

Personal Best

HOPE Health Letter[®]

APRIL 2023

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.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, **Making the Best Medical Care Choices**, is at personalbest.com/extras/23V4tools.

BEST bits



■ **Donate Life Month is an opportunity to learn about lifesaving organ donation.** You can register for your organs to be donated after your death. But living donors are also needed. Medically approved donors can donate liver tissue and a kidney. Bone marrow and stem cells from living donors are also needed for people whose blood-forming cells have been damaged by cancer treatments and disease. Learn more at donatelifenet.org.



■ **April is Cancer Control Month, a reminder of how you can reduce your cancer risk.** Check with your health care provider to make sure you're current on screenings for breast, colon, skin and other common cancers and learn how to lower your individual cancer risk factors (e.g., smoking, lack of exercise and excess weight). Also share any family history of cancer. Screenings can catch cancer early, when it's more treatable. Learn more at cancer.org.



■ **National Alcohol Screening Day is April 6**, a day that recognizes the harmful effects of alcohol abuse and alcohol dependency. Alcoholism is partially genetic and can be passed to your children. **The first step to getting help for excess alcohol use is acknowledging there's a problem.** To that end, the CDC encourages health care providers to use short screening tests as part of regular checkups. In addition, free anonymous screenings are at health centers nationwide.

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.

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](https://www.intuitiveeating.org/certified-counselors).



TIP of the MONTH Earth Day, April 22

This month marks Earth Day, an annual event to support environmental protection. Did you know that your diet can play a role in helping the Earth? By prioritizing plant-based foods (vegetables, fruit, grains, beans, nuts and seeds), you can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Filling your plate with these foods helps protect forests and conserves fresh water. When eating fish or seafood, choose sustainable species that are not overfished (check online advisories). To lower your carbon footprint, choose in-season foods from local farms when possible. And reduce food waste by not overeating or buying more food than you can consume. Compost leftover food and scraps whenever you can.

Middle Eastern Spiced Chicken

EASY recipe

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 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



an opportunity to learn about autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In 2021, the CDC estimated that one in 44 American children were on the autism spectrum, according to 2018 data. Autism is found in all socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Genetics is a factor, according to the Organization for Autism Research. Research has conclusively shown that vaccines do not cause autism. The abilities and behaviors of people on the spectrum can vary significantly. Those affected may focus on one interest, have difficulty understanding facial expressions or be hypersensitive to odors. Some are nonverbal while others are highly articulate; some need help with daily lives while others live and work independently as adults. Accepting and supporting autistic people can help them reach their full potential. Learn more at researchautism.org.

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.

April is Humor Month.



Humor Me!

Humor can do far more than make you smile or laugh.

Why did the banana go to the doctor? He wasn't peeling well. Yes, that's corny. But whether humor is silly or sophisticated, what makes you smile and even guffaw can benefit your health.

For starters, when you laugh, your body releases endorphins — natural, pain-relieving hormones. Endorphins can help reduce depression and boost confidence. According to scientists:

- A good laugh relaxes tense muscles for up to 45 minutes.
- Laughing increases the amount of oxygen in your blood and can lower blood pressure, both heart health boosters.
- Cultivating a sense of humor and adopting a positive mindset can boost your immunity to sickness.



- Cortisol, an important hormone produced by the adrenal glands, is crucial to how your body responds to stress. But if you have chronically high cortisol levels, it can contribute to weight gain and poor sleep. Laughter is associated with a decreased level of excess cortisol.

Want to add humor to your life? Watch more funny movies and TV shows. Spend time with friends who like to laugh. Read a humorous book and watch zany videos that make you smile. Or make comical videos with your family and friends.

Bottom line: While laughter isn't literally medicine, it certainly is a great prescription for boosting your mood and health.



April is IBS Awareness Month.

Are you living with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)? Up to 15% of U.S. adults suffer from the condition, which typically causes recurring abdominal pain and bowel distress that come and go, often triggered during stress. Do probiotics help? Recent reports show certain probiotic strains (Lactobacillus plantarum and Bifidobacterium infantis) may provide symptom relief, but more research is needed. Before trying probiotics, ask your health care provider, as the wrong probiotic can worsen your condition.

The good news? The FODMAP diet can help relieve symptoms for people with IBS. FODMAP is an acronym for a group of foods that contain hard-to-digest carbohydrates (fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols). People with IBS can work with a dietitian to figure out which FODMAPs trigger their symptoms. Common culprits include milk, wheat, garlic, onions and legumes.

body & mind

Q: Anxiety screening for children?

