

BETTER HEALTH



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Health Tip

Beware of the “health halo” effect when choosing healthier food items at a restaurant. Cornell researchers found that people who chose a healthier sandwich or entrée often “rewarded” their choice by ordering a large fry or a larger soft drink which negated the “good” of the healthier food. Studies consistently show that people who think their meal is healthy are more likely to add unhealthy side dishes, drinks, and desserts, resulting in consuming more than twice as many additional calories.

Be mindful that you don’t also attach a “health halo” to an entire restaurant. If you are eating at a place that has healthier food items, you may assume that all the food choices are good for you. Pay attention to calorie counts on menus and be mindful of the number of calories you are consuming.

Eat Foods that Can Lower Blood Pressure

Adding certain foods to your diet can help you lower your blood pressure. Here are just a few examples of foods to eat.

Fruits high in potassium

Bananas, oranges, cantaloupe, apricots, and cherries can help manage mildly high blood pressure. Potassium relaxes the walls of the blood vessels, lowering blood pressure and protecting against muscle cramping.



Oily fish

Studies report modest reductions in blood pressure in people who eat oily fish with omega-3 several times per week. That would include fish such as salmon, sardines, mackerel, and albacore tuna. Evidence suggests that the benefits of oily fish may be greater for people with moderate to severe high blood pressure than for those with slightly elevated blood pressure.

Leafy green vegetables

Leafy green vegetables are rich in nitrates, which help manage blood pressure. Research suggests that eating at least one cup of green leafy vegetables per day can lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Natural yogurt

A 2021 study looked at data for people with and without high blood pressure to see whether there was a link between fermented dairy products and hypertension. The participants with high blood pressure who consumed more yogurt had lower systolic blood pressure and lower arterial pressure than those who did not.

While some foods may relieve hypertension, others can increase the risk. Some foods to avoid include:

- Salt
- Caffeine
- Alcohol
- Processed foods

Source: Medical News Today, Harvard Health, British Heart Foundation



Loneliness Affects the Brain

We all may experience passing moments of loneliness during our lifetimes, but when loneliness becomes chronic or severe, the long-term effects can be detrimental to our health.

Loneliness Can Contribute to Cognitive Decline

Social interactions keep our brains stimulated. Living in solitude does the opposite. In a study of more than 11,000 people, scientists found that those who reported high levels of social isolation had above-average decline in cognitive function when it came to tests of memory recall.

Loneliness May Make Us Pessimistic

Researchers have found that hostility often emerges as a defense mechanism because lonely people fear further rejection. Unfortunately, that fear doesn't encourage seeking companionship, but instead leads to pushing people further away. Researchers call this a "self-reinforcing loop" of feeling lonely, criticizing friendships, and isolating from others.

Feeling Lonely May Make Us Less Likely to Trust Others

Lonely people, who often become hyper-vigilant to potential rejection, develop higher levels of distrust in others. "This is one of the more worrisome signs of loneliness – when you're paranoid that people you don't even know are out to give you a hard time. It's a sign you've spent too much time alone," says Jacqueline Olds, MD, a psychiatry consultant at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Here are ideas for staying connected:

- Volunteer. As you work with others for a common cause, doing so will give you a sense of purpose and you'll feel better helping others.
- Make a "stay in touch calendar" with reminders to regularly reach out to family and friends either in-person, by video chat, or by phone.
- Go for walks or consider adopting a dog to walk with you (a dog can get you outside your house). During your walks you may run into neighbors also out for a stroll. Strike up a conversation even if it's just about the weather.

Source: *Everyday Health and Journals of Gerontology*

Don't Go Nuts Over Nutella

Nutella is available in more than 160 countries and has become an international household name. As a result, a jar of Nutella is sold every 2.5 seconds. You may think it's a healthier food item because it contains nuts, but hazelnuts only account for 13% of the product and is the third ingredient behind sugar and palm oil. In fact, a two-tablespoon serving of Nutella contains 1.6 tablespoons of sugar!

Based on the American Heart Association's sugar consumption recommendations, that means a woman or a child would be close to their daily sugar limit after consuming just two tablespoons of Nutella.

Consuming too much added sugar has been linked to a variety of chronic diseases and conditions, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, liver disease, cognitive decline and even some types of cancers, including esophageal cancer. Plus, added sugar may be one of the driving factors behind the surge in childhood obesity.

A healthier breakfast alternative to spreading Nutella on a bagel or toast is to use peanut butter.

Compare the differences between two Tablespoons of Nutella and 2 Tbsps. of Jif creamy peanut butter:

| 2 Tbsp Serving | Nutella | Jif |
|----------------|---------|--------|
| Calories | 200 | 190 |
| Fat | 12 g | 16 g |
| Saturated Fat | 4 g | 3 g |
| Sodium | 15 mg | 150 mg |
| Carbohydrates | 22 g | 7 g |
| Fiber | 1 g | 2 g |
| Sugar | 21 g | 3 g |
| Protein | 2 g | 7 g |

Source: *Healthline.com*



Food for Thought

Tart cherry juice may help you get a more peaceful night's rest. Two small studies about the effectiveness of tart cherry juice saw increases in sleep efficiency after participants consumed tart cherry juice for 7-14 consecutive days. The researchers noted that while the juice will not immediately put you to sleep, it may help you sleep longer once you are asleep.



The reason is that all cherries contain melatonin, a chemical known to induce sleepiness and prevent insomnia. Tart cherries (aka sour cherries – particularly the Montmorency variety) have notably higher levels of melatonin. They also contain a chemical that inhibits the deterioration of tryptophan – another factor contributing to more restful sleep.

