



WINTER 2026

healthy living

STAYING ON SCHEDULE

Unfortunately, some tend to think of a doctor's visit only in terms of sickness or injury.



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While it's important to seek prompt medical attention in those cases, regular well visits and health screenings play an essential role in sustaining overall health. Don't underestimate the importance of these periodic checkups. Schedule at least one appointment each year, regardless of how healthy you feel. Many insurance plans cover these visits, and Medicare often provides them at no charge.

PREVENTION AND EARLY DETECTION

Well visits help doctors spot concerning health trends and diagnose unseen problems. Both are key to averting health issues down the road. During these sessions, healthcare professionals perform tests that offer a detailed overview of your current status. The consultation typically involves reviewing your medical history, as well as physical assessments

and routine screenings. By the end of the appointment, you'll have established vital health benchmarks. They'll be referenced and regularly monitored to minimize your risks of illness or other future complications. Visits may include things like mammograms, mental health evaluations and checks for colorectal cancer. Doctors then make key recommendations or prescribe medication as needed.

OVERALL WELL-BEING

In addition to illness prevention and treatment, well visits help with patients' overall health. Your healthcare provider will talk about better lifestyle practices during your visit, including exercise, stress management, nutrition and mental health. These visits may include vaccinations that are meant to protect you and your community from preventable illnesses. As needed, you could receive advice on weight management,

smoking cessation or other tailored recommendations. In the end, you'll have a customized plan that encourages healthier behaviors and improves your quality of life.

WHAT TO TALK ABOUT

Establishing and maintaining a straightforward, honest relationship with your healthcare provider is vitally important. The end result of these regular well visits should be a complete picture of your health and lifestyle with action items based on your specific health needs. You'll be encouraged to voice any questions or concerns. Your doctor will offer personalized health guidance that fits your individual situation. During follow-up visits, discuss any changes you have experienced since the last appointment. Your medical recommendations may change over time with age-appropriate therapies and tests.

DEBUNKING HEALTH MYTHS

Here's a look at several very common — but completely wrong — health myths.

Now more than ever, we're surrounded by misleading or completely false information. Blame, in some cases, goes to the internet. But many health myths go back much further, as stories handed down from generation to generation.

CATCHING A COLD

Perhaps you got caught in the rain. Or maybe, after a long day, you simply find it too exhausting to dry your hair after taking a shower. Heading to bed with damp hair will almost certainly result in messy hair in the morning — but it won't lead to a cold. Experts say the temperature or moisture of your body doesn't have anything to do with catching viruses like the common cold. There is one worry when it comes to going to bed with wet hair: Wet pillows

are more likely to harbor bacteria so doctors say those who are prone to acne should frequently change their pillowcases.

WEIGHT WATCHERS

Being healthy involves a variety of factors, with your body weight representing only one aspect. Doctors report that it's not unusual to encounter patients who are thin and have lots of health problems. The reverse, of course, is also true. Plenty of overweight people are perfectly healthy. Body mass index alone does not indicate good health.

SUN EXPOSURE

For years, people believed that getting a so-called "base tan" before a beach outing would protect the skin from sunburn. Some people would even frequent tanning salons for this specific purpose. But skin requires much more than that to be protected. Experts say these kinds of tans may provide a sun protection factor of only 1 to 4. The minimum

recommended SPF is 30. Any form of tanning heightens the risk of developing skin cancer and can accelerate skin aging.

FAT-BURNING ALTERNATIVES

There are plenty of supplements and foods currently being promoted as fat-burning options. These claims have typically not been evaluated by actual

doctors. The only reliable way to burn fat, encourage weight loss and boost metabolism is through exercise. There's a direct correlation between inactivity and negative health outcomes like heart disease. Diets focusing on limited food options or even a single item risk depriving your body of essential nutrients. Being physically active also strengthens our social connections.



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GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT DIABETES

Millions of Americans have already been diagnosed, and the numbers keep going up.

The numbers are concentrated among people who are 45 and older and without a high school diploma, but they're not alone: Most concerning are the hundreds of thousands of minors and young adults who have diabetes.

If you've been diagnosed, effectively managing the disease is critically important to avoid serious complications. While much is still unknown about Type 1 diabetes, lifestyle changes and preventative therapies can help prevent Type 2 diabetes, the most common form of the disease.

WHAT IS DIABETES?

Diabetes is an autoimmune disorder that occurs when the body erroneously attacks the beta cells that produce insulin. Insulin is a critical hormone that regulates the blood sugar level in our bodies. Without it, these levels can become dangerously high. While genetics and environmental factors contribute to type 1 diabetes, the precise reasons behind this particular immune response remain unclear. Symptoms include unexplained weight loss, excessive thirst, extreme hunger, frequent urination, fatigue, slow-healing wounds and blurred vision.

