

# Personal Best

HOPE Health Letter<sup>®</sup>

JUNE 2024

## Wellness Tourism

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD

**Wellness tourism is travel for promoting health and well-being.** You can focus on physical, psychological or spiritual activities involving nutrition, fitness, stress reduction, spiritual awakening, or a combination of these. The goal of wellness tourism is to turn travel into an opportunity to holistically improve or maintain health.



**How does it differ from medical tourism?** Medical tourism involves travel to receive medical treatment in a different country or state. For example, surgery or dental care may be scheduled somewhere else because it is less expensive, better quality or unavailable at home. In contrast, wellness tourism consists of trips centered on health and wellness, disease prevention, healthy lifestyle choices and ways to enhance our well-being.

**Wellness tourism had gross revenues reaching \$720 billion in 2019.** Driving this trend is an epidemic of chronic disease and many Americans' desire for better health. The Global Wellness Institute says wellness travelers consist of two main groups: ❶ those whose main motivation for picking a destination is wellness and ❷ travelers who participate in wellness activities to maintain their health while taking business or leisure trips. The Institute ranks the U.S. as the top wellness economy in the world and No. 1 in almost every category of access to wellness activities.

**Any type of travel has risks, such as weather, sanitation, foodborne illness and infectious disease.** Consult with a health care provider about vaccines, food and water sources and other recommendations, especially before traveling outside the U.S. Also ask your host destination what steps they take to reduce the environmental impact and habitat destruction of the programs they offer.

### BEST bits



■ **Quality sunglasses are more than just a fashion accessory.**

Wearing sunglasses daily, even when cloudy, decreases cataract risk and other eye damage from the sun's ultraviolet rays. Check the label to make sure your lenses provide UVA and UVB protection. **Sunglasses Awareness Day, on June 27,** is a good time to reflect on the health benefits of sunglasses.



■ **Family Health & Fitness Day is June 8.** Local parks and recreation

centers are great community resources that help improve the health of individuals and the whole community. Take advantage of health fairs, family fun runs and other health events sponsored on this day of observance. Check with your local parks and recreation centers for the schedule of events.



■ **June is Migraine and Headache Awareness Month.** The aim is to

increase awareness about headache conditions, such as migraine, tension or cluster headache, and new daily persistent headache. Education will center on the impact on people living with these conditions, as well as the importance of seeking medical care. Purple decorations in June signify this month of observance for people with headaches. If you suffer from chronic headache pain, contact your health care provider about treatment and lifestyle changes. Learn more at [headaches.org](https://headaches.org).

## MILK: Not Just From Cows

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



### TIP of the MONTH

#### Raw Milk

Raw milk is one of the most dangerous foods to consume, according to the CDC. Even people in excellent health can become seriously ill from drinking raw milk and eating raw milk products, such as ice cream and soft cheese. Why? Raw milk isn't pasteurized. Pasteurization kills dangerous germs with heat. Scientific research hasn't revealed any evidence that raw milk has nutritional benefits. Raw milk from organic (grass-fed) animals is just as harmful as that made from grain-fed livestock. Raw milk from dairies labeled organic, certified and local is no guarantee of safety. Pasteurization is one food manufacturing process that's safe and beneficial for your health.

**Americans have been gradually passing up cow milk in favor of plant-based milk alternatives.** In 2023, non-dairy milks accounted for \$3.6 billion in the U.S., with almond milk being the most popular.

**There are many reasons why you might prefer non-dairy milk.** You may opt for dairy-free beverages if you have lactose intolerance (though you can get lactose-free cow's milk), or a milk allergy, follow a vegan diet or want to avoid products made from cows given antibiotics and hormones.

#### Here's what to know when you peruse the dairy aisle:

**The key to choosing a good milk alternative is an option that is high in protein and low in sugar.** Cow's milk has 8 grams of protein per cup, but some plant-based milks have just 1 gram of protein. Soy milk is the only alternative naturally high in protein — with about 8 grams per cup, it's just like cow's milk (almond and hemp milk have less than 1 gram). Some oat and almond milks are now enriched with pea protein to bump up the total protein content.

**Check for added sugars.** Many plant-based milks have added sugars, especially if they are vanilla- or chocolate-flavored. Choose unsweetened beverages more often.

