



WELCOA'S
spark16
IGNITE YOUR BEST YOU.

FEATURING
16 GREAT WAYS TO...
A HEALTHY HEART
Pages 4-5

A MONTHLY HEALTHLETTER FROM THE WELLNESS COUNCIL OF AMERICA

1-MINUTE
Deep Breathing
Exercise

Perhaps as the result of a lifetime of stress, adults learn to breathe shallowly, into the upper part of the lungs. With this type of breathing there isn't much air exchanged (about half a pint), which leaves stale air in the lower lobes of the lungs. On the other hand, breathing deeply brings in about a gallon of air per breath.

Try This:

- Place your hand over your belly. Take a deep breath in. You should feel your hand rise just slightly on the in-breath, and most likely you'll feel your hand fall even more on the out-breath.
- Focus on your breath and feel your hand rise and fall with each inhalation and exhalation. See if you can make your exhalation last a few seconds longer than your inhalation. Take three to five deep breaths this way or until you feel relaxed.



Breathe Easy...
Protect Your Heart?

Although researchers have yet to pinpoint stress as an independent risk factor for heart disease, we do know that chronic stress negatively affects your cardiovascular system in several ways. Indeed, when you're under stress, your body goes through a primitive "fight or flight" response in which you are likely to experience:

- A release of cortisol (a stress hormone)
- Increased blood pressure
- A release of fatty acids into the bloodstream (which after time can increase cholesterol and triglycerides)
- An increased heart rate

If you are in the midst of a brief crisis (think house fire, attack, robbery, etc.) this stress response can help you quickly react and survive the situation. Of course, most of the stress we experience today is not related to escaping a fire, but rather a long day at the office. Unfortunately, your body doesn't know the difference between a life-threatening situation and chronic stress. Without strategies to deal with the stress of modern day life, your body—and in particular your heart—will greatly suffer.

Address The Stress In A Breath

To be sure, deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. When you breathe deeply your brain receives more oxygen, and moreover, deep breathing sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. Your brain then sends this message to the rest of your body. All of the effects of stress, such as an increased heart rate and increased blood pressure begin to decrease as you breathe deeply.

Deep breathing certainly won't remove the chronic stress from your life, but it will almost instantaneously help your body and cardiovascular system fight the physiological effects of stress.



MORE HEALTH TIPS INSIDE

This Month's Recipe:

Vegetable Lasagna

Not only is this dish packed with nutritional goodness, it's absolutely delicious! Here's how to make this meal:

INGREDIENTS:

9 lasagna noodles (*Barilla* "no boiling required" brand is a great option)

1 8-oz. container of sliced, fresh mushrooms

1 cup pre-packaged shredded carrots

1 medium yellow onion, chopped

3 Tbsps extra virgin olive oil

1 15-oz. can of tomato sauce

1 12-oz. can of tomato paste

1 small can of sliced black olives

3 Tbsps of fresh basil

1 Tbsp of oregano

1 10-oz. package of frozen chopped spinach, thawed, and squeezed to remove water

1 cup of low-fat cottage cheese

4 cups of shredded mozzarella cheese

1 3-oz. container of shredded parmesan cheese

INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. In a large skillet, sauté the mushrooms, carrots, and onions in olive oil until tender. Stir in tomato sauce, paste, olives, spinach, basil, and oregano. Mix cottage cheese and ricotta together in a separate bowl. Place a single layer of lasagna noodles in a lightly greased 13x9 baking dish. Spread with a layer of cottage cheese/ricotta mixture, spinach/tomato mixture, and mozzarella/parmesan mixture to cover the noodles. Repeat layers (three of each). Bake at 375 for about 40 minutes or until bubbling. Let stand for a few minutes before serving.



Dr. Ann
Ann Kulze, M.D.

With formal training in nutrition and medicine, plus hands-on experience as a mother of four and family physician, Dr. Ann is a unique nutrition expert for the real world.

The whole food ingredients found in Dr. Ann's recipes are the right foods for health and vitality. Nutritional excellence naturally follows.

For more, visit DrAnnWellness.com.

QUICK TIP

Looking for a gluten-free and/or lower carb option? Substitute slices of zucchini for lasagna noodles. Just slice 2 large zucchinis lengthwise into very thin slices and use in place of the lasagna noodles. You won't even miss the noodles in this one!



Energize Your Diet!

