

# WELLNESS WORKS!

*Fuel for Change...Fuel for Life*

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## DIET / NUTRITION

# Ten Ways to Eat Healthier

[www.health.discovery.com](http://www.health.discovery.com)

### One Meal at a Time!

For many of us, learning to develop healthy eating habits takes a little more discipline than it does for others. But by making small changes with every meal, you can start developing healthier eating habits in no time. Here are a few small steps that can lead to giant leaps for you and your family's daily diet.

### The Power of Choice

Begin with the types of foods that you choose to buy. In most cases, you'll eat what you buy — if the cookies or chips are in the house, you'll have more of a tendency to snack on them than on a piece of fruit.

1. Start by changing the "snack ratio" in the house. Slowly and gradually have more fruit and healthier snack choices around, rather than the typical, higher-calorie junk food. For instance, have three types of fruit (apples, oranges, grapes) to replace some of the small bags of chips or candy bars. Or simply start replacing unhealthy snacks with alternative choices, such as oatmeal bars, granola bars, or peanuts and yogurt.

2. When shopping at the grocery store, spend more of your time in the outer aisles. That's where you'll find the healthier foods, such as fresh fruits, fish and vegetables, which are naturally lower in fat and cholesterol and have not been filled with sugar, salt and other preservatives that add on the pounds.

3. Begin reading the labels of the foods that you eat.



Foods that are labeled "low in fat," or "light," are not always the healthiest choice. Many times, if a product is lower in fat, it may be higher in sodium, or, if it's lower in sugar, it may be high in fat. Start reading the "Nutrition Facts" chart on the back of the box, can or bag.

It's hard to read the label of every food item while you're shopping. A better way to start is with your favorite packaged foods and snacks at home. Soon you'll start to notice the differences in the amounts of sodium, carbohydrates, sugar and calories per serving between the different foods that you've chosen. The next step is to slowly begin making adjustments in your shopping choices, and to look for alternatives with fewer calories, sodium, and fats.

### Don't get caught up in the calories

"Everyone zeroes in on the calories," says registered dietitian Claire LeBrun. "I even catch myself sometimes doing it; you gotta look at the portions and calories per serving size." The gotcha that gets a lot of consumers with the nutritional facts charts is the number of calories per serving size. Most consumers read the number of calories and assume that's the number of calories for the entire package, rather than the number of calories per serving — buyer beware.

4. Develop a healthy habit of selecting sensible-sized food portions. If your plate has a serving of rice that can't fit into the cupped palm of your hand, then, in most cases, the amount of food you've chosen is too much. Using this "cup of your hand" technique is a good way to mentally measure the amounts of foods that go onto your plate. Some people use the size of their fist as a measurement. The size of your fist, or a cupped hand, is about the same size of one measuring

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### A Letter from the Editor

It's hard to believe that a whole year has gone by since the inaugural issue of the *Wellness Works! Newsletter*. Since then the Newsletter has gotten great feedback and suggestions.

The most requested repeat topic was healthy recipes. To that end, the Wellness Council is holding another Healthy Recipe Contest. Please see page four for details.

Please continue to make comments and suggestions to help make the *Wellness Works! Newsletter* a better resource and a better newsletter.

Thank you.

