

# MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2023

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**GREATEST  
SCIENTISTS**  
*Carl Linnaeus*



# 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.

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# 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.



# 8 THINGS TO DO WHEN YOU HAVE THE FLU

## and 8 Things to Avoid!

What experts say you should reach for and pay attention to if you get sick

For plenty of people, the flu is mostly just a nuisance. But that is not the case for older adults.

“Even though people over 60 are less than 20 percent of the population, they account for over 80 percent of the serious complications of influenza,” says William Schaffner, M.D., medical director of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases and professor of preventive medicine and infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. “So what you do when you get the flu turns out to be very important for this age group.”

The same goes for what you don’t do. Here are eight ways to hasten your recovery from the flu.



### 1. Call your health care provider ASAP

Not everyone who gets the flu needs to see their doctor, but people over 65 do. That’s because age itself — along with many other conditions that often come along in later years, such as diabetes and heart disease — puts you at risk for serious complications from the flu, namely pneumonia.

“As we age, our immune system responds less vigorously than it does when we’re younger,” explains Stuart Ray, M.D., professor of medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Johns Hopkins Hospital. “Both antibodies and T cells play important roles in protecting against infection and severe disease from influenza. And those tend to decrease during late adulthood.”

Your doctor will likely prescribe an antiviral medication that helps your body fight off the influenza virus. Research shows that taking an antiviral, like Tamiflu, at the first sign of the flu can reduce symptoms and shorten your bout of the flu by one day.

#### **Don’t postpone treatment**

With antivirals, time is of the essence. You should take them within 48 hours after symptoms kick in. “What we adults tend to do is say, ‘I’d rather not go to the doctor. Let’s see if I feel better tomorrow,’ ” Schaffner says. “When we get what we think is influenza, it’s important to contact our health care provider, because the sooner we get the treatment, the better the success of the treatment.”

Keep in mind: You don’t have to make an in-person appointment. Your doctor should be able to

assess your symptoms virtually. Miss your 48-hour window? There’s still some benefit to taking an antiviral “beyond the 48 hours, but it diminishes day by day,” Schaffner says.

### 2. Stay home

The flu is highly contagious, spreading through droplets in the air when you cough, sneeze or talk. And that’s true even before you feel fluish. According to the National Institute on Aging, people with the flu can spread it a day before and up to a week after feeling sick.

#### **Don’t leave home until your fever is gone**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends staying home until you’re fever free — without the help of fever-reducing meds — for 24 hours.





#### 4. Drink plenty of fluids

"It's important to stay well-hydrated when you have a fever," Ray says. "Hydration will also help alleviate general malaise." To that end, keep a big glass of water on the nightstand — juice, broth, decaffeinated herbal tea all work, too.

#### Don't reach for that morning mug of coffee

Same goes for any caffeinated beverage and also alcohol. All of these are dehydrating, which will slow your recovery. "Dehydration means you can't get your secretions up," Schaffner says. "It's more difficult to mobilize [the secretions] out of your chest and cough them up, and that can predispose you to the development of pneumonia."



#### 5. Rinse and moisten your sinuses

A neti pot is one way to clear out built-up mucus in your sinuses. But if you're not comfortable using the little teapot-looking container, here's another way to relieve congestion and keep your nasal passages moist.

"A warm — not hot — shower will immerse you in warm moisture, and that will lubricate your mucous membranes, particularly

if you can cup some warm water into your hands, snuffle that up into your nose, and then very gently blow your nose," Schaffner suggests.

#### Don't use a humidifier

If your humidifier is just-out-of-the-box brand new, that's one thing. But if you've had yours for a while, it's probably best to skip it, Schaffner says. "They're usually not cleaned very well, so bacteria grows and suddenly you're aerosolizing contaminated water."



#### 6. Consider over-the-counter pain relievers

Acetaminophen and ibuprofen aren't cures, but they can help reduce fever and alleviate aches and pains. Just "be sure to read the label carefully because these medications are not without risk — they can injure the liver, kidneys, intestines and cause other side effects — and these risks rise with age and complex health history," Ray says. "Moreover, they don't reduce the risk of hospitalization or death."

