

# WELLNESS MAGAZINE

APRIL 2023

**7 Warning Signs  
You're About  
to Gain Weight**

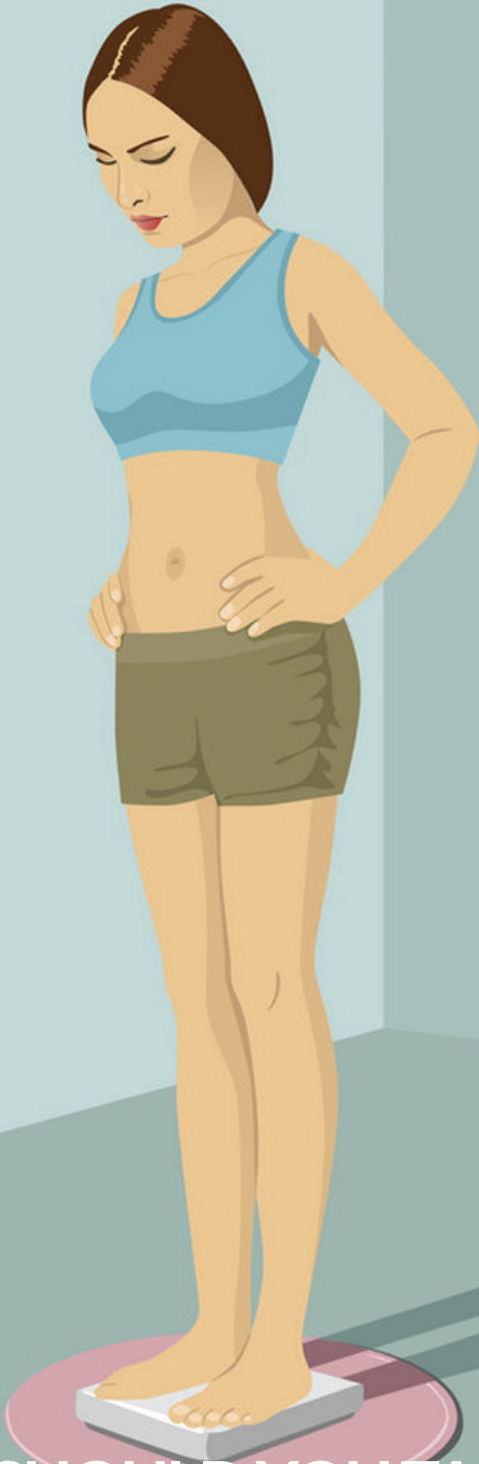
**6 BODY PARTS  
YOU SHOULDN'T  
IGNORE AFTER 50**

WHAT YOUR  
**BLOOD TYPE**  
SAYS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

8 WAYS TO BOOST  
THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF  
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**GREATEST  
SCIENTISTS**  
*Mary Leakey*

**SHOULD YOU TAKE  
A DIABETES DRUG  
FOR WEIGHT LOSS?**



# WELCOME

## to the Floridacare Family

Prevention rather than cure should be the watchword of each person for their health care, in order to avoid risk factors that can lead us to suffer from a disease. We must promote a healthy physical and mental lifestyle, and that is the objective of this magazine, that whoever reads it, can know the importance of preventive health. You can start using your plan right away, but please note that you must present your membership card and photo ID at the time of service to verify your eligibility. For general questions, appointment assistance, or customer service, call 305-294-9292, between 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. We encourage our new members to take a moment and familiarize themselves with this booklet so that you can better understand how Floridacare works. The more informed you are about the excellent services and exclusive prices that Floridacare offers you, the better your experience will be. Remember that your health is the most precious gift you have. Thank you for trusting Floridacare to protect your family's health.





# Why is Wellness Important?

Over the past year, we have all experienced new challenges that have affected our physical, mental, and social well-being. Many of us have felt tired and stressed, which is why wellness and self-care are more important than ever. Below, we share some new ideas to achieve your well-being in all its dimensions and you can nourish your mind and body.

1. Do exercises
2. Drink water regularly.
3. Track your fitness.
4. Take multivitamins.
5. At the office, stand up every 30 minutes.
6. Go outside
7. Get enough sleep.
8. Eat organic food if possible.
9. Practice gratitude.
10. Read books.
11. Eat more fruits and vegetables.
12. Correct your posture.
13. Take a daily probiotic.
14. Get vaccinated.
15. Minimize sugar intake.
16. Meditate.
17. Listen to music.
18. Share with friends and family.
19. Do not abuse electronic equipment.
20. Organize your days.



# 7 WARNING SIGNS YOU'RE ABOUT TO GAIN WEIGHT

**Prevent the pounds before they grab you  
by the waist**

Gaining weight means one of two things: working hard to lose the pounds or shelling out money for new clothes. But what if you could see that weight gain approaching in advance and take steps to fend it off before it collects around your midsection? Here are seven indicators that weight gain may be in your near future and some simple steps to preempt the pounds.

