Healthy Lifestyle

Do Your Body Good
The health benefits of carrots

Build A Home Gym
Budget-friendly ideas inside

Pain But No Gain
Signs you might be overtraining
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The health benefits of carrots

When looking to quell hunger pangs that can pop up between meals, many people reach for snacks. Snacks can be a great way to prevent overeating at mealtime, but such benefits can be negated if people choose the wrong snacks.

Potato chips and sugary packaged baked goods may be readily available inside office vending machines and at convenience stores, but such snacks don’t pack the nutritional punch of carrots. Considered a superfood by many people, carrots are a simple snack that can be found at any grocery store and brought along to an office, regardless of whether that office is a traditional office, a work site or anywhere else people spend their workdays.

**Vitamins and minerals**

Carrots are a great source of various vitamins and minerals. According to the health and wellness information site Healthline®, carrots are great sources of vitamin A, biotin, vitamin K1, potassium, and vitamin B6.

Carrots are rich in beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A, a nutrient that promotes strong vision and plays a vital role in immune function.

Studies have shown that biotin plays an important role in the body’s ability to metabolize fat and protein.

Vitamin K1 plays a vital role in blood coagulation, which is the process of making blood clot. Coagulation enables the blood to plug and heal a wound.

Potassium can help people control their blood pressure, which can benefit their long-term health in various ways.

Finally, vitamin B6 plays a role in converting food into energy, making it an ideal afternoon snack for people who want to quell their hunger pangs and give themselves a needed energy boost.

**Carrots and long-term health**

Carrots also have been shown to have long-term health benefits. In 2016, the American Institute for Cancer Research added carrots to its list of “Foods that Fight Cancer.” The links between carrots and reducing cancer risk are many and include carrots’ status as a low-calorie snack. Low-calorie snacks can help people reduce their risk of overweight and obesity, which the AICR notes is a cause of 11 cancers.

Studies, including one published in the European Journal of Nutrition, have linked carrots to lower cholesterol levels. That’s a considerable benefit, as high cholesterol is among the most significant risk factors for heart disease.

Carrots have long been touted as helping to improve vision, and that reputation is well-earned. When the beta-carotene in carrots is converted into vitamin A, that vitamin A combines with a protein called opsin to form rhodopsin, which is needed for night and color vision.

When snack time beckons, carrots can help people reap immediate and long-term rewards.
Mapping out a healthy diet can be tricky. While everyone needs certain vitamins and minerals, no two people are the same, and a diet that’s right for one person might not be suitable or palatable for another.

Personal preference must be considered when planning a diet, as people are more likely to stick with a healthy diet if they enjoy the foods they eat. While fruits and vegetables should be a part of everyone’s diet, people should not overlook the importance of including lean protein in their diets as well.

Choosing which proteins to include in a diet can be tricky. The United States Department of Agriculture notes that not all proteins are created equal in terms of their health benefits. Proteins include foods such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and nuts, but some can actually lead to negative side effects, including an increased risk for overweight or obesity and heart disease.

Why are some proteins potentially troublesome?
The USDA notes that some foods from the protein group are high in saturated fat and cholesterol. Such foods include fatty cuts of beef, pork and lamb; ground beef that is between 75 and 85 percent lean; regular sausages, hot dogs and bacon; lunch meats like bologna and salami; and duck. Limiting, if not avoiding, such foods can help people maintain healthy cholesterol levels.

Cholesterol is only found in foods from animal sources, but not all animal-based proteins contribute to high cholesterol. Lean proteins can be great ways to reap the benefits of protein without suffering the negative side effects of proteins that are high in fat and calories.

The online medical resource Healthline® notes that white-fleshed fish, such cod and flounder; skinless, white-meat poultry; and pork loin or pork chops are some examples of lean, animal-based proteins.

What do the right proteins do for the body?
The right proteins are vital to a healthy lifestyle. The USDA notes that the following are some of the many characteristics of lean proteins that make them healthy additions to anyone’s diet.

- **Nutrient-rich:** Lean proteins supply the body with various nutrients, including B vitamins, vitamin E, iron, zinc, and magnesium. The B vitamins found in proteins help the body release energy and promote nervous system function. In addition, B vitamins found in protein aid in the formation of red blood cells and help build tissues. Iron carries oxygen to the blood, so the iron found in lean protein can help the body perform a vital function that can prevent fatigue and promote a strong immune system. The zinc in lean protein also helps ensure a properly functioning immune system.

- **Healthy bones and muscles:** Proteins are building blocks for bones, muscles, cartilage, skin, and blood. Proteins can help muscles recover after a workout, and low protein intake can make it harder for the body to absorb calcium, which is vital for bone strength. The body uses the magnesium in lean protein sources to build strong bones and release energy from muscles.

The right protein sources can benefit the body in myriad ways.
How much exercise does a person need?

Exercise is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle. Exercise helps people maintain healthy weights, improves mood, reduces the risk for various health ailments, and much more. But how much exercise is necessary for optimal health? Research indicates that the answer to that question depends on the person and his or individual health goals.

According to David Bassett, Jr., PhD, a professor of exercise physiology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, having a clear set of exercise goals can help a person determine just how much exercise he or she needs, particularly if a person is exercising to control his or her weight or reduce his or her stress.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that most healthy adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination thereof, every week. Try to engage in strength training for all major muscle groups at least two times per week. The Mayo Clinic says a general goal for most people is to aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day.

Health experts say that this exercise needn’t all occur at once, either. If a 30-minute walk is not possible, split that up into a few 10-minute walks throughout the day. Any activity is better than doing nothing at all.