#### Don't take decongestants

Or at least not without consulting your health care provider. Here's why: "Decongestants contain a combination of ingredients, some of which can increase your heart rate, even raise your blood pressure, and possibly interfere with sleep," Schaffner says.

#### 7. Stay physically active

Forget what your mother said about staying in bed 24/7. "You have to listen to your body. But the

more time you spend horizontal, the worse it is — physically and psychologically," Schaffner says.

#### Don't overdo it

That said, now is not the time to try for your personal best — for example, turning that daily power walk into a run or trying that hot yoga class you've been curious about. "Although gentle exercise, even just walking around, will make you feel better," Schaffner says.



#### 8. Pay attention to symptoms

If your symptoms are getting progressively worse — you've got chest pain, your temperature is going up, you're coughing up yellow phlegm — call your doctor, "particularly if you have any underlying illnesses and you're worse today than you were yesterday," Schaffner says.

#### Don't try to tough it out on your own

You may be in the early stages of pneumonia, the most common complication of the flu. It can cause severe illness in people of every age, but older adults are among the most vulnerable. Research published in 2018 found that more than 1 in 6 adults 65 and older who are hospitalized with pneumonia die from the infection.





# Sore Arm After Flu Shot?

## 7 Ways to Ease the Ache

The common side effect can be a real pain, but there are some things you can do

If you've had a flu vaccine, chances are you're no stranger to the sore arm that can linger a day or two after the shot — it's among the most common side effects. The reason for the soreness, doctors say, has less to do with the needle and more to do with the vaccine inside the syringe.

"It's activating your immune system," says Kisha Davis, M.D., a family physician in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and a member of the board of directors of the American Academy of

Family Physicians. Just like when you stub your toe and the blood rushes to that area, the same happens when you get a vaccine. "Your arm is kind of calling in the resources to react to what has just happened," Davis says.

For some people, the soreness is hardly noticeable. For others, it can be more pronounced. "Everyone can have different responses," says Scott Selinger, M.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Internal Medicine at Dell Medical School, at the University of Texas at

Austin. And while it's no doubt a nuisance at the time, there is a silver lining to the side effect: "It's telling us that your body recognized that vaccine; it's mounting a response and it's going to give you that protection later on," Davis says.

And more good news: There are a few things you can do before, during and after the flu shot — or any vaccine for that matter — to help ease the ache. Here's what the experts recommend.

### Before your vaccine:

Clear the calendar. Plan to take it easy the day of and the day after your vaccine, in case you feel under the weather. "It might not be good to go play a game of pickleball right after, so think about what other activities you're going to be doing," Davis says.

Drink plenty of water. "It helps move blood flow a

lot more easily if you're not dehydrated," Selinger says.

Plan your pre-vaccine workouts accordingly. "Make sure that you haven't done any rigorous upper-body exercise," Selinger says.



## During the vaccine:

Clear the calendar. Plan to take it easy the day of and the day after your vaccine, in case you feel under the weather. “It might not be good to go play a game of pickleball right after, so think about what other activities you’re going to be doing,” Davis says.

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Plan your pre-vaccine workouts accordingly. “Make sure that you haven’t done any rigorous upper-body exercise,” Selinger says.

## After the vaccine:

Cool off. An ice pack or cold compress can help with soreness and swelling, Davis says.

Take a pain reliever. Over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen and ibuprofen can help relieve side effects after your shot, Davis says. Just be sure to talk to your doctor about what medications are OK to take.

Move your arm. Keeping your arm active will

also help to cut down on soreness. “Even if it’s just arm rotations, those sorts of things will help keep it from getting stiff and also help to get that vaccine circulating throughout your system,” Davis says. Some people swear by lifting weights afterward, but it “doesn’t have to be that extreme,” she adds.

