

Featured content



Losing it

Smart moves for weight loss that lasts

By Robert Snarski

Spring is peeking around the corner, and that means our motivation for losing weight likely will kick into high gear.

There are weddings to attend, beaches to visit, dresses to wear and people to impress. But don't fall into a dieting trap, one that may result in short-term success but may ultimately lead to long-term problems. Instead, choose the right diet and exercise plan and stick to it.

Here are a few do's and don'ts to help you achieve your healthy weight goals:

DO form new habits: Any diet that can train you to engage in

healthier behaviors is worth more than a few dropped pounds.

"You'll be better served making long-term, significant changes to your eating habits, like cutting out soda or eating a higher percentage of vegetables each day," says Annie Kay, a registered dietitian and author of "Every Bite is Divine." "Cutting carbs out of your life for 10 weeks may help you drop some pounds for a short period of time, but reducing carbs permanently will help you maintain a healthier lifestyle for years to come."

DON'T set unrealistic goals: Whether you're attending a high school reunion in a month or preparing for a trip to Mexico

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with friends this spring, you might be tempted to go for broke when it comes to losing weight. A slow, steady approach — most experts suggest losing one or two pounds a week — will improve your odds of keeping the weight off and will spare you from unnecessary health risks.

While it may be possible to lose weight over a short period of time, you need to set strong habits that will serve you well in the years to come.

DO drink more water: It's obvious advice, but it's absolutely essential. Keeping your body flush with water helps boost your metabolism, cleanse your body of waste and acts as an appetite suppressant.

The National Academy of Medicine recommends drinking at least one eight-ounce glass of water with each meal, carrying water with you in a reusable bottle, drinking extra water while working out, eating more soups and liquid-rich meals, and eating fruits and vegetable with high water content, such as berries, grapes, melons, tomatoes, celery, cucumbers and lettuce.

DON'T use eating to respond to your emotions: We know the potential emotional traps waiting for us — increased responsibilities at work, growing financial obligations, disagreements with family members. It's difficult to navigate through them without giving into our old



habits.

"It's easy to succumb to a quick trip to the vending machine at the office or a late-night binge at home when you're feeling stressed or unhappy," says Mark Goulston, a Los Angeles-based psychiatrist and author of "Get Out of Your Own Way: Overcoming Self-Defeating Behavior." "Instead of going back to your old lifestyle, find new ways to deal with negative factors in your life instead of adding to them by engaging in potentially harmful behavior."

DO find a partner or a cheering

section: Goulston, who also hosts the weekly podcast "My Wakeup Call," says communicating with others is often the best way to stay on track when trying to accomplish a goal.

Janice Anderson, a 37-year-old registered nurse from Iowa City, agrees. Anderson says she tried numerous times to lose weight but didn't

actually succeed until several of her friends and relatives created a support group to help cheer each other on during a weight-loss endeavor.

"We still support each other today. Sometimes it's just a simple text to the group that tells people how much you weigh and what you've been doing to either increase, decrease or maintain that number," Anderson says. "It's been really helpful. There have been times, most recently after the holidays, that I've posted that I've gained a few pounds and I will immediately be reminded about how I lost the weight when it happened in the past and how I don't need to get frustrated and how I just should focus on being healthy. It's much different than operating in a black hole like I used to when I tried to lose weight and keep it off."

DON'T undervalue the benefits

of exercise: While most weight-loss experts point out that it's nearly

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impossible to lose weight without changing the amount of calories you put into your body, you shouldn't attempt a weight-loss plan that doesn't involve exercise. Talk to your doctor to find out whether you should avoid certain types of exercise because of a health condition.

"People underestimate the benefits of exercise, even small amounts of activity, when they try to lose weight," says Fabio Comana, who teaches courses in exercise science and nutrition at San Diego State University. "The basic idea of burning off more calories than we take in applies, but it's more than that. Establishing a regular routine of movement will improve other aspects of your health, not just help reduce your weight."

Exercise can give you a serious mood boost and is great for the cardiovascular system, for instance. And, if you engage in weight training, you not only can boost your metabolism and reduce fat, you also strengthen your bones and can decrease blood pressure.

