GETTING MOTIVATED TO EXERCISE

We know exercise is healthy. But, without motivation, it’s hard to get started. Try these tips to get excited about working out, to get going and to stay with it.

- **Set goals you can achieve.** Try 20 minutes of exercise, 3 days per week. Once you’ve mastered that habit, move it up to 30. Then, increase the number of days, and so on.

- **Make exercise “me time.”** Exercise class, a walk or your favorite sport is time that helps your body and mind get healthier. Think of it as a treat to yourself.

- **Write down something you’ve achieved with exercise.** Whether you met your goal for two weeks or perhaps noticed your mood was better, take note of it. Go back and look at the good things you’ve accomplished over time. This can give you positive encouragement.

- **Don’t dwell on setbacks.** Everyone has a day where they miss a workout. Just move forward and figure out how you can get back into your routine tomorrow.

- **Find support when you need it.** Sometimes, it helps to have a friend cheer you on. Or, maybe a family member is willing to babysit your kids while you exercise. Maybe you can ask a friend to exercise with you. Together, you can motivate each other.

- **Skip the stuff you don’t like.** If you really dislike a certain class or activity, don’t do it. Instead, find an exercise you can look forward to. Do what gets you active and feels fun and invigorating.

- **Try something new.** Whether it’s a new class, a new video or a new piece of equipment at the gym, variety can be fun. Doing the same exercise every day for weeks or months can kill motivation.

If you have any health conditions, or haven’t exercised in a long time, ask your doctor which types of exercise would work best for you.

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians
How not to get sick when traveling

Nothing can ruin a vacation faster than someone getting sick. Whether you’re planning a trip just an hour away or across the ocean, there are many things you can do to stay healthy while away from home.

See your doctor before you go
Get a checkup before you go on vacation. Ask the doctor if you need any vaccines or preventive medicines. Some countries require vaccines that you wouldn’t normally need in the U.S. Make plans to get everyone vaccinated at least six weeks before you leave.

If you take any medicines regularly, make sure you have enough to last throughout your trip. Running out of a prescription medicine can be inconvenient — or even dangerous — if you’re not near your doctor or pharmacy. If possible, keep your medicine with you in a carry-on bag so you have it with you at all times.

Avoid traveler’s diarrhea

Traveler’s diarrhea is the most common travel-related illness. It can happen nearly anywhere if you eat contaminated food or drink contaminated water. Lower your risk of getting it with these guidelines:

- Eat only cooked food served hot.
- Avoid eating food from street vendors, if possible.
- Don’t eat or drink unpasteurized milk or dairy products.
- Avoid eating raw seafood or undercooked meats.
- Avoid tap water and ice on airplanes and in places where water may not be safe. Drink only commercially-bottled water and beverages.
- Use bottled water to brush your teeth when traveling abroad. Don’t get shower water in your mouth.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often. Be especially careful about washing hands after using the bathroom and before eating.
- Consider bringing some anti-diarrhea medicine with you in case you get sick. Make sure you stay hydrated with water, electrolyte drinks, and/or sports drinks.

Tell bugs to buzz off

Mosquitoes can spread disease, both in the U.S. and abroad. Protect yourself by wearing repellents with DEET. Use bed nets for international travel in areas where bugs are a problem. If you’re traveling to a country with a higher risk of malaria, ask your doctor about preventive medicine to take before you go on your trip. Be sure to also pack lightweight clothing that covers the arms and legs to keep bugs off.

A few simple precautions can ensure you have a safe and healthy summer vacation.
Understanding enlarged prostate

Benign prostatic hyperplasia, sometimes called BPH or enlarged prostate, is a condition where a man’s prostate gland gets larger. It is the most common prostate problem for men older than age 50. And, up to 90 percent of men over age 80 have it.

An enlarged prostate is not cancer, and for many men, it’s not serious. But, it can cause some symptoms that are bothersome, such as urinating too frequently, trouble starting or stopping urinating and incontinence. This happens when the prostate gets too large and blocks the urethra, which lets urine out of the body. Or, it can stress the bladder as it tries to force urine past the blockage.

In rare cases, an enlarged prostate can cause serious problems such as kidney damage. That’s why it’s important to talk with a doctor about enlarged prostate and to follow your doctor’s recommendations.

