While aerobic activities like walking, jogging, gardening, swimming, and playing tennis or pickleball are an important part of a healthy lifestyle, there are many reasons to add strength training to the mix. “Along with activities that strengthen the cardiometabolic system, like we see with aerobic activity, some amount of strength training is also important,” says Roger Fielding, PhD, leader and senior scientist of the Nutrition, Exercise Physiology, and Sarcopenia Team at the Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging. Research suggests even less than an hour of weightbearing exercise a week can support good quality of life now and in years to come.

**Why Strength Train?** Weightbearing activity helps build muscle strength and preserve muscle mass and bone density. This is especially important as people age. A loss of muscle mass, strength, and function—known as sarcopenia—is common with advancing age. These changes can decrease quality of life and increase risk of frailty, falls, and bone fracture. Low muscle mass has been associated with higher risk of cognitive decline, insulin resistance, and inflammatory marker levels.

In a recent review of 16 studies, muscle-strengthening activities were associated with a 10 to 17 percent lower risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), cancer, diabetes, lung cancer, and death from any cause. Researchers found that not only is strength training beneficial for health, it also doesn’t require a lot of time to see positive results. Even just 30 minutes a week may lead to increased strength and health benefits. Combining strength training with aerobic activities was linked to a lower risk of all-cause, CVD, and total cancer deaths.
**How to Strength Train.** Strength training, also referred to as resistance training or weight training, includes any activity that provides muscles with some type of resistance. Resistance can come from a number of sources, including weights, bands, machines, or your own body weight. Although there are different recommendations from reputable organizations on duration and frequency of strength training sessions, Fielding says 30 to 60 minutes a week divided into two or more days is generally accepted guidance. “We recommend four to five strength training activities that utilize both the upper and the lower extremities,” Fielding says. He suggests performing three sets of an exercise for eight to ten repetitions (reps). “Choose a weight that has you feeling like you can’t do any more by rep eight, nine, or ten,” says Fielding.

**Try these tips to get started on a strength training program:**

- Take 30! Plan for at least 30 minutes of strength training activities per week, divided into at least 2 sessions.
- Seek guidance. Consider hiring someone for one or two sessions or finding an introductory program to learn how to perform strength training movements safely and effectively.
- Use bodyweight. No equipment is required to strength train. If you don’t want to invest in weights or join a gym, using the resistance of your own bodyweight working against gravity (as in push-ups and squats) is all you need.
- Train high and low. Choose exercises that work muscles in the upper body and lower body.

![Bodyweight Strength Training Suggestions](image)
We’ve all had stomachaches, and most of us have experienced gastrointestinal symptoms like gassiness and bloating, heartburn, constipation, and diarrhea at some time. When should we seek treatment for symptoms like these, and when is it okay to wait them out or try to treat them ourselves?

**Bad Belly.** Short term bowel changes and/or abdominal (belly) pain can have a variety of causes, including food poisoning, a virus, or gas. Food allergies or an intolerance (such as lactose intolerance) and irritable bowel syndrome are possible causes of recurring incidents. But abdominal pain can also be a sign of something critical (such as appendicitis, diverticulitis, or kidney stones) or chronic (like celiac disease, inflammatory bowel disease, or irritable bowel syndrome). How bad the pain is does not indicate how serious the disorder is. For example, gas pains can be very painful, and appendicitis may cause only a mild ache.
Follow this advice if you’re having gastrointestinal pain or changes:

✧ Treat Yourself. It’s fine to try over-the-counter products like antacids, anti-gas products, and fiber supplements, as long as symptoms are mild and not chronic.

✧ Know When to Seek Help. See a health-care professional immediately if you see blood in your stool, have trouble swallowing, are losing weight without trying, or have symptoms that are getting worse or not going away.

✧ Don’t Worry. Most gastrointestinal problems, like gas, a “stomach bug”, food poisoning, and heartburn are not serious and will go away on their own or with home care. Just be aware that severe pain and changes that don’t resolve could have a more serious origin and should not be ignored.

