



If you've ever jogged or taken a brisk walk after a stressful day, chances are your mood improved along with your body's release of tension. But the mental health benefits of exercise go beyond short-term effects.

Physically active people tend to be less depressed than inactive people, according to population-based research. Clinical studies have shown regular exercise can significantly reduce depressive symptoms in patients, sometimes better than antidepressant medication. Early evidence also suggests exercise may relieve anxiety and reduce panic attacks, while vigorous exercise has helped people quit smoking.

10 Ways to Lose 10 Pounds



Dropping 1 to 2 pounds per week is a healthy rate of weight loss and may help your body adjust to the changes without slowing your metabolism. Plan the first few weeks of your weight loss in detail. Create exercise routines and menus to keep you on track until they're automatic. Here are some guidelines:

- 1. Use the 500 Formula to lose 1 pound a week.** Cut 500 calories a day by using an extra 250 calories with exercise and by consuming 250 fewer calories (such as skipping a fancy coffee drink and cookie).
- 2. Avoid keeping** high-calorie, high-fat and sugary snacks at home and at work. Snack on fruit instead.
- 3. Aim for 30 minutes of cardio exercise** (walking, biking or swimming) most every day. Get your provider's okay first, if you're not used to regular workouts.
- 4. Keep a food and fitness journal.** Record everything you eat and drink to learn your true intake and any eating patterns to avoid. Log in your exercise, too.



Making Sense of Vitamin D



Could you be D-deficient? Vitamin D is a hormone produced by the body in response to sunlight. It also occurs in fatty fish such as salmon and is added to some foods such as milk and orange juice. If your D level is low, you most likely wouldn't notice any symptoms. Factors that may lead to deficiency:

- Darker skin may absorb less sunshine to make vitamin D.
- After age 50 our skin tends to make less D.
- Unhealthy kidneys are less able to convert vitamin D.
- People with milk allergies or lactose intolerance may consume less D.
- People who live north of the line connecting San Francisco and Philadelphia.

Supplements and safety – Heavy doses of vitamin D may lead to excess calcium in the blood that can damage the blood vessels, heart and kidneys. In response, the Institute of Medicine has set a safety limit of 4000 IU per day. **Best advice:** Consult your health care provider before exceeding your daily requirement.

“Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises.” – Demosthenes

- 5. Keep moving throughout the day.** Add household chores, stretching and walking breaks to boost your metabolism and energy.
- 6. Include strength building 2 to 3 days a week.** It helps build and protect your lean body mass and boost metabolism.
- 7. Skip sugary and alcoholic beverages** that can add hundreds of empty calories.
- 8. Drink plenty of water,** before, during and after exercise and before meals so you don't confuse hunger for real thirst.
- 9. Avoid skipping meals.** And make sure your food tastes *good*.
- 10. If you see no progress in 3 to 4 weeks,** consult your health care provider, a personal trainer or registered dietitian.



With some dedication, you can adopt these habits for a long and healthy life.



Get-Fit Gifts for Everyone



A top gift pick to consider is one of the wireless fitness tracking devices. These packable tools can monitor steps walked, heart rate, and calories in and out all day long. Some of these monitors can easily slip into a pocket or clip onto a waistband. More gift ideas:

- > **Pocket diet and exercise journal** – a winning tool for weight watchers who enjoy recording the details of their progress.
- > **Resistance bands** – great for muscle training, ideal for travelers or at-home exercisers who don't have much workout space.
- > **Free weights** – beyond dumbbells, check out sandbells or kettlebells.
- > **Sports bag** – from fashionable to no-nonsense, and always useful.
- > **Lessons** – for yoga, tennis, golf, dancing, skiing – you name it.

- > **Personal blender** – for mixing energizing smoothies.
- > **Wearable gear** – comfortable, fun tanks, shorts, leggings and windbreakers.
- > **Exercise DVDs** – for convenient at-home workouts, everything from yoga, dance and core exercise to stretching and strengthening for all ages and fitness levels.
- > **Exercise floor mat** – a must for Pilates, stretching or yoga.

- > **Personal trainer session** – an excellent way to identify and tailor a fitness plan.
- > **Green tea gift bag** – nothing like a soothing cup of tea to help folks relax.



No matter what you choose, a gift that raises health awareness is a gift that can last a lifetime.

Physical Therapy 101

Physical therapy (PT) can literally put your life back in motion. It is used to treat many debilitating conditions ranging from arthritis to back pain. The best results with PT include pain relief and improved mobility, and it often helps avoid surgery.

Physical therapists use exercise, manual therapy, education, and applications such as heat, cold and electrical stimulation. People of all ages, from newborns to the very elderly, benefit from physical therapy.



Depending on your condition, your therapy may focus on preventing or correcting problems that affect:

- muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones (musculoskeletal system).
- nerves and related muscles (neuromuscular system).
- heart and related blood vessels (cardiovascular system).
- lungs and breathing (pulmonary system).
- skin wounds or burns.

The keys to success: Seek help early before the problem worsens, and follow your therapist's directions. If you find your PT exercises become a little tedious, focus on the potential rewards – less pain and more strength and flexibility to lead a healthier, fuller life.



Eating for ENERGY

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

If holiday parties and round-the-clock cheer leave you feeling a little sluggish, it's a great time to steer your choices toward whole foods that supply long-lasting energy.



Just as cars rely on gasoline to run smoothly, people rely on food to provide the body with fuel. Energy in foods is measured in units called calories. And while all foods contain calories, some are more high-powered than others – just like regular vs. premium gasoline.

What about sugar? Foods that mostly contain sugar will provide a quick burst of energy, but as soon as your body burns through it, you'll feel sleepy again and crave more sugar. It's a vicious cycle.

For ultimate endurance, choose foods that contain fiber and protein instead. These 2 vital nutrients are digested slowly, so they provide a steady stream of energy and leave us feeling full longer. **Bonus:** Protein also stimulates brain cells to help us feel more alert.

Add high-fiber vegetables, fruit and whole grains to protein choices, including:

- Lean meat and poultry
- Fish
- Greek yogurt
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Legumes

These foods also contain B-vitamins and magnesium, which are required to release energy from carbohydrates.

Fatigue and a lack of energy may be signs of dehydration. Often a glass of water is the best solution to restore your energy.



Smart Moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/Dec13tools.

Next Month: Top Health Hints for 2014