Don’t ignore these signs
Enlarged prostate is usually not serious. But, some symptoms could signal a more serious problem. Get medical care right away if you notice any of these signs:

• Complete inability to urinate
• Fever and chills along with frequent and painful urination
• Blood in urine
• Severe pain in lower belly and/or urinary tract

How enlarged prostate is treated

Treatment is based on symptoms and lifestyle. Many men who have mild symptoms find that lifestyle changes can help. Some recommendations include:

• Drink less fluids, especially before bedtime or when you won’t benear a bathroom.
• Avoid caffeine and/or alcohol. These can irritate the bladder and increase urination, which can worsen symptoms of an enlarged prostate.
• Avoid medications that can cause urination problems, including cold medicines with decongestants, antihistamines for allergies, diuretics and some antidepressants.
• Train your bladder, which means to gradually hold urine for longer periods.
• Exercises to strengthen muscles in the pelvic floor region of your body.
• Prevent and/or treat constipation, which can irritate a stressed bladder.

Lifestyle changes usually help improve quality of life for men with an enlarged prostate. But if they don’t, your doctor may discuss medications or minimally invasive procedures. Surgery is usually not needed, but it is an option for severe cases.

Fortunately, this common health issue can be managed and treated. Get regular checkups with your doctor or urologist to keep symptoms under control.

Sources: National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
Mushrooms: Eat your fungi!

Botanically speaking, mushrooms are not a vegetable, but a type of fungi. However, this doesn’t make them any less nutritious. In fact, mushrooms have some important nutrients and health benefits.

**Mushrooms love the sun**

Vitamin D has been a hot topic lately in nutrition news. Some research suggests the nutrient may help prevent some types of cancer. It also plays a role in a healthy immune system and building strong bones.

Mushrooms contain a nutrient that turns into vitamin D when exposed to sunlight. Some stores sell mushrooms processed this way. Look for “high vitamin D” mushrooms. Or, you can make them yourself by setting your fresh mushrooms in the sun for a few minutes.

**Versatile & healthy**

Mushrooms have many other health benefits as well. They add flavor and interest to many recipes without adding many calories. They are very low in fat and sodium, and have fiber and a small amount of protein.

Mushrooms have some B vitamins, and contain the minerals selenium and potassium. Try adding them to pasta, pizza and meat dishes. They can also be eaten as a side dish alone: wash, slice and sauté them in a pan with a splash of olive oil and garlic until they are cooked through.

Portabella mushrooms are large enough to be eaten on a bun as a “portabella burger.” In fact, one whole portabella mushroom has just 18 calories, 1 gram of fiber, and less than half a gram of fat. That’s a healthy burger alternative that’s worth a try!

**Mushroom Safety**

Mushrooms grow almost anywhere that gets enough shade and moisture. But, this doesn’t mean people should pick wild mushrooms and eat them. In fact, many people have gotten sick or worse from eating wild mushrooms.

Many poisonous mushrooms look very similar to those safe to eat. Some types can cause vomiting, diarrhea and kidney damage. They can even cause death in rare cases.

To avoid poisonous mushrooms, only eat those purchased from a reputable supermarket or have been inspected and identified as safe by a mushroom expert.

Some people are allergic to mushrooms and cannot safely eat them. If you have severe allergies and have never eaten mushrooms before, ask your allergist before trying them.

Sources: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Produce for Better Health Foundation
How to reduce stress at work

GET ENOUGH SLEEP
Poor sleep can affect your mood, judgement and memory. This can harm your ability to cope with stress.

LOOK AT THE BRIGHT SIDE
Each day, write down something you are thankful for. Take note of things that make you smile.

GET MOVING
Exercise is a well-known way to reduce stress and improve mood. Walking just 20 minutes a day can make a difference.

TRY MEDITATION
Meditating, praying or whatever helps you block out the stress of the day can help you relax. Finding time for peace can reduce overall stress levels.

FIND WAYS TO LAUGH
Laughter can help your muscles relax, which can be soothing after a stressful day.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH
Deep breathing activates a state of relaxation. Focus on deep breaths in and out for a few minutes each day.

STRETCH IT OUT
Stretching can be relaxing and can help the body get ready for sleep. Stretch each night before bed to help you get good rest.

TALK TO OTHERS
Emotional support from friends and family is helpful during times of stress. Make plans to talk with people and have fun with loved ones during your free time.

Sources: American Institute of Stress, Anxiety and Depression Association of America, American Psychological Association
Well-Being Tip

Life after stroke

9 tips for caregivers

A stroke can impact a person’s life in many ways. If you are caring for someone who recently had a stroke, you may be overwhelmed. With more than 7 million stroke survivors living today, you’re not alone. You can make life after a stroke a little easier for yourself and your loved one with these tips.

1. **ASK QUESTIONS.**
   If you’re not sure about a medication or other needs, talk to the doctor, nurse or therapist. Take notes, if possible.

2. **FOCUS ON STROKE PREVENTION.**
   People who have a stroke may be at higher risk of having another one. A healthy diet, exercise, regular doctor visits and taking medications as prescribed can help reduce this risk.

