

JUNE 2013

## Benefits of Good Balance

**Do you seem to be losing your balance and coordination?** Maybe you feel a bit wobbly getting in and out of the bathtub, or need to walk down the stairs more slowly. It happens as we age, but your balance may be “off” for other reasons – injury, illness, poor posture, poor vision, obesity or weak core muscles.

Balance is your body’s equilibrium, or physical stability. It’s at the core of nearly every physical action you perform. In fact, building your “core” muscles – those that surround your trunk – is the key to staying strong and upright as you age. Without a strong core, you’re more likely to suffer back pain, lose your balance and fall, or be more prone to injury during exercise.



▶▶ Continued on the other side.



### Don't miss out on swimming this season.

If you or your kids haven't learned how, contact your local Red Cross chapter or municipal pool for a swimming class near you. And even if you already know how to swim, always wear a Coast Guard-approved life vest on boats, kayaks and water skis. Splish-splash your way to cool fun and fitness this summer.



## Men: Take Charge of Your Health



If you're a guy, give yourself a sporting chance to dodge health problems and feel better now. Kick off **Men's Health Week during June 11 to 17**, just before Father's Day, by adopting these practical ways to improve physical and mental fitness.

- 1. Eat for energy, pleasure and weight control.** To cut calories, just take smaller portions and skip seconds. Fill at least half your plate at every meal with fruits and vegetables.
- 2. Make exercise your best friend.** Doing cardio workouts for 150 minutes per week (e.g., brisk walking, jogging, biking or basketball) along with strength training 2 to 3 days a week can deliver significant health benefits. Household and yard chores also are good for burning calories and working your muscles.
- 3. Seek healthful ways to relieve stress.** How about a new hobby or sport to take your mind off your worries? If emotions are keeping you down, don't isolate yourself – talk with someone you trust.
- 4. Take charge of your health.** The average guy needs regular checkups and screenings to reduce risk of heart disease, cancer and other conditions. Find a health care provider you can easily talk to about your health habits and any sensitive issues that concern you.

## The ABCs of Hepatitis

**Hepatitis is inflammation of the liver caused by a virus.** The most common types are hepatitis A, B and C.

Hepatitis can produce short-term (acute) illness or lifelong disease that weakens the liver. Acute symptoms can include: fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, gray-colored stool, joint pain and jaundice.

**Hepatitis A** is acute and highly contagious. It usually improves without permanent liver damage. *Primary source:* contaminated food or water or close contact with infected people. *Vaccination available:* Yes.

**Hepatitis B** can begin as an acute infection, but for 15% to 25% of infected people the virus remains in the body, causing long-term liver problems. These can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver failure. *Primary source:* blood and body fluids of an infected person. *Vaccination available:* Yes.

**Hepatitis C** can involve a short-term illness. But 60% to 70% of infected people experience chronic liver problems, placing them at risk for cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver failure. Many people don't know that they have hepatitis C until liver damage becomes apparent years later. *Primary source:* blood and body fluids of an infected person. *Vaccination available:* No.

**See a physician without delay** if you think you may have been exposed to hepatitis.



## Help for Caregivers

Not surprisingly, caregivers experience high levels of stress. In its 2011 annual report, *Stress in America*, the American Psychological Association named caregivers as 1 of the 3 most-stressed groups in America.

As a caregiver, you may be so focused on your loved one that your health suffers. Clear signs of depression and excessive stress include:

- Feeling worried, overwhelmed and hopeless
- Feeling irritable and tired most of the time
- Withdrawing socially and losing interest in favorite activities

**Accepting help is vital.** Talk to family, a friend, a health care provider or a church leader. Consider joining a support group. Local hospitals and organizations may provide nearby classes that teach caregiver coping methods.

Every few days, make plans that get you out of the house. Take a walk or eat out with friends. In-home health personnel can visit for a few hours or a few days to relieve you. Many caregivers report that even brief respite periods help boost their mental health.

*Take the first step today.  
Don't delay getting help.*



## Benefits of Good Balance

*Continued from the other side.*

**Test your balance:** Stand on one foot with your eyes closed. If you can't hold still for at least 10 seconds without becoming wobbly, it's time for some easy balance training.

### Eyes-Closed Balance Routine

1. On one leg, arms out to each side, eyes closed, balance for 30 to 60 seconds. Switch legs and repeat.
2. On one leg, arms hugging your chest, eyes closed, balance for 30 to 60 seconds. Switch legs and repeat.

### Eyes-Open Balance Hop

1. On one leg, hop forward and back 10 times; stabilize between hops. Switch legs and repeat.
2. Same as above, but hop side to side.

*Note:* For balance routines, wear supportive shoes and keep a chair nearby to rest your hand if need be.

Balance improvement may take practice, starting with the exercises above. Additionally, do a few simple core strengthening activities 2 or 3 times a week. Get your health care provider's OK first – these activities may not be suitable for some.



## Breakfast Outside the Box

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**As a source of whole grains and fiber, some cereals can't be beat.**

And when paired with milk, you get an additional 16 essential nutrients including protein, calcium and vitamin D.



But too many people start their days with a bowl of cereal made from refined flour and packed with a whole lot of sugar. It tastes good, but it probably won't sustain you all morning.

Begin your day instead with a good combination of foods that contain fiber and protein. These 2 nutrients help fill you up and keep you going all morning. Include vegetables and fruit, whole grains and a high-protein food such as milk, yogurt, nuts or eggs. For cereal, pick one with fewer than 6 grams of sugar and at least 4 grams of fiber per 30-gram serving.

**Here are some winning ideas:**

- Oatmeal made with skim or low-fat milk, instead of water, and fruit
- Nut butter and banana wrapped in a whole-grain tortilla
- Yogurt parfait: whole-grain cereal, yogurt and fruit
- Corn tortillas rolled with black beans, tomato and reduced-fat cheddar cheese
- Scrambled eggs on whole-grain toast with raw vegetables
- Whole-grain rye crackers with hummus

**Why is breakfast so vital?** Research shows that breakfast-eaters have better memory and concentration skills, better nutrient intake for the day overall, and are better able to stay at a healthy weight than those who skip breakfast. That's food for thought.

*“Good health and good sense are two of life's greatest blessings.”*  
– Publilius Syrus

### Visit area farmers markets for the freshest in-season produce.

June crops at their best in many regions include: artichokes, asparagus, beets, bok choy, kale, nectarines, rhubarb, strawberries, scallions and spinach. Availability varies by state; to see what's freshest near you, search online starting at the Farmers Market Coalition at [farmersmarketcoalition.org](http://farmersmarketcoalition.org).



Smart Moves toolkit is at [www.personalbest.com/extras/June13tools](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/June13tools).

Next Month: Fabulous Fish