

TransFormations

Your life. Your health. Your choice.

The Brain Game: Body *and* Mind Fitness as You Age

There is always dialogue about increasing and maintaining *physical* activity for better overall health.

Staying active, *plus* a healthy diet; a good night's sleep; less stress; a go-to support system of family and friends; more work-life balance; avoiding excess alcohol, *not* smoking; with a dash of all of the other preventive measures, (inclusive of consulting your doctor), equals the right recipe for staying on track to becoming fit. And if you've got an existing condition like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or obesity (as well as diabetes), it's time to gain and maintain control of those loose cannons as well to reduce risks of heart disease, heart attack, or stroke down the road.

The fact is, nutritional, physical, and social preventive measures, along with some cognitive training (*hello salad, walking shoes, workout buddy, and crossword puzzle!*) can help keep your brain sharp through the years as you age, according to the Alzheimer's Association. The Mayo Clinic has also cited that lowering mid-life risk factors and chronic health conditions can help to lower Alzheimer's disease risk. The American Heart Association, too, says that exercise may help keep your brain healthier longer.

So on top of a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats like avocados and olive oil, plus exercising for 30 minutes, five times per week, what are some of the things that you can do to keep your brain healthy?

Do what you enjoy, but challenge yourself, too. Whether it's kayaking or reading, if you love it, rock on; it brings happiness. New experiences could be designing a new garden, learning magic, or mastering a musical instrument. Try traveling somewhere new. Stay interested *and* interesting.

Have an active social circle. Good friends are golden; they offer companionship, a sounding board, a support system, *and* fun— that should go both ways! Share some mutual interest, or discover some new ones that you can introduce or share.

Safety first. Always wear a seatbelt when driving or riding in a car. Ditto a bike helmet when cycling. Protect that noggin when playing contact sports. Also avoid falls in the home.

Stay active in body, mind, and spirit!

Sources include www.alz.org, www.heart.org, and www.mayoclinic.org



> Want More?

Find more helpful facts, news, and tips inside this issue, at your company's wellness website. Need help? Call TransFormations at **1-866-439-2041**.

Your Good-Health Checklist

It's easy to drop the ball on good health from time to time. The good news is that each day offers a fresh start, so time to "spot-check" where you stand with your overall fitness—especially with flu season just around the corner:

Keep current with preventive exams. Don't neglect annual physicals, ditto those for eyes, your six-month dental checks, as well as the dermatologist for the "mole patrol." (Consult your doctor for the frequency that's recommended for you, impacted by current health and family history. That's especially key for mammography and skin checks).

Eat a healthy, balanced diet. Check out a favorite cooking show or online source for flavorful good-for-you meals and snacks. Try a new veggie or whole grain! Control portion size, fat, and sodium. Read nutrition labels carefully.

Move it! The goal for adults is 150 minutes of exercise per week (that's 30 minutes daily, five days per week), so find something that you like and can stick with, indoors or outside. (Try for at least three days a week and work up from there!)

Quit smoking. Do it *now*; quitting will have numerous immediate and long-term health benefits for your quality of life, and potential longevity.

Get enough sleep. Adults generally need seven to eight hours of sleep each night to feel fully rested. If you're having trouble falling asleep, make your room an oasis from stress and trade electronic devices for relaxing "tea time" or easy stretching before bedtime to unwind and re-charge you.



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Wash your hands. Get rid of germs at home and at work. Lather up and rub for at least 20 seconds before you rinse. Carry hand sanitizer when on-the-go. Surfaces like desks and doorknobs, gas pump handles, and shopping carts are catch-alls for germs, so avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to prevent spreading.

Get a flu shot this year. Speak to your doctor about the vaccine's benefits and risks for you. There's no guarantee that you won't get the flu, but getting vaccinated can reduce the risk and severity, if you do get sick.

Bring balance back. Experts agree that a positive outlook (including good relationships, laughter, and coping mechanisms like deep breathing, meditation, *and* exercise) can help lessen stress. They also bolster the immune system when it comes to fighting illness and recovery time.

See your doctor for more individualized tips, and remember: If you fumble, you can always pick up the ball again and score!

Sources include www.cdc.gov and www.mayoclinic.org

Mediterranean Baked Fish (Serves 4)

Light and moist, the zesty flavor medley of the Mediterranean comes through in this perfect summer fish dish for family and friends. Using garlic, onion, tomato, and the other herbs, along with a good olive oil, eliminates the need for salt and more fat. It's just 177 calories with 4 grams of fat per serving (plus only 1 gram of saturated fat), 281 mgs. sodium, and only 56 grams of cholesterol.

