

Personal Best

HOPE Health Letter[®]

SEPTEMBER 2023

Amp Up Your Walk 5 Ways

Walking is a great form of exercise, especially if you enjoy moving in comfort. It's widely accessible and easy for most. As you adjust to walking for fitness, here are some ways to step up the intensity, benefits and pleasure of your walking workouts.



1. Add speed. Here's how: Take your normal-sized steps or slightly smaller steps and focus on a quicker movement. Keep your shoulders relaxed as you pump your arms close to your body for additional momentum and balance.

2. Add incline. If you walk outdoors, take to the hills. If you use a treadmill, you can ramp up the incline. When walking on flat surfaces begins to feel easier, challenge yourself to ramp up the incline — maintaining the same pace, you'll burn more calories. Extra: Walking uphill also helps strengthen your bones better than walking on flat surfaces does.

3. Add intervals. Alternating between higher and lower intensities throughout your workout yields better fitness improvements and more calorie burn than a continuous steady pace. It's a natural way to boost your speed and walking intensity gradually.

4. Add some music. Studies suggest music helps walkers move faster and longer before feeling their fatigue. Why not consider adding a soundtrack to your workouts for an extra push and pleasure?

Note: Don't play your favorite tunes too loudly. Protect your hearing and make sure you can still hear sounds around you, such as cars.

5. If you have a dog who loves to walk, lucky you. Add a park route to your walks and spend a few minutes playing fetch along the way with your canine buddy.

If you're not used to regular exercise, get your health care provider's okay first. If you have a chronic condition, such as heart disease, consult your provider before intensifying your walking routine.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, [Health Benefits of Volunteering](#), is at personalbest.com/extras/23V9tools.

BEST bits

■ **Do you know the difference between disease, disorder, condition and syndrome?**

A **disease** is a specific health or medical issue that is diagnosable; it may or may not be treatable. A **disorder** is a disruption in a normal body and the cause can be unknown and individual (e.g., sinus problems). A **health condition** refers to a physical or mental illness, injury or impairment; it can be continuous or recurring, such as allergies and headaches. A **syndrome** refers to a group of symptoms occurring together, such as chronic fatigue syndrome.



■ **Here's a reminder during Healthy Aging Month to practice these personal wellness measures throughout your life.**

In addition to eating and sleeping well and staying physically active, stay connected. Social connections are vital for healthy aging. Stay in touch with family and friends; join groups with activities that interest you. Volunteer in your community, and keep learning to keep your mind sharp and engaged. It may help prevent cognitive decline and improve your overall well-being. Know your family history of chronic diseases; ask your health care provider about steps to reduce your risk.



■ **Bone and Joint Health National Action Week runs October 12 to 18.**

Bone, joint and back ailments, such as chronic pain, arthritis and osteoporosis, are among the most common health problems worldwide. Poor bone and joint health can lead to disability, falls and injuries. Check with your health care provider about bone density testing as well as any joint issues that concern you.

Cancer-Fighting Foods

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Research shows that certain dietary patterns can help prevent cancer or slow its growth.

Specifically, a Mediterranean or plant-based diet — where most of the foods on your plate come from vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes — is often recommended for cancer prevention.

The cancer-fighting foods in this dietary pattern are filled with antioxidants, vitamins and other compounds that reduce inflammation, protect cells from damage and may prevent the growth and spread of cancer cells.

There is no single food that can prevent or treat cancer. The overall dietary pattern matters more than any one food, so consume a variety of these nourishing foods daily:

- Cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, kale and cauliflower.
- Berries, such as blueberries, strawberries and raspberries.
- Leafy green vegetables, such as spinach and romaine.
- Orange vegetables and fruits, such as carrots, squash and oranges.
- Garlic, onions, ginger and turmeric.
- Tomatoes.
- Tea and coffee.
- Nuts and seeds, such as flax, chia and walnuts.
- Beans, peas, lentils and soy.

Note: These foods have been researched for their anti-cancer potential when consumed as part of a healthy dietary pattern.

Now that you have a long list of foods to include more often, there's also a short list of foods and beverages to consume less often, since they may contain cancer-promoting compounds. It's wise to cut back on:

- Alcohol, including beer, wine and spirits.
- Processed meat, such as salami, hotdogs and sausages.
- Burnt and charred foods, such as barbecued meat.
- Sugary foods, such as soda and candy.
- Refined grain products, such as white bread, cookies and cake.

An occasional hotdog or sweet treat is not a problem. It's overall daily eating habits that have the largest impact on cancer prevention and matter more than any one meal.