4 Super Easy Ways To Boost Your Health And Energy

Consuming the right foods cannot only satisfy your hunger, but it can also boost your mood and energy level. Here are four surefire strategies that deliver a delicious energy boost:

- 1. Eat a lean protein at every meal.** Consuming protein gives rise to a prolonged and sustained blood glucose level, which translates to a steady and robust energy level. Moreover, lean proteins like skinless chicken and turkey include the amino acid tyrosine, which boosts levels of two brain chemicals (dopamine and norepinephrine) that can help you feel more alert and focused.
- 2. Indulge in an ounce or two of dark chocolate.** This delectable treat provides just the right amount of sugar and caffeine to jump-start dwindling energy levels and is loaded with flavanols (an antioxidant) which can enhance blood flow and energy. Aim for dark chocolate that contains at least 60 percent of cacao.
- 3. Drink a cup of freshly brewed tea.** Green, black, white and oolong all provide a small amount of energy-boosting caffeine along with potent antioxidants called catechins that increase blood flow. Studies show that tea may also improve alertness, reaction time and memory.
- 4. Try to eat beans every day.** Beans may perhaps be nature's most perfect energy-boosting food. They are a rich source of the body's preferred fuel—glucose—that's released steadily over a longer period of time (this translates to immediate, but sustained energy). In addition, they are chock full of B vitamins and minerals that play a key role in energy production at the cellular level. Kidney, garbanzo, pinto, black beans—and hummus dips—are all great (and delicious) options.

SUPER STAR FOOD OF THE MONTH: Cauliflower

Like its cruciferous cousins, broccoli, cabbage and kale, cauliflower is a nutritional and cancer-fighting powerhouse. Cauliflower provides a hefty dose of fiber, vitamin C, and folate, but is most prized for its anti-cancer chemicals called glucosinolates and thiocyanates.



ROAST YOUR VEGGIES

Roasting is arguably the easiest and tastiest way to prepare your veggies. It preserves their nutrients while concentrating their natural sugars and flavors, which makes them particularly yummy to even the pickiest palates. Roasting also dramatically shrinks veggies in size (because it removes their water), making it easier to consume more in one sitting. Some of the best vegetables to roast include cauliflower, broccoli, sweet potatoes, carrots, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, onions and bell peppers. Simply place your vegetables of choice on a baking sheet or casserole dish, drizzle or mist with extra virgin olive oil, sprinkle with kosher salt, and roast at 375-400 degrees until lightly browned (about 15-20 minutes)



HEALTHY



Cool Tool!

Check out the Cleveland Clinic's website to assess your risk of heart attack. The tool uses information from the Framingham Heart Study to predict your risk of developing a heart attack in the next 10 years.

To get started, go to <http://my.clevelandclinic.org/heart/prevention/framingham.aspx> and then click "risk assessment tool."

1 Eliminate one processed food from your diet each day. Most processed foods (chips, white pasta, etc.) are loaded with sodium, and too much sodium can increase your blood pressure and risk for a heart attack. Overhauling your diet may be tough, but removing one processed food item a day is a great place to start.

2 Discover your "heart age." Learning your "heart age" will give you a good indication of your heart health. Check out the online calculator at www.heartagecalculator.com.

3 Get annual check-ups. This is the best and most accurate way to learn critical heart numbers. Knowing and keeping your blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and triglycerides in check are critical for good heart health.

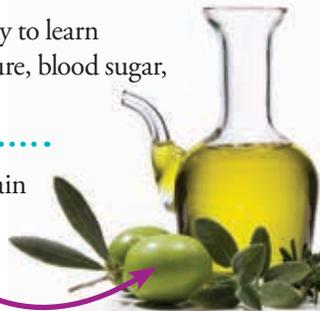
4 Replace butter with olive and canola oils. These oils contain good amounts of heart-healthy monounsaturated fats. Butter on the other hand is made from animal fat and contains cholesterol and high levels of saturated fat.

5 Find an activity you enjoy and do it 30 minutes a day. The research is overwhelming and conclusive—physical activity will help to keep your heart healthy.

6 Put any foods that contain "hydrogenated oil" or "partially hydrogenated oil" back on the shelf. It means the food contains trans fat—what most doctors consider the unhealthiest type of fat.

7 Gradually add more fiber to your diet. Studies link a high-fiber diet with a lower risk of heart disease. To prevent gas and bloating, gradually add more high-fiber foods like fruits and vegetables and whole grains, such as brown rice and whole-wheat pasta to your daily diet.

8 Do something relaxing every day—no exceptions. Harvard researchers have uncovered strong links between stress and cardiovascular disease. Whether it's listening to music, taking a jog or reading a book—find a healthy way to unwind every day.



Tips For A HEART



Did You Know?

When it comes to exercise and heart health, activities like dancing, playing tag with your kids and/or vacuuming or mopping the floors all count. You just need to get up and move!

9 Stop smoking. Drop this nasty habit and drop one of the top controllable risk factors for heart disease.

10 Get out of your chair every hour. Being a couch potato has an unhealthy influence on blood fats and blood sugar. Moreover, an analysis published in the *British Medical Journal* suggests that the life expectancy of the entire U.S. population could increase if we simply sat less. Aim to get up and move for at least 60 seconds every hour.

