

Noteworthy Medical Myths

Getting a flu shot can give you the flu.

Fact: Flu vaccines are either made with inactive flu virus or no virus at all. They are recommended for adults and children.

Speaking of viral illnesses, the old cliché *starve a fever, feed a cold* is baloney.



Men are more likely to get heart disease than women. **Fact:** The CDC reports that almost as many women die from heart disease as men. And, just like for men, heart disease is the leading cause of death for women.

Eating close to bedtime causes weight gain. **Fact:** What's best is to avoid eating ultra-processed food and overeating each day.

Eating carrots helps you see in the dark. **Fact:** While carrots are good for eyesight, they aren't *that* good. The vitamin A in carrots helps you see in **low light** but won't give you superhero night vision.

No pain, no gain. **Fact:** Exercise does not need to hurt to be effective. When starting a new workout regimen, you may experience some temporary normal muscle soreness.

Reading in dim light damages vision. **Fact:** There is no scientific evidence that reading in the dark does any long-term harm to your eyes, according to the Cleveland Clinic Cole Eye Institute.

Eggs cause unhealthy cholesterol. **Fact:** Eggs contain some dietary cholesterol, but this does not translate into blood cholesterol. Studies show an egg a day is okay for heart health.

Note: Online health advice varies in quality. The resources we recommend include:

National Institutes of Health: [nih.gov](https://www.nih.gov)

MedlinePlus: [medlineplus.gov](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/)

Food and Drug Administration: [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov/)

American Heart Association: [heart.org](https://www.heart.org/)

American Cancer Society: [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org/)



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Getting Forgetful?**, is at personalbest.com/extras/23V6tools.

BEST bits



■ The 36th Annual National Cancer Survivors Day is June 4.

It's a celebration of life honoring cancer survivors. There are more than 18 million in the U.S. as of January 2022; this represents about 5.4% of the population. The number of U.S. cancer survivors is projected to reach 24%, or 22.5 million, by 2032. The declines in death rates were steepest in lung cancer and melanoma (by 4% to 5% per year). Getting all the screenings your health care provider recommends, getting regular checkups and checking your skin regularly can help reduce your risk of cancer.



■ Family Health and Fitness Day is June 10.

It promotes the importance of parks and recreation services in keeping families and communities physically active. Celebrate this day with your family in your local parks. Learn more at nrpa.org/events/family-fitness-day.

■ **Cover up your feet.** They can develop skin cancer (melanoma) through sun exposure. Feet are the most misdiagnosed and fatal site of this cancer. In 2022 researchers found that the overall survival rate for melanoma of the foot or ankle was just 52%, compared to the 85% survival rate for patients with melanomas on other areas of the body. Possible signs of foot melanoma: a brown or black vertical line under a toenail, a changing mole, a pinkish-red spot or growth or a non-healing sore on your foot.

■ **Don't fall for the lure of a base tan this summer.** Any tan is a sign of skin damage. Base tans are hyped for building melanin (a substance in your body that makes pigmentation) in the skin through short sessions in the sun or a tanning bed to prevent sunburn outdoors. This isn't only a false claim, it's a potentially hazardous one. According to the National Cancer Institute, a base tan offers no protection from sunburn. However, it does promote wrinkles and increases the risk of skin cancer. For a sun-kissed look, spray on a fake bronze sunless tan. Protect your skin by limiting time in the sun, using water-resistant sunscreens with an SPF of 30 or higher and UVA and UVB protection and avoiding tanning beds.

Medication Interactions

Drug interactions may affect your health by changing how a drug works or inducing side effects. Keep a lookout for the four main types of drug interactions.

1. Drug-drug interactions occur when two or more drugs react with each other. This may increase or decrease the action of a drug or lead to undesirable side effects.

Example: Mixing a sedative with an antihistamine can slow reaction time and make driving a car or operating machinery more dangerous.

2. Drug-food interactions: Food can affect the absorption of some medicines and increase or decrease the drug's blood level. Depending on the medicine, the change in blood level may be helpful or harmful. **Example:** Cholesterol-lowering medications called statins, or drugs used to treat depression, may interact with grapefruit or grapefruit juice. This makes them less effective.

3. Drug-supplement interactions: Reactions can occur between drugs and dietary supplements, herbal remedies or botanicals. **Example:** Acid reducers, such as omeprazole or ranitidine, can decrease the absorption of supplemental calcium, vitamin B₁₂ and other minerals.

4. Drug-condition interactions: An existing medical condition can make certain drugs potentially harmful. Conditions, such as kidney disease, hepatitis and pregnancy, can affect how the body processes medicine. Dosing may need to be adjusted, or the medicine might not be given to people with certain conditions. **Example:** If you have high blood pressure, you may be warned not to take a nasal decongestant since it can increase blood pressure.

How to Avoid Drug Interactions

Before taking medicines, tell your health care provider about all of the prescription and nonprescription medicines you're taking. Also inform your provider about your use of vitamins, nutritional supplements and herbal products. In addition, tell your provider about the medical conditions you have, such as high blood pressure, prostate disease or diabetes.

Before taking a medicine, ask: What is the medicine used for? How should I take the medicine? While taking the medicine, should I avoid any other medicine, foods or beverages? Can I take this medicine safely with my other medicines? Are there any possible drug interactions? What are the signs of those drug interactions? In the case of a drug interaction, what should I do?

Lastly, thoroughly read the medication information and directions; these can change over time. The package inserts and drug labels often have valuable information about possible drug interactions.

To learn more about your medications, go to reference.medscape.com and under **Tools**, click on **Drug Interaction Checker**.



QuikRisk™ Assessment: Do you have a healthy relationship with social media?

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Social media can be entertaining and help connect you with faraway friends and family. However, excessive use may be mentally harmful. How many of the following statements apply to you?

1. My social media use interferes with important responsibilities (e.g., work, school or family). T F
2. I feel an urge to spend more time on social media. T F
3. I've been unable to cut down on my social media use. T F
4. I get upset when I don't have access to social media. T F
5. My social media use has caused friction in my relationships. T F
6. I prefer being on social media even when I'm around friends or family. T F
7. Social media is my escape from problems or stress. T F
8. I feel compelled to check social media multiple times a day. T F
9. Since spending more time on social media, I've been more lonely, anxious or depressed. T F
10. I enjoy social media but am uncomfortable with in-person interactions. T F

If you marked *True* for four or more of these statements, consider consulting a mental health professional or refocusing part of your spare time on in-person relationships, self-care and other interests.

Regularly taking breaks from social media help, too.



Note: This self-assessment is not a substitute for professional evaluation or treatment.



June is National Men's Health Month.

If you're a man who too often ignores health care, you're not alone. Research shows about 40% of men put off medical care even when they have worrisome symptoms. If you're a guy, take control of your health. Setting health goals is key, even if they start small (such as taking a walk daily, yearly checkups and eating more vegetables). Early detection and treatment of health problems, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes and depression can save lives. Check out the **Physical Wellness Toolkit** at [nih.gov/health-information/physical-wellness-toolkit](https://www.nih.gov/health-information/physical-wellness-toolkit) for advice on getting started.



TIP of the MONTH

Freezing Food

Does your spring cleaning include a freezer overhaul to ensure your food is still fresh? While freezing is a great way to preserve food, it doesn't last forever. Here's a freezer guideline for raw fresh meat, poultry and fish:

- Meat: up to 12 months.
- Whole poultry: 12 months.
- Poultry pieces: 9 months.
- Fatty fish: up to 3 months.
- Lean fish: up to 8 months.

And remember, when you freeze these items, add a **frozen on date label** so you can use it before it expires.

What are Functional Foods?

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Many foods serve the function of providing us with calories, satisfying our appetite and tasting good.

Foods that contain a high amount of beneficial nutrients that confer health benefits or help prevent disease earn the specific moniker **functional foods**.

These special foods have benefits that go beyond their basic calories and protein. They are often high in a specific vitamin or mineral, or they supply fiber, probiotics, antioxidants or healthy fats. Functional foods can be natural — for example, salmon naturally contains heart-healthy omega-3 fats — or can be created by a food manufacturer, such as orange juice fortified with vitamin D.



The term functional foods originated in Japan in the 1980s and was created by government agencies to highlight foods that had exceptional health benefits. The FDA regulates health claims that can be made for foods that have functional health benefits. For example, a container of milk may say “calcium builds strong bones,” and fruit and vegetable packages can claim these items may reduce the risk of some types of cancer (due to vitamins A and C and fiber).

Some examples of functional foods are:

- Berries, rich in fiber, vitamins and antioxidants.
- Leafy greens, rich in calcium and vitamins A, C and K.
- Nuts and seeds, rich in vitamin E, fiber and healthy fats.
- Legumes, rich in fiber and iron.
- Fatty fish, rich in vitamin D and omega-3 fats.
- Fortified dairy foods or plant-based alternatives, rich in probiotics, calcium and vitamin D.
- Fortified cereals, rich in an array of vitamins and minerals.



Eating functional foods can help ensure we get enough nutrients in the diet, may help prevent nutrient deficiencies and may protect against nutrition-related diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease.

Spring Herb Salad

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4 cups salad greens | ¼ cup chopped fresh basil, <i>divided</i> |
| ½ cup frozen peas, thawed | ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro, <i>divided</i> |
| ½ cup grape tomatoes | 1 tbsp lemon juice |
| ¼ cup feta cheese, crumbled | 1 tbsp red wine vinegar |
| 2 tbsp toasted pecans | 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil |
| 1 cup cooked (or unsalted canned) chickpeas | ½ tsp salt |



On a large platter, assemble salad greens. **Top** with peas, tomatoes, feta cheese, pecans, chickpeas, 2 tbsp basil and 2 tbsp cilantro. **In** a small bowl, add remaining basil, remaining cilantro, lemon, vinegar, olive oil and salt. **Whisk** to combine. **Drizzle** dressing over salad and toss to coat, then serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 237 calories | 7g protein | 15g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 5g mono fat | 5g poly fat | 19g carb | 2g sugar (0 added sugar) | 5g fiber | 382mg sodium

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit coronavirus.gov.

EXPERT advice

— Eric Endlich, PhD

Q: Mental health self-care tips?

A: For many conditions, including eating disorders, addictions, anxiety and depression, it is important to seek professional treatment, such as psychotherapy and medication. In addition to therapy, trying these winning strategies can help you cope with everyday stress or to stay mentally healthy:

- **Exercise:** A sense of well-being is one of many benefits.
- **Nutrition:** Healthy food nourishes the brain as well as the body.
- **Rest:** Recharging can build your resilience.
- **Meditation:** Start by simply paying attention to your breathing for a few minutes.
- **Gratitude:** Let people know they've made a difference; you'll both feel better.
- **Positivity:** Pay attention to what's going well in your life and the world.
- **Goal-setting:** Having something to strive toward gives life meaning.
- **Human contact:** A hug, a phone call or a visit — any of these can brighten your day.
- **Boundary-setting:** Knowing when to say **no** helps you avoid getting overwhelmed.



CPR and AED Awareness Week is June 1 to 7.



Save a Life with CPR

Every year, more than 350,000 Americans who are not hospitalized experience sudden cardiac arrest. A person experiencing cardiac arrest may seem fine until they collapse, and they die within minutes unless they receive cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), or their heart is shocked back into a normal rhythm with an automated external defibrillator (AED).

CPR isn't complicated, but you need to know the basics. Note:

The instructions below are for situations when an AED isn't available.

If someone is unconscious, call 911 or ask another bystander to do it.

Don't assume someone will call unprompted.

- First, check to see if the person is breathing, has a heartbeat and is responsive. If they are not, begin CPR. If the person can breathe and/or respond, do not use CPR. Follow instructions from the 911 operator until emergency responders arrive.
- Even if you aren't trained in CPR, you can still perform chest compressions until EMTs arrive. This is hands-only CPR. Place one of your hands in the center of the person's chest with your other hand on top. Interlock your fingers, lock your elbows and start pushing down hard at about a rate of 100 compressions per minute (use the beat of the Bee Gee's song "Stayin' Alive").
- Don't attempt mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Only medical providers and others trained in the technique should administer it, according to the American Heart Association.



Remember: Don't hesitate to perform CPR for fear of hurting the person. Good Samaritan laws nationwide protect you from legal action if you give CPR or other emergency aid.

The COVID-19 pandemic aged adolescent brains. The stress of school closures and separation from peers changed teen brains, according to Stanford University researchers, who compared MRI scans of 163 teen brains. Half of the scans were taken before the COVID lockdowns and half were taken afterward. The scans afterward showed accelerated signs of aging, similar to brain changes found in youngsters who've suffered abuse. The changes don't suggest serious brain disease, but the adolescents with aged brains reported heightened levels of anxiety and depression. The researchers concluded it's important to recognize that teens who experienced the lockdowns may have higher rates of these mental health problems.