## **1. You're on a diet**

You may lose some weight in the short term, but research shows that dieters often end up heavier than their baseline weights. In a review of 29 weight-loss studies, dieters regained more than half the weight they had shed within two years. After five years, they had regained about 80 percent.

We are at the mercy of a tightly controlled system designed to keep the body at its current weight, says Caroline M. Apovian, M.D., codirector of the Center for Weight Management and Wellness at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

"When you try to lose weight [by dieting], your body's going to fight you," she notes.

As soon as calories drop, your body makes less leptin, the hormone that tells your brain you're full, and more ghrelin, a hormone that signals that you're hungry. Plus, your body tries to hold on to its fat stores by lowering your metabolic rate, burning fewer calories. Prevent the pounds: To shed weight for good, don't simply restrict calories. Instead, make sure the calories you eat count. Apovian advises sticking with whole grains, lean protein, low-fat dairy, fruits and vegetables, and avoiding processed foods and added sugars.



## **2. You're down in the dumps**

Mood disorders may lead to weight gain — and vice versa, says David Arterburn, M.D., a senior investigator at Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute.

“Some people use eating as a coping mechanism for sadness, because certain foods, like refined sugars, can have an opiate like effect on the brain,” Arterburn adds. Certain antidepressants may also promote weight gain, such as sertraline (Zoloft) and mirtazapine (Remeron).  
Prevent the pounds: “Getting more active can both help treat depression and help prevent weight gain,” Arterburn says. But you may also need counseling or a new medication. For instance, the antidepressant bupropion (Wellbutrin) can be a part of treatment for obesity.

## **3. That laundry basket seems heavier**

As we age, we lose muscle mass — from 3 to 8 percent a decade starting at around age 30. That increases the risk of weight gain.

“Muscle is much more metabolically active than fat,” says David Creel, a psychologist and registered dietitian in the Bariatric and Metabolic Institute at Cleveland Clinic. “If you maintain more muscle, you’ll burn more calories at rest.”

Prevent the pounds: Pick up some weights or stretchy bands. Not only does greater muscle power help you slim down, it also bolsters your bones and reduces disease risks. Just be sure to get adequate protein to support muscle maintenance — about 25 grams at each meal for the average woman and about 30 grams for the average man. “As you get older, your cells don’t take up protein and make muscle with it as well as they do in younger people,” Apovian explains. (For a guide to using protein to manage your weight, check out the AARP bestseller *The Whole Body Reset*.)

#### 4 You drink diet soda

In a nine-year study of older adults, those who drank at least one diet soda a day had triple the increase in waist size, compared with people who didn't drink diet sodas, says Sharon Fowler, an epidemiologist with the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, who conducted the research.

"It's a dose response," Fowler adds. "The more you drink, the more weight you put on."

**Prevent the pounds:** Swap that chemical stew for unsweetened iced tea or sparkling water.

#### 5. You started a new medication

Weight-related trouble can come from some surprising medications, says Lawrence J. Cheskin, M.D., professor and chair of nutrition at George Mason University and coauthor of *Weight Loss for Life: The Proven Plan for Success*.

Research shows that people taking some nonsedating antihistamines long term, including fexofenadine (Allegra) and desloratadine (Clarinet), had significantly higher weights and larger waistlines than those not on this regimen.

The reasons haven't been pinned down, but blocking the production of histamine, which plays a part in the

brain's appetite suppression, may make you feel hungrier. Older beta-blockers, such as atenolol (Tenormin) and metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol XL), have also been shown to trigger weight gain, while newer ones, like carvedilol (Coreg), usually don't. **Prevent the pounds:** If you notice a weight increase after starting a new medication, talk to your doctor about substituting another drug.



## **6. You're using cardio to manage your weight**

Swimming, running, walking and cycling offer many perks, from sounder sleep to a lower risk for cancer and diabetes. But they're not a cure-all for weight issues, Cheskin notes. Prevent the pounds: Remember, you need strong muscles to rev your metabolism and optimize calorie burning. Cardio alone won't be enough. Coupling cardio with strength training is a better bet for long-term weight management. But you also have to address the quantity of food you eat. Cheskin recommends keeping a food diary to help find the right balance. Self-monitoring your food intake is one of the most common strategies of "successful losers" — people in a national registry who have lost at least 30 pounds and kept it off for more than a year.

## **7. You wake up tired**

Sleep deprivation lowers the satiation hormone leptin and raises the hunger hormone ghrelin. Plus, research shows that when you're hurting for sleep, you're more likely to reach for fat-laden, sugary foods. And trying to catch up on sleep during the weekend just isn't going to cut it. In a 2019 study in the *International Journal of Obesity*, researchers measured the duration and variability of sleep in a group of older adults, along with their weight and waist measurements, for a year. "The consistency of a person's sleep schedule and getting more than six hours of sleep a night were two key factors in their ability to lose weight," says board-certified sleep specialist Michael Breus, author of *The Sleep Doctor's Diet Plan: Lose Weight Through Better Sleep*. Prevent the pounds: Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends; abstain from caffeine after 2 p.m. and avoid alcohol for three hours before bedtime; and get 15 minutes of sunlight every morning to keep your circadian rhythms functioning well.





