

Personal Best

HOPE Health Letter®

DECEMBER 2022

Looking Forward in 2023 — and Beyond

Do you know why we ring in the New Year on January 1?

It's an old story. Most historians credit Julius Caesar with developing the Julian calendar more than 2,000 years ago, designating January 1 as the start of a new year. The Gregorian calendar, which many nations use today, started in 1582 when Pope Gregory XIII aligned the calendar with the earth's rotation around the sun — marking 365 days.

The new year has taken on a lot of meaning since then.

And a good thing about entering a new year each January? It offers us new perspectives and options for living, working and enjoying life.

What are you most hoping for in the New Year? Will it begin with a hangover or hope and gratitude for greeting a new year filled with promise? Or somewhere in between?

At least 50% of us make resolutions for each new year, and the most popular personal goals:

resolving to lose weight, eat healthier and exercise more. To get started, identify the personal activities that you hope to explore to achieve better health, well-being and pleasure. For example:

- Create a comfortable start-of-day routine.
- Walk regularly with your kids or a friend.
- Unplug from screen time more often to relax.
- Learn how to meditate to promote tranquility.
- Plan for pleasant activities in your new year.



Take action: It's common for New Year's resolutions to fade away in the hustle and bustle of daily life. Revisit your health goals frequently.

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Volunteering? Good for You!**, is at personalbest.com/extras/22V12tools.

BEST bits

■ **Your T-zone — eyes, nose and mouth — is your primary port of entry for contagious infections**, including influenza, COVID-19, colds and pneumonia, as well as bacterial infections. Because we tend to touch our faces, eyes and noses multiple times every waking hour, we risk contracting infection from any germs on our hands.

Solution: Wash your hands regularly and keep them off your T-zone.

■ **If you are a hospital inpatient, get your teeth brushed at least twice daily.** Hospital patients who don't are believed to be a leading cause of hundreds of thousands of cases of pneumonia a year in patients who haven't been put on a ventilator, according to the National Organization for NV-HAP Prevention. The hospital-acquired pneumonia, NVHAP, infects about one in every 100 hospital patients.



■ **Are you protected against the flu this year?** National Influenza Vaccination Week is December 6 through 12, highlighting the value of gaining protection against the flu each year. Without protection, influenza takes a heavy annual toll in the U.S. The CDC estimates that between 2010 and 2020, the flu resulted in nine to 41 million illnesses, 140,000 to 710,000 hospitalizations and 12,000 to 52,000 deaths *annually*. You may be most vulnerable to developing serious flu complications if you have certain chronic conditions, including asthma, diabetes and heart or kidney disease. To learn more, search for **flu complications** at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date pandemic information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

“If you combine good flavors, food turns into an orchestra.”

— Joey Fatone



TIP of the MONTH

Nutrition in a Small Package

Do you enjoy almonds, walnuts and pecans? Eating nuts in small quantities is a heart-healthy habit, but some people are worried that these high-calorie morsels may promote weight gain. **Not so.** A meta-analysis of multiple studies shows that nuts will not cause weight gain and may actually help with weight maintenance because they are nutrient-dense and satiating. Choose a 1- to 1.5-ounce serving per day from a variety of your favorite nuts.

eating smart

Nutrition: Sleep on It

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

It's well known that eating a balanced diet can help combat heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer. But did you know that the same nutritious diet can also help improve sleep?

Studies show that a Mediterranean-style diet — one that's filled with vegetables, fruit, beans, grains, fish and olive oil — can help improve sleep quality.

Overall, research shows diets that are high in protein, fiber-rich carbohydrates and healthier fats can help people wake less during the night, have deeper sleep, and take less time to fall asleep.

The carbs you choose make a big difference. High-fiber carbs, such as whole grains, vegetables and beans, are associated with deep sleep, while sugary carbs are tied to lighter sleep. A dietary pattern that's loaded with soft drinks, pastries and candy can actually reduce sleep quality. Studies show that people who sleep for a shorter duration also tend to eat more calories and consume more fatty foods in total than people who sleep longer.

Eating patterns that are plentiful in fruits, vegetables, grains, seeds, and legumes contain more melatonin, which is a hormone that helps regulate our internal body clock and helps ensure better sleep.

