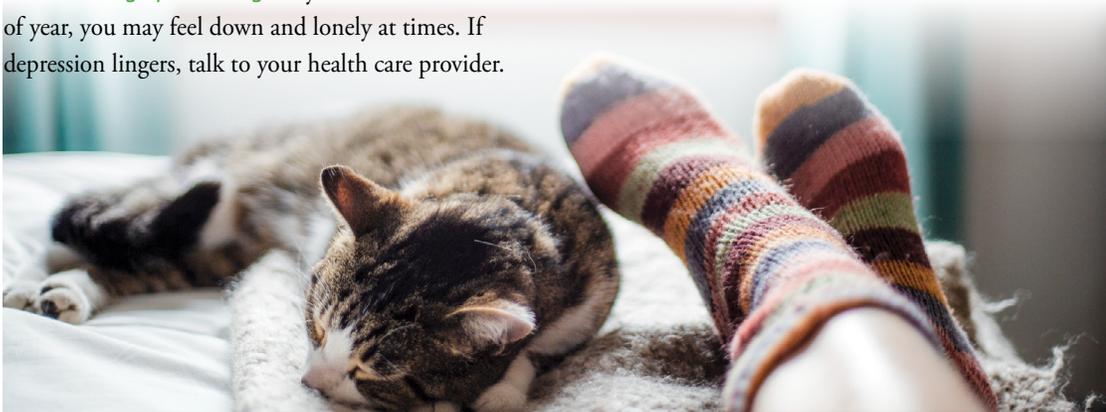
4. Acknowledge your feelings. If you're alone this time of year, you may feel down and lonely at times. If depression lingers, talk to your health care provider.

5. Don't skimp on shut-eye. Sleep deprivation can trigger depression and exhaustion.

6. Give up perfectionism. If you're hosting company at your home, stop worrying about food and décor being perfect. Instead, enjoy seeing friends and family.

7. Learn to say No. Don't feel pressured to accept every invitation. A simple "Thanks, but I won't be able to come" is sufficient.

8. Move more, not less. Avoid the temptation to cut back on exercise this time of year.



"Happiness is not a station you arrive at, but a manner of traveling."

— Margaret Lee Runbeck

Get in the slow lane.

Warning: Hurrying is dangerous to your health and safety. It's time to get out of life's fast lane and consciously slow down. Rushing to meetings and constantly multitasking can be life threatening. Distracted driving and speeding cause deadly car accidents, and hurrying is a primary cause of serious injuries from falls, according to the National Safety Council. And rushing spikes stress hormones, raising your blood pressure.

Why Are You So Tired?

If you're walking around fatigued, you're not alone. The CDC notes more than 15% of women and more than 10% of men in the U.S. regularly feel tired.

Fatigue can be a symptom of several medical conditions, including anemia, depression, seasonal affective disorder (SAD), underactive thyroid, infections, sleep apnea and heart disease. Contact your health care provider if you're consistently tired or have new, unexplained fatigue.

 **However, ongoing fatigue is most often due to our everyday lifestyle.** Inadequate sleep is a leading cause — the CDC reports that

1 in 3 American adults is regularly sleep deprived. To boost your energy and health, get 7 to 9 hours of slumber nightly, or daily if you're working night shifts. Maintaining a consistent sleep routine — going to bed and getting up at the same times — is most helpful.

 **Dehydration causes fatigue**, so drink adequate water throughout the day. **Note:** Coffee drinks can increase urination and dehydration.

Skipping meals and eating sweets  to temporarily boost energy can lead to fatigue when the sugar's high wears off. Eat healthy, regular meals for steady energy.

 **Feeling tired makes exercise seem unappealing**, but physical activity offers several benefits. It can lower stress and depression, strengthen muscles and promote sound sleep. If you're sedentary, increase physical activity slowly but consistently — and enjoy added energy.

 **Helping others can help you.** Research shows volunteering is linked to multiple health benefits, including depression relief, a lower risk for high blood pressure, and memory help. The NIH's Longitudinal Study of Aging suggests that volunteering may help you live longer, too. Ready to volunteer? Look for opportunities fitting your talents and interests through community centers, religious groups and many nonprofit organizations.



“Exercise is medicine. Literally. Just like a pill, it reliably changes brain function by altering the activity of key brain chemicals and hormones.”

