

Personal Best

HOPE Health Letter[®]

FEBRUARY 2023

Life's Essential 8



From the American Heart Association

Getting enough sleep? A duration of seven to nine hours daily for adults, and more for children, is considered necessary for good health, according to the American Heart Association's (AHA) new **Life's Essential 8**. Because of sleep's importance to our well-being, the AHA has added healthy sleep to its previously seven key components of heart health.

During American Heart Month in February, consider the eight factors that protect your cardiovascular (CV) system:

1. Healthy diet: Updated with a new guide to assess diet.
2. Participation in physical activity.
3. Avoiding nicotine exposure: Updated to account for vaping and secondhand smoke.
4. Healthy weight.
5. Healthy blood lipids: Updated to adjust blood cholesterol measures.
6. Healthy blood glucose: Updated to adjust blood sugar measures.
7. Healthy blood pressure.
8. Healthy sleep: New.

As noted above, the AHA has updated four of the previous Essential 7 factors to help you more effectively lower your risk for heart disease, stroke and other major health problems.

This latest AHA health checklist showed about 80% of U.S. adults had moderate to low CV health, with lowest scores occurring in diet, physical activity and BMI (body mass index).

The researchers found that just 19.6% of U.S. adults had high CV health; 62.5% had moderate CV health and 17.9% had low CV health. Adult women had higher average CV health scores than men. The AHA used a new method of scoring each component to average an overall heart health score on a scale from 0 to 100.

Learn more about protecting your heart in this issue's Special Report, "Healthy Body, Healthy Heart," on page 7.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, The Value of Prevention, is at personalbest.com/extras/23V2tools.



BEST bits



During National Children's Dental Health Month, check out dental sealants to help prevent cavities in your children. Cavities are caused by a breakdown of tooth enamel by acids from bacteria that collect on teeth. Dental sealants are a quick and painless way to protect against 80% of the cavities children get in their permanent back teeth (molars), where nine in ten cavities occur, for two years. Sealants are thin coatings painted on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. Learn more at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).



Eating disorders are serious, complex and sometimes fatal illnesses that cause radical preoccupation with food. The most common forms are anorexia nervosa (eating very little), bulimia nervosa (eating followed by purging) and binge eating (anxiety-triggered overeating). The average ages of onset are 18 to 21 years old. National Eating Disorders Awareness Week is February 20 to 26. Learn more at nationaleatingdisorders.org.

Close to 30 million adults in the U.S. could benefit from hearing aid use. Hearing aids are now available over the counter for those with perceived mild to moderate hearing impairment to buy hearing aids more quickly. They are available from stores or online retailers without a medical exam, prescription or a fitting adjustment by an audiologist.

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](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

“I know once people get connected to real food, they never change back.”

— Alice Waters



TIP of the MONTH

Focus on Your Food

Instead of scarfing down copious amounts of food between meals, choose nutritious snacks and eat them mindfully. That means enjoying snacks without distractions, such as your TV, smartphone or computer screen. Choose a snack-sized bag or serve yourself a portion on a plate or bowl, rather than eating out of a family-size box or bag, which may cause you to mindlessly overeat past your fullness cue. Serving yourself helps with portion control. Remember to enjoy every bite.

eating smart

Snacks vs. Treats

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Three daily meals may not keep you energized all day, but snacks help fill the hunger gap. Despite criticism from the dieting community, snacks are a good idea science supports.

Studies show that distributing food daily across four to five small meals and snacks (rather than three large meals) favorably affects health. Snacks alleviate digestive and metabolic overload that can come from eating three large meals. Plus, choosing nourishing snacks helps ensure you get enough nutrients throughout the day.

Of course, the type of snacks you choose is important. How can you tell a snack from a treat? Snacks are mini-meals made of nourishing whole foods, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts and lean proteins. Treats are ultra-processed foods high in sugar, salt and/or fat, such as chips, soft drinks, fast food, pastries and candy.

