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LIVE WELL, BE WELL

GHT
WCA GROUP HEALTH TRUST

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take charge

Start With SMART Goals

Why do you need goals? They help define what's essential and meaningful to you.

Learn the SMART way:

Specific – Clearly identify each goal. Not just, *I will get more organized*, but *I will take a time management course in the next 3 months*.

Measurable – Select and track small tasks within each goal, especially for long-term, major objectives. For example, *I will save more this year by cutting spending 10%, starting with entertainment.*

Attainable – Set objectives that are challenging, even difficult, but within your reach.

Relevant – Decide what's most important to you in your life and work. What qualities or changes do you most desire?

Timed – A timeline for every goal keeps you on track toward success.

Homework: Identify your primary aims within key areas of your life – work, relationships, health, finances and other needs. Prioritize those; then select action steps within each primary goal. When your goals are clear, you stay more focused and motivated to achieve them.

Beyond the New Year, make goal setting an ongoing guide for planning your career and choosing personal pursuits. *Setting your goals can be as valuable as achieving them.*

health in action

Stand Up for Your Health

Too much sitting getting you down? Do you notice more backache, stiffness and fatigue than usual? Or maybe your waistline is spreading? New research into sitting has revealed that the average American adult sits nearly 8 hours a day – and it's causing problems from head to toe.

When your body sits for long periods, things slow down, including brain and muscle function, blood and oxygen flow, and metabolism.

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best bits

■ **Got head pain?** It could be a *tension headache*. These occur when neck, shoulder and scalp muscles become tense and cause mild to moderate pain. To prevent them: **1.** Avoid skipping meals or sleep. **2.** Reduce stress with relaxation techniques such as meditation and exercise. **3.** Try alternative methods including biofeedback, or medical approaches if non-drug therapies aren't helping. Talk to your health care provider about treatment options.

■ **If you're considering a fad diet for the New Year, think again.** Extreme low-calorie diets may cause you to lose weight quickly, but you're likely to regain the weight lost (or more) when you return to normal eating. For the best results, eat a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean protein, low-fat dairy and whole grains, with smaller portions. And strive to get 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity 5 days a week.

■ **Vaccination update:** The CDC now advises that adults age 65 and older get the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine and the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine. **Note:** Pneumococcal vaccines are also recommended for adults 19 years and older with certain health conditions and lifestyles. Ask your health care provider if you're getting all the vaccinations you need.

"The groundwork for all happiness is health."
– Leigh Hunt

This Edition

➡ Avoid These Calorie Traps
➡ How Stress Affects Your Back
➡ Joint Replacement – Delay?

Reach your personal best with Smart Moves at *www.personalbest.com/extras/15V1tools*.

Rx for Medication Safety

By Diane McReynolds, Personal Best Healthlines Founder

From antibiotics to lifesaving drugs for hundreds of conditions, medications help us live longer, healthier lives – provided we take them seriously.

Medication misuse leads to thousands of hospitalizations and deaths each year in the U.S. By staying involved in your health care, you can lower your risks and get the most from your medicine. Learn these 6 steps to safe medication:

1- Maintain a list of ALL your medicines. Include prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and vitamin, mineral and herbal supplements. Always bring your list to health care visits or for hospital stays.

2- Learn why you need specific drugs. You're more likely to use them correctly, know what to expect and report any problems to your provider.

3- Ask about possible side effects. Some drug side effects may bother you at first but soon ease up. Call your provider if you have serious, persistent or recurrent reactions; you may need a different medicine or dosage.

4- Ask about possible interactions when using multiple drugs. If you use alcohol or tobacco, ask about any impact from these substances while taking medicines or supplements.

5- Learn how to use each medicine. Ask your provider when to take it and for how long. Whether it's a prescription or an OTC medicine, read the label and always use as directed.

6- Try to have all your prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy. It will track all your drugs and alert you or your provider if a new drug might cause problems. Your pharmacist is a vital member of your health care team, ready to assist and answer your questions.

Go to **www.fda.gov** and enter **BeSafeRx** in the search engine to learn about finding safe and legal online pharmacies.

body matters

Joint Replacement:
Should You Delay?

For the right patients, joint replacement can be life changing. It is relatively safe and effective but not without risks, and recovery can take weeks. Even if you meet the medical requirements for joint replacement, here are some reasons you may want to delay or avoid the procedure:

Have you tried less-invasive treatments? Ask your health care provider about possible non-surgical methods.