Beverages can impact sleep, too, especially caffeinated beverages, such as coffee and tea, as well as energy drinks and some soft drinks. Too much caffeine can harm sleep, since it stimulates the central nervous system and boosts energy levels. Aim to have no more than 400 milligrams of caffeine (about four small cups of coffee) per day and consume it in the morning rather than close to bedtime, to minimize sleep disruption. And even moderate amounts of alcohol (two drinks) can decrease sleep quality by 24%.



Pomegranate Apple Salad with Ginger Dressing

EASY recipe

4 cups baby spinach	3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 apple, thinly sliced	1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
½ cup pomegranate seeds	1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 cup frozen edamame beans, defrosted and prepared	1 tsp freshly grated ginger
¼ cup crumbled feta cheese	¼ tsp salt



Arrange the spinach on a large serving platter. **Sprinkle** with apple, pomegranate, edamame and feta cheese. **In** a small bowl, whisk olive oil, vinegar, mustard, ginger and salt until blended. **Drizzle** dressing over salad, toss and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 217 calories | 7g protein | 15g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 6g mono fat | 5g poly fat | 17g carbohydrate | 9g sugar | 5g fiber | 308mg sodium

The Jolly (or Not) Holidays

Many folks find their mental health takes a nose dive during the wintry holidays. With extra demands on your time and energy, the added effort can bring on added fatigue — enough to deflate your spirits.

Feeling down during the holidays is a common syndrome, and you're likely to have plenty of company in this regard. The American Psychological Association recently reported that 38% of people said their stress increased during the holidays, and only 8% of people said they felt happier.



Can you identify with these reasons for feeling blue at holiday time?

- **Recent loss of a loved one** may leave you feeling socially isolated. However, withdrawing can often worsen loneliness and depression.
- **Added anxiety during the holiday months** may cause even those who are generally content to experience loneliness.
- **Less daylight in winter** can contribute to seasonal affective disorder, a form of depression triggered by the change of seasons and reduced daylight.

Exercising your body can help offset the blues. Include some form of daily physical activity — as simple as taking a daily walk outdoors, building a snow fort with your children or meeting friends for a day of cross-country skiing. Or try swimming indoors regularly to boost your mood and energy despite the chilly climate.

'Tis the Season for Patience

The holiday season is a time for parties, gatherings — and frazzled nerves. Traffic, unexpected flight delays, misdirected packages and other holiday aggravations can be so stressful, you forget the holiday season is supposed to be joyful.

But there's a way to stay calm (or at least calmer) when faced with holiday stress: Cultivate patience.

Improving your patience muscle is possible. Cleveland Clinic psychologist Scott Bea likens it to dancing. While some people are naturally more patient, everyone can learn to be more patient with practice.

Tips for more patience:

Consciously choose to slow down. Let other people go ahead of you in line or in traffic sometimes. You don't have to rush through every minute of the season.

Keep exercising. Even a short walk can soothe your body's revved up stress response. That can help you feel calmer and boost your patience.

Haven't got time or patience to fight traffic for last-minute gifts? Opt for gift ecards and take a few calm moments to include a personal message.

Accept what you can't change. If your flight is canceled or delayed, or you are stuck in a traffic jam, consider how you might change things if possible. If not, psychologist Bea advises accepting your experience for what it is: something that's not fun but will pass. Remember, impatience won't change anything.

Give yourself a break. Maybe you're frustrated with loved ones not helping you, you don't want to go to a crowded event, or you don't have time or energy for elaborate decorations. Slow down and acknowledge your feelings. Take care of your mental and physical health and you'll be far more likely to have enough patience for dealing with whatever stress the season brings.



“Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.”

— George Bernard Shaw

Melatonin supplements, used as sleep aids, can sicken and even kill children. Melatonin, a hormone which plays a role in sleep, is widely available in over-the-counter sleep medications, including child-attracting gummies. But melatonin can be deadly for children, especially those ages five and younger. Children's Hospital of Michigan researchers found more than 260,000 American youngsters were poisoned by melatonin during the previous decade. Thousands were hospitalized and some died. Keep melatonin — and other supplements, as well as all prescription and over-the-counter medications — securely locked up out of the reach of children.

