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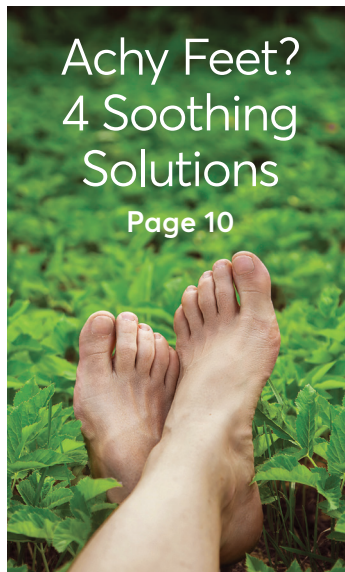
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Salad Safety Update

Important news about romaine lettuce

In three separate outbreaks in the fall of 2019, at least 188 people were sickened by romaine lettuce and other leafy greens from Salinas, Calif., tainted with toxin-producing *E. coli* O157:H7. Ninety-two needed to be hospitalized, 16 with a form of kidney failure.

These outbreaks were only part of a long string of problems. Between 2006 and 2019, at least 46 multistate *E. coli* outbreaks were linked to leafy greens. The Food and Drug Administration launched an investigation into the 2019 outbreaks. In May, the agency released a report saying that it couldn't be sure of the cause but that, most likely, bacteria-laden fecal matter from cattle grazing in the region had contaminated area water sources and lettuce farms.



The fact that the FDA is conducting such investigations is encouraging, but more should be done to make greens safer, says Sana Mujahid, Ph.D., manager of food safety research at CR. "The FDA needs to have the authority to investi-

gate animal feeding operations for pathogens that may contaminate crops like lettuce," she says. The agency also needs to implement Food Safety Modernization Act mandates for stricter water quality measures and the issuing of a list of high-risk foods, such as leafy greens, she says.

Until then, keeping packaged lettuce cold and eating it while it's fresh may reduce foodborne illness risk, as may buying whole heads of lettuce instead of bagged greens. Learn more at CR.org/saladsafety.

> This Month's Experts

We contact health authorities and medical researchers from across the country. Here are some of the experts we consulted this month:

Wayne Campbell, Ph.D., professor, department of nutrition science, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind.

Dwayne Dobschuetz, M.S.N., R.N., advanced practice nurse, geriatrics home care, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Chicago.

Joan Eckerson, Ph.D., professor and chair, department of exercise science and pre-health professions, Creighton University, Omaha, Neb.

Alice H. Lichtenstein, D.Sc., Stanley N. Gershoff professor of nutrition science and

policy, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, Boston.

James Lai, M.D., geriatrician, Yale School of Medicine, New Haven, Conn.

Priya Parthasarathy, D.P.M., podiatric surgeon, Foot & Ankle Specialists of the Mid-Atlantic, Silver Spring, Md.

Bruce Rabin, M.D., Ph.D., professor of pathology, psychology, and psychiatry, University of Pittsburgh.

Joan E. Roberts, Ph.D., professor of chemistry,

Fordham University, New York City.

Nisha Rughwani, M.D., associate professor of geriatrics and palliative medicine, Icahn School of Medicine, Mount Sinai Hospital, New York City.

Marilyn Schneck, Ph.D., scientist, Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute, San Francisco.

Rebecca Sundling, D.P.M., M.P.H., spokesperson, American Podiatric Medical Association; podiatrist, Northwood Foot and Ankle Center, Holland, Mich.

Health Wire

Quick Tips for Living Well



Yoga for Headache Relief

Regular yoga cut the number of monthly migraines and the use of pain relievers in a study involving 114 adults in India. One group practiced supervised yoga three times a week for a month and then five times a week for two months at home. All participants got advice about eating, stress, and sleep. Headaches dropped from 9.1 to 4.7 a month for those who did yoga and from 7.7 to 6.8 a month for the others.

Source: *Neurology*, May 26, 2020.

Good Vision and Your Brain

Could keeping your eye-glass prescription up to date and fixing vision problems like cataracts protect your brain? A Stanford University study of 1,061 women found that those with 20/40 vision or worse

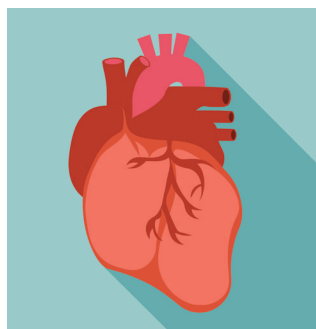
were twice as likely to develop dementia over 3.8 years than those with 20/20 vision. The researchers say one reason may be that poor vision may interfere with brain-stimulating activities like socializing.

Source: *JAMA Ophthalmology*, April 16, 2020.

The Blood Test You Must Get

More than 30,000 people ages 60 and older were diagnosed with hepatitis C in 2018, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But almost 40 percent of U.S. adults with this potentially fatal—and treatable—liver disease don't know they have it. That's why the CDC now recommends that all adults get tested.

