

# THE TOP HEALTH<sup>®</sup>

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

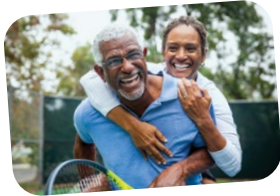
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## Exercise: Get More Outdoors

**Why exercise with Mother Nature?** It's hard to argue with the many health benefits you can gain from regular exercise. And moving it outdoors offers some special benefits over indoor exercise, especially on beautiful sunny days. Let it broaden your horizons.

**Just open the door.** You'll find countless routes and settings in your neighborhood, often quicker than traveling to a gym.



**Forget boredom.** You can choose a changing environment, especially if you live near a park, shoreline or designated bike path – much more fun than working on a machine, especially with a friend.

**Burn more calories.** Headwinds make your muscles work harder to overcome the resistance against your body, especially when jogging or biking.

### Make exercise family time outside.

Take your kids routinely to a playground, go biking or hiking and break a sweat — a good step in raising confident kids who grow to appreciate fitness.



**Connect with your community.** Break from screen time to share the fresh air with fellow neighborhood walkers, joggers and bikers.

**Boost your mood.** There is research suggesting that exercise outside can benefit mental well-being more than the same type of exercise inside. One study found outdoor exercisers scored **higher** on measures of energy, enthusiasm and self-esteem and **lower** on tension, depression and fatigue.

**Reminder:** Know your outdoor environment – find a setting that's safe and meets your exercise needs. Consider traffic, weather and air conditions before heading out.

Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. — *Melody Beattie*

## Cooking \$mart

Maximize nutrition and ingredients without breaking your budget.

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

March is  
Nutrition  
Month.



**Some foods that are touted for their health benefits can also be expensive.** Items such as chia seeds, quinoa and nuts are nutritious but not always affordable. The good news is that you can reap the same nutritional benefits from similar foods that cost much less. Some examples:

**Instead of quinoa,** opt for oats or **pot barley.**

Either of these options are filled with fiber, vitamins and minerals, and can be used to make anything from a warm breakfast cereal to a savory side dish. Oats and barley cost about half of what you'll pay for quinoa.



**Instead of mixed nuts,** buy **peanuts,** which are more affordable. You'll get the same satisfying crunch, plus lots of protein and good-for-you unsaturated fats. The same is true for nut butters: Peanut butter is more affordable than almond or cashew butter.

**Instead of chia seeds,** choose **flax seeds.**

They cost a third less and are a great source of heart-healthy omega-3 fats.



**Instead of pricey snack bars,** make your **own.**

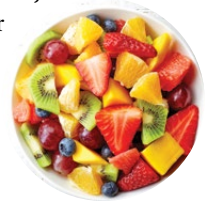


**Instead of ground beef,** try **brown lentils.**

Both contain protein, but lentils are cheaper yet higher in fiber and lower in saturated fat compared to ground beef. You can also mix beef and lentils (in burgers, for example) for the best of both worlds.

**Instead of pricey dried goji, acai or mulberries,**

stick with locally grown **fresh fruits.** Whether you like apples, berries or oranges, they all contain beneficial antioxidants and vitamin C. Any fruit is a good choice.



**Instead of buying coffee or tea over the counter,** make it at **home.**

A \$3 cup of tea?



Buy tea bags instead for only cents per bag. These beverages help you stay hydrated, but the costs add up. Make them at home and tote them in a thermos. And bottle water yourself: Fill a reusable bottle with water from the tap. It costs lot less and is just as good as what you buy in the store.

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.



## Q: Colon cancer screening?

**A:** Colorectal cancer is the third-leading cause of cancer deaths in both men and women. The good news is it's often preventable with regular screening. Tests can detect pre-cancerous polyps and lead to their removal before they have a chance to become full-blown cancer. And when cancer has already started, screening can detect it earlier when it's smaller and easier to treat.

**But a third of people who should get tested have never been screened.** The American Cancer Society recommends people at average risk start screening at age 45. Screening for colon cancer can easily be done using stool tests that look for blood or DNA changes. Or a health care provider can look inside the colon and rectum using colonoscopy, sigmoidoscopy or CT colonography to detect any polyps or cancer.

**Talk to your provider about the best colorectal screening method for you.** And ask when you should start. — Elizabeth Smoots, MD

## March 24 is American Diabetes Alert Day.

Nearly 1 in 4 Americans is unaware they have type 2 diabetes caused by high blood glucose levels. Another 84 million have prediabetes, not yet requiring medication. The good news: We can often prevent or reverse this life-threatening condition that can lead to cardiovascular disease, heart attack, stroke, nerve damage, kidney disease and vision loss. Primary risks for diabetes include excess weight, family history, inactivity and race (risk is higher for African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian-Americans). The sooner you identify your risks and control them, the better. To learn if you have risks, take the 60-second type 2 diabetes risk test at [diabetes.org/risk-test](https://diabetes.org/risk-test).



## How's Your Mental Health?

**Pessimism, low self-worth, sadness and a general loss of interest** — these are signs you may notice following a significant personal setback or unhappy event. But feeling sad and hopeless month after month is depression — a biological disorder and leading cause of disability affecting every age group and more than 16% of Americans.

**Depression, also known as major depressive disorder or clinical depression,** affects the ability to feel, think and handle daily activities. Classic signs include:

- Feeling hopeless.
- Lack of interest in normal activities.
- Frequent unusual fatigue.
- Oversleeping or insomnia.
- Abusing alcohol or drugs.
- Becoming isolated.
- Thoughts of suicide.
- Recurring headaches or digestive trouble.
- Difficulty with concentration or memory.
- Moving or talking slower so much that others notice.



**The severity of depression** may be judged by how many symptoms you have and how much they impair your everyday life.

**Depression is an equal-opportunity illness,** affecting women, men and adolescents. However, each may experience their symptoms differently. It's hard to identify in teens and is often overlooked in men. For example, men may have feelings of anger and aggression rather than sadness. They are less likely than women to recognize, discuss and seek treatment for depression. Yet depression affects a large number of men, and at any age.

**The good news is, depression is treatable.** So, besides your health care provider's help, what can you do on your own? Treat yourself well:

- Keep a regular sleep schedule.
- Boost energy and well-being through exercise.
- Spend time with people you like.
- Ask family and friends for help.
- Pursue favorite activities.
- Set goals to build confidence in the future.
- Do helpful things for others.
- Reflect on things for which you're grateful.
- Relax, meditate and appreciate nature daily.



**And try to simplify your days.  
We can all feel better leading  
a less complicated life.**



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Boost Your Mood With Exercise**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/20V3tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/20V3tools).

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