

Listen to your ears

It's easy to take hearing for granted. But without proper care of your ears, you could end up with hearing loss or ear problems.



WORRIED ABOUT WAX

Your body makes ear wax to protect your ears. Wax keeps dust and other particles from getting inside.

Only clean the outside of your ears with a tissue, washcloth or cotton swab. Never stick anything, including a cotton swab, in your ear. This will push wax farther down into the ear and can create a harmful blockage.

If you feel that there's a lot of wax in the ear, you can safely try to soften it with a drop of mineral oil or glycerin. Your doctor can also remove ear wax blockages without damaging your ear.



SAYING NO TO NOISE

One of the most common reasons people lose their hearing is exposure to loud noises. This can happen very quickly after a loud sound like an explosion. Or, it can happen over time if a person is exposed to loud sounds for months or years.

You can help prevent noise-induced hearing loss with one simple tool: ear plugs. Wear them when going to a loud concert, watching fireworks or attending loud events. Wear them when mowing the lawn or using loud power equipment at home.

If you have a job where you are exposed to noise, make sure you are using the right hearing protection. You may need something more powerful than ear plugs for certain jobs. Talk about this with your employer.



USE HEADPHONES WITH CARE

The World Health Organization says people should limit how much they use headphones. Don't use them more than one hour a day. Keep the volume as low as possible, but no louder than 60 percent.

Noise-cancelling headphones help you keep the volume low because they block out sounds around you. But, you should not use these when driving, cycling or walking because you won't be able to hear possible dangers nearby.

Talk to your doctor about your hearing health. Together, you can decide when you may need a hearing test.

Never stick anything, including a cotton swab, in your ear.

Lower your breast cancer risk

A risk factor is something that changes your chances of getting a disease. Knowing which risk factors you have can be helpful.

You may be able to make changes that lower your risk of breast cancer. Also, you can have screenings done to catch it early, when it is easier to treat and cure. Talk with your doctor about getting regular mammograms to detect breast cancer.

These are risk factors that a person may be able to change.



ALCOHOL

Drinking alcohol raises your risk of breast cancer. The more alcohol a person drinks, the higher the risk.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends that women have no more than one drink a day. If you don't drink, don't start. The lowest risk is in women who don't drink alcohol at all.



SMOKING

Smoking increases the risk of cancer, including breast cancer. Ask your doctor if you need help quitting.



MANAGE WEIGHT

Having more body fat after menopause can make estrogen levels higher. Higher estrogen raises the risk of breast cancer.

Being overweight can also raise insulin levels. Higher insulin levels are linked to breast cancer.

The ACS recommends people work to stay at a healthy weight or lose weight if they are overweight. Weight loss can be difficult, so ask your doctor if you need help.



NOT BEING ACTIVE

Getting regular exercise can lower your breast cancer risk. While exercising five days a week is best, try to exercise whenever you can. Even a small amount of exercise is better than none.



USING HORMONE THERAPY

Some women use hormone therapy after menopause. Hormone therapy may also be called HRT, HT or menopause therapy. This can help with menopause symptoms like hot flashes and night sweats.

Hormone therapy increases the risk of breast cancer. But, the risk may go back down after about five years of stopping treatment.

Hormone therapy can also increase the risk of heart disease, stroke and blood clots.

If you need hormone therapy for menopause symptoms, talk to your doctor about it. Usually it's best to use it at the lowest dose for the shortest amount of time.

Mood & food: *the close link*

You may already know that your diet can change how you feel mentally. If you've ever been really hungry, you may notice that you start to feel upset or angry. And, some high-calorie junk foods are called "comfort foods" for a reason. They make you feel better mentally, but only for a little while.



WHY WE WANT COMFORT FOOD

Stress can make you want to eat unhealthy foods. This is your body's way of trying to get fuel when it thinks you are in trouble. Although this is normal, you have the power to overcome it.

Take a moment to think about a food you are craving. Then think about your current emotions. If you're feeling sad, angry or stressed, this could be why you want that pizza or ice cream.

If you eat the food, you may feel good for a few minutes. But unhealthy foods with lots of fat and sugar can actually increase the risk of depression or anxiety. This creates an unhealthy cycle that will continue as you eat those comfort foods.

YOU CAN WIN!

The link between the mind and what a person eats is complex. That's why it can be so hard to make good choices when you have a bad day or feel depressed. But there are ways to fight this habit and start to make better choices, even when your mood is down or you feel stressed.

You're not stuck in this cycle. Eating fruits and vegetables can make you feel happy. When you're happy, you're more likely to reach for healthy foods again. This can start a positive cycle!

THE CYCLE OF MOOD & FOOD

If you use food to cope with stress or depression for too long, your body will get used to it. Then, when you do try to make a healthy choice, your body and mind may be confused. This could lead to an even stronger craving for those comfort foods. This cycle makes it very hard to make changes to your diet.



Mood-boosting foods



A healthy diet can have an effect on your brain. It can actually make you feel happy.

Eat plenty of foods with omega-3 fats. These heart-healthy fats are found in fish, flaxseeds and walnuts, and may help reduce the risk of developing depression.

Focus on the Mediterranean Diet. This diet includes lots of plant-based foods like fruits and vegetables, as well as olive oil, whole grains, fish, poultry, eggs and beans.

