Hitting the Gym
Why you might be better off exercising at a gym than at home

The Easy Road to a Healthier You
3 simple ways to get healthier every day
### Healthy Living

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What to expect as you transition to a healthy diet

For many people, the road to a healthy lifestyle begins in the kitchen. People make changes to their diets of their own volition or at the recommendation of their doctors, and those changes can have a profound effect that might surprise even the most devoted of healthy eaters.

According to the Center for Advancement in Cancer Education, 90 percent of all cancer cases can be prevented through environmental and lifestyle choices like deciding to eat a healthy diet. In addition, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, notes that a history of poor eating is one of the biggest contributors to the various nutrition- and physical activity-related health challenges that now face the U.S. population. By simply altering their diets to make them more nutritious, millions of people across the globe can significantly reduce their risk for various chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

People who are committed to eating healthier should know that changing diets can produce some adverse, but typically temporary, side effects. The CACE notes that such side effects are predictable, as they are essentially just manifestations of the body’s adjustments as it responds to eating better. People adopting healthier diets should discuss the appearance of the following side effects with their physicians while recognizing that they are not necessarily a cause for concern.

Skin rashes
The CACE notes that people who have histories of recurring skin rashes or eruptions may experience such rashes as they adjust to healthy diets. That’s because the skin is becoming more active and alive due to the healthy diet and expelling toxins that could potentially prove hazardous down the road. Doctors unfamiliar with patients’ histories may mistake these rashes for food allergies, so it’s important that patients be open and honest about their medical histories and remind their doctors that they are in the process of changing their diets for the better.

Colds or fevers
Colds or fevers can be another way the body indicates it’s working hard to cleanse itself. Fevers should always be monitored closely, even while in the midst of changing one’s diet for the better. But the CACE notes that colds or fevers, while unpleasant, can serve as a natural form of housecleaning as the body adjusts to a healthy diet. Persistent colds and fevers should be brought to the attention of a physician.

Additional symptoms
Some people may experience withdrawal symptoms like headaches and irritability as they transition from unhealthy diets to healthy ones. Such symptoms may be more likely to occur among people who suddenly adopt extreme diets. A gradual transition may help mitigate these symptoms, as can choosing a less extreme, balanced diet as opposed to one that demands certain foods be avoided entirely right off the bat. Choosing to eat a healthier diet is a smart move that can pay long-term dividends. But the transition may require people to confront potentially uncomfortable side effects as their bodies adjust.
The rise of telehealth services

Getting sick once meant traveling to a physician's office only to sit in a waiting room with fellow under-the-weather individuals. Few if any people like leaving home when they're feeling ill, and thanks to technology, many no longer need to do so.

Telehealth services, which the Massachusetts Medical Society defines as the delivery and facilitation of health and health-related services including medical care, provider and patient education, health information services, and self-care via telecommunications and digital communication technologies, are revolutionizing the healthcare industry. In many instances, patients need not leave the comfort of their beds or sofas to be diagnosed and treated.

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology says telehealth, which is a broader scope of remote healthcare services than telemedicine, can utilize everything from videoconferencing, the internet, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless phone communications.

Many providers and insurance companies now offer some method of telehealth services. Consider some of these statistics:

• The American Telemedicine Association says more than one-half of all hospitals in the United States have a telehealth program.
• Forty-eight states require payers to cover telehealth, says the Center for Connected Health Policy.
• BBC Research indicates that telehealth makes up roughly one-quarter of the healthcare-related technology market.

Preventative care involves safeguarding mental health as well

Preventative care is often looked at through the needs people need to do to protect their physical well-being. For example, a healthy diet and routine exercise, while beneficial to mental health, are often viewed as lifestyle choices that can make people feel better physically. But taking steps to protect one's mental health also is vital to a long, productive life.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes that positive mental health and mental wellness can have a profoundly positive impact on a person's life. Positive mental health can help people realize their full potential, cope with the stresses of life and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

What can I do to protect my mental health?