— Stephen S. Ilardi

Winterize Your Exercise

Don't let chilly, dark days dampen your fitness goals. Your body needs year-round exercise, so start booking activities on your calendar every week. Try something new and have fun:

Pool classes provide a perfect warm-up plus excellent exercise routines, including lap swimming, shallow or deep-water muscle workouts, and yoga routines for improved flexibility, strength and vitality.

Indoors? You can't beat the convenience of at-home exercise to save time, money and fuss — and you're more likely to stick with it. Get a floor mat for core exercises and yoga. Try tai chi workouts. Include strength-training options. Add some music.

Outdoors? Cold weather can pose risks, including darkness, frostbite and icy pavement, but exercisers can usually avoid trouble: Check the forecast. Warm up first indoors. Cover your head and hands and bundle up in windproof, layered clothing to combat wind chill. Use reflective tape for visibility.

Partner up. Walk your dog, play soccer or ice skate with the kids. Ride a bike when the sun shines, or try snowshoeing, Nordic skiing or enjoy an invigorating jog.

Added benefit: Exercise boosts your immunity during cold and flu season. Just a few minutes a day can help prevent simple bacterial and viral infections, according to the CDC.



EXPERT advice

Q: Vitamin D test?

A: Blood tests can measure your recent vitamin D levels from foods, supplements and sunlight exposure on your skin. Routine testing is not usually necessary in adults at normal risk. But if you have factors that raise your risk for vitamin D deficiency, your health

care provider may order testing to ensure you are getting enough.

Deficiency risks: Limited sun exposure is a common cause of low vitamin D. Older age or not regularly going outdoors often limits sun exposure. Other risks for D deficiency include dark

skin, obesity and osteoporosis. Unhealthy diet or poor absorption of nutrients — as occurs in those with celiac disease or inflammatory bowel disease — can also make low vitamin D more likely. If in doubt, ask your provider if you need the test.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAPF





New Year's Resolutions: SUCCESS ALL YEAR

Use a checklist to achieve doable goals this year.

According to U.S. News & World Report, 80% of us abandon New Year's resolutions quickly — usually because we've listed pie-in-the-sky goals without thinking them through. The solution? Aim for clear goals and plan how to attain them.

Of course, yearly resolutions are personal. But these strategies can guide you toward a positive new year.

- **GET MOVING.** Aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week. If you miss a day or 2, don't give up. Go for a walk, skip the elevator and take the stairs. Stand up to read, text or talk on your phone.
- **MAKE HEALTHY EATING A HABIT.** Making small changes, such as eating more vegetables, drinking fewer soft drinks or substituting salads for fries, can benefit your health year-round.
- **PROTECT YOUR TECHNOLOGY.** From your smartphone to your laptop, download security and anti-virus updates and back up files regularly.
- **SET REASONABLE INVESTMENT GOALS.** Commit to saving a certain amount you can afford every month (you can always add more).
- **LEARN, PLAY, CONNECT.** Schedule time with friends, family — and yourself — to relax and enjoy life away from work.



EXPERT advice

Q: How to cope with less daylight?

A: Unless you live near the equator, you experience fewer daylight hours in the winter, which can mean difficulties with sleep, energy and mood. What strategies work best?

Stay physically active — especially early in the day and outdoors, if possible.

Consider checking your vitamin D levels (see “Q&A: Vitamin D test?” on page 4). With less sunlight, your body may not be making enough of this key nutrient.

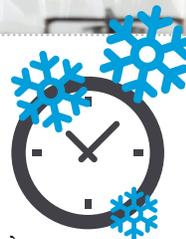
Light it up. Sit near a window or add artificial sunlight with a full-spectrum lamp. Maintain a

healthy diet. Resist the temptation to eat more carbs or sweets, or to use more caffeine or alcohol.

Get out of town. If you have the chance to take a break in a sunnier climate, it may reinvigorate you.

If you are still struggling to adjust, consult your health care provider about other possible treatments. Also ask about **seasonal affective disorder (SAD)**, which occurs in winter.

— Eric Endlich, PhD



Nothing's better than the wind to your back, the sun in front of you, and your friends beside you.

— Aaron Douglas Trimble

Haven't had your flu shot yet?



