



March is Nutrition Month.

BEST bits



March is Red Cross Month.

The Red Cross maintains a strong network of people providing compassionate care to those facing disaster. To learn how you can help those in need, check Red Cross services in your area at redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter.html.



March is Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Awareness Month.

MS is a chronic neurological condition that affects the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord); it's caused by inflammation due to overactive immune cells. Studies suggest the importance of diet for those with MS. Following healthy eating plans high in fish, eggs, poultry, vegetables and legumes was linked with a 25% reduced risk of initial central nervous system damage related to MS. Learn more at msfocus.org/Get-Help.

■ **From the CDC: Don't skip cancer screening.** These tests can find signs of cancer when treatment is likely to work best. Ask your health care provider when you need tests for breast, cervical (women), prostate (men) and colorectal cancers, as well as for lung cancer if you have a history of smoking. Progress in cancer research, detection and treatments has helped decrease the incidence and death rates for all cancers. Learn more at healthypeople.gov.

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.”

— Confucius

Eating Plan for Life

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Before you try another fad diet that's likely to fail, consider a better option: The best approach for improved health and weight control is to develop a personal plan — one you can stick with and enjoy. Diets that are too restrictive, unaffordable or boring won't work for you long term.

The right eating plan for you should match your taste buds, daily schedule, finances and health needs. That's a lot to think about. Consider these 5 factors to help you find the best plan for you:

- ❶ **Does it include foods you love?** Restricting your favorite foods may leave you unhappy and is not sustainable for long. Make sure you love what you eat.
- ❷ **Does it allow you to socialize?** Some diet plans are so limited that it's difficult to travel or dine with friends and family. If your diet is keeping you isolated, you need to rethink it.
- ❸ **Is it simple and affordable?** A sign of failure is spending too much time sourcing ingredients and too much money on them. The plan needs to fit your lifestyle.
- ❹ **Does it support physical activity?** Eating well is only part of the equation. Regular exercise is important for reducing disease risk, maintaining a healthy weight and improving your mood.
- ❺ **Does it provide the nutrition that your body needs?** It's important that the food you choose is both enjoyable and nourishing. Restricting food can lead to nutrient deficiencies. See a dietitian to ensure your nutrient needs are being met.

SIGNS You Need Medical Care

Worrisome health symptoms can show up unexpectedly. When you're concerned but unsure the problem warrants a health care visit, call your health care provider's office and ask about it. Many medical offices have staff available to answer these calls.

Generally, we see our primary care providers (PCP) for non-emergency symptoms and preventive care. Your PCP knows you best, including your health history, what has been effective for you in the past, and other health concerns — and can provide continuous care. Examples of non-emergency conditions: persistent symptoms such as urination or bowel changes, unintentional weight loss, emotional changes, joint pain, congestion or coughing.

For urgent problems after office hours, learn the procedure recommended by your provider's office. You may be able to reach the provider on call. But if you can't see your provider or don't have one, here are some general guidelines on when and where to seek medical care:



1. Call 9-1-1 for life-threatening conditions such as severe chest pain or stroke. Serious conditions include:

- **Difficulty breathing.**
- **A possible heart attack:** chest pain, which may radiate to an arm or jaw, with sweating, vomiting or dizziness.
- **An injury** that threatens life or limb.
- **A possible stroke:** facial drooping; weakness or numbness on 1 side of the body; sudden trouble with walking, talking or vision; sudden severe headache; or loss of consciousness.

2. Go to the emergency room (ER). The following are some reasons to use an ER. Have someone drive you to the ER or call 9-1-1 if you have:

- Heart attack or stroke signs (noted to the left).
- Sudden confusion or a change in mental status.
- Serious burns or a fever with rash.
- A head injury or concussion; an eye injury.
- Fainting or seizures.
- Severe cuts that may need sutures; facial lacerations.
- Fractures or dislocated joints.
- Severe cold or flu symptoms.
- Bleeding during pregnancy.
- Severe abdominal pain with or without vomiting.