11 Brew a cup of tea every day. Researchers followed more than 37,000 people in the Netherlands for 13 years and found that people who drank three to six cups of tea (green or black) per day had a 45 percent lower risk of death from heart disease than people who drank less than one cup of tea a day.

12 Eat fish twice a week. Research suggests that consuming fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids like salmon, herring and sardines may reduce your risk of heart disease by 30 percent.

13 Do strength training a few times a week. In addition to aerobic activity (i.e., walking, running) the American Heart Association endorses light weight training as a beneficial activity for those with heart disease as well as those trying to prevent it.

14 Laugh every day. Watch a funny video or read a joke. Research from the University of Maryland School of Medicine shows that laughter helps relieve the stress that damages the tissue that forms the inner lining of blood vessels and helps blood flow.

15 Eat a handful of nuts every day. According to the Food and Drug Administration, eating about a handful of most nuts, such as almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, pistachio nuts and walnuts may reduce your risk of heart disease.

16 Learn what a heart attack looks like. It's usually not like what you see on TV. Visit www.heart.org for warning signs and action plans.



Remember to talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

Want To Help A Friend Or Loved One Get Active?

The Do's & Don'ts



The short and long-term benefits of exercise are practically endless, yet many people still struggle finding the time and motivation to get active. The good news is that if someone you care about is having a hard time getting active, there are several things you can do to help:

DO entice with the benefits, DON'T focus on the negative. Chances are, your friend or loved one already knows that they're compromising their health by not exercising. So, focus on the not-so-obvious benefits. For example, you could point out that a group class is a great way to socialize and meet new people. Or perhaps you can mention that you always feel rejuvenated and refreshed after a brisk walk.

DO start small, DON'T try to overhaul their schedule. You don't need to endure hour-long boot camp sessions to reap the benefits of physical activity. In fact, if your friend is a novice, such workouts could prove overwhelming and lead to injury. Focus on helping your friend start small like squeezing in a 10 to 15-minute walk a few times a day.

DO keep your commitments, DON'T expect them to go it alone. Whether it's through continual encouragement and advice or holding them accountable to their workouts, supporting your friend or loved one is critical when it comes to helping them adopt an active lifestyle. Ask them what they need from you and then don't waiver on that commitment.

DO recognize accomplishments, DON'T reward with unhealthy gifts or incentives. Take time to recognize both small and large achievements—celebrating and recognizing success is essential to staying on track and keeping motivated. Send a congratulatory email, buy a workout DVD or go to a movie to recognize milestones. Just be sure you don't reward accomplishments with junk food or a night full of cocktails—this is counterintuitive to the healthy lifestyle you're trying to help your friend achieve.

MOVE OF THE MONTH

STAIR STEPPING

One of the best and most convenient ways to challenge your cardiovascular system and keep your heart, lungs and body in shape is to walk up and down stairs. This is a great and simple move you can do by yourself or with a friend.

Get Ready...

All you'll need is a flight or more of stairs. If you don't have access to stairs, you can also use a low to moderate-sized bench, sturdy chair, outside curb or even a hard-covered, large book placed securely against a wall.

Get Set...

Stand upright with your feet together, legs straight and hands down by your sides—facing the lowest step.

GO!

1. Step up with your right foot. Then step up with your left foot.
2. Continue this progression all the way up the flight of stairs.
3. Repeat this motion up and down the stairs with the goal of stepping up and down for at least 4-30 minutes in duration.

Seasonal Affective Disorder

When It's More Than The Blues

If you seem to experience a serious mood change during the winter months, you may be suffering from seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. SAD is a type of depression that occurs during the same season each year. Experts are not completely sure what causes SAD, but they think it may be caused by a lack of sunlight.

If you feel down and out all winter, but feel much better in spring and summer, you may have SAD. Symptoms for SAD vary, but commonly include:

- Sad, anxious or empty feelings
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Changes in weight
- A heavy feeling in the arms or legs
- Social withdrawal

When To See Your Doctor

It's completely normal to have some bad days. However, if you feel down for several days in a row and nothing seems to lift your mood, see your doctor.