Ingredients:

1 lb. fish fillets (flounder, sole, or sea perch—but you can try tilapia as well)

2 tsps. olive oil (extra virgin recommended, for better flavor)

1 large onion, sliced

1 can (16 oz.) whole tomatoes, drained (reserve juice) and coarsely chopped

1 bay leaf

1 clove garlic, minced

1 cup dry white wine

1/2 cup reserved tomato juice, from canned tomatoes

1/4 cup lemon juice

1/4 cup orange juice

1 tbsp. fresh grated orange peel

1 tsp. fennel seeds, crushed

1/2 tsp. dried oregano, crushed

1/2 tsp. dried thyme, crushed

1/2 tsp. dried basil, crushed

black pepper, to taste

Directions:

Heat oil in large nonstick skillet. Add onion, and sauté over moderate heat for 5 minutes or until soft. Add all remaining ingredients except fish. Stir well and simmer uncovered for 30 minutes. Arrange fish in 10" x 6"-inch baking dish; cover with sauce. Bake, uncovered, at 375° F about 15 minutes or until fish flakes easily.

Recipe adapted from www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Combating Cholesterol

The good news about cholesterol: It's necessary for fat digestion, creation of vitamin D, and hormones like estrogen and testosterone. **The bad news:** our bodies already make all of the cholesterol needed, but we're exposed to *additional* fats in some foods, which our bodies use to make cholesterol. When cholesterol lab numbers rise as a result, we can be at increased risk for heart disease and stroke.

Start by trading in solid fats like butter for lighter margarines containing *phytosterols* that can help block cholesterol absorption, or olive oil. Try avocados versus mayo. Include at least two servings of Omega-3-rich fish (like albacore tuna, salmon, or sardines) per week. For sometime-meat or poultry, choose lean cuts, remove skin and fat, and go with palm-sized portions. Knock off processed deli meats. Limit white bread,

crackers, and white rice. Boost fiber with whole grain breads, crackers, brown rice, oatmeal, or quinoa, plus nuts like walnuts and almonds. Reach for *nutrient-dense* raw veggies and hummus over high-calorie, processed chips and dip. Skip sugary soda, and enjoy spring water with berries, citrus or sliced cucumbers instead. Go for low fat or skim versus whole milk (or try fortified soy milk). Avoid anything with "added" sugar— grab real fruit! Work up to exercising for 30 minutes, five days per week. If you smoke, quit.

The FDA's (Food and Drug Administration) Percent Daily Value on food labels is based on a 2,000 calorie diet, but an *individual's* caloric needs and values may differ. Ask your doctor to assess *your* risk factors before giving you a personal goal number.

Cholesterol At-a-Glance	Goal Cholesterol Screening Numbers
LDL (Low-density Lipo-Protein; "bad" cholesterol carried through arteries and tissues can build up, and block blood flow.)	Can vary (ask your doctor about personal risks.)
HDL (High-density Lipo-Protein; "good" cholesterol carries "bad" cholesterol back to the liver, to be broken down for removal from the body.)	Minimum Goals: Greater than 40 mg/dL* (men) Greater than 50 mg/dL* (women) Optimal Goal for All (men <i>and</i> women): 60 mg/dL*
Triglycerides (fat used for energy)	Less than 150 mg/dL*
Total cholesterol (LDL, HDL, and Triglycerides combined)	Less than 200 mg/dL*

*Per deciliter (dL) of blood



Take the first step by getting screened. If your cholesterol is high, ask your doctor how you can make impactful changes through diet and exercise *first*, and explore alternative treatments; you could prevent the need for a prescription medication. We can't change some risk factors, like age, sex, and heredity, but we can focus on *behavior change* across one's lifespan, to help maintain good cholesterol numbers, now, and as we age.

Sources include: www.cdc.gov, www.my.clevelandclinic.org, and www.mayoclinic.org

Flexibility: Move It or Lose It!

If you've ever gotten off-track with exercise and struggled with getting back to your usual routine, you know this drill of then and now: You committed to keeping fit, with a regimen that you've enjoyed and reaped its benefits. But over time, life has gotten in the way with a lack of time and energy (plus some added weight), along with a beckoning couch after a long day at work, lengthy commute, or driving the kids to activities. You know you feel and look better when you exercise, but having the energy to start it up again is, well, another story.

The fact is, when you haven't exercised for a while, your muscles can *atrophy* or become less effective due to lack of use. You can lose muscle tone, flexibility, and strength that you had gained by moving. Your posture can suffer, too, especially if you do a lot of sitting, because you're likely giving in to more of a slouch position that can impact your neck, shoulders, and hips. This only makes you feel more tired.

Whether it's isolating and stretching certain muscles (like those in the neck and shoulders) at your desk for 15 to 30 seconds in intervals a few times a day, doing basic body stretching at home on the floor or outside, or exploring yoga for its breathing, flexibility, and meditative qualities, gentle stretching (*without* bouncing!) can start to ease you back into moving.

Did You Know...?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than one third (36.5 percent) of adult men and women in the U.S. are obese, categorized by a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30.0 or higher. For kids age two to 19 years old (derived also from age percentile), the rate of obesity has remained relatively steady at about 17 percent since 2011, affecting about 12.7 million children and adolescents. Most experts agree that healthy behavior change—good nutrition and portion control (www.choosemyplate.gov), plus regular exercise are the keys to turning the obesity epidemic around!

Visit www.cdc.gov to calculate BMI for adults, children, and teens.