Source: American Heart Association

Recipe:

Pasta with chickpeas, tomato & spinach

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small yellow onion (peeled and chopped into ¼-inch pieces)
- 8 ounces medium-size whole-wheat pasta (such as rotini or shells)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic (peeled and minced)
- 2 carrots (scrubbed and diced into 1/4-inch pieces)
- 1 celery stalk (diced into 1/4-1/2-inch pieces)
- 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1 can 16-ounce low-sodium chickpeas (drained and rinsed with cold water)
- 1 can 14.5-ounce low-sodium diced tomatoes (including the liquid)
- 2 cups spinach (washed and chopped)
- 1/2 teaspoon chopped red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese (optional)
- 1/4 cup whole olives (optional)



DIRECTIONS

1. To cook the pasta, fill a large pot halfway with water. Bring it to a boil over high heat. When the water is boiling, add the pasta and cook until just tender, about 12 minutes or the time listed on the package. Just before draining, reserve 1 ½ cups of the pasta water. Drain the pasta and set aside.
2. While the pasta is cooking, cook the sauce: Put the skillet on the stove over medium-low heat and when it is hot, add the oil. Add the garlic, onion, carrots, celery, and rosemary and cook until the garlic is golden, about 15 minutes.
3. Add the chickpeas and using the fork, lightly mash half of them. Add the reserved pasta water and tomatoes and cook 10 minutes.
4. Add the pasta and spinach to the skillet mixture and cook until the spinach is tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed by the pasta, about 10 minutes. Add the red pepper flakes and olives, if desired.
5. Mix well and serve immediately, garnished with Parmesan cheese if desired.

Note: Kale can be used instead of spinach.

Nutrition Facts: Servings 4. Calories 395; Total Fat 8 g; Saturated Fat 2 g; Total Carbohydrate 68 g; Dietary Fiber 13 g; Protein 19 g.

Source: What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl

Feng Shui and stress

Your home should be a haven where you can find relief from stress. If it's not, you could lower stress levels by making some simple changes in your home.

The ancient Chinese art of Feng Shui focuses on how things are placed in the home. It is based on a belief that the way the home is set up can affect stress levels. One of the concepts is that Chi, or a life force, must flow freely in the home.



DIFFERENT WAYS TO USE FENG SHUI

Using these concepts may help you feel more at ease when you're at home. Consider these tips:



Clutter is out.

You may already know that a cluttered space can cause stress. Some studies have even shown that clutter causes an increase in stress hormones. When possible, get rid of unused or unwanted things. Find places, like cupboards and closets, to neatly keep other things.



Use a balance of colors.

Feng Shui uses the five elements: fire, earth, water, metal and wood. You can use objects that represent all of these things in a room. Another option is to use colors that represent these things in your house. You might use a warm wood trim with cool, watery blue walls.



Position mirrors correctly.

Make sure your mirrors reflect things you want to see. For instance, a mirror that reflects a plant can bring beauty into the home. But if the mirror reflects a stack of dirty laundry or a cluttered desk, it could create stress.



Use nature's beauty.

Spending time in a peaceful garden can be a great way to relieve stress. Some people enjoy pulling weeds or planting wildflowers. Make an outside space into a quiet retreat that you can use when you feel stressed. Incorporate your favorite colors, textures or smells.



3 “C”s

to be your best at work

Every job can be done half-heartedly — or done really well. Doing your best will help you feel satisfied with your job, which is great for your mental health.

1

CONFIDENCE

Be confident in your abilities, especially your ability to go above and beyond at work. Not only is this good for your clients, coworkers and/or customers, but it has an added bonus: you'll feel great too!

2

CONNECT

Build positive relationships with people at work to help you succeed. If you're experienced, help others learn from you. If you need guidance, don't be afraid to ask others for their advice and input.

3

COMMUNICATE

If you see a problem, speak up. Constructive feedback can be done in a way that's respectful and kind. If you see good things happening, point those out, too. It's a great way to build morale.



What is CBD?

CBD (or cannabidiol) oil may be purchased in many pharmacies and other stores. It is claimed to treat more than 50 health conditions like sleep problems, anxiety and pain. But, experts say there's little evidence that it works for most of them.

What is CBD?

CBD oil comes from the cannabis plant. Cannabis plants can be marijuana or hemp.

A chemical called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) causes the mental changes that make a person "high" when they use marijuana. CBD oil should contain little to no THC so it can't make a person high. However, there is no way to know for sure that the CBD product is THC-free.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tested CBD products. Some products were found to contain THC, even though CBD should not contain it. Other products had a different amount of CBD than what the label stated.



What does CBD do?

Experts don't know exactly how CBD works in the body. There is solid evidence that it can help control seizure disorders in children. But, evidence that it helps treat other conditions is lacking. In fact, the FDA has warned several companies about selling CBD with untested health claims.

Does CBD have side effects?

In studies, people didn't report serious side effects when taking CBD. There were some reports of diarrhea. Also, CBD may interact with a person's other medications.

People who take other medicines or have health conditions should ask a doctor before using CBD.

Should I use CBD?

There isn't enough evidence to recommend CBD for health problems other than seizures. Experts say you should stick with proven treatments for health problems. Always talk with a doctor before using any natural treatment, including CBD.

Source: National Institutes of Health