

## 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, back, 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.

### Daily stretching can:

- Allow flexibility to flourish
- Improve the range of motion in joints, like those around the knees and hips
- Enhance athletic performance
- Decrease the onset of injury
- Increase blood flow and oxygen to the muscles to aid in healing and recovery time
- Minimize stress
- Boost both quality of life and longevity

Stretching (like any exercise) requires a gentle warm-up, to avoid potential muscle or joint injury. Never stretch cold muscles! 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](http://www.mayoclinic.org) for home and office stretching exercises.

### Want more?

Find more helpful facts, news, and tips inside this issue, at your company's wellness website, or your [mynurturlife](http://mynurturlife) website.

Need help? Call Transformations at **1-866-439-2041**.

# Keep Spring Cleaning Sneeze-free

No doubt about it. Your nose *knows*.  
So do your eyes and skin.

Many cleaning products (even natural ones) have distinctive scents or fumes that can sometimes prove irritating to the nose, as well as the eyes, and back of the throat, if exposed to them in an enclosed space with no fresh-air circulation. The skin can also be particularly sensitive when it comes in contact with a cleaning product, abrasive or otherwise. Chemical-based products can often have the most burning, irritating (and sometimes toxic) effects on the body. Most are poisonous if swallowed. But even “natural” products can prompt unpleasant reaction (and be dangerous) if used incorrectly, especially if you have a sensitivity to them.

Items like perfume, bath soap, or laundry detergent can also prompt an allergic reaction (from sneezing, burning, and itchy, watery eyes, to a skin rash). Elements, like dust, mildew, or mold can also trigger an asthma attack, inclusive of wheezing or shortness of breath. If you're at all sensitive to allergens either indoors or out (like pollen), it's even more crucial to be careful about the products that you use to clean your house.

## Go Natural!

- Opt for natural alternatives to chemicals; seek out natural product lines that include milder, plant-based ingredients and fresh, lighter scents.
- Try baking soda mixed with water as an all-purpose, mildly-abrasive cleaner.



- Lemon juice can be an effective deodorizer, glass cleaner, and stain remover.
- Olive oil works well as a furniture polish, and just a little goes a long way.
- White vinegar does double-duty removing grease and mildew. It's also a no-streak glass-cleaner.

## Protect Yourself and Your Family

- Always clean in a well-ventilated area. Circulate the air via an open window or fan.
- Use a mask and latex-free gloves.
- Have asthma? Always keep your inhaler handy.
- Follow cleanser directions.
- *Never* mix cleaning products with one another!
- Mark hazardous cleansers clearly.
- Store them safely out of reach from children or pets, *and* in their original containers.
- Contact your local waste disposal facility about safe disposal.
- Need help? Call the **American Poison Control Center Help Line 24/7 at 1-800-222-1222.**

Sources include [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

# Mini Meal: Lentil Salad

This little salad is a beauty, and not just because it's a healthy mix of fiber (8 g.), and protein (9 g.), plus low in sugar (3 g.). At just 170 calories, it's a fast fix for something crunchy, cold, and refreshing, it's filling, and it's also easily portable for a quick lunch “al desko” at work, or to bring to a potluck. Serve it alone or on the side!

- 1 cup lentils, sorted and rinsed
- 3 cups water
- 1 clove garlic, sliced in half
- 1 green onion, sliced
- ½ cup diced green pepper
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved

- Juice of 1 lemon
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- ¼ tsp. ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp. dried parsley

Combine lentils, water, and garlic in a pot over medium heat. Simmer for 15 minutes until lentils are tender. Drain and run under cold water. Discard garlic. While lentils are cooking, whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, black pepper, and parsley. In a large bowl, add lentils, green onion, green pepper and tomatoes. Drizzle dressing and mix. Refrigerate until serving.

Visit [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org) for more nutritional information.

# Busting (a Move) Through the Clutter

From work deadlines and travel to family commitments, life as you know it has created little mounds of chaos inside a much-beloved-but-sometimes-neglected house.

## Sound familiar? Spring's here, so let the de-cluttering begin.

Too much “stuff” and little surface area not only clutters the house, attracting allergens, irritants and pests; it also clutters the mind, blocking clear, creative thought, causing stress. An at-home obstacle course is the opposite effect that you were going for when you first envisioned your abode as the restful haven that it could be. If you've run out of space in the House of Things, it's time to take your house back.

### Try these de-cluttering tips:

**Baby Steps:** Clutter overwhelms, so don't try to tackle too much at one time; you'll only get frustrated and likely stop with nothing accomplished. Experts advise to pick just one room (or even one corner!) as a reasonable goal to finish first. Do that, and you'll feel good about your progress!

**Surface vs. Storage:** Flat surfaces are not designed to store items, so clear those first to stop the catch-all madness. Weed through bills and stray receipts to identify those to be tossed. Affordable craft store photo boxes can serve as decorative storage for select items that you need



to file. Prioritize keepsake greeting cards for a special bulletin board (or snap a group photo to remember and store).

**Divide and Conquer:** Find your floor again by labeling boxes into four categories: “Keep,” “Sort,” “Donate” and “Throw Away.” Group books onto shelving, then insert small baskets with items you wish to conceal to better-utilize wall space. (Donate/sell books too; ditto gently-used clothing.)

**Device, Key and Cord Control:** Use decorative baskets or boxes for the remote control and cell phones; hang keys on cool hooks or toss into an artsy bowl. Round-up stray electrical cords with a cord cover.