3. Consider an urgent care center (if available) which offers services after hours and weekends and beyond a typical primary care office. Illnesses or injuries that are not life-threatening, but can't wait until the next day, can be treated at an urgent care center. When to go? Examples include fever without a rash; severe or persistent abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, trouble breathing, flu symptoms, strains and sprains, or small cuts that may need stitches.

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Managing Life's Transitions: Ready or Not?

We can't always predict significant changes in life, such as switching jobs and financial, family or health issues. When facing a difficult change, set aside time to study and prepare for what's ahead. **Here's how:**



Recall the past. You've been changing your whole life. Consider specific ways your life was altered, often for the better, and how you succeeded.

Review the things that worry you. Then list only your primary challenges. Maybe the change won't be as broad or intimidating as you first thought.

Be positive and proactive.

Identify the benefits with the transition — new opportunities for knowledge and growth may surprise you. For example, a diagnosis of diabetes, while daunting, can encourage healthier choices in your life so you feel better.

Make your health a priority in the process.

Get routine exercise, eat well, meet sleep needs and maintain your regular schedule as much as possible to help you feel in control. Avoid overeating and alcohol abuse, which can reverse your progress.

Choosing personal wellness now can boost your energy, often critical while making a major change.

Count on help. If you feel unusually stressed or depressed, see your health care provider.



March 17-23 is National Poison Prevention Week.

Poison Prevention

To prevent accidental poisoning, the American Association of Poison Control Centers recommends you:

- KEEP** the national poison helpline number stored in your cell phone or posted by your home phone in case of emergency. Call **1-800-222-1222** or text **POISON** to **797979** to save the number in your cell phone.
- STORE** medicines and hazardous materials out of sight and reach of children. Always keep these substances in original, child-resistant containers.
- READ** and follow labels and directions before you use them or administer to children.
- DETECT** invisible threats by putting a carbon monoxide detector in your home.



TIP of the MONTH

Fruits and Vegetables Galore

Want to eat more fruits and vegetables? Make them the most convenient snack choice when you're hungry. Keep a bowl of apples and bananas on your kitchen counter for quick snacks. Cut up bell peppers, cucumber, celery and carrot sticks and **keep them handy in the fridge**. And buy no-prep options such as grapes, cherry tomatoes or baby-cut carrots for grab-and-go convenience. Make sure your produce is washed well before you eat it.



Produce Primer

eating smart

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Fruits and vegetables are the cornerstones of a nutritious diet. Do you often buy fresh produce and find that it spoils before you enjoy it? Here are some tips to keep your produce fresh and flavorful longer:

Buy quality: If fruit or vegetables are already soft, mushy or moldy in the store, they will spoil very quickly at home. So spend your money on hardier produce. Look for items with no cuts, bruises or soft spots.

Store separately: As fruits ripen, they naturally release ethylene gas. This can cause neighboring vegetables to ripen more quickly and spoil faster. Store your fruit and vegetables in separate fridge compartments. If your fridge only has 1 drawer for produce, tuck your vegetables into it and store fruit in a separate bowl or basket.

Invest in vegetables: They generally stay fresh longer than fruits. The flavor of carrots, beets, fennel, celery, broccoli and cauliflower doesn't change very much whether they have been in the fridge 1 day or 10 days.

Rely on the freezer: Frozen vegetables and fruit reduce preparation time. No need to wash and chop — they go from the freezer into recipes easily. Plus, frozen produce stays fresh for up to 1 year, reducing waste.

Room temperature: Some items store best unrefrigerated. This includes tomatoes, bananas, potatoes, garlic, onions, squash, lemons and limes.

Bag it: Berries and grapes store well in plastic bags with tiny holes to release moisture, which keep the fruit fresh longer. Mushrooms don't do well in plastic bags; instead, keep them in paper bags.

Trim the stems: Beets, carrots, turnips and kohlrabi can last for several months in the fridge; just remove the leafy greens before storing them. You can stir-fry the greens or use them to make pesto.