# 6 BODY PARTS YOU SHOULDN'T IGNORE AFTER YOUR 50.

*If you want to keep your body strong and healthy in the second half of life, you might need some new routines. Here's what you're up against and why you should treat your most vulnerable body parts.*



## 1. Your eyes

Even if you have perfect vision, an eye exam every one to three years should be part of your routine starting at age 55. Eye doctors monitor your eyes to diagnose and manage common age-related conditions such as macular degeneration — when the eye begins to blur and lose central vision — and glaucoma, which damages the optic nerve, threatening peripheral vision. Besides not smoking, which increases the risk of eye diseases, research shows you can slow the progress of macular degeneration with a specific multivitamin supplement. Medication and surgery can hold the line on glaucoma.

Your doctor will also keep an eye out for vision-clouding cataracts. And if you're experiencing the gritty sensation of dry eye — which gets more common with age — look for relief with omega-3-rich foods or supplements, eyelid hygiene or artificial tears.



## 2. Your teeth and gums

These days, thanks to widespread water fluoridation and basic oral hygiene, people expect to keep all or at least most of their teeth for a lifetime — into their 80s and 90s, but to get that kind of mileage out of them, you may need to do more than you're used to. As people get older, we see more gum recession and bone loss and that can expose some root surface. But these surfaces aren't covered with enamel, the hard outer coating that protects the top of the tooth, so they become more susceptible to decay. After 50, you may also make less saliva, which dissolves the acids made from breaking down food, making them less damaging to teeth. Or you may be prescribed one of the hundreds of medications known to cause dry mouth, which also puts teeth at risk.

To keep your teeth and gums healthy for the long haul, it's recommended doubling down on your oral hygiene and no skipping flossing tonight. If you're on a drug that causes dry mouth, ask your doctor if you can take a smaller dose or a different drug. And avoid chewing ice, as tooth enamel can chip, or using your teeth for things like removing a price tag.

## 3. Your feet

You probably don't think much about your feet until they hurt — and pain is a strong likelihood. Many people over 50 have significant foot issues.

Long-term forces are often to blame. Calluses on the soles develop from foot abnormalities that make it difficult to walk. Similarly bony lumps called bunions form due to long-term pressure on the big toe joint. Such problems not only make your feet smart but can lead to knee, hip and back problems.

Forty to 60 are the prime ages for plantar fasciitis, inflammation of the tissue band (fascia) that connects the heel bone to the toes. It typically comes from overstressing the fascia due to the force of activity and hard surfaces. What to do: Wear supportive shoes — even around the house. "If you're not supporting and protecting the foot, then you're going to get arch problems, heel pain and Achilles tendinitis.

Sidestep other foot ills by having your feet measured, he adds. Many people don't realize that feet can get bigger with age and suffer from shoes that are too tight.





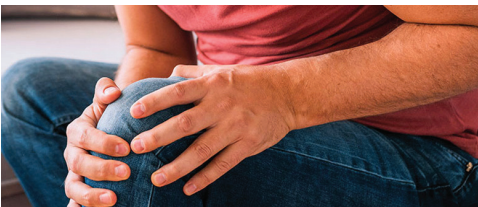
#### 4. Your pelvic floor

You might think of the pelvic floor — the muscles that stretch from the pubic bone back to the tailbone at the bottom of the pelvis — as a female concern. But it's just as important to men.

The pelvic floor muscles hold up your bowel, your bladder and your uterus, if you're a woman, and your prostate, if you're a man. A strong pelvic floor is also essential to sexual arousal and orgasm.

One in 4 women experience pelvic floor disorders, often as a result of childbirth, though they may emerge long after the kids have grown. Weakened pelvic muscles can lead to urinary or fecal incontinence, pain and prolapse, when organs drop down and even protrude outside the vaginal canal. Men can also experience incontinence, particularly after prostate cancer treatment.

Strengthening your body's core is also vital. Abdominal muscles, hip muscles and spinal muscles connect to and support the pelvic floor, and vice versa, allowing it to work at its best.



#### 5. Your hips and knees

These familiar joints are among your body's most vulnerable. Knees and hips are weight-bearing joints. They're subjected to a lot more stress than, say, your shoulder or elbow. And having a knee or a hip that's causing you pain diminishes every aspect of your life.

Unfortunately hip and knee pain are common after 50 and often lead to surgery. It's a result of everybody living a longer and more active life. Active people who play a lot of sports are prone to knee injuries and those injuries can result in premature arthritis.

Other factors like obesity can also play a role. Carrying extra weight seems to predispose our joints to wearing out, not just because there's more stress on the joint, but having a lot of fatty tissue on your body predisposes you to inflammation, and that inflammation seems to attack hip and knees. Arthritis of these joints also runs in families.