December 1 to 7

is **Influenza Vaccination Week**, and the CDC urges

everyone who hasn't yet been vaccinated against the flu this year to get a shot now. It's best to get the flu shot by the end of October, but if you missed that window, get it now. While most people recover from the flu, it can lead to health problems, hospitalization and even death. Learn more at cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/nivw/index.htm.



Secure Credit Cards

Secure credit cards are backed by collateral in a savings account opened at the financial institution that issues the card.

Some details:

- 1 **Banks offering secured credit cards** typically charge an application fee and require a deposit of \$500 to \$1,000 into a savings account.
- 2 **The person** then receives a credit limit in the same amount on a bank credit card.
- 3 **The savings balance** cannot be withdrawn while the card is used.
- 4 **The deposit** is refunded (with a small amount of interest) when the credit card balance is paid off and the account is closed.

Scams abound in this market, so make sure you choose a reputable institution. Also, shop for the lowest account fees.



“The mint makes it first; it is up to you to make it last.”

— Evan Esar

safety solutions

TOPSAFETY'S Annual Safe Gift Guide

December is Safe Toys & Celebrations Month.



You can't go wrong offering your loved ones and good friends the gift of safety. Here are some ideas:



For the traveler:

- **A hidden money belt**, neck stash or travel scarf (contains a secret pocket to stash money, credit cards and keys).
- **A virtual private network (VPN)** to provide public Wi-Fi or hotspot protection while traveling.
- **An RFID-blocking** passport or credit card sleeve.

For the homebody:

- **A sturdy and decorative fireplace screen** to help keep embers in check.
- **A portable multipurpose fire extinguisher**.
- **Emergency blackout lights** that automatically come on when electricity goes out.



For the driver:

- **Wearable anti-fatigue monitors and apps** can keep drivers awake via an alarm system, including one that alerts the driver's friends or family to send a wake-up call.
- **Phone-locking apps** prevent drivers from texting, emailing and surfing while driving. This is a great gift for teen drivers who need to disconnect from their phones and connect with the road.



LOST in the City

Driving to unknown parts this holiday season? Know your destination before you leave. But what if your cell phone dies and you don't have GPS or a map? Or you get turned around? Here's how to get you back on track:

IF YOU GET LOST:

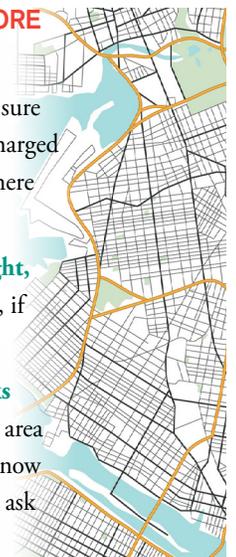
- ✓ **If the area looks safe** and there are plenty of businesses and people around, get help at a nearby business.
- ✓ **Look for public transit stops.** They usually have street maps that might provide directions.
- ✓ **Do not flash around a wad of money, expensive jewelry or cell phones.** Carry cards and money close to your body in a hidden pocket or money belt.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF IN AN UNSAFE AREA:

- ✓ **Don't get out of the car;** ask a police officer for directions.
- ✓ **Act like you know** what you are doing until you get your bearings.
- ✓ **Don't play hero.** If asked for money or valuables, give them up. It's better to lose possessions than lose your life.

BEST ADVICE BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

- ✓ **Plan a route**, make sure your cell phone is charged and tell someone where you are going.
- ✓ **Travel in the daylight**, and travel in groups, if possible.
- ✓ **Look for landmarks** before you leave the area so you can at least know where you were and ask for directions back.



Chronic pain can interfere with all aspects of life. It can lead to insomnia, impaired physical activity, isolation and depression. The most common chronic pain conditions are arthritis, back of neck, joint and nerve pain, and migraine.

PAIN RELIEF: Drug-Free Strategies

Fortunately, we now have several strategies for relieving chronic pain — beyond medications that may compromise your health. For chronic pain, consult your health care provider or seek the advice of a pain management specialist regarding your pain therapy options, such as the following:

Physical and occupational therapies

can be great allies in fighting your pain. Physical therapists guide you through mild exercise routines that help improve your strength and mobility.

Occupational therapists teach you how to perform everyday activities in ways that don't aggravate your pain.



Yoga and tai chi have been successful in reducing or controlling pain from many conditions, including backache, headache, arthritis and lingering injuries. Movements emphasize strengthening the back and core muscles.