When to Worry. “If your symptoms concern you, see a health-care provider to get peace of mind,” says John Leung, MD, a gastroenterologist and adjunct clinical assistant professor at the Friedman School. “Signs that definitely require looking into include unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite, persistent abdominal pain, and blood in your stool (which can be bright red or maroon or cause tarry, black stools). Additionally, if you have difficulty swallowing, you should see a doctor immediately.” If you can’t keep anything down and have been unable to have a bowel movement, have a tender or hard belly, have pain that lasts more than a day or two or is getting worse, or have diarrhea for more than five days, seek help.

“I see a lot of patients concerned about foamy or pale stools or mucous in stool,” says Leung. “Stool size, texture, color, or odor changes may worry you, but if you do not have other associated symptoms such as pain, fever, blood, weight loss, or jaundice and you feel otherwise well, it’s fine to wait and see if your stool normalizes.”

What to Do. “It can be difficult to determine what can be dealt with at home and what cannot,” says Leung. “If your symptoms are mild, it’s fine to try some over-the-counter treatments. But if symptoms get worse or don’t get better, I suggest seeing a doctor right away.” Fiber supplements, antacids, anti-gas products, enzyme tablets that help digest dairy, and sports drinks to replace fluids lost with diarrhea and vomiting are some first-line options.

Dietary changes play a role in many short-term abdominal problems, allergies, intolerances, and food sensitivities. If you suspect ongoing issues are related to what you eat, don’t try to make major dietary changes without guidance. “I do not recommend overly restrictive or drastic diet changes,” says Leung. “These can lead to malnutrition and cause more problems long term.”
Optimizing Sleep

Sleep has a major impact on health. Not getting enough quality sleep is associated with increased risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and overweight and obesity. It may also contribute to depression, moodiness, memory problems, learning difficulties, and decreased alertness and reaction time that can lead to accidents and workplace injuries. Unfortunately, more than a third of all U.S. adults report sleeping less than the recommended seven hours a night, and almost half say they often feel sleepy during the day.

Falling Asleep

Some people fall asleep right away or can take 15 to 20 minutes to fall asleep, which is normal. If it takes you longer than this, you may want to look into why. Short-term insomnia (trouble falling or staying asleep for a few days or weeks) has many causes. Stress, anxiety, and trouble ‘shutting down’ your thoughts are common issues. You may have trouble sleeping if you’re uncomfortable or if there’s too much noise or light in the room, or you may not be getting into bed at the right time. Like most living things, humans have a circadian rhythm—natural biological changes that follow a 24-hour cycle and are tied to light and darkness. A consistent bedtime can help reset and regulate your circadian rhythm.

One hormone involved in circadian rhythm is melatonin. Melatonin is released two to three hours before your body’s intended bedtime. It is produced by the brain in response to darkness. Exposure to light after sundown—especially the blue light given off by electronics with screens—suppresses the secretion of melatonin. Using unfiltered phones, tablets, and laptops in the two to three hours before bed could therefore contribute to trouble falling asleep.

Other things you do before bed can also be part of the problem. Caffeine is one culprit. It can take more than five hours to eliminate caffeine from your body, so drinking regular coffee, caffeinated tea, and cola in the second half of the day could impact sleep. Physical activity is another issue. While being physically active during the day is associated with better sleep, getting your heart rate up too close to bedtime can cause the release of adrenaline that may leave you feeling wakeful when you want to go to sleep. Don’t count on a nightcap to help you sleep. Alcohol might relax you and help you fall asleep, but it has been shown to significantly reduce sleep quality. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), chronic insomnia is defined as poor sleep three or more nights a week that lasts for more than three months and cannot be fully explained by another health problem. If you experience this type of long-term insomnia, seek medical help.