Daily stretching can:

- > Allow flexibility to flourish, improving the range of joint motion (like in knees and hips)
- > Enhance athletic performance and decrease injuries
- > Increase blood flow and oxygen to the muscles to aid in healing and recovery time
- > Minimize stress
- > Boost quality of life *and* longevity

Always move around a bit to warm up first; never stretch cold muscles! Then transition to gentle stretching. Ask your doctor about incorporating moderate aerobic (adults: 150 minutes per week), core, and strength training back into your routine. Don't be too hard on yourself; no one expects you to be an Olympian! But make a pact with *you* to move it or lose it! Getting your flexibility back is key to getting back on track. Now is always the best time!

Visit www.mayoclinic.org for home and office stretching exercises.

We're listening!

Got a comment (or a success story)? Whether you're a long-time reader of Transformations, or this is your first issue, we'd love to hear from you! Email us at: newsletters@EnvolveHealth.com.

Every Leaf Tells a Health Story

For many, tracing one's family tree has become a favorite "detective" hobby— and the airwaves are routinely filled with ads from various resources and tools about hunting online for distant relatives. The goal is to paint the family ancestry picture, connecting the dots from great-great grandpa and others to you.

Some methods might help to fill in some "blanks" when it comes to straight lineage. But not so much when it comes to health history. In fact, the numbers of people tracing their family *health* history falls short: According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 96% of Americans said that knowing their *health* history is worthwhile. But only one-third have actually gone the extra mile to make a family *health* tree.

Most families share a history of certain illnesses or health problems, including cancer, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, or high blood pressure. Creating a family health tree that goes back at least three generations can help your doctor foresee illnesses that you could be prone to developing. He or she can then offer advice on things that you can do to stay healthy.



Make a list of immediate relatives (parents, brothers, sisters, and children) and extended family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and half-brothers/sisters). Also include cousins, plus great-aunts/uncles. Ask about long-term illnesses or issues, age at diagnosis, plus cause and age at death. Talk to family members. Explore old family letters and scrapbooks. Check public records like death certificates and obituaries.

Using *My Family Health Portrait* (www.familyhistory.hhs.gov) you can record and print out your family history to share with relatives and your doctor. Having a family illness history doesn't guarantee that you'll inherit it, but a glimpse into the past can help you (and your kids) to have a healthier future.

Sources include: www.familyhistory.hhs.gov

It's about transformations... yours!

Almost 50 percent of the American population deals with at least one chronic health issue. Whether it's a condition like asthma or COPD; depression, diabetes or heart disease, having a chronic condition means you could be challenged *by* it and living *with* it for the long haul. Maintaining a healthy weight through good nutrition and exercise is important throughout your life, too, in order to stay strong and fit – not only for general good health, but to help you take on whatever life throws your way.

TransFormations is a guide that offers education, plus fun, timely ideas, and support as you take more control of these challenges to live life well. If you have a success story to tell, we'd love to hear it. Questions? Our expert Health Coaches are here to help. Call us toll-free: **1-866-439-2041**.



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> Questions?

Call us toll-free at
1-866-439-2041.

Our Health Coaches are happy to talk with you about your health and healthcare options. Our coaches include registered dietitians, registered nurses, diabetes educators, exercise physiologists, respiratory therapists and other healthcare specialists. They have made it their life's work to help people like you. *Talk with one today.*

National Health Happenings and Resources Include:

SEPTEMBER

World Alzheimer's Month
Alzheimer's Disease International
www.alz.co.uk/wam
(In the U.S.: www.alz.org)

National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month
American College of Sports Medicine
www.acsm.org

Whole Grains Month
Whole Grains Council
www.wholegrainscouncil.org

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
National Ovarian Cancer Coalition
www.ovarian.org

Prostate Cancer Awareness Month
www.zerocancer.org

National Yoga Awareness Month
Yoga Health Foundation
www.yogamonth.org

Farmers' Markets:

Take Your Pick for Freshness, Flavor

Bing cherries and jarred honey. Farm-fresh eggs, cheeses, and herb bread. Arugula, zucchini, and fresh flowers too...

From Seattle, Washington to Portland, Maine, farmers' markets have long been a community gathering place, marrying the fun of a family-friendly, open-air event with fresh, healthy, often-organic food choices that are both accessible *and* affordable. Along with feeling good about supporting local farmers who sell their own products directly to the public, shoppers can expect an abundance of colorful, quality fruits and veggies, from tried-and-true apples and strawberries to adventurous offerings like broccoli rabe, fiddlehead ferns, and yucca root (depending on the season). If you're a "foodie," you'll be in farm-to-table heaven. If you're simply looking for more affordable, healthy choices for your family's meals, the farmers' market can be one-stop shopping from dairy to whole grains. It's also a wonderful way to expose children to new flavors and textures, plus get to know your local growers.

No matter where you may live, you can find both large and small farmers' markets in your area. Visit www.localharvest.org to explore the more-than 30,000 farms and farmers' markets listed nationally, plus an array of mouth-watering-related recipes. Other sites include the National Farmers' Market Directory at www.nfmd.org. Those participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can locate over 3,600 farmers' markets who accept benefits, by visiting www.fns.usda.gov/ebt/snap-and-farmers-markets.

Visit your local farmers' market this weekend, and fill your table with fresh flavor, good health, and new friends!