Turn up the music to keep both you and the clutter moving. Remember: A little cleaning and a little exercise can produce big results!

Visit [www.gettingorganizedmagazine.com](http://www.gettingorganizedmagazine.com) and [www.realsimple.com](http://www.realsimple.com) for more ideas.



## Why health coaching?

“Coaching gives you a personal sense of what you're doing. (My coach and I) set goals. It's also a reminder to me that there's someone to call me up, and ask me *how* I'm doing. It's a program that works.”

*Arnie P., age 61, retired electrician*

# Dig It: Gardening

The early English poet Alfred Austin once said, “...To nurture a garden is to feed not just on the body, but the soul.”

There’s always been something very real, and well, very down to earth, about feeling the dirt between your fingers, planting a seed, and watching it grow, whether it’s a tulip or a tomato. If you enjoy the outdoors, gardening can be one-stop shopping for gently increasing some activity, taking in a little Vitamin D (with sunscreen, of course), watching the nature show of birds, butterflies, and more, and also reaping the fruits of your labor— be they flowers, fruits, or veggies.

Turns out, gardening is not only a sensory experience; it’s very therapeutic, too. It’s a means to get Zen and slow things down a bit, allowing yourself to relish all of the little moments that can get lost in the daily shuffle. Pull some weeds and let go of the stresses of the work week. Focus on the oasis that you’re creating, versus those best laid plans that fell apart last weekend. Design your landscape, keeping color variation and shape in mind. Get creative!

Plant vegetables to create wonderful salads. Imagine the bounty of superfoods, from arugula to spinach, fresh for the plucking—and at a savings, too, versus buying them at the store! Prefer flowers? Take your pick, just beyond your back door, and arrange-away.

Just bend at the knees when lifting, and use a garden mat for kneeling. Your shovel should be in proportion to your body and height. Insect repellent is key, too. We’ll mention sunscreen again, because we can’t emphasize it enough (go for an SPF of 30), along with wearing a hat. Wear long sleeves, long pants and socks to ward against ticks, and give yourself the once-over check for “passengers” before going inside! Drink plenty of water while you’re out there, and avoid the sun at peak periods.



Whether it’s a container garden on the deck, or a few feet of soil with some scattered stones, meditate on the positive and the possibilities; dream big, or simply focus on the flower in your hand.

No matter what you choose to ponder while gardening, this is your escape, in your own backyard.

Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for more tips.

## 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! E-mail us at: [newsletters@nurturhealth.com](mailto:newsletters@nurturhealth.com).

## A Perfect Fit: Bike Helmets for Safety

Five to 14-year-olds and young adults age 15 to 24 make up 52 percent of bike injuries seen in the U.S. People age 15 to 29, as well as those 45 years and older, have the highest bike-related deaths.

If you think that bike helmets are just a fashion accessory along for the ride, think again. A bike helmet can help protect the head and brain if you crash. But bike helmets must fit right in order to do their job. Here's how you can get a level and snug fit, before pedaling:

- Measure your head first to find a helmet size, ideally with a tape measure. (You can also use a string, and then just measure the string with a ruler.)
- Level the helmet low on your forehead, but above the eyebrows. Make sure you can see!
- Adjust the side straps to make a "V" below the ears.
- Pull and fasten snugly under the chin.
- Try to yawn; your skin should move a little.
- Only two fingers should be able to fit between your head and helmet.



Always wear a helmet for protection. And yes, they can look pretty cool, too, but don't sacrifice function for fashion. *Get a proper fit first* before you get sucked in by that pop of color. Don't ride at night (if you must, use lights and bright gear that reflects light). Wear bright colors *anytime* you ride (on your helmet as well as clothing). Remember: fit *before* fashion, and ride to stay alive!

Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for a Heads Up Helmet Fact Sheet.

## 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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Dallas, TX 75244

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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:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Slide and Video Stretching Exercises [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

United States Environmental Protection Agency (Design for the Environment (DfE)-certified cleaning products) [www.epa.gov/dfeproducts](http://www.epa.gov/dfeproducts)

### Did You Know...?

Soap and water wins over hand sanitizer, hands-down. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), sanitizers don't remove dirt, allowing germs to hide under it and remain on hands. If a hand sanitizer is the "next best" option, be sure that it contains more than 60 percent alcohol to be most effective. Kids are at greater risk of harm from hand sanitizers (they are prone to lick off the residue).

## Take a Staycation!

Sometimes you just need to get away. But when money and time are both limited, vacation choices can be, too. Re-adjust and re-think your travel plans, and get a little creative with a "staycation."

A *staycation* is a great way to "escape" on a budget while at home or just around town. No need to pack. You'll save money on eating out, gas for the car, plane, or train tickets, and hotel rooms. You can relax *or* stay active— all at your own pace!

Clean your house *before* your staycation, so you can check that off, and really unwind. There are lots of things families can do at home to slow things down, reconnect, and have some fun:

- Try backyard camping! Share family stories around the picnic table or fire pit.
- Set up a net for badminton or volleyball.
- Create a backyard course for a Family Olympics.
- Break out the board games for Family Game Night.
- Family Movie Night at home can include healthy snacks, like popcorn (hold the butter!) and fresh veggies.
- Seek out freebies locally (from nature trails to museum "free" nights).
- Take naps! Studies show that a 10 to 30-minute nap mid-day can boost energy, mood, and memory. *Happy staycation!*

Sources include: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and [www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org).