Shedding excess pounds and exercising are good ways to minimize joint pain. If your joint is already giving you trouble, keep moving. But you may need to alter what you've been doing. If you've been a runner for 20 years and now your knee is bothering you when you run, don't run so much. Find something else or change your routines — do it every other day, go shorter distances, do it in intervals. But listen to the joint. Arthroscopic surgery to trim or reconstruct damaged cartilage and remove fragments of bone or cartilage may offer relief from knee pain or alleviate symptoms of problems that damage the cartilage and the soft tissues around the hip joint. It gives people many more years of active life.

Many people will eventually need joint replacement in their later years. Fortunately surgery is increasingly common — and safe — and often can be done at surgical centers, allowing you to go home the same day.



#### 6. Your ears

Just 2 percent of Americans ages 45 to 54 have serious hearing loss. But that changes over time, rising to half of people 75 and older.

We start to see people who are bothered by hearing loss in their 50s and 60s. People first tend to notice it in challenging situations like a crowded restaurant or a ball game, where the brain is trying to pick out the signal from the background noise.

Hearing changes may be imperceptible year to year, and it takes the average person seven years to seek help, according to the Hearing Loss Association of America. But addressing hearing loss early on may lead to less precipitous declines and lower risks for depression and dementia, both of which can be linked to poor hearing.

The younger you are, the more capable you are of adjusting to a hearing aid. You preserve your hearing better and the [hearing] decreases more slowly. It is recommended that people get a baseline hearing test in their 50s, which allows doctors to evaluate changes over time.

Another reason to care for your ears: They play a crucial role in preserving your balance and preventing falls, which become more common and risky as you age.



# What Your Blood Type Says About Your Health

Knowing your type could give clues to your risk of stroke and heart attack

**D**o you know your blood type? There's a good chance that you don't. More Americans know their horoscope sign (66 percent) than their blood type (51 percent), according to a survey published this year by medical laboratory company Quest Diagnostics.

There are compelling health reasons why you should know, especially when it comes to your heart. Research suggests that people with certain blood types — namely A and B — are at higher risk to develop blood clots and to have heart attacks and strokes.

"We think about blood type a lot when we think about transfusions," says Robert Salazar, M.D., a cardiologist at Memorial Hermann Health System in Houston. There may be some benefits to know about it for heart health, he adds. "Increasingly, there is a push towards the individualization of medicine and medical advice," he explains. Adding information about blood type, he says, may help inform doctors on how to best treat patients.

## Types of blood

Blood types are determined by the presence or absence of certain substances, called antigens, that can trigger an immune response if they are foreign to the body.

There are four main blood types: A, B, O and AB, according to the American Red Cross. In addition to these antigens, there's a protein called the Rh factor, which can either be present (+) or absent (-). That means there are eight blood subtypes: A+, A-, B+, B-, O+, O-, AB+, AB-.

## Types A and B and blood clots

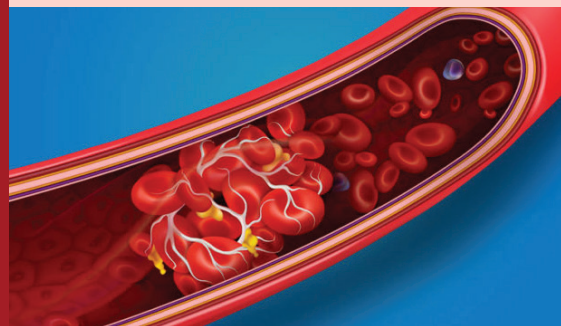
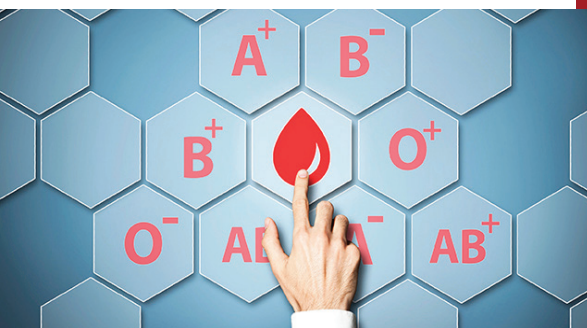
People with blood types A and B are at higher risk to develop blood clots compared with people who have type O blood, according to a 2020 study published in the American Heart Association journal *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology*. The study, which looked at more than 400,000 people, found that types A and B were 50 percent more likely to develop blood clots in the legs called deep vein thrombosis and 47 percent more likely to develop a pulmonary embolism — when a clot travels to the lungs — than people with type O blood. They were 8 percent more likely to have a heart attack and 10 percent more likely to experience heart failure than type Os.

## Why blood type affects clot risk

There are many possible reasons for why this happens, says Mary Cushman, M.D., a hematologist at the University of Vermont Medical Center and a professor of medicine and pathology at the Larner College of Medicine at UVM in Burlington, Vermont.