Learning to recognize the early warning signs of mental health problems can help prevent such problems from escalating and compel people to seek help. The DHHS advises anyone feeling these signs or recognizing these signs in others to seek help for themselves or their loved ones:

• Eating or sleeping too much or too little
• Pulling away from people and usual activities
• Having low or no energy
• Feeling numb or as if nothing matters
• Unexplained aches and pains
• Feeling helpless or hopeless
• Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
• Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
• Yelling or fighting with family and friends
• Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
• Persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
• Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
• Thinking of harming yourself or others
• An inability to perform daily tasks, such as taking care of your children or getting to work or school

Taking steps to protect one's mental wellness is a vital component of preventative care. More information about mental health is available at www.mentalhealth.gov.
Goals can be a motivating force that help people realize their full potential. When it comes to personal fitness, goals are often an essential component of getting healthy. Achieving fitness-related goals is not always so easy. A 2018 survey from Cision and Varo Money found that 45 percent of respondents resolved to lose weight or get in shape in 2018. Many of those people made those efforts part of their New Year’s resolutions, which various studies have found have a high failure rate. In fact, one 2015 report from U.S. News indicated that 80 percent of New Year’s resolutions don’t survive to see the second week of February. Fortunately, there are ways to clear the hurdles required to make significant lifestyle changes, particularly those associated with physical fitness. Whether they’re looking to lose weight, improve their overall health and/or simply hoping to look better in the mirror, many people find working with personal trainers is a good way to get on track and stay on track. People on the fence about hiring personal trainers can consider these benefits to working with these highly trained fitness professionals.

- **Knowledge:** Gyms often require their personal trainers to earn their personal training certifications, and many universities now even partner with specific certification programs so people who want to become personal trainers can earn both their degrees and their certifications. Knowledgeable, certified personal trainers can help their clients tailor their workouts around clients’ individual goals. After meeting with a client and learning about the client’s goals, trainers can design workout regimens specific to the individual. That personalization is not possible for people who design their workout regimens around generalized advice they find online or elsewhere.

- **Motivation:** Personal trainers also can provide the motivation their clients need to keep going. That’s valuable for anyone, but especially for people new to exercise or who haven’t been physically active for some time. Trainers can motivate clients to finish sets when weightlifting, but also track clients’ progress between workouts. When delivered by a trained fitness professional, such progress reports can motivate people to keep working, especially during those times when they might be questioning their commitments to exercising.

- **Variety:** Many people quit working out due to something often referred to as “exercise boredom.” That’s the boredom that can set in when people perform the same exercise routine for weeks, months or even years at a time. Personal trainers can use their experience to create exercise regimens that change often enough to prevent exercise boredom from settling in.

- **Avoid injury:** Perhaps the biggest benefit to working with a personal trainer is that doing so can reduce risk for injury. Personal trainers know the appropriate ways to use exercise machines and watch their clients closely to ensure their form is always correct during a workout. Poor form or misuse of machines can lead to injuries that can quickly derail fitness goals. Personal trainers can be invaluable assets for people looking to get or stay healthy.
Why you might be better off exercising at a gym than at home

Routine exercise benefits minds and bodies in various ways. Studies have shown that physical activity can improve mood and lower people’s risk for various diseases, including heart disease and diabetes. As beneficial as exercise can be, many people simply don’t make physical activity part of their regular routines. Recent studies and reports from the United States’ National Center for Health Statistics and Statistics Canada, conducted separately from each other, found that roughly 80 percent of adults in both the U.S. and Canada are not meeting the minimum physical activity requirements recommended by their respective governments. While a host of factors can influence a person’s decisions on physical activity, where to exercise is one factor that could go a long way toward determining just how much adults exercise. Basements, attics, spare bedrooms, or two-car garages may seem like the perfect places to create home gyms. However, the benefits of working out at a gym may outweigh the convenience of working out at home.

Workout partners and/or other gym members may improve your chances of losing weight. People who exercise at home tend to work out alone. In so doing, they may be removing a potentially strong motivator that could keep them exercising. A 2016 study published in the research journal Obesity found that increasing contacts and interactions with thinner individuals, and declining contacts and interactions with heavier individuals, were linked to actual weight loss. In other words, working out with a fit friend or simply interacting with fellow gym members who maintain healthy weights can benefit people who are trying to lose weight through exercise.

Gym memberships have a way of paying for themselves. The cost of a gym membership is one factor many people cite as a reason for not exercising more. However, many health insurance plans now offer sweat equity rebates that reward policy holders for working out. Such rebates can greatly reduce the cost of a gym membership, if not remove it entirely. For example, a sweat equity program that offers a $200 rebate every six months for policy holders who exercise 50 times during that period can make a $30 monthly gym membership free. In that example, gym members would pay $180 for six months but get all of that money back if they work out 50 times in a six-month period.