## Ten Ways to Eat Healthier...continued

- cup.
- Retrain your taste buds and retrain your brain and attitude toward good food choices. The natural sweetness of an orange or apple can't compete with the sugary taste of a candy bar, but you must retrain, and relearn, the goodness of what's good for you. Start choosing to eat more fruits and vegetables as snacks or as replacements for some of the fats that you would tend to add onto your lunch tray or dinner plate — you and your taste buds will get used to it.
  - Learn basic alternatives to fattening foods. Learn to speak the second language of food — the language of healthy food:
    - Choose mustard over mayo.
    - Choose brown rice, whole wheat, rye or oat bread over white bread.
    - Choose the white meat of turkey or chicken over dark meat, red meat or pork.
    - Choose baked or broiled over fried, battered or breaded.
    - Choose water over juice and soda. Some juices contain just as many carbs and calories as a small bag of potato chips. Try slowly weaning yourself off caffeinated soda with [herbal] tea or water — have two glasses of water, or cups of tea, per every can of soda.
    - Choose low-calorie sauces and ask to have sauces and dressings served on the side.
  - Choose fat-free milk and cheese made with skim milk, as opposed to whole milk.
  - Choose vegetables as side orders over fries and chips. Steamed veggies are preferable over creamed veggies.
  - Choose to pack fruit and nuts to hold you over to the next meal, rather than opting for fast food or snacks from a vending machine. Fruits like bananas and oranges are convenient and have their own protective packaging.
  - The more color on your plate, the better. Not only does this keep things interesting and exciting for you and your taste buds, but it's healthier. The nutrients that create the different colors in our fruit and vegetables, represent different nutrients for your body. Feed your body as many varieties as possible, the fight against the common cold, cancers and other illnesses can be prevented by having variety in your diet. Trying new fruits, vegetable combinations and dinner choices will keep your family on their toes.
  - Don't skip meals (especially breakfast).
- Skipping meals, or starving your body will cause it to go into a starvation mode — it will start to hold on to fat rather than burn it. In fact, allow yourself to snack a little more, just make them healthy snacks. Your metabolism will actually pick up steam and start to burn more of what you're giving it — especially with an accompanying daily exercise program.
- Don't eat more than two and a half to three hours before bedtime. Give your body a chance to digest and burn the last fuel of the day. A lot of weight loss success stories profess this good habit as a key element to their weight loss journey.
  - Keep it all in perspective. Realize that you're making a lifestyle change, NOT going on a diet — don't put yourself in food prison. According to registered dietitian Claire LeBrun, it's about balance and listening to yourself. Ask yourself, "How has your day balanced out? What's this snack going to do for you?" We all have different schedules, and we must find what works for us individually. The types of foods you choose are just that — choices. Your goal is to keep them as choices by making the right food decisions a majority of the time. When a doctor tells you that you have to make a lifestyle change, you are no longer making it a choice.
- Learning to eat healthy doesn't happen overnight, but it can happen, and you can do it!! One meal at a time. ❖

*"Everyone zeroes in on the calories...you gotta look at the portions and calories per serving size"*

## SMART HEALTH CARE CHOICES

### Take Charge of Your Health Care

[www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov)

The single, most important thing you can do to ensure you get high quality health care is to find and use health information and take an active role in making decisions about your care.

Here are some steps you can take to improve your care:

☞ Work together with your doctor and other members of the health care team to make decisions about your care.

☞ Be sure to talk with your doctor. Here are some examples of questions to ask your doctor. It is not a complete list. You will probably have many other questions. You should keep asking questions until you understand what is wrong with you and what you need to do to get better.

Understand your diagnosis:

- What is wrong with me?
- What do I need to do to get better?

- Where can I get more information about my condition?

If you need a lab test, an x-ray, or another kind of test, ask your doctor:

- How will the test be done?
- How accurate will the results be?
  - What are the benefits and risks of the test?
  - When and how will I receive the results?
  - What should I do if I don't receive the results?

If you receive a prescription for a new medicine:

- What is the name of the medicine?
- What is it supposed to do?
- When should I take the medicine, and how much should I take?
- Does the medicine have any side effects?

If you need surgery:

- What kind of operation do I need?

- Why do I need an operation?
- What are the benefits and risks of the operation?
- How long will it take to recover?
- What will happen if I don't have the operation?
- Are there any other treatments I could have instead of an operation?
- Where can I get a second opinion?

☞ Ask your doctor what the scientific evidence has to say about your condition.

☞ Do your homework; go online or to the library to find out more information about your condition.

☞ Find and use quality information in making health care choices. Be sure the information comes from a reliable source.

Improving health care quality is a team effort, and it is ongoing on many levels. To succeed, every part of the health care system must become involved, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, hospitals, and you, the patient. ❖



## FITNESS / WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

## Touch-Potato Blues

[www.healthandwellnessclub.com](http://www.healthandwellnessclub.com)

Your time exercising doesn't just make you healthier; it can make you happier too.