"The enzyme that controls blood type has other actions," she explains. One of these is to modify a protein called von Willebrand factor, which is very important in forming blood clots. "The modifications to the protein are different in different blood types," she says. "So people with type O blood have the lowest levels of von Willebrand factor on average and the lowest risk of abnormal clots. Type AB has the highest level and, in some studies, the highest risk of blood clots."

There may also be some differences in platelets, the small cell fragments in the blood that form clots, says Joshua Beckman, a cardiologist at the UT Southwestern Medical Center. This may make you more susceptible to clotting.





## Type A, type AB and cholesterol, stroke.

There's evidence to suggest that type A blood is linked to higher levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, the waxy substance that clogs arteries. Type AB blood is linked to inflammation, which may adversely affect blood vessels. Larger studies need to be done before coming to any definite conclusions, Beckman says.



Blood type may impact stroke risk, too. A 2022 study published in the medical journal *Neurology* reviewed 48 studies of 17,000 stroke patients and found that people with type A were 16 percent more likely to have an early stroke than people with other blood types, and those with type O were 12 percent less likely. An earlier study done by Cushman found that blood type AB, compared with O, had a 1.8 times higher risk of stroke; other blood types weren't affected.

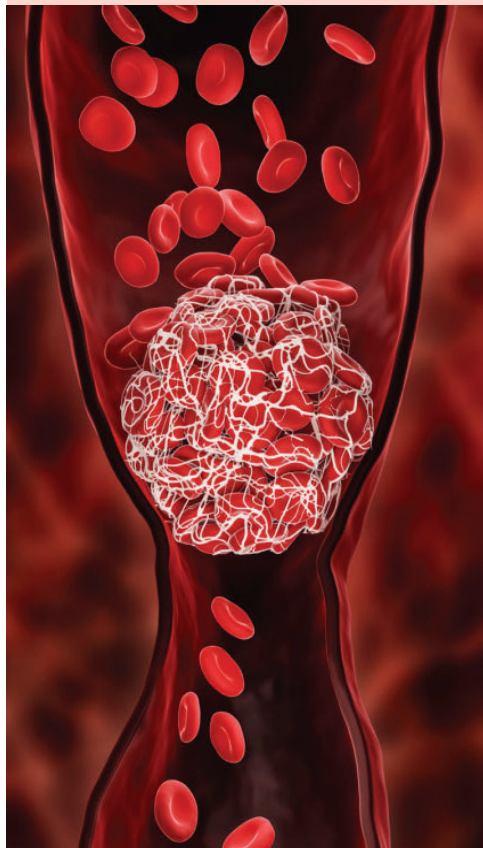
## Blood type and other health risks

Scientists are studying how blood type might affect risks from the COVID-19 virus, but they say it's too early to draw firm conclusions. Research has linked type O blood with a lower chance of getting seriously ill from cholera, and it may offer some protection from severe malaria.

## What you can do

It's important to keep research findings in context. Though certain blood types could mean an increased chance of health problems such as blood clots and stroke, the risk is relatively small compared with the dangers of smoking and high blood pressure, and blood type doesn't tell you much about your personal risk, Cushman points out.

You also shouldn't let your blood type give you a false sense of security. If you're having surgery or if you have cancer — both situations that can raise the risk of blood clots — Cushman recommends that you talk to your health care provider about a blood clot prevention plan. “If you have O blood type, you may have slightly lower risk of some diseases like thrombosis, but it doesn't completely protect you from the risk,” she says. Thrombosis occurs when clots block blood vessels.



Knowing your blood type may give you added insight into your heart health, Salazar says. Though doctors often talk about manageable risk factors, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and smoking, there's less conversation around genes or the genetic risk for heart disease, he says. Having a patient's blood type is a “way to try to narrow down individuals who may be at high risk,” he says. For these people, following the American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8 — eating right, staying active, not smoking, getting enough sleep, managing weight, controlling cholesterol, managing blood sugar and managing blood pressure — may be even more important.



Regardless of your blood type, everyone should have a heart-healthy lifestyle, Cushman says. “Following the guidance of the American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8, for example, will add years to your life and reduce your risk of thrombosis-related outcomes like heart attack, stroke and venous thrombosis,” she says.

# Should You Take a Diabetes Drug for Weight Loss?



The medications can help many patients improve their health, but they come with some risks

It's hard to read the headlines or watch TV these days without seeing an article or ad praising the weight-loss wonders of Ozempic. The injectable drug, whose technical name is semaglutide, first gained federal approval in 2017 for the treatment of type 2 diabetes, a condition that affects more than 35 million Americans. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has also approved a version of semaglutide with a slightly higher dose and a different name (Wegovy) as a treatment for obesity.