## Remember the benefits of the flu shot

It’s important to remember that, while uncomfortable, a sore arm from the influenza vaccine and other routine shots is less of a pain than getting seriously ill from the flu, COVID-19, RSV, pneumonia, shingles and the like.

The flu sent as many as 670,000 people to the hospital during the 2022-2023 season, early estimates show; and the majority of flu-related hospitalizations occur among those 65 and older, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In addition to lowering your odds of getting really sick, Davis says getting your flu shot and other recommended vaccines can help protect the community as well. “We know that when more people are vaccinated, that means there’s less flu circulating in the community. And that means as a community, people are healthier,” she says. Doctors and health officials recommend getting your flu shot before Halloween, to give your body plenty of time to ramp up its defenses before virus activity really picks up. (And you can get your new COVID-19 vaccine at the same time, health officials say.) If you miss that window, just get it as soon as you can — better late than never, Davis says.

# Is It Risky to Take **HEARTBURN MEDICATION?**

Here's why you should talk to your doctor before starting — or stopping — treatment.

Heartburn medications can work wonders when it comes to alleviating the painful burning sensation in the chest and throat caused by acid reflux, a condition that affects over 60 million Americans each month. But research has linked a common class of heartburn drugs, called proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), to potential health risks — especially when these medications, often meant for short-term use, are taken for a long time. That's not an uncommon scenario, health experts say. "Oftentimes patients come into the hospital, they get put on a PPI and then it just never leaves their [medication] list," says Shawna Stricker, a pharmacy resident at Nebraska Medicine in Omaha. (PPIs — which include lansoprazole [Prevacid], omeprazole [Prilosec] and esomeprazole [Nexium] — are also available over the counter.) The question then becomes: Does the patient "actually need that anymore, or is it causing more harm than good?" Stricker says



## Health risks associated with PPIs

**W**hile PPIs are generally considered safe, researchers have uncovered some potential health risks associated with long-term use of the pills.

For example, a recent study published in the journal *Neurology* suggests that people who take a prescription PPI for more than four years may have a higher risk of developing dementia compared to people who don't take these medications.

The study, which did not look at risks associated with over-the-counter PPI medications, included 5,712 adults ages 45 and older. Researchers followed the adults an average of five and a half years and observed that those

who had been taking the acid reflux drugs for more than 4.4 years had a 33 percent higher risk of developing dementia than people who never took the drugs. (It's important to note, however, that most studies have not found an association between PPI use and dementia among older adults.)

Beyond dementia, previous research has linked long-term PPI use to increased risk of bone fracture, kidney disease, gastrointestinal infection and magnesium deficiency. These risks were most pronounced in older adults, many of whom take medication for heartburn.



## What is the link?

**W**hy taking proton pump inhibitors might be linked in some way to a higher risk of dementia or other health issues isn't entirely clear, but researchers have some theories.

There could be a number of reasons that explain the higher dementia risk in people taking PPIs, says Kamakshi Lakshminarayan, M.D., a professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota and senior author on the Neurology paper.

She stresses that the study she led was observational — meaning it doesn't confirm cause and effect — and the researchers couldn't rule out other contributors to dementia. "This study does not prove that acid reflux drugs cause dementia; it only shows an association," Lakshminarayan notes. That said, low vitamin B12 levels could have something to do with it.

Other research finds that having lower levels of stomach acid from taking PPIs reduces the body's ability to release B12 from foods, meaning less gets absorbed. And low B12 levels can affect memory and thinking skills, Lakshminarayan explains. (The researchers, however, didn't measure participants' initial B12 levels, so they couldn't say if a decrease in those levels factored into the link they found between long-term PPI use and a higher risk of dementia.)

As far as other health issues go, reduced absorption of calcium could be to blame for possible fracture risks associated with PPIs, and alterations in the gut could be behind the increased risk for gastrointestinal infections, research suggests.

## Concerned? Talk to your doctor

**L**akshminarayan, Stricker and other researchers stress that studies to date don't prove that heartburn medicines cause the health problems to which they're linked. Instead, the studies are primarily observational, meaning researchers have observed that people who take the drugs continuously have a higher incidence of certain health problems, ranging from infection to dementia.