**Keep in mind that while dairy products are naturally rich in calcium,** alternative milks must be enriched with calcium to meet the levels in cow's milk. Choose an alternative that is fortified with calcium and other nutrients, such as vitamin D and B<sub>12</sub>. You may notice that your beverage carton has instructions to "shake well before serving." This is an important step, since the fortified vitamins and minerals tend to sink to the bottom of the container. Shake it up to ensure you get more nutrients in every cup.

**What about allergies?** If you have nut allergies, avoid beverages made from nuts, such as almond, cashew, hazelnut and macadamia. Pass on soy- and flax-based milks if you're allergic to either.



### Summer Corn Salad

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 3 cups fresh, frozen (defrosted) or canned (and drained) corn niblets | ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley or basil |
| 1 cup chopped cucumber  | 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil        |
| 1 cup diced tomato  | 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar           |
| ¼ cup diced red onion   | 1 tsp Dijon mustard                  |
|   | ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese           |

In a large bowl, add corn, cucumber, tomato, onion and parsley. In a small container with a lid, add oil, vinegar and mustard. **Shake** well, then add dressing to vegetables, and toss to coat. **Top** with feta cheese and serve.

**Makes 6 servings. Per serving:** 170 calories | 4g protein | 9g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 6g mono fat | 1g poly fat | 22g carbohydrate | 4g sugar (0g added sugar) | 3g fiber | 98mg sodium



EASY recipe

# When Office Gossip Is About You

By Eric Endlich, PhD

**While it might be tempting to listen to the latest juicy rumors about coworkers,** consider how you'd feel if you overheard others talking about you behind your back. Finding out that you've been the subject of office gossip can be very unsettling. Here are some useful steps to take if you learn that false rumors are being spread about you:



**Take five.** If you're going to navigate this challenging situation, you'll need to have your wits about you; take time to calm down so you can think clearly before you approach anyone.

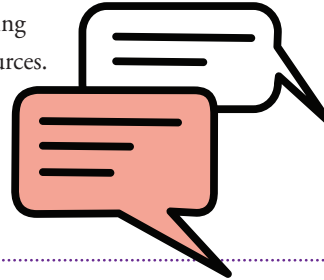
**Speak to the source.** If you learn that someone has made negative comments about you, approach them with curiosity, ask them to elaborate on any concerns they might have and resist the urge to accuse or attack them.

**Stick to your work.** If you strive to deliver excellent performance on the job, your accomplishments will speak for themselves and will overshadow any false claims that may have been made.

**Get support.** Confide in a trusted coworker or mentor. Or, if you feel you're being harassed or discriminated against, consider speaking to someone in human resources.

**Stay professional.** Set an example by not talking about other people.

**Focus on what you control.** You may not be able to stop others from spreading falsehoods, but you can choose to respect coworkers.



**June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness**

**Month.** Did you know? Alzheimer's is the sixth-leading cause of American deaths. But it's not part of normal aging, according to the NIH. Instead of feeling helpless about Alzheimer's and related forms of dementia, use **Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month** as an opportunity to discover ways to potentially lower the risk and bring attention and funding to Alzheimer's research. Learn more at [act.alz.org](https://act.alz.org).

# Getting Past Burnout

By Eric Endlich, PhD

**Prolonged stress can lead to burnout, a state of physical and emotional exhaustion.** When demands are too great, you may lose interest and motivation. It's important to address this condition before it leads to health problems.

## Some signs of burnout are:

- Impatience or irritability.
- Headaches, stomachaches or other pain with no known cause.
- Sleep changes.
- Difficulty focusing.
- Lack of satisfaction from usual activities.
- Feeling unappreciated or trapped.
- Coping through alcohol, drugs or food.
- A generally negative attitude.

## Keys to managing burnout include:

- **Identifying** the signs early. Know when you're reaching your limit.
- **Finding** a good listener. Whether via a loved one or support group, feeling heard can be very comforting.
- **Avoiding** excessive negativity. Read positive news stories and seek out upbeat people.
- **Maintaining** perspective. There's more to life than your stress triggers.
- **Taking** breaks. Step away from energy-sappers so you can recharge.
- **Engaging** in meaningful activities. What makes you feel fulfilled?
- **Considering** your options. Can you decline or delegate some tasks?
- **Relaxing.** Try yoga, a nature walk or soothing music.
- **Sleeping.** This is essential.
- **Exercising.** When your energy is low, this can be challenging but also rejuvenating.
- **Developing** a long-term plan. Select your top priorities, and keep them front and center.



Recognizing health problems affecting men saves lives. National Men's Health Week, June 10 to 16, brings awareness about men's risks for heart disease, stroke, prostate cancer, depression and other health problems. Guys, get your checkups, seek help quitting smoking or for other addiction problems, and learn how exercise and healthy diets can lower your health risks. Learn more at [cdc.gov/features/healthymen/index.html](https://cdc.gov/features/healthymen/index.html).



## Q: PTSD and COVID-19 connection?

**A:** The COVID-19 pandemic has not only worsened the physical health of countless individuals, but has also impacted mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD can occur after a dangerous or frightening experience, leading to symptoms including:

- Flashbacks or nightmares of the traumatic event.
- Avoidance of reminders of the trauma.
- Mood disturbance.
- Wariness or difficulty sleeping.

### COVID-19 may cause or worsen PTSD because of:

- Feeling unsafe. The potential threat of infection often raises anxiety levels.
- Breathing restrictions. The sensation of breathing through a mask, or difficulty breathing during a COVID infection, can trigger anxiety or trauma memories.
- Reduced coping strategies. Social distancing and reduced social contact may limit key sources of comfort for some people.



**Post-traumatic symptoms often resolve on their own in many cases.** However, if you believe you have PTSD and are not improving, consider seeking help from your health care provider or a mental health professional.

— Eric Endlich, PhD

# Pleasures of Pickleball

**It's a sport with a funny name, but pickleball is no joke.** Pickleball is the nation's fastest-growing sport and no wonder. It's easy to learn and great exercise for body and mind at any age and skill level.

**So what is pickleball?** You serve a soft, light plastic ball underhand with a solid paddle over a net to your opponent. Unlike tennis and other racket sports, this aerobic exercise has a shorter learning curve. It's great for building lower and upper body muscles, as well as those in the core.



**And with outdoor and indoor pickleball courts available nationwide,** it's easy to find a place to play, whether it's a fitness facility or a public park. Pickleball courts are 44 feet by 20 feet, making them smaller than tennis courts. The smaller court makes it easier to keep the ball in play longer than in tennis. The game is played to 11 points, and two to four steps are enough to get a point. While pickleball is a slower sport than tennis, it packs plenty of heart-pumping activity. It improves hand and eye coordination, too.

**Pickleball is a lower-impact sport,** which means less stress on your ankles, hips and knees. If you have a joint condition, such as arthritis, ask your health care provider about pickleball. To reduce risk of injury, always warm up — a five-minute walk is good — followed by stretching before you hit the court. Stretch after playing while your muscles are still warm.

**Did you know?** Pickleball was invented on Bainbridge Island, near Seattle, in 1965. The name comes from rowing, in which the slowest boat is the pickle boat.

# Wildfire Smoke

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

As events in recent years have shown, wildfire smoke can affect you even if you live hundreds of miles downwind from the point of origin. The smoke from some past fires was so thick it obscured landmarks, such as the Statue of Liberty. Smoke can linger for days, even after the wildfires have ended.

**Smoke from wildfires is potentially hazardous for everyone.** Struggling to breathe, coughing and wheezing can occur in healthy adults. People with certain health conditions, such as asthma, heart ailments and COPD, are especially vulnerable. Pregnant people are at higher risk, too. So are children, because their respiratory systems are still developing, and they breathe in more air relative to their body weight than adults do.

**Whether you live in a wildfire-prone area or downwind from one,** there are steps you can take to reduce your exposure to smoke:

- 1. Keep informed.** Check air quality at [airnow.gov](https://airnow.gov) and monitor news for weather information.
- 2. Stay indoors as much as possible** during a fire or smoky conditions. Protect indoor air by not frying, grilling, burning or smoking. Keep windows shut. If you can, equip one room (clean room) with an air purifier that has a HEPA filter. Set your air conditioner to recirculate, and close the fresh air intake. Do not use swamp coolers. Shut dampers. Do not vacuum. In cars, run the air conditioner set to recirculate with windows closed.
- 3. If you must go out when air quality is low, wear a securely fitting N95, KN95 or P100 respirator.** The number is the percentage of particles the mask filters out. These respirators work much better than bandanas and wet cloths, or dust and surgical masks.
- 4. Talk to your health care provider if you have a chronic condition aggravated by smoke.** Create a plan to manage your health during times of poor air quality. Make sure you have plenty of medications and any medical devices if you can't go out or have to evacuate.