“Every day brings
new choices.”

— Martha Beck

Feel aches and pains all over when winter rolls around? You aren't alone. Although the cold can aggravate arthritis pain, others without that condition can feel more aches when it's chilly. That's because barometric pressure changes in cold weather, causing muscles, tendons and ligaments to expand, and that results in discomfort in some people. Staying active in the winter can help reduce the discomfort. When the weather feels too cold, consider exercising in an indoor gym or at home.



body&mind

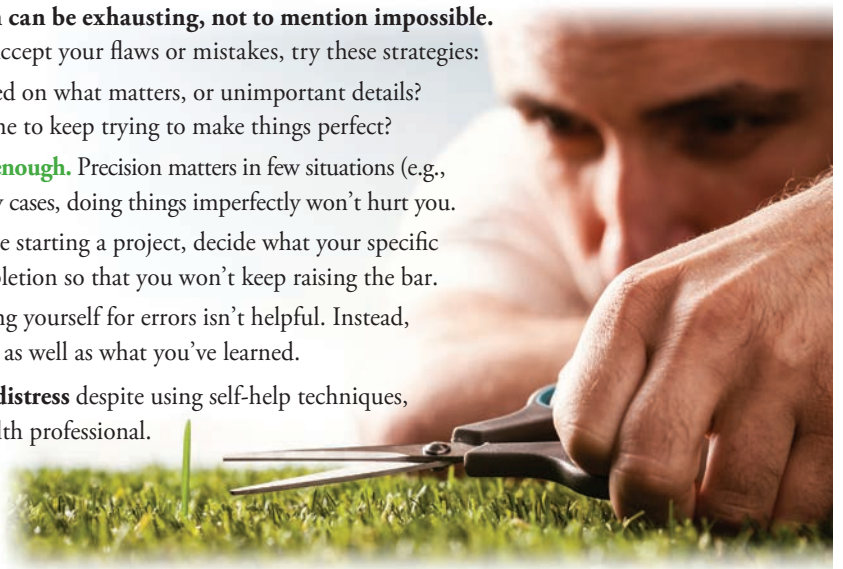
Q: How to cope with pressure to be perfect?

A: Pursuing perfection can be exhausting, not to mention impossible. If you are unable to accept your flaws or mistakes, try these strategies:

- **Zoom out.** Are you focused on what matters, or unimportant details? Is it a good use of your time to keep trying to make things perfect?
- **Let good enough be good enough.** Precision matters in few situations (e.g., brain surgery), but in many cases, doing things imperfectly won't hurt you.
- **Set your standards.** Before starting a project, decide what your specific requirements are for completion so that you won't keep raising the bar.
- **Let go of the past.** Blaming yourself for errors isn't helpful. Instead, notice what you did right, as well as what you've learned.

If you experience ongoing distress despite using self-help techniques, consider seeing a mental health professional.

— Eric Endlich, PhD



Autoimmune Diseases: The Basics

The odds are someone you know has an autoimmune disease. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports that about one in 15 Americans has this condition, which occurs when your immune system mistakenly attacks healthy tissues. What causes an autoimmune disease is not known, but a family history of autoimmunity and being female raise the odds.

There are more than 100 known autoimmune diseases. Some affect joints and muscles while others attack the digestive tract, nervous system, endocrine system and the skin. Symptoms and treatments can vary widely. However, the most common signs of autoimmune diseases include fatigue, muscle pain, joint swelling, abdominal pain and skin problems.

Common autoimmune diseases:

- **Lupus** has symptoms that can vary greatly but often include extreme fatigue, joint pain, light sensitivity and a butterfly-shaped rash across the nose and cheeks.
- **Rheumatoid arthritis** causes joint pain and inflammation.
- **Crohn's disease, celiac disease** and **ulcerative colitis** involve autoimmune attacks on different parts of the digestive system.
- **Psoriasis** causes a rash with itchy, scaly patches, usually on the knees, elbows, trunk and scalp.
- **Multiple sclerosis** results from autoimmune attacks on myelin, the protective sheath surrounding nerves in the brain and spinal cord.