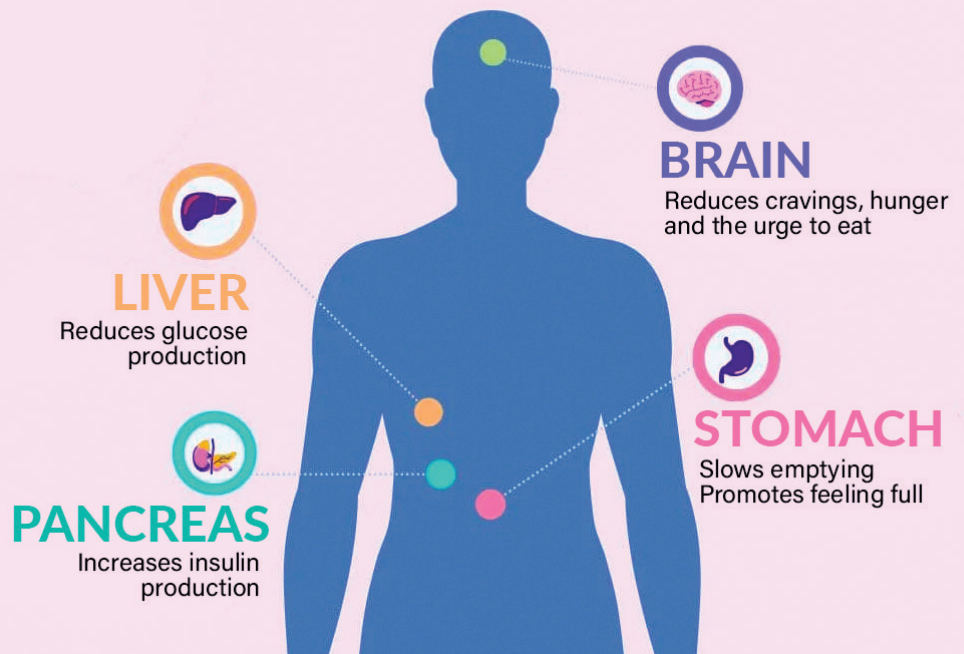
However, more and more people who don't have diabetes or obesity are turning to the semaglutide drugs for their slimming effects. People taking semaglutide lose, on average, 15 percent of their body weight, studies show. Some shed even more.

But health experts warn that semaglutide and other drugs like it shouldn't be used as a quick fix for weight loss in people who don't need or qualify for it. Besides potential health risks, their increasing use may be contributing to the drugs' shortage. Both Ozempic and Wegovy are on the FDA's list of medications in short supply, along with a similar type 2 diabetes drug, tirzepatide (Mounjaro), which in clinical trials also helped people lose a significant amount of weight.

Taking these drugs to lose weight could set you up for some unpleasant side effects, not to mention a blow to your bank account. Semaglutide is expensive (upwards of \$1,000 a month), and insurance coverage is hit or miss, even for people who meet the FDA's criteria. Many Medicare Part D plans will cover Ozempic for its intended use in type 2 diabetics, but Medicare does not cover medications just to treat obesity.



## SEMAGLUTIDE TARGETS



Semaglutide belongs to a class of drugs known as glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists that have been around since 2005. Other well-known type 2 diabetes drugs in the GLP-1 category include dulaglutide (Trulicity) and liraglutide (Victoza, Saxenda). These have also been shown to help people lose weight.





## Who can benefit from semaglutide?

Semaglutide can be a powerful tool for overweight adults. Losing just 5 percent of your body weight can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease and other chronic health issues. It's known that greater weight loss correlates with greater health improvements. Dropping 10 to 15 percent of your body weight can improve one's liver function and reduce sleep apnea, for example. Only adults with type 2 diabetes are eligible for Ozempic, based on the FDA's approval. Wegovy was approved for people with a BMI (body mass index) of 30 or greater and for people with a BMI of 27 or higher who also have at least one weight-related health issue, like high blood pressure or cholesterol.

If this is you and you've been struggling to lose weight, it is recommended to talk to your doctor about your options. You'll also want to check with your health plan to see what's covered and for how long. If semaglutide doesn't make the cut, there are older weight-loss medications that can be just as effective for some patients.



## What about people who don't have diabetes or obesity?

Physicians can prescribe FDA-approved medications for uses not spelled out by the agency. When they do, it's called "off-label" prescribing, and according to the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, about one in five prescriptions written today are for off-label use.

But when it comes to semaglutide, there's really no indication for its use in people who don't have type 2 diabetes and who don't have excess weight.

For one thing, health experts stress that the weekly injections are not meant to be a quick fix for somebody looking to drop a few pounds. According to Brian Burtch, M.D., an endocrinologist with University Hospitals in Mentor, Ohio, "This is something that you commit to long term, the same way you would commit to a medication used to treat another chronic health issue. Stopping the medication will cause you to regain the weight you lost.

Semaglutide can also cause some unpleasant — sometimes serious — side effects, including nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, constipation, stomach pain, headache, fatigue and more. "Typically, those let up as you've been on the medication and your body gets used to it, but not in all instances," Burtch says.



In rarer cases, taking these drugs may increase the risk of pancreatitis, and their labels warn about the potential risk of thyroid C-cell tumors, so they're not recommended for people who have a personal family history of medullary thyroid carcinoma or of what's called MEN, which stands for multiple endocrine neoplasia, Burtch says.

"We hope that patients consult with a doctor who's either an endocrinologist or an obesity expert who is familiar with the risks and benefits of these medications, and how to use them properly," Burtch says. "Because we do see patients who are just trying to lose a little bit of weight, who are already at a reasonable weight, just wanting to get skinnier, and that is not who these medicines are made for. These medicines are made for patients who have [excess] weight, who have other metabolic risk factors, and by losing this weight will improve their health."



# 8 Ways to Boost the HEALTH BENEFITS of Gardening



Studies show that gardening is real exercise, with benefits that may include everything from stronger hands to healthier hearts and longer lives. Studies have found lower rates of stroke, heart attack and early death among older gardeners, regardless of their other exercise habits. Want to make a healthy habit even healthier? Consider these eight ideas:

## 1. Pick up the pace ... gradually

Physical activity guidelines from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services say adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity each week. Gardeners can easily meet the goal for moderate activity, says Candice Shoemaker, a retired professor of horticulture at Kansas State University.

Though a little weeding might not raise your heart rate much, anything that uses both the upper and lower body, such as digging, raking or pulling a hose can get you into the moderate activity zone, Shoemaker says. If you've had an inactive winter, "maybe do little bouts at a time to build up" endurance, suggests Christine Zellers, a health educator with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cape May County, New Jersey. "Maybe walk back and forth a little bit, get your muscles warm, maybe even do some stretches," she says.

## 2. Lift that bale ... with care

Government activity guidelines call for strength-building exercises at least a couple of times a week, and the heavy lifting involved in some gardening tasks can count, the guidelines say.

Shoemaker says her research shows that even light gardening tasks, such as potting plants, can improve hand strength and finger dexterity in older adults, including those recovering from strokes.

Gardeners need to know their own strength and act accordingly, Zellers says. When she works alone with heavy bags of mulch, she uses a bucket to carry manageable amounts to planting beds.

If you do lift heavy bags, avoid bending over and lifting in a way that strains back muscles, she advises. Instead, she says, bend from your knees and make your stronger leg muscles do the work.

If you do a lot of squatting in the garden, you can make those leg muscles, and all your lower body muscles, even stronger. But take care: Gardeners prone to sore knees might want to limit squatting and kneeling on hard ground by using a two-sided gardening stool with a padded seat that can double as a kneeler, Shoemaker suggests.

## 3. Be sun savvy

It can be tempting to look at gardening as a chance to soak up some sun and boost your vitamin D production. Though some doctors have suggested a few brief periods of unprotected sun exposure each week for that reason, the American Academy of Dermatology says it's better to get the bone-building vitamin from supplements and foods, such as salmon and fortified drinks. That's because sun exposure increases the risk of skin cancer.

You should apply sunscreen with a protection factor of at least 30 about half an hour before going out, says Alison Ehrlich, a dermatologist in Washington, D.C.

Also sun-smart: a broad-brimmed hat, long sleeves and pants — which also will protect you from ticks and other insects, she notes, especially if you tuck the pants into high boots. Ideally, she says, you'd stay out of the sun from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., when the rays are strongest. Or, she says, you can "strategically garden in different areas of your yard" that are shady at different times of day.



#### 4. Glove up

The gardener's best defense against poison ivy, poison oak, rose thorns and various other hazards is a good pair of long, cuffed gloves, Ehrlich says. "People get poison ivy along their wrists and forearms because their shirt moves," she says. She usually wears a leather pair in her own garden. In wet conditions, she says, you might want to top those with a waterproof pair.



#### 5. Mask up

The same kind of face masks used to prevent COVID-19 can reduce seasonal allergy symptoms by reducing the pollen and mold spores you breathe in, research suggests. Many allergy patients probably noticed a difference after they started masking against COVID, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology. The group recommends people with outdoor allergies wear masks when mowing lawns or gardening.

Allergic gardeners should keep their gardening gloves, tools and shoes out of the house and shower when they go inside, the group says. Getting out of your clothes and into a shower will limit your exposure to any poison ivy oil stuck on your clothes or skin, Ehrlich says.

#### 6. Grow with others — or for them

Joining a gardening club or community garden can make gardening a more social experience and intensify the physical and mental health benefits, studies suggest. Shoemaker says her research has shown that even solo gardeners can reap social benefits — by sharing what they grow. That might mean taking extra produce to neighbors or something more, she says. One man she interviewed grew flowers that he supplied to his church. "He said, 'I met so many new people at my church, because they wanted to talk to me about my flowers,'" she recalls.