## Q: What are aneurysms?

**A:** **An aneurysm is a bulge or dilation in a blood vessel wall.** It can develop in various areas of the body. Common locations include the thoracic (runs through the chest) aorta, the abdominal aorta, and blood vessels in the legs, neck or groin. Blood vessels in the brain may also develop aneurysms.

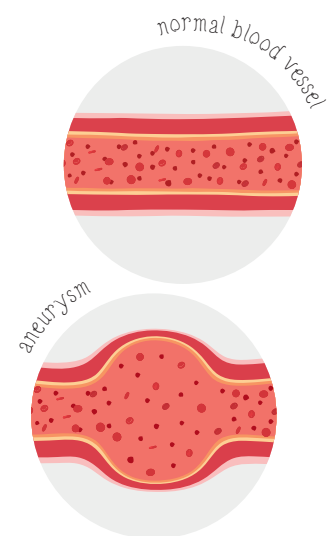
**Aneurysms often have no symptoms.** The main risk is that aneurysms can rupture, often without warning. This can lead to life-threatening internal bleeding or death. A ruptured aneurysm is a medical emergency; it may require immediate surgery.

**Medical monitoring is key.** People with aneurysms often have regularly scheduled checkups and imaging tests. A health care provider can evaluate the medical history, family history and symptoms. An estimate of the risk of rupture also depends on the dimensions, shape and location of the aneurysm. Screening for potential aneurysms should be considered for people who smoke or have polycystic kidneys, connective tissue disease or a family history of aneurysms.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



June 27 is National HIV Testing Day, an opportunity to think about your risk and take action. Talk to your health care provider or local health center about HIV testing. The CDC recommends everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once, and more often if you may be at risk for HIV. And learn more about HIV prevention and treatment by visiting [Let's Stop HIV](https://letstophiv.com) at [cdc.gov/stophivtogether](https://cdc.gov/stophivtogether), the CDC's national campaign to promote HIV testing and to help those diagnosed with HIV stay healthy. It's part of the **Ending the HIV Epidemic** in the U.S. initiative at [cdc.gov/endliv/index.html](https://cdc.gov/endliv/index.html), bringing new hope to those diagnosed with this virus.



# dollars&sense

## Savings Bonds: Still a Good Investment?

Bonds were once considered too conservative by investors looking for a high return on their savings, but government securities are a reliable, safe way to secure money for the long term. You can buy them from the government at [treasurydirect.gov](https://www.treasurydirect.gov). Paper bonds are no longer available. The bonds can be cashed in after a year, and they continue to pay interest until their maturity at 30 years.

You can choose from EE savings bonds and I savings bonds. EE bonds provide a fixed interest rate which remains constant through the bond's life. I bonds have a fixed component and a variable component which changes every six months based on inflation (think of it as inflation protection built into the investment). You can buy \$10,000 worth of I bonds a year. Government bonds aren't an exciting way to save, but they're a secure investment for your nest egg.

**What if you lost a savings bond you were given?** Not to worry: Use Form 1048 Claim for Lost, Stolen, or Destroyed United States Savings Bonds. You don't need the bond's serial number, but the more information you provide, the more likely you can retrieve the bonds or receive payment for them.

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

# safety solutions

## Annual Safety Quiz

It's National Safety Month — test your knowledge by answering the following true or false questions.

- Electrical power strips can handle unlimited devices.  
 True  False
- Keep three points of contact while climbing or descending a ladder.  
 True  False
- If your radon levels fall below 4 pCi/L, you are safe for at least ten years.  
 True  False
- If you are driving and the road becomes flooded, turn around. Don't attempt to go through the flooded area even if it appears shallow.  
 True  False
- Set the thermostat on your water heater at 120°F or lower to avoid potential burns.  
 True  False

### ANSWERS:

- 1. False** — Power strips have a maximum load capacity that cannot be exceeded. Overloading can cause short-circuiting and overheating, which can lead to fire. Always check the power strip's maximum load capacity and don't exceed it.
- 2. True** — Limit your exposure to slips and falls by always maintaining three points of contact when ascending or descending a ladder: Face the ladder, have two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand in contact with the ladder steps, rungs and side rails.
- 3. False** — Even levels below 4 pCi/L can be harmful and radon levels can change over the years. Continue to check levels every two years.
- 4. True** — If a road becomes flooded, **turn around**. Don't attempt to go through the flooded area; even six inches of water will cause loss of control. One foot of water can float many vehicles and two feet of water can sweep most vehicles away.
- 5. True** — Set the thermostat on your water heater at 120°F or lower to avoid scalds and burns. Always test the water temperature before bathing a child.