Warm Mushroom Salad with Ginger Vinaigrette

EASY recipe

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup peeled fresh ginger, cut into matchsticks
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 tbsp minced ginger
- 4 cups chopped fresh mushrooms (use a variety, such as shiitake, oyster, cremini, button)
- 6 cups mixed salad greens

Heat oil in a small skillet over medium. **Once** hot, add ginger sticks. **Stir-fry** for 6 minutes or until crunchy. **Remove**, drain on paper towel and set aside for garnishing. **Pour** remaining warm oil into small bowl and allow oil to cool. **Add** vinegar, salt and pepper to make vinaigrette. **Add** 1 tbsp of vinaigrette to a large skillet set over medium heat. **Add** garlic and minced ginger and sauté 1 minute. **Add** mushrooms and cook until soft, about 7 minutes; remove mixture from heat and allow to cool slightly (very hot mushrooms will wilt the greens). **Put** greens on a platter and top with warm mushrooms. **Add** remaining vinaigrette and garnish with crunchy ginger sticks.



Makes 4 servings. Per serving:

173 calories | 3g protein | 14g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 10g mono fat
2g poly fat | 12g carbohydrate | 2g sugar | 3g fiber | 160mg sodium

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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ACHOO! Spring Allergies and YOU

Flu season may be winding down, but runny noses and sneezing are now pestering many people who are allergic to trees, grass and flowers.

Seasonal allergic rhinitis (hay fever) can also make your eyes red and itchy. You may experience allergy symptoms for as long as you are exposed to bothersome pollen.

Self-help measures for spring allergies:

- **Use a humidifier** to relieve stuffy sinuses. Hot showers help, too.
- **Try nasal irrigation** with over-the-counter saline sprays several times a day to open nasal passages. **Note:** Nose sprays containing decongestants relieve post-nasal drip but may have significant side effects if used more than 3 days.
- **Drink water** throughout the day to help thin mucus.
- **Keep windows and doors shut** at home and in your car.
- **Check pollen counts** in your area at aaaai.org/global/nab-pollen-counts?ipb=1.
- **Take a shower**, wash your hair and change your clothes after being outdoors, especially if pollen counts are high.



When your allergy symptoms become bothersome, see your health care provider for treatment. If you're referred to an allergist, you may be tested for pollen allergies. Immunotherapy (allergy shots) may help.



Kidney Stones 101

Anyone can get a kidney stone, but some people are more likely than others to have them. Kidney stones are hard deposits of minerals and salts that form inside your kidneys. There are several kinds of kidney stones, with many causes, that can affect your urinary tract from kidneys to bladder.

Factors that may produce kidney stones include:

- ✓ **Dehydration:** abnormal urinary chemical levels; and urinary tract infections.
- ✓ **Medical conditions** (e.g., obesity, hyperparathyroidism, and when the kidneys fail to properly acidify the urine).
- ✓ **A buildup of calcium oxalate** due to diet, metabolic disorders, excess vitamin D or intestinal bypass surgery.
- ✓ **A diet high in protein,** sugar and/or sodium.

Passing a kidney stone often causes pain in the lower abdomen and groin as it moves through your urinary tract. Seek immediate medical attention if you experience severe pain with fever or bloody urine. Treatment often involves medication and staying hydrated. Surgery is sometimes required if stones become lodged in the urinary tract.

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

EXPERT advice



Q: Colorectal cancer screening types?

A: The American Cancer Society (ACS) says the best way to prevent death from colorectal cancer is to stay current with screening. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S., for women and men combined. But half of these deaths may be prevented with regular screening.

The ACS recommends these screening options for average-risk people starting at age 45:

- **Fecal occult blood or fecal immunochemical test:** once a year.
- **Fecal DNA test:** every 3 years.
- **Flexible sigmoidoscopy:** viewing only the descending colon with a lighted tube every 5 years.
- **Colonoscopy:** inspecting the entire colon with a lighted tube every 10 years.
- **Computed tomography colonography:** X-ray to find colorectal problems every 5 years.

People at increased cancer risk may need to start screening earlier or more frequently. Consult your health care provider about the best screening time and type for you.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP