

Your
Health



Getting Motivated

There's no question that exercise offers numerous benefits for body and mind. The problem, quite frankly, can be motivation. Here's how to get moving.

MAKE IT SOCIAL

It's crucial that we stay active, so many your next trip to the gym or jogging trail a social outing. Invite friends to come along. Conversation and competition will instantly remake the same old routine. If scheduling issues persist, track your daily progress on a workout app and share the results with your peers. You can set shared goals, celebrate each personal milestone and then meet up later to celebrate achieving them. Family members might enjoy getting to sneak in a few extra hours of together time, too.

SHAKE THINGS UP

Maybe the problem is your routine itself. Keep your workouts fresh by changing up your exercise patterns, while adding splashes of fun. Try different movements, or change which days you do certain reps. Try a new soundtrack, or watching your favorite show while you're on the treadmill. The key is building strength, endurance, flexibility and balance — but it doesn't have to be drudgery. Take a break from your gym,



© ADOBE STOCK

and join a class. Whether it's yoga, kickboxing, pilates, spinning, dancing or Zumba, you'll have a chance re-engage with exercise. You might made a few new friends along the way!

EXERCISE WITHOUT EXERCISING

Are there everyday moments

when you can inject physical activity into your schedule? If you're walking the dog, try jogging if your pet is able. Park as far away as possible when shopping for a little burst of cardio on the way in — and some light strength training with the loaded bags or cart on the way back to your vehi-

cle. You don't need dedicated exercise time, or a gym membership, to get your heart pumping.

TREAT YOURSELF

Some may only associate “exercise” and “treating yourself” with cheat days. But why not purchase the latest exer-

cise gadget, some new workout clothes, or that piece of equipment you've been hoping for? Time the purchase to reaching a new fitness milestone — or put a dollar in a jar each time you reach one. By the end of the month, you'll have enough money to treat yourself.

Battling Heart Disease

Ideal cardiovascular health actually comes down to seven key factors, according to the American Heart Association.

DON'T SMOKE

Smoking increases your risk of heart disease. Chemicals in cigarettes can damage blood vessels and your heart. The smoke itself reduces oxygen in your blood, increasing blood pressure and your heart rate — because now the heart must work harder to supply oxygen. Encourage friends and family to quit as soon as is possible, too.

HEALTHY WEIGHT

Doctors calculate your body mass index as part of regular check ups to find out if our weight is within a healthy range. This same number can serve as an indicator for heart problems, since being obese or overweight increases your heart-disease risk. A healthy weight for adults is usually between 18.5 and 24.9 BMI.

REGULAR EXERCISE

Adults should take part in moderate-intensity exercise for at least a half hour several times a week, according to the U.S. surgeon general. Aside from weight control, regular exercise helps with blood pressure and cholesterol. In total, you should get at least 150 minutes of this kind of aerobic



© ADOBE STOCK

activity each week. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends at least two weekly muscle-strengthening sessions.

EATING RIGHT

Eating more fruits and vegetables is a great way to improve your heart health. Look for foods that are low in cholesterol, trans and saturated fats. Use

herbs and spices rather than salt, since sodium can increase your risk of high blood pressure, and that's a major heart-disease risk factor. Eat less added sugar, too — and not just in your food. Substitute flavored water for sugary drinks.

BLOOD PRESSURE

Check your blood pressure

regularly, whether at the doctor's office, a local pharmacy or at home. If not controlled, high blood pressure can also increase your risk for stroke, kidney disease, pregnancy problems and cognitive issues later in life.

CHOLESTEROL AND GLUCOSE

Everyone should have their

cholesterol checked at least once every five years, according to the CDC. This simple blood test will alert your physician to an issue that's directly linked to heart disease. Blood-sugar levels must also be closely monitored, in particular with those living with diabetes. Your doctor can discuss how keeping track of this will lower your risks.

Avoid Dental Erosion

Your smile is often the first thing people notice.

Bad habits, however, can encourage the erosion of your enamel, undoing the good work of daily dental hygiene and regular visits to the dentist.

WHAT IT IS

Enamel acts as a protective coat for sensitive layers inside the tooth. Dental erosion is the loss of this of enamel caused by acids. Teeth begin to yellow when they succumb to this erosion: The white outer coating wears down and dentine — which is more pale — starts showing through.

THE CAUSES

Tooth enamel briefly softens every time you ingest something acidic. Saliva then works to balance the mouth's acid content, eventually returning everything to a normal state. This happens with soft drinks, fruit juices, kombucha, teas, coffees and alcoholic drinks, among many other things. People dealing with reflux, morning sickness or bulimia may also have erosion issues because of the acid our stomachs. Those suffering from constant dry mouth are also at an increased risk.

Erosion happens when acidic intake is so often that the mouth doesn't have time to rebalance itself. The enamel begins to wear away.



© ADOBE STOCK

WHAT TO DO

Cutting down on acidic things is the best advice, but coffee drinkers might revolt. So carefully avoid leaving acidic drinks in your mouth too long, or swishing them around. Instead, if possible, use a straw so that the liquid is quickly transported past the teeth toward the back of

your mouth. Drink water instead of juice or soft drinks. Avoid chewing vitamin C tablets. Eat fruit with meals instead of as a stand-alone snack. Finishing meals with milk or cheese will also help balance acids.

If you can't brush right away, chew sugar-free gum since that will jumpstart the

production of saliva.

TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Your dentist will monitor erosion issues during regular checkups, providing advice and solutions before any damage becomes permanent. Doctors can help with managing vomiting or reflux. There are vitamin C supple-

ments that are meant to be swallowed whole, rather than chewed. Typically, the tooth's lost surface will be replaced by fillings. In the most extreme cases, damaged teeth may need to be replaced with crowns or veneers. Contact a dental professional if you are growing concerned.

Can You Hear Me Now?

Many people lose their hearing because of hereditary issues or illness, while others may suffer from medical conditions like middle-ear infections or tinnitus that lead to irreversible damage.

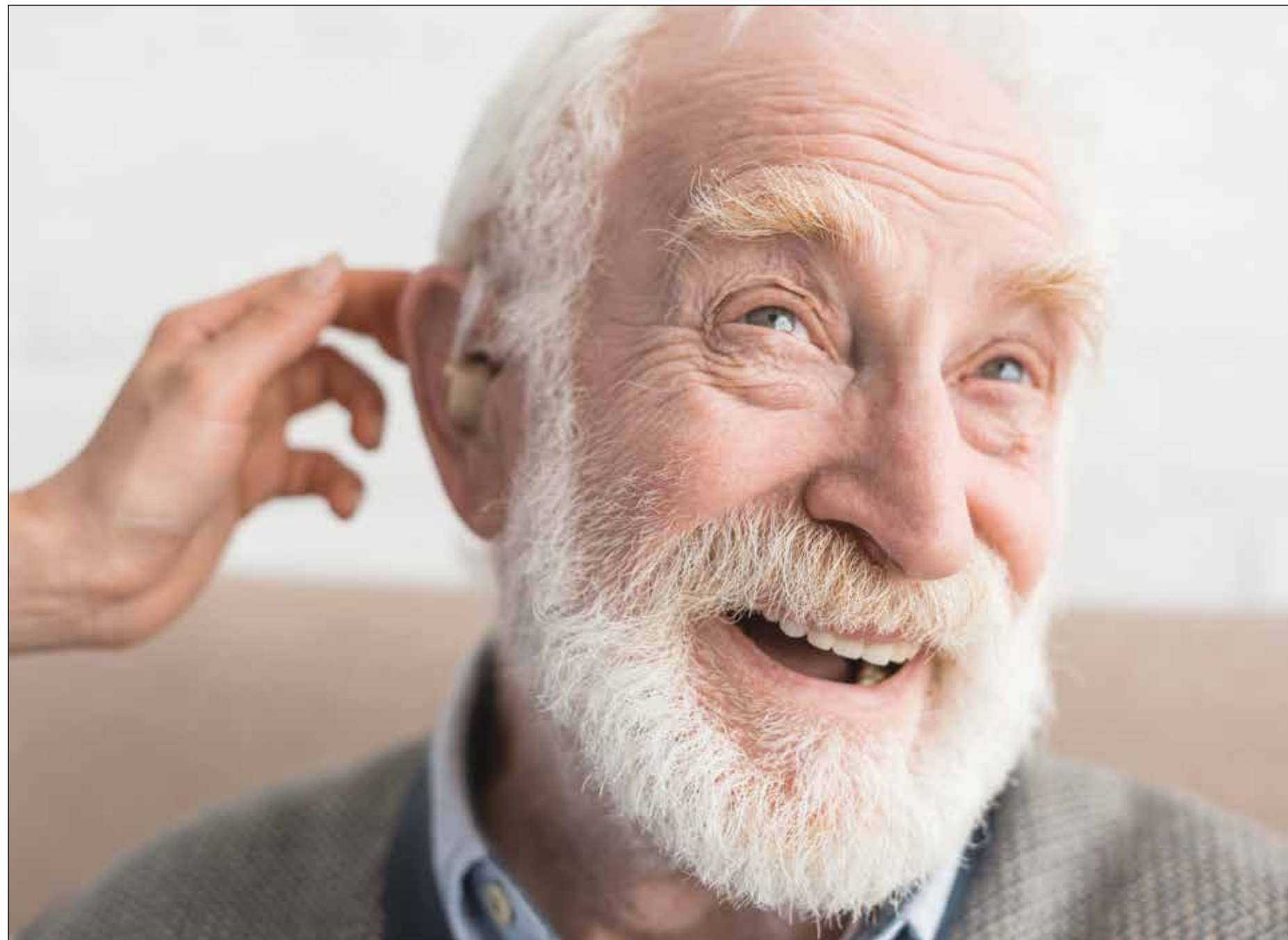
Today, hearing loss is the third most common condition in the U.S., following only arthritis and heart disease. Here's a look at how this is impacting us, and what we can do.

TYPES OF LOSS

Hearing loss is divided into three different types, depending on the damage: Conductive loss involves the middle or outer ear. Sensorineural relates to inner-ear issues. Mixed loss, as it sounds, includes some combination of both. Genetics, age and illness play a role, as do a number of modern-day issues like ongoing loud noises and some forms of medication. Many cases are untreatable, so prevention remains our best way to keep healthy hearing.

DEGREES OF LOSS

There are also different degrees of loss: Mild loss is diagnosed for those who may have trouble making out conversations amid background noise. Moderate loss would involve having to ask others to



© ADOBE STOCK

repeat themselves in one-on-one conversations or when on the phone. Severe loss is such that a hearing aid is required. Profound loss may require technology like a cochlear implant.

THE CAUSES

Aging is the most common cause, though researchers still don't fully understand why we

lose our hearing. One in three people who are 65-74 has some sort of loss. After 75, it's an entire 50%. As with exposure to loud sounds, a lifetime of listening may simply wear down delicate ear mechanics. Genes play a role, as do certain drugs. In fact, there are more than 200 chemical and medications that are linked to hearing loss.

THE TREATMENTS

Important preventative measures include wearing earplugs when around any sound that louder than traffic. If you work in a noisy workplace, discuss ear safety with your employer. Hearing aids help most people with more serious hearing loss, and some have found success with personal-listening systems

and phone-amplification software. Surgery can ultimately reverse losses caused by infection, scar tissue or otosclerosis. Antibiotics may work in the case of infection. Removing ear wax is sometimes a solution. If all else fails, cochlear implants are becoming more popular with those suffering from profound hearing loss.

Eating After Exercising

Working out expends a lot of energy, and you can come away feel both tired and very, very hungry.

It's important, however, to eat right, or you may risk losing ground in your journey toward a healthier life.

WHEN TO EAT

Have a snack within 15-30 minutes of your workout's end in order to recover your regular energy levels. That will also help curb your appetite. Good post-workout choices include almonds and chocolate milk, yogurt with blueberries and granola, pretzels and string cheese, and peanut butter and apples and peanut butter, among other things. Eat a full meal with both protein and carbs within two hours of exercising in order to replace critical nutrients and help in muscle recovery. If your appetite is low after exercising, look for liquid-food options like protein drinks or milk.

WHY IT MATTERS

As important as it is to eat within a certain timeframe, it's even more critical that you make smart choices about what you eat. Balancing your nutritional intake doesn't just restore your energy; it also helps with reducing fatigue and encourages recovery. Proteins, carbohydrates and the healthy fats that we get from nuts are essential. The



© ADOBE STOCK

mixture depends on what you're doing: Endurance activities like cycling, swimming or running require more carbs, while strength trainers should learn more toward proteins. The average active person's diet should be somewhere in between.

WHAT TO EAT

Proteins help muscles heal

after exercise, while also preventing any loss of lean mass. Healthy choices include chicken, fish, nuts and healthy shakes. Dairy from milk, cottage cheese and yogurt rebuilds amino acids and repairs cells. Omega-3 fatty acids boost muscle-protein synthesis, and that's increases muscle cells according to a study by the

Washington University School of Medicine.