DO choose your plan carefully:

It's easy to be swayed by friends on Facebook who boast about their results on the keto diet or post about the 10 pounds they lost in 10 days on a juice fast, but you need to choose a dieting plan that is sensible and right for you.

That's why it's important to consult with your doctor before attempting something new. He or she can recommend diets and workouts based on your health. 🍃



Coming up empty

Alcohol could be sabotaging your diet

By Stacey Burling
Tribune News Service
The Philadelphia Inquirer

A new study from Penn Nursing suggests that, if you want to lose weight and keep it off this year, you should think about cutting back on drinking.

The study, which was led by Ariana Chao, an assistant professor of nursing who studies obesity treatment and binge eating, examined how drinking affected weight loss among 4,901 people with type 2 diabetes who participated in the Action for Health in Diabetes study.

The study compared weight loss for people who underwent an intensive lifestyle intervention that focused on improving diet and exercise with those in a control group. The people in the intervention group

were told about the calories in alcohol and advised to decrease drinking to reduce caloric intake.

On average, people in the intervention group lost considerably more weight during the first year (around 9 percent of total weight) than those in the control group, who lost less than 1 percent of body weight.

Nondrinkers in the intervention group had kept more weight off at four years — 5.1 percent of initial weight — than those who drank at any level. Heavy drinkers, defined as men who drank more than 14 drinks a week or women who drank more than seven, had lost 2.4 percent of initial weight at four years.

Alcohol abstainers were also considerably more likely to lose 10 percent or more of their weight. Twenty-seven percent of nondrinkers attained that goal compared with just 4.8 percent of heavy drinkers.

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Twenty-four percent of light drinkers lost 10 percent or more of their body weight.


From a health standpoint, losing 5 percent or more of your weight can improve your health even if you're still overweight, Chao said.

People in the study were 45 to 76 years old and less likely to drink than the general population. At the beginning of the study, 38 percent said they had not had a drink in the past year. (Nationally, about 70 percent of Americans say they drink at least once a year.) Only 1.7 percent of study participants said they were heavy drinkers. One limitation of the study, Chao said, is that people tend to underestimate their drinking.

Drinking may undercut diets in several ways, Chao said. One is that alcoholic drinks tend to be extra calories. People add them to meals rather than, say, substituting them for a side dish. The calories can be substantial.

According to the National Institutes of Health, 12 ounces of regular beer has 153 calories. Craft beer, which often has higher alcohol content, can have more. Five ounces of white wine has 121 calories. Red has 125 calories. Sweet mixed drinks are where the calories can soar. A 4.4-ounce margarita has 168 calories and a 9.9-ounce pina colada has 490 calories. But keep in mind that many restaurant drinks are bigger than this.

Beyond the calories, studies have shown that people who are drinking tend to eat more and make poorer choices about food when they're drinking.

If you're thinking about losing some weight, Chao has some advice: "I would suggest as much as possible to decrease or eliminate sources of empty calories — things like alcohol that might add extra calories and that might make it difficult to make healthy food choices." 



How many calories are in your drink?

12 ounces regular beer: 153 (craft beers often have more)

5 ounces red wine: 125

5 ounces white wine: 121

4 ounces champagne: 84

1.5 ounces gin, rum, vodka, whiskey, tequila: 97

2.25 ounce martini: 124

2.75 ounce cosmopolitan: 146

6.6 ounce mojito: 143

4.4 ounce margarita: 168

9.9 ounce pina colada: 490

3.5 ounce Manhattan: 164

(Source: National Institutes of Health)



Chicken tonight

Consider new ways to serve popular poultry

By Marla Caceres

When Chrissy Krampert, a director of product marketing in Dunedin, Fla., craves chicken, she has to do a little bit of planning.

Krampert's favorite way to prepare chicken is inspired by the roast chicken at Zuni Cafe, a James Beard Award-winning restaurant in San Francisco.

The method, developed by Zuni Cafe's former chef, Judy Rodgers, requires thoroughly drying a small chicken (the size produces better skin-to-meat ratio) salting it for at

least a day, and flipping it a few times during roasting. But the extra effort is worth it: The result is a moist, succulent chicken with perfectly browned, crackly skin.

"Zuni takes time. It's intentional," Krampert says. "You prepare a few days ahead with paper towels and salt — so much salt. You heat up the oven far hotter than you think you should and things steam up and out and then you put in this raw, weird chicken that's been hanging out in your fridge for days. Then, all of a sudden, it's the best roast chicken of your life. Juicy and crispy all at the same time and you just get it. You understand the appeal of chicken."

We want the meats

Americans definitely understand the appeal of chicken and other meat. The average consumer was expected to eat 222.2 pounds of red meat and poultry last year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, surpassing a record set in 2004.

For the health-conscious, chicken is a smart choice. It's rich in B vitamins and niacin as well as phosphorus and selenium. If you choose lean cuts, like chicken breast, you'll also enjoy a meat option that's high in protein and low in saturated fat.

Choosing organic, free-range chicken usually results in meat that's even more nutrient-dense, according to advice from the Cleveland Clinic.

Americans are also drawn to the price of chicken. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average price of a whole chicken in December 2018 was \$1.466 per pound. Beef ranged from \$3.71 to \$8.31 per pound, depending on the cut.

But ubiquity can breed boredom, as people find themselves in a rut, making the same grilled chicken week after week, or reaching for the same grocery store rotisserie bird on busy nights.

Mix things up

To keep chicken exciting, try out different cooking techniques, like Zuni Cafe's roasting method, or experiment with new and interesting flavors.

"Start with seasonings or marinades. Trying out a new spice or sauce can be an easy way to exper-

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iment with new flavors or ingredients,” says Emily Cooper, a registered dietitian who runs the cooking blog sinfulnutrition.com.

Cooper is also a fan of doing a quick brine before cooking chicken. Even soaking chicken in cold, salted water while an oven, pan or grill preheats can make a difference.

“I find it imparts more moisture in a short amount of time, without any additional flavor that would come from a marinade,” she says. “Also, I almost always have salt and some sort of spices on hand, but don’t always remember to grab a marinade

at the store. It is a great and inexpensive way to upgrade chicken in minutes.”

Even professional chefs look for ways to make classic chicken dishes new and exciting. Chef Charlie McKenna, of Chicago barbecue restaurant Lillie’s Q (and its namesake product line), found inspiration from the city’s Korean population for his unique take on fried chicken.

“My favorite ingredient to use in fried chicken is fish sauce before coating the chicken in the flour mixture,” he says. “It adds just the perfect crispness and right amount

of umami flavor.”

For a delicious experiment with technique and flavor, food blogger Regina Braun of Leelalicious.com loves spatchcocked (or butterflied) chicken roasted in a cast iron pan with lemon, garlic and rosemary. Butterflying a chicken requires removing the backbone or spine of the bird. This allows it to lay flatter and cook faster with less risk of drying out the white meat.

“Easy enough for weeknight dinner, but can also impress at a dinner party,” Braun says. 🌿



Diverse flavors come together in healthy Brazilian dish

By Linda Gassenheimer
Tribune News Service

The flavors of this Brazilian meal make an intriguing dinner. Cumin, cayenne pepper and coconut milk are among the diverse flavors in Brazilian dishes. They are featured in this Brazilian sautéed chicken dish served over quinoa.

Quinoa, has a nutty flavor, is high in

protein and is a good source of fiber. It’s also gluten-free and provides the side dish for this dinner.

Helpful Hints:

- Green beans can be substituted for okra. Add them to the chicken after it has simmered 10 minutes.
- Canned light coconut milk can be found in the ethnic section of the supermarket.

Countdown:

- Start chicken.
- While chicken cooks, make quinoa.

Shopping List:

To buy: 2 chicken breasts, bone in and wings removed, about 1/2 pound each, 1 jar ground cumin, 1 jar cayenne pepper, 1 package frozen chopped onion, 1/2 pound okra, 1 can light coconut milk, 1 container unsalted, dry-roasted peanuts and 1 package quinoa.

Staples: canola oil, fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth, salt and black peppercorns.

Brazilian-style chicken

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer

Yield 2 servings.

- 2 chicken breasts, bone in and wings removed, about 1/2 pound each
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 cup frozen chopped onion
- 1/2 cup fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 pound okra, trimmed and sliced

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(about 2 cups)

- 1/2 cup light coconut milk
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons unsalted, dry-roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped

Remove skin from chicken. Mix cumin and cayenne together and rub over chicken. Heat oil in a nonstick skillet, just large enough to hold the chicken in one layer, over medium-high heat. Brown chicken for 5 minutes. Add the onion, chicken broth and okra. Bring to a simmer. Lower heat to medium-low, cover with a lid and simmer 15 minutes. A meat thermometer should read 170 degrees. Add coconut milk and salt and pepper to taste. Mix into sauce. Sprinkle peanuts on top. Serve over quinoa.

Per serving: 420 calories (38 percent from fat), 17.7 g fat (5.1 g saturated, 6.7 g monounsaturated), 126 mg cholesterol, 46 g protein, 20.9 g carbohydrates, 6 g fiber, 123 mg sodium.

Quinoa

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer

Yield 2 servings.

- 1/2 cup quinoa
- 1 1/2 cups water
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Place quinoa and water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat. Lower heat to medium, cover with a lid and cook 10 minutes. All of the water should be absorbed. If the pan runs dry before the quinoa is cooked, add more water. Place quinoa on a plate and serve chicken and sauce on top.

Per serving: 157 calories (15 percent from fat), 2.6 g fat, (0.3 g saturated, 0.7 g monounsaturated), no cholesterol, 6 g protein, 27.3 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 2 mg sodium. 🌱

Linda Gassenheimer is an author of over 30 cookbooks. Her newest is "The 12-Week Diabetes Cookbook."



The clean scene

Buying organic fruit, vegetables requires some checking

By Robert Snarski

The past few years, Alyssa Smith has been more mindful of the fruits and vegetables she puts into her grocery cart.

"I used to spend so much time at farmer's markets that I didn't give a second thought to the safety of my food," says Smith, a 34-year-old graphic designer who lived in Chicago until 2015. "When I moved

to Buffalo, I noticed that the farmer's market by my house didn't have as much variety. There are some wonderful ones further out, but I try to keep my car time to a minimum when I'm not working so I found myself shopping for fruit at the grocery store, which, to be honest, is something I hadn't done much of before I moved here."

Smith says she's never been very confident buying organic vegetables and fruit off the shelf.

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“I realize there are regulations and that things have to be labeled a certain way, but I’m always skeptical about seeing a gigantic bin of peaches in the middle of the produce section and being told on a sign that yes, these are organic and yes, you’ll have to pay more because of it.”

This dilemma is relatively common. How do you shop for organic produce when you can’t have a face-to-face conversation with the farmer who grew it? And perhaps, more importantly, is it even worth the trouble?

Kris Carr thinks so. The producer and primary focus of “Crazy Sexy Cancer,” a documentary about Carr’s successful battle with cancer, based on a natural diet and various wellness practices, says shopping for organic produce doesn’t just help the person who is purchasing, serving and eating the food, it also helps others.

Buying locally grown fruits and vegetables can help ensure that your produce hasn’t been treated with preservatives, but that’s not always the case. If possible, ask your local farmer or vendor if the food was treated to ensure a longer shelf life.



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How clean is **your produce?**

Would you like some pesticides with your strawberries?

Of course not. Buying organic is a smart move, of course, but you also should carefully wash all your fruits and vegetables. A lot of pesticide residue is removed by thorough cold water washing, and adding baking soda, vinegar or salt to the water wash removes even more residue.

Another move is to look for the kinds of fruits and vegetables that have a low residue of pesticides to begin with. The Environmental Working Group produces rankings of pesticide-contaminated fruits and vegetables.

Here is the EWG's Clean 15 fruits and vegetables that tested lowest for pesticides and the Dirty Dozen of produce that tested highest in pesticides for 2018.

The Clean 15

1. Avocados
2. Sweet corn
3. Pineapples
4. Cabbage
5. Onions
6. Frozen sweet peas
7. Papaya

8. Asparagus
9. Mangoes
10. Eggplants
11. Honeydew melons
12. Kiwis
13. Cantaloupes
14. Cauliflower
15. Broccoli

Note: A small amount of sweet corn and papayas sold in the United States is produced from genetically modified seeds. Buy organic varieties of these crops if you want to avoid genetically modified produce.

The Dirty Dozen

1. Strawberries
2. Spinach
3. Nectarines
4. Apples
5. Grapes
6. Peaches
7. Cherries
8. Pears
9. Tomatoes
10. Celery
11. Potatoes
12. Sweet bell peppers and hot peppers

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“Think about this. Every time we purchase organic fruit or vegetables, we’re saying to other vegetable producers that clean living matters,” says Carr, who has also authored a series of books on healthy living. “We’re saying that we do care what we put into our bodies and we prefer to be as natural as possible. As that message continues to spread, more and more people will pay attention and help make organic produce the norm, not the exception.”

What is organic?

Before shopping for organic items, it’s helpful to have a better idea of what the organic label means.

By definition, organic foods are grown without chemical influence and use only natural matter and natural processes to grow. That means no synthetic chemicals, no pesticides and no additives. Instead, organic fruits and vegetables are the product of growth through natural fertilizer, like compost. But pesticide residue has been found on organic produce.

Pesticides are toxic, and exposure to them can cause health problems, and they also are linked to a range of illnesses and diseases in humans, from respiratory problems to cancer.

Buying locally grown fruits and vegetables can help ensure that your produce hasn’t been treated with preservatives, but that’s not always the case. If possible, ask your local farmer or vendor if the food was treated to ensure a longer shelf life.

The USDA has established four categories of organic produce. The first, 100 percent organic, is reserved strictly for products composed of

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a single ingredient, such as raw, organically produced fruits and vegetables. Food items with more than one ingredient fall under the following categories: 95 percent or more organic, 70 to 95 percent organic and less than 70 percent organic.

Look for labels

When grocery shopping, remember that USDA-certified organic products carry a USDA organic seal, which is green and white. Be on the lookout for organic labels in colors other than green and white and point them out to your grocery store's manager, if possible.

The USDA can fine the produce provider — and in some cases, the vendor — up to \$11,000 per violation.

If it appears that the label is missing, check the PLU, or Price Look UP, sticker. Organic produce contains a five-digit code that begins with the number 9. If the PLU starts with the number 8, it means that the produce has been genetically modified. Produce that is not organic and that has been treated with chemicals and pesticides has only four digits. 🍏



Best foot forward

Proper care of your feet can lead to long-lasting benefits

By Steve Noe

We often take our feet for granted, but we shouldn't. Taking the proper steps to care for your feet delivers a big payoff now and down the road.

If you'd like to get the maximum amount of productivity out of your feet for years to come, consider the advice from a pair of podiatrists on proper foot care:

Don't ignore pain or injuries:

"While many relatively minor musculoskeletal aches and pains and sprains and strains will resolve on their own, don't play doctor with your feet," says Dr. Ernest Isaacson, a New York-based podiatrist. "If something is hurting, or doesn't feel right, or if you've knocked into the

bedpost in the middle of the night and the toe resembles a rainbow-colored sausage, don't assume it's minor or will get better without treatment. "Better to go to the doctor for nothing than be compelled to go to the doctor later for something."

Dr. Nicholas Brissey, a podiatrist with northern Illinois-based OrthoIllinois, echoes Isaacson's advice. "It is very important to listen to your body," Brissey says. "If something hurts or doesn't feel right, stop doing it. If pain does not go away, get in to see your doctor or a musculoskeletal specialist."

Wear good shoes: Isaacson says many of the foot-related issues he encounters could have been avoided if his patients simply had worn properly fitting and comfortable shoes.

"Size for your shoes toward the

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end of the day,” he says. “And the shoe that feels good in the store is the shoe that will feel good on the road and at home.”

Despite your mother’s advice, Isaacson says a low heel often is better than a flat, so don’t dismiss the 1.5- to 2-inch heels. Isaacson also suggests making sure there’s plenty of room for your toes to spread out.

