

# Personal Best

## HOPE Health Letter<sup>®</sup>

MARCH 2023

## Unplug and Unwind

**How would you feel about spending 24 hours away from your electronic devices?** The National Day of Unplugging (NDU), observed every first weekend in March, has a message for us: Consider living an entire day, from sundown to sundown on March 3 to 4, without the static of technology. It's a chance for you and your family and friends to fully disconnect from your phones, computers, streaming — and kick back and enjoy some relaxation together.



**Computers, smartphones, smart TVs and video games are integral to our lives.** A typical American family maintains five devices connecting them to people, media, education, work, shopping and more, all at their fingertips. Our kids are growing up quickly in our high-tech world — a survey of 5,000 kids found that in 2021, 37% of 11-year-olds and 91% of 14-year-olds had a smartphone.

**Fortunately, for more than a decade,** NDU and its related resources have inspired schools, businesses and individuals to adopt and promote a positive life-tech balance.

**Hopefully, you are taking regular respites from your smart devices to get up and move about.** On your breaks, head outdoors for some fresh air and exercise. By routinely unplugging, you can find time to do some of your other favorite things.

**To maintain safe, appropriate online use,** teach kids from a young age about technology and positive online behavior. You may find it hard to stay on top of all the apps and sites your children may use. To keep up with the changing tech landscape, visit [saferinternetday.org](https://saferinternetday.org).

Learn more about going device-free at [unplugcollaborative.org](https://unplugcollaborative.org).

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Stretching Works Wonders**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/23V3tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/23V3tools).

## BEST bits



**■ Is frequent screen time in bed becoming a habit? Sleep Awareness Week** is March 12 to March 18 — a good reminder to make sleep a health priority. The National Sleep Foundation's 2022 Sleep in America Poll showed 58% of respondents reported looking at screens within an hour before bedtime. Important to know: Exposure to blue light at night stimulates your brain into thinking it's earlier in the day. Your brain slows or stops its release of the hormone melatonin, making it harder to fall asleep. Sleep better: Keep all screens out of your bedroom and stop using smart devices at least one hour before bedtime. That includes falling asleep with the TV on. Learn more at [thensf.org](https://thensf.org).

**■ Myth: Exercise is unsafe if you have multiple sclerosis (MS). Fact:** Staying physically active is essential if you have MS. Regular exercise can help you deal with your symptoms, improve strength and balance as well as lower your risk for developing other health problems. But don't push yourself too hard, which can cause fatigue. Also, getting overheated during your workout may aggravate your symptoms. Work with your health care provider or physical therapist to design a safe, effective program well worth your effort. Discuss flexibility training (stretching to improve range of motion), aerobic training for energy and progressive resistance exercise (strength training).

**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 pandemic information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://coronavirus.gov).

## Personalized Nutrition

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



### TIP of the MONTH

#### Tuna

There are many options when buying tuna. It comes in cans, pouches and glass jars, and these can be used interchangeably. Tuna can be packed in water or oil. The oil-packed version has more calories and is useful when you want a moister tuna to add atop salad or in pasta. Water-packed tuna is drier and flakier and works well when mixed with mayo for tuna sandwiches. Albacore or white tuna is lighter in color, and contains more mercury than skipjack tuna, which is slightly browner. All are a source of heart-healthy omega-3 fats.

**Nutrition advice is often standard for healthy adults** — eat more vegetables, choose whole grains and consume less sugar. But what if you could get advice unique to your health needs?

**Personalized nutrition (also known as precision nutrition or nutrigenomics)** offers nutrition advice tailored to your genetics or microbiome (the bacteria in your digestive tract) — based on the assumption that we all respond differently to what we eat. For

example, not everyone with type 2 diabetes reacts the same way to different foods, and there may be a personal reason behind it. Instead of a routine blood test, one day you may be offered a DNA and microbiome test (measures bacteria in the digestive tract) to help advance your health.

**Some genetic tests can reveal how well you metabolize caffeine, vitamins and minerals.** While it's too soon to use personalized nutrition to treat chronic diseases, ongoing research may identify and help treat metabolic syndrome (a cluster of conditions occurring together that raise risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes), certain cancers and type 2 diabetes.

**This growing field is the future of nutrition counseling, but personalized nutrition is in its early stages.** The technology is expensive, not widely accessible and requires a health professional to interpret the results and help implement meaningful changes. You can't get that with a test bought online.