Isn't it interesting that radiant physical health and sunny mental health so often go hand in hand? That your couch-potato friends seem strangely cranky when compared to your walking club? That your day is so much better when you get up early for a jog than when you roll out of bed and mainline coffee on your way to work? It's not a coincidence; activity breeds content more directly than you might suspect.

#### Exercise boosts mood

The specifics are still a little mysterious, but scientists believe that exercise causes direct physical changes in the way your body communicates with your brain. We've all heard of the "runner's high," the rush of endorphins that the brain releases in response to pain. But the cocktail is more complex than that, and it doesn't have to include pain to bring pleasure. The power trio of dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine rushes into our brains when we exert our bodies even moderately. These chemicals relax and calm us while stimulating our pleasure receptors. Sound familiar? They are the same neurochemicals that are affected by mood-management drugs like Prozac and Ritalin. In fact, a Duke University study found that elderly patients with depression saw better results with moderate exercise than they did with antidepressant drugs. Researchers at Berlin's Free University found that exercise often works faster than antidepressants, which can take weeks to show effects.

#### It's addictive

When you first start an exercise program, you

tend to be thankful just to make it through the workout. "At last . . . sweet immobility!" you sigh as you crash onto the couch afterward. It isn't until you've buckled down for a couple of weeks that you begin to notice something: you've started looking forward to it. It's still hard when you do it and blissful when it's over, but when you look at the big picture you realize . . . it really seems to make you chipper.

Of course, the overall effects of exercise are bound to make us feel good; that's why we do it. The flat abs and buns of steel improve our body image. The muscular strength makes us feel more powerful. Learning a sport gives us a sense of accomplishment. But the link between exercise and mood is not just a secondary one.

#### Take your medicine

What works for clinical conditions can also work for the garden-variety blues. If you've been feeling a little down lately, it helps to look at your lifestyle. Along with poor diet and high stress levels, physical inertia might be a contributor. Don't be a hero, though; if your symptoms are severe, exercise alone won't necessarily do the trick. Talk to your doctor about medication and psychotherapy as well. For a mild case of the blahs, however, you can start with the simple things.

#### The right treatment

So you're convinced; you've decided to try exercising to improve your mood. What kind of exercise should you do? It doesn't seem to matter much. Aerobic (i.e., walking, jogging or bicycling) and non-aerobic (i.e., weightlifting) exercise appear to have approximately equal mood-enhancement properties. Also, relaxation disciplines like yoga and Tai Chi target stress directly and incorporate a meditative slant that can make a world of difference in itself.

#### Proper dosage

The best program, of course, would employ a balanced combination of the three, ideally in longer workouts of low intensity rather than short, high-energy bursts. Three 45-minute walks per week plus a yoga class or two should have things looking up before you know it, and the full-spectrum sunshine that you get with your walk will work on seasonal blahs at the same time. Consistency is important, too; studies show that when you fall off an exercise program, your mood-enhancement benefits will fall off as well.

The most important thing to remember is: Do something you enjoy. If jog-

ging hurts your bad knee, try some non-impact swimming. If your tension has been building in rush-hour traffic, maybe you shouldn't take your bike out into it; go to a yoga class instead. Don't underestimate the power of play, either; dancing, jumping rope and Frisbee-tossing can

## Spotlight On:

### Seasonal Affective Disorder

Everyone feels down or sluggish sometimes. Some people may even get the "winter blues" because it's often too chilly to go outside and they may feel restless and bored. However, some people experience a more serious mood change when the cold weather rolls around. They may feel like they can't get out of bed in the morning, have no energy, and have an increased appetite, especially for starches and sweets. They may also feel depressed and show no interest in their normal activities or in talking to their friends. Sometimes, these symptoms are quite severe. This condition is known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

**What causes SAD?** Some experts think it's a lack of sunlight during the winter months, when the days are shorter and daylight is scarce. They believe that a lack of sunlight increases the body's production of a chemical called melatonin, which helps regulate sleep and can cause symptoms of depression.