Between meals, fuel up with a nourishing snack. Choose options that offer some protein paired with fiber-rich carbs. Examples include:

- Apple and cheddar cheese.
- Nuts, seeds and dried fruit.
- Vegetables and hummus.
- Yogurt with fruit.
- Banana with peanut butter.
- Berries and cottage cheese.
- Crackers with egg or tuna salad.



Treats provide pleasure and enjoyment, so they have a place in a healthy eating plan. But, they are meant to be enjoyed in moderation, which means smaller amounts eaten less often than snacks. Why? Because treats don't add meaningful amounts of vitamins, minerals or fiber to your diet and tend to be high in sugar and sodium.

Studies show that people who eat lots of treats, especially in the evening while distracted by a screen, tend to have diets that are less nourishing and more likely to contribute to weight gain.

Greek Yogurt Ranch Dip with Vegetables

EASY recipe

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 cup plain non-fat Greek yogurt | ½ tsp dried parsley |
| 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar | ¼ tsp kosher salt |
| 1 tsp extra-virgin olive oil | 1 cup carrot sticks |
| ½ tsp garlic powder | 1 cup sliced red pepper |
| ½ tsp onion powder | 1 cup cucumber sticks |
| ½ tsp dried dill | |



In a medium bowl, stir together Greek yogurt, vinegar, oil, garlic powder, onion powder, dill, parsley and salt. **Garnish** with a pinch of dried dill or parsley. **Serve** with carrots, red peppers and cucumbers for dipping.

Makes 2 servings. Per serving: 152 calories | 14g protein | 3g total fat | 1g saturated fat | 1g mono fat | 1g poly fat | 18g carbohydrate | 9g sugar (0 added sugar) | 4g fiber | 379mg sodium

Lessons in Monotasking

Do you often have trouble focusing on mental tasks without getting distracted? You're not alone: Harvard Business has reported that the average person is mentally distracted or interrupted every *40 seconds* while working a computer. Social media, shopping, videos, games and other online options are designed to hold your attention — with a major cost to your focus and productivity.

While multitasking is highly valued in business, most research fails to support its effectiveness and our capacity to do it. And when our attention is completely derailed, it can take more than 20 minutes to refocus and become productive.

We can improve focus and gain more control over distractions by committing to focusing on one job at a time: monotasking. Some practical strategies can help you adapt to a higher level of concentration and productivity. This can take practice. Try these initial steps:

- **Identify and list your distractions.** Turn off notifications to help reduce how often you check your phone. Did you know? Average smartphone users check their phones 150 times a day.
- **Commit your attention to what must be achieved now.** Wear noise-canceling headphones, keep your phone and tablet away from your immediate work zone. After focusing for 45 to 60 minutes on a single task, take a few deep breaths and treat yourself to a five-minute rest break to feel re-energized.
- **No matter what smart device you use, check out apps and website blockers,** which are used by more than two million people to reclaim focus and productivity.



“I love educating myself on different cultures’ dishes and foods that are important and celebrated within that culture. I also think food brings people together. It’s unifying!”

— Lana Condor

It’s easy to become distracted at work. But sticking to some simple strategies can help you focus better and longer with fewer interruptions. Controlling your devices is key — don’t let technology control you. Use your phone’s airplane mode to limit text messages and calls during certain times of the day (you can always exempt specific numbers). Check email only three or four times daily. Stop adding reply all in emails unless you need to hear from everyone. And make a to-do list for your day’s top priorities and stick to it.

