



How's **Your** Health?

Here's a list of some of the most important self-care measures for improving your health. Check the statements that apply to you: 7 or 8 is good, and 9 or 10 is excellent. Use the results to identify new health habits that you hope to achieve in the coming months.

- I stay within 10 to 15 pounds of my healthiest **weight**.
- I follow a schedule for preventive **screening** and **exams** with my health care provider and dentist.
- I accumulate 30 to 60 minutes of **exercise** most days of the week.
- I eat a variety of **fruits** (at least 2 cups) and **vegetables** (at least 2½ cups) daily.
- I limit red meat and other foods high in **saturated fat** to two servings a week.
- I (a) don't **smoke** or (b) have asked my provider for help quitting.
- I manage work **stress** in healthy ways, such as regular exercise.
- I feel generally **positive** about life.
- I **relax** nearly every day.
- I have a network of **friends** for mutual support and fun.
- I get seven to nine hours of **sleep** a day.

▶▶ **Remember:** It's never too late to change for the better.

Note: This is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice. Talk to your health care provider about your individual needs.



January is Glaucoma Awareness Month.

Are you at risk for glaucoma? It's an eye disease that gradually causes blindness. People at increased risk include those of African, Asian and Hispanic descent; older than age 60; with hypertension or high nearsightedness; or with a family history of the disease. The best way to protect your sight from glaucoma is to detect it early. Get tested routinely, especially if you have increased risk.

Strength Training *for Life*



You don't need to be an Olympic champion to protect muscle mass and build strength.

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) offers these guidelines for beginners:

- 1. Work each major muscle group** — chest, shoulders, arms, back, abdomen and legs. Goal: Two to three 30-minute sessions per week.
- 2. Select one or two exercises per muscle group.** To improve strength, do eight to 12 repetitions for each exercise against a resistance that's hard for you to repeat 10 times. Perform two to four sets of each exercise per workout.
- 3. Allow 48 hours before you exercise the muscle group again** (don't do the same exercise every day).
- 4. It's best for older persons and previously sedentary adults to start with light intensity exercise.**

As you gain strength, you can increase the amount of resistance as your ability to repeat the exercise increases to 15 times. For best results, consider investing in a few sessions with a personal trainer (certified by a national organization such as the ACSM at acsm.org).

▶▶ **Important:** Talk to your provider before starting a resistance exercise program if you have health problems, such as high blood pressure or diabetes.



"A healthy attitude is contagious, but don't wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier." — Tom Stoppard



Alzheimer's Update

Research is accelerating in a worldwide quest to find new treatments that stop, slow or even prevent **Alzheimer's disease** (AD), the most common form of dementia.

Investigating the disease has produced five FDA-approved AD drugs that treat symptoms and temporarily help memory and thinking in approximately half the people who take them. Researchers believe successful treatment may eventually involve a "cocktail" of medications aimed at several targets, much like treatments for AIDS and certain cancers.

Your chance of developing Alzheimer's may increase as a result of conditions that damage your heart or blood vessels, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and heart disease. Up to 80% of people with AD also have cardiovascular disease. Protecting your heart and vascular system may be the most helpful approach to protecting your brain.

Evidence also suggests exercise may directly benefit brain cells by increasing blood and oxygen flow and providing proven benefits to the cardiovascular system. *TopHealth takeaway:* Get 30 minutes of aerobic exercise several times a week.

▶▶ To learn more about AD or how you can participate in dementia research, visit the Alzheimer's Association at alz.org.



What's Eating You?

There's one vital reason why you should eat: You feel hungry. However, many people use food to cope with boredom, stress, anger or other negative emotions. This is **emotional eating**, and it can lead to gaining unwanted weight.

Hunger vs. emotional eating:

Emotions can be so tied to food that you reach for treats without realizing it. Learn to recognize the difference:

HUNGER	EMOTIONAL EATING
Occurs gradually	Comes on suddenly
You stop eating when you're full	You keep eating
Any food will do	You crave specific foods

Ask yourself:

Find out if you're an emotional eater. For one week, keep a food journal with these three columns:

1. What food I ate
2. How much I ate
3. How I felt when I ate (hungry, tired, happy, lonely, bored, etc.)

After one week, look for patterns. Do you tend to eat sweets when you feel tired? Do double chocolate chip cookies or potato chips look good whenever you're stressed? Recognizing emotional eating habits and the foods that trigger them is the first step in changing your relationship with food.

To overcome these habits:

- Tame stress with a walk or a talk with a friend rather than with food.
- Ask yourself if you're truly hungry before you reach for food.
- Don't buy your trigger junk food.
- Replace junk food with healthier foods (e.g., an apple instead of a cookie).

Sometimes emotional eating signals a more serious mental health issue such as depression. If you feel your habit is beyond your control, talk to your provider.



By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

LONGEVITY CORNER

New research published in the Archives of Internal Medicine suggests that loneliness may cause physical decay and an early death. Researchers followed more than 1,500 seniors for more than five years. They found that the lonely seniors were twice as likely as the non-lonely ones to have physical difficulties with daily tasks — cleaning, washing clothes, shopping and fixing dinner. So if you know a lonely senior, why not "friend" them (and we don't mean online)? *By Zorba Paster, MD*

Managing Stress at Work



More than 36% of workers report that they feel "stressed out" during the workday, based on the 2011 *Stress in the Workplace* survey of 1,546 U.S. workers by the American Psychological Association.

For most workers, it's the annoying, everyday hassles that make up the bulk of work stress — communication failures, poor teamwork, delays and numerous other obstacles that interfere with work.

Other stressors are harder to control. Frequent changes in technology, job insecurity and an unpredictable economy produce confusion and worry. Nevertheless, we're required to perform responsibly and effectively. That includes learning to tolerate stressors big and small. These steps may help:

- **Talk with colleagues or friends you trust** about the work issues you're facing. They may provide insights or offer ideas for coping.
- **Stay flexible.** Frequent change in the workplace is normal and potentially positive.
- **Be vigilant about your health.** Get regular exercise and plenty of sleep, and eat a healthy diet. When you feel strong, you'll cope better.
- **Believe in yourself.** When you feel uncertain about the future, recalling past achievements can help restore your confidence, hope and sense of control.

Keep your perspective. Ask yourself, *Is this thing worth stressing about?* In most cases, it won't be. When you see the difference, you can control the stress rather than let it control you.



Smart moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/jan13tools. **Next Month: Good Fats**