Symptoms of many autoimmune diseases can come and go. And, because of the wide range of symptoms, diagnosis may be initially difficult. If you are diagnosed with an autoimmune condition, it's important to see a specialist and work with your health care provider on your treatment plan. While there's no permanent cure, treatments can help relieve symptoms and sometimes may result in remission.



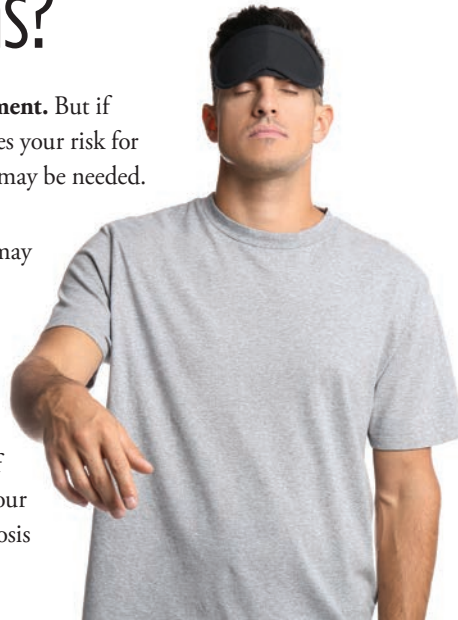
Q: Sleepwalking solutions?

A: Occasional sleepwalking does not usually require treatment. But if walking while asleep results in poor-quality sleep or increases your risk for injury, an exam to check for sleep disorders and a therapeutic plan may be needed. Here are some of the most frequently used treatment options:

Simple home remedies: Make the sleep environment safe, which may include blocking the stairs with gates and locking the doors and windows before bedtime. Schedule adequate sleep to ward off sleepwalking. Find effective ways to deal with stress, or consider enlisting the help of a mental health professional.

Treatment for any underlying medical conditions: Have your health care provider or pharmacist evaluate your medicines to see if they may cause sleepwalking; take any prescribed medications as your provider recommends. Learning relaxation techniques or self-hypnosis can sometimes help, too.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



“For me, fitness is a part of my everyday life. But fitness does not mean having big muscles; it means being active, quick and flexible. It can be defined in many terms.”

— Varun Dhawan

Aspirin 101

Aspirin was invented more than a century ago.

While this famous drug derived from willow bark has been replaced by acetaminophen and other medications as the preferred treatment for pain and inflammation, it remains the most widely used drug globally.

Because aspirin thins blood, a low-dose (81 milligrams) can help prevent strokes and heart attacks by stopping blood clots from forming in blood vessels damaged and narrowed by plaque.

Low-dose aspirin, as directed by your health care provider, may be taken for preventing cardiovascular disease, but only if you have a history of heart attack, atrial fibrillation, stroke or vascular stenting. Low-dose aspirin isn't recommended for those with no history of heart disease or stroke.

Because of certain risks, aspirin isn't for everyone. Regular use can raise the risk for a hemorrhagic stroke (caused by bleeding in the brain). Also, if you have a history of gastritis or stomach ulcers, which can cause internal bleeding, don't take aspirin without your provider's approval. Aspirin can also interact with many other medications. *Always get your provider's okay before taking aspirin.*

However, middle-aged adults, with their provider's approval, may benefit from regular low-dose aspirin if they are at high risk for a first heart attack or stroke due to risk factors, such as smoking, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high LDL (bad) cholesterol or a strong family history of heart disease.

Bottom line: Follow your provider's advice about whether you should take low-dose aspirin for your heart, use it to relieve aches and pain or avoid it altogether. Read labels and never take more aspirin than is recommended. If you use aspirin, report unusual bruising or bleeding immediately to your provider.



Take care of your heart this time of year. Being fit as a fiddle doesn't protect against **holiday heart syndrome.**

This typically happens after an otherwise healthy person with a normal heart engages in **binge drinking.** The CDC defines binge drinking as consuming five or more drinks on an occasion for men or four or more drinks on an occasion for women. Holiday heart syndrome causes abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias), primarily atrial fibrillation. Seek medical help immediately for symptoms, such as a fluttering heartbeat, shortness of breath and lightheadedness. The condition usually resolves over time, but it can raise stroke risk. Best prevention: Don't drink alcohol in excess.