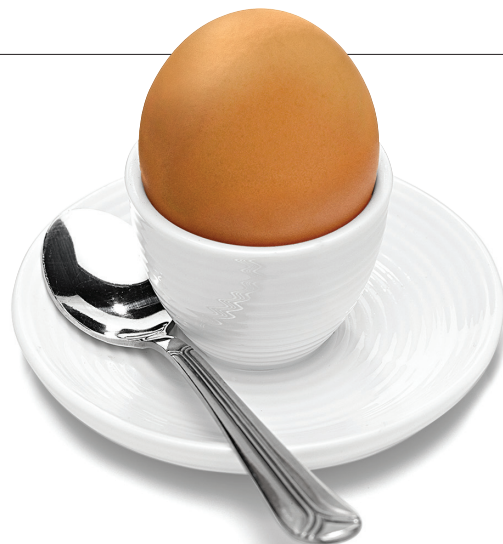
Source: CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, April 10, 2020.



Heart-Attack Signals

In a recent review, men and women reported chest pain as the most common sign before their heart attack. Both genders also noted fatigue, left arm or shoulder pain, nausea, breathlessness, sweating, fainting, and indigestion. But more women reported jaw, neck, and between-the-shoulder pain or palpitations.

Source: *Journal of the American Heart Association*, May 4, 2020.



Big Benefits of Vitamin D

People who consumed plenty of foods rich in vitamin D, such as fatty fish and eggs, saw health bonuses, according to a Greek study that tracked 3,042 adults for 10 years. Men who got the most vitamin D from food were 20 percent less likely to develop high blood pressure than those who consumed the least. Women who ate the most foods with the vitamin were 6 to 21 percent less likely to have high blood sugar, high cholesterol, or both. Those in the high-D group got 3.3 daily micrograms, the amount in two eggs and a serving of canned tuna or less than 1 ounce of salmon. Vitamin D supplements haven't led to significant heart-health benefits in studies, the researchers noted.

Source: *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, April 7, 2020.



Don't Let Hearing Problems Throw You Off Balance

In a study of 3,864 adults middle-aged and older, those with moderate hearing loss were 2.7 times more likely to be unsteady on their feet than those with normal hearing. One

reason may be that damage to inner-ear cells may harm hearing and alter the body's balance system. Some research suggests hearing aids may reduce the risk of falls.

Source: *JAMA Otolaryngology–Head & Neck Surgery*, April 23, 2020.



Healthy Habits We've Learned in the Pandemic

We're washing our hands the right way, cooking more at home, and using telemedicine. These smart steps can help us protect ourselves now and later.

The past few months have been scary and challenging, especially for older adults, who are more susceptible to life-threatening complications from COVID-19. But sheltering in place has given us a chance to learn better strategies for infection protection, cook at home more often, and even check in with physicians more frequently via telemedicine, says James Lai, M.D., a geriatrician at the Yale School of Medicine.

"It's also been a time of deep gratitude and reflection," says Bruce Rabin, M.D., Ph.D., a professor of pathology, psychology, and psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. "Older adults are turning inward more to find contentment and beauty in day-to-day life. We appreciate things like family and friends even more now."

While we don't know exactly what the next few months will bring in terms of

the coronavirus, what we've learned may help us with whatever comes.

1. WE KEEP GERMS AT BAY

Learning proper hand-washing can help prevent up to 40 percent of diarrhea-related illnesses and up to 21 percent of respiratory infections (like COVID-19), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

And thanks to frequent reminders from the CDC and other groups, we've learned to do it often and well: lathering soap all over our wet hands, including the backs, between fingers, and under nails, for at least 20 seconds, then rinsing and drying them with a clean towel. We've also embraced infection-control habits such as avoiding sick people if possible, always having tissues handy, and tossing those tissues right away after coughing or sneezing into them, Lai says.

"I'm amazed. People ask me to wash my hands when I come into [their] home all the time," notes Dwayne Dobschuetz, M.S.N., R.N., an advanced practice nurse in geriatrics home care at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. His patients also tell him they disinfect their countertops and doorknobs daily.

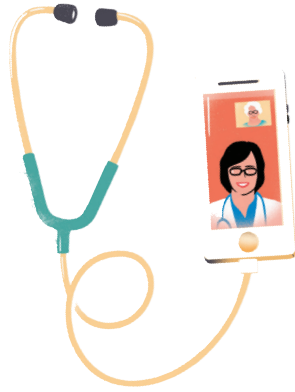
2. WE 'SEE' OUR DOCS IN NEW WAYS

In March, with many medical offices closed and hospitals and urgent care centers overburdened, Medicare and some private insurers expanded their coverage of telemedicine. While virtual healthcare isn't appropriate for everything or everyone, evidence suggests that it can play an important role for older adults.

And research points to high satisfaction levels. A 2019 study by Massachusetts General Hospital published in *The American Journal of Managed Care* involving 254 patients found that about 75 percent rated a telehealth consult as good or better than an in-person visit. "Usually, it's hard for a senior to get their doctor on the phone," Dobschuetz says. "With a televisit, they get a doctor's undivided attention for 20 to 30 minutes."