These acids are found in tuna and salmon. Fish oils can help reduce muscle soreness, too.

DON'T FORGET TO DRINK

Since dehydration is always a danger, everyone needs fluids before, during and then

after exercising.

Drink roughly 2-3 cups of water in the hours before your workout, then 1/2 to 1 cups of water every 15-20 minutes while working out. (You may have to adjust these numbers based on body mass and your particular climate.)

After your workout, drink 2-3 cups for every pound you lost during the session.



© ADOBE STOCK

Soothing Dry Eyes

Tears are much more than small droplets of water. In fact they also contain more than 1,500 proteins along with fatty oils and mucus, according to the National Eye Institute. So what happens when they stop working?

WHAT TEARS DO

Tears keep the surface of our eyes smooth, while protecting them from certain elements in our environment. The eye becomes itchy or inflamed when the body doesn't produce tears — or enough of them — to play this critical role. Often this is a temporary issue, and no long-term damage is done. For some people, however, having dry eyes is part of every-day life.

WHO'S AT RISK?

The condition of dry eyes is most

common in older people, but anyone can be impacted. In some cases, dry eyes are an underlying symptom of a more serious issue. Rheumatoid arthritis, blepharitis, and entropion are some of the diseases linked to dry eyes, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Allergies, thyroid disorders and vitamin A deficiency can be involved. Certain medications, including antihistamines, hormone replacement therapy, decongestants and antidepressants, may make it worse. The corneal nerve

can become desensitized because of the use of contact lenses, as well. Dry eyes happen to both women and men, but women develop a higher incidence after menopause.

DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM

A comprehensive examination is often scheduled to properly diagnose dry eyes. The doctor will evaluate the exterior of your eye, as also check out the eyelids and cornea. This evaluation is then coupled with details from your medical history, general health issues, and symptom details to develop a management plan.

In some cases, you may be encouraged to eat a diet that's higher in vitamin A, which is found in carrots, liver and broccoli.

Your doctor may also encourage a diet with more Omega-3 fatty acids, found in walnuts, fish and vegetable oils.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Dry eyes are, unfortunately, a chronic condition — so no treatment is likely to cure it. However, there are approaches your doctor can recommend to better manage this condition.

Those with mild cases of dry eyes can find relief with the use of artificial-tear solutions. These are available over the counter to supplement your natural production of tears. Certain eye drops can also enhance your body's ability to create tears. The doctor will tailor a plan that's right for you.

Meditate for Better Mental Health

Meditation techniques can help us all to better mental health, by encouraging presence, peace and sense of purpose. Here's how.

WHAT IT IS

Meditation has been part of our world in some form for centuries. It was originally designed to help deepen followers' understanding of mystical and sacred ideas, but is more commonly used today for stress reduction and as a relaxation technique.

The Mayo Clinic describes meditation as a "type of mind-body complementary medicine."

WHAT IT DOES

Practitioners of meditation center attention on the moment they're living in, and ultimately find a heightened sense of awareness. Those who meditate say they gain new perspectives, build stress management skills and have increased their own self awareness through the process, while encouraging their imagination and reducing negative thoughts. The Mayo Clinic has reported better nights of sleep, and improved mental health. There is no correct way to do it. Meditation, quite simply, is defined as a peaceful activity that lowers your level of stress, suits your particular



© ADOBE STOCK

lifestyle and helps bring peace of mind.

STARTING POINTS

Anyone can meditate, and it can be done anywhere. Find a quiet place where you can form mental images that you find to be relaxing. It might be a trickling mountain spring, coffee at a Parisian cafe, a quiet walk in a park, or a day

at an exotic beach. Use as many senses as you can when imagining this place, including sounds and smells. You have just been transported through guided meditation. Mantra meditation involves focusing on the within, typically the flow of your breath or perhaps your own heart-beat. It's all about living in the present, letting go of past

hurts or the worries of the day. Next, create your own version.

HELPFUL RESULTS

Mindfulness brought on through meditation is of particular help in improving the lives of those dealing with anxiety disorders and depression, according to Psychology Today. The American Journey

of Psychiatry conducted a study with similar results. These issues impact most of us at one point or another, and relief can be elusive. The best part about meditation is that it's so easy to maintain as a routine.

Researchers found that most of those studied chose to continue meditating long after the studies concluded.