Have you tried losing weight? For every pound you gain, you add pressure on your knees, hips and feet. If you have arthritis, losing just 15 pounds can significantly reduce knee and lower back pain. **Tip:** Proper exercise is essential for weight control and joint health; even if you have tender joints, you can still exercise and strengthen the muscles surrounding your joints.

Can you postpone? The average joint implant only lasts 10 to 15 years, according to Dr. Scott Martin, associate professor of orthopedic surgery at Harvard Medical School. Many patients are seeking replacement earlier in life. But having the procedure done at age 50 instead of 70, for example, could mean a second procedure when you're older.

Dr. Martin's bottom line: "Stick with your own joint if you can, but if it's physically, mentally and emotionally wearing you down, then it's time to consider joint replacement."

self care

How **Stress** Affects Your **Back**

Your emotional health can produce negative physical effects. Continuous stress can cause a cycle of fatigue and muscle tension, further stressing your mind and body. A primary target is your back.

Chronic stress and depression have been linked to back strain that leads to chronic pain and disability. Some research suggests that many cases of chronic back and neck pain may result from nervous tension, which temporarily constricts blood vessels, reducing oxygen to the cells.

Best solutions for reducing stress-related back pain:

- **Be aware of when you feel especially stressed.** Find relief before your emotional tension affects your back – change activities, exercise or meditate.
- **Fit in daily physical activity.** In particular, aerobic workouts can reduce depression, relieve stress and strengthen your back muscles.
- **Modify your repetitive tasks.** If your work is sedentary, do as many tasks as possible standing up to break up muscle tension; take stretching and walking breaks.
- **Watch your posture.** Avoid slouching and hunching forward.

You don't have to live with back or neck pain. Examine your lifestyle and work environment to find ways to reverse situations that can produce stress and hurt your back.

How Hobbies Can Help You on the Job

Research shows that engaging in creative, enjoyable pursuits in your personal time can boost workplace performance. People who regularly engage in hobbies enjoy better overall health than those who do not, including a lower risk of some mental health problems such as depression. Hobbies can help improve your quality of life and further your quest for better work-life balance.

Ideally, experts agree, a hobby should be something you have a passion for, and doing it gives you a sense of pleasure and purpose. It provides a break from day-to-day responsibilities, and it makes you feel good.

According to career coach Joyce E.A. Russell, hobbies have many benefits:

- They give you permission to spend time on yourself.
- Hobbies such as team sports, clubs and activity groups provide social interaction.
- Doing activities you enjoy can alleviate stress, improve your overall mood and make you less likely to get burned out on the job.
- Hobbies may also provide health benefits, such as lower blood pressure and less risk of memory loss as you age.

Bonus: The improved clarity of thought, focus and decision-making a hobby brings may boost job performance as well.

best bites

Produce Pick of the Month:

Sweet Potatoes

Sweet potatoes aren't just delicious – they also deliver more than 100% of your daily vitamin A requirement in a half-cup serving. Vitamin A is an antioxidant that's important for maintaining good eyesight and helping with night vision. Sweet potatoes also have fiber, vitamin B_6 and vitamin C.

eating smart

Avoid These Calorie Traps

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

If you've resolved to shed a few pounds this year, pay attention to foods that can derail your weight-loss plan. You know the ones – the innocent-looking muffin or fruity trail mix with shockingly high calorie counts.

Imagine this: You order a salad and a 16-ounce bottle of apple juice for lunch. It sounds like a vegetable- and fruit-packed meal with approximately 200 calories. **Look closer:** The salad has 60 calories, but the 4 tablespoons of salad dressing add 200 more. The juice is 242 calories, bringing your lunch total to **502 calories.** You could have easily enjoyed a filling, nutritious meal of chicken, brown rice and salad for the same amount of calories.

Even healthy fats need to be eaten in moderation. Foods such as olive or flax oil contain heart-friendly mono- and polyunsaturated fats. Since they have approximately 120 calories per tablespoon, eat no more than 2 to 3 tablespoons each day.

Sugary foods such as regular soft drinks, candy and pastries are easy to over-consume because they taste good, but the calories add up quickly. Always watch your portion sizes of the highest-calorie foods and drinks.