TIP of the MONTH Family Meals

Family meals are a time when children can learn important life skills, including table manners, communication and how to recognize and enjoy a wide variety of foods. A recent study shows that sharing leisurely meals as a family can also help increase a child's vegetable and fruit intake. Researchers found that just ten extra minutes at the dining table can help kids eat about three to four more bites of fruits and vegetables compared to rushed or shorter meals.

Rainbow Oven-Roasted Vegetables

EASY recipe

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 red pepper, seeded and diced (1 inch) | 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil |
| 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced into rounds | 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar |
| 1 yellow pepper, seeded and diced (1 inch) | ½ tsp salt |
| 3 cups broccoli florets | 1 tsp oregano |
| 3 cups purple cabbage, diced (1 inch) | ¼ cup crumbled goat cheese |



Preheat oven to 400°F. **Line** baking tray with parchment or foil. **Add** vegetables in rows according to the rainbow: red pepper, carrot, yellow pepper, broccoli and cabbage. **Drizzle** with olive oil, vinegar, salt and oregano. **Roast** in oven 20-25 minutes, until vegetables are tender-crisp. **Top** with goat cheese and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 142 calories | 4g protein | 8g total fat | 1g saturated fat | 3g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 17g carb | 9g sugar (0 added sugar) | 6g fiber | 355mg sodium

Virtual Meetings: Key Guidelines

Working remotely has become increasingly popular for connecting businesses, organizations and workers.

And it often requires effective video conferencing among individual staff members, group leaders and their customers.

Here are some ground rules for making the most of meeting remotely, whether from your home office or when traveling:

First, if you are leading the meeting or are a presenter during the meeting: (a) prepare and circulate an agenda defining the meeting purpose and potential ways to achieve goals, (b) list the things to achieve during your presentation, (c) stick to the purpose during your meeting. Allow for a question-answer segment when you finish.

When gathered for a virtual meeting:

- Mute your microphone except when you are speaking.
- Raise your hand if you have a question or comment for someone in the meeting.
- Keep kids, pets and other distractions out of meetings to boost productivity.
- Take and share notes of each meeting.
- Set a realistic but tight timeframe for every meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask if everyone knows what to do and if there is anything you can do to improve your next remote meeting.

Four things to avoid when you're in a virtual meeting: frequent movements, typing (noisy), talking over people (wait your turn) and leaving a meeting without notice.



BOTTOM LINE

To achieve meeting etiquette, prepare, communicate well with others and focus on the topic at hand.



Memorizing 988 could save a life.

Suicide is often not discussed openly, but it should be. Suicide is a leading cause of death in the U.S., resulting in about one death every 11 minutes, according to the CDC. **September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month**, a time to learn about immediate help available 24/7 for someone who may be in crisis and contemplating self-harm. The National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) urges using these free resources for assistance if you or someone you know is possibly suicidal: Call or text **988** to the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** to be connected with crisis counselors for emotional support and other services. Help is also available via web chat at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) and immediately by texting **741-741** to reach a free, trained counselor.

Breathing Properly

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Breathing is something we do all day long without thinking about it. But proper, intentional breathing can improve our stress levels and overall health. While everyone can benefit, proper breathing is especially important for those with chronic lung conditions, such as asthma and COPD. What's more, proper breathing is easy to learn.

The first step is becoming aware of your breathing pattern. Sit comfortably with your back straight and observe your natural pattern, noting how slowly and deeply you breathe.

Next, practice diaphragmatic or belly breathing. Rest one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. Slowly inhale through your nose while focusing on inflating your stomach area like a balloon, causing the hand on your belly — but not the other one — to move. Continue for a minimum of five minutes or until you start feeling deeply relaxed.

Another helpful technique is alternate nostril breathing. Close off one nostril using your thumb or forefinger while slowly inhaling through the



other nostril for four seconds. Switch nostrils and breathe out for eight seconds. Alternate sides and continue for several minutes.

Whichever approach you prefer, the keys for maximum effectiveness are:

1. Breathing deeply (into your belly).
2. Breathing slowly (aim eventually for six to ten deep breaths per minute, or six to ten seconds per breath).
3. Breathing through your nose, if possible.
4. Maintaining the pattern for at least five minutes.
5. Practicing intentional breathing daily.

With continued practice, you may see benefits in your blood pressure, moods, anxiety level, digestion, lung capacity and sleep.



It's National
Cholesterol

Education Month, a perfect time to learn about high-density lipoprotein (HDL).