**The good news?** Research suggests these tests will be beneficial. One meta-analysis of 11 studies of personalized nutrition advice revealed that people were more likely to succeed with dietary changes through personalized, rather than general, advice. More to come.



### Linguini with Tuna

- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cans (12.5 oz) light tuna packed in water, drained and broken into pieces
- 1 cup diced button mushrooms
- 1 cup diced broccoli florets
- 1 jar (24 oz) tomato sauce
- 1 lb dry whole-grain linguini
- ¼ cup freshly chopped basil

**Heat** oil in a large pan over medium heat. **Add** onion and garlic, sauté 2-3 minutes. **Add** tuna, mushrooms and broccoli. **Stir** in tomato sauce and mix well. **Cook** on medium for 15 minutes, adding water if sauce is too thick. **Cook** pasta according to package directions. **Drain** pasta, reserving some pasta cooking water. **Add** tuna-tomato sauce to pasta, stir well, and thin with pasta cooking water if needed. **Garnish** with basil and serve.

**Makes 6 servings. Per serving:** 501 calories | 42g protein | 7g total fat  
1g saturated fat | 3g mono fat | 2g poly fat | 73g carbohydrate  
9g sugar (0 added sugar) | 14g fiber | 734mg sodium

### EASY recipe



# QuikRisk™ Assessment: Are You a People-Pleaser?

By Eric Endlich, PhD



**People-pleasers are often well liked because they pay so much attention to making others feel at ease and happy.** But in the extreme, this pattern can make your own needs and welfare secondary. To find out if you are a people-pleaser, answer these questions:

1. Do you often agree with others in conversations, regardless of your true opinions?  Yes  No
2. Do you often apologize when something goes wrong, even though you know it's not your fault?  Yes  No
3. Do you typically say yes to every request for a favor?  Yes  No
4. Does your self-worth go up or down depending on whether you feel you have the approval of others at any particular moment?  Yes  No
5. Do you avoid conflict at all costs?  Yes  No
6. Do you put off self-care (e.g., hobbies, exercise or medical appointments) because you're too busy taking care of others?  Yes  No
7. Do you change the way you act (e.g., eating or drinking habits) based on the behavior of those around you?  Yes  No
8. Do you often feel responsible for other people's feelings?  Yes  No
9. Do you feel taken advantage of by others?  Yes  No
10. Do you frequently feel burned out or resentful from all of your helping and giving to others?  Yes  No

**If you answered with a strong yes to three or more of these questions,** learn to recognize and make your own needs and feelings more of a priority. Professional counseling may be helpful, as well.

## Are you stuck with chronic negative emotions?

Anger, sadness, grief and fear are normal parts of life. However, persistent negative emotions can cause avoidance of situations or people, spark angry outbursts, and lead to overeating or substance abuse. What can you do? Try to minimize negative feelings. First, acknowledge them. Second, find a safety valve to relieve those emotions: Exercise, try meditation techniques to calm racing thoughts, talk to a trusted friend, focus on a hobby or volunteer to help others. If negative feelings persist, contact your health care provider. Treatment can include medication and therapy. A mental health professional can help you find ways to relieve emotions and thoughts that feel like they're stuck in your mind and give you the means to build a healthier life.

## Decompression 101

**Do you often get home from work and feel tense?** Whether it's a long commute, constantly facing deadlines or feeling revved up all day at a job you love, it can sometimes be hard to truly decompress and relax after work — which you need to do.

**Whether it's bad stress from work-related tension or good stress from exciting projects,** your mind and body need time to cultivate calm. It can benefit your overall mental and physical health with lower blood pressure and better sleep.

### Ways to decompress:

- **Catch your breath.** Take a few minutes to breathe deeply and slowly. Inhale through your nose, and then breathe out, counting to ten. Repeat for at least three minutes and feel the stress leaving your body.
- **Calm down in water.** Research shows soaking in a not-too-hot but relaxingly warm bath improves blood flow and reduces muscle tension. And that can help your mind take a breather, too.



- **Go outside.** Exercise is a great way to relieve mental tension, and even if you don't feel like hitting the gym, a walk outdoors in nature alone or with your dog, friend or family member is pleasurable decompression therapy.
- **Disconnect from technology after work.** Consciously stop being glued to your phone and computer. Listen to music, read and indulge in hobbies and talents you've ignored for a while. Spend quality time talking and listening to friends and family.
- **Take a staycation.** If you know you need downtime, take a vacation day or two and relax at home.
- **Get a massage.** Studies show a therapeutic massage lowers the stress hormone cortisol.

