

Health, Mind & Body

A Special Supplement to

Record-Herald
and The Times-Gazette

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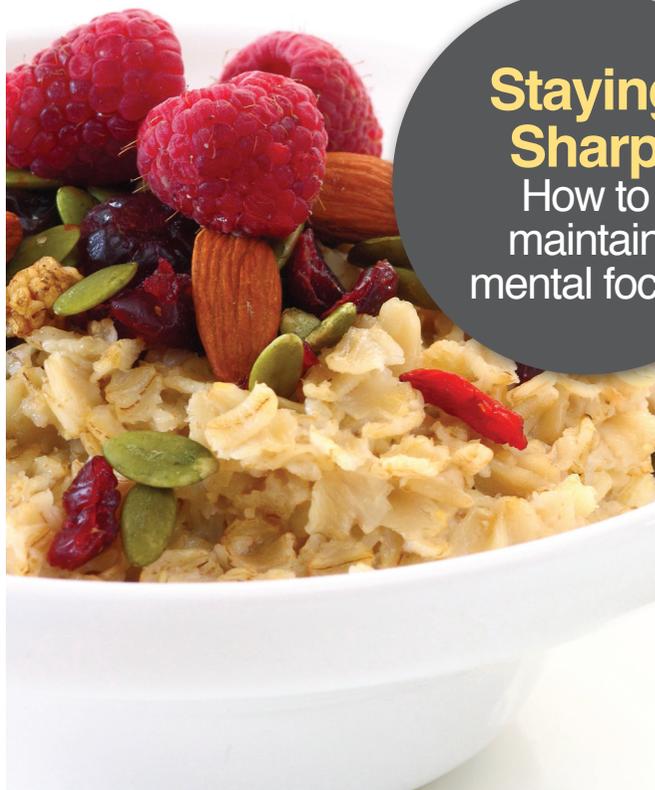
Live Long and Healthy

These healthy habits
can have a lasting impact

A New You

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Did you know?

Peanut butter is a nutritious food that can be served in sandwiches, as a dip or as an ingredient for flavorful sauces. Peanut butter also can be enjoyed by the spoonful right out of the container. Peanut plants are rather interesting. Unlike many plants, the peanut flowers form above ground, but the fruit — the peanuts — grow below the soil by the roots. Peanuts do not grow on trees and really aren't nuts at all. They're actually legumes. The National Peanut Board says that it takes about 540 peanuts to make a 12-ounce jar of peanut butter. The world's largest peanut butter factory can produce 25,000 jars each day. That means millions of peanuts must be harvested and transformed to create those delicious jars of creamy and crunchy peanut butter.





Healthy Habits that can have a lasting impact

Working past retirement age may help some men and women stay more mentally sharp.

A long and healthy life is the ultimate goal for many people. While a host of factors beyond a person's control, such as genetics, impact how long that person lives and how susceptible to certain medical conditions he or she may be, there are many things men and women can do to improve their chances of living long, healthy lives.

Keep working. While many working men and women dream of the day when they can leave the daily grind behind once and for all, they might want to think more about a second career than a long, carefree retirement. A study from British researchers published in the *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* found that each extra year that men and women

work was associated with a six-week delay in the onset of dementia. While men and women may want to retire from their professions, finding second careers or volunteering close to full-time hours may improve their long-term health and quality of life.

Stay on your toes. A healthy diet is a key component of a healthy lifestyle, but diet alone is not enough to promote a long and healthy life. According to the Johns Hopkins Medicine Health Library, the risks associated with a physically inactive lifestyle are considerable. Such risks include a greater risk of developing high blood pressure and coronary heart disease and even a greater risk for certain cancers. In addition, physical inactivity can add to feelings of anxiety and depression. Inactivity tends to increase with age, so men and women aiming for long and healthy lives should make physical activity a vital part of their daily lives.

Get your whole grains. Whole grains may be another key ingredient to a long and healthy life. Numerous studies have shown that increasing whole grain consumption can help prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes. Researchers who conducted a systematic review of studies examining the link

between whole grains and type 2 diabetes prevention in 2007 found that eating an extra two servings of whole grains per day decreased a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 21 percent. That's an important finding, as additional research has found that people with diabetes have an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, a neurodegenerative condition that can dramatically reduce quality of life.

Visit your physician annually if not more frequently. While many people, especially those who feel healthy, are hesitant to visit their physicians, doing so may just save your life. Several diseases, including cancer and heart disease, are more effectively treated when detected early. Annual physicals and discussions with your physician may uncover a disease in its early stages when it is most treatable. Waiting until symptoms appear may not be too late to treat a condition or disease, but taking a proactive approach increases the likelihood of early detection, which increases your chances of living a long and healthy life.

Healthy habits improve peoples' quality of life while also increasing the likelihood that men and women live long, healthy and productive lives.

Did you know?

Research indicates that people who laugh a lot are much healthier and may live longer than those who don't find time to chuckle. A good, deep belly laugh can provide your body and mind with a great workout. Dr. Lee Berk at the Loma Linda School of Public Health in California found that laughing lowers levels of stress hormones and strengthens the immune system. The organization Laughter Works, which teaches people how and why to laugh, says laughter can cause blood pressure to drop, blood to become oxygenated and endorphins to kick in, which can improve mood. And that's just the beginning. Laughing can help reduce stress and promote stronger relationships between people who laugh together. Data indicates children around the age of six laugh the most, laughing roughly 300 times per day, while adults average only 15 to 100 laughs per day.





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Decrease mucus production and subsequent sore throats

When allergies, colds or the flu strike, the resulting symptoms can be unpleasant. Watery eyes, sneezing, aches, pains, and lethargy are common. Two additional symptoms common to respiratory illnesses include excess mucus production and sore throat.

Mucus is a vital component of bodily health. The American Academy of Otolaryngology says glands in the nose and throat continually produce thin mucus to moisten and clean respiratory passageways. This mucus traps foreign matter and can help combat infection. When viruses or bacteria irritate parts of the nose and throat, excess mucus may be produced as the immune system attempts to retaliate. This mucus may thicken and become more acidic. Extra mucus can produce its own side effects, including further irritation. According to New York-Presbyterian

Hospital, in many cases, excess mucus production can lead to post-nasal drip and subsequent sore throats.

People often mistake post-nasal drip and related sore throat as separate medical conditions. But each can be traced to whichever illness or irritant (such as dry air or chemical exposure) is triggering the body's mucus response. Reducing the amount of mucus pooling in the back of the throat can help a person feel better more quickly and can be used in conjunction with medical advice.

Limit foods that may increase mucus production. Dairy products, wheat, soy, bananas, sugar, and preservatives may contribute to mucus production, according to The University of Maryland Medical Center.

Drink peppermint or regular mint tea. The natural menthol in these herbs can help thin mucus and loosen it up for more productive coughs.

Increase consumption of mucus-fighting foods and beverages. Mustard, lemon, garlic, and anti-

inflammatory oils found in many nuts may help reduce swelling in the throat and nose and tame mucus production.

Drink plenty of fluids. Clear fluids, such as water, tea and broth, can also thin out mucus, making it flow more easily down the throat.

Rely on salt solutions. Simple nasal saline rinses or gargling with salt water can alleviate irritation and help reduce some of the mucus, too. Remember to use cooled-down boiled tap water or distilled, sterile water for nasal rinses to prevent the chance of water contamination, which can lead to serious illness.

Consider medication. When natural remedies are exhausted, prescription or over-the-counter products may provide relief. Decongestants can dry up nasal secretions, while antibiotics may be needed if an infection is bacterial in nature.

Always consult with a doctor to get an accurate diagnosis of mucus issues and sore throat causes. He or she may suggest one of the tips above or a combination of therapies.

Sore throat can result from excess mucus production and post-nasal drip irritation.

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Be smart about antibiotic use

drugs have been used successfully for the last 70 years to treat patients with infectious diseases.

But antibiotics cannot treat illnesses stemming from viruses, which include most colds and the flu.

As effective as antibiotics can be, antibiotic resistance is a growing problem. The CDC reports that at least two million people become infected with bacteria that have become resistant to antibiotics, and roughly 23,000 people die each year as a result of these types of infections. An April 2014 report from the World Health Organization stated, "This serious threat is no longer a prediction for the future, it is happening right now in every region of the world and has the potential to affect anyone, of any age, in any country. It is now a major threat to public health."

The Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics says antibiotic resistance occurs when an antibiotic has lost its ability to effectively control or kill bacterial growth. The three main ways resistance develops include natural

resistance to certain types of antibiotics, genetic mutation or through the acquisition of resistance from another bacterium. This resistance can occur spontaneously or through misuse of antibiotics or antimicrobials. Prescription medications are not always the culprits, either. Antibiotic use in livestock and food production also may contribute to resistance.

When antibiotic resistance occurs, a stronger drug may be needed to treat an infection that was once taken care of by a milder medication.

Prudent antibiotic use can help prevent the recurrence of resistance. Individuals can help the process in a number of ways.

Become educated. The health resource Medscape, powered by WebMD, says in a recent survey of 796 clinicians, 42 percent of doctors have admitted to prescribing antibiotics 10 to 24 percent of the time even when they are not sure they are necessary. Patient request is a large factor in such offerings. About 25 percent of patients ask

their doctor or nurse for antibiotics. Patients who educate themselves about the proper application of antibiotics may be less likely to request them, and that can help prevent the development of a resistance.

Confirm need. Only take antibiotics when a bacteria-, parasite- or fungus-based illness is identified. These illnesses may include strep throat, urinary tract infections or ear infections.

Take a wait-and-see approach. Wait for lab results to come back for strep throat or other cultures to see if you need an antibiotic. Many viral-based illnesses will go away within two weeks' time.

Adhere to dosage guidelines. When prescribed antibiotics for an infection, take them as directed, making sure you complete the dosage cycle. Do not stop simply because you feel better. Stopping early may not be enough to effectively kill the bacteria and may contribute to resistance in the future.

Antibiotic abuse and resistance are concerns that can be addressed by becoming informed and making smart medication choices.

When used correctly, antibiotics and similar drugs known as antimicrobial agents can alleviate infections caused by various bacteria and some types of fungi and parasites. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that these



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The benefits of reading



Many people are avid readers, feeling that a good book remains the most entertaining form of escapism. But reading provides more than just an opportunity to leave the daily grind behind. While many people may read to immerse themselves in something other than a movie or a television show, they may not know about all the additional benefits they are enjoying when cuddling up with a good book.

Reading can improve brain function. A recent study from researchers at Emory University discovered that reading a novel can improve brain function in various ways. During the study, researchers found that reading fiction improves connectivity in the brain. In addition, reading fiction improved readers' ability to put themselves in other peoples' shoes, which might help them relate better to people in both the present and future.

Reading can benefit long-term brain health. While readers engrossed in a great book might only be worried about what's coming on the next page, the benefits to reading are much more long-term than the next chapter. Researchers at the Rush University Medical Center in Chicago found that reading is one of a handful of mentally stimulating activities that can benefit brain health in old age. In their Rush Memory and Aging Project, researchers examined nearly 300 elderly men and women, giving them tests of memory and thinking throughout the final years of their lives. When participants, who were surveyed as to how often they engaged in mentally stimulating

activities such as reading, passed away, their brains were examined for signs of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Researchers discovered that the participants who engaged in mentally challenging activities most often had slower rates of memory decline. In addition, even those who had symptoms of brain damage that are commonly associated with Alzheimer's and dementia seemed to benefit from the stimulation that mentally challenging activities produced.

Reading can help reduce stress. Another big benefit of reading is its relationship to stress. According to a 2009 study from researchers at the University of Sussex in England, reading can reduce stress by up to 68 percent. In addition, reading might help relieve that stress even faster than other forms of stress relief because it allows for a more immediate escape from the stress of daily life.

Reading can help you get a more restful night's sleep. According to the National Sleep Foundation, engaging in a calming activity for an hour before going to bed can help your body wind down and ready itself for sleep. Some people may struggle to fall asleep after reading on an electronic device, such as a tablet or e-reader, as the light that emanates from such devices may be activating the brain. If need be, stick to reading traditional print books and magazines before going to bed. Reading is not only a favorite activity for many people, but it's also something that can benefit the body in myriad ways.

Save money and still get in shape



Committing to multiple personal training sessions as opposed to paying on a session-by-session basis is one potential way to save money when trying to get in shape.

The costs of getting fit can sometimes seem formidable.

Men and women on tight budgets may feel that gym memberships, home exercise equipment or costly personal training sessions are simply beyond their means. Such concerns can have long-term negative impacts on individuals' health, which only highlights the need to find ways to save when attempting to get in shape.

While there is no shortage of ways to spend money when trying to get back in shape, there are even more ways to save when adopting a healthier lifestyle.

Buy in bulk. Many professional fitness services, whether it's gym memberships or personal training sessions, offer greater discounts to individuals willing to make bigger commitments. Men and women who commit to a 12-month gym membership instead of going month-to-month can typically save a substantial amount of money each month by making such long-term commitments. For example, a gym may charge \$89 for a month-to-

month membership, but only \$69 per month for people who commit for a full year. That's a savings of nearly 23 percent. Personal trainers also typically offer considerable discounts to clients who commit to a greater number of sessions than those who simply purchase one session at a time.

Join a gym at the right moment. Many gyms capitalize on people's New Year's resolutions to get fit by offering steep discounts to men and women who sign up at the end of December or in January. Others may discount memberships in late winter when people want to get in shape before the return of beach season. Signing up during the height of discount season or when gyms are offering special discounts, such as anniversary or holiday deals, can save you a lot of money over the course of the year.

Work out at home. If a gym membership is simply beyond your means, create your own workout area at home. Visit a nearby sporting goods store and purchase some weights and go for jogs around the neighborhood to meet your daily

cardiovascular exercise goals. If space is limited at home, embrace yoga. Yoga provides both strength and balance training, and all you need is room for a yoga mat.

Investigate your health insurance. Many health insurance providers offer gym membership rebates to their customers. If you have never had a gym membership in the past, you may not even know if your provider offers this benefit. Gym membership rebates typically require that policy holders visit their gyms 'X' number of times in a six- or 12-month span (i.e., 50 times in six months or 100 times in 12 months) in order to earn rebates. A \$400 annual rebate on a gym membership that costs \$69 per month cuts the yearly cost of that gym membership by nearly 50 percent. If your existing insurance plan does not offer such rebates, speak with your employer about including it when the time comes to renew the insurance offerings in the future. Getting fit does not have to break the bank. Health-conscious men and women can find numerous ways to save on their journeys to living more active lifestyles.

Don't be burned by poor fever advice

Elevated body temperature, also known as fever, makes many people run to the medicine cabinet. This is especially true when fever strikes a young child and parents' concerns grow. But fevers are quite common and not nearly as harmful as many people may think.

Although illnesses may bring about fevers that can be life-threatening, including malaria and dengue, more run-of-the-mill fevers are typically triggered by common bacterial or viral infections or even inflammatory conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, offers The Mayo Clinic. Sometimes the cause of a fever can't be identified, but that is not necessarily cause for alarm.

Fevers are a natural immune response. The purpose of a fever is to gain an advantage over an infectious agent by making the body less favorable for the spread of this agent, whether it's a virus or bacterium. Many infectious agents are temperature-sensitive and require the right mix of conditions to be able to become profligate consumers of the body's resources. The hypothalamus is the body's internal thermostat and will be triggered by biochemical substances in the blood alerting the body to the presence of a potential invader. The body then will retain and generate more heat to essentially kill off that invader.

According to the Internal Medicine Residency Program at Indiana University, because children have immature and novice immune systems, they tend to get higher fevers more quickly than adults. As children age and their bodies learn and adapt, fevers typically are not nearly as severe. This may be a reason why a child's high fever is less of a concern than the same fever in an adult.



Normal body temperature fluctuates during the day, but a temperature from about 97 F (36.1 C) to 99 F (37.2 C) generally is considered "normal." Adults should only be concerned if a fever is high-grade, reaching 104 F or more. Such fevers are considered dangerous. Chronic fevers, or those persisting for longer than three to four days, also should be checked out by a physician.

Watching how a person behaves may indicate whether he or she is ill enough to necessitate a doctor visit. Infants should always be checked by a doctor if they have a fever because it could be a sign of a serious infection.

Low-grade fevers generally do not require any medicine, and taking a fever-reducer may prolong the underlying illness or mask the cause of it. Give the body a chance to fight the foreign invader before reaching for acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Physicians may advise avoiding fever-lowering drugs for temperatures of 102 F (38.9 C) or lower. Always call a doctor if you need clarification on medication dosage and other fever recommendations.

Fevers can be scary, but they are just one of many ways the human body defends itself against illness.

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