Massage therapy is especially effective for reducing muscular backache and pain from surgeries and injuries as it relieves stress and anxiety.



Mind-body techniques, such as meditation and breathing exercises, can help you manage how you perceive your pain. Negative thoughts and stress aggravate pain.

Learning to regard your pain in a calmer way can reduce anxiety that otherwise would increase pain.

Acupuncture hair-thin needles may stimulate nerves in the body to help override your pain from a variety of conditions. Results have been mixed.

Who has chronic pain?

Results of a 6-month study of U.S. adults in 2016 showed an estimated 50 million (20%) had **chronic pain** and 19.6 million (8%) had **high-impact chronic pain**. High-impact pain results in limited life or work activities on most days or every day. Both types of pain are more prevalent in women, older adults, unemployed adults, adults living in poverty, adults with less than a high school education, and adults with public health insurance.

PRACTICAL HABITS for Chronic Pain

- ❖ **Gentle cardio exercise** can boost endorphin brain chemicals that help block pain signals. 
- ❖ **Protect your sleep quality** (e.g., alcohol and stress aggravate sleep problems).
- ❖ **Quit smoking** as it can cause circulation problems and worsen your pain.
- ❖ **You can learn** pain-reducing techniques from a support group.
- ❖ **Track your pain level** and activities every day.
- ❖ **Eat a well-balanced diet.** It's essential to feeling stronger.

The success of pain relief therapies is individual — one size doesn't fit all. More pain management research is happening, and it's especially focused on how treatments can impact specific pain conditions.

Pain researchers see the best results when treatments are prescribed after a thorough evaluation of each individual, often using a combination of therapies that can lead to improving your day-to-day quality of life.

DR. ZORBA'S corner

Sitting is the new smoking —

a thought I agree wholeheartedly with, but a recent study from Columbia University shows that **not all sitting is equal**. Research following 3,500 people for nearly 9 years showed that sitting in front of the TV increased the risk of a heart attack and death by nearly 50%. By contrast, those who had sedentary jobs didn't have this same risk. What does this mean?

Too much time in front of the tube is especially harmful to your health. Get up and move as often as possible. Set your phone to remind you every 20 minutes.

— Zorba Paster, MD



December Fill-in-the-Blank Puzzle

Find out how well you know the topics covered in this issue of the newsletter.

- 1 An example of moderate-intensity exercise is _____ . (2 words)
- 2 Wash your hands with soap and warm or cold water for at least _____ seconds.
- 3 Choose a _____ cutting board made from resin, marble or glass for cutting meat poultry and seafood.
- 4 The CDC notes more than _____ of women and more than _____ of men in the U.S. regularly feel tired. (2 words)
- 5 Unless you live near the _____, you experience fewer daylight hours in the winter, which can mean difficulties with sleep, energy and mood.
- 6 The NIH's Longitudinal Study of Aging suggests that _____ may help you live longer.
- 7 It's best to get the flu shot by the end of _____.
- 8 _____ are backed by collateral in a savings account opened at the financial institution that issues the card. (3 words)

Stay in Touch. Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

Phone: 800-871-9525 • Fax: 205-437-3084 • Email: PBeditor@ebix.com

Website: personalbest.com and hopehealth.com

Executive Editor: Susan Cottman

Advisers: Patricia C. Buchsel, RN, MSN, FAAN; Jamie Lynn Byram, MBA, AFC, MS; Eric Endlich, PhD; Mary P. Hollins, MS, JD, CSHM; Kenneth Holtyn, MS; Reed Humphrey, PhD; Gary B. Kushner, SPHR, CBP; Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus; Zorba Paster, MD; Charles Stuart Platkin, PhD; Cara Rosenbloom, RD; Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAFP; Margaret Spencer, MD

Editor: Airmie Miller • Designer: Sheila Brooks

The content herein is in no way intended to serve as a substitute for professional advice. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet or exercise, talk to your health care provider. Sources available on request. © 2019 Ebix Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction in any form of any part of this publication is a violation of federal copyright law and is strictly prohibited. Personal Best® and Hope Health® are registered trademarks of Ebix Inc. Two Perimeter Park South, Suite 160 East, Birmingham, AL 35243 • Please recycle.



You'll find the answers at personalbest.com/extras/Dec2019puzzle.pdf.