You probably know unhealthy cholesterol levels can be a significant risk factor for cardiovascular disease. But your total cholesterol number isn't the whole story. While low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is the bad cholesterol that collects in blood vessel walls, HDL helps protect the heart by moving some of the LDL to the liver for elimination. **Bottom line:** To raise your HDL and help protect your heart health, Harvard heart experts advise losing weight if needed, exercising regularly, replacing refined carbs with whole grains and adding more proteins, such as fresh, frozen or canned fish, lean chicken or ground turkey, or plant-based options, to your diet. Also, if you smoke, quit.

body&mind

Q: Keys to self-motivation?

A: Whatever you hope to achieve in life, staying motivated can help you succeed.

You are bound to hit bumps in the road, and knowing how to keep pushing forward is vital. How to stay on track?

- Be sure that your goals are clearly defined and realistic.
- Break down big, long-term goals into smaller, more manageable tasks that you can check off along the way.
- Give yourself appropriate deadlines for each checkpoint.
- Write down your plan and share it with others.
- Celebrate and reward yourself as you reach your short-term milestones.
- Know that your journey will be challenging sometimes. If you have setbacks, ask yourself: What did I learn? How can I do better next time?
- Ask others for suggestions or seek professional advice if you get stuck.
- Take breaks as needed to recharge.
- Surround yourself with cheerleaders who encourage you and believe you can succeed.

— Eric Endlich, PhD



Making Sense of Medical Studies

The most common and important purpose of medical studies is to test new medicines, types of surgeries, procedures or medical devices among groups of people.

These studies can help researchers confirm how and if new proposed treatments are effective and safe for patient use. For example, trial studies of taking medicine or having surgery can help ensure your treatment was tested scientifically before you use it as a patient.

When you're researching health and medical topics, you may find various types of medical research, including experiments, comparative analyses, surveys and interviews.

Clinical studies are the most thorough. They compare a medicine, device or new treatment against something else, such as: (a) the current medicine used to treat the same disease, (b) a treatment that contains no active ingredients, called a **placebo** or (c) no treatment. Clinical trials may occur in hospitals, university research centers, community clinics and physicians' offices.

Observational studies review what occurs when people follow a certain treatment or behavior. Example: Researchers might compare the health of people who exercise every day with the health of those who don't exercise routinely.



Randomized trials help determine if treatments or diagnostic tests are effective. Example: A trial might compare diabetic patients with implanted insulin pumps against diabetic patients (control group) who receive multiple insulin injections.

Cohort studies involve a research design that follows large groups of people typically for a long period of time. Researchers use data from cohort studies to understand human health and the environmental and social factors that influence it.

When researching the data available, keep in mind that one study rarely provides a scientific standard of proof. Take the time to compare various reports for a more thorough understanding.

Q: What is cardiomyopathy?

A: **Cardiomyopathy is a heart muscle disorder.** The condition can weaken your heart muscle and make it harder for it to pump blood throughout your body. Viral illnesses, such as COVID-19, can cause cardiomyopathy as can heart attacks, heart valve problems and high blood pressure. Other culprits include obesity, diabetes, thyroid disease and drug or alcohol abuse. Genetic factors may play a role.

Signs and symptoms: Cardiomyopathy can cause shortness of breath, swelling of the legs or feet, abdominal bloating and coughing or trouble breathing while lying down. Other symptoms include fatigue, chest discomfort, palpitations or dizziness. Contact your health care provider if you have these symptoms. Call 911 if you experience severe breathlessness, fainting or chest pain lasting more than a few minutes.

Health care options: Treatments for cardiomyopathy include medications, surgery or, more rarely, heart transplantation. Lifestyle measures can help manage this condition. Losing excess weight, quitting smoking, restricting salt, avoiding alcohol and exercising with your health care provider's guidance may provide protection and benefits.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



If you live with chronic pain, you aren't alone. September is **Pain Awareness Month**, an opportunity to learn about chronic pain, which lasts for more than three months. It affects more than one in five Americans and can range from ongoing back and nerve pain to chronic migraines and pain from past injuries or ongoing conditions, such as arthritis and diabetes. Chronic pain can interfere with work, recreation and family relationships. If you have chronic pain, talk to your health care provider about pain-relieving procedures, medications, exercises and relaxation techniques which may reduce discomfort and, if needed, counseling to help you cope. Learn more at acpanow.com.

Overcome That Exercise Plateau

Hitting an exercise plateau is frustrating. Does this sound familiar? After exercising regularly for weeks or months, you've improved your stamina and lost a few unwanted pounds. But you're not seeing more weight loss, more muscle definition or the ability to run or bike faster — signs you've reached an exercise plateau.

Don't despair. Hitting a fitness plateau means you've improved your fitness, up to a point.

You can overcome the plateau by remembering FITT, which stands for these exercise principles to help you overcome an exercise plateau:

- **F is for frequency.** If you've been working out three times a week, add another session.
- **I is for intensity.** Are you coasting along on your workouts? It's time to rev up your heart rate, if you are free of cardiac problems, to 65% to 90% of the heart rate maximum for your age (with your health care provider's okay). Check out the American Heart Association's (AHA) target heart rates chart for more information at heart.org.
- **T is for time.** Did you reach your exercise plateau after 20- to 30-minute exercise sessions? Increase the time you work out from 30 to 60 minutes.



- **T is for type of exercise.** Simply adding variety to your workouts can be key to overcoming your exercise plateau. Consider a host of other exercises you may not have tried yet, such as biking, swimming, tennis and resistance training with weights, while making aerobic activities central to workouts, according to the AHA.

The American Council on Exercise (ACE) suggests considering a personal trainer for at least a session or two to help you find new exercise routines and check your form as you work to get fitter. But don't overdo it; ACE also emphasizes getting plenty of rest, staying hydrated and exploring ways to have fun as you overcome your exercise plateau.

Answer the following questions
to test your financial smarts.

1. You have \$500 in a savings account and the interest rate is 3% per year. After five years, how much will you have in the account if you left the money to grow?
 - a. More than \$515.
 - b. Exactly \$515.
 - c. Less than \$515.
2. Imagine the interest on your savings account is 3.5% per year and inflation is 8% per year. After one year, how much will you be able to buy with the money in the account?
 - a. More than today.
 - b. Exactly the same.
 - c. Less than today.
3. If interest rates fall, what will typically happen to bond prices?
 - a. They will rise.
 - b. They will fall.
 - c. They will stay the same.
 - d. There is no relationship between bond prices and the interest rate.
4. A 15-year mortgage typically requires higher monthly payments than a 30-year mortgage, but the total interest paid over the life of the loan will be less.
True False
5. Buying a single company's stock usually provides a safer return than a stock mutual fund.
True False

ANSWERS

1. a
2. c
3. a
4. True
5. False

— Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, CFP, AFC, MBA

September is National Food Safety Education Month.



8 Tips to Prevent Foodborne Illness

Food poisoning can happen to anyone, but people older than 65 years, children under five years, pregnant women and people with compromised immune systems are more at risk. Here are eight ways to help avoid foodborne illness:

1. Wash your hands and food surfaces with warm, soapy water before and after preparing foods.
2. Rinse produce under running water before eating or preparing it even if you don't plan on eating the peel. Don't wash raw meat, poultry or eggs.
3. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs separate in the refrigerator and use one cutting board for raw meats, poultry and seafood and another cutting board for everything else to avoid cross-contamination.
4. Use a food thermometer to ensure that foods are cooked to the correct internal temperature.
5. Refrigerate food promptly before bacteria can multiply. **Caution:** Bacteria can multiply rapidly in the danger zone between 40°F and 140°F. **Tip:** Divide warm or hot leftovers into small containers to help them chill faster.
6. Never leave out perishable foods for more than two hours (or one hour if the temperature exceeds 90°F).
7. Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator overnight, in cold water or in the microwave. Never leave frozen foods on the counter to thaw out.
8. Never eat raw batter, dough or other foods with uncooked eggs or flour.



Learn more at foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts.

September is National Preparedness Month.



High Winds: Are You Prepared?

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) classifies damaging winds as those exceeding 50 to 60 mph. NOAA states that while tornados and hurricanes receive more attention, straight-line winds can be dangerous and are more widespread and common.

Make sure you're prepared with these National Weather Service tips if high winds are forecasted for your area:

- Secure gutters, shutters and loose objects in your yard.
- Trim tree branches so that they are away from your home and power lines.
- Plan where to take shelter if there is a high wind warning — an interior room, such as a bathroom or basement, away from windows. **Caution:** If you live in a mobile home, find a sturdy building where you can take shelter.
- Charge batteries of all essential items including weather radios, cell phones, booster packs and power tools, such as a chain saw, which you may need for downed trees.



Locate and update your home emergency kit to include enough nonperishable food and water for up to three days.

How You Can Guard Against Cancer

By Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus

Cancer is the second-leading cause of death in the U.S. after heart disease. And the total number of new cancers diagnosed each year is increasing. Three primary reasons: (1) tobacco use, (2) the increased use of screening and testing to detect cancer earlier and (3) changes in risk factors, including increased obesity, alcohol use and certain viral infections.

Scientists have estimated that more than half of cancers could have been prevented in the past 20 years. Why? Because most cancers are caused by controllable lifestyle and environmental factors. We can often prevent cancer by recognizing the risks and taking action to lower our risks. The list below includes the most-studied known or suspected risk factors for cancer.

How can you reduce your risk of cancer? An abundance of scientific evidence shows that you can significantly lower your cancer risk through healthful, protective habits. These include the following common behaviors and conditions:

Avoid or quit tobacco use. Tobacco products and secondhand smoke have many chemicals that damage DNA, potentially leading to leukemia and cancers of the lung, larynx (voice box), mouth, esophagus, throat, bladder, kidney, liver, stomach, pancreas, colon and rectum and cervix.

Avoid heavy alcohol use (more than one or two drinks per day), which raises your risk of several cancers (liver, breast, mouth, throat, esophagus and larynx (voice box)). The more you drink, the higher your risks.

Avoid obesity to lower your risk of several cancers, including cancers of the breast (in women past menopause), colon, rectum, endometrium, esophagus, kidney, pancreas and gallbladder.

Avoid excess sun exposure and tanning to reduce ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which causes early skin aging and damage that can lead to skin cancer, such as melanoma.

Reduce exposure to cancer-causing environmental substances, such as asbestos, benzene, cadmium, formaldehyde and radon.

Consider vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV). Check with your health care provider or search for **HPV vaccine** on [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Exercise. According to the American Cancer Society, getting regular physical activity is associated with a lower risk for several types of cancer, including breast, prostate, colon, endometrium and possibly pancreatic cancer.

More support for being physically active every day: Harvard Health reported in 2022 that rates of cancers of the stomach, uterus, colon, esophagus, breast and bladder were all lower among more physically



active people, particularly those who did at least 43 minutes per day of moderate-intensity activity, such as brisk walking.

Diet? Scientists continue to research how diet may guard against cancer. There is strong evidence that eating whole grains and other foods rich in dietary fiber protects against weight gain and obesity, factors which can increase your risk of several cancers. For more information, see “Cancer-Fighting Foods” on page 2 of this issue.

Learn more at [cancer.gov](https://www.cancer.gov).

Cancer Screening Saves Lives

FOR WOMEN

Breast Cancer: Begin at ages 40 to 44, if desired.

Ages 45 to 54: Annually.

Age 55+: Every 1 to 2 years.

Cervical Cancer: Begin at age 21 or as advised.

FOR MEN

Prostate Cancer: Start at age 50 if advised.

FOR EVERYONE

Colorectal Cancer: Start at age 45 and repeat as advised.

Skin Cancer: See your health provider if there's a change in your skin, including a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal or a change in a mole.

DR. ZORBA'S corner

Advice Worth More Than a Grain of Salt

Worried about salt? A teaspoon of salt is about 2,300 mg of sodium, the main component of salt. That's about all you need. The problem is processed foods — soups, chips, frozen entrées and restaurant meals — are often loaded with salt. For some, especially those with high blood pressure, cutting salt is the way to keep that blood pressure in control. For home cooking, use pepper, herbs and spices and other no-salt flavorings to those dishes. You'll be much healthier. And if you are diagnosed with high blood pressure, cutting back on salt is one of the easiest things you can do.

— Zorba Paster, MD

September Fill-in-the-Blank Puzzle

Find out how well you know the topics covered in this issue of the newsletter.

- 1 Research shows that certain _____ patterns can help prevent cancer or slow its growth.
- 2 Proper, intentional _____ can improve our stress levels and overall health.
- 3 In a clinical study, a treatment that contains no active ingredients, is called a _____.
- 4 _____-density lipoprotein is the bad cholesterol because it collects in blood vessel walls.
- 5 _____ can weaken your heart muscle and make it harder for it to pump blood throughout your body.
- 6 _____ pain lasts for more than three months and affects more than one in five Americans.
- 7 A 15-year mortgage typically requires _____ monthly payments than a 30-year mortgage, but the total interest paid over the life of the loan will be less.
- 8 _____ is the second-leading cause of death in the U.S. after heart disease.



You'll find the answers at personalbest.com/extras/Sep2023puzzle.pdf.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, Health Benefits of Volunteering, is at personalbest.com/extras/23V9tools.

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