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

For most people, discounts, coupons and other offers make for enjoyable and profitable shopping. Keep these offers in mind as you shop:

Buy one, get one (BOGO): This discount can save you money on expensive items and items you usually buy in multiples. BOGO is a good choice for both scenarios. Buy one, get one free is the best deal. Keep in mind that another common discount, buy one at full price and get one at 50% off, is 25% off each item. Read BOGO offers carefully and budget accordingly.

Compare discounts: For example, a 25% off coupon on a \$50 purchase seems like a great deal. But if the company offered a \$20 off coupon, that would save you close to 50% of the price.

Multiple buys: Sales on items you use frequently can provide big savings. Items, such as paper goods, meal basics (pasta, canned or frozen foods) and favorites, are good choices with these types of sales. A common example: Buy ten for \$10.

Low rates for an introductory period: Many credit card companies offer low introductory rates for the first six, 12 or 18 months. If you have a major purchase, this option could save a good bit of money for you. However, be sure to check conditions of the offer. Many introductory rates require you to pay off balances within a certain period.

Conditional offers: Some companies offer promotions with conditions, such as "Spend X amount for a higher percentage off," or "Spend X amount for free shipping."

Bottom line: There are many ways to receive discounts and special deals but always spend within your budget. No discount is worth going into debt.

Annual Safety Gift Guide

Give the gift of safety this year to show how much you care. Here are some ideas for innovative stocking stuffers and gifts:

Portable toothbrush sanitizing case: Taking a toothbrush while traveling is often scary when you think of the germs that the brush head might encounter. There are a variety of portable sanitizers out there designed to kill germs.

Portable water purifier: This is a great device for hikers or campers who need hydration in a hurry.

Wearable safety device: These include bracelets, fitness bands, necklaces, keychains and even scrunchies that can make calls or set off alarms.

Digital peephole viewer: In addition to doorbell viewers, there are LCD peephole viewers that can attach over existing peepholes. These devices let residents view their visitors on larger screens. Features can include wide-angle, zoom and low-light modes. Some even have image recording capabilities.

TV simulator: Many people use light timers when they are away from home; however, there are now LED TV simulator units that mimic the flickering light of a television.

Battery-powered air pump: These can come in handy for any traveler by bike or car because they don't require physical strength or electricity to operate.

Dryer vent pressure system sensor: Lint-clogged dryer vents can lead to fires. These pressure system sensors can alert you when a lint clog is inhibiting air movement.



Warning: Imposter Scam Calls

You or someone you know may get a call, text or an email from what seems like a legitimate company, such as your bank, a utility, major retailers or well-known technology companies, telling you that you've missed a payment, have an unauthorized purchase or that your computer has been hacked. Sometimes these calls even impersonate a loved one — your grandchild, children or friend — who needs money quickly. They often ask for a wire transfer or gift card. The con: They want to trick you into sending them money or sharing personal information.

If anyone contacts you asking for or demanding money:

Hang up. Then check with the actual person or the real company using the contact and website information on your bill. If you receive a suspicious email, don't use the phone number, email or website link provided in the message. Look up the information and contact the company on their website for verification.

Never pay anyone who asks for money via gift card, cryptocurrency or money transfer. It is a scam.

Report any scam to the FTC at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud).



Timing Your Exercise

By Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus

When it comes to exercise, what time you're active can help make it routine. Your personal lifestyle and workout goals may influence when you exercise. If you're a beginner, read on for tips on getting started.

"Any time that you feel motivated and energized enough to exercise is the best time for you," says Dr. Beth Frates, clinical assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Harvard Medical School.

Many people find routine exercise works best in the mornings when it's less likely to get bumped by other demands of the day. Another potential benefit for morning exercisers is boosting the feel-good brain chemicals, dopamine and serotonin, that are released during physical activity.

"That sets you up for success throughout the whole day and may increase your concentration and creativity," says Dr. Frates.

Other regular exercisers who may not be morning people find a workout at the end of their work day especially energizing for evenings ahead. Plus, as the day progresses, your muscles and joints may become more limber for a more effective workout.

And then there are folks who fit in exercise whenever possible. Varying your exercise time can have advantages, especially if you can choose periods when your energy level is robust. Or if you tend to experience midafternoon slumps, try doing short bursts of exercise to re-energize.