Small changes can help: When eating salad, for example, have the standard serving size of dressing (2 tablespoons). Use less oil and more vinegar, or dip vegetables in dressing instead of pouring it over the salad.

Other traps: Granola, cheese, smoothies and nuts can be healthy, but keep portions small to save calories. Always fill plates with vegetables, which are nature's lowest-calorie foods.

EASY | RECIPE
From Personal Best®

Spinach Salad with Pears and Toasted Pecans

Dressing:
3 tbsp pure **white grape juice**
2 tsp **cider vinegar**
1 tsp **Dijon mustard**
Pinch of **salt** and **pepper**

Salad:
3 tbsp **pecan** halves
2 tsp **olive oil**
3 Bosc **pears**, peeled and cored (cut into ½-inch slices)
1 6-oz bag baby **spinach leaves**
¼ cup crumbled **feta cheese**

1. Combine dressing ingredients and set aside.
2. Toast pecans in a dry skillet over medium heat 2 minutes; remove.
3. Heat oil in skillet. Add pear slices to skillet and cook 2 minutes, until lightly browned, stirring gently; remove.
4. Add dressing to skillet; whisk and simmer 3 minutes to slightly reduce and thicken.
5. In a large bowl, add spinach. Toss with dressing.
6. Arrange dressed spinach on 4 plates and top with pear slices, pecans and feta.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving:
143 calories | 2.8g protein | 4.6g total fat | 1.7g sat fat | 2.1g mono fat | 0.3g poly fat | 8.3mg cholesterol | 24g carbohydrate | 15g sugar | 4.3g fiber | 127mg sodium
Sugar breakdown per serving: pears – 13 grams; grape juice – 2 grams.

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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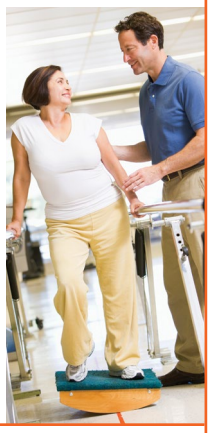
top safety How to Return to Work After an Injury

Resuming work after you're injured is something many of us are excited to do, but experts recommend you do it gradually, especially if you have a physically demanding job.

Here is some advice about returning:

1. Get your health care provider's OK to return to work. Most states and companies require a written release from an approved health care provider for employees to return to work.
2. Make sure all of your medical and physical restrictions are documented.
3. If you have been away from the workplace for an extended period, talk with your supervisor about a gradual return to work, as well as changing your work activities and your schedule until you fully recover. ***Suggestion:*** Meet with your supervisor and your provider to discuss a return-to-work plan. Together you can establish your capabilities, goals and timeframes.
4. If approved, establish an exercise program with your provider to build strength and endurance.
5. Ask for help if there is a task you can't perform.
6. Be patient. It takes time to heal completely.



expert advice

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Q: Risk factors for shingles?

A: The virus that causes chickenpox can lie dormant in the body and later reactivate to cause a painful rash called *shingles*. This rash causes clusters of small blisters. It usually occurs on the trunk, but can appear anywhere. Shingles can produce severe pain and sometimes causes a chronic condition called **postherpetic neuralgia**.

Risk factors for developing shingles include:

Older age. A vaccine to prevent shingles is recommended for adults 60 years or older. Without it half of people who live to 85 develop shingles.

Weak immunity. People with immune disorders such as HIV or cancer are at increased risk for shingles. So are those undergoing radiation or chemotherapy – treatments that can weaken the immune system.

Medications. Besides chemotherapy drugs, prolonged use of steroids can increase shingles risk. So can drugs given to prevent rejection of transplanted organs.

Stand Up for Your Health

➡ Continued from page 1.

The potential effects are widespread and chronic:

Cardiovascular – unhealthy cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

Spinal – disk damage and neck, shoulder and back pain.

Muscles – weakened core, back and hip muscles.

Legs – reduced circulation and soft bones.

Obesity – sitting promotes weight gain.

Starting now, get up and move more:

- Stand up, stretch and walk a few steps.
- Stand up while talking on the phone.
- Get off the couch while watching TV.
- Schedule 10-minute activity breaks a few times a day.
- Get up and do some chores.
- Combine meetings with walking.
- Set a timer as a reminder.

The idea is to break the chronic constricted posture of sitting that prevents your body from functioning well. ***Stand up – for your health.***