Still, the research available "raises concern," says Kristina Thurber, a clinical pharmacist at Mayo Clinic who has studied PPI and health risks.

If you're taking a PPI, and have been doing so for a while, talk to your doctor about whether it's something you still need to take. The benefits may outweigh any potential risks — not to mention it can be risky to stop taking PPIs on your own if the medication was prescribed to

treat an ulcer. But there are also cases where doctors should be deprescribing PPIs, says Marcel Yibirin, M.D., an internal medicine resident at Boston Medical Center.

Yibirin stresses that patients on PPIs should take the "lowest effective dose for the shortest duration of time" needed. The problem, he adds, is that patients can access the medications over the counter, and many take them without being monitored on an ongoing basis by a doctor.

If you and your health care provider decide you don't need a PPI, know that antacids (Tums, for example) can help treat mild heartburn. Lifestyle changes such as losing weight, altering your diet, adjusting medication regimens (again, talk to your doctor) and switching up your sleeping position can also help.

# WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR BODY when you stop smoking?

*Learn the benefits of ending tobacco addiction.*

“At any point in your life did a health professional offer you treatment to quit smoking?” It’s one of the questions I ask patients who come to my office seeking help to treat prediabetes, hypertension or metabolic syndrome, when I realize they smoke. I can assure you that more than 50% of them tell me: “no, I didn’t even know there were treatments.” This is one of the things that, despite my years as a doctor, continues to surprise me. Another thing that alarms me a lot is that very few people, despite smoking for years, do not know exactly what damage smoking causes to the body and what benefits quitting smoking has.

In this column we are going to talk about the changes that your body experiences when you quit tobacco and the benefits it represents for your health.

## What are the reasons to quit smoking?

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 13 Hispanic adults in the United States smoke cigarettes, a habit that has been estimated to be more common among men than women and is more popular among people from 45 to 64 years old. Using these commercial tobacco products increases the risk of heart disease and cancer, two of the leading causes of death in the United States. Likewise, it increases the possibility of suffering from type 2 diabetes by 30 to 40%.

Cigars, even if they are made from dried tobacco leaves, contain chemicals that are added to give flavor. According to the American Cancer Society, tobacco smoke contains thousands of chemicals, including at least 70 cancer-causing chemicals. Some of the chemicals found in cigarettes are nicotine, which is responsible for tobacco dependence, lead, arsenic, ammonia, carbon monoxide, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and the list goes on.

Let’s talk a little about nicotine because it is the main addictive drug found in cigarettes and other forms of tobacco. It is surprising to discover that between 80 and 90% of regular smokers are addicted to this substance.

But how does nicotine affect you? As explained by the Department of Health and Human Services, nicotine quickly impacts your brain, releasing adrenaline and generating a pleasant and energizing sensation. However, this feeling quickly disappears, leaving you tired or depressed and longing to experience it again. Over time, your body develops a high tolerance to nicotine, leading you to consume more cigarettes to get the same effect. This cycle of ups and downs repeats itself over and over again, thus leading to addiction.

Now, let’s move on to the good news:



# What happens to your body when you stop smoking?

The first phase of quitting smoking is accompanied by some annoying symptoms, the so-called withdrawal symptoms. During this phase you may feel depressed or sad, experience problems falling asleep, have irritability and a bad mood, as well as difficulty thinking clearly and concentrating. Feeling restless and nervous are common symptoms in this phase, as well as feeling more hungry, gaining weight, and a decreased heart rate.

However, in a matter of days or weeks, with the right help, these symptoms will begin to alleviate and it is at that moment where your body begins the beautiful task of regenerating.

## When do you start to notice the benefits of quitting smoking?

Some benefits are immediate. For example:

In just 20 minutes your blood pressure and pulse normalize.

After 12 hours the carbon monoxide levels in your blood drop considerably.