Type 1 is diagnosed when blood

sugar levels are off and ketones are present in urine. Ketones are byproduct produced when our body breaks down fat. There is no cure, and those who are diagnosed manage it with a lifetime of insulin therapy.

Type 2 diabetes is far more common, but also more preventable. Those at risk of Type 2 are encouraged to maintain a healthy weight, eat a balanced diet, manage stress, quit smoking, limit alcohol intake and get enough sleep.

PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS

The good news is that there have been some big advancements in treatment for those with Type 1 diabetes. Automated insulin delivery systems have grown in usage. Researchers have narrowed down the specific proteins that are present in the beta cells of those who've been diagnosed, leading to huge potential breakthroughs. Recently identified processes may improve accuracy when measuring blood glucose. As we've learned more, the American Diabetes Association has revised the standards for diabetes management. Certain medications, including metformin, can also help delay or even prevent the onset of Type 2 diabetes.



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ARE YOU VITAMIN DEFICIENT?

A well-balanced diet is crucial for obtaining most of the nutrients necessary for good health.

Many people, however, suffer from deficiencies in vitamins and minerals largely due to a Western diet rich in processed foods. Below are some frequently encountered nutrient deficiencies.

IRON

Iron is vital for red blood cells, as it aids in oxygen transport. There are two forms of dietary iron: heme iron, predominantly found in red meat, and non-heme iron, which is available in both plant-based foods and meat. According to Healthline, iron deficiencies are widespread, affecting over 25% of individuals. Anemia, characterized by a reduced number of red blood cells, is the most prevalent result of insufficient iron levels. Common symptoms include fatigue, weakness, compromised immunity, and cognitive impairments. Foods rich in iron encompass red meat, organ meats, shellfish, canned sardines, beans, seeds and dark leafy greens.

VITAMIN D

Vitamin D acts similarly to a steroid hormone, circulating in the

bloodstream and instructing cells on regulating gene expression. It is synthesized from cholesterol in the skin when exposed to sunlight. In the United States, around 42% of the population may experience a deficiency, as noted by Healthline. Lacking sufficient vitamin D can lead to muscle weakness, bone deterioration and a greater risk of fractures. Key sources of vitamin D include cod liver oil, fatty fish and egg yolks.

CALCIUM

Calcium is a vital mineral that plays a crucial role in the growth and preservation of bones.

Additionally, it functions as a signaling molecule, ensuring the heart, muscles and nerves operate properly. Fewer than 15% of teenage girls, under 10% of women aged over 50, and less than 22% of teenage boys and men older than 50 achieve the recommended calcium intake levels. A deficiency in calcium may lead to softer, more brittle bones. Foods rich in calcium include fish with bones, dairy products and dark green vegetables.

MAGNESIUM

Magnesium is an essential mineral necessary for maintaining healthy bones and teeth. It

participates in over 300 enzymatic reactions within the body.

Healthline reports that nearly 70% of Americans younger than 71 and about 80% of those older than 71 do not consume adequate magnesium levels. Low magnesium intake is linked to type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, heart disorders and osteoporosis. Severe magnesium deficiency symptoms can include irregular heart rhythms, muscle cramps, restless leg syndrome, fatigue and migraines. Whole grains, nuts, dark chocolate and dark green vegetables are excellent sources of magnesium.



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CARING FOR A WOUND

Give immediate attention to any injury to aid in healing and ward off infections.

If you suffer a serious wound, seek medical attention immediately. But you may need to address the injury before help arrives. Likewise, proper care for smaller injuries like scrapes or minor cuts can prevent them from escalating into a more significant issue.

CLEAN THE WOUND

With minor injuries, the initial focus is on properly cleaning the affected area. To reduce the chance of infection, wash your hands with soap and water before making contact with the injury. If possible, put on gloves. Use cool water to rinse the wound, clearing away dirt and bacteria. Use a clean cloth or sterile gauze to gently pat the area until it's dry.

STOP THE BLEEDING

If your bleeding is moderate, apply gentle and steady pressure with a clean cloth or bandage for 5 to 10 minutes. Elevating the injured area above heart level can help stop the bleeding. If after 10 minutes of pressure the bleeding has not stopped or if the wound continues to ooze, seek immediate medical attention. This may signal a more severe injury that requires sutures. Apply an over-the-counter antibiotic ointment to reduce the risk of infection.

BANDAGING AND MEDICATION

Most minor wounds can be managed with a bandage or medical tape for better coverage. This is essential for protecting the area from dirt and bacteria. Watch for symptoms indicating infection, including redness, swelling, warmth or pus. See a doctor if any of these symptoms occur. Change the dressing daily or more frequently if it becomes wet or dirty.