Gyms can make it easier to diversify your workouts. Exercise boredom is something even the most ardent fitness enthusiast can relate to. Exercise boredom refers to the disinterest that can develop over time as people do the same workouts for weeks, months or years at a time. A home gym may not be spacious enough to include too many machines, whereas gyms typically include enough machines and classes to allow people to diversify their workouts as often as they’d like. Working out at home may be convenient, but people looking to make exercise part of their daily routines may get better results by exercising at a nearby gym.

The role screening should play before starting an exercise regimen

Exercise plays a significant role in disease prevention. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, physical activity helps to reduce individuals’ risk of chronic conditions, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, various types of cancer, and dementia. As vital as exercise is to a healthy lifestyle, many people simply are not getting enough of it. A 2018 report from the National Center for Health Statistics found that only about 23 percent of American adults between the ages of 18 and 64 are meeting the benchmarks for physical activity guidelines set forth by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. And that problem is not unique to the United States. A recent study from Statistics Canada found that only about 17 percent of adults in Canada were meeting the minimum guidelines for weekly physical activity established by the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. Such figures illustrate the emphasis that many adults must place on getting more physical activity. But returning to physical activity after a long layoff or becoming physically active for the first time are not as simple as lacing up a pair of running shoes and hitting the road. In fact, the American College of Sports Medicine notes the importance of preparticipation health screening for adults about to engage in physical activity after a period of inactivity.

What is a preparticipation health screening?
A preparticipation health screening is an examination conducted by a physician that looks for particular issues that may interfere with one’s ability to exercise. Doctors will likely ask patients about their medical histories and their family histories as well, as each of these factors can be used to determine whether a person is ready for physical activity or any restrictions need to be put in place to protect them.

What happens after a preparticipation health screening?
Once a physician conducts a health screening, he or she will conclude if an individual can exercise and how much he or she can exercise. Adults who are cleared to exercise but have never been physically active or have gone years without exercising will likely be advised to take it slowly at first. Doctors may provide specific exercise recommendations or refer patients to a sports medicine professional who can help them devise an appropriate workout regimen. Doctors also may recommend followup appointments to track patients’ progress. Such appointments can be invaluable, as they can help people whose overall health has improved after limited exercise ramp up the intensity of their workouts, which can help them continue on the course to a healthier life. However, it’s important that people consult their physicians before increasing the intensity of their workouts. A second screening might even be worthwhile, helping people and their physicians alter workout regimens that reflect their improved overall health. Many people aspire to exercise more. In many instances, a preparticipation screening is a vital component for people looking to become more physically active after a long layoff.
Nutritious diets have long been touted as essential components of healthy lifestyles. Many people have a tendency to view diet as something that’s purely physical, associating the foods they eat with how they look and how much energy they have. While accurate, it doesn’t paint the full picture of just how big and positive an impact healthy diets can have on overall health.

In regard to healthy diets, it’s hard to dispute the effectiveness of the Mediterranean diet. The Mediterranean diet focuses on plant-based foods and, as a result, includes lots of fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and olive oil. The diet is so healthy that the World Health Organization even recognizes it as a healthy, sustainable dietary pattern. Long touted for its ability to promote heart health and reduce risk for heart disease, which the WHO notes is the number one cause of death across the globe, the Mediterranean diet has also been found to protect against cancer and type 2 diabetes.

Each of those benefits makes the Mediterranean diet worthy of consideration at the very least, but the benefits of this approach to eating don’t stop there. In fact, people unfamiliar with the Mediterranean diet, or even those who subscribe to it, may not realize that the diet can have a positive effect on mental wellness.

A 2015 study published in the scientific journal *Ageing Research Reviews* found that strong adherence to the Mediterranean diet was associated with a 40 percent reduced risk for cognitive impairment. Another study from researchers in Spain found that older adults who supplemented their Mediterranean diets with extra olive oil or nuts had superior cognitive function, including better memory and thinking skills, than those who ate low-fat diets. Reasoning, attention and language were better among the former group as well.