From 2 weeks to 3 months after stopping you will see improvement in blood circulation and lung function. You will be able to climb stairs more easily. My patients always tell me that they can now play with their children or grandchildren and this is extremely beautiful, but there are still more friends.

## Other benefits are long term:

After a year of quitting smoking, the risk of having a heart attack is reduced by half, just as you hear.

After 5 years of quitting smoking, the risk of suffering from cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus and bladder is reduced by 50%.

Between 2 and 5 years after quitting smoking, the risk of stroke, or embolisms as they are commonly known, can be reduced to the level of a non-smoker. Incredible true?

After 10 years of quitting smoking, the risk of death from lung cancer is reduced by approximately 50% compared to that of a person who continues to smoke.

And at 15 years old it is almost as if you have never smoked, unless you have already had severe lung or heart problems. But dear friends, that's not all.

By age 20, the risk of developing cancer of the throat and larynx, mouth, and pancreatic cancer is reduced to almost that of a person who does not smoke.

# How to improve your cardiovascular health

Quitting smoking lowers your risk of getting sick and dying from cardiovascular disease, according to the CDC. Markers of inflammation and hypercoagulability are reduced. Something very interesting is that the risk of getting sick and dying from a stroke is reduced. By quitting tobacco you reduce the risk of developing an abdominal aortic aneurysm, and that risk continues to reduce over time. Quitting smoking can benefit even people who have already been diagnosed with coronary heart disease, as it reduces the risk of premature death.

## How to improve your respiratory health

If you are looking to improve your respiratory health, the first step you should take is to eliminate tobacco from your life, explains the CDC. If you have already been diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), quitting smoking would reduce the progression of the condition over time; as well as respiratory symptoms (cough, sputum production, wheezing) and respiratory infections.

If you are asthmatic, quitting smoking could reduce symptoms by improving lung function and treatment outcomes.

It's almost like being reborn, it's getting a better organism with better functioning. I know you're thinking: I have to achieve it with willpower! It is true that the will is crucial, but as we saw at the beginning, quitting smoking is not easy since cigarettes create both a physical and psychological dependency and that is precisely why you must be patient and be kind to yourself, do not punish yourself or beat yourself up. Feel guilty if you can't quit smoking the first time.

Most people who try to quit smoking do not succeed on the first try, it usually takes several tries before they can quit permanently. The good news is that we have several medical treatment alternatives that can help you. Therefore, my recommendation would be that you do not do it alone, if you have the opportunity, seek the help of a doctor. Most people who try to quit smoking on their own relapse within the first month, often due to withdrawal symptoms.





# Medical alternatives that can help you quit smoking

There are many clinics and health centers that offer smoking cessation programs, and there are psychiatrists and internists specializing in addictions who can help you. My recommendation is that you go to your trusted clinic or doctor so that they can guide you on these alternatives

## Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

This was the first smoking cessation treatment available and approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and is the longest running and most studied in the history of smoking therapies. nicotine addiction. The goal of NRT is to temporarily replace the nicotine in cigarettes and reduce motivation to smoke and withdrawal symptoms, thus facilitating the transition from smoking to abstinence.

This therapy provides nicotine, in the form of gum, patches, nasal sprays, inhalers, or nicotine lozenges, without the other harmful chemicals in tobacco.

Multiple studies have shown that using two nicotine replacement treatments at the same time can help you quit smoking more successfully than just one. Because nicotine replacement therapy treats only physical dependence, it is not expected to be the only thing used to help you quit smoking. Other methods are needed to help with the psychological part.



# 10 WORST HABITS FOR YOUR HEART



Everything from bad sleep to stress can hurt your heart and wreck your health

**T**here's good news and bad news when it comes to your risk of developing heart disease, the leading killer in the U.S.

Let's start with the bad. Several factors raise a person's risk for getting heart disease — a term used to describe a range of conditions that affect the heart — including some that can't be controlled, such as family history, and others that are more complex, such as having access to good-for-you foods and safe, affordable housing.

That said, there's a lot you can do to help prevent heart disease and, in certain cases, reverse

it. Some of these actions, however difficult to achieve, are obvious: Get active, eat better, lose weight, and stop smoking. "Lifestyle changes are difficult for everyone," says Sabra Lewsey, M.D., a cardiologist and assistant professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins Medicine. "But they are profoundly important and can make lifesaving gains in your health."

Others are more surprising.

Here are 10 habits to avoid if you hope to improve your heart health.

## 1. Being a Couch Potato

Not moving enough, especially on a regular basis, is risky for your health. Inactivity has been linked to cognitive decline, more frailty and even an increased risk of death. Fortunately, almost any sort of activity that raises your heart rate is a good place to start.

It's important to move your body and elevate your heart rate for at least 150 minutes every week. You should throw in twice-weekly strength training sessions, according to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

That may seem like a lot of exercise, but it doesn't need to be done all at once. As long as you get your heart rate up for 15 minutes or more at a time, it counts. Also, "activity" doesn't just mean a walk or a gym class or a bike ride. It could be gardening, shopping, walking the dog or cleaning.





## 2. Drinking too much alcohol

“Not everyone recognizes the connection between heart health and alcohol,” Youmans says. Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure, cause irregular heartbeats “and even have a direct toxic effect on the heart.”

Imbibing too much “can lead to heart failure or a weakening of the heart,” says Amber Johnson, M.D., a cardiologist and assistant professor of medicine at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

How much is too much? When it comes to health risks, the World Health Organization said in 2023 that no alcohol is the safest amount.

For those who do drink alcohol, the recommended limits in the U.S. are up to one drink a day for women and up to two for men.



## 3. Skimping on sleep

Not getting your seven (or eight or nine) hours of shut-eye a night will slowly, but quite reliably, damage your health, including your heart.

“Poor-quality sleep or untreated sleep apnea can lead to high blood pressure and affect heart health,” Lewsey cautions. Lack of sleep has also been associated with diabetes and weight gain, which negatively affect heart health, too.

Sleep apnea can “cause abnormal heart rhythms,” Johnson points out.



## 4. Smoking tobacco

Whether you vape or smoke cigarettes or cigars, tobacco is terrible for your health. Secondhand tobacco smoke is, too. Most people know this, but what you may not realize is that tobacco doesn't just ravage your lungs and cause cancer: Your heart is also a victim.

Tobacco damages blood vessels and causes plaque buildup (atherosclerosis), which can trigger a heart attack, abnormal heart rhythms and, eventually, heart failure.

Let your friends and/or loved ones know so that they can hold you accountable, and use nicotine replacement or other medicines to help you quit with the help of your doctor.”



## 5. Opting for unhealthy foods

A heart-healthy diet includes a panoply of delicious options: fruits, vegetables, lean protein, nuts and whole grains.

In a new review of heart-healthy diets, published in the journal *Circulation*, an American Heart Association committee ranked the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet at the top of the list. This diet, designed to treat or prevent high blood pressure, is low in salt, added sugar, alcohol and processed foods, and rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes.

Also ranking high for its heart-health benefits is the Mediterranean diet, which, like DASH, consists of mostly plants, limits meats and focuses on “good fats” including walnuts, almonds, olive oil and avocados.

A few other tips: Swap sodas for water — a lot of water. Watch out for processed, sugary and fried foods, and be mindful of what you eat and drink at restaurants. Food full of saturated and trans fats, salt and cholesterol is best reserved for special occasions, rather than on the daily.

“Avoiding [foods] high [in] sodium is really important,” Johnson says. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that most adults consume fewer than 1,500 milligrams of sodium per day, with 2,300 mg as an upper limit. Yet the average American eats more than 3,400 mg of sodium a day, the AHA says.

Pay attention to those numbers from your routine blood tests, too. Watch out for an excess of bad cholesterol (LDL) and/or triglycerides and not enough good cholesterol (HDL). Also, high blood sugar can damage your blood vessels. People with diabetes are twice as likely to develop heart disease; plus, they’re more likely to experience heart failure.