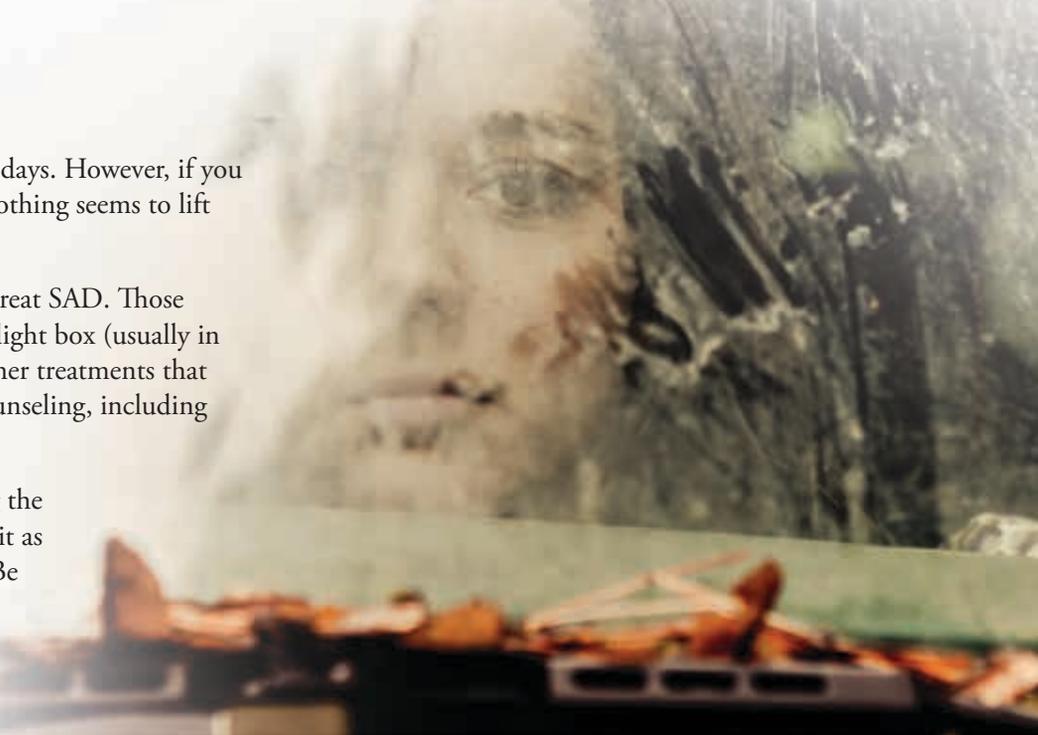
Doctors often prescribe light therapy to treat SAD. Those with the disorder simply sit in front of a light box (usually in the morning) for at least 30 minutes. Other treatments that may help include antidepressants and counseling, including cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Bottom line: If you're constantly feeling the winter blues don't brush it off or dismiss it as something that's simply "in your head." Be aware of the signs and symptoms and see your doc for diagnosis and treatment.

See The Light, Feel Better?

Melatonin is a hormone made by a small gland in the brain, and it helps control your sleep and wake cycles. Normally, melatonin levels begin to rise in the evening and then drop in the early morning hours. In part, your body clock controls how much melatonin your body makes, but light also affects melatonin production. Indeed, when your body notices there is no sunlight, the brain is signaled to produce melatonin. During the shorter days of the winter months, your body may produce melatonin earlier in the day than usual and these levels may not drop off until later the next day. This hormonal change is thought to lead to the symptoms of SAD and it's why light therapy is often used to treat the disorder.

Since experts know that lack of light can cause an imbalance in melatonin production, it's thought that light therapy using a special lamp that mimics light from the sun can help your body maintain a healthy melatonin production, and thus keep those winter blues at bay.



WELCOA'S **spark16**

IGNITE YOUR BEST YOU.

In every issue you'll find 16 ridiculously simple ways to stay healthy!

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DID YOU KNOW?

30
percent

CONSUMING FISH RICH IN OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS LIKE SALMON, HERRING AND SARDINES MAY REDUCE YOUR RISK OF HEART DISEASE BY 30 PERCENT.

30
minutes

THE AMOUNT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY YOU SHOULD AIM FOR EVERY DAY. WALKING AND DOING YARD WORK COUNTS!

1,500

THE AVERAGE AMOUNT OF BREATHS YOU TAKE IN A 24-HOUR PERIOD

The Benefits Of **Deep Breathing**



Believe it or not, the way you breathe can have a tremendous impact on your entire body. Short, shallow breathing limits your diaphragm, which means the lowest part of your lungs doesn't get all the oxygenated air it should. You may not realize it, but this can make you feel short of breath and anxious.

When you breathe deeply, you take a long, slow breath through your nose and exhale through your mouth. This type of breathing allows your lungs to fully fill with oxygen, and it can slow your heartbeat and lower or stabilize blood pressure

Start Now

Taking a few minutes out of the day to deep breathe has definite health benefits. Fortunately, breathing exercises are easy to learn. You can do them whenever you want, and you don't need any special tools or equipment to do them!

What's In A Number?

1
PINT

WITH SHORT, SHALLOW
BREATHING

THIS IS ABOUT HOW MUCH
AIR IS EXCHANGED IN
YOUR LUNGS

1
GALLON

WITH DEEP
BREATHING

YOU EXCHANGE ABOUT A
GALLON OF AIR PER BREATH