If you are thinking of trying tart cherry juice as a natural sleep aid, experts advise checking with your doctor especially if you have diabetes. Many cherry juice brands have high concentrations of sugar and other sweeteners to reduce the bitterness of the cherries. Experts also recommend that you don't count on cherry juice as being the "magic pill" for your sleep, but rather include it as a part of the larger picture of healthy sleeping habits such as limiting alcohol and caffeine and blue light screen time hours before bedtime.

Source: *Cleveland Clinic*

Money Management

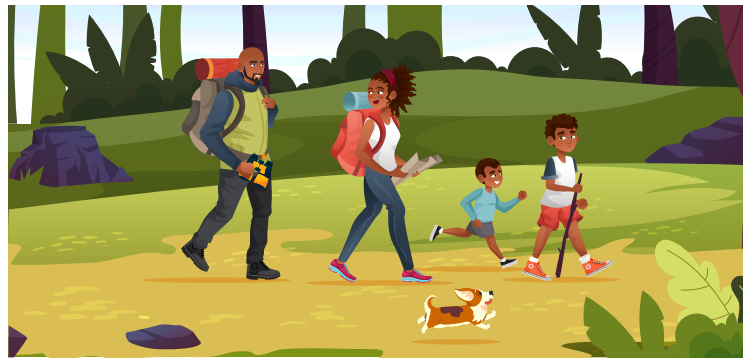
Two very small studies highlight how caffeine consumption may influence your spending habits – something to be aware of when trying to maintain your budget.

The first study involved 300 shoppers at a retail store: 150 were given caffeinated coffee and another 150 were given decaf coffee or water. The participants consumed their beverage prior to shopping, and then afterwards, showed their receipts to researchers. On average, the shoppers who drank caffeinated coffee spent 50% more, and most of those extra purchases were splurges for non-essential items.

The second small study involved 200 college students: half drank caffeinated coffee and the other half decaf. The students were then given a list of 66 products and asked which items they would like to purchase. The decaf participants chose mainly practical items, but the caffeinated students chose impulse purchases at higher rates than the decaf group.

Lead researcher Dr. Dipayan Biswas, PhD, explained caffeine's effect on shopping, "Caffeine, as a powerful stimulant, releases dopamine in the brain, which excites the mind and the body. This leads to a higher energetic state, which in turn enhances impulsivity and decreases self-control."

Source: *Journal of Marketing and Readers Digest*



Physical Activity and Health

Those who make time for daily exercise tend to be happier, healthier, more confident, and are better able to maintain a healthier body weight over the long term. Specifically, physical activity/exercise can:

- **Improve Self Worth** – Research concludes that people who exercise regularly report higher self-worth, have fewer negative thoughts about themselves, and they display greater levels of confidence which positively impacts all areas of their life (such as work, social, and their personal life).
- **Soothe Pain** – The American Journal of Cardiology notes that the best way to overcome chronic pain is to get moving. In fact, medical researchers recommend moderate and gentle daily exercise (such as walking or swimming) for both the short- and long-term management of pain.
- **Act as a Natural Antidepressant** – An American Medical Association study monitored and compared a group of depression sufferers taking antidepressant medications vs. a group of non-medicated participants. The study revealed that participants who did daily aerobic exercise experienced similar – and in some cases longer – improvement in their depression as those who took medication.

Source: *active.beat.com*

Did You Know

Regular marijuana use may increase the risk of heart disease. New research by the American College of Cardiology found that people who use marijuana regularly are 34% more likely to develop coronary artery disease than those who never use the drug. The research used data from the *All of Us Research Program* which included health information and habits of 175,000 people.

Marijuana impacts cardiovascular health due to cannabinoids – a chemical found in marijuana that can cause an increase in heart rate and causes the sympathetic nervous system to become overly active. That prolonged stress to blood vessels and arteries may lead to developing chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis, or a heart attack.

Source: *health.com and National Institutes of Health*



Editor's Pulse *by Steve Gruenwald*

Words for the Soul and Body

Graduations and weddings often create an opportunity for guests to submit words of advice for how to get along with others or how to have a lasting marriage. My words of wisdom don't count for much, so I've started to share the words of One who has far more wisdom than any person can ever obtain. They're the words from Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Learning to forgive takes work because forgiveness doesn't come naturally. As a result of our sinful natures, forgiveness is not a part of our genetic makeup. Our human nature is more inclined to get even, or hold a grudge, or withhold forgiveness until a certain amount of penance has been paid by the offender. God, on the other hand, out of His goodness, grace, and mercy forgives us of all our sins. That's the example of forgiveness God sets before us: He desired for us to live with Him in His kingdom and then removed the yolk of sin that would have prevented that from happening. It's only after we recognize our own need for forgiveness and rejoice in that forgiveness that we can begin – with God's help – to forgive others.

We may have the perfect model of how to forgive and know what it means to be forgiven, but forgiving others doesn't come

as easily. C.S. Lewis said it best, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive."

I'm sure it won't surprise you to hear that the ability to forgive improves your health, your relationships, and your outlook on life. A study recorded in the *Journal of Adult Development* found that those who were able to forgive were more satisfied with their lives and less likely to report feelings of nervousness, restlessness, or sadness. Every time a person thinks of his/her transgressor, the body responds: blood pressure and heart rate increases; facial muscles tense; stress hormones kick in; and over time, that revved up condition takes its toll by affecting the immune and cardiovascular systems. Forgiveness, on the other hand, reduces stress.

Forgiving others is not a sign of weakness but of strength. Forgiveness takes courage and a determination to let go of events and situations that can preoccupy our minds and drag us down. It doesn't mean that you won't ever recall the hurt and the events of the past, you simply will choose not to dwell there.

Learning to forgive is not easy, nor is it something that is mastered right away. There's a very good chance we will be working on that education for the rest of our earthly lives!



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