Staying Asleep

There are multiple disorders that can lead to sleep interruptions. Some can be addressed by behavioral changes, but some should be treated by health-care professionals. If you find yourself consistently waking up in the night, it is recommended to get an assessment from your primary care physician or a sleep specialist.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, nearly 69 percent of men and 76 percent of women over 40 get up at least once a night to use the bathroom. Going more than once a night is called nocturia. Some possible causes include high fluid intake before bed (especially caffeinated beverages or alcohol), an enlarged prostate (in men), kidney problems, high blood sugar/uncontrolled diabetes, fluid retention (caused by edema, congestive heart failure, or a high sodium diet), or certain drugs (including diuretics and lithium). You could also have a condition that keeps your bladder from emptying fully.

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If you have trouble falling or staying asleep, or if daytime sleepiness has you questioning the quality of the sleep you’re getting, consider speaking to a health-care provider. If there is no medical reason for your sleep issues, addressing your “sleep hygiene” may help. Good sleep habits, like always going to bed at the same time, restricting caffeine intake to the morning and perhaps early afternoon, avoiding the blue light from electronics two to three hours before bedtime, and using your bed only for sleep and sex may help.

Research shows relaxation techniques like deep breathing and meditation, listening to music, practicing yoga, and performing tai chi can improve sleep quality in individuals without clinical sleep disorders. Making sure your environment is conducive to good sleep and getting regular physical activity (not too close to bedtime) can be helpful, and some data support aromatherapy, massage, sleep education, and psychotherapy as well.

Obstructive sleep apnea, in which the upper airway becomes blocked during sleep, is a common (and underdiagnosed) condition. This breathing disorder affects 15 to 30 percent of males and 10 to 30 percent of females and risk increases with age and weight. You may be unaware you are awakening multiple times a night to catch your breath but will likely be sleepy during the day. You (or those around you) may also notice changes in your memory, decision making skills, concentration, and behavior. Sleep apnea also increases your risk for health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke. If you (or someone who listens to you snore) are concerned, ask your health-care provider to order a sleep study and discuss treatment options.

Eating or drinking less than an hour before bedtime is associated with increased risk of trouble staying asleep, as are medical conditions include parasomnias (like sleepwalking and night terrors) and sleep-related movement disorders, including restless leg syndrome, periodic limb movement disorder, leg cramps, and bruxism (jaw clenching and grinding).

Too much sleep may also be a cause for concern. Sleeping longer than nine or 10 hours a day is not recommended. Consistent long sleep could indicate depression or another illness, and research suggests it may be associated with heart disease.

The following are science-backed tips to help you fall asleep and stay asleep:

- Keep to a schedule. Find a good bedtime and wake time for your body and be consistent (even on weekends) to help regulate your circadian rhythm.
- Set the mood. Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, and at a comfortable temperature.
- Relax. Try to reduce sources of stress. Plan for time to unwind before bedtime. Practice deep breathing, read a book, do yoga, meditate, listen to calming music, or do anything else that relaxes you.
- Be sleepy. Go to bed when you feel sleepy. If you don’t fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed and do a relaxing activity that doesn’t involve screens.
- Avoid confusion. Use your bed only for sleep or sexual activity.
- Don’t be blue. Avoid looking at bright screens two to three hours before bedtime. If you have to use electronics, consider wearing blue light blocking glasses or apply a setting or app designed to filter the light on your devices.
- Limit naps. Don’t nap more than one hour a day (science suggests the sweet spot is about 20 to 30 minutes).
- Watch what you eat and drink. Don’t go to bed hungry, but avoid caffeinated beverages, alcohol, and large meals before bed.
- Get moving. Regular physical activity may help you sleep better, but don’t be active too close to bedtime.
Healthy eating is recommended throughout life, but as we age certain factors can affect our nutrient needs. Choosing a variety of foods from all the food groups (vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy and protein foods) will help you build a healthy eating routine.

The following tips can help you get started on your way to eating right.

**Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.**
Eat a variety of different colored vegetables, including ones that are dark-green, red, and orange. Beans, peas, and lentils are also good choices. Fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables can all be healthful options. Look for “reduced sodium” or “no-salt-added” on the labels. Add fruit to meals, snacks or as dessert. Choose fruits that are dried, frozen, or canned in water or 100% juice, as well as fresh fruits.