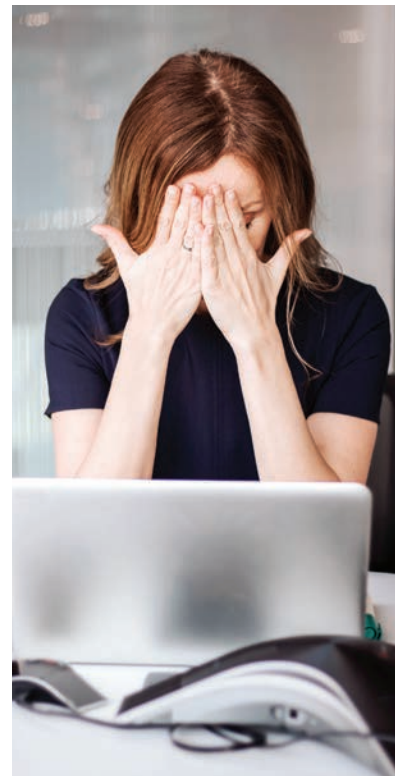
Got Scary News Anxiety? Here’s Help

It’s hard to avoid 24/7 online news, especially if your phone is always at hand. And, of course, it’s important to stay abreast of what’s happening in your community, country and the world. But a barrage of headlines about war, shootings, pandemics and financial woes, day after day, can harm your mental health.

If scary news is making you anxious and worried, you aren’t alone. In fact, psychotherapist Steven Stosny sees so many people with the problem, he’s dubbed it “headline stress disorder.”

You can’t ignore the news, but these tips can help you cope.

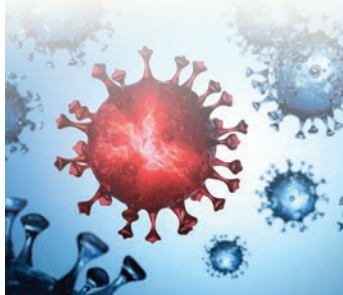
- **Stop doom scrolling.** After you’ve read frightening news, there’s no reason to read details about the event over and over.
- **Avoid online groups and websites that feed your fears.** From wild conspiracy theories, to not-always-accurate medical advice, social media can spike anxiety. Talk to your health care provider about medical worries instead of relying on the internet.
- **Limit your news consumption.** There’s a big difference between checking news once or twice a day and every few minutes. Consider deleting news apps to give yourself a mental break.
- **Commit to consistent, tried-and-true stress management techniques.** Daily exercise, adequate sleep and eating healthy all help combat stress and mitigate news anxiety.
- **Calm hopeless feelings with practical action.** If reports of suffering, climate change and other worrisome news make you feel hopeless, take realistic action when you can, Stosny advises. For example, write your representatives or recycle and donate household items you no longer need to charity.



To acquire knowledge,
one must study, but
to acquire wisdom,
one must observe.

— Marilyn vos Savant

Most people with Omicron, a COVID-19 variant, may not realize they are infected. That's the conclusion of researchers from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, UCLA and Abbott Laboratories, who studied 210 adults (almost all vaccinated against COVID-19) during a surge of the virus around Los Angeles in spring of 2022. More than half who tested positive for the virus were unaware they had it — some had slight symptoms they thought were colds. The good news from the study is Omicron may cause mild or no symptoms in the vaccinated. The bad news is those in the study who were unaware they had Omicron likely and rapidly spread the virus in their community.



body&mind

Q: How can mental health apps help me?

A: While there's no substitute for professional treatment, there are numerous apps designed to help with:

- Meditation.
- Anxiety.
- Mood.
- Symptom tracking.
- Stress.
- Sleep.
- Thinking skills.
- Medication tracking.



Potential advantages of apps:

- Apps are accessible anywhere and anytime, unlike in-person appointments with professionals.
- App usage is often anonymous, avoiding personal disclosures.
- Apps can be an initial step toward pursuing psychotherapy.
- Apps may be free or less expensive than professional help.
- While therapists can only treat a finite number of clients, apps have unlimited availability.
- Some people may find apps more engaging or appealing than traditional therapy.
- Apps monitoring certain functions (e.g., sleep) can provide 24-hour coverage.
- For those in therapy, apps can extend the benefits via skills practice and ongoing monitoring.
- Automated data collection via apps (e.g., of movement) may be more objective than self-reports.

When selecting apps, start with those supported by research or recommended by your health care provider. Always check the app's privacy protections.

— Eric Endlich, PhD

Urgent Care 101

Urgent care centers are not the same as emergency rooms (ERs). Understanding the difference can help you make the right decision when you need care but aren't sure where to go for specific injuries or symptoms, such as a swollen knee after a fall, a cut finger, a sore throat or sudden chest pain.

