

A MONTHLY HEALTHLETTER FROM THE WELLNESS COUNCIL OF AMERICA



TAPPING INTO THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

Dr. Herbert Benson, founder of Harvard's Mind/Body Medical Institute, coined the term "Relaxation Response" in his book (of the same name) in 1975. The book was a national best seller, and the concepts it promoted are still wildly popular and practiced today. Essentially, the relaxation response is defined as a physical state of deep rest that enables your body to release chemicals and brain signals that make your muscles and organs slow down and increase blood flow to the brain.

So how does one elicit the relaxation response? Dr. Benson notes that there is no single method that works for everyone. In fact, there are several ways to summon it. Some effective methods include sitting in a relaxed position with your eyes closed, and then simply repeating a word or sound as you breathe. Some people use words like "calm" or "relax." If your mind wanders, which is normal, just refocus on the word repetition.

If traditional meditation isn't your thing, don't worry. Anything that slows your thoughts down and enables you to focus solely on the task at hand can evoke the relaxation response. This can include activities like running, yoga, knitting, or playing an instrument.

ANXIETY GETTING THE BEST OF YOU?

It's perfectly normal to worry from time to time—job concerns, financial security and your health are just a few items that can cause you to fret. However, anxiety can prove to be a healthy response, spurring you to take action when facing danger or uncertainty. But, for some people, anxiety is a routine part of their everyday lives.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)—the broadest type of anxiety—is characterized by constant, excessive and often unwarranted worry. Usually, this means having **persistent anxious thoughts on most days of the week, for several months**. Also, the anxiety is typically so severe that it interferes with daily life, and is accompanied with symptoms such as fatigue, restlessness, muscle tension and irritability.

Only a doctor can diagnose GAD. If you've experienced the symptoms above, or think you might have this condition, call or visit your primary care doctor right away. There are several treatments that can help alleviate generalized anxiety disorder.



QUICK COPING STRATEGIES

Take a walk—even if it's just for 5 minutes.
It will ease tension and boost your mood.

Aim for your best instead of perfection.
Trying to be perfect is stressful. Take comfort in your best effort.

Make a lunch date.
Having someone to talk to can take your mind off your anxiety and help you cope.

Let people know how they can help you.
Asking your family or friends to take on certain tasks and chores can help unload some of the burden you feel.

Write down your worries.
It can help identify what's bothering you and allow you to evaluate what you can and can't do about it.

6.8
MILLION

According to the National Institutes of Health, **GAD affects about 6.8 million American adults**. The disorder develops gradually and can arise at any time in one's life.

Adding asparagus to your meals is a tasty and nutritious way to add some variety and flavor. When cooked and seasoned, this superstar veggie is tender and delicious. Here are two great ways to incorporate asparagus into your next meal:

SAUTÉED ASPARAGUS AND ARTICHOKES

1 lb. asparagus, trimmed and sliced into thirds

1 can artichoke quarters, drained

1 bunch scallions, chopped

2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)

Juice of 1 lemon

DIRECTIONS:

Heat the EVOO over medium-high heat. Add scallions and asparagus and cook until tender. Stir in artichokes and lemon juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

SERVES: 4-6

ASPARGUS WITH LEMON-YOGURT DRESSING

1½ lb. asparagus, trimmed

½ cup plain low-fat yogurt

Juice of 1 lemon

1 tbsp. chopped dill

1 tsp. honey

Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS:

Steam asparagus until just tender. Rinse in cold water and chill in fridge. Stir together honey, yogurt, dill, and lemon juice. Place asparagus on platter; drizzle dressing over and season to taste with salt and pepper.

SERVES 4-6



Asparagus

2 WAYS

Asparagus offers one of your best natural sources of folate. Adequate folate is vital during all stages of life, especially during periods of rapid growth such as pregnancy, infancy and adolescence. This green veggie also serves up healthy doses of vitamins K, A and C as well as iron and potassium.



Dr. Ann
Ann Kulze, M.D.

With formal training in nutrition and medicine, plus hands-on experience as a mother of four and family physician, Dr. Ann is a unique nutrition expert for the real world.

The whole food ingredients found in Dr. Ann's recipes are the right foods for health and vitality. Nutritional excellence naturally follows.

For more, visit DrAnnWellness.com.

BATTLE BELLY FAT

with These 3 Nutritional Strategies

Many of us would like to whittle away our middle for aesthetic reasons, but a bulging belly poses risks that are more than skin deep. In fact, excess belly fat (also known as visceral fat) can put you at increased risk for many health problems including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke.

Researchers now know that belly fat wraps around your organs (like your stomach, liver and pancreas) and churns out harmful hormones and inflammatory substances which can wreak havoc on your body. Fortunately, slimming down your waistline is possible. With regular physical activity and a healthy diet, you can reduce your belly bulge. Here are three ways to eat your way slim!

1

FILL UP ON FIBER.

Fiber has a long list of health benefits, but fighting fat and protecting metabolic health is arguably where it shines most brilliantly. A study from Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center found that for every extra 10 grams of soluble fiber eaten per day, participants lost 3.7 percent of their visceral fat over five years. Aim for 25-30 grams of fiber a day and try to get a good portion of your fiber from fruits and veggies. The superstars for fiber content include: berries, snow peas, apples, canned tomato products, pumpkin, cauliflower, avocado, spinach, asparagus, broccoli, carrots, Brussels sprouts, sweet potato, okra, artichoke hearts, and winter squash.



2

FOCUS ON FATS (YES, YOU HEARD RIGHT).

A diet rich in monosaturated fatty acids and omega-3 fats can help protect you from belly fat. Some studies have shown that consuming these fats can prevent fat from being distributed around the belly. Avocados, nuts (any kind) and olive oil are all great sources of these healthy fats. Shoot for a handful of nuts a day and season your veggies and salads with extra virgin olive oil.



3

FORGO REFINED GRAINS, BUT REACH FOR WHOLE.

A diet rich in whole grains may help fight your belly bulge. A study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* revealed that people who incorporated whole grain breads, cereals and other whole grain foods lost more body fat from the abdominal area than those who ate only refined grains like white bread and rice. Focus on whole, intact grains like brown rice, oatmeal and quinoa.





WELCOA*

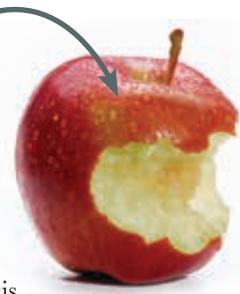
spark16... SIMPLY YOURSELF



Researchers at Harvard Medical School analyzed 21 studies and found that drinking unsweetened dark chocolate is associated with reduced blood pressure, improved blood vessel health and lowering LDL ("bad") cholesterol and elevating HDL ("good") cholesterol.



1 **Go apple picking.** Find a local orchard and make a day of it with friends or family. It's a fun and inexpensive way to stock up on this fiber-filled fruit.



2 **Go to a wine tasting with a friend.** Several studies indicate that red wine offers health benefits due to its antioxidant content. Many neighborhood grocers and wine shops offer free tastings on a regular basis. Savor the taste and stick to the equivalent of one glass.

3 **Go hiking on a scenic, leafy trail.** Enjoy the turn of the season if you can and take a stroll through your local park or trail.

4 **Have an afternoon picnic.** Pack some fresh fruits, veggies, dip, cheese, whole grain crackers and you have a healthy, fun and relaxing day on your hands!

5 **Go to a movie solo.** If you haven't done it before, you may find it liberating. Plus, catching a flick is a great way to unwind.

6 **Relax with a cup of hot cocoa (made from unsweetened dark chocolate).** It's a quick and easy way to reward yourself during a long day, and it provides health benefits too!



7 **Book a massage.** Swedish massages in particular can improve circulation and help you relax. Is there a better way to reward yourself?

8 **Make your own "ice cream."** You can still enjoy a cold treat in the fall! Freeze a banana and then toss it in a blender along with half a cup of unsweetened almond milk and a few teaspoons of cocoa powder. Add or substitute with any of your favorite fruits—berries, peaches and pitted cherries are just a few ideas.



16 WAYS TO TREAT THIS FALL

Remember to talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

9 Grab a book and read outside. Take full advantage of the mild weather—cozy up under a blanket and turn the pages under some turning trees.

10 Make a “gourmet dinner” with a friend or your spouse. Focus on making a quality meal with quality ingredients. Watch some cooking shows or look up some recipes to get inspired.

11 Use your gym’s sauna or steam room. If you belong to one and they offer it, use it. Heat helps ease tension and relaxes your muscles. It’s a great reward after a workout on a crisp fall day.

12 Use a day of PTO to pamper yourself. Use a vacation day to do whatever activities bring you joy and help you relax.

13 Take a luxurious bubble bath. Splurge on some aromatherapy like candles or essential oils, turn on some relaxing music and then draw your tub with warm water and soak away!

14 It’s pumpkin season—so grab a few and roast your own seeds. Sprinkle with some olive oil, cinnamon and a dash of sugar. The seeds are loaded with healthy nutrients and they’re delicious!

15 Take a “power nap”. If you have the time and it’s feasible, a nap can prove extremely rewarding. Crack a window open and take a 15-20 minute siesta.

16 Splurge on an item that will help you maintain healthy habits. Running shoes, a raincoat, a fitness tracker—set your sights on one thing that you think will help you begin or maintain a healthy habit.



Studies have shown that even a **five-minute** walk outdoors can boost your mood and self-esteem.



HOW TO SPOT & TREAT

THYROID TROUBLES



CAUSES OF HYPERTHYROIDISM

Most people aren't even aware of hyperthyroidism until it affects them or someone they know. Here is what commonly sparks the condition:

Family history. The most common cause of hyperthyroidism is an autoimmune condition called Graves' disease, which runs in families, and usually affects younger women.

Inflammation. Inflammation of the thyroid is called thyroiditis. A virus or problem with the immune system causes the gland to swell, leaking thyroid hormones into the bloodstream.

Growths or lumps in the thyroid. If lumps or nodules (often referred to as goiters) grow in the thyroid gland, they will gradually increase the gland's activity and the amount of thyroid hormone in your blood.

Your thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland that sits low on the front of the neck. Although it's small in size, the thyroid plays a big role in your overall health. The gland secretes hormones that influence metabolism, growth and development, and body temperature. If your thyroid isn't functioning properly, you're likely to experience several symptoms. However, because common symptoms of an overactive thyroid can be associated with fatigue or aging in general, many people dismiss them and never get checked out until the condition greatly worsens.

COULD YOU HAVE THYROID ISSUES?

Millions of people have an overactive thyroid gland and don't know it. The condition, known as hyperthyroidism, causes your thyroid gland to make and release more thyroid hormones than your body needs. The condition is much more common among women, but men can develop it as well. People with an overactive thyroid often experience several symptoms including:

- Increased body temperature and/or an inability to stay cool
- Constant perspiration, thirst and/or hunger
- Irritability, anxiousness and/or insomnia
- Unexplained weight loss even when appetite and the amount and type of food you eat remain the same or even increases
- An enlarged thyroid gland (goiter), which may appear as a swelling at the base of your neck

- Shaky hands
- Vision problems like watery, puffy eyes or double vision
- Hives
- Increased heart rate

If you've been experiencing any of these symptoms, call your healthcare provider and ask about having your thyroid tested. Aside from the daily discomfort that hyperthyroidism can cause, if left untreated, an overactive thyroid can cause health complications, such as irregular heart rhythm and heart trouble, miscarriage, or osteoporosis.

There are several different ways your doctor can treat hyperthyroidism. Depending on your age and the severity of the condition, treatments could include anti-thyroid medications, radioactive iodine, beta blockers, or surgery.





MAKE YOUR WORKOUT WORK FOR YOU

Fitness Experts Share Their Secrets

It appears that success and exercise go hand-in-hand. Several scientific studies show that exercise is critical for optimal brain function, memory and learning. In fact, a recent study published in *Frontiers in Physiology, Cell Reports* found that exercise may boost a protein called klotho, and research shows that those who have more of this protein have better cognitive function.

You know that exercise can help you achieve a good quality of life, but how do you ensure you're successful at exercise? For many of us, sticking to a workout routine can be a challenge. It may be difficult just to get up off the couch! Fortunately, fitness experts and amateurs alike have paved the way for us, and here are some of their most tried and true "secrets" for making workouts work for you.

If you don't like running on a treadmill, don't do it. You're much more likely to adhere to an exercise routine if you stick to what you like. In fact, a study out of Dublin City University found that when you're having a good time exercising, it masks the unpleasant feelings that often go along with working out (fatigue, boredom, soreness, etc.). Try

watching or listening to funny shows if you're on a stationary bike or take a dancing class with friends—whatever you enjoy and makes you smile.

Start out small. Setting unrealistic or intimidating goals can set you up for failure. For example, if you haven't run more than a mile for a year, but want to run a marathon in six months, you're likely to get injured (if you train too much, too fast or too hard) or the goal might seem so daunting that you give up after a few weeks. Start an exercise routine with "baby steps." Maybe this means walking for 10 minutes or riding your bike around the block. The point is to start off gradually and then build up your goals as you increase your endurance.

Ask family and friends to join you. You may be more likely to stick with it if you have good company. Register for a run or class with someone. Not only will a workout partner help keep you accountable, but you'll be able to share your experiences and success with them.

Add variety. Try to mix things up so you don't get bored. If you always walk, try bike riding, dancing or swimming. A little variety will help ensure that exercise doesn't get boring or routine.

MOVE OF THE MONTH: MOVING ALTERNATING TOE TOUCH

Here's a great, simple move to help you improve your mobility, stability and flexibility for your upper and lower back (as well as your hamstrings). This is a move you can do in front of your desk, the TV—practically anywhere!

GET READY

All you'll need is a flat, non-slip surface to stand on.

GET SET

Standing upright, place your feet hip width apart, with your legs straight and hands by your sides.

GO

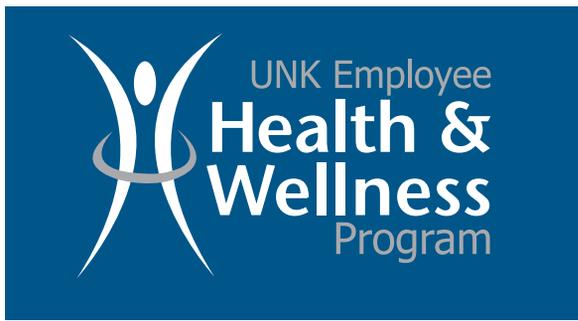
1. Take a small step forward (approximately 6-12 inches) with your right foot. Next, balance your weight and raise the non-standing leg and foot out to the side.
2. Slowly bend forward at your waist, rotating your torso, while reaching down with your left hand, trying to touch the toes of your right foot. Go down as far as you comfortably can and hold this position for 2-4 seconds.
3. Slowly stand upright and return to Step 1.

Repeat the motion to the other side. Repeat these steps alternating legs 4-6 times each.

Pointers to Remember:

- Move slowly and under control.
- Bend at the waist, keeping your back straight.
- Reach down and stretch until there's slight tension, but not pain.
- Exhale as you lower down to reach toes.
- Keep legs straight throughout motion with a slight bend in knees.





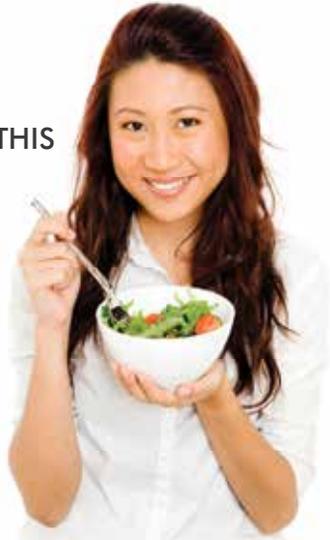
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DID YOU KNOW?

6.8 MILLION GENERALIZED **ANXIETY DISORDER** AFFECTS ABOUT 6.8 MILLION AMERICAN ADULTS.

5 MINUTES STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT EVEN A **FIVE-MINUTE** WALK OUTDOORS CAN BOOST YOUR MOOD AND SELF-ESTEEM.

25-30 GRAMS YOU SHOULD AIM FOR 25-30 GRAMS OF **FIBER** A DAY.

Is It Social Anxiety Disorder?

Getting nervous before speaking in front of a large crowd or being a bit shy in front of a group of strangers is quite normal, but for millions of Americans, everyday social situations pose an extreme challenge. Situations that can provoke serious anxiety include:



- Eating or drinking in front of others
- Working in front of others
- Interacting with people during any type of social event (parties, get togethers, etc.)
- Asking questions or giving reports in groups
- Using public facilities or services, like bathrooms or transportation

If you've been experiencing anxiety in any of the above situations talk to your doctor. Social anxiety disorder can be treated with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and/or medications.

WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?

400 CALORIES

Stop by your local coffee shop and your standard cup of regular hot chocolate with whipped cream can cost you 400 calories and about 43 grams of sugar!

BEST CHOICE

60 CALORIES

There are only 60 calories in a standard cup of unsweetened dark chocolate hot chocolate.