**Make at least half your grains whole.**
Choose breads, cereals, crackers, and noodles made with 100% whole grains. Whole grain corn tortillas, brown rice, bulgur, millet, amaranth and oats all count as whole grains, too. Also, look for fiber-rich cereals to help stay regular and cereals that are fortified with vitamin B12, which is a nutrient that decreases in absorption as we age or due to some medications.

**Switch to fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese.**
Older adults need more calcium and vitamin D to help keep bones healthy. Include three servings of fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt or cheese each day. If you are lactose intolerant, try lactose-free milk or a calcium-fortified soy beverage.

**Vary your protein choices.**
Eat a variety of foods from the protein food group each week. In addition to lean meat, poultry and eggs, choose seafood, nuts, beans, peas, and lentils when planning your meals. Spread your protein intake throughout the day by including a source with meals and snacks. Protein foods derived from animal sources also provide vitamin B12, and certain plant-based foods may be fortified. If you’re at risk for low levels of vitamin B12, your doctor may also recommend a supplement.

**Limit sodium, saturated fat and added sugars.**
Look out for salt, or sodium, in foods you eat. Compare sodium in the foods you buy and choose those with lower amounts. Add spices or herbs to season food without adding salt. Switch from solid fats to oils when preparing foods. Make major sources of saturated fats occasional choices, not everyday foods. Examples of these include desserts, fried foods, pizza, and processed meats like sausages and hot dogs. Select fruit for dessert more often in place of treats with added sugars.
Stay well-hydrated
Drink plenty of water throughout the day to help prevent dehydration and promote good digestion. Other beverages that can help meet fluid needs include unsweetened beverages, like low-fat and fat-free milk, fortified soy beverages, and 100-percent fruit juices. Choose these more often in place of sugary drinks.

Enjoy your food but be mindful of portion sizes.
Most older adults need fewer calories than in younger years. Avoid oversized portions. Try using smaller plates, bowls and glasses.

Cook more often at home, where you are in control of what’s in your food.
When ordering out, look for dishes that include vegetables, fruits and whole grains, along with a lean protein food. When portions are large, share a meal or save half for later.

Consult a registered dietitian nutritionist if you have special dietary needs. A registered dietitian nutritionist can create a customized eating plan for you.
1. **Eat Breakfast**
   Start your day with a healthy breakfast that includes lean protein, whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Try making a breakfast burrito with scrambled eggs, low-fat cheese, salsa and a whole wheat tortilla or a parfait with low-fat plain yogurt, fruit and whole grain cereal.

2. **Make Half Your Plate Fruits and Vegetables**
   Fruits and veggies add color, flavor and texture plus vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber to your plate. Make 2 cups of fruit and 2 1/2 cups of vegetables your daily goal. Experiment with different types, including fresh, frozen and canned.

3. **Watch Portion Sizes**
   Use half your plate for fruits and vegetables and the other half for grains and lean protein foods. Complete the meal with a serving of fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt. Measuring cups may also help you compare your portions to the recommended serving size.

4. **Be Active**
   Regular physical activity has many health benefits. Start by doing what exercise you can. Children and teens should get 60 or more minutes of physical activity per day, and adults at least two hours and 30 minutes per week. You don’t have to hit the gym – take a walk after dinner or put on music and dance at home.

5. **Get to Know Food Labels**
   Reading the Nutrition Facts panel can help you choose foods and drinks to meet your nutrient needs.

6. **Fix Healthy Snacks**
   Healthy snacks can sustain your energy levels between meals, especially when they include a combination of foods. Choose from two or more of the MyPlate food groups: grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and protein. Try raw veggies with low-fat cottage cheese or hummus, or a tablespoon of nut or seed butter with an apple or banana.
Consult an RDN
Whether you want to lose weight, lower your health-risks or manage a chronic disease, consult the experts! Registered dietitian nutritionists can help you by providing sound, easy to-follow personalized nutrition advice.

Drink More Water
Quench your thirst with water instead of drinks with added sugars. Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water, especially if you are active, an older adult or live or work in hot conditions.

Follow Food Safety Guidelines
Reduce your chances of getting sick with proper food safety. This includes: regular hand washing, separating raw foods from ready-to-eat foods, cooking foods to the appropriate internal temperature, and refrigerating food promptly.

Get Cooking
Preparing foods at home can be healthy, rewarding and cost-effective. Master some kitchen basics, like dicing onions or cooking dried beans.

Order Out without Ditching Goals
You can eat out and stick to your healthy eating plan! The key is to plan ahead, ask questions and choose foods carefully. Compare nutrition information, if available, and look for healthier options that are grilled, baked, broiled or steamed.

Enact Family Meal Time
Plan to eat as a family at least a few times each week. Set a regular mealtime. Turn off the TV, phones and other electronic devices to encourage mealtime talk. Get kids involved in meal planning and cooking and use this time to teach them about good nutrition.

Banish Brown Bag Boredom
Whether it’s for work or school, prevent brown bag boredom with easy-to-make, healthy lunch ideas. Try a whole-wheat pita pocket with veggies and hummus or a low sodium vegetable soup with whole grain crackers or a salad of mixed greens with low-fat dressing and a hard boiled egg.

Reduce Added Sugars
Foods and drinks with added sugars can contribute empty calories and little or no nutrition. Review the new and improved Nutrition Facts Label or ingredients list to identify sources of added sugars.
Eat Seafood Twice a Week
Seafood – fish and shellfish – contains a range of nutrients including healthy omega-3 fats. Salmon, trout, oysters and sardines are higher in omega-3s and lower in mercury.

Explore New Foods and Flavors
Add more nutrition and eating pleasure by expanding your range of food choices. When shopping, make a point of selecting a fruit, vegetable or whole grain that’s new to you or your family.

Experiment with Plant-Based Meals
Expand variety in your menus with budget-friendly meatless meals. Many recipes that use meat and poultry can be made without. Vegetables, beans, and lentils are all great substitutes. Try including one meatless meal per week to start.

Make an Effort to Reduce Food Waste
Check out what foods you have on hand before stocking up at the grocery store. Plan meals based on leftovers and only buy perishable foods you will use or freeze within a couple of days. Managing these food resources at home can help save nutrients and money.

Slow Down at Mealtime
Instead of eating on the run, try sitting down and focusing on the food you’re about to eat. Dedicating time to enjoy the taste and textures of foods can have a positive effect on your food intake.

Supplement with Caution
Choose foods first for your nutrition needs. A dietary supplement may be necessary when nutrient requirements can’t be met or there is a confirmed deficiency. If you’re considering a vitamin, mineral or herbal supplement, be sure to discuss safe and appropriate options with an RDN or another healthcare provider before taking.
DOWN

1. When corn is dried and processed, it can be made into this ingredient which is used for dishes like polenta, grits, and cornbread.
2. These tiny fruits are available fresh, frozen, or dried and include a color in their name.
3. This fruit is a cross between a pomelo and a tangerine.
4. This fish is often used in Cajun cuisine or may be coated (in the answer to #1 Down) and baked or fried.
5. A low-fat, slightly sour beverage that is part of the Dairy Group.
6. Found in the produce section and is often bumpy on the outside and smooth and green on the inside when ripe. It’s also the main ingredient in guacamole.

ACROSS

7. A type of quick-cooking wheat kernel that’s popular in dishes like pilaf, tabbouleh, and kibbeh.
8. This dairy food is common in lunchboxes and a popular snack for children and adults.
9. This vegetable may be eaten raw or cooked and is used to make sauces for pasta.
10. These seeds have a nutty taste and are the main ingredient in tahini. They can also be used in a variety of other dishes or pressed into an oil that’s used for cooking.
11. This game bird is found on dinner tables in some households during the holidays and special occasions.

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