

# BETTER HEALTH

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## Did You Know?

Research suggests that fiber may protect the brain from dementia. The study involved approximately 3,700 healthy adults, ages 40 to 64, who completed routine dietary surveys for 16 years.

Researchers monitored the participants for two decades to see which ones developed dementia. The study revealed that people who consumed the most daily fiber had the lowest rates of dementia. The reverse also was true – those who ate the least amount of fiber had the highest rates.

**Source:** Harvard Health Publishing

## Money Matters

Using autopay to pay your bills is convenient: you can avoid late fees and you don't have to take the time each month to pay bills. The downside is that you may also forget about those payments and the fact that they do matter for your budget. Good budgeting is knowing how much money you have coming in (income) and knowing where it's going (expenses). When you write a check or complete an online bill-pay form, you are more aware of the expenditure.

If you use autopay, be sure to check your transactions at least once a month to make sure the charges are accurate. That check-in also helps register in your mind where your money is going. Finally, don't forget to include all those autopay transactions in your budget to help keep you on track.



## Food for Thought

Certain foods can help with depression. For example, bananas can help enhance your mood because they help with the production of serotonin – a chemical needed for nerve cells and for the brain to function. Similarly, oatmeal, eggs, chicken, and peanuts can calm the brain and improve mood and sleep.

**Source:** Healthline



## Alcohol Guidelines May Be Too Generous

For years the alcohol consumption guidelines have been two drinks a day for men, and one drink for women. More recent studies are showing those amounts may be too much. Even moderate drinking can raise the risk of cancer, heart attacks, and dementia. In fact, just one drink per day increases the risk of heart attack and stroke by 10-20%.

Research also suggests that alcohol ages the brain more quickly. Researchers studied MRIs of more than 36,000 middle-aged adults and compared the scans with their reported alcohol intake. After grouping the subjects by average daily alcohol intake - from none to two beers or glasses of wine or more a day - the researchers found the more alcohol consumed was associated with a more pronounced decline in brain volume, regardless of other factors.

According to the American Cancer Society, alcohol contributes to more than 75,000 new cancer cases per year in the U.S. and is attributed to 19,000 annual cancer deaths. Alcohol is a direct cause of several types of cancer including liver, breast, colorectal, throat, and larynx. Alcohol liver disease alone kills 22,000 Americans every year.

While the consumption guidelines haven't changed just yet, doctors are encouraging people to cut back on alcoholic drinks to stay below the minimum number of drinks per week.

**Source:** *The Week*

## Sneaky Snacks

You may want to avoid these snacks that may seem harmless – they may even sound healthy – but instead may work against your best efforts to be well:

**Pretzels:** You may think twice about eating them if you pictured them as being made out of sugar. That's basically what you're eating with this refined-carb product that has no nutrients or health benefits.

**Veggie Chips and Straws:** Don't let the word "veggie" convince you they are healthy. You're still eating

## Decline the Detox

Detoxing your body is a popular health fad, but don't believe the hype. Detox diets don't work and aren't necessary. The sell from marketers is that if you follow their specific diet or use their special products you can rid your body of toxins and therefore improve your health and help you lose weight. The detox market is estimated to be worth more than \$51 billion dollars, yet there is little scientific evidence to back up detox product claims.



Most nutritionists and health experts don't believe in detoxes. "Our body has a natural detoxification process in our liver, kidneys, and digestive system," says Tara Collingwood, RDN. "There is no need to 'detox' and give our organs a chance to rest. They are made to work all the time to keep our bodies healthy."

**God created your body to do its own detoxifying naturally. You can optimize your body's natural detoxification capabilities by following these healthy habits:**

- **Limit alcohol:** Your liver metabolizes more than 90% of the alcohol you consume. Excessive drinking can severely damage your liver function by causing fat buildup, inflammation, and scarring. When this happens, your liver can't function adequately and perform its tasks of filtering waste and other toxins from your body.
- **Drink more water:** Being well hydrated allows your body's natural detoxification system to properly remove waste products from your blood. Water removes those waste products through urination, breathing, and sweating.
- **Reduce your intake of sugar**  
A high consumption of sugar through sugary beverages and sweets can cause fatty liver disease, a condition that negatively impacts liver function.

**Source:** *Everyday Health and Healthline*

something fried in oil that causes you to consume saturated and trans fat. Plus, most veggie chips and straws have the same amount of calories as regular potato chips.

**Dried Fruit:** once dried, the fruit shrinks making the sugar more concentrated. That shrinkage also means you may eat more fruit than you typically would increasing the calorie count.

**Pre-made smoothies:** Even if they contain some fruit juice, most are packed with added sugar driving up the calorie count to equal that of a meal.

**Source:** *Prevention*

## Extra Weight Cuts Years Off of Life

Obesity has been found to take several years off of a person's life. Based on a life expectancy of 85 years, nonsmokers who were 10 to 30 pounds overweight at age 40 shortened their life-span three to seven years, according to data from the Framingham Heart Study. Smokers lost as many as 13.5 years, the study found.



Other studies have found that being young and overweight knocks off even more years. A study led by researchers at the University of Alabama found that being obese beginning at age 20 can take up to 20 years off of a person's life. The reason younger people are more vulnerable to obesity's health effects is because there is more time for the disease to take its toll.

If you are an active member of the Concordia Health Plan you have several free health solutions designed to help you maintain or lose weight:

- **Wondr** takes a common-sense, skill-building approach to lasting weight loss, and it doesn't include starving, counting calories or eating diet food.
- **Omada** is a 16-week digital health program that helps members who are at risk for developing diabetes and cardiovascular disease adopt behavioral changes.
- **Virta** is a treatment clinically proven to reverse type 2 diabetes – patients reduce their blood sugar and A1c, while removing diabetes medications and losing weight.

More information about these and other programs to help you be well so that you can serve well can be found at [ConcordiaPlans.org](https://www.concordiahealthplan.org).

## A Little Goes a Long Way

Here's good news if you struggle to find time to exercise: Compared to being sedentary, just 11 minutes of exercise each day can reduce your risk of early death and help prevent heart disease, stroke, and some cancers.

That's the finding from a recent study published by the British Journal of Sports Medicine that looked at data from 196 published articles to show the health impact of exercise. Compared to a sedentary lifestyle, those exercising 11 minutes per day were 17% less likely to develop cardiovascular disease and 7% less likely to develop cancer.

The news gets even better for those who exercise for 30 minutes each day: a 27% lower risk of cardiovascular disease and a 12% lower risk of developing cancer.

### This review confirms findings from other studies:

- that higher levels of exercise are associated with lower rates of hospitalization for certain conditions, such as diabetes and stroke.
- that more than 100,000 yearly deaths could be prevented if people committed to adding just 10 minutes of exercise to their daily routines.

God created our bodies to move, and exercise keeps the body well-tuned. Exercise helps lower inflammation, decreases fat tissue, and helps with hormone regulation and sleep. Exercise also greatly improves quality of life by helping you feel less stressed, depressed, or anxious.

**Source:** [Health.com](https://www.health.com)

## Health Myths Meet Reality

In the quest to stay healthy, ward off diseases, or simply to look healthier, we may be swayed by products that promise amazing results. Sometimes the claims aren't true.

**MYTH** – Collagen drinks and supplements improve your skin, nails, and hair.

**REALITY** – Collagen is a major structural protein found in skin, hair, and nails to maintain skin elasticity, volume, and moisture. It also helps make up proteins that form skin, hair, and nails. According to Harvard Medical School's review of studies about collagen, there isn't enough proof to show that taking collagen pills or drinks will make a difference in your skin, hair, or nail health.

**MYTH** – A daily multivitamin improves health and prevents cancer and cardiovascular disease.

**REALITY** – Johns Hopkins researchers reviewed evidence including three studies involving nearly 450,000 people and found that a daily multivitamin doesn't provide any meaningful health benefit. Their analysis found that multivitamins did not reduce the risk for heart disease or cancer; they did not reduce the risk for mental decline such as memory loss or slowed thinking; nor did they help prevent an early death. Nutrition experts recommend using the money you would normally spend on vitamins to instead buy healthy foods such as fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.

**Source:** [Johns Hopkins Medicine](https://www.jhu.edu/) and [Harvard Health Publishing](https://www.harvard.edu/)



## Editor's Pulse *by Steve Gruenwald*

### One Size Doesn't Fit All

To maintain or improve your weight, how much you eat is important. That can be a challenge given the serving sizes at most restaurants. To differentiate: a serving is the amount of food the restaurant has decided to put on your plate. A portion is the amount that you choose to eat from that serving based on your body's needs and cues.

Here's a way to help remember the difference between serving size and portion size. "S" is for serving, but it's also for standard, and in this case, the standard size a particular restaurant regularly serves. "P" is for portion, but it is also stands for personal. Choosing the portion – how much of the serving you eat – is a personal decision based on your age, sex, weight, height, metabolism, and activity level.

According to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, the serving sizes in America's restaurants have doubled or tripled in the last 20 years which is a key factor contributing to high obesity rates among adults. American adults are eating an average of 300 more calories per day than they were in 1985, and as a result, the U.S. adult obesity rate has risen from 15% of the population in 1980 to more than 42% now.

Don't assume that the serving on your plate is a well-measured, healthy amount. That's when the "P" (as in portion

and personal) comes into play. Consider using the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) dietary guidelines which are intended to help you eat a healthy portion. For example, your meat portion (chicken breast, steak, fish, etc.) should be three to four ounces or about the size and thickness of the palm of your hand. Start with that amount as your baseline and then add those other personal factors: What other meals (and the calories from those meals) have you already consumed or will consume for the day? How active have you been or will be?

Perhaps we should add something else to the "P" in addition to portion and personal – you have the power to choose how much you eat. Make the healthy decision by splitting a meal with your spouse or a friend. Request a to-go box as soon as you place your order and divide the meal when it comes. Order a smaller appetizer instead of an entrée as your meal. Lots of social norms surround eating in public, so don't be swayed by how any of these suggestions may look to the server or others at your table. Lead by example and take control of the situation to be a good steward of the body entrusted to your care. Your body will thank you for it.



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