

# Personal Best

## HOPE Health Letter®

DECEMBER 2020

## Save Time for Exercise

**For most of us, screen time has significantly increased our sitting time.** In 2018, an American Cancer Society 21-year study of 127,554 people linked prolonged sitting time with a higher risk of death from all causes, including cancer, cardiovascular diseases, lung, liver and digestive diseases, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease.



**Let this be a driving factor in reducing your sitting and fitting in some daily exercise.** Finding time for fitness activities can be challenging for folks with work and family demands. First, consider the rewards of regular exercise: protecting your health and feeling your best. Second, make exercise a priority. Third, don't make excuses with every little interruption that comes along.

### Ways to stay motivated:

- Wear a fitness tracker.
- Involve friends and family.
- Recruit a lunchtime walking partner.
- Let your dog inspire you to go out the door.
- Enjoy outdoor sports.
- Lift weights during TV time.
- Make physical chores count inside and outside.
- Stand up during phone calls, email checks and online searches.
- Take the stairs and walk whenever you find opportunities.



**Break it up.** If you can't always fit in a 30-minute workout, shorter bursts of physical activity can count toward the overall goal of 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity cardio activity. Or try vigorous-intensity aerobic activities, such as jogging or elliptical training, for 75 minutes a week, or 15 minutes, five days a week. Make it a habit.

### BEST bits

■ **Warning: Be heart smart when shoveling snow.** It can significantly stress your cardiovascular system — similar to being at peak exercise during a stress test. For those not physically fit, such exertion can lead to heart attack, especially in the cold when arteries tend to constrict and increase blood pressure. Warm up your muscles before starting to shovel. Stop immediately if you feel any chest pain, become lightheaded or short of breath, or your heart starts racing. Go inside and rest if you become tired; don't try to do it all in one round. Take frequent breaks and stay hydrated. If you have a chronic medical condition, ask your health care provider before shoveling and other strenuous activity.

■ **Vaccines are vital:** Before the 1950s, serious diseases, including polio, measles and diphtheria, sickened hundreds of thousands of people in the U.S. Thousands died each year. Fortunately, with vaccines these diseases now occur rarely in the U.S. But some infectious diseases still exist elsewhere and can be brought here — the fact that most of us are vaccinated against these diseases prevents possible cases from becoming epidemic. **Ensure your children** are properly immunized to guard against any resurgence of diseases. Review immunizations with your child's health care provider. Learn more at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

**Note:** Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

“I love to talk about cooking and recipes, but I love as much talking about how food and cooking can change the world.”

— Jose Andres



## TIP of the MONTH

### Omelets

Omelets are delicious, nutritious and infinitely customizable. Making individual omelets (rather than one large one) will result in fluffier omelets that are easier to flip. The ideal nonstick skillet for a three-egg omelet is eight inches (20 cm) with sloping sides, so you can easily slide the omelet onto a plate. Make sure your skillet is very hot before you add the eggs. Then, be patient. Let it set before you flip it, or you'll end up with scrambled eggs.

## eating smart

# Better Breakfast Menu

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**Do you ever start the day with a sugary doughnut but feel hungry about an hour later?** The food you choose at breakfast can set your energy level and hunger cues for the whole morning, so make smart selections.

**Starting the day with white flour and sugar won't provide the nutrients you need for long-lasting energy.** Plain bread, pastries or sugary cereal are digested quickly, which spikes blood sugar levels and leaves you feeling hungry again. A better plan? Introduce foods rich in protein and fiber at breakfast or lunch time. This plan can help combat type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome.

**Protein-rich foods provide a feeling of fullness because they are digested slowly.** This helps you feel satisfied longer and may curb your craving for sweets. Try eggs, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, peanut butter, beans, cow's milk or alternative milks made from soy or peas. **Note:** Most almond and rice beverages contain little protein.

**Bulk up with fiber.** Like protein, fiber helps promote satiety (feeling full). Include any of these fiber-rich foods at breakfast: nuts, seeds, vegetables, fruit, whole grains, bran, beans or lentils. Some healthy fats at breakfast also help you digest the meal more slowly. Fat is found in nuts, seeds, avocado and cheese.

**Some winning breakfast combinations include:**

- Peanut butter and banana oatmeal (made with milk or soy/pea beverage).
- Vegetable omelet with whole-grain toast.
- Greek yogurt parfait with nuts and berries.
- Cottage cheese and fruit sprinkled with seeds.
- Black bean, tomato and egg burritos.
- Bran cereal with milk and fruit.
- Whole-grain toast with cheese and tomato.
- Greek yogurt green smoothies.



## Easy Breakfast Burritos

8 eggs	1 red bell pepper, diced
Pinch salt and pepper	
1 tbsp butter	¼ cup salsa
8 whole-grain tortillas	2 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro
1 cup cooked black beans, gently mashed	

**In** a large bowl, crack and whisk eggs. **Add** salt and pepper. **In** a large nonstick skillet, melt butter over medium heat. **Add** eggs. **Cook**, stirring, until eggs are scrambled, about 5 minutes. **Arrange** tortillas on clean work surface. **On** each tortilla: Spread mashed beans along center. **Top** with peppers, salsa, eggs and cilantro. **Fold** up bottom of tortillas over filling, then fold in sides and roll up tightly. **Eat** immediately, or freeze for future breakfasts.

**Makes 8 burritos. Per serving:** 250 calories | 14g protein | 9g total fat | 4g saturated fat | 2g mono fat | 1g poly fat | 28g carbohydrate | 3g sugar | 6g fiber | 345mg sodium



EASY recipe

# Tame the Seasonal Craze

**Holiday shopping, cooking, decorating and festivities are fun but can also cause stress.**

Exhaustion, occasional family squabbles and feelings of sadness when things don't always go as planned can dampen holiday spirits.

**But don't let the seasonal rush get you down.** Use these practical tips to minimize stress so you can enjoy the holidays

- **Plan ahead and stick to a budget.** Money doesn't buy happiness or necessarily the best gifts. Consider making gifts if you have time.
- **Take care of you.** Don't skip on sleep. Try to fit in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise weekly, such as walks, yoga or gym workouts.
- **Set aside family differences.** Consciously decide to accept friends and relatives as they are. Leave political and other contentious subjects off the table.
  - **Remember: It's OK to say "no."** You don't have to participate in every activity or cook an elaborate meal if you'd rather not. There's also nothing wrong with taking shortcuts, such as ordering precooked holiday food.
  - **Accept your feelings.** Life isn't always happy, even during the holidays. If you're sad or anxious, reach out to friends and family and seek counseling if needed.



## Traveling with Kids

**Many parents and their kids usually hit the road or fly to visit families this time of year.** However, public health experts recommend limiting or avoiding travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. But if you must travel, here are strategies to make the trip as safe and pleasant as possible for everyone:

**Whether driving or flying,** fill a backpack for younger kids with coloring books, crayons and a favorite small toy. Smart devices, especially tablets designed for younger children, can keep kids occupied using headphones with games and movies. Don't overstuff backpacks; keep them light enough for youngsters to carry. Bring healthy snacks, too.

**With cold, flu and COVID-19 outbreaks,** protecting health while traveling with kids should be in the forefront. Make sure you have child-safe hand sanitizer, wipes and tissues for the trip. What about masks? Everyone in your family age two and older needs to wear them on flights as well as in common or public areas. Bring extra masks so you always have plenty on hand.

**Before you travel,** check CDC health alerts at [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel). Contact your pediatrician about additional recommended safety measures and decide if travel is absolutely necessary. This might be the year to plan a fun staycation instead and connect online with distant family.



“Success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go.”

— William Feather



**National Influenza Vaccination Week is December 6-12.**

**Still haven't had your flu shot?** It's far better to get it now than not at all. Having the flu can be miserable, cause missed work and, sometimes, is life-threatening, primarily in people with chronic health conditions. The CDC says everyone (with rare exceptions) age six months and older, including pregnant women, should get vaccinated against the flu as soon as possible.

**How effective are annual flu shots?** When vaccines closely match flu viruses in circulation, the risk of getting the flu is reduced 40% to 60% among the overall population. For the 2019-2020 flu season, flu vaccines reduced provider visits for flu illness by 45% as of June 2020, according to the CDC.



“Try to be a rainbow  
in someone’s cloud.”

— Maya Angelou



## December 6 to 12 is Handwashing Awareness Week —

a good time to learn the proper way to clean your hands and prevent the spread of illness. Wet your hands with clean water and apply soap; lather by rubbing hands together, scrubbing the backs of hands, between fingers and under nails, for at least 20 seconds; rinse hands with warm or cold water; dry them with a clean towel. Always do this before preparing or eating meals, and after coughing, sneezing and using the toilet. Carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer when you’re in public places, such as stores and public transit. Find more tips at [cdc.gov/handwashing](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing).



# body & mind

## Prevent Colds 5 Ways

**The odds of catching a cold this winter are high.** Every year, U.S. adults have an average of two or three colds and children have even more, the CDC says. But that doesn’t mean catching colds and the accompanying sore throats, sneezes and body aches are inevitable this season.

### Five research-backed tips for preventing colds:



1. **Wash your hands often with soap and water.** Cold-causing viruses are picked up on surfaces and stay on your skin for hours. So, wash your hands regularly, lathering well for at least 20 seconds. Wash your hands before and after putting on, touching and taking off a face covering.



2. **Keep hand sanitizer nearby for times soap and water aren’t available.** Make sure to use a product that contains at least 60% alcohol.



3. **Be aware of where you put your hands.** Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. Even a few cold virus particles can infiltrate your body through your eyes, nose or mouth and make you sick.



4. **Avoid people who are sick.** Keep your distance from others with colds. If a family member has a cold, increase handwashing and avoid close contact as much as possible.



5. **Disinfect surfaces which are frequently touched.** Wash toys with non-toxic soap and warm water and use disinfectant wipes on doorknobs and counter tops.

### EXPERT advice

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD

## Q: Health screening newborns?

**A:** **Newborn screening is the practice of testing all babies in their first days of life for certain serious disorders.** The testing is offered in every state and is usually performed before the newborn leaves the hospital. After home deliveries, it can be done at home or in the doctor’s office.

**Why are infants screened?** Newborn screening checks for phenylketonuria, hypothyroidism, sickle cell disease, cystic fibrosis and other potential newborn conditions. Early detection and treatment help prevent disabilities or life-threatening illnesses.

**How is screening done?** The test is performed by pricking the baby’s heel for a few drops of blood. Most states also provide a hearing test to screen for congenital hearing loss. In addition, blood oxygen readings taken with skin sensors can screen for congenital heart disease. In some states a repeat blood test is done when the baby is one to two weeks old.



# Telemedicine Update

**Telemedicine refers to the many ways you and your health care providers can use technology to communicate with each other.** Options include phone calls, texting, email and online video calls. It's also referred to as telehealth, digital medicine and e-health.

**Depending on what your provider and clinic offer,** the two most common telemedical services offered are:

1. Patient portals for emailing and requesting medicine refills and appointments.
2. Virtual appointments via a phone call or video conference.

**The goal of telemedicine is to simplify and save time within our complex health care systems.**

It is especially helpful for patients in remote locations. Many clinics use patient portals for easy email access. Telemedicine visits also cost less than in-person appointments.

**The COVID-19 pandemic has expanded the demand for and use of virtual provider services,** so why not learn what online options may be offered through your clinic and insurer?



## When using telemedicine services:

- Check your health care plan to learn what's covered under telemedicine, including your provider services, urgent care, copays and other fees.
- If possible, strengthen your broadband to reduce technical problems, such as slow connection speed.
- Prepare before each virtual visit to save time.
- Ask your provider if their telemedicine platform is HIPPA-protected to ensure that your confidential information is secure.

Learn more at [himss.org/news/patients-guide-telemedicine](https://www.himss.org/news/patients-guide-telemedicine).

## EXPERT advice

— Eric Endlich, PhD

## Q: Signs of compulsive spending?

**A:** **Increased buying around the holidays differs from addictive spending, which feels irresistible.** Compulsive spenders persist even when items go unused, cause distress or lead to financial problems. Surges of dopamine, a feel-good brain chemical, create a shopping high and lead to even more purchases. Some individuals have a history of other impulsive or addictive behaviors. Warning signs include:

1. Spending much of your income on unnecessary items.
2. Hiding purchases.
3. Enjoying shopping more than the items themselves.
4. Using spending to cope with depression, anxiety, pain or stress.
5. Getting a thrill from purchasing.
6. Feeling ashamed of your habit.
7. Focusing more on shopping than other activities.



**Good news:** Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) may lead to improved control over your spending; 12-step group programs such as Debtors Anonymous can help, too.

“What is important is to believe in something so strongly that you're never discouraged.”

— Salma Hayek



## Stay out of the T-zone.

Your eyes, nose and mouth comprise the T-zone; they're entry portals for germs. Researchers say it's the area people touch most often, and they usually don't realize it's a habit. When you touch something contaminated with germs and then touch the T-zone, the result can be infection with a cold, flu, COVID-19 or other illness. The solution? Work to keep your hands off your face. The more you stay out of the zone, the better.



## Subscription Boxes

Having a difficult time deciding what to give friends and loved ones? Subscription boxes offer a budget-friendly way to try products before making full-size purchases. Most boxes offer monthly subscriptions with four to six sample-size products. Contents include food, home, hobby, and personal grooming products. You can also get boxes for pets for the animal lovers in your life. Most boxes cost \$10 to \$20 a month. Subscribers can customize their boxes to suit their preferences. Subscription products can be physical or digital, such as newspapers and magazines. Search online for **subscription boxes** to learn more.

— Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, AFC

December is Safe Toys & Gifts Awareness Month.

# Annual Safe Gift Guide

This year, the world seems to be focusing on safety more than ever, so giving the gift of safety is one that many people may choose. Here are some ideas:

### For the health-conscious fashion buff:

- **Designer and fashion masks.** Who says you can't look good while staying safe? There's a wide selection of masks for every taste and age.
- **Sun-safe clothing.** Buying for a gardener or a person who spends a lot of time outdoors? Consider purchasing sun-protective clothing. There are options that are lightweight, moisture wicking and breathable at various prices.

### For the online shopper:

- **Safe delivery boxes.** There are many size and tamper-resistant options available for package deliveries to prevent front porch or apartment hallway theft.
- **Smart doorbells.** Many will appreciate doorbells that allow them to see when deliveries are made as well as who is outside their doors.

### For the athlete:

- **Reflective running gear.** Walkers and runners will appreciate reflective gear, especially if they choose to run before sunrise or after sunset.
- **Running lights.** Select from models for early morning or evening runners and hikers that can be worn on the head, arm, ankle or even on bike helmets.
- **LED bike lights.** These can be attached to handlebars or wheels.



# The Ergonomics of Reaching Overhead



Certain work responsibilities may require us to reach overhead, which can stress our necks and shoulders. This can result in muscle and joint injuries. To prevent injury and strain, follow these ergonomic guidelines when reaching overhead:

- **Lighten the load.** If you must lift or lower a load from above, lighten it if possible.
- **Change the process.** Work overhead for shorter periods of time. Use work methods that are less labor intensive and may reduce your time reaching overhead.
- **Use tools and equipment** that can help you, such as drill bit or screwdriver extensions. Or use a sturdy platform or an aerial lift to decrease vertical distance.
- **Preassemble fixtures** or whatever you are fitting before installing them to minimize time spent working overhead.
- **Consider working in teams.** One person can lift while the other assembles. Rotate the tasks until the job is complete.
- **Take regular and frequent breaks** to give muscles time to relax.

# Insight: VISION AND EYE HEALTH

By Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus



**Healthy eyes and vision are precious — and susceptible to many problems and changes, especially as we age.** Most people are unaware of the many eye and vision disorders we might face, according to a survey by the American Academy of Ophthalmology. The Academy urges us to **get smart about eye health.**

**The Harris Poll** conducted the survey online among more than 3,500 U.S. adults age 18 and older for the Academy last year. Some of the key findings:

**More than 80% surveyed said they were knowledgeable about eye and vision health,** yet fewer than 20% were able to correctly identify the three main causes of blindness in the U.S., which are glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration and diabetic eye disease. And only about a third know we do not always experience symptoms before losing vision to eye diseases.

**Studies suggest that people fear losing vision** more than they fear cancer, stroke, heart disease and other serious health problems.

**Take the following self-assessment to learn if you may be at risk for vision problems.**

**Have you ever had an eye injury or eye surgery?**

yes  no

Be aware that eye injuries and surgeries can increase your risk for eye disorders. See an eye care provider (ophthalmologist) regularly to check on your eye and vision condition.

**Have you noticed a change in your vision during the past 12 months?**

yes  no

Any changes in vision, such as night blindness, blurred vision or sensitivity to light, should be reported to your eye care provider. Don't delay.

**Do you have persistent pain or redness in or around your eye?**

yes  no

Ongoing pain not due to sinus problems, allergies, headache or eye strain can signal a serious eye problem. If your eye hurts continuously, get emergency care.

**Do you have diabetes?**

yes  no

People with diabetes are at risk for diabetic retinopathy, an eye disease that harms blood vessels in the eye. If you have diabetes, eye experts say you need a dilated eye exam annually or as often as your provider advises.

**Do your children get regular eye exams, too?**

yes  no

Kids are susceptible to nearsightedness, amblyopia (lazy eye) and eye infections. Left untreated, these problems can interfere with reading, focusing and learning. Detecting and treating problems early give children the best chance for healthy vision long term.

**Don't put off seeking eye care** from an ophthalmologist trained to identify possible threats to your vision. Glasses, contact lenses, LASIK (laser eye surgery) and other procedures can be used to restore good vision. Learn more at [aao.org/eye-health](http://aao.org/eye-health).

**News for contact lens wearers:** As of June 2020, physicians are required by the Federal Trade Commission to provide patients with a copy of their contact lens prescription. This allows patients to comparison shop for their lenses, according to the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

## DR. ZORBA'S corner

### Immunizations

**Immunizations are critical for good health in adults, too.** Besides the annual flu shot, adults need a booster of Td or Tdap every 10 years (besides tetanus, adults can get diphtheria and pertussis, also known as whooping cough), two pneumonia shots (PCV12 and PPSV23), and the two-dose shingles (Zoster) shot, which is 97% effective. The Zoster vaccination is recommended for age 50 and older and can prevent anyone who has had chickenpox from developing shingles, a reactivation of chickenpox that causes painful rashes. The side effects of shots are miniscule compared to the benefit. Vaccination is one of the best investments you can make for good health. — Zorba Paster, MD

## December Fill-in-the-Blank Puzzle

Find out how well you know the topics covered in this issue of the newsletter.

- 1 Protein-rich foods provide a feeling of \_\_\_\_\_ because they are digested slowly.
- 2 If you must travel, everyone in your family age \_\_\_\_\_ and older needs to wear \_\_\_\_\_ on flights as well as in common or public areas.
- 3 For the 2019-2020 flu season, flu vaccines reduced provider visits for flu illness by \_\_\_\_\_ as of June 2020, according to the CDC.
- 4 Every year, U.S. adults have an average of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ colds and children have even more.
- 5 Surges of \_\_\_\_\_, a feel-good brain chemical, create a shopping high and lead to even more purchases.
- 6 The three main causes of blindness in the U.S. are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 7 People with diabetes are at risk for diabetic \_\_\_\_\_, an eye disease that harms blood vessels in the eye.
- 8 The Zoster vaccination is recommended for adults age \_\_\_\_\_ and older and can prevent anyone who has had chickenpox from developing shingles, a \_\_\_\_\_ of chickenpox that causes painful rashes.



You'll find the answers at [personalbest.com/extras/Dec2020puzzle.pdf](https://personalbest.com/extras/Dec2020puzzle.pdf).

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, Say Goodbye to Food Cravings, is at [personalbest.com/extras/20V12tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/20V12tools).

#### Stay in Touch. Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

Phone: 800-871-9525 • Fax: 205-437-3084 • Email: [PBeditor@ebix.com](mailto:PBeditor@ebix.com)

Website: [personalbest.com](https://personalbest.com) and [hopehealth.com](https://hopehealth.com)

Executive Editor: Susan Cottman

Advisers: Patricia C. Buchsel, RN, MSN, FAAN; Jamie Lynn Byram, MBA, AFC, MS; Eric Endlich, PhD; Mary P. Hollins, MS, JD, CSHM; Kenneth Holtyn, MS; Reed Humphrey, PhD; Gary B. Kushner, SPHR, CBP; Diane McReynolds, Executive Editor Emeritus; Zorba Paster, MD; Charles Stuart Platkin, PhD; Cara Rosenbloom, RD; Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP; Margaret Spencer, MD

Editor: Airmie Miller • Designer: Sheila Brooks

The content herein is in no way intended to serve as a substitute for professional advice. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet or exercise, talk to your health care provider. Sources available on request. © 2020 Ebix Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction in any form of any part of this publication is a violation of federal copyright law and is strictly prohibited. Personal Best® and Hope Health® are registered trademarks of Ebix Inc. Two Perimeter Park South, Suite 160 East, Birmingham, AL 35243 • Please recycle.