

Personal Best

HOPE Health Letter[®]

JANUARY 2025

Health Fads You Don't Need

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

If you are interested in a healthy lifestyle, start by eating right, being physically active and getting enough sleep. It's not flashy advice, but these tried-and-true methods are known to help boost energy levels and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

It may be tempting to take shortcuts or try wellness trends that are popular on social media, but they fall outside the parameters of a healthy lifestyle. Here are some fads to skip because there is no scientific proof they are helpful, safe or healthy.

Carnivore diet: This diet contains meat, butter and eggs, but it eliminates vegetables, fruit, grains, nuts and oils (such as olive and canola). It's the opposite of the plant-based diet that's recommended for better health. It lacks many important vitamins and minerals; this happens when an eating plan omits entire food groups. It's low in fiber, which can negatively affect digestive health. The carnivore diet is unsafe if you're pregnant or breastfeeding and for people with conditions, such as high blood pressure, kidney disease or diabetes.

IV vitamin bars: Hospitals correctly use intravenous (IV) drips to deliver vital fluids or medication to patients. But there's danger in visiting an unregulated spa for an IV drip of random vitamins your body may not need. Vitamins can be toxic in high doses, and improperly inserted IVs can lead to blood clots or infections.


Juice cleanses: Drinking juice for a few days is touted to cleanse your body of impurities. Sounds great except for one thing: It's bunk. The human body regularly self-cleans and naturally eliminates impurities through sweat, urine and feces. The FDA warns that these products make false claims about wellness and may contain potentially harmful ingredients.

Alkaline water: This bottled water is less acidic than tap water, and marketers say it can detoxify the body and slow down aging. Science doesn't support these claims. Drinking alkaline water will not change your body's overall pH — that's highly regulated by the kidneys, lungs and liver.



BEST bits

■ **What causes persistent or new symptoms after COVID infection?** It's Long COVID, a condition marked by often debilitating symptoms, including fatigue, postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, a severe blood pressure drop when standing and dizziness. The symptoms can develop, reoccur or linger months after a COVID infection. According to the CDC, millions of U.S. adults and children have Long COVID. But many others contracted COVID and don't have the Long form. **Why?** Columbia University found vaccination against COVID, even when people still contract the virus, reduces the risk of both severe infection and Long COVID. A National Academy of Sciences report concluded having COVID in the past and recovering fully doesn't mean you aren't at risk for developing Long COVID with a new infection. So, stay up-to-date on boosters. If you do contract the virus, taking antivirals during the acute phase of infection may reduce the risk of Long COVID.

 ■ **Are you at risk for vision-robbing glaucoma? January is Glaucoma Awareness Month,** an opportunity to learn about this leading cause of vision loss. Risks include being older than 60, a family history of glaucoma and having diabetes or hypertension. African Americans and Hispanics, age 40 and older, also are at increased risk. But anyone can get glaucoma. There's no cure, but treatment can often protect vision. That's why regular, comprehensive eye exams are important. Learn more at nei.nih.gov.

The Science of Satiety

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



TIP of the MONTH

Prebiotic Soft Drinks

Soft drinks with fiber? Indeed. Trendy prebiotic soda is popping up on store shelves. It's flavored carbonated water with two to three grams of fiber per can from prebiotic inulin, acacia or tapioca. Prebiotic fibers help support the beneficial bacteria (probiotics) in the gut. This soda doesn't replace the need to get 25 to 35 grams of fiber daily from foods, such as fruit, vegetables and whole grains. If you try it, choose a low-sugar option with fewer than two teaspoons of sugar per can. **Caution:** Prebiotic fibers may cause gas and bloating, especially if you already have irritable bowel syndrome. Do not try to get all of your daily fiber intake from this soda. Rely on vegetables, beans and whole grains for a fiber-rich and well-rounded eating plan.

Satiety is the state of feeling full and satisfied after eating. This feeling of fullness is affected by hormones that react in response to food intake. There are two main hormones linked to feeling hungry and full:

- ◆ **Ghrelin** — a hormone that stimulates the appetite. It's sometimes referred to as the hunger hormone.
- ◆ **Leptin** — a hormone that regulates appetite and recognizes fullness. It's sometimes called the satiety hormone.