A: **Anxiety rates in children and teens have been rising;** it's no wonder that the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends screening everyone from ages eight to 18 for anxiety.

The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED), a commonly used tool, asks the child and the parent about symptoms during the past three months. A high score may indicate an anxiety disorder, and the responses for subsets of questions may suggest specific conditions, such as panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder or school avoidance.

Sample SCARED items include:

- "I get scared if I sleep away from home."
- "I worry about going to school."
- "When I get frightened, I feel like I am choking."

Note: The parent version of SCARED asks the same questions from the parent's viewpoint.

Anxiety disorders are treatable. Your child's health care provider may be able to provide referrals to mental health professionals if needed.

— Eric Endlich, PhD



QuikQuiz™: Melatonin Misconceptions

Over-the-counter (OTC) melatonin supplements — sold as capsules, gummies, liquids and tablets — are popular sleep aids. A 2022 study revealed that sales of melatonin in the U.S. increased by about 150% percent between 2016 and 2022, according to the NIH. Test your knowledge:

1. Melatonin supplements act like sleeping pills.
T F
2. Some supplement ingredient labels don't list the correct amount of melatonin.
T F
3. The long-term effects of using melatonin aren't well established.
T F
4. Melatonin is a vitamin.
T F
5. The effectiveness of melatonin varies among individuals and may not work for some.
T F
6. According to current scientific research, melatonin can treat COVID-19.
T F

ANSWERS

1. **False** — Melatonin products **relax** you so you can fall asleep. To maximize the benefits of melatonin, get exposure to daylight and stop using electronic devices one to two hours before bedtime.
2. **True** — In a 2017 study, researchers found that most of the 31 products bought from grocery stores and pharmacies didn't list the correct amount of melatonin. Because melatonin supplements are considered **dietary** products, the FDA regulates them less than prescription and OTC medications.
3. **True** — The effects of using melatonin long-term (months and years) are unclear. Talk to your health care provider before using OTC sleep aids, especially if you're pregnant or nursing.
4. **False** — Melatonin is a hormone made by the brain in response to darkness and it helps regulate sleep.
5. **True** — Like many OTC and prescription drugs, melatonin's effectiveness varies among people. Your provider can recommend a plan for better sleep, including lifestyle changes.
6. **False** — Scientists don't have enough data to determine if it can treat COVID-19.



Q: Do I need inflammation testing?

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.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



Did you know? 
National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on April 29 gives Americans the chance to safely toss all unwanted, unused or expired prescription medications. Each year, millions of Americans misuse controlled prescription drugs, most often obtained from a medicine cabinet of someone they know, leading to potential accidental poisoning and overdose. Learn more at takebackday.dea.gov.

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.

Shop Smart for Internet Providers

Bundling internet with cable TV is a thing of the past for many consumers. Because streaming services have changed how people view media, internet access can be purchased solo. Besides checking for service availability in your area, here are factors to consider when choosing an internet provider:

Speed: Do you have enough bandwidth to support your online activities (e.g., gaming and streaming)? If you don't know what your internet speed is, use an online tester to find out.

Price: Service providers' prices depend on the location and amount of competition in your area. Read your bill carefully to check for extra charges, such as those for installation, data overages, equipment rental or cancellation. Also, watch for competitors' deals. It might be time to change or ask your provider to price match.

Connection type: Your connection determines your download and upload speed. Fiber internet is considered the best with cable internet a close second.

Data: If you work online or have hobbies that use a lot of data, an unlimited data plan is your best option. If a service provider has a low price but limits data, check the contract for overage charges or slowdowns. It may be cheaper to pay more for unlimited.

Availability, speed and price are the main factors when choosing a service provider, which may limit the type of service you can get. You might need to switch providers occasionally to find a service that meets your needs and budget.

— Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, CFP, AFC, MBA

safety solutions

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.



SAFETY CORNER

Outdoor Chores



Spring is a great time to tackle yard work. Just remember to stay safe while working. Here are a few tips:

Wear sunscreen. Use it year round to protect your skin. Apply a broad-spectrum product with at least SPF 30 about 20 minutes before going outdoors.

Check equipment. Lawn mowers, tractors and other outdoor equipment need to be tuned up after sitting through a long winter. Keep everything in good working condition to avoid mishaps.

Examine the ground for rocks, branches and other small items before using a mower.

Wear a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt, long pants and closed-toe footwear when doing yard work.

Treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin, an insecticide. Use an effective tick repellent, too. Ticks can be active anytime the temperature is above freezing.

Wear heavy gloves as well as eye and hearing protection when using loud or motor-driven equipment.



Sleep Guide

By Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus

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:

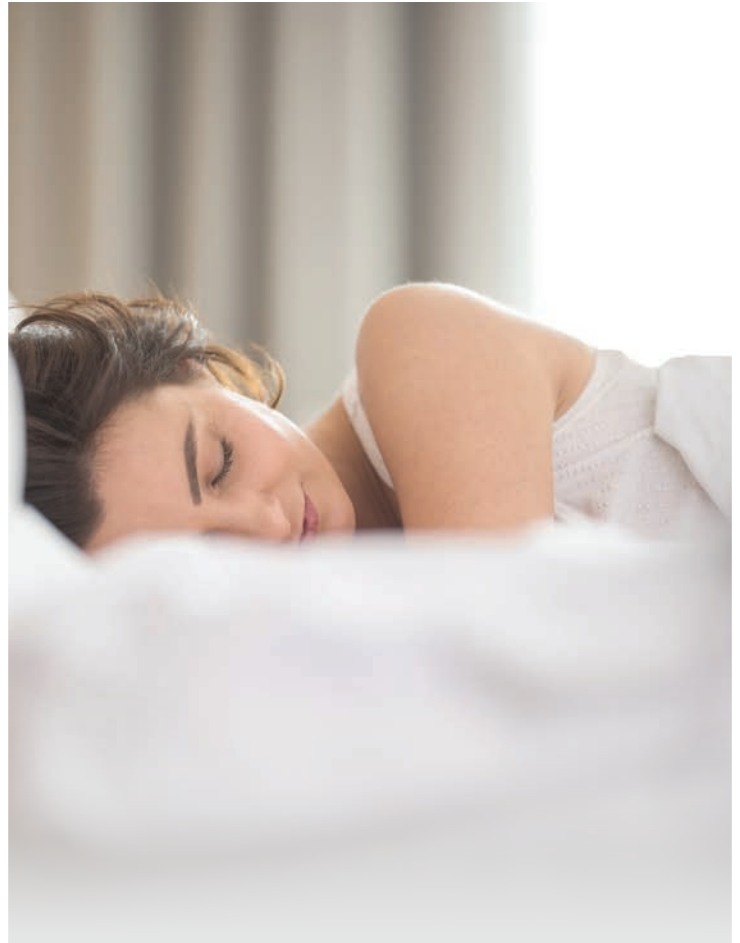
- **Treat** any underlying physical or mental health condition, such as arthritis pain or anxiety, that may be interfering with your sleep. Work with your health care provider.
- **Engage** in healthy lifestyle activities, including regular exercise.
- **Practice** good daily sleep habits, such as waking 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.

DR. ZORBA'S corner

National Healthcare Decisions Day is April 16, a good time to get a Power of Attorney for



Health Care. Sign it and store it in a safe place. Give a copy to your health care provider or hospital. This document allows someone you trust to make your health care decisions if you can't. If you have a serious stroke, develop Alzheimer's or other kinds of dementia, or if you have a concussion or an auto accident where you can't talk and communicate, this document allows you to designate who *speaks for you*. Whom would you want to make your health care decisions? A random person or someone important in your life? This document allows you to make that choice. My vote is to always choose someone you know and trust to make those critical decisions.

— Zorba Paster, MD

April Fill-in-the-Blank Puzzle

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

- 1 Babies have an innate, built-in _____ system.
- 2 By prioritizing _____ foods you can reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3 _____, an important hormone produced by the adrenal glands, is crucial to how your body responds to stress.
- 4 Research has conclusively shown that _____ do not cause autism.
- 5 The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends screening everyone from ages eight to 18 for _____.
- 6 _____ is a hormone made by the brain in response to darkness, and it helps regulate sleep.
- 7 The _____ diet can help relieve symptoms for people with IBS.
- 8 _____ is an important contributor to many chronic disorders, including heart disease, arthritis and cancer.



You'll find the answers at personalbest.com/extras/Apr2023puzzle.pdf.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, Making the Best Medical Care Choices, is at personalbest.com/extras/23V4tools.

Stay in Touch. Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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