## Personal Data Breaches

June is Internet  
Safety Month.



You just got word that your data kept by a hospital or retailer was hacked. What do you do?

**Stay informed.** If you learn of a data breach, read all of the information the organization sends you. Find out the scope and nature of the breach, the type of data leaked and risks associated with the compromised information.

**Change your password.** Make sure it's at least 12 characters long. Use upper and lower case letters, symbols and numbers. A random string of characters is best. Avoid recognizable words and phrases. **Tip:** Use a password manager to generate random and unique passwords and to store all passwords.

**Don't reuse your passwords.** Each online account needs a unique password.

**Use multi-factor authentication (MFA)** or two-factor authentication (2FA) whenever you can. Many websites already require it. These security measures provide an extra layer of protection by requiring another verification step, such as replying to a text, using a code that is sent to you, a facial scan or another identity verification method.

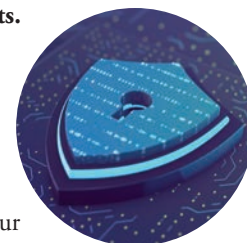
**Monitor your financial accounts.**

This includes all bank accounts, credit cards and payment apps. You can also consider a credit monitoring service, especially if the data breach involves highly sensitive information, such as your social security number.

**Check your credit reports at no cost.** Go to [annualcreditreport.com](https://annualcreditreport.com). You can print or save them as a pdf. Review these reports often for suspicious activity. Report discrepancies. All three major national credit bureaus participate: TransUnion, Experian and Equifax. **Tip:** Watch out for and avoid websites that sell credit reports.

**Beware of phishing emails, texts or direct messages.**

After the breach, cybercriminals may try to exploit it by sending you phishing bait, requiring you to click links or call a number. *Don't fall for it.* Contact the company directly using the information on their website or app.



# Strategies for **Hot** Weather

**It's official: 2023 was Earth's hottest year since global records began in 1850,** according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It was marked by extreme heat events, which led to illness, hospitalizations and deaths.

**The definition of extreme heat depends on where you live.** Heat waves aren't restricted to traditionally warmer climates. An example from the CDC: In Boston, 92°F in May is extreme heat. But in Phoenix, the temperature has to rise above 100°F to be called extreme. And extreme heat can occur in rural areas, too.

**Why should you be concerned about extreme heat?** In the U.S., severe heat caused more deaths in most years from 2012 to 2022 than any other hazardous weather, including flooding, hurricanes and tornadoes. On average, emergency rooms nationwide see more than 65,000 people annually for acute (short-term) heat illness, according to the CDC. Even northern regions, such as the Pacific Northwest, can experience heat waves. For example, in June 2021, normally mild Seattle baked at 107°F.

**Extreme heat also aggravates chronic conditions** — heart disease, respiratory disease (asthma and COPD), diabetes. Overweight people, those with certain health or mobility conditions, the ill and the elderly are also at higher risk for heat-related ailments. So are people who take certain medications.

## Here's how to keep your cool when the temperature rises:

**If you have air conditioning, use it.** Replace outdated or inefficient models before you need them. Air conditioners and other cooling devices sell out quickly when the heat hits. Follow manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance. Keep all windows closed for best performance.

**Electric fans are a tried-and-true cooling method** if you can't afford air conditioning. Check them in the spring to make sure they're working. Fans provide relief whether they're

ceiling, tower, tabletop or personal models.

**Seek out cooling shelters** and other air-conditioned public areas, such as libraries, shopping malls, movie theaters and libraries, when you need to beat the heat. Stay indoors during the day as much as you can. Schedule outdoor activities to avoid times when the sun is most intense (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

**Check on your neighbors,** especially if they are house-bound or unwell. The elderly and those with limited mobility are especially

## Don't Spare the Sunscreen

Sunscreen users often get burned, likely because they apply too little sunscreen — or apply or reapply it too late during sun exposure, according to the CDC.