If these hormones are not functioning properly, they can affect the body's ability to regulate feelings of hunger and fullness. Abnormal leptin levels are linked to metabolic syndrome and obesity. This is known as leptin resistance, and researchers are looking at how it may affect weight control and health. To date, there's no effective leptin therapy to help manage obesity or metabolic syndrome. Research is ongoing.

What researchers do believe is that certain nutrients in foods can dictate how full we feel after a meal. Studies show that eating foods that contain more protein and fiber can help us feel satiated and stay full for longer. On the other hand, foods that contain refined carbs (such as sugar), do not help us feel as full.

In the 1990s, researchers developed a satiety index to measure how full you get after eating certain foods. The foods that provide the most fullness are high in protein or fiber. They include:

- Fish, beef and poultry.
- Lentils and beans.
- Eggs.
- Whole grains, such as oatmeal and whole-wheat pasta.
- Fruit.
- Cheese.

Foods that are less satiating tend to be high in refined flour or sugar. These include cakes, donuts, chocolate bars and similar products.

Eating meals made of balanced plates (½ plate vegetables and fruit, ¼ whole grains and ¼ protein) remains good advice.

This combination at meals will help you feel full for longer, and provides plenty of vitamins, minerals and fiber.



Sheet Pan Honey-Mustard Chicken

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1½ lbs. boneless skinless chicken thighs | 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil |
| 2 cups potatoes, 1-inch diced | ½ tsp salt |
| 1 onion, 1-inch diced | 2 tbsp fresh chopped parsley |
| 2 large carrots, sliced into rounds | |
| 3 tbsp honey | |
| 3 tbsp grainy Dijon mustard | |

Preheat oven to 400°F. **Line** baking sheet with parchment. **In** a large bowl, add chicken, potatoes, onions and carrots. **Add** honey, mustard, oil and salt to the chicken. **Stir** well to coat. **Spread** chicken and vegetables evenly onto baking sheet. **Bake** for 35-40 minutes, stirring once, until chicken is 165°F and potatoes are fork-tender. **Garnish** with parsley and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 385 calories | 35g protein | 17g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 10g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 27g carbohydrate | 16g sugar (3g added sugars) | 3g fiber | 588mg sodium



The Toll of Financial Stress

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Having enough money is one of the most common things that causes all of us to worry — and that couples argue about. However, worrying won't put money in your bank account or bread on the table, and it can have negative impacts, such as:

- Poor sleep.
- Difficulty enjoying life.
- Decreased productivity.
- Head, back or stomach aches.
- Conflict with your partner or loved ones.
- Reduced immunity.

Because of these effects, it's well worth trying to break this mental habit. There are several strategies you may find effective, including:

- **Facing your feelings.** These worries are normal, but when making big decisions, it's important to leave time to think things through calmly.
- **Examining your beliefs.** If you have persistent irrational thoughts about money (e.g., *"I won't be happy until I'm a multimillionaire"*), look for evidence to challenge them (e.g., *"there are many things in life that bring me joy and cost nothing"*).

- **Developing a budget.** Knowing how much is coming in and going out can help ease your mind.
- **Consulting a professional.** Ask those you trust for recommendations for financial experts who can help you make an effective plan for the future.
- **Focusing on what you control.** Prices may rise whether you like it or not, but you can still decide what and when to buy in many cases.
- **Taking a break.** Find relaxing and enjoyable activities to engage in so you're not thinking about money all the time.



After the holidays, many people choose to reset their health by participating in Dry January, a month-long break from consuming alcohol. Many participants have reported they lost weight, slept better and felt better. And studies back it up: Dry January participants had lower blood pressure, weight loss, reduced stress and improved sleep.

Thinking of trying it? Here are some tips for managing a successful Dry January:

Have fun. Try creating new mocktail concoctions that taste great but are alcohol-free (preferably sugar-free or low in sugar). Or pursue a new hobby.

Resist temptations. Keep alcohol out of your house. Bring mocktails when you know alcohol is available at an event or a party.

Form a support network. Ask friends and family to hold you accountable. Or invite them to join you in the challenge.

Make a plan for slip-ups. We're all human. If you do drink alcohol, do a mental restart.

Sleep and Mood

Lack of sleep can have a major impact on your mental health and emotions. According to research, sleep deprivation can affect mood by:

- Causing stress and anxiety.
- Leading to depression.
- Causing irritability.
- Making decision-making, concentration and focusing more difficult.
- Impairing the ability to learn and perform tasks that require logical or complex thinking.
- Increasing the risk of developing a mood disorder.
- Slowing reaction time.