“And a custom orthotic always makes the shoe feel better at a minimum and can be quite therapeutic in treating many lower-extremity conditions,” he says.

Brissey agrees with Isaacson on the importance of wearing proper shoes and increasing comfort with orthotics.

“Optimally, one would wear sport-specific shoes — basketball shoes for basketball, tennis shoes for tennis, running shoes for running, and so on and so forth,” says Brissey. “Inferior heel pain, often plantar fasciitis, is self-limiting in 80 to 90 percent of the population with supportive inserts. Superfeet, Powerstep and Protalus are a few good ones, but must also accompany good shoes.”

Brissey also recommends wearing compression socks, which can provide mild support and compression. No longer limited to the style your grandfather wore, compression socks now come in a variety of colors and are made by numerous sports companies, including Nike and Reebok.

Unless you’re an elite runner, Brissey suggests avoiding minimal-type shoes.

“Good support and stability are

keys,” he says.

Proper footwear shouldn’t be limited to what you wear outside the house. When not wearing shoes at home, Brissey recommends wearing a good pair of supportive slippers or clogs.

Check out your skin: Isaacson says skin is the largest organ in the body. It lives and breathes, and deserves plenty of attention.

“Fungal infections of the skin and nails can be a minor annoyance or a real detriment to quality of life, but in most cases, they are eminently treatable,” Isaacson says. “Suspected bacterial infections, no matter how minor, should never be ignored.”

Isaacson says find your favorite moisturizer, use it judiciously and keep an eye out for any suspi-

cious-looking growths on your skin.

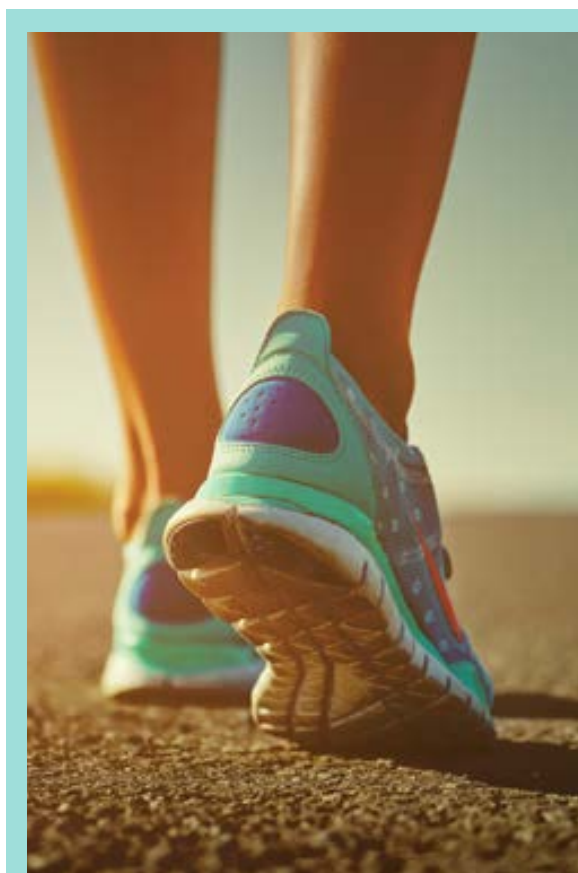
“While relatively uncommon, any malignancy is best recognized and treated early,” he says.

Diabetics, pay attention: Seventy percent of non-traumatic amputations worldwide are performed on diabetics, according to Isaacson, because the disease impairs the nerves and can block circulation to the feet.

Good news: Prevention works.

“Control your sugar and have your feet checked by a podiatrist regularly,” says Isaacson. “Daily inspections of the feet, coupled with regular visits to the doctor and good control of glucose levels, along with proper shoes, has been shown in many studies to significantly reduce the rate of serious complications, ulcers and amputation in diabetics.”

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Don't forget the feet

Keeping your feet limber will make them feel better and help prevent injury. Try these stretches.

- Take a golf ball, and roll it back and forth from your toes to your heels. You can also use a tennis ball or soup can.
- Sit on the floor with your legs in front of you. Take a towel and place it around your toes. Easily pull the towel toward you. Hold for about 20 seconds, then release.

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Isaacson says the same suggestions apply to those who suffer from impaired circulation.

Don't smoke: Isaacson says it's hard to overemphasize the importance of not smoking on many levels.

"Bones heal 42 percent slower in smokers," he says. "Cigarette use can lead to very serious circulation issues and amputations. The skin loses its supple texture and wounds are harder to heal. And those are just some of the lower-extremity manifestations, not to mention the generalized detrimental health effects."

Pedicure pointers: Isaacson says he's often asked if it's OK to go to salons for pedicure treatments. While he believes it's best to seek out a medical pedicurist who can provide an enhanced level of service, most salons are acceptable as long as they follow guidelines for cleansing instruments and have good sterilization practices.

Be sure salon employees thoroughly drain, sanitize and rinse the footbaths between clients. Never allow a pedicurist to use a razor or other sharp device to shave away dead skin on your heels and avoid getting a pedicure if you have cuts or blisters on your toes or heels.

"As long as patients don't have a condition, such as diabetes or impaired circulation with advanced changes in the feet that would place the feet at undue risk, I don't discourage patients from salon treatments," says Isaacson. "And admittedly, it feels pretty good too." 🌿



Here's the rub

**Regular massage-therapy sessions
can help improve health, reduce stress**

By Sarah Newkirk

Thinking about booking a massage appointment to alleviate some winter stress? It's a great idea, one you might want to incorporate into your regular routine.

Though most of us view a massage as a sporadic luxury, perhaps something we get around to doing once or twice a year, regular massage therapy has multiple boosts for mental and physical health.

"There are so many mental and physical benefits of massage therapy, which is likely why massage therapy has been around as a health-care practice all over the world for over 5,000 years," says Marci Howard-

May, director of spa and wellness at the St. George, Utah-based Red Mountain Resort. "Massage is a great way to help combat stress and bring much-needed relaxation into our modern-day lives."

Massage therapy alleviates stress by reducing levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, and simultaneously increasing levels of serotonin and dopamine, Howard-May says. Serotonin regulates mood, hunger, sleep and digestion, and has been linked to learning and memory, Howard-May says, while dopamine promotes focus, alertness and motivation.

"It is by the stimulation of the nervous system and cardiovascular system that these benefits

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are reached,” says Howard-May. “Massage stimulates our parasympathetic nervous system through pressure sensors in the skin called mechanoreceptors.”

Massage therapy aids greatly in pain relief, both chronic and recent. Most of us lead lives that create some type of physical discomfort—sitting at our desks too long, staring at our phones too often—and engaging in too much

or not enough physical activity.

“Chronic sitting leads to tightness, hypertonicity and shortening of muscles and fascia, connective tissue that connects all of our muscles and is crucial for proper movement,” says Jonathan Jordan, a San Francisco-based massage therapist, personal trainer and nutrition coach. “Most common issues include tightness and pain in the neck,

shoulders and hips, which can lead to pain in other joints, especially the lower back and knees. Regular massage and soft-tissue work can help restore these muscles back to their healthy length and tone so as to alleviate this pain and restore posture.”

There are several types of massage therapy with specific uses and goals. Two of the most common are Swedish and deep tissue, which are generally used for relaxation and pain relief, respectively. Swedish massage is less penetrating than deep tissue, whereas deep tissue uses greater pressure and intensity.

“Swedish massage uses long, flowing strokes, kneading and vibration to create a sense of relaxation, pain reduction and improved flexibility,” Howard-May says. Deep-tissue massage “uses more pressure and focuses on removing adhesions or knots in the tissues to improve range of motion and flexibility, as well as addressing trigger points that can refer pain locally and into other areas of the body.”

If you feel pain during a massage, let your massage therapist know. Pain can cause muscles to seize up, making it harder for the therapist to ease tension. You don’t need to be sore to have an effective massage.

If you have an injury or chronically tight or painful areas, be sure that your therapist is aware of it before you get started.

If you’ve never gotten a massage, perhaps what’s holding you back is the prospect of getting virtually naked in front of and/or being



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touched by a stranger — some of the most common qualms.

Experts emphasize that it's essential to do a little research beforehand—read up on potential massage therapists to find out about their style and approach, and arrive to your session prepared with any questions and concerns.

Jordan says one of the most common questions among newcomers is with regard to how much they should undress. He states it really depends on your comfort level —some clients prefer to leave their underwear on, though you can also undress entirely if the massage therapist doesn't specifically state that you shouldn't do so.

"You will be draped and your modesty will be maintained," Jordan says. "If you cover an area of your body with clothing, the therapist will not work on that area."

Howard-May adds that there are ways to ease into massage therapy if you're still feeling apprehensive about the prospect of being undressed in front of a stranger. There are massage techniques in which you can remain fully clothed, such as chair massage, sound therapy, cranial-sacral therapy and reflexology.

If your feet need some attention, you can try Thai foot massage, which uses the ancient art of Thai reflexology to apply pressure to specific areas of the soles of the feet. It is believed that a reflex reaction occurs in another part of the body. 🌿



Skiing a great sport for many ages

By Marla Caceres

Skiing might look intimidating to newbies, but experts and devotees insist there's no better way to be outside in the winter, and no wrong time in life to start.

"There's something so special about exercising in the outdoors, because it transcends fitness. There are these crystalizing experiences that emerge through recreating in the outdoors that are impossible to replicate at the gym," says Jen Gurecki, CEO and co-founder of Coalition Snow, an all-women's ski

and snowboard company. "Beyond that, you can be in control of how hard you want to ski — the amount of physical strength you exert — so it lends itself to people at all different skill levels."

Skiing also lends itself to all ages. According to the National Ski Areas Association, 21 percent of skiers and snowboarders are between the ages of 52 and 70.

Want to hit the slopes this winter for the first time? First, follow this advice from experts:

Take lessons: You may have friends and family who insist they can teach you how to ski in an afternoon. As

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tempting as it might be to take them up on their offer, don't.

"It is most certainly possible for adults of any age to learn to ski," says Elianne Furtney, managing director of Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows Ski and Snowboard Schools in Lake Tahoe, Calif. "We recommend that adult skiers do not have their friends or family members teach them how to ski. Instead, they should invest in several high-quality lessons from accredited ski instructors."

Beginning lessons cover everything you need to know to get started.

"You'd learn the basics of your equipment, how to stand and move with your ski equipment on and the basics for getting around and stopping on flat areas and gentlest hills," says Jessica Parcheta, owner and ski school director of The Alpine Factory, a year-round indoor ski and snowboard center in Arden Hills, Minn. "From there, you'd learn how make turns, which is the primary way skiers control their speed. All beginner lessons start out on very small hills, to minimize the risk of going too fast before those speed control skills are taught."

If you're not feeling completely comfortable going out on your own after a few lessons, don't fret — seeking additional lessons from specialized experts is a smart move.

"Most people can learn the basics in a reasonable amount of time, yet it can be comforting to take additional lessons to help you master skills and have a watchful



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eye nearby to help out with your form,” Parcheta says. “There are even instructors who’ve taken advanced training in the needs of mature students, earning a ‘Senior Specialist’ certificate.”

Get the right gear: If you’re just starting out, don’t be intimidated by the amount of stuff you need. You might be able to rent most of your gear from the school or resort. Some ski schools, like Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows, even provide free goggles and gloves for use during beginner lessons.

“Make sure that you have a helmet, goggles and gloves,” Furtney says. “When it comes to skis and boots, it is better to invest in a good pair of ski boots from a reputable shop with a boot fitter. Skis are much less important and excellent skis are always available for rent.”

Take advantage of deals: You don’t have to splurge on one-on-one lessons to learn how to ski. Many ski schools and resorts offer group classes or beginner’s packages that include rentals, lift tickets and lessons.

“Take more than one lesson and once you feel comfortable and in control (you’ll innately know the feeling when you get there), you can advance out of the lessons and into your own personal experience on the mountain, either by yourself or with family and friends,” Gurecki says. 