### The best defense is to use a lot of sunscreen:

- 1 **Apply** an ounce (a full shot glass) of sunscreen to cover your entire exposed body, including neck, ears, top of feet and head. (Check expiration dates before using.)
- 2 **Use** *broad-spectrum* and *water-resistant* sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30.
- 3 **Choose** 30 to 50 SPF for fair or sensitive complexions.
- 4 **Apply** sunscreen at least 15 minutes before you go outside. Reapply it at least every two hours: more often when sweating or in or around water.

vulnerable to heat illness and even death if they don't have air conditioning or other ways of staying cool.

**Subscribe to local heat alert systems** and monitor the weather. Remember that humidity matters, too. During high humidity, water takes longer to evaporate, so it's harder for you to cool down by sweating.

**If you must work outdoors,** save your most intense activities for early morning if possible. Drink plenty of water or electrolyte-replacing fluids before you are thirsty. If it's very hot, drink every 15 minutes. Wear lightweight, light-colored and loose clothing, and a wide-brimmed hat. Shield your eyes with sunglasses that have UV protection. Take frequent breaks in shade or air conditioning.

**Pavement, especially asphalt, can burn your feet** (or your pet's paws) in extreme heat. At peak temperatures, pavement can get hot enough to cause second-degree burns. Wear shoes even if you're just getting the mail. Make sure your children wear foot protection when they're outside. Walk dogs on the grass or use dog booties or paw wax to protect them from injury.



## DR. ZORBA'S corner

### Waist-to-Hip Ratio Research

When it comes to an ideal weight, researchers are rethinking the Body Mass Index (BMI). It's calculated by taking a person's weight in pounds divided by the square of height in feet. A BMI above 25 can mean you're overweight and higher than 30 is the start of obesity. But recently British researchers looked at almost 400,000 men and women, trying to see if waist-to-hip ratio was a better indicator of heart attacks, stroke and other causes of mortality. This method measures abdominal fat, which isn't good for your health. Participants were measured where their waists were narrowest, generally around the belly button, and the hips at their broadest. A higher waist-to-hip ratio was linked more strongly and consistently than BMI to a greater risk of death from any cause. For men an ideal waist to hip ratio is 0.9 — anything higher than 1 means too much abdominal fat. For women .8 or less is ideal and 0.86 is high. You may see this measurement at your next health care provider's visit. — Zorba Paster, MD

#### Stay in Touch. Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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### STUDY: Plant-Based Diet and Diabetes Risk

**Healthful plant-based diets are associated with lower risks of type 2 diabetes.** A prospective cohort study in *Diabetes & Metabolism* followed 113,000 residents (aged 40 to 69) of England, Scotland and Wales for 12 years. Participants were graded on whether they had a healthful or unhealthful plant-based diet. A healthful plant-based diet had high intakes of vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, whole grains, tea and coffee. In addition, it was low in sweets, desserts, refined grains, potatoes and sugary drinks.

**Participants with the top scores for healthful plant-based diets** had a 24% reduced risk of type 2 diabetes compared to those with the bottom scores. In contrast, those with the highest scores for unhealthful plant-based diets had a 37% increased risk of type 2 diabetes.

#### How do healthful plant-based diets help?

The study found that healthful plant-based diets lower body fat and waist circumference and reduce inflammation. The diets also normalize blood sugar, decrease triglycerides and improve kidney and liver function. The researchers concluded that eating a healthful plant-based diet can help prevent type 2 diabetes.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, [Get in the Swim](#), is at [personalbest.com/extras/24V6tools](http://personalbest.com/extras/24V6tools).

### STUDY: Sleep and High Blood Pressure

**Irregular sleep patterns may increase the risk of high blood pressure.** An American Heart Association study found an association between people who went to sleep and woke up at inconsistent times and a greater chance of developing hypertension than those with consistent sleep patterns. Researchers reviewed the sleep patterns of 12,287 adults from 20 countries for nine months. A device under the mattress measured when participants fell asleep and woke up.

**A 90-minute variation in bedtime** was linked to a 92% increased risk of high blood pressure compared to a regular bedtime. A bedtime variability of 30 minutes was associated with a 32% higher risk in the study. Waking up 43 minutes late increased the risk 9%. **In conclusion:** A regular sleep schedule is essential for cardiovascular health.

**While the study only showed an association,** not a direct cause and effect, scientists do agree that getting seven to nine hours of quality sleep nightly (or daily if you work shifts), is good for your heart and overall health.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD