



Exercise Goofs

Regular exercise is one of the best habits you can maintain to protect your health, mentally and physically. Make the most of your workout goals, and avoid these common exercise mistakes.

- **Inconsistent workouts** — Fitting in occasional or weekend exercise won't deliver the fitness benefits of steady sessions three to five times per week. Avoid doing a week's worth of exercise in a single session; it can reduce the value of your exercise time and raise your risk for injury.
- **Skipping a warmup before you exercise** — Warming up your muscles promotes their flexibility before you put them to work, which is especially important as we age. For example, spend a few minutes doing squats and arm circles, or walking before jogging.
- **Overdoing weight lifting** — Practice caution to avoid potential muscle strain and soreness, especially if you're just starting a routine. Begin by using lighter weights, and gradually add extra weight and reps over time.
- **Poor posture** — Always keep your back straight and

avoid slouching your shoulders, whether walking, weight lifting or golfing. For posture advice, seek guidance from a physical therapist.

Just starting an exercise plan? The best approach is to adopt a routine with a recommended goal of 150 minutes weekly of moderate-intensity exercise (that gets your heart and lungs pumping, such as brisk walking) and strength training at least twice per week. Example: shorter aerobic workouts (at least 20 minutes) each day or longer sessions (at least 50 minutes) three times per week.



Good to know: Any amount of exercise, even taking a flight of stairs or mopping your kitchen floor, is beneficial, but more is better. Get your health care provider's okay before increasing your activity level if you're unaccustomed to exercise.



BMED FUND notes

It's April Already... Have You Made an Appointment with Your Primary Care Physician for an Annual Physical Yet?

Time flies — the first quarter of 2023 is in the history books. Have you made your appointment for your annual physical yet? Appointments for routine physicals, often termed "well visits," need to be scheduled months out. Medical office schedules often have blocks set aside for non-emergency appointments, which fill up fast. The importance of annual checkups cannot be encouraged enough. We make sure our cars, homes, pets, etc., get an annual maintenance check and tune-up, but we often don't give the same priority to scheduling our own.

The Importance of Scheduling an Annual Physical

Even if we are feeling OK, or even well, the value of an annual physical cannot be overstated. Here are a few key benefits of an annual physical:

Assessing Overall Health — Routine bloodwork and an in-person physical evaluation can help your physician assess whether any new risks may be developing. Simple routine tests help your provider create a preventative care plan with you or initiate further investigation strategies if an early problem is detected. Alternatively, if there are problems detected, the visit will give you the peace of mind of knowing more conclusively that your health is stable.

Screening for Cancer — The odds of managing cancer outcomes are significantly enhanced when there is early detection. There are many ways that an annual physical can give clues as to whether there are lurking dangers that need early intervention.

Updating Your Medical Records — Maintaining an up-to-date medical record provides vital information for your doctor in their efforts help you to make and manage lifestyle decisions or develop a care plan when one becomes necessary. Keeping your medical information up

Sleep Guide

We spend about a third of our lives sleeping. Quality sleep is essential to sustaining good health, good work, learning, and enjoyment of life, family and friends. Not getting enough sleep creates **sleep debt**.

Eventually, your body will demand that the debt be repaid. If you are burning the candle at both ends, there's a good chance you're deep in debt. Most adults require seven to nine hours of sleep daily for physical and mental health protection, while growing children and teens need even more.

Why do we need that much sleep? It allows your body and mind to recharge, leaving you refreshed and alert when you wake up. Good quality sleep helps the body stay strong, healthy and fight diseases. Lacking adequate sleep, the brain cannot function well, impairing your ability to learn, concentrate and process thinking and memory.

The negative short-term effects of poor sleep may be obvious: feeling drowsy, depressed and unproductive. But chronic sleep deprivation can increase the long-term risk of serious health problems, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and depression.

About a third of adults in the U.S. fail to regularly get adequate sleep. Ways to improve your sleep every 24 hours:

- **Treat** any underlying physical or mental health condition, such as arthritis pain or anxiety, that may be interfering with your sleep. Work with your health care provider.
- **Engage** in healthy lifestyle activities, including regular exercise.
- **Practice** good daily sleep habits, such as waking up at the same time each day and keeping your bedroom dark, quiet and cool.
- **Avoid caffeine late in the day**, and avoid alcohol close to bedtime.
- **Turn off** electronic devices in the evening.

Note: Prescription sleep aid medications as well as over-the-counter drug treatments and supplements for sleep improvement may help restore your sleep patterns. There are many options and your first step to using and choosing a suitable sleep aid is consulting your health care provider.



What about shiftworkers? Getting enough sleep is especially challenging for people who work shifts. Lifestyle measures can reduce fatigue and the risk of developing health problems, such as type 2 diabetes and weight gain.

The Sleep Foundation recommends these coping strategies if you work nights:

- Ensure family members or roommates know how to avoid disturbing you during your allotted sleep time.
- Block outside daylight and keep your thermostat at about 65°F.

Understanding Sleep

Your brain is very active during sleep.

Sleep affects your daily functioning and your physical and mental health in many ways that researchers are just beginning to understand. During sleep, you usually pass through five phases of sleep. These stages progress in a cycle from stage 1 to REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, and then the cycle starts over again with stage 1.

Stages 3 and 4 are the most refreshing of the sleep stages — it is this type of sleep that you crave when you're very tired. It's more difficult to awaken someone during these stages, and when awakened, a person will often feel groggy and disoriented for a few minutes.

Foods and medicines affect whether we feel alert or drowsy and how well we sleep.

Caffeine and heavy meals impact sleep. Drugs, such as diet pills and decongestants, stimulate some parts of the brain and can cause insomnia or an inability to sleep. Some antidepressants can suppress REM sleep.

Smokers often sleep lightly and tend to wake up after three or four hours due to nicotine withdrawal — another good reason to quit tobacco.

QuikQuiz™: Storing Medications



Test your knowledge:

1. The best place to store medications is in your bathroom medicine cabinet. T F
2. Child-resistant caps on medications are foolproof. T F
3. It's okay to keep medications in any container. T F
4. Home medical tests not used orally are safe to store in your bathroom. T F
5. Never take any expired drug. T F
6. Medications are designed to be resistant to excess heat. T F
7. All drugs can be flushed down the toilet when they expire or you are no longer taking them. T F

ANSWERS

1. **False** — High humidity in bathrooms can cause some medications to lose potency.
2. **False** — Child-resistant lids are important, but children and teens can find ways to remove them (which is why the lids are called resistant). Keep medicines high on a shelf or in a closet, preferably locked up.
3. **False** — Keep medications in their original bottles unless you use a weekly pill organizer. Mistaking one medication for another may cause overdosing or side effects.
4. **False** — For example, blood glucose strips can give inaccurate readings if exposed to humidity.
5. **True** — Always check the expiration date, which tells you when a drug is no longer at full strength. If a drug has changed color, smells or looks different, ask your pharmacist if you should use it.
6. **False** — Exposure to excess heat, even for a short time, can potentially lower potency and even change the chemical makeup of some drugs. Some medications require refrigeration.
7. **False** — Don't flush medicines unless the label or patient information says to do so and there's no take-back option, says the FDA. Take old meds to your pharmacist or mix them with coffee grounds or kitty litter to make them unappealing to children and animals. Then dispose of them in sealed plastic bags. To learn more, search for **Disposal of Unused Medicines** at [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov).

Peer Pressure: Not Just for Kids

The term *peer pressure* might call to mind children or teens who try to copy those around them, but we can be swayed by our peers at any age.

Sometimes it's intentional. We may strive to imitate others we admire or seek to gain their approval. Or we subconsciously act like those around us. If others are eating or drinking to excess, for example, this copycat behavior can be a problem.

Consider these strategies if you want to maintain or improve your health and self-image:

- **Seek out positive influences.** Surround yourself with people who act responsibly and have healthy habits. They encourage you, support your choices and don't offer unwanted advice.
- **Focus on your priorities,** whether it's more wholesome eating or regular exercise, so you won't be sidetracked by others' choices. You don't have to live up to anyone's standards or expectations except your own realistic and healthful goals.
- **Motivate and congratulate yourself along the way.** If you are happy with your progress, why should it matter what others are doing or saying?
- **Politely say no** when someone wants you to try a fad diet or other unhealthy but trending habits. People who respect your choices will not persist with "try it, you'll like it" or "everyone's doing it" advice.
- **Prepare.** If you expect to be in a situation with unhealthy temptations, create a plan to make smart decisions, resist pressure from others and leave the situation if needed.



Final thought: Online content is full of messages designed to pressure and make you feel inadequate if you don't jump on the latest fad. Odds are, the product or trend being promoted isn't as popular or beneficial as its influencers claim it is.

Hunger Cues

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

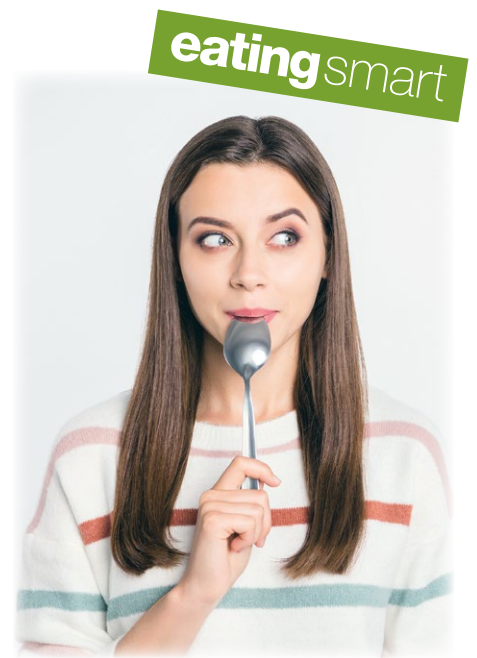
The advice to eat according to your hunger cues, or "eat when you feel hungry, but stop when you feel full," is popular in nutrition circles. It's a more intuitive way of eating compared to diet culture's dogma of counting calories or following a rigid meal plan.

Chronic dieters lose their sense of hunger cues because they eat according to a restrictive plan, not according to what their body needs. Plus, dietary restriction teaches you to ignore early signs of hunger, making you so hungry that you will likely overeat at mealtime. That's not a healthful cycle.

Consider this: Babies have an innate, built-in fullness system. If you've noticed a baby turn away when they are done eating, you've seen this instinct firsthand. As we grow, we stop listening to our body's cues. Maybe you were told to clean your plate as a child, which started to override fullness cues. Or perhaps you get cravings based on seeing or smelling certain foods. These environmental cues ignore the body's hunger and fullness cues and may lead to overeating.

You can get back in touch with hunger cues and manage your appetite. Learn to rate your hunger on a scale of 1 to 10:

- 1 – ravenous
- 2 – very hungry
- 3 – hungry
- 4 – ready to eat
- 5 – neutral
- 6 – mild fullness
- 7 – satisfied
- 8 – uncomfortable fullness
- 9 – stuffed
- 10 – physically ill



The scale helps you recognize your body's cues. Ideally, you should start eating at 3 or 4 (hungry or ready to eat), and stop eating at 7 (satisfied). Throughout the day, pause for a moment and determine if you feel hungry, and soon you will establish a pattern of eating according to your body's needs. Not sure how to begin? Search online for a certified intuitive eating dietitian or view a list at intuitiveeating.org/certified-counselors.

