

HealthyLiving



Healthy Living Newsletter Focus on Fitness and Nutrition

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"Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right," talk show host Oprah Winfrey.

What's fueling you?

Everything you do requires fuel. Whether you're rolling over in bed or sprinting a mile, your body and its miraculous, intricate systems need to be stoked. In this new year, what will be fueling you?

Energy in

Your breath is constant because your life depends on a constant flow of incoming energy (oxygen helps your cells draw energy from stored food). At this moment, is your breath shallow and quick? Or deep and satisfying? In addition to oxygen, your body seeks these nutrients:

- Carbohydrates – whole-grain bread, pasta, cereal
- Fats and oils – canola oil, Atlantic salmon, nuts and seeds
- Proteins and amino acids – almonds, black beans, grilled chicken
- Water – and plenty of it. Many experts have veered away from the "eight-ounces, eight-times-a-day" rule because needs vary widely.

Life also requires vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals (valuable plant substances) in smaller, but consistent amounts.

Energy out

Hemmed in by our more sedentary modern life, we sometimes forget that our bodies were made to move. We risk not using the energy we take in, often provided by convenient, but high-calorie, high-fat, low-nutrient foods. Do you need to expend more energy? Opportunities lie all around you.

- Digging and planting flowers burns about 324 calories per hour
- Pushing a lawnmower on a cool evening burns about 324 calories an hour
- Playing with children burns about 216 calories an hour
- Taking a yoga class burns about 360 calories an hour

Lavish some attention on your body instead of plopping it in front of the TV or computer. You deserve it! Every breath is a reminder to get your body back in the game.

Seize the day

Do you run your day, or does it run you? A few easy steps during the course of your day can lead to greater health and happiness.

Morning

Eat breakfast. Research shows that people who eat breakfast regularly tend to weigh less than those who don't. If you eat high-energy-density foods like bagels, calories add up quickly. If you eat high-fiber, low-energy-density foods – such as oatmeal, strawberries, walnuts, and low-fat yogurt – you can eat more and get fewer calories.

Noon

Eat to fuel. Does "fast and cheap" describe your usual lunchtime fare? With under five minutes of planning the night before, you can replace it with "fast, cheap, guilt-free, and delicious."

Night

Forget "exercise." Instead, do something fun and physical. Take a walk through the neighborhood, spiff up the garden and pull a few weeds, or bike to the store.



Will I enjoy food if it's all “health food”?

Some would argue that if you've been relying on the “easy flavor” of excess fat and sugar, you haven't really been enjoying food at all. Next meal, challenge yourself to experience every bite. Note smells and textures as well as taste. Chew and swallow slowly. Eating this way allows you to enjoy foods more and gives your brain time to realize your body is satisfied.

32.2%

The percentage of adults in America who suffer from obesity

Source: American Obesity Association, May 2005, www.obesity.org

Healthy living does not have to be boring.

- Steam fresh vegetables so they retain their rich color, flavor and snap.
- Use fresh cracked pepper on meats and salads.
- Replace bland iceberg lettuce with arugula, romaine and spinach.

Sources: American Heart Association, 2006, www.americanheart.org; Calorie Control Council, National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute, 2006; UCLA Center for Human Nutrition, 2006; Whatislife.com, 2006, www.whatislife.com; “Physical, Psychological Benefits of Walking More Each Day,” AScribe Newswire, 2006; American Diabetes Association, 2006

Sweet Muesli

- 1 1/2 cups rolled oats
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 2 cups shredded unpeeled apples
- 1 1/2 cups pitted prunes, whole or halved (optional)
- 2 T honey
- 2 T lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- Fresh fruits (sliced banana, apple, pineapple; grapes, berries; orange segments)
- Chopped almonds or pecans

To make the muesli, combine oats, water, shredded apples, prunes, honey, lemon juice, and cinnamon; cover and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, spoon some muesli into a bowl, and top with your choice of fresh fruits and nuts. Serve with a dollop of plain nonfat yogurt or milk, if desired. (The muesli can be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for several days.)

Nutritional information: 6 servings; about 218 calories per serving; fat, 2 grams; cholesterol, 0; fiber, 4 grams; sodium, 5 milligrams; calories from fat, 7 percent

Visit www.intellihealth.com to see this and other yummy, healthy breakfast ideas.

Key words: breakfast; healthy recipes.

Source: www.stretcher.com, 2006



Exercises to relieve low back pain

Are you one of the 65 million Americans who suffer from low back pain? One of the possible remedies is moderate exercise that focuses on strengthening the muscles of the back, legs and stomach.

Knowing the suspected cause of your low back pain might help in deciding which exercises might benefit you. Be aware that some causes of low back pain require prompt medical evaluation and treatment, rather than exercise alone. For most people with low back pain, however, no definitive cause is ever found, says Robert Shmerling, M.D., associate physician at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital and associate professor at Harvard Medical School.

The tricky thing about low back pain is that it can get better completely without medical treatment or it may stubbornly resist treatment and persist for years. Although most people improve, low back pain returns in about 40 percent of cases, Dr. Shmerling says. Certain exercises can reduce the chance that pain will return and can manage ongoing pain.

Here are some exercises commonly recommended by Dr. Shmerling and other physicians. Before starting these routines, check with your doctor. Specifically, ask how many times a week you should perform the exercises. If your muscles are tight, take a warm shower or bath before performing any of the exercises. Wear loose clothing and use a rug or mat. Do not wear shoes.

Stop and consult with your doctor if you feel any discomfort, if your back pain increases or if any tingling, numbness or weakness occurs in your legs.

Double knee-to-chest stretch

The purpose of the double knee-to-chest stretch is to stretch the lower back and hamstring muscles and relieve pressure on bone facets, where vertebrae come together.

- Lie on your back with both knees bent, your feet on the floor and your arms at your sides.
- Clasp your hands around both knees, pulling them firmly to your chest until you feel a comfortable stretch in your lower back.
- Hold for three to five seconds.
- Repeat five times.

Pelvic lift

The purpose of the pelvic lift is to strengthen the gluteal (buttocks) and abdominal muscles and flatten the spine.

- Lie on your back with your knees flexed and your feet flat on the floor as close to the buttocks as possible. Keep the knees together.
- Tighten the muscles of your lower abdomen and buttocks to flatten your lower back against the floor.
- Slowly raise your hips up from the floor and hold for a slow count of five.
- Repeat five times.

Hamstring stretch

The purpose of the hamstring stretch is to strengthen the gluteal (buttocks) and abdominal muscles and flatten the spine.

- Lie on your back with a belt or strap placed around one foot.
- Slowly lift that leg, keeping your knee straight.
- Hold for five seconds.
- Repeat five times with each leg.

Alternate leg extension

The purpose of the alternate leg extension is to strengthen the gluteal (buttocks) and abdominal muscles and flatten the spine.

- Lie on your stomach with your arms folded under your chin.
- Slowly lift one leg – not too high – without bending it, while keeping your pelvis flat on the floor.
- Slowly lower your leg.
- Switch to your other leg.
- Repeat 10 times for each leg.



Lumbar extension

The purpose of the lumbar extension is to extend the muscles in the lower back.

- Lie on your stomach and place your hands on the floor near the sides of your head.
- Slowly push your upper body off the floor by straightening your arms, but keep your hips on the floor.
- Hold for 10 seconds.
- Relax your arms, moving back to the floor.
- Repeat five times.

Chair stretch

The purpose of this exercise is to stretch and strengthen the back and supporting muscle. Do not do this exercise if you have osteoporosis.

- Sit in a chair. Slowly bend forward toward the floor until you feel a mild stretch in your back.
- Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat three or four times.

Leg lift

The leg lift is a strengthening exercise.

- Lie face down on a firm surface with a large pillow under your hips and lower abdomen.
- With the knee bent, raise one leg slightly off the surface and hold for about five seconds.
- Repeat five to 10 times with each leg.
- Repeat the exercise with each leg straight.

Exercises to avoid

Many exercises actually increase your risk of low back pain. Because of this, you should avoid the following:

- Straight leg sit-ups
- Bent leg sit-ups during acute back pain (These may be safe if your back is kept in a neutral position.)
- Leg lifts (lifting both legs while lying on your back)
- Lifting heavy weights above your waist (military press, bicep curls while standing)
- Any stretching done while sitting with your legs in a V position
- Toe touches while standing