If you can't contact your health care provider easily for advice, it makes sense to seek immediate medical care. Here are the basics on deciding between urgent care and the ER:

Urgent care centers provide easy access to quality medical care, including office-based laboratory tests, such as urinalysis, rapid strep assays and X-rays, when your regular health care provider isn't available.

But it's not a substitute for regular health care. Instead, urgent care is for urgent — but not emergency — concerns. For example, urgent care facilities treat cuts that need stitches (but aren't bleeding profusely), mild to moderate asthma symptoms, fever or flu, minor broken bones or swelling from falls, irritated eyes, moderate back problems, severe sore throat or cough, urinary tract infections and vomiting, diarrhea, or dehydration.

It's important to know when to skip urgent care and head straight to the ER or call 911. Medical emergencies are potentially life-threatening and require ER care. These include compound fractures (with bones protruding through the skin), heart attack or stroke symptoms, seizures, loss of consciousness, deep wounds of any kind, pregnancy-related problems, poisoning, bad burns, severe bleeding, serious back or head injuries.



Live life to the fullest, and focus on the positive.

— Matt Cameron

Q: How much sitting is too much?

A: Any prolonged sitting can be harmful. Sitting more than eight hours a day with no physical activity increased the likelihood of death as much as smoking and obesity, according to an analysis of one million people enrolled in 13 studies.

The risks for weight gain, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer also went up with extended sitting. The good news is this study found 60 to 75 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity daily — such as brisk walking — helped neutralize the detrimental effects of sitting for long periods.

Take steps to reduce sitting. With your health care provider's approval, gradually build up to 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each week. When you must sit, take a break every 30 minutes to stand up and stretch or walk around the office. Use your watch or phone to track the time. Or consider getting a standup desk or treadmill desk; both are effective ways to stay productive while not sitting.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



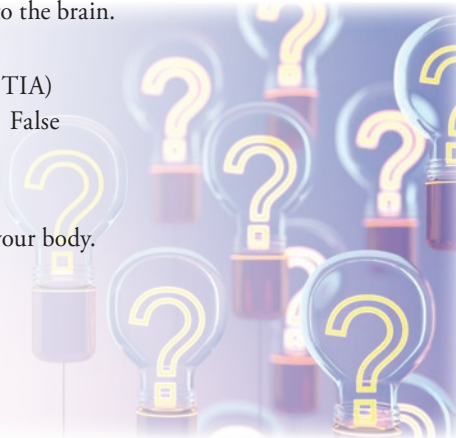
While there are risks for dementia you can't control, staying active physically and mentally may help lower the odds of developing this memory-robbing condition. A case in point: An analysis of 38 studies worldwide, involving more than two million people, revealed leisure activities may help keep dementia at bay. Among the participants, 75,000 developed dementia while researchers were following them.

Those who pursued leisure activities regularly had a 17% lower risk of dementia. Physical activity reported included walking, running, swimming, bicycling, yoga, dancing, volunteering and socializing with friends and family. Intellectual pursuits included reading, watching movies, playing musical instruments and making art. **Note:** The data were self-reported and may not have always been accurate.

What's Your Stroke IQ?

Knowing about stroke could help save your life or that of someone you love. Test your knowledge:

- All strokes are caused by blood clots that cut off blood flow to the brain. True False
- The symptoms of a mini-stroke (transient ischemic attack or TIA) usually pass quickly, but still require medical care. True False
- Strokes only occur in the elderly. True False
- Which of these is **not** a stroke symptom?
 - Sudden weakness, numbness or inability to move part of your body.
 - Sudden severe headache.
 - Sudden dizziness or loss of balance.
 - Difficulty breathing.
- If someone experiences stroke symptoms, they should always take an aspirin immediately. True False



ANSWERS

- False** — While a blood clot causes an **ischemic** stroke (the most common type), another less common but often more dangerous type of stroke is a **hemorrhagic** stroke, which occurs when a blood vessel ruptures in the brain.
- True** — All strokes require immediate treatment.
- False** — Although strokes are more common in the elderly, the American Heart Association reports people 49 and younger are increasingly having strokes. This is happening as the risk factors, especially high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes, have become more common in younger and middle-aged people.
- d** — Another stroke symptom is difficulty speaking.
- False** — It's true a stroke caused by a blood clot will be treated immediately with clot-busting medications, such as aspirin. But if a person is having a hemorrhagic stroke, aspirin can worsen the condition.