WHEN TO CALL A DOCTOR

If a fever develops or red streaks begin to extend from the wound, seek immediate medical attention because these are signs of a serious infection. Certain wounds may require medical assistance that goes beyond home care. Get help if the wound



is deep, exceeds half an inch in length, is caused by a dirty or rusty object, or if you have not received a tetanus shot within the past five years.

Finally, if the wound is on the face or another sensitive region, you may need professional treatment to minimize scarring. Condition or seeking advice for a minor issue, virtual visits can help you stay on top of your health goals without the hassle of scheduling in-person appointments.

In addition to video calls, many telehealth platforms offer secure messaging with health care providers, making it easy to ask questions or get prescription refills without delay.

Mental Health Apps

Numerous apps can help manage stress, anxiety

and other mental health concerns. Apps like Calm, Headspace and Talkspace offer guided meditation, therapy sessions and mindfulness exercises. By incorporating these tools into your routine, you can improve your mental well-being and reduce stress.

Goal-Setting Platforms

Many fitness and wellness apps come with built-in communities and goal-setting features that allow users to connect with others who share similar objectives. Platforms like Strava, for example, let users track their workouts while interacting with others, creating a sense of community and competition. You can join challenges, share progress and encourage others, fostering motivation and accountability.

HELP WITH YOUR

HEALTH GOALS

Technology has touched every facet of our lives — including wellness.

Recent innovations like cellphone apps, smart watches and fitness trackers have made it easier than ever to establish and reach individual health objectives. Whether your goal is to stay fit, lose weight or enhance your general well-being, there's breakthrough technology to help you get there. Nowadays, we can even schedule and conduct some doctor visits online.

NUTRITION AND MEAL-PLANNING APPS

A balanced diet plays an essential role in achieving any health objective, whether you want to build muscle, lose weight or simply promote overall wellness. Applications now help users record their meals, record macronutrient levels and keep up with calorie consumption. Some of these programs even generate customized meal plans and shopping lists catering to individual dietary preferences or restrictions.

TRACKERS AND SMARTWATCHES

Among the newest and most sought-after tools are fitness trackers and smartwatches. These devices are worn on the body, where they keep tabs on a range of metrics, including calories burned, steps taken, heart rate and sleep patterns. Some measure additional indicators such as oxygen saturation. You can set daily targets like taking 10,000 steps or burning a specified number of calories, then maintain your own accountability with technology. Many trackers offer reminders to move after prolonged inactivity.

TELEHEALTH SERVICES

The era of obligatory doctor visits for all health issues is now behind us. Telehealth services have transformed healthcare accessibility, enabling patients to connect with healthcare professionals from the comfort of home. Whether you need guidance on a minor issue or are dealing with a chronic condition, online consultations can help without the inconvenience of traveling across town. In addition to virtual consultations,

many telehealth platforms provide secure messaging options that allow for on-the-go questions or prescription refills.

MENTAL HEALTH APPS

Health applications can assist with mental health, addressing issues with anxiety, stress and other challenges. Some fitness and wellness platforms provide guided meditation,



mindfulness practices and even therapy sessions. Many incorporate goal-setting tools and community features that let users engage with others who have similar objectives. You can log workouts while interacting with others, fostering a sense of camaraderie and friendly competition. Take part in challenges, motivate new friends and track your progress in the spirit of inspiration and accountability.



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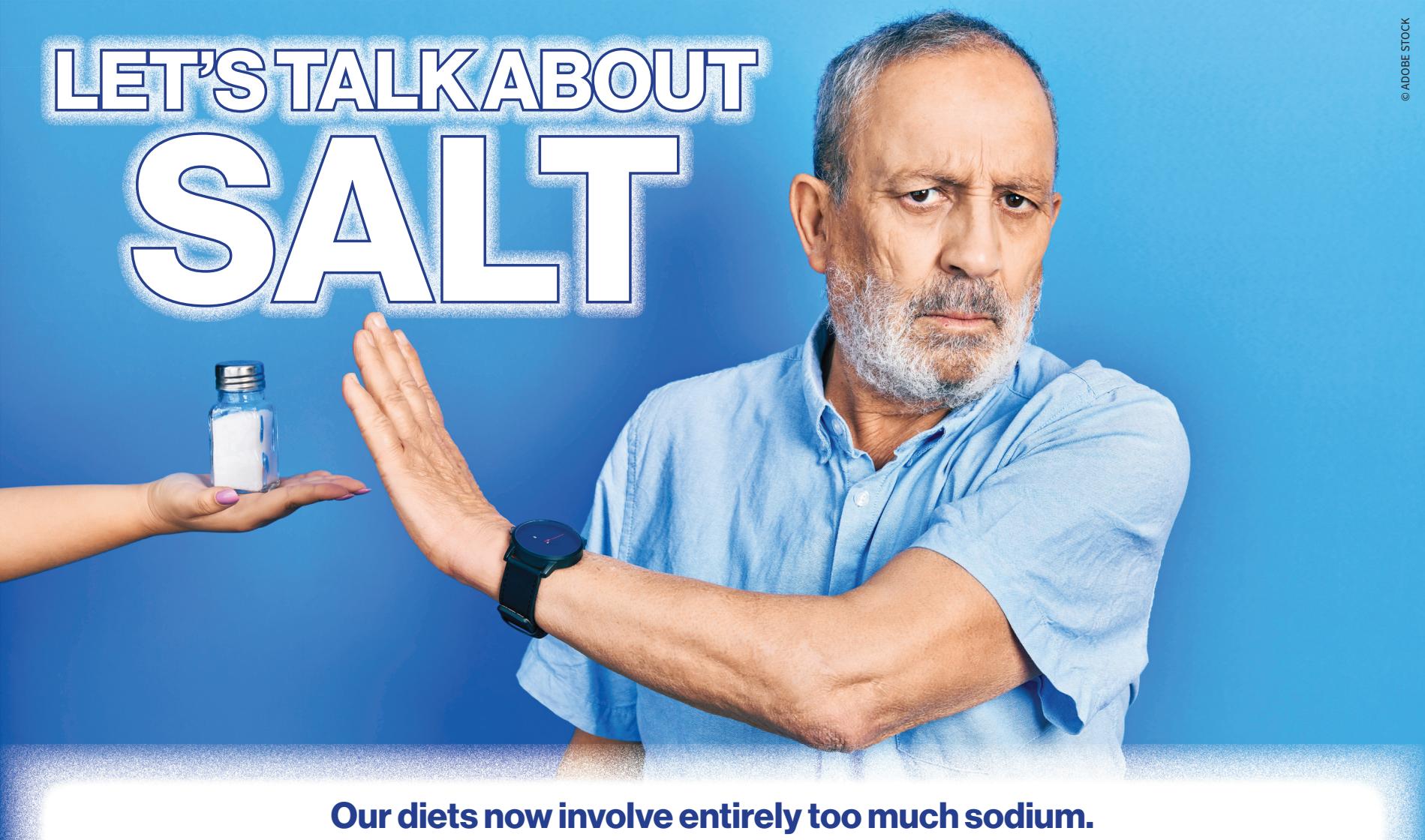
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LET'S TALK ABOUT SALT



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Our diets now involve entirely too much sodium. It's leading to chronic health issues.

Sodium, which is mainly present in salt, is everywhere it seems.

You'll find it in processed foods like snacks, fast foods and some deli meats. Today, experts say nearly every nation is regularly surpassing the suggested sodium intake levels. Some people are consuming up to twice the recommended amount.

Health issues related to salt are becoming just as prevalent. Over time, too much sodium can lead to heart disease, strokes, high blood pressure, gastric cancer, obesity, kidney damage and osteoporosis.

FOCUS ON REDUCTION

One of the most effective ways to fight many chronic diseases is simply to reduce sodium intake. Sodium is essential for muscle function and fluid balance, but it can be like walking a tightrope. While sodium is helpful in lower

dosages, excessive intake of salt causes fluid retention. The result is swelling, or edema. Lowering your salt intake has an immediate beneficial effect on blood pressure. Water retention caused by high sodium levels increases blood volume and puts extra pressure on the heart.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Controlling your sodium intake can help lower the risk of a heart attack or stroke. Blood pressure management is one of the most difficult issues to tackle because patients may not even notice when their levels are high. But elevated heart rates over time can lead to a life-threatening medical episode. Excessive amounts of sodium can strain the kidneys, potentially causing separate long-lasting harm.

TAKING A NEW APPROACH

Worried about salt? Develop a meal plan focused on fresh vegetables, lean proteins, fruits and whole grains. These foods will create a balanced, nutritious diet and are naturally low in sodium. Avoid snacks such as chips, pretzels, canned soups and frozen dinners, since they are usually high in sodium. Reducing your intake of these items alone can greatly decrease your overall sodium consumption. Never add salt.

Be wary of processed and packaged items, as they frequently contain high levels of hidden sodium. Choose products that advertise lower sodium content. Consider serving sizes, as well. Rather than using salt, give your food a flavor boost with herbs, spices and other sodium-free seasonings. By cooking your meals at home, you'll be taking charge of your diet. That gives you control over the ingredients — including the amount of salt.



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