Middle Eastern Spiced Chicken

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 4 breasts), cut into 2-inch pieces | ½ tsp turmeric |
| 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil | ¼ tsp cinnamon |
| 2 tsp cumin | ¼ tsp garlic powder |
| 2 tsp paprika | ½ tsp salt |

Preheat oven to 400°F. **Place** chicken pieces in a large mixing bowl. **Coat** in olive oil, cumin, paprika, turmeric, cinnamon, garlic powder and salt. **Mix** well to combine. **Line** baking pan with parchment paper. **Spread** chicken on baking pan. **Bake** 15 minutes, or until chicken reaches internal temp of 165°F. **Remove** from oven, cut chicken into smaller pieces and toss in pan drippings. **Serve** with pita, cucumber, tomato and dipping sauces, such as hummus or tzatziki.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 300 calories | 45g protein | 13g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 5g mono fat | 5g poly fat | 1g carbohydrate | 0g sugar (0 added sugar) | 1g fiber | 356mg sodium

EASY recipe



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 pandemic information visit coronavirus.gov.

EXPERT advice — Elizabeth Smoots, MD

Q: Do I need testing for inflammation?

A: Inflammation is an important contributor to many chronic disorders, including heart disease, arthritis and cancer. However, it doesn't tell the whole story, since excess weight, smoking, autoimmunity, chronic infections, toxins, genetics and many other factors can lead to long-term illness.

Guidelines do not recommend routine inflammation testing for everyone.

Inflammation tests, such as sedimentation rate (the distance red blood cells fall in a test tube in one hour) or C-reactive protein level (which rises when you have inflammation), can be used along with symptom evaluation and other tests to help diagnose an inflammatory condition, such as giant cell arteritis (inflammation of certain arteries, especially those near the temples). Monitoring inflammatory conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, can also be done using the tests.

Getting regular medical care can help detect the presence of risk factors for inflammation. The risk factors are usually evaluated and treated without the need for inflammation testing. Healthy lifestyle habits, such as brisk walking, eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, and avoiding pro-inflammatory ingredients, such as sugar, are other important ways to help reduce inflammation.

to date can also help with diagnostic efforts when problems arise. It provides highly critical information for your medical team to have if an emergency occurs.

Maintaining a Relationship with Your Primary Care Physician — While it can seem like time with your doctor is brief and to the point when engaging in appointments for treatment of common ailments, the annual physical appointment is designed to be more interactive, offering an opportunity for you as a patient to share more information with your doctor and ask more questions. Prepare before attending your annual physical visit with your questions and information about any health issues you may have experienced over the prior year. Regular annual visits with your primary care physician provide a relationship building opportunity. Your PCP is the clearinghouse for all medical information associated with your visits from from their office as well as other specialists. Based on the information you provide, their file is designed to be the centralized location of all of your medical information. Your annual physical appointment is an opportunity to build and maintain a trusting and ongoing relationship with your primary care advocate and warrior against disease.

Updating Vaccinations — As COVID has taught us, maintaining our vaccination record is not just an issue that needs addressing during childhood. The availability of vaccinations to help eliminate or minimize risks for a variety of health concerns, viruses and conditions is expanding. Annual physicals give an opportunity to ask questions about vaccination availability and receive vaccinations where appropriate for your health needs.

So, what are you waiting for? Make you appointment today — your body maintenance is priority one.

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National Playground Safety Week is April 24 to 28.

Check Your Playground

Playgrounds are a great place for your children to burn off pent-up energy. However, you always need to look out for your child's safety. If you have older children, ask them to help you check for hazards.

The National Program for Playground Safety Kid Checker helps children understand the importance of playground safety by letting them check for dangers before using the playground. Of course, as an adult, you still need to supervise all children at the playground. Use this checklist:

- Supervision:** Are adults present and watching?
- Age appropriate:** Is there a separate play area for preschoolers (ages two to five) and school-age children (ages five to 12)?
- Fall surface:** Does the surface have appropriate safety support materials, such as sand, pea gravel, wood products, shredded rubber or a rubber mat?
- Equipment maintenance:** Is the equipment in good condition and are all of the spaces fewer than 3½ inches or greater than nine inches?

Learn more at playgroundsafety.org/safety-tips/kid-checker.