Try not to “overindulge with food,” Youmans warns. “We all love that slice of pizza or juicy hamburger, and, in fact, occasionally, those foods can be OK. But when our diets consist of foods high in fats and sugars all the time, it starts to affect our heart health negatively.”

# 10 WORST HABITS FOR YOUR HEART





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## 6. Living a lonely life

It's so important to have friends and family to lean on. Unfortunately, it's not as common as you may think.

In 2023, one in three adults ages 50 to 80 reported feeling isolated in the past year, according to the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging. More than one in three older adults (37 percent) reported feeling a lack of companionship. These circumstances can be terrible for your health, including your heart.

A 2023 advisory from the U.S. surgeon general explains that social isolation and loneliness are associated with a 29 percent increase in the risk of heart disease and a 32 percent increase in the risk of stroke. What's more, the report says the effect of social isolation on high blood pressure among older adults "is even greater than that of other major clinical risk factors such as diabetes."

That's why it's crucial to find a group of people who will support you and make you feel fulfilled. Try to "seek community resources and support groups to help you with these lifestyle changes," Lewsey says, and work to "build a network of support" to help you along the way.

## 7. Minimizing your mental health

Managing your stress is key for maintaining good health. If anxiety gets out of control, we're more likely to do things that are damaging. Stress raises your blood pressure. To combat this, try to find something you enjoy that will help you calm down and breathe better. For some people, it's meditating. Others enjoy hiking, cooking or playing board games with friends.

Can anxiety or panic attacks damage your heart? Not usually. Rarely, though, heartbreak can truly hurt your ticker. The condition is commonly called broken heart syndrome, and it's "a type of heart failure," Johnson explains. "If you are under very intense stress, like if you are in a car crash or your loved one dies suddenly, that can cause a weakening of the heart," she says.

The solution is often medication (such as beta-blockers) plus a plan to manage stress in a healthy way.



## 8. Waiting to lose weight

Carrying around extra weight, especially around your waist, is bad for your heart.

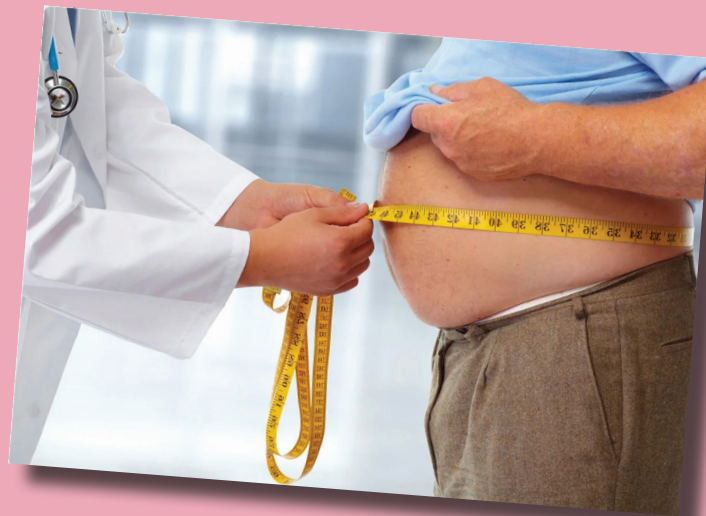
Obesity is a risk factor for heart disease. Researchers have found that the heavier you are, the higher your risk is for heart disease — it's a so-called silent heart injury, even if you feel healthy, even if your numbers look good.

It's also true that being overweight or having obesity can spike your cholesterol levels, your blood sugar, your triglycerides and your blood pressure. All of these factors damage your heart and raise your risk for developing heart disease. Obesity is commonly linked with diabetes, as well.

“One tip is to buy a scale, as knowledge is power, and this will help you keep track [of your weight],” Youmans suggests. “To help to move the scale in the right direction, remember that you need to burn more calories than you consume, so try getting more active and eating fewer calories.”

You don't need to lose much to reap heart-health benefits: Losing 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can improve your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar numbers.

# 10 WORST HABITS FOR YOUR HEART



## 9. Neglecting your teeth

Though a clear scientific link between dental hygiene and heart health hasn't been established, some researchers say there is an association between the two. That is, poor oral health can mean poor heart health. Gum disease is associated with heart disease, and bacterial infections and inflammation appear to play a part, too.

“Good dental health, with regular cleanings, is also important [for] overall heart health,” Lewsey says.

Despite that benefit, a 2017 federal survey found that about one-third of people 65 and older hadn't seen a dentist in the past year.





# 10 WORST HABITS FOR YOUR HEART

## 10. Giving up too soon

Good heart health is often difficult to achieve and even harder to maintain — especially when everyone around you continues to do things you know aren't good for you.

“A lot of these health behaviors that we have found to be important vary from community to community or culture to culture,” Johnson says. “Certain cultures may not eat the foods that are considered heart-healthy ... so there may be some disparities.”

Above all, it's important not to give up. And, hey, try to be patient.

“Habit change is hard,” Youmans says. “It can take some time to break them, particularly if they are enjoyable.”

He adds, “Anything that is worth having takes time. Making a small change that you can sustain for a long period is much more important than a bigger change that may be harder to sustain.”

Every day is an opportunity to get healthier, whether it's walking past the candy jar, meditating or taking the stairs. Make your lunch the night before, instead of grabbing fast food. Set up a weekly social group. Get 15 more minutes of sleep. Do it again, again and again.



# Healthy Food



## Buffalo Shrimp Lettuce Wraps

**YIELDS:**  
4

**PREP TIME:**  
15 min

**COOK TIME**  
20 min

**TOTAL TIME:**  
35 min

### INGREDIENTS

4 tbsp. butter  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1/4 c. hot sauce, such as Frank's  
1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil  
1 lb. shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails removed  
Kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1 head romaine, leaves separated, for serving  
1/4 red onion, finely chopped  
1 rib celery, sliced thin  
1/2 c. blue cheese, crumbled

### DIRECTIONS

Make buffalo sauce: In a small saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. When melted completely, add garlic and cook until fragrant, 1 minute. Add hot sauce and stir to combine. Turn heat to low while you cook the shrimp.

Make shrimp: In a large skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add shrimp and season with salt and pepper. Cook, flipping halfway, until pink and opaque on both sides, about 2 minutes per side. Turn off heat and add the buffalo sauce, tossing to coat.

Assemble wraps: Add a small scoop of shrimp to the center of a romaine leaf, then top with red onion, celery, and blue cheese.





# GREATEST SCIENTISTS

*Carl Linnaeus*

Born: 1707, Sweden

Died: 1778, Sweden

Swedish botanist Carl (or Carolus) Linnaeus is, by some measures, the most influential person ever to have lived. He is famous for devising new systems for naming and grouping all living organisms, as well as naming thousands of species.

Linnaeus was born in the province of Småland on 23 May, 1707. He studied medicine and science at the University of Lund and Uppsala University. At this time, botany was an important part of medical training, as doctors had to be familiar with many types of plant and their medicinal properties in order to treat their patients. But memorising scientific plant names was extremely difficult – each one was known by a long description in Latin.

In the 1730s, Linnaeus undertook expeditions to Lapland and central Sweden, before finishing his medical degree at the University of Harderwijk in the Netherlands. While enrolled at the University of Leiden he published his

famous *Systema Naturae* – a new way of classifying living organisms.

Over the years, Linnaeus revised this classification system, which soon became a huge, multivolume work. It grouped all species into higher categories, known as taxa: genera, orders, classes and kingdoms.

Central to this system was binomial nomenclature – the idea that all organisms should be described by only two Latin words: one denoting its genus, and another its species. Two-word Latin names had been used before, but Linnaeus was the first to apply this approach extensively and consistently, and it soon caught on as the standard naming system for animals and plants.



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