Zellers notes that just going outside to garden can open social doors. She says people stop and talk all the time when she's out working in her beds. Those kinds of encounters can connect neighbors who might not otherwise speak, she says.



#### 7. Grow more food

Flowers are lovely, but if your garden doesn't include edibles, you are missing out on an inexpensive way to add healthy food to your diet, Zellers and Shoemaker say.

"If you grow food, you're more likely to eat that food," Shoemaker says. Research shows older adults who garden eat more vegetables than those who don't.

If space is limited, start by growing a few herbs, Zellers suggests. Not sure what to grow or how to do it? Cooperative extension offices around the country are great sources for gardening tips, she says.

#### 8. Stop and smell the roses (and listen to the birds)

One of the greatest mental health benefits of gardening, Zellers says, is the opportunity to unplug from everything else and spend some mindful time with nature. Research backs that idea: A 2022 study found that just seeing or hearing birds outside is enough to boost mental well-being, even for people with depression. "When I'm gardening," Zellers says, "I try to take a moment to notice like, wow, the sun's out, it's beautiful today, I feel it on my skin. ... It feels nice to be aware of those surroundings."





# Healthy Food

## CREAMY BROCCOLI CAULIFLOWER SOUP

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 3-4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 head of cauliflower, cut into florets
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon red chili flake
- teaspoon sea salt
- cup organic coconut milk
- 1 handful fresh baby spinach
- 2 cups blanched broccoli, cut into small florets
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast or to taste
- Fresh ground black pepper to taste

### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat olive oil in a soup pot or a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add chopped onions and sauté until starting to turn translucent. Add garlic and sauté for an additional minute.
2. Add vegetable broth, cauliflower, cumin, cayenne pepper and sea salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat, cover, and let simmer for 10 minutes or until cauliflower is tender.
3. Remove from heat and let slightly cool.
4. Place 2 cups slightly cooled cauliflower in a blender. Add cup coconut milk and fresh baby spinach and place top on blender slightly slanted to release steam. Blend until smooth. Repeat until all cauliflower mixture is blended. Season to taste with additional sea salt and pepper.
5. Return to blended cauliflower mixture to soup pot, adding in blanched broccoli florets, nutritional yeast and stir. Heat to serve.



# GREATEST SCIENTISTS

*Mary Leakey*



- Born: February 6, 1913, London, England
- Died: December 9, 1996, Nairobi, Kenya

Mary Leakey was a British expert in ancient human fossils. She was one of the most important researchers in human evolution, and found the first examples of several extinct species that were human ancestors (Proconsul, an ape, Australopithecus boisei, an small early human who walked on two legs, and Homo habilis, one of the first tool-making human ancestors).

Throughout her career, Mary discovered a total of 15 new fossil species.



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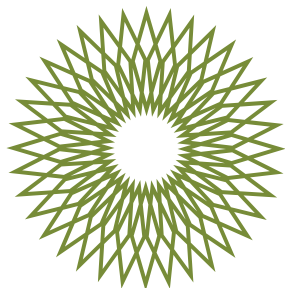
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# MEET OUR PARTNERS



**PREMIER**  
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## ROUTINE VISION

Premier manages hundreds of unique vision plans for our partner Health Plans. Through our expansive network of ophthalmic physicians, we provide exams, eyeglasses and contact lenses to members insured by our Health Plan partners.

Routine comprehensive eye exams are vital to our overall health:

Our vision is important to our general health and well-being.

- 80 percent of what children learn is through their eyes
- Children have better academic success when their vision is fully developed
- As we age, our vision affects our balance – loss of vision may lead to falls with life changing impact

Routine comprehensive eye exams can detect not only vision problems and eye disease, but also general health problems, such as diabetes, hypertension and hardening of the arteries, before you are even aware that a problem exists. Early detection of cataracts, retinal disorders, glaucoma and macular degeneration can help prevent vision loss or blindness.

## MEDICAL & SURGICAL

Premier delivers comprehensive medical eye care through contracted medical eye providers, from office exams to complex ocular surgical procedures.

Credentialed Premier providers must meet high standards. Ophthalmologists are eligible to be certified through the American Board of Ophthalmology, which awards certification to providers who meet a series of accredited medical training requirements in ophthalmology; pledge to practice with compassion, integrity and respect for human dignity, and complete an intensive evaluation process. Optometrists maintain high standards for quality, meeting the requirements to maintain their licensure and staying current with the latest standards of eye care.

As part of our shared dedication to excellence, Premier works with providers and Health Plans on a Medical Management Program for eye complications – retinal edema, cataracts, retinopathy, and others – related to diabetes. This reporting system adds a fifth digit sub-classification to the provider's coding on claims, which provides the most accurate information about the complication and about the patient's health to Health Plan partners.

**BOCA RATON**  
**6501 Park of Commerce**  
**Bld, First Floor**  
**Boca Raton, FL 33487**

P: 800-738-1889  
F: 800-523-3788







[www.floridacare.com](http://www.floridacare.com)

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