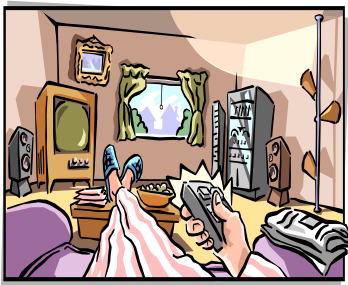
A popular treatment for SAD is called "light therapy," using a special type of light visor or a light box provided by a doctor. Other treatments include medication, changes in diet, learning new ways to manage stress, or sometimes a vacation to a sunny, warm climate during the cold months.

Remember, for most people, emotional ups and downs are normal at any time of year and are not necessarily a cause for concern. SAD is not just "all in your imagination" and, with a doctor's help, there are ways that you can feel better. ❖

all work up a sweat. After all, you're doing it to feel good, in more ways than one.

#### Tips for making exercise easier

- ★ Recruit buddies to work out with you. Socializing will boost your mood even further, and knowing friends are waiting will motivate you to keep showing up.
- ★ Do it for your dog. Pets need exercise, too, so promise your furry best friend a daily romp in the park. He'll benefit as much as you will.
- ★ Track your progress. Note your gains - or (weight) losses - in an accomplishment journal. Review it frequently and take pride in how far you've come.
- ★ Plug in. Play your favorite music or an audiobook (free from the library) on your headphones. Or put a movie in the VCR if you're exercising indoors.
- ★ Vary your routine. Try a variety of activities, classes and workout tapes. Walk a new route through your neighborhood. Do different activities on different days of the week. ❖



## Personal Wellness Goal:

### Smile!

Researchers have found a free and relatively easy way to ward off the common cold. Smile. A study in Psychosomatic Medicine found that people who are happy, energetic and relaxed are less likely to catch a cold than those who are depressed, nervous or angry. Happy and relaxed people are prone to better health practices than those who are negative and stressed out. Positive people are more likely to get enough sleep and to exercise regularly, which are both associated with lower levels of stress hormones.

*Don't Forget: Quit Smoking!, Stretch to De-Stress!, Make your Doctor your Partner in Healthcare!, Have a Good Laugh!, Drink more Water!, and Make physical activity a regular part of your day!*



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*Fuel for Change... Fuel for Life*

**Do You Have Ideas for the  
Wellness Works! Newsletter?**

**Submit your ideas to  
[wellness@carrollfuel.net](mailto:wellness@carrollfuel.net)**

**Or visit our website at  
<http://wellness.carrollfuel.com>**

## STRESS MANAGEMENT: *M*ake Peace With Stress This Season

[www.healthday.com](http://www.healthday.com)

The stress of the season comes and goes, but ongoing stress - even at low levels - can harm health and well-being, experts say.

Here are some tips on how to protect yourself by learning how to manage stress day by day:

**Look for signs.** Catch stress early by watching for signs such as headache, gut discomfort, tense muscles and fidgety sleep. If you notice these stress alarm signals, it's time to use stress-management techniques.

**Exercise.** Even a short walk can improve your mood and reduce stress.

**Eat well.** A healthy diet provides your body with the energy to handle daily stress. Making unhealthy food choices and skipping meals can lead to fatigue, greater susceptibility to illness, and a general feeling of poor health.



**Set limits.** Refuse some tasks to keep schedules less hectic.

This will help you be more productive and successful with the tasks that you do decide to tackle.

**Vent.** Friends can provide important social support by listening to your frustrations or providing encouragement.

**Escape.** Pleasant distractions such as a good book or movie can help take your mind off your worries.

**Bliss out.** Relax with a hobby, exercise, meditation, prayer, slow breathing or anything else that provides you with a feeling of calm.

**Still stressed?** Get help. Seeking out help isn't a sign of weakness, it's good judgment. ❖

## Healthy Recipe Contest

The Carroll Wellness Council is holding its second annual Healthy Recipe Contest. Recipes will be judged on nutritional value and taste. The winning recipe will be printed in the next *Wellness Works* newsletter. The top three will be posted on the Wellness Website.

Just submit your healthy recipes to [wellness@carrollfuel.net](mailto:wellness@carrollfuel.net) or in person to Lauren Shapiro by February 28, 2006.

Give us your favorite recipe for a healthy dish or dessert and let us be the judge! ❖