3. **TAKE FALLS SERIOUSLY.**
   People who have had a stroke may be more likely to fall. Seek medical care right away if a fall causes severe pain, a head injury, bruising or bleeding. Talk to a doctor if a fall happens more than once, even if it’s minor.

4. **KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR PROBLEMS LIKE DIZZINESS, BALANCE PROBLEMS OR TROUBLE WALKING.**
   This may mean the person needs physical therapy to help with their recovery and improve their mobility.

5. **KEEP TRACK OF PROGRESS.**
   Stroke recovery may happen quickly, or it may take months or years. Write down progress your loved one has made each day or week. This can be helpful to the doctor during follow up visits.

6. **BE AWARE OF DEPRESSION.**
   Up to 50 percent of stroke survivors get depression. This can harm their recovery. Talk to your loved one’s doctor if you notice they have symptoms like a loss of interest in activities, sadness or hopelessness.

7. **DON’T GO IT ALONE.**
   A number of resources can help both you and your loved one with stroke recovery. Many support groups for survivors and their caregivers are available. Ask your case manager or social worker for help finding these groups.

8. **KNOW YOUR LOVED ONE’S INSURANCE BENEFITS.**
   There may be limits to how long insurance will pay for stroke rehabilitation. Be sure you are aware of the coverage limits and any costs. Ask your case manager or social worker if you’re not sure how to do this.

9. **TAKE A BREAK WHEN YOU CAN.**
   Even the best caregiver needs some time off. Find a trusted friend or family member who can fill in for you. Try to get exercise, such as walking, to help combat stress and improve your sleep. A regular meditation practice may also help.

Source: American Stroke Association
Being a single parent can be stressful. After all, raising a child is tough work! Without someone else to share the load, things may feel twice as hard.

The U.S. Census Bureau says 11 million households with kids under age 18 have a single parent. These tips can help you and your children lead happy and healthy lives, together:

• **Let your kids talk.** Have a family meal or some time each day to talk with your kids. Ask them about school and activities. Young children may appreciate some quiet playtime with you or reading a book together. Let them talk about their feelings, both positive and negative ones.

• **Get support.** Family, friends and support groups can be very helpful for single parents. Talking to other adults is a great way to get helpful advice and lower your stress level.

• **Don’t worry about buying “things” for your kids.** Most kids just want time with their parent. Your attention is one of the best gifts you can give them.

• **Find good child care.** You may need some time for yourself, away from your kids. A reliable babysitter or daycare is a great way to give you a break from caring for your kids. Try a new hobby, take a walk, or go out with a friend when you get the chance.

• **Keep a schedule.** As much as possible, keep each day close to the same schedule. A consistent bedtime, wake time and meal times can help kids feel secure. Kids like routine because they know what happens next.

• **Don’t turn to your kids for support.** It can be hard when you feel like you need to talk to someone about your feelings. You may be tempted to say things to your kids about work stress or your former spouse or partner. Avoid this, as it adds stress and worry to a child’s mind. Try to keep it to yourself and “vent” to an adult friend instead.

• **Work on discipline with your former spouse or partner.** Having the same rules and parenting strategy is important if kids spend time at more than one house. Try to talk with your child’s other parent about ways you can work together to raise healthy and confident kids.

• **Keep an eye on your mental well-being.** If you are feeling helpless or hopeless, or if you have anxiety or panic attacks, talk to your doctor. Your mental health is an important part of taking on the stress of being a single parent.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics
Save money on health expenses

Unexpected health care costs can be hard on any budget. To help manage your own health care costs:

• **Get preventive care.** Well visits and checkups often cost a lot less than treating a disease or illness. Talk to your doctor and dentist about how often you should be seen, and stick to this schedule.

• **Use generic medicines.** Name brand medicines can cost hundreds of dollars more than generic ones. Ask your doctor if a generic medicine is available for your condition. Tell your doctor if you are having trouble paying for medications. Drug makers sometimes offer coupons or savings cards for people who need them.

• **Shop around for your prescriptions.** Medicine costs can vary widely among pharmacies. Call pharmacies and ask for the cost of your prescription medicine. Some websites also have prescription medicine costs available for pharmacies in your area. You may also wish to look into mail-order pharmacies.

• **Check your medical bills.** Make sure there are no mistakes on your doctor, hospital or prescription bills. And, be sure your insurance covered services it is supposed to cover. If you have questions, or think you may be over-billed, call the number listed on your bill.

Source: Consumer Federation of America

Watch those late fees!

A few dollars here, 20 dollars there... late fees can add up. Whether it's your credit card bill or a service you received, make an effort to pay your bill on time. Avoid late fees by getting bills set up on automatic payment plans. Or, have a special slot on the wall to place bills that haven't been paid. Then, they won't get buried under junk mail or other papers on your desk.