For those with specific fitness goals, it could be wise to speak with a trainer or a doctor about which types of exercises (and durations) are effective. Physicians may be able to map out a fitness plan that works.

Build an effective (and budget-friendly) home gym

Physical fitness is important. Exercise guidelines depend on the individual, but the American Heart Association recommends adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week. That amount may need to be increased to meet specific goals, such as weight loss.

In order to meet their fitness goals, many people invest in home gyms. Home gyms can be a convenient way to maximize physical activity and help people maintain muscle mass. According to Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, a Harvard-affiliated medical center, staying fit can improve physical strength, reduce seniors’ fear of falls, increase confidence, and improve sleep.

When setting up a home gym, people may be tempted to invest a fortune into their equipment. But such investments aren’t entirely necessary. Here are some ways to have a functional, budget-friendly workout space in your home.

Invest in elastic resistance bands. Invest in lightweight elastic bands. According to a study published in 2018 in the Journal of Sports Science & Medicine, such bands can improve strength just as effectively as many weight machines commonly found in gyms. Resistance bands don’t take up much space and can be tucked out of sight when not in use.

Dedicate a workout space. Many people find that areas away from the bustle of the household are great spaces to devote to home gyms. Include a full-length mirror that lets you make sure you’re performing exercises correctly and invest in a stereo to pump in inspirational music. The fewer the distractions, the more likely you will commit to your exercise regimen.

Invest in a set of dumbbells. Adjustable dumbbells or a few of various weights are a good investment. Dumbbells are compact and can be used to perform a variety of strength-training exercises. Begin with light weights and work your way up to reduce your risk of injury.

Try stability balls. Stability balls are used to perform various core exercises, according to Harvard Medical School. The body’s core can be strengthened to improve balance, reduce back pain and more. Stability balls also can be used to perform abdominal crunches, squats, hamstring curls, and body bridges. Balls also can double as a bench when working with dumbbells.

Don’t forget about cardio. Elliptical machines, stationary bikes and treadmills are effective, but there are other ways to get your daily dose of cardiovascular exercise. Lateral shuffles between two points on a gym floor, or setting up a circuit of jumping jacks or skipping rope can keep your heart rate up and improve health.

Home gyms can help people get and stay in shape.
Exercise is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. Many people find that pairing a nutritious, well-balanced diet with routine exercise is a successful formula for a long and healthy life.

People typically know when to stop eating. In fact, the brain signals when the stomach is full to prevent the body from eating too much. Exercise can be a little trickier, as men and women may be inclined to ignore certain warning signs of overexertion during a workout. The well-known workout motto “no pain, no gain” implies that rewards await those who push through their pain during a workout. However, ignoring signals that the body is being overtrained can have a detrimental effect on both short- and long-term health.

According to the American Council on Exercise®, there is a tipping point in regard to how much exercise the body can take. ACE notes that, when people pass that point, the exercise they engage in can actually do more harm than good. ACE refers to the tipping point as overtraining syndrome, or OTS, which can actually contribute to a reduction in overall fitness and increase a person’s risk for injury.

People dealing with OTS may not recognize its symptoms as readily as they would a full stomach. As a result, it can be easier to overtrain than overeat. For instance, people focused on eating healthy often know when to call it quits at the dinner table, but might not know when to end a workout. Overtraining can be just as harmful as overeating, and athletes can help themselves by learning to recognize various signs of overtraining.

**Decreased performance:** ACE notes that a lack of improved performance, despite an increase in training intensity or volume, is a tell-tale sign of OTS. Athletes who recognize a decrease in their agility, strength and endurance might be dealing with OTS.

**Increased perceive effort during workouts:** OTS can make seemingly effortless workouts seem difficult. An abnormally elevated heart rate during exercise or even throughout the day may indicate OTS.

**Excessive fatigue:** Too much training can contribute to fatigue because the body is not being given ample time to recover between workouts.

**Agitation and moodiness:** Overtraining can contribute to a hormonal imbalance that affects stress levels, potentially making people more irritable and contributing to moodiness.

**Insomnia or restless sleep:** The overproduction of stress hormones that can occur when overtraining can adversely affect a person’s ability to get adequate sleep.

Additional signs of overtraining include loss of appetite, chronic or nagging injuries, metabolic imbalances, and stress and/or depression. More information about OTS and how to avoid it is available at www.acefitness.org.

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**Did you know?**

The American Academy of Family Physicians notes that children should get at least one hour of physical activity per day. The AAFP notes that many kids easily achieve that marker simply by being children and engaging in the activities kids are drawn to each day, such as running, climbing and playing games like tag with other youngsters. The Canadian Paediatric Society notes that exercise needs change as children advance through various stages in life, and that means activities should change along with them. For example, the CPS recommends that physical activities for toddlers should be fun and encourage children to explore and try new things. Unstructured physical activity or free play can benefit toddlers. As toddlers become preschoolers, physical activities can become more structured, though the CPS notes that children this age may not understand the rules of organized sports nor are they necessarily coordinated enough to participate in them. However, structured activities like games of tag and throwing and catching may be appropriate for some preschoolers. As children enter kindergarten and advance through elementary school, physical activities can be moderate to vigorous in intensity. Organized sports can become part of the fitness regimen at this time, though the CPS recommends short instruction times, flexible rules, free time in practices, and a focus on fun rather than competition. Parents who want to learn about age-appropriate physical activities can encourage their children to embrace fitness and are urged to speak with their children’s physicians.
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