Make your workouts work better:

1. Wait at least three hours after a large meal before your exercise regimen.
2. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid vigorous activity (running, fast dancing, high-intensity interval training or HIIT) one hour before bedtime. Regular exercise of adequate intensity can promote muscle relaxation and deeper sleep.
3. Before a vigorous workout, a carbohydrate-rich snack (e.g., a banana or slice of whole-grain bread) can provide quick fuel for short, high-intensity exercise.
4. You're trying to lose or maintain your weight, but you're craving a treat on the job. Skip the calories and take a short break for a burst of energy; try a fast walk or lifting weights.
5. If you're just beginning routine exercise, you may find it easier to break workouts into shorter periods. Even seven or eight minutes at a time count toward your goal of 150 minutes per week.
6. Before a strength training workout, consider warming up with brisk walking or another aerobic activity for five or 10 minutes. Cold muscles are more prone to injury than are warm muscles.
7. Try a pedometer. It's an easy, inexpensive way to get motivated. A mile walk is approximately 2,000 steps; 10,000 steps are nearly five miles. **Note:** The number of steps and distance vary among individuals. The most important thing is to just **walk**.



Added benefits of routine vigorous exercise over time:

- Sound sleep.
- Better brain health.
- Weight control.
- Stronger bones and muscles.



Regular exercise can also lower your risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and several kinds of cancer.

DR. ZORBA'S corner

Want to prevent knee pain? An observational study led by Baylor College of Medicine researchers and published in June in *Arthritis & Rheumatology* shows that walking is the best way to do it. Dr. Grace Hsiao-Wei Lo, the lead author and an assistant professor of immunology, allergy and rheumatology at Baylor, said the study's findings are especially helpful for people who don't have daily knee pain even though their X-rays show osteoarthritis.

More than 1,000 people 50 years of age and older were followed for up to 20 years for symptoms of osteoarthritis. Those who walked regularly, classified as walkers, had less knee pain and stronger knees than the non-walkers. Those who reported walking for exercise had a 40% lower risk of new frequent knee pain compared to the non-walkers. The takeaway? Start moving. It will save your knees.

— Zorba Paster, MD

December Fill-in-the-Blank Puzzle

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

- 1 Fiber-rich carbs, such as whole grains, vegetables and beans, are associated with _____.
- 2 _____ is a hormone which plays a role in sleep.
- 3 One in 15 Americans has an _____ disorder, according to the NIH.
- 4 _____ is the most widely used drug globally.
- 5 The CDC defines _____ drinking as consuming five or more drinks on an occasion for men or four or more drinks on an occasion for women.
- 6 Before a vigorous workout, a _____-rich snack (e.g., a banana or slice of whole-grain bread) can provide quick fuel for short, high-intensity exercise.
- 7 Recent research shows walking is the best way to _____ knee pain.
- 8 Less _____ in winter time can contribute to seasonal affective disorder.



You'll find the answers at personalbest.com/extras/Dec2022puzzle.pdf.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, *Volunteering? Good for You!*, is at personalbest.com/extras/22V12tools.

Stay in Touch. Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

Phone: 800-871-9525 • Fax: 205-437-3084 • Email: PBeditor@ebix.com

Website: personalbest.com

Executive Editor: Susan Cottman

Advisers: Patricia C. Buchsel, RN, MSN, FAAN; Jamie Lynn Byram, MBA, AFC, MS; Eric Endlich, PhD; Mary P. Hollins, MS, JD, CSHM; Kenneth Holtyn, MS; Reed Humphrey, PhD; Gary B. Kushner, SPHR, CBP; Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus; Zorba Paster, MD; Charles Stuart Platkin, PhD; Cara Rosenbloom, RD; Elizabeth Smoots, MD; Margaret Spencer, MD

Editor: Aimie Miller

The content herein is in no way intended to serve as a substitute for professional advice. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet or exercise, talk to your health care provider. Sources available on request. © 2022 Ebix Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction in any form of any part of this publication is a violation of federal copyright law and is strictly prohibited. Personal Best® and Hope Health® are registered trademarks of Ebix Inc. 1 Ebix Way, Johns Creek, GA 30097 • Please recycle.