TIP: Remember **FAST** if you believe you or someone near you is having stroke symptoms:

- F** is for *face drooping*, numbness or lopsided smile.
- A** is for *arm weakness* or numbness.
- S** is for *speech difficulty* — slurred speech or inability to repeat a simple sentence.
- T** is for *time to call 911*. If the person shows ANY sign of possible stroke, call 911. It is crucial to be treated for stroke immediately, within 30 minutes, for the best outcome.

A popular misconception about 401(k)s is that the IRS requires an employee to be 21 years old to participate. But the IRS doesn't specify a minimum age. The tax code age requirement myth developed because company plans can set minimums and other rules for when plans must let employees participate. Usually the plan sponsor dictates age and service requirements, typically at age 21 and one year of service.

The earlier a person begins saving, the better. Compound interest is your friend. Not only does saving within a 401(k) plan allow you to save for retirement, it also provides tax benefits.

Traditional plans allow you to contribute to your account with pre-tax dollars, lowering your taxable income. Funds saved through a traditional plan won't be taxed until distributions are taken during retirement. Saving through payroll withholding allows you to create and sustain savings habits by moving money into your 401(k) automatically. Consistently saving will allow your nest egg to grow, funding your retirement years.

Employer contributions are another benefit to saving early. Most employers match a percentage of your contributions, enabling you to grow your retirement savings by taking advantage of free money. If your employer offers matching, make every effort to contribute to take advantage of the match amount.

AED Advice

If you witness someone in cardiac arrest, you need to act quickly.

Using an automated external defibrillator (AED) can save that person's life. An AED is a computerized device that can check a person's heart rhythm and determine whether to use a shock to restart the heart.



If someone is unresponsive and has no pulse, follow these steps for using an AED:

1. Call 911 or have someone call for you.
2. Turn on the AED and follow the voice prompts.
3. Remove clothing from chest area.
4. Place one pad on the upper right side of the bare chest.
5. Place the other pad on the lower left side of the bare chest, a few inches below the left armpit.
6. Plug the pad connector cable into the AED, if necessary.
7. Make sure no one is touching the person.
8. Say, "CLEAR!" in a loud, commanding voice.
9. If the AED determines a shock is needed, deliver the shock by pushing the shock button.

After the AED delivers the shock, or if no shock is advised, you will be prompted to check if the person is breathing normally. If not, you will need to start CPR.

Note: Seek your health care provider's guidance in providing CPR if you live with someone who is at risk for needing it.

5 Steps for Safe Return to Work

If you're going back to work after being away due to an injury or long illness, you need to start back slowly and carefully to prevent re-injury or fatigue. How?



1. **Listen to your health care provider.** Many of us want to return to work as soon as we feel a little better, but it's important to discuss your limitations and your work schedule with your health care provider and supervisor.
2. **Work with your supervisor ahead of time on a return-to-work plan.** Ask for accommodations, if necessary. For example, consider adjusting your hours or your days. If you have a physically demanding position, ask if you can start back working light duty. Then, gradually adjust back to your previous position.
3. **Whenever possible,** concentrate on difficult assignments first before fatigue sets in later in the work day.
4. **Take needed breaks (with your supervisor's okay).** Listen to your body.
5. **Be patient.** Returning to work after an injury or illness can be slow.

Healthy Body, Healthy Heart

By Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus

Each day your heart beats, on average, 100,000 times, pumping your blood through a vast system of blood vessels that's more than 60,000 miles long. Your heart is an amazing engine, but it needs your help to keep blood moving.