Ways to improve your sleep:

Keep a consistent bedtime routine. Get up and go to sleep at roughly the same time every day.

Don't take long naps during the day.



Avoid alcohol, nicotine and caffeine in the late afternoon and evening.

Keep it cool. Sleep experts recommend setting your thermostat between 65°F and 68°F.

Don't go to bed too hungry or too full.

Develop a nightly bedtime routine, such as taking a bath or shower, meditating or reading.

Exercise during the day, not right before bed. **Tip:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise a week.

Turn off all of your electronics (yes, even your phone) about an hour before going to bed.

See your health care provider if you still have sleep problems.

Studies indicate that even a moderate lack of sleep can greatly impact temperament. In one study, University of Pennsylvania scientists discovered that participants restricted to just 4.5 hours of sleep per night for one week experienced heightened levels of stress, anger, sadness and mental fatigue. However, once the participants returned to their usual sleep patterns, they noticed significant mood improvements.

It's not too late to get a flu shot. Yes, it's best to get vaccinated in September or October before flu season is going strong. But the flu virus is often still active into March. So, if you didn't get your flu shot before, make time to get it now. Remember, it takes about two weeks for full immunity to the virus to kick in after vaccination. If you got through the last couple of months without catching the flu, that doesn't mean you're not at risk for catching the virus now. By getting the flu shot, you'll not only raise the odds you'll avoid the flu, but you'll help prevent spreading the flu to others. And make sure you're up-to-date on your COVID vaccination.

Q: Signs of self-sabotage?

A: **Self-sabotage occurs when people act in a way that interferes with their progress.** It can hinder personal growth, relationships and overall well-being — and recognizing the signs is the first step toward improvement.

Common signs include:

- Putting off tasks relating to one's goals.
- Avoiding situations that involve opportunities to succeed.
- Behaving in self-destructive ways, such as drinking heavily.
- Pushing away loved ones through withdrawal or arguments.
- Giving up too quickly when success doesn't happen right away.
- Striving for perfection in a way that prevents completing tasks.

If you recognize some of these signs, try to:

- Catch these behaviors early.
- Challenge negative self-talk.
- Accept slow or imperfect progress.
- Identify what's important to you.
- Develop goals to reverse these patterns.
- Enlist the support of someone you trust.

If you are still experiencing significant negative effects of self-sabotage, consider working with a mental health professional.

— Eric Endlich, PhD



Why Does Your Abdomen Hurt?

Almost everyone has experienced pain in their abdomen at some time. Often called a belly or stomach ache, abdominal discomfort is felt somewhere between the lower chest and groin. The degree of pain, whether it is minimal or severe, doesn't necessarily indicate it's caused by a serious health problem, according to Mt. Sinai gastrointestinal disease experts.

It is most often the result of gas, constipation, viral gastroenteritis (a stomach virus), lactose intolerance, food allergies, indigestion or heartburn. Diverticulitis (tenderness in the lower left abdomen due to infection or inflammation of pouches inside the large intestine) is another common cause of abdominal pain. However, abdominal pain can have serious causes, including appendicitis, an abdominal aortic aneurysm dissection, a bowel blockage, or cancer.

If your abdominal pain is not severe, sip clear fluids and avoid solid food for several hours. If you've vomited, don't eat for six hours; then try small amounts of rice and apple sauce. If your pain is high up in your abdomen, antacids may help. Diverticulitis can usually be relieved with a prescription for antibiotics.

However, if you have abdominal pain that is severe, worsens or doesn't improve in 24 to 48 hours, or if you have diarrhea for more than five days, contact your health care provider. And it's important to know abdominal pain can be caused by a problem that isn't in your belly, such as a heart attack, menstrual cramps, or pneumonia. If you vomit blood, become dehydrated, or have chest, neck, or shoulder pain, seek emergency care.



Month. Cervical cancer is largely preventable with vaccination and routine screening. Nearly all cervical cancers are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). But the HPV vaccine is reducing these cases; among vaccinated women, the percentage of precancers caused by HPV dropped from 55% to 33%, according to a 2019 CDC study. Routine Pap and HPV tests can identify cervical cancer early and prevent it from developing.



Q: What is norovirus?

A: Norovirus is the leading cause of gastroenteritis in the U.S. It's transmitted from food or water contaminated with the virus or from close contact with an infected person. The virus spreads especially fast in crowded conditions, such as cruise ships, restaurants, schools, daycare centers and nursing homes.

Common symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps, along with low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and fatigue. The illness begins one to two days after exposure and usually lasts for one to three days. Dehydration is a risk, especially in young children, older adults and those with chronic illnesses.

Protect yourself and avoid spreading norovirus to others with this CDC advice:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet or changing diapers. Also wash them before preparing food or eating. Soap and water kill norovirus germs better than hand sanitizers.
- Wash fruits and vegetables and cook meat, poultry and shellfish thoroughly.
- Stay home when sick for two to three days after your symptoms stop.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



Health Risks of Oversleeping

We can all agree that getting enough quality sleep is important for your health and safety. But what about too much sleep? Oversleeping — more than nine hours a night — can negatively affect your health.



Oversleeping has been associated with numerous health issues, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and increased risk of death. It is also linked to depression and undiagnosed medical conditions, such as sleep apnea. Research shows that oversleeping can worsen body inflammation, decrease your immune function and lead to chronic diseases.

Studies also indicate that oversleeping can be related to the following medical problems:

Heart disease: Studies have indicated there is a higher chance of heart disease for those who sleep nine to 11 hours a night, compared to those who only sleep for seven to eight hours.

Headaches: Sleeping longer can prompt headaches, especially for those who are susceptible to headaches.

Depression: Oversleeping can worsen depression.

Obesity: A recent study revealed that people who consistently slept for nine or ten hours each night had a 21% higher likelihood of becoming obese over a six-year period compared to those who slept for seven to eight hours.

Back pain: Medical professionals recommend against sleeping more than usual and also encourage a mild amount of activity if you are suffering from back pain.

Diabetes: Both oversleeping and not getting enough quality sleep can increase your risk of diabetes.

Fatality: Multiple studies show that people who oversleep have considerably higher death rates than people sleeping the recommended seven to nine hours a night.

Q: When should I change my W-4 withholding?

A: Regularly reviewing your W-4 withholdings, especially after major life changes or shifts in financial circumstances, can help you manage your tax responsibilities effectively and avoid surprises during tax season.

Here are a few scenarios when you should consider updating your W-4:

1. Major life changes: Life events, such as marriage, divorce or the birth or adoption of a child, can impact your tax situation. These changes often affect your filing status and how many dependents you claim, which leads to accurate withholding.

2. Changes in income: If you receive a substantial raise, start a new job or take on a second job, your tax liability may increase. Adjusting your W-4 can help align your withholding with your new income level to avoid unexpected tax bills.

3. Tax law revisions: New tax laws or modifications to existing ones can alter your tax liability. It's wise to review your W-4 if there are significant changes in tax legislation to ensure your withholdings remain appropriate.

4. Changes in deductions or credits: If you become eligible for new tax credits or deductions, such as education credits or mortgage interest deductions, an updated W-4 can help ensure that your withholding matches your expected tax liability more closely.

5. Avoiding penalties: If you had a large tax bill or a refund that was too small last year, it might mean your withholding wasn't accurate. Adjusting your W-4 can help prevent underpayment penalties or result in larger refunds.

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

Outdoor Winter Work Tips

Working outside in the cold is a reality for many people. In addition to slip and fall hazards, there is a chance for workers to develop cold stress if they aren't careful. Cold stress is when the cold air, moisture and snow draw heat away from the body, resulting in conditions, such as hypothermia, frostbite, trench foot and chilblains.



Hypothermia: When normal body temperature drops below 95° F due to heat being lost faster than it is replaced.

Frostbite: Tissue injury from freezing, usually affecting the extremities, particularly the feet and hands. Severe cases may require amputation.

Trench foot or immersion foot: Injury to the feet from prolonged exposure to wet and cold temperatures, leading to tissue death due to restricted circulation.

Chilblains: Painful inflammation of small blood vessels from repeated exposure of skin to cold, damp air.

Take these steps to make sure you are safe while performing required outdoor work:

- **Recognize** the symptoms of cold stress. They can include tingling, blisters, aching, shivering, reddening skin and, in the case of hypothermia, confusion.
- **Dress** for the conditions. Wear at least two layers of wool, silk or synthetics; these fabrics can retain insulation even when wet. Add a ventilated outer layer that offers wind and rain protection. Wear a hat or hood and insulated gloves. Consider protecting your face with a synthetic or knit mask if the temperature is below freezing. Wear insulated and waterproof boots with good traction.
- **Stay dry.** Bring extra socks, gloves, hats, jackets and a change of clothes in case you get wet and need to change.
- **Drink** warm, sweetened fluids. Avoid alcohol.
- **Don't** touch cold metal or wet surfaces with your bare hands.
- **Follow** safe work practices and use personal protective equipment.
- **Monitor** your physical condition, as well as your coworkers' conditions.
- **Take** frequent breaks in warm, dry areas.

Vape Pens Pose Fire Hazard

Did you know that one of the most common sources of battery-related fires in airplane travel is vape pens? According to passenger and cargo airlines reporting, vape pens caused about 35% of battery-related fire or smoke incidents. The FAA database of battery-related issues indicates most overheating e-cigarettes were managed without incident.

However, airplanes present a unique environment, and a malfunction with a battery-powered device aboard can lead to serious problems.

Here's how you can prevent battery-related vape pen fires:

- ❖ Turn off your vape pen before putting it in your pocket or purse. And always keep it within reach — not in the overhead bin.
- ❖ Don't pack vape pens in checked luggage.
- ❖ Follow the rules. Don't use or charge your vape pen while on an airplane.
- ❖ Report smoke or fire to a flight attendant immediately.



Your Health: Maintenance Manual

The key to staying healthy all your life is improving your physical, mental and emotional well-being. That includes getting health care services appropriate for your age, gender, lifestyle and family health history.

Having a primary health care provider who manages your care can help you stay well and recover faster if you become sick. You can ensure you get quality care by participating in decisions that affect you.

How involved are you in your care? Check the statements that apply to you:

- I have a primary health care provider to help manage my health needs.
- I understand my health plan benefits.
- I take an active role in my health care decisions by asking questions and discussing treatment options, screening needs and lifestyle choices.
- I am learning more about my health with my provider's help.
- I follow a schedule of routine tests and exams I need for cancer, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and unhealthy cholesterol.
- I get dental exams as recommended.
- I get a flu shot annually, and keep current on COVID shots and other vaccinations I need.
- I maintain a file of my health history.
- I know where to get urgent care other than a hospital emergency room.
- I use my provider's patient portal if one is available.
- I follow my provider's instructions instead of relying on social media influencers for medical advice.
- I visit my provider when I have a health issue, such as constant headaches or unexplained pain, instead of researching my symptoms online and self-diagnosing.
- I get my provider's okay before taking any over-the-counter medication or supplement.

Besides partnering with your provider, it's important to build a healthy lifestyle to reduce your risks for short- and long-term illness.

Take these steps:

- ◆ **Get seven to nine hours of sleep daily.** Set a regular bedtime and stick to it.
- ◆ **Move every day.** Even if you are extra busy, make time for a walk or move to an online video. Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week. Any amount of movement helps, but more is better. Chores that require you to move count, too.
- ◆ **Make relaxation part of your life.** Consider yoga, meditation, putting together a jigsaw puzzle, or listening to music.



Prevention is key to lifelong health. It can take some time, but your body and mind will thank you for it.

- ◆ **Eat mindfully.** Pay attention to what you are putting in your body. Focus on eating more fruits, vegetables and quality protein (e.g., fish, beans, lean meat and poultry) instead of highly processed food.
- ◆ **Practice safety** at work and home and on the road.
- ◆ **Know your feelings.** Try to find positives in worry and negatives by learning from them. Recognize unhealthy thought patterns and let them go while viewing the good things in your life daily. Relax and relieve the stress.
- ◆ **Watch your screen time.** Resist the urge to check your electronic devices every few minutes.
- ◆ **Keep learning.** Seek activities that offer different ideas and stimulate critical thinking, curiosity, problem-solving and creativity. Take a class or research a favorite subject.
- ◆ **Build professional skills.** We gain knowledge and personal satisfaction with occupations that move us forward. Explore different career and volunteer opportunities.
- ◆ **Take care of your financial health.** Save whenever you can and create a fund for emergencies.
- ◆ **Connect with others.** Having trusted relationships can boost your self-esteem and buffer stress. Make time for friends or join groups where you can meet others with similar interests.
- ◆ **Enjoy nature every day.** Take a walk outside, care for plants and notice the seasonal changes.
- ◆ **Do your part to preserve the environment** — reduce noise, pollution and unnecessary consumption. Compost food and recycle whenever you can. Donate items for reuse.

How to Discuss Self-Care with Your Health Care Provider

Whether you have a long-time health care provider or a new one, communication is key. You need to discuss your symptoms and concerns and have all your questions answered fully so that you understand and make changes or additions to your self-care plans.

However, it's important to remember providers are busy, and you may feel overwhelmed. So, prepare for your wellness appointment or to address a physical symptom by writing down any questions you have. Prioritize the ones you consider the most important and stay focused.

It's helpful to bring a list of your self-care measures and ask about any home test results you are concerned about or find confusing. Take notes, if needed, and don't be shy about asking for clarification about tests your provider may order, or specifics about an exercise or eating plan. Never hesitate to discuss your prescription medications and make sure that your health record includes a list of over-the-counter medications and supplements.

Self-care involves advocating for your well-being. If your concerns are not addressed satisfactorily, be assertive. Let your provider know that you still have questions and ask for an additional appointment, if the appointment can be longer or if there are other staff members who can address your questions. If your provider has a patient portal, check to see if you can post questions there.

DR. ZORBA'S corner

New research shows that getting three common tests at your health care provider's office may show if you are at risk for heart attack and stroke.

Tests for lipoprotein A, LDL (bad) cholesterol and C-Reactive protein, which is a measure of inflammation, provide vital information for your cardiovascular health. The Nurses' Health Study, which started in 1992, involves nearly 28,000 participants, looked at women whose average age was 55 years old. When the researchers reviewed the results of all three tests, the women with the highest levels had a 1.5 times higher associated risk for strokes and three times the associated risk for heart disease compared to women who had the lowest levels. Following a Mediterranean diet, exercising, taking a statin to lower HDL and getting blood pressure under control is critical in this at-risk group. — Zorba Paster, MD

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, PhD, CFP, AFC, MBA; Eric Endlich, PhD; Kenneth Holtyn, MS; Reed Humphrey, PhD; Gary B. Kushner, SPHR, CBP; Zorba Paster, MD; Cara Rosenbloom, RD; Elizabeth Smoots, MD; Margaret Spencer, MD

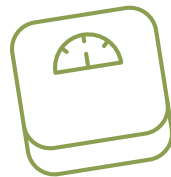
Editor: Airmie Miller

Graphic Designer: Sheila Nupen

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. © 2025 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.

STUDY: Antidepressants and Weight Gain

Several antidepressants are tied to weight gain. A study headed by Harvard public health researchers used electronic health records to follow weight changes for two years in more than 183,000 U.S. patients who were first-time users of eight different antidepressants.



The results showed the people who took Cymbalta, Lexapro or Paxil (or their generic equivalents) for six months were at highest risk for gaining at least 5% of the weight they started out with, compared to patients who took Zoloft (or the generic equivalent). Those who took Wellbutrin (generic Bupropion) did not have increased weight gain.

The study results do not mean treating your depression or anxiety with antidepressants will definitely cause you to pack on extra pounds. But ranking antidepressants by their weight gain potential could help health care providers and patients choose the antidepressant best for individuals. **One takeaway from the research:** The weight gain issue could be especially important in choosing medications for patients with diabetes.

STUDY: Aspirin and Older Adults

In a study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers found that 18.5 million participants ages 60 and older who had healthy hearts reported using aspirin in 2021 to prevent heart disease. Of those, 3.3 million said they used aspirin without first asking their health care provider.

Why does this matter? Aspirin may benefit some people with heart disease, but it carries risks which increase with age. In the 1990s, many health care providers advised patients to take an aspirin daily to lower the risk of first-time heart attacks and clot-related strokes. But since then, researchers have found that daily aspirin increases the risk of internal bleeding, especially in people who are age 60 or older. The bleeding can happen in the intestines or stomach, as well as intracranially (in the brain or between the skull and the brain).

The takeaway: Get your provider's okay before taking aspirin.

