

OnTrack to Wellness

Brought to You by the NYC Transit HR Benefits Wellness Team

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The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

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Fish Power

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Dietary Guidelines suggest that Americans eat at least two (3.5 oz.) servings of fish each week, and for good reason. Fish is a great source of protein and omega-3 fats, and contributes vitamins and minerals to the diet, including selenium, vitamin D, iron and zinc.

Eating enough fish helps protect heart health, lower blood pressure and improve blood vessel function, especially when you choose fatty fish such as salmon, trout and sardines. Fish may also help reduce the risk of depression and Alzheimer's disease. The trouble is, most Americans aren't eating enough fish. About half of all Americans eat fish only occasionally or not at all.

Why is our fish intake so low? Some simply don't like fish, while some don't know how to prepare it. And others are worried about possible contaminants such as mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Is this fear warranted? Researchers have calculated that if 100,000 people ate farmed salmon twice a week for 70 years, the extra PCB intake could potentially cause 24 extra deaths from cancer — but would prevent at least 7,000 deaths from heart disease. Levels of PCBs and dioxins in fish are very low, similar to levels in meats, dairy products, and eggs.

To avoid excess mercury, especially if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or feeding young children, watch local fish advisories. Steer clear of shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. Instead, choose shrimp, canned light tuna or salmon — which happen to be the most popular types of fish for eating in the U.S. anyway.

Physical Activity for Life

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Did you know? New evidence-based studies show we can fight many of our most common chronic health problems simply by staying physically active.

Key Recommendations:

Ages 3 to 5 (new): Get at least 3 hours per day of active play (light, moderate or vigorous) to enhance growth and development.

Ages 6 to 17 (no change): Get 60 minutes per day of moderate-to-vigorous intensity activity for healthy heart, muscle and bone development.

Adults (no change): Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity each week; add muscle strengthening 2 to 3 days a week.

Light intensity

Walking leisurely or doing light household chores.

Moderate intensity

Biking, walking briskly or raking the yard.

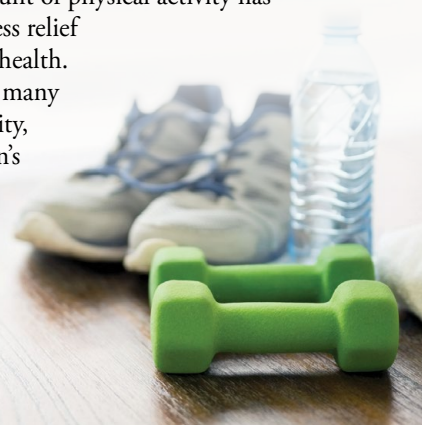
Vigorous intensity

Jogging, circuit workouts or heavy labor.

Just move more and sit less. There is no minimum exercise time requirement now. The new guidelines suggest any amount of physical activity has health benefits, including better sleep, stress relief and improved blood pressure and mental health. Over time, staying physical helps manage many ongoing health conditions including obesity, osteoarthritis, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, diabetes and dementia.



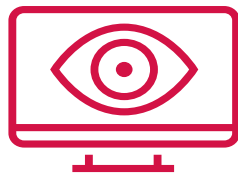
May is **Physical Fitness and Sports Month**, a good time to learn more at **Move Your Way** at health.gov/moveyourway/.



Our health is something we often take for granted. But, there are some things in life that should never be taken for granted. Take care of yourself.

— Catherine Pulsifer

Computer Vision Syndrome



May is Healthy Vision Month — a perfect time to focus on computer vision syndrome (CVS). Although not a vision-threatening problem, CVS can cause several annoying and sometimes painful symptoms, including eyestrain, blurred vision, dry eyes, headaches and neck pain.

Studies show 50% to 90% of people who use a computer for 2 hours or more sometimes experience CVS symptoms.

But there's good news. Several simple self-help measures can help relieve and prevent CVS.

For example, the American Optometric Association advises adjusting your computer screen so it is about 4 to 5 inches below eye level. Position your computer screen to avoid glare, too. If you can't change the lighting, consider a glare filter for the computer screen.

More eye-relieving tips:

- Rest your eyes for 15 minutes after 2 hours of computer use.
- Follow the **20-20-20 Rule**: For every 20 minutes of computer viewing, take a 20-second break and refocus your eyes by looking 20 feet away.
- Blink frequently to keep eyes moist; use moisturizing eye drops.
- Make sure your chair is comfortable to avoid neck and shoulder discomfort.
- Get an eye exam. Uncorrected or under-corrected vision problems contribute to eyestrain. Some people benefit from glasses prescribed specifically for computer use, too.

Women: Take Time for Health

What have you done lately for better health? Aside from work, household routines and the many people in your life, are you also taking care of your health?

Take preventive action against the top 2 causes of death in America — heart disease and cancer:

1. Learn your family's medical history; recognize the leading risks to good health including obesity, smoking and inactivity.
2. Depending on your age, be sure you have regular cancer screenings and routine checkups.
3. Work closely with a trusted health care provider, especially on tough issues (e.g., losing excess weight, ongoing stress).

Good health is a woman's best friend. Learn more at womenshealth.gov/nwhw/by-age.

National Women's Health Week is May 12 to 18.



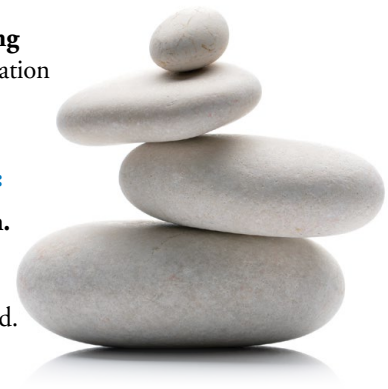
What's On Your Mind?

Do you ever feel like your mind is going in a million directions at once? Information overload can lead to stress, negativity and disorganization.

Try these steps to declutter your mind:

- **Challenge yourself but not too much.** When a task is too easy, you are likely to get bored; when it's too hard, you may become frustrated and discouraged. Seek the Goldilocks zone of just-right difficulty.
- **Tame your emotional tiger.** Recognize your feelings; then take steps to manage them. Try deep breathing, challenging your negative thoughts and problem solving (vs. just plain worrying).
- **Stay focused.** You may not experience the zone (the ability to focus) until 20 minutes into a task, so set distractions aside and stick with the activity long enough to hit your stride.
- **Break it up.** Every hour or so, take 10 to 15 minutes to stretch, move or do something different.

Review these steps as needed when you start a new project.



Take the Pressure Off



May is Stroke Prevention Month.

Reducing high blood pressure can help prevent stroke, a major cause of death and disability. High blood pressure damages blood vessels and leads to serious health problems, including stroke. It's the major risk factor for stroke, but one that is preventable.

If your blood pressure is too high, work with your health care provider to lower it. Here's what you can do:

- **Try the health-healthy DASH** (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan. It's rich in vegetables, fruits and whole grains and low in salt. Research shows it can lower high blood pressure.
- **Exercise regularly.** (Get your health care provider's OK if you are new to exercise.)
- **Control stress.** Research shows techniques such as yoga and meditation can effectively soothe stress, lowering blood pressure in many people.
- **Get serious about weight control.** Even losing just 3% to 5% of excess weight can improve blood pressure readings.
- **If you smoke, get help quitting.** Call the National Cancer Institute's free Smoking Quitline at 1-877-448-7848.



Note: Taking prescribed medication, if needed, is important. Even if you feel fine, never stop using it unless your provider says you can.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Eating the Mediterranean Way**, is at personalbest.com/extras/19V5tools.

5.2019