That means controlling or even preventing the primary factors that lead to heart disease and heart attack: high blood pressure, unhealthy blood cholesterol levels and smoking. Nearly half of the U.S. population has at least one of these risks, according to the CDC. Other factors that put us at a higher risk for heart trouble include:

- Diabetes.
- Unhealthy diet.
- Excessive alcohol use.
- Overweight and obesity.
- Physical inactivity.
- Insufficient sleep.

Steps to better heart health and lower risk of cardiovascular disease:

Manage your blood pressure to reduce strain on your heart, arteries and kidneys.

Monitor your blood cholesterol to give your arteries their best chance to remain free of blockage.

Stop using tobacco. Cigarette smoking significantly increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Maintain healthy blood sugar to help prevent type 2 diabetes, a factor that can damage your heart, kidneys and nerves.

Eat well. A heart-smart eating plan contains lots of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, nuts and fish. It's also lower in refined flour, salt, meat and sweets.

Move every day. Physical activity helps keep your heart muscle strong. It may seem counterintuitive, but making your heart work harder through consistent, moderate- to vigorous-intensity exercise can help lower your blood pressure and keep your heart in shape. Getting at least 150 minutes



of moderate-intensity activity weekly (any amount is beneficial, but more is better), such as brisk walking, helps reduce your heart disease risk.

Maintain a healthy weight. Both aerobic exercise and resistance (weight) training burn calories, aid weight loss and help improve your baseline metabolic rate. The more muscle mass you develop, the more calories you burn. Losing even 10% of your weight can reduce the burden on your heart. Your health care provider can help you safely manage your weight.

Watch your alcohol intake. The American Heart Association advises that men should have no more than two drinks per day, and women should have no more than one drink per day. If you don't drink alcohol, don't start.

Make time to sleep. You need seven to nine hours every night (or day, if you work shifts). Quality sleep allows the body to repair itself and helps reduce inflammation, a contributing factor in heart ailments. Did you know? Sleep deprivation is linked to high blood pressure and heart disease, according to the CDC.



Signs of Heart Attack:

- **Chest pain or discomfort:** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center or left side of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes or that goes away and returns. The discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Feeling weak, lightheaded or faint:** You may also break out into a cold sweat.
- **Pain or discomfort:** Occurs in the jaw, neck or back.
- **Pain or discomfort:** Occurs in one or both arms or shoulders.
- **Shortness of breath:** This often comes along with chest discomfort, but shortness of breath also can happen before chest discomfort.
- **Other symptoms:** These may include unusual or unexplained tiredness and nausea or vomiting.

DR. ZORBA'S corner

Children's Mental Health

Many young people, especially teenagers and young adults, are suffering from stress. From COVID-19 to social upheaval, from politics to environmental issues — young people today have a lot on their plates. So, what can you do? Lots. First of all recognize it. Ask your child. Talk to them so they'll open up. Teens, even if they don't show it, look to their parents all the time for guidance. That may mean a talk with their guidance counselors, a visit with their health care providers or an appointment with a therapist. And remember, you can call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988, 24/7**, to reach mental health services nationwide. This is critical for anyone, at any time, considering suicide. There are suicide counselors, standing by to help, usually from your local area.

— Zorba Paster, MD

February Fill-in-the-Blank Puzzle

Find out how well you know the topics covered in this issue of the newsletter.

- 1 Harvard Business has reported that the average person is mentally distracted or interrupted every _____ seconds while working at a computer.
- 2 It is crucial to be treated for _____ immediately, within 30 minutes, for the best outcome.
- 3 _____ care isn't a substitute for regular health care.
- 4 Most people with _____, a COVID-19 variant, may not realize they are infected.
- 5 A recent analysis of 13 studies revealed that the risks for weight gain, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer rose with extended _____.
- 6 Traditional 401(k) plans let you contribute _____ dollars to your account, lowering your taxable income.
- 7 When you must sit, take a break every _____ minutes to stand up and stretch or walk around the office.
- 8 Staying active physically and mentally may help lower the odds of developing _____.



You'll find the answers at personalbest.com/extras/Feb2023puzzle.pdf.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, **The Value of Prevention**, is at personalbest.com/extras/23V2tools.

Stay in Touch. Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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