

THE TOP HEALTH[®]

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter.

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Better HDL, Better Health

September is
Cholesterol
Education Month.



Your blood cholesterol levels are key to a strong heart and basic good health. Cholesterol is essential to our bodies on a cellular level. This waxy fat-like substance is in every cell attached to proteins called lipoproteins. We have 2 major types of cholesterol:

The bad: Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol collects on the walls of your blood vessels, causing clotting that can lead to stroke or heart attack.

The good: High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol helps remove some of the bad cholesterol in your blood, returning it to your liver where it's broken down and passed from your body.

Control with medication? If your LDL level runs high, your health care provider may prescribe lowering it with medication. Reducing LDL and triglyceride levels can sometimes also improve HDL. But drugs designed specifically to raise HDL have generally not reduced heart attack risk.

Lifestyle factors? Unhealthy, low HDL levels often occur in people who smoke or have obesity, high blood pressure or high blood sugar levels — conditions that can be controlled with better health habits. Simple daily choices can lead to healthier levels of both HDL and LDL.

Talk to your provider about your cholesterol numbers and how to improve them. **Primary goals:**

- >> Lose excess weight with regular exercise and a heart-healthy diet.
- >> Stop smoking. This can improve HDL and help your heart significantly.
- >> Replace fast food and processed foods with home cooking and lots of vegetables.
- >> Skip sugar-rich foods and those containing trans fats.



Health at the End of the RAINBOW

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Filling half of your plate with vegetables and fruit at every meal is a great way to ensure you get enough of these wholesome foods each day. But which vegetables and fruits are the healthiest? They are all good.

Your best bet is to choose a variety from all colors of the rainbow.

Each hue comes with a unique set of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and phytonutrients (health-friendly plant compounds). Those vibrant colors are more than just pretty — they are functional, too. The pigments that make carrots orange, tomatoes red and spinach green work collectively to help protect you.

The exact type and amount we need of each vegetable and fruit is not fully understood, so the best advice is to include these beauties for:

Lycopene: In tomatoes, watermelon and pink grapefruit. It's linked to a reduced risk of certain cancers, especially breast and prostate.

Anthocyanins: In blueberries, blackberries and purple cabbage. They're linked to heart health, brain health and better cognitive function.

Carotenoids: In carrots, leafy greens, sweet potatoes and pumpkins. Carotenoids may help prevent cataracts and other age-related eye diseases.

Flavonoids: In cherries, berries and red grapes. These pigments have shown anti-inflammatory effects, and may also protect heart and brain health.

Sulforaphane: In broccoli, cauliflower, kale and cabbage. This plant compound has been shown to reduce cancer cell growth in lab and animal studies.

September
is Fruits and
Veggies —
More
Matters
Month.



- >> **Remember, there isn't 1 superfood** that will fully protect your health on its own, but a variety of colorful vegetables and fruit are part of a balanced diet that has proven health benefits.

Do it for
your heart
and your
long-term
health.



Health is the thing that makes you feel that now is the best time of year. — Franklin P. Adams

When Your Head Hurts



Headache is common to most of us, and they're usually a minor nuisance. For severe headache, you might worry about stroke, blood clots or tumor but a connection to such conditions is rare.

Check your symptoms. Your headaches could be serious if they:

- ☐ Are unusually painful.
- ☐ Increase with movement.
- ☐ Get steadily worse.
- ☐ Affect your mental ability.
- ☐ Occur after a head injury.
- ☐ Occur with fever.
- ☐ Prevent normal activities.
- ☐ First start after age 50.

If you checked any of these symptoms, consult your health care provider. Get prompt care if you experience fainting, convulsions, stiff neck or slurred speech.

HEAD-SMART HABITS for frequent headaches include:

- 1. Learning the causes.** Track your symptoms, behavior and surroundings for a few weeks using our Headache Diary download at personalbest.com/extras/THWC/RightNavigation/PBest-Headache-Diary.pdf.
- 2. Sleeping.** Adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep nightly on a regular schedule.
- 3. Avoiding alcohol and limiting caffeine.** Too much of either can produce headache.
- 4. Reducing stress.** Simplify your schedule; try yoga, tai chi or meditation to help balance your days.
- 5. Exercising regularly.** It may reduce the frequency and severity of migraine and stress-related headaches.



September is Menopause Awareness Month.

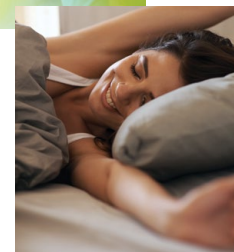
Menopause Relief



Although menopause is a normal part of aging in women, hormonal changes can cause physical changes, such as the sudden perspiration-producing sensations called hot flashes.

But there are ways to reduce or possibly eliminate menopause symptoms with lifestyle changes, according to the National Institutes of Health:

- Dress in layers and remove some clothing when you feel a hot flash starting.
- Sipping a cold drink and taking slow, deep breaths can reduce the feeling of heat.
- Avoiding smoking, spicy food, excess caffeine and alcohol can often keep hot flashes at bay.
- Hot flashes disrupt sleep so keep your bedroom cool (a fan nearby can help) and sleep in lightweight clothing.
- Regular exercise can pay off with better sleep quality and help keep weight under control (being overweight is associated with more severe hot flashes).
- If menopause causes vaginal dryness, over-the-counter water-based lubricants and vaginal moisturizers, used regularly, offer relief.



When lifestyle changes aren't providing enough help, talk to your health care provider about other treatments, including prescription medications and low-dose hormones, that may be appropriate for you, depending on your medical history and symptoms.

Snoring is Serious Business

Snoring occurs when relaxed tissues in your throat vibrate as you breathe during sleep. It can annoy and keep your partner awake, but snoring can also disrupt your own sleep, causing fatigue and raising the risk of health problems.

Nasal polyps, enlarged tonsils and a stuffy nose can cause snoring. Drinking alcohol before bed and simply growing older, too, can cause tongue and throat muscles to relax, resulting in snoring. But sleep apnea, marked by breathing that stops briefly and repeatedly during sleep, is the most serious condition linked to snoring.

Sleep apnea causes choking noises and snoring during sleep because your airway is narrowed, often from excess weight. Your brain perceives breathing difficulty and wakes you up, often many times an hour. You may not remember the repeated awakenings, but the

result can be morning headaches, irritability, forgetfulness, behavior or mood changes, anxiety and depression.

If you experience sleep apnea symptoms, talk to your health care provider about sleep study testing. Treatment for sleep apnea typically includes lifestyle changes, weight loss and a **continuous positive air pressure (CPAP) machine**. Untreated, sleep apnea raises the risk of stroke, heart failure, irregular heartbeats, heart attack and hypertension, according to the National Institutes of Health.



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Goals for Good Eating**, is at personalbest.com/extras/19V9tools.

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