Some doctors also notice the benefits. "With telemedicine, we can 'see'

more patients,” says Nisha Rughwani, M.D., an associate professor of geriatrics and palliative medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. “We need to allow time between in-person visits to thoroughly clean and disinfect a room, [so we] cannot have the same volume we previously did.”



3. WE EAT A BIT BETTER

We’ve begun eating at home most of the time because of the pandemic, and a survey of 1,005 people by Hunter, a marketing firm, found that 54 percent of Americans have also been cooking more. A January 2020 study published in the journal *Public Health Nutrition* suggests that people who cook and eat at home tend to have healthier diets.

The Hunter survey also found that 57 percent of Americans said they were wasting less food during the pandemic, and that 60 percent reported searching for recipes that use ingredients they already had on hand. “The hope is that even as restaurants gradually open up,” Rabin said, “people will continue to cook at home because it’s less expensive, healthier, and also relaxing.”

4. WE’RE SAFELY SOCIAL

Social isolation is a major risk factor for dementia, says Gary Small, M.D., director of the UCLA Longevity Center. But when we can’t see people in person, technology can help. A 2019 study in *The American*

Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry found that older adults who use tools like Skype have a significantly lower risk of depression than others. “Most of the seniors I see were already isolated before the pandemic, but now it’s really encouraged them to embrace technology and not be afraid,”

Dobschuetz says. For example, one of his patients plays games with his adult children on Zoom each Tuesday and with friends on other days.

If you aren’t getting out much, try doing virtual activities with friends at least two or three times a week. Keep your brain active, whether it’s reading a daily newspaper or doing more social pastimes, such as joining a virtual book club or playing board games. A 2018 study in *JAMA Psychiatry* of more than 15,000 older adults found that those who participated in daily intellectual activities like card games had a lower risk of dementia. “They all allow you to think critically and interact with others,” Small says.

Mahjong, which can be played with others online, is a great option, Small adds. In fact, a March 2020 study in *Frontiers in Neurology* found that people over 65 who played mahjong three times a week for 12 weeks showed improvements in executive function compared with a control group.



For more information, go to [CR.org/infectionprotection](https://www.cdc.gov/CR.org/infectionprotection).

A Schedule Can Help

In this unpredictable time, experts say that sticking with a routine is important for physical and emotional health.

Eat and sleep on a regular schedule. Whether you eat three full meals or four to six smaller noshes throughout the day, stick with what’s usual for you. This reduces the chance that you’ll overeat or eat too little, and it will help keep you regular, advises Nisha Rughwani, M.D. And keeping a set time for sleeping and waking will keep your body clock regulated so that you’re not falling asleep at odd hours or napping during the day.

Make a stay-strong plan. Walk daily or regularly (inside if you prefer) and make time for twice-a-week resistance and balance exercises. Go to [cdc.gov/physicalactivity/downloads/growing_stronger.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/downloads/growing_stronger.pdf) for helpful activities.

Have a designated news time. Reading a newspaper is actually best, because it forces you to use critical thinking and reading skills instead of just passively watching a news anchor. But if you choose to get your news via TV or online, limit it to 30 minutes a day. “More than that can lead to anxiety,” Rughwani says.

The Advantages of Age

Just as fine wine improves over the years, the ability to weather difficulties grows stronger with time. Going through life’s crises may help us become more resilient and patient, says Bruce Rabin, M.D. “These attributes are like muscles. They become

stronger the more you use them,” he adds. Gratitude helps, too. A 2019 review in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* found that the attitude was consistently higher in older adults. This may help explain the outpouring of support that

essential frontline workers have received from seniors. “I’ve been blown away by the level of appreciation I’ve seen from my patients, the emails and phone calls I’ve gotten thanking me for being there for them,” says Nisha Rughwani, M.D.

And this attitude may have health benefits. A 2016 study in the *Journal of Health Psychology* found that women who kept a “gratitude journal” for two weeks reported better moods and sleep, and had lower blood pressure than others.

Best Spreads for Your Bread

Almond, cashew, vegan butter, and more. Which give you the biggest nutrition boost?



There it sits, that bare slice of bread, waiting for you to spread something on it to make it even more appealing and nutritious.

What's the healthiest pick? You could opt for a drizzle of olive oil, mashed avocado, hummus, or even low-fat cottage cheese. But many people would prefer dairy butter, margarine, plant or vegan butter or spread, or nut butter. And among these, there are a few considerations. "Many spreads are mostly combinations of different oils," says Amy Keating, R.D., nutritionist at CR. "Some have more saturated fat, but others have mostly 'good' fats that can be healthy additions to your diet."

Complicating matters, you may have heard that some studies have suggested that saturated fat is not such a dietary villain. That's just not true, says Alice H. Lichtenstein, D.Sc., the Gershoff Professor of Nutrition Science and Policy at the Friedman School at Tufts University in Boston. "The data clearly indicate that replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fat decreases heart disease risk," she says.

To help you make the best choice for your health and taste buds, we've broken down the differences among the common spreads so that you have the information you need when you're navigating your choices.