March is National Kidney Month. The



NIH estimates 37 million Americans have chronic kidney disease (CKD), but nine in ten don't know it. Without treatment, CKD can lead to life-threatening complications. Risk factors include type 2 diabetes, hypertension and obesity. Make sure you stay up-to-date on kidney health checkups and report any problems to your health care provider, such as pain or burning during urination, that may indicate kidney infections or injuries. To reduce the risk of CKD, exercise regularly, lose weight if needed, and maintain healthy blood glucose levels. If you're diagnosed with CKD, follow your treatment plan for diet, exercise and medication.

## body&mind

### Q: How long should I grieve?

**A:** Grief can be triggered by many types of loss, including a person, animal, job, relationship or physical capability. The emotional pain can be extreme, and sometimes feels endless. As for duration, many therapists say it's a highly individual experience, and people should be given as much time as they need to recover. The American Cancer Society says, "Grieving is painful, and it's important that those who have suffered a loss be allowed the time they need to express their grief."



While the American Cancer Society notes that it's common for grief to last for a year or more, in 2015 the World Health Organization determined that grief that continues past six months warrants professional help. In 2018, the American Psychiatric Association classified grief lasting more than one year as **prolonged grief disorder** when individuals suffer from three or more daily symptoms.

While debate continues about whether ongoing grief should be considered a disorder, support groups and counseling are available for those desiring further assistance.

— Eric Endlich, PhD

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.



## Colon Health

**Understanding colorectal cancer risks and screening could save your life.** Although the death rate from colorectal cancer has been declining for adult Americans for many decades due to more screenings and improvements in treating the disease, colorectal cancer is still the second-leading cause of cancer deaths for men and women in the U.S. It takes the lives of about 53,000 Americans annually, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS).

There are some colorectal cancer risk factors you cannot change, including being age 50 or older, having a personal history of precancerous polyps or colorectal cancer, and having inflammatory bowel disease. Although most people with colorectal cancer have no family history of the disease, it can run in families due to genetic factors.

**Risk factors for colorectal cancer you can control include:**

- Being overweight or obese.
- Being sedentary.
- Eating a diet high in red meat and processed meats, such as hot dogs and luncheon meats.
- Smoking.
- Drinking alcohol to excess.



**Talk to your health care provider about your risk factors and the type of screening best for you.** There are several screening methods, including a colonoscopy (which involves a tube-like instrument with a tiny video camera and instruments for examining the colon and removing polyps for biopsies) and DNA tests, which check stool samples for signs of cancer. Stool DNA tests are done once every three years for low-risk individuals.

**People with average risk should begin screenings for colorectal cancer at age 45.** However, depending on your personal risk factors and history, you may need the screenings earlier. Screenings may be discontinued at age 74, depending on health and medical history. Learn more at [cancer.gov/types/colorectal/patient/colorectal-screening-pdq](https://cancer.gov/types/colorectal/patient/colorectal-screening-pdq).

## Q: Concussion symptoms?

**A:** Violent shaking or a blow to the head can result in a concussion, also known as a traumatic brain injury. The most common causes are falls and contact sports. The injury can temporarily affect brain function, causing symptoms that may begin slowly and last for days or weeks.

**Symptoms of concussion.** Headache, memory loss and confusion are the most common symptoms. An inability to remember the event causing the concussion frequently occurs. Fatigue, drowsiness, foggy thinking, forgetfulness and a temporary loss of consciousness are not unusual. Other signs of a concussion are ringing in the ears, nausea, vomiting, blurry vision and trouble with balance and coordination.

**Seek medical care for an evaluation** within one to two days if you, or someone under your care, has suffered a head injury. Get emergency care immediately for repeated nausea or vomiting, loss of consciousness lasting more than 30 seconds, behavior changes, progressive headache, pupils of unequal sizes or if other worrisome signs develop.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD



World Glaucoma Week is March 12 to



**18.** Glaucoma is the leading cause of preventable, irreversible blindness. It affects people all over the world. There are several types of glaucoma, but all involve damage to the optic nerve. Unfortunately, you can have very early glaucoma and not know it until significant vision loss occurred. World Glaucoma Week reminds us that early diagnosis and treatment can halt progression of glaucoma. That's why it's important to have regular eye examinations by an ophthalmologist.

## Waist Circumference: Important to Your Health

**A simple test using a tape measure could help predict serious health problems.** If that sounds too strange to believe, it is backed by extensive research. It turns out waist circumference measurement is more accurate in predicting **metabolic syndrome** than a person's body mass index (BMI), which is a measurement of body fat compared with height and weight.

**Metabolic syndrome** is a cluster of conditions that together raise risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes. **Identifying people with metabolic syndrome is important because this condition raises the risk of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes.** And, for several years, a BMI more than 25 was considered one of the top predictors of metabolic syndrome, along with high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar and low good cholesterol (HDL). But when a team of Columbia University researchers studied more than 1,000 research subjects, they found a simple waist circumference measurement with a tape measure was a far stronger indicator than BMI of who had metabolic syndrome.

**While BMI remains useful for studying how much excess fat people have,** the extra fat around your middle is a bigger risk factor for heart disease than extra fat in other parts of your body, such as your hips and thighs, according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

**So, what waist size should raise a red flag that you should get serious about reducing your weight?** Having a waist circumference of more than 35 inches for women and more than 40 inches for men is the form of obesity most strongly tied to metabolic syndrome.



## Q: How do budgeting apps work?

**A:** There are many apps available to help with budgeting and managing finances. They make tracking expenses easy; most allow you to enter purchases immediately so that you don't have to wait until you are at a computer.

### You may need a budgeting app if you:

- Frequently overdraw your checking account.
- Often need to move money from savings to checking.
- Usually carry balances on credit cards.
- Incur fees for late payments.
- Forget to pay bills.
- Rarely have money for savings.
- Don't have an emergency fund.

### Budgeting app features include:

- Tracking income and expenditures.
- Highlighting areas or categories for review.
- Estimating monthly spending.
- Scanning and including receipts.
- Notifying you when bills are due.
- Looking at balances in real time.
- Notifying you when balances are high or low.

**Other apps have advanced features**, such as adding credit cards, retirement accounts and loans. If you use a smartphone for financial transactions, adding a budgeting app is an easy next step in complete money management.

### Also, before you buy, research the apps' security features.

They should have procedures, including data encryption, authentication procedures, accredited data centers and third-party auditing of the security features.

March is Red Cross Month.



## First Aid Basics

**According to OSHA, first aid refers to medical attention that is usually administered immediately after the injury occurs and at the location where it occurred.** It's often a one-time, short-term treatment. Here are first aid basic steps to take from the Red Cross:

1. Check the scene, obtain consent and use personal protective equipment.
2. Check for responsiveness, breathing, bleeding or other life-threatening conditions. **Note:** Check for no more than ten seconds.
3. Unresponsive and life-threatening: Call 911 if the person is not responding, responds but is not fully awake, has life-threatening bleeding, is not breathing or has an obvious life-threatening condition. Then give care based on your training. For example, if the person isn't responsive or not breathing, give CPR and use an AED.
4. Responsive and not life-threatening: Ask the person about what happened, symptoms, allergies, medications and medical conditions. **Note:** Do not move the person.
5. Call 911 if needed and provide care based on your level of training.



You can get first aid training certification through the Red Cross. Learn more at [redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid](https://redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid).

National Poison Prevention Week is March 19 to 25.



## Your Home: Lead Level Alert

**Did you know that any home built before 1978 could have lead-based paint?** If you think your home may qualify:

- Hire a certified lead professional to test your home and assess your options.
- Check for peeling, chipping or deteriorating paint and fix small areas immediately. Caution: Limit sanding. If you must sand, sand the minimum area needed, wet the area first and clean up thoroughly.
- Check painted areas that get a lot of wear and tear, such as windows, doors and stairways, for damage or deterioration.
- Wipe down painted flat surfaces, such as window sills, with a damp cloth weekly.
- Mop uncarpeted floors weekly. Caution: Do not sweep with a broom.
- Clean carpeted areas with a wet scrub or steamer method. Use vacuums with High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters if there are visible dust and debris on carpets. Caution: Do not beat or shake area rugs.
- Clean walls with damp, disposable cloths. Caution: Do not use solvent cleaners.

**Note:** There is no safe level of lead in the blood. Even low levels can diminish a child's intelligence, academic performance and ability to pay attention. Children are exposed when they inhale, swallow or touch lead or lead dust.

Learn more at [epa.gov/lead](https://epa.gov/lead).



# Eating Disorders

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**One side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic was a rise in the number of people diagnosed with eating disorders.**

While food-related, eating disorders are considered mental health conditions. Common eating disorders include:

- **Anorexia nervosa**, a mental illness that includes an intense fear of gaining weight and often an abnormally low body weight. It involves restriction of food and calories, over-exercising to burn calories, or both.
- **Bulimia nervosa**, a mental illness resulting in food restriction, binge eating (consuming a lot of food), and purging by vomiting or laxative use.
- **Binge eating disorder**, a mental illness characterized by eating large amounts of food and then feeling guilty or distressed afterward, but repeating that behavior on other occasions.

**While not officially a diagnosable eating disorder, orthorexia nervosa is increasingly common as well.** It's defined as an obsession with healthy eating, leading to unhealthy dietary restrictions. With orthorexia, food restriction, such as cutting out all carbs, all fat or all sugar, can become so extreme that it negatively affects health by causing obsessive thinking and malnutrition. It can lead to eating disorders, such as anorexia.

## Causes, signs and symptoms

**Some signs and symptoms of eating disorders** include a preoccupation with food, nutrients, calorie counting, weight loss, continual dieting, a refusal to eat certain foods, fear of food, skipping meals, extreme mood swings and withdrawing from friends or family.

**Eating disorders** are caused by a combination of things, including genetics, biological vulnerability, environmental and social factors. Family and twin studies suggest that eating disorders run in families, and genetic studies are being conducted to determine which genes may contribute to eating disorder risk. For some people, a precipitating factor, such as illness, trauma or loss, can trigger the onset of an eating disorder.



## Treatment

**Eating disorders are one of the deadliest mental illnesses, second only to opioid addiction.** While serious, eating disorders are treatable with a team approach that includes psychologists, physicians and dietitians. To be successful, treatment must address the eating disorder symptoms, medical consequences, psychological factors and the social and cultural environments that contribute to or maintain the eating disorder.

**People with eating disorders** tend to have personality traits that include perfectionism, the desire to please others, sensitivity to criticism and self-doubt. As a part of treatment, therapy helps the patient manage the preoccupation with weight and other challenging emotions.

**If you or a family member** seems to be overly preoccupied with food, eating, counting calories, exercising to burn calories, taking laxatives to shed calories, or vomiting to lose weight, talk with your health care provider for guidance.

**While eating disorders disproportionately affect tween (ages eight to 12) and teenage females, approximately one in four people with anorexia or bulimia nervosa are male.** Adults can also have eating disorders — mental health does not discriminate based on age. In fact, in a study of adults seeking eating disorder treatment, 17% of the participants were age 40 or older. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa affect about 2% to 3% of women. The most common age of onset is between 12 to 25.



## DR. ZORBA'S corner

### Coffee — Healthful or Not?

**Coffee:** Some studies show that two to five cups a day reduce your risk of getting heart attacks, type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, uterine cancer — and help treat depression. However, other studies have not shown any effect. So is coffee harmful?

**Not necessarily.** Coffee got a bad name years ago because of faulty research that linked coffee to asthma, lung cancer and heart disease. Those early studies never took smoking into consideration when they analyzed the data.

**Bottom line:** Don't start drinking coffee to prevent health problems — the evidence is not strong enough to suggest that. But if you do like your coffee, drink no more than three 12-ounce servings a day. If you get the jitters, or can't sleep at night, you might be caffeine sensitive. Cut back on your java and don't drink any after 12 p.m. Or switch to decaffeinated coffee and herbal teas.

— Zorba Paster, MD

# March Fill-in-the-Blank Puzzle

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

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ syndrome is a cluster of conditions occurring together that raise risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.
- 2 The \_\_\_\_\_ is the specific bacteria in your digestive tract.
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_ is a source of heart-healthy omega-3 fats.
- 4 It's common for \_\_\_\_\_ to last for a year or more.
- 5 People with \_\_\_\_\_ risk should begin screenings for colorectal cancer at age 45.
- 6 Violent shaking or a blow to the head can result in a \_\_\_\_\_, also known as a traumatic brain injury.
- 7 The extra fat around your \_\_\_\_\_ is a bigger risk factor for heart disease than extra fat in other parts of your body, such as your hips and thighs.
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ is the leading cause of preventable, irreversible blindness.



You'll find the answers at [personalbest.com/extras/Mar2023puzzle.pdf](https://personalbest.com/extras/Mar2023puzzle.pdf).

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### 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)

Executive Editor: Susan Cottman

Advisers: Patricia C. Buchsel, RN, MSN, FAAN; Jamie Lynn Byram, PhD, CFP, AFC, MBA; 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; Margaret Spencer, MD

Editor: Aimie Miller

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