NUT AND SEED BUTTERS

Peanut butter is a good source of plant protein (about 4 grams per tablespoon), but you have other options. There are other nut butters, such as almond, cashew, and pistachio. Or you can try a seed butter, such as one made with sunflower, sesame, pumpkin, or even watermelon seeds.

Pros: "They're low in saturated fat, so they're good substitutes for [protein] foods high in saturated fat, like red meat," Lichtenstein says. Unlike animal sources of protein, these butters also contain fiber. Plus, nuts and seeds are generally rich in vitamin E and beneficial phytochemicals.

Cons: "Like real butter and spreads, nut butters are a calorie-dense food and should be used in moderation," Lichtenstein says. Nut and seed butters also vary in the additives they contain, such as sugar or palm or palm fruit oil, which keeps the spread from separating at room temperature but adds saturated fat. Try a variety of nut and seed butters, but stick with brands that are unsalted or have just a little salt and that list the fewest ingredients.

DAIRY BUTTER

Bread and butter is a breakfast staple—just think hot buttered toast. Made primarily from cream, butter is widely available and keeps well for a dairy food.

Pros: Butter isn't full of additives, and it naturally contains beta carotene that your body converts into vitamin A, which is important for eye health. (But butter doesn't provide as much of the nutrient as orange-colored fruits and vegetables, such as carrots, do.)

Cons: The big one is saturated fat. A tablespoon of butter has about 12 grams of fat, around 7 of them saturated. (If you're eating 1,800 calories daily, you should be trying to keep your saturated fat intake to less than about 20 grams.) It's high in calories, too: around 100 per tablespoon, an amount that doesn't go as far as you might think on a dinner roll or baked potato.

PLANT BUTTERS

These may sound like a new product, but the ingredients lists on plant butters (sometimes called vegan butters) are pretty similar to those for margarine and vegetable oil spreads. For practical purposes, the categories are interchangeable.

Pros: Much like margarine, they're often made from a combination of plant oils, such as soybean, canola, olive, and avocado. They can be lower in calories and saturated fat than dairy butter and have more heart-healthy mono- and polyunsaturated fats.

Cons: The labels may say "made with olive oil" or another healthy-sounding oil, but these products typically contain a mix of plant oils, some of which might not be as good for you as the one being touted. Palm and palm kernel oil are commonly used, which adds a fair amount of saturated fat. They may also have additives, like natural flavors. Taste and texture can vary, too, so it may take some experimenting to find the one you like best.



The Power of Sunglasses

Know which ones really protect your vision

When you think of the damage the sun can do, your first thought may be of the ultraviolet (UV) radiation that can burn your skin, increasing your risk of skin cancer. What you may not realize is that the sun can hurt your eyes as well.

“I think people are aware of skin damage from UV simply because sunburn hurts,” says Joan E. Roberts, Ph.D., a professor of chemistry at Fordham University Lincoln Center in New York. In most cases, sun damage to the eyes accumulates slowly over time, without your noticing until irreversible harm has been done, Roberts says.

That harm can include several conditions that can affect your ability to see, a rare form of eye cancer, and skin cancer.

Just as sunscreen shields your skin by blocking UV radiation, sunglasses can shield your eyes from harmful rays. But not every pair is equally effective. Here's what to know about how the sun can injure your sight, and how sunglasses can help safeguard your eye health.

HEALTH RISKS TO YOUR VISION

Evidence suggests that excessive exposure to sunlight is a risk factor for

cataracts, a clouding of the eye's lens that can blur vision. For instance, a 2014 study published in the journal *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science* found that people who lived in places with more sunlight were more likely to need surgery to remove a cataract than those living elsewhere.

Sunlight may also contribute to an increased risk of macular degeneration (MD), which occurs when the macula, a part of the retina, becomes damaged, causing distortions in what you see, blurriness, or difficulty discerning fine details. Although the link between sunlight and MD isn't definitive, an analysis of 13 studies, published in 2019 in the journal *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health*, found that outdoor workers with long-term exposure to sunlight were more likely to have the condition.

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, long-term exposure to sunlight may also be a risk factor for melanoma on the surface of the eye. Skin cancers can also occur on the skin around the eyes, including the eyelids. Looking directly at the sun or the bright glare

from water, snow, or ice for too long can also damage parts of the eye, causing a condition called photokeratitis. Symptoms include temporary discomfort, blurriness, and light sensitivity.

COMPONENTS OF GOOD GLASSES

To help limit your exposure to sunlight, wear a hat and sunglasses when you head outside, even on cloudy days, advises Marilyn Schneck, Ph.D., a scientist with the Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute in San Francisco. And keep the following in mind while choosing your shades:

➤ **Look for the most protection.** Opt for a pair whose label says the product blocks 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays, two concerning types for eyes. (The term “UV 400 nm” also means the glasses block at least 99 percent of UV rays.) If you wear corrective lenses, make sure they have UV protection built in.

➤ **Know that pricier isn't always better.** Confused about pricing? The most effective sunglasses aren't necessarily more expensive. You can easily find inexpensive sunglasses that have 100 percent ultraviolet-blocking ability.

➤ **Go big.** Even while wearing sunglasses, some of the sun's rays can reach your eyes and the skin around them. Larger lenses can help maximize sunglasses' ability to stop rays from reaching your eyes. Wrap-around sunglasses, which conform to the curve of your face, are even better. They have the added bonus of protecting the skin around your eyes, which is difficult to cover with sunscreen.

➤ **Take care after cataract surgery.** Although a cataract impairs vision, the cloudy yellowing of the lens also blocks some potentially damaging blue light from reaching the retina. Once the cataract is removed surgically, more blue light reaches the back of the eye. Wearing sunglasses and a hat can help protect the retina after you have cataract surgery.



For more on where to buy corrective lenses, members can go to [CR.org/glasses](https://www.consumerreports.org/glasses).

Foods That Fight Fatigue

Some easy dietary changes can boost your energy and improve overall health



Low energy is a common complaint in doctors' offices, and older adults are especially vulnerable. "Fatigue is largely underreported in the elderly," says Joan Eckerson, Ph.D., professor and chair of the department of exercise science and pre-health professions at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. "By some estimates, as many as 50 percent of older adults suffer from some sort of mild fatigue." Underlying health conditions and medications can cause that tapped-out feeling, as can loneliness, anxiety, lack of exercise, boredom, and stress-induced changes to your normally healthy habits (including eating more junk food and drinking more alcohol).

The coronavirus pandemic may have exacerbated some or all of these factors, but you have an excellent tool to help fill your tank. "From an 'energetic' standpoint, nutrition is one of the most helpful modifiable behaviors that can help an older person feel better," says Wayne Campbell, Ph.D., a professor in the department of nutrition science at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. The following tips will help shore up your diet and boost your energy reserves.

CHOOSE SLOW CARBS

Carbohydrates are the main fuel for your muscles and brain, but to keep energy up, most of the carbohydrate foods you eat

should be whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables. Full of nutrients, including fiber, they supply a steady release of energy in the form of blood glucose. "When you're older, your body doesn't process carbohydrates as well as it used to," Campbell says. That means your pancreas may have to pump out more insulin to handle the carbs you eat, especially ones that aren't whole-grain. Cereals, white rice, crackers, sugary foods, and other refined carbs can cause blood sugar to spike and then drop, which can zap your energy.

CONSUME THE RIGHT CALORIES

Eating too many or too few calories can affect energy. Obesity, a problem for well over one-third of older adults, makes it difficult to get around. And people who are obese may be eating too many foods made with refined carbs, especially sugars, and unhealthy fats. In general, you need fewer calories to maintain weight than when you're younger, Campbell says, so there's less room for junk. "The general Western diet is a contributing factor to feeling less energetic," Campbell says. Minimizing sweets and highly processed snacks creates room for healthy options.

ENHANCE YOUR APPETITE

On the other end of the spectrum is undernutrition. Decreased appetite, an inability to chew well, dry mouth, loneliness, and lack of access to high-quality food are just a handful of the problems that contribute to the "anorexia of aging," characterized by weight loss and fatigue. If you don't have much of an appetite, eat smaller portions more often instead of large meals. If you're underweight, look to healthy foods that aren't overly filling but add calories. For example, use olive oil on vegetables or drizzle over soups or pasta, mix nut butter or milk powder into smoothies, slice avocado into salads, choose whole-milk yogurt, and snack on nuts and dried fruits.

BEAT INFLAMMATION

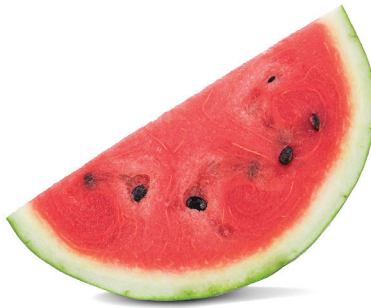
Many health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, are associated with fatigue and chronic inflammation. It's believed that tamping

down inflammation can improve low energy levels that result from these diseases, according to a 2019 review article published in the journal *Nutrients*, as well as help control some of the diseases themselves. Whole grains, fruits and vegetables, legumes (beans, lentils), nuts, fish, and plant oils, such as olive and avocado, are rich in antioxidants, healthy fat, and fiber, which are all anti-inflammatory.

These foods are also at the core of the Mediterranean diet, which some studies have linked to improved energy. In addition to its anti-inflammatory effect, the diet may support the microbiome (the collection of healthy bacteria and other microbes that live mostly in the gut) in such a way as to enhance healthy aging. For example, researchers at University College Cork in Ireland found that older people following a Mediterranean diet for a year had a more diverse microbiome, were less likely to be frail, and had improved cognition factors associated with fatigue. And dark leafy greens, celery, beets, and other vegetables contain nitrates—which are thought to help support the mitochondria, the part of the cell that produces energy—and may increase blood flow. (You may have heard that nitrites and nitrates in deli meat are unhealthy, but that has to do with the interaction between the compounds and the protein in the meat.)

PUMP UP THE PROTEIN

Many people cut back on protein when they start trimming their diets, but this important macronutrient is key for



'From an "energetic" standpoint, nutrition is one of the most helpful modifiable behaviors.'

—Wayne Campbell, Ph.D.,
Purdue University

energy. Protein provides the building blocks for muscles. Muscle mass is important for staying physically active (which also improves energy) and good health in general. Muscle loss with age can lead to a condition called sarcopenia, which lowers your stamina and increases your risk of a variety of health problems. "I encourage older adults to consume the same amount of protein-rich foods that they were eating as a younger person but be mindful about the quality of those foods," Campbell says. Older adults should aim for about 0.6 gram of protein per pound of body weight. (For a 150-pound person, that's 90 grams of protein per day.) High-quality sources include lean meat and poultry, beans, soy and tofu, nuts, dairy, and eggs.

To help your body use that protein more efficiently, spread your intake throughout

the day, aiming for 25 to 30 grams at each meal, including breakfast and lunch, two meals that tend to be lighter in protein. A 3-ounce cooked chicken breast has about 25 grams of protein, a cup of Greek yogurt has 23 grams, a cup of cooked quinoa contains 8 grams, and an egg has 6 grams.

STAY HYDRATED

Dehydration can contribute to poor sleep and fatigue, Eckerson says. "The thirst mechanism is blunted as you get older, which means you may not want to drink as much as you should," she says. While there aren't any hard-and-fast hydration rules for older adults, the general guideline (for men, about 15.5 cups of fluid per day; women, 11.5) is a good one to shoot for, and it's especially important to drink up in warm summer months. Remember, foods that are high in water (such as many fruits and vegetables) and other liquids also count.

USE CAFFEINE STRATEGICALLY

This "drug" can contribute to poor sleep if you consume it late in the day but can help pep you up in the morning. Eckerson advises keeping your intake below 400 mg per day (12 ounces of coffee has nearly 150 mg). If you're not used to caffeine, it could aggravate bladder problems or make you urinate more often, so go easy.



To get ideas for anti-inflammatory meals, go to [CR.org/inflammationdiet](https://www.cancer.org/inflammationdiet).

3 Nutrients You Need Now

Older adults are at risk for some common nutrient deficiencies that lead to poor energy, but you shouldn't self-diagnose. Check with your doctor, who will run tests to find out whether you need supplementation.

IRON

According to an article in the *American Journal of Hematology*, anemia is common in older adults. At least 10 percent of those 65 and older are thought to have it—almost 40 percent of men and 22 percent of women 85 and older. Low iron is a common type of anemia; red meat, eggs, and spinach are good food sources, but you may need more.

MAGNESIUM

This hard-working mineral is important for energy and heart, nerve, and muscle function, among many other things. Almost half of Americans—and 70 to 80 percent of those older than 70—fail to meet their daily magnesium needs. Whole grains, nuts, legumes, and many vegetables contain magnesium.

VITAMIN B12

Up to 15 percent of people may be running low on this crucial vitamin. Because of changes in the gastrointestinal tract as you age, your body is less able to absorb vitamin B12 from foods, and a deficiency can lead to fatigue and cognitive changes, among other problems. Chronic use of acid-blocking medications can affect B12 absorption, too.

Fix That Foot Pain Now

What you can do for achy heels, bunions, and more

Foot pain regularly affects an estimated 21 percent of older adults, according to the 2017 Framingham Foot Study. Such discomfort may affect your quality of life and increase your fall risk. Plus, “the feet can show some of the earliest symptoms of systemic diseases,” says Rebecca Sundling, D.P.M., M.P.H., a spokesperson for the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) and a podiatrist at the Northwood Foot and Ankle Center in Holland, Mich. So if your feet hurt, consider the following:

ACHY HEELS

A variety of factors can cause achy heels. For instance, over time, the fat pad on the bottom of your feet may thin, which can make walking hurt. Most often, it’s plantar fasciitis, an inflammation of the band of tissue that connects the front of your foot to the back. This can cause midfoot and heel pain, especially when you first wake up.

“The most common scenario (in plantar fasciitis) is no shoes at home or the wrong shoes,” says Alex Kor, D.P.M., an APMA spokesperson, and fellow and past president of the American Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine. So choose comfortable, supportive shoes; keep heels and flip-flops in the back of your closet; and maintain a healthy weight to reduce pressure on your feet. If you suspect a thin foot pad is at fault, consider using an orthotic. Over-the-counter (OTC) orthotics may work just as well as custom products.

For plantar fasciitis, the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons recommends initially limiting activity, applying an ice pack to the area three times a day for 20 minutes, and doing exercises that stretch the calf muscle. (Ask your doctor.) If activity brings significant pain,



stop. If these strategies don’t help after a few weeks, call the doctor; you might need further treatment.

BUNIONS, CALLUSES, AND MORE

Problems such as bunions, calluses, and hammertoes may be caused by years of constrictive or high-heeled shoes. Hammertoes (humped up in the middle) and bunions, a bump on the big toe’s first

joint), also may have a genetic component. Having less cushy fat pads on the bottom of the feet makes older adults susceptible to calluses—patches of hardened, thickened skin.

In all cases, wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes that are wide (for bunions) or stretchy or have a large toe box and/or laces (for hammertoes). Treatment depends on the particular problem, but small drugstore foot cushions, padding such as lambswool, and orthotics may reduce pressure on painful spots while wearing shoes. OTC pain relievers can also ease pain. If bunions or hammertoes remain very painful, ask your doctor whether you might benefit from surgery.

BURNING, NUMBNESS, TINGLING

Burning, tingling, or numbness might signal nerve damage (neuropathy). Because this is a common complication of diabetes, ask your doctor whether you should be tested for the disease. If you have neuropathy, with or without diabetes, your doctor and podiatrist can guide you through at-home care strategies, such as checking your feet daily, says Priya Parthasarathy, D.P.M., a podiatric surgeon at Foot & Ankle Specialists of the Mid-Atlantic. Otherwise, you might not notice an injury or infection right away. It’s also important to wear shoes that fit well and to avoid going barefoot.

TLC for Your Toes

Older adults are more susceptible to fungal infections that can leave toenails brittle, crumbly, and discolored, according to American Podiatric Medical Association spokesperson Cary M. Zinkin, D.P.M. And nails thicken with age, which can increase the likelihood of painful ingrown toenails, Zinkin says. If you suspect toenail fungus, have a podiatrist confirm it. For an ingrown toenail, soaking

in warm water with soap or Epsom salts several times a day for a week or two can help. If redness or swelling worsens, or you see pus, call your doctor. To cut your risk of ingrown toenails, “avoid having your nails cut down the side while having a pedicure,” says podiatric surgeon Priya Parthasarathy, D.P.M. If you’re caring for toenails at home, soak your feet for a few minutes, then cut nails straight across.

You can use clippers and make small snips across, cutting so that toenails don’t extend over your toe. You can also simply file them, says Alex Kor, D.P.M. If you have diabetes, neuropathy, or another major medical problem, or take blood thinners, you’re probably best off going to a podiatrist for toenail care, Kor says. For those who prefer not to go to the office, some podiatrists offer at-home nail care.

Don't Sweat It

7 moves to help keep you cool during summer's heat waves

Getting older comes with greater sensitivity to the extremes of temperature. In heat waves, older people, especially those with cardiovascular disease, are more vulnerable to serious illness and death. As outdoor

temperatures continue to rise this summer, it's important to make sure your home is ready to take the heat. Here, our experts offer tips on keeping your air conditioner in top shape, plus other ways of staying cool and healthy.

1 CLEAN OR REPLACE YOUR FILTERS.

Whether you use a window unit or have central air, regularly clean or replace the appliance's filter to keep it in good working condition. If you have a window unit, you can clean the filter yourself a few times during the season by vacuuming it, washing it with soapy water, and letting it air-dry before replacing. With central air, replace the filter as often as the manufacturer recommends—our tests have shown that a filter generally lasts between three and 12 months.

2 BLOCK ANY LEAKS.

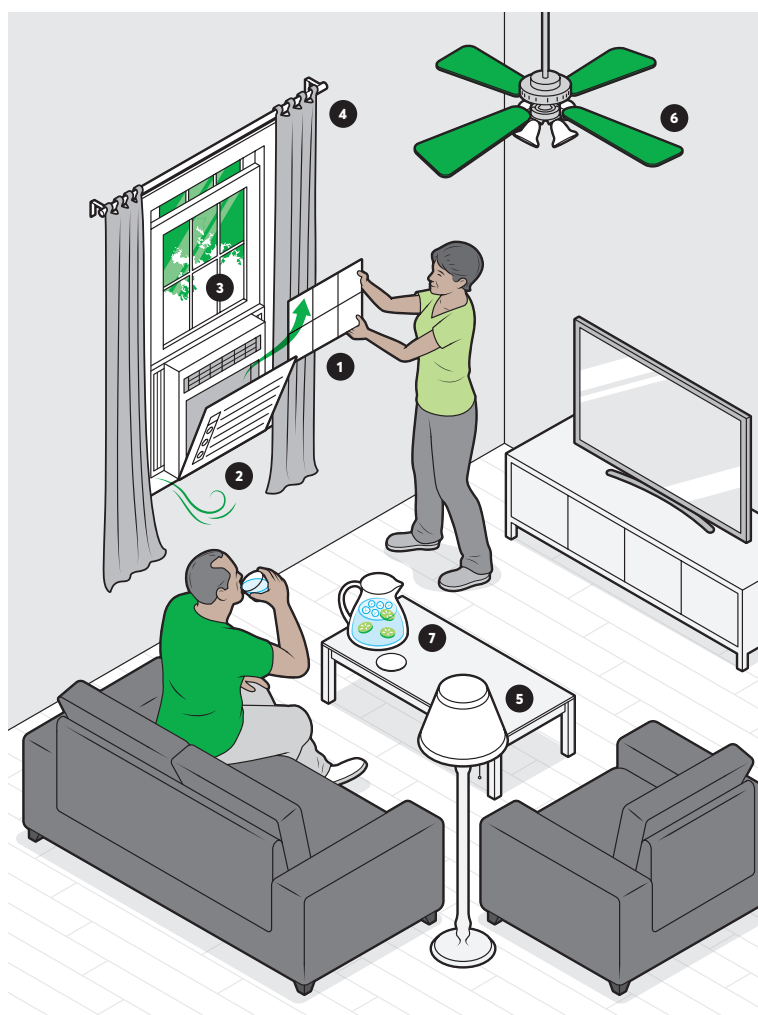
Carefully check around the edges of the window unit to make sure it's completely sealed and that no hot air is getting in or cold air is getting out. Weatherstripping, available at hardware stores (generally considered essential businesses), can help you close up any gaps.

3 KEEP WINDOW UNITS SHADED.

A shaded window is the best place for a window unit. That's because in direct sunlight, the unit won't operate at peak efficiency. Install it in a shaded spot if you can, on the side of your house that gets the least sun, under an awning, or shaded by trees.

4 BLOCK THE HOT SUN.

Use window shades, blinds, or curtains to block sunlight from entering the room, keeping it cooler.



5 GIVE THE A/C SPACE.

Place heat-generating appliances, such as the TV or floor lamps, away from the window unit, because the unit can sense their heat and might run

longer than necessary as a result. If you have central air, vacuum the registers regularly, and make sure they aren't blocked by furniture or other objects, which keeps air flowing.

6 USE FANS WISELY.

No A/C? A ceiling or oscillating fan can help keep your space more comfortable. But know that in very high heat, fans on their own may be ineffective at keeping you cool. Keep an eye on the weather report—staying inside air-conditioned spaces during heat warnings is safest.

7 KEEP HYDRATED.

Drinking sufficient fluids can help keep your body cool. Sip on water or another beverage regularly throughout the day (though it's best to avoid alcoholic or sugar-sweetened beverages). To help remind yourself, at the beginning of the day fill up a pitcher with water flavored with fruit slices or mint, and make it your goal to finish drinking it by the end of the day.

BE ALERT TO DANGER.

Heatstroke occurs at a body temperature over 104° F, and it can be fatal. So if you suspect it in yourself or a companion, you should call 911. Signs include passing out, behavior changes such as agitation or confusion, and no longer producing sweat. Early signs of heat-related illness, which could progress to heatstroke, include feeling nauseated, dizzy, or weak—so if you notice one of these symptoms, take a rest and get into air conditioning, or cool off with a cool shower or bath.

CR's Experts

Chris Regan leads CR's window air conditioner tests.

Dave Trezza leads CR's air filter tests.

On Your Mind

> Question of the Month

I have a chronic condition but I'm worried about going to my doctor's office. Any advice?

"IF YOU HAVE a health condition that has not been under good control or if you have new health concerns that worry you, like a suspicious mole, pain, or digestive problems, don't delay in talking with your doctor," says Michael Steinman, M.D., a geriatrician and professor at the University of California, San Francisco. In some cases you may be able to check on conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder by phone or in a video visit, he says. But it's possible to see a doctor in person without a high risk of exposure to the coronavirus, he adds.

STAYING STRONG AT HOME

Q How can I keep my arms strong without hurting myself?

A Try the National Institute on Aging's free Go4Life strength-training videos on YouTube, which are geared to older adults and require no special equipment, suggests Michael E. Rogers, Ph.D., director of the Center for Physical Activity and Aging at Wichita State University. You'll also find illustrated exercises at cdc.gov/physicalactivity/downloads/growing_stronger.pdf. The YMCA has free

videos for older adults at ymca360.org/on-demand/category/14 that incorporate resistance bands, small hand weights, soup cans, or small water bottles.

SMART FRUIT STORAGE

Q What's the best way to keep summer berries fresh?

A For optimal storage, set your refrigerator to 37° F, says Ellen Klosz, M.S., a nutritionist at Consumer Reports. When shopping, check containers for bruised or moldy berries. (At home,

remove any that you may have missed.) Refrigerate berries on a shelf in the container they came in. Don't wash or trim them until you're ready to use them. Your berries should keep for up to 7 days.

HAND-SANITIZER TIPS

Q If I'm buying hand sanitizer, what should I look for?

A Soap and water are considered best for hand-washing, but when they're unavailable, choose a sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethyl alcohol or 70 percent isopropyl alcohol. They work against the coronavirus and the viruses that cause colds and influenza, but they're less effective than proper hand-washing against some other bugs, such as the norovirus, which can cause diarrhea. "Alcohol-based hand sanitizers work when you use a big enough glob to rub all over the front and back of your hands, all sides of your fingers, and your fingernails, and if you let it dry so that the sanitizer is in contact with your skin for 60 to 90 seconds," says John Swartzberg, M.D., an infectious disease expert and clinical professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley. (The CDC says 20 seconds is enough.)

Talk to Us

HAVE QUESTIONS? We'll answer those of general interest. Write to CRH, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703 or go to CR.org/crh to contact us by email.

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