In addition to improving cognitive function, the Mediterranean diet also may improve mental wellness by reducing adherents’ risk of developing depression. A 2013 study published in the *Journal of Nutrition, Health and Aging* found that people who followed the Mediterranean diet most closely were nearly 99 percent less likely to develop depression that those who followed the diet the least closely.

While diet is often thought of in physical terms, the Mediterranean diet can benefit mental wellness while also helping people maintain healthy weights.

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**Did you know?**

Sugar is a naturally occurring component in many healthy foods, including fruit. But people looking to eat healthy should be wary of foods that contain added sugars, which can pose a significant threat to long-term health. According to the Harvard Medical School, added sugars are not currently listed on Nutrition Facts labels (though the Mayo Clinic expects that to change in the future). That can make it hard to spot foods that contain substantial amounts of added sugars. However, the HMS recommends looking at the ingredients listings on food labels and keeping an eye out for words ending in “ose.” The Mayo Clinic notes that fructose, dextrose, glucose, and maltose are the chemical names for various types of sugar. These ingredients can serve as a red flag that a product contains added sugars that can be detrimental to your overall health. In addition to words ending in “ose,” shoppers can scan ingredients listings for other common types of added sugars, including cane juice, cane syrup, corn sweeteners, high-fructose corn syrup, fruit juice concentrate and nectars, honey, malt or maple syrup, and molasses.

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How to approach nutrition when feeding children away from home

Children can be picky eaters. Parents know that getting kids to eat anything, much less healthy foods, can sometimes make the dinner table feel more like a battlefield than a place to break bread. That’s especially so when the dinner table is in a restaurant, where savvy youngsters might know less nutritious dishes like macaroni and cheese or fried chicken fingers are on the menu. But the benefits of a healthy, balanced diet are so numerous for youngsters that it’s worth doing whatever it takes to get kids to embrace nutrient-rich foods, both at home and when dining out.

The American Academy of Family Physicians notes that a healthy diet can stabilize children’s energy levels, help them maintain healthy weights and potentially prevent mental health conditions, including anxiety and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD.

But recognizing the importance of a healthy diet and getting kids to embrace one are two different things, especially when kids are dining out and being tempted by unhealthy alternatives. In recognition of that, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following strategies to parents who want their kids to eat healthy when they’re away from home.

Make meals all-inclusive. When preparing school lunches or taking youngsters out for a night on the town, make sure to offer a mix of foods from the five food groups. The AAP recommends parents offer vegetables, fruit, grains, low-fat dairy, and/or quality protein sources, which can include meat, fish, nuts, seeds, and eggs. Offering each of these foods at every meal may not be feasible, but kids should eat foods selected from the major food groups at every meal.

Avoid highly processed foods. The National Institutes of Health notes that studies have suggested there’s a link between highly processed foods and health problems. Such foods, which typically contain ingredients such as hydrogenated oils, high-fructose corn syrup and flavoring agents, are typically high in calories, salt, sugar, and fat. While highly processed foods tend to be easier to make and readily available at restaurants, serving them to youngsters can start kids down the road to poor dietary habits, potentially increasing their risk for obesity and diseases like heart disease and diabetes. When packing snacks for school lunches or taking kids out to restaurants, be sure to include or bring along healthy whole foods, such as fruits and vegetables. This can ensure kids get some healthy fare during mealtimes.

Enhance foods if necessary. While high amounts of sugar, salt and fat can jeopardize the health of adults and youngsters alike, the AAP notes that small amounts of these substances can be used to enhance kids’ enjoyment of healthy foods and increase the likelihood that they will eat them.

Parents may not have much control over what their children eat while away from home. But a handful of strategies can increase the likelihood that kids enjoy healthy fare when eating at school or at restaurants.

How handwashing helps fight infection

There are many ways to avoid infection, but few might be as simultaneously simple and effective as handwashing. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps a person can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. While skeptics might question just how big an impact handwashing can have, the science behind washing hands paints a pretty strong picture of just how beneficial this particular component of personal hygiene can be.

What does handwashing do?

With so many germs floating around, it may seem as though something as simple as handwashing couldn’t be nearly as effective as it’s said to be. But the CDC notes that handwashing removes germs from hands, thereby removing an easy way for germs to enter the body and be passed on to others. For instance, many people habitually touch their eyes, nose and mouth without thinking twice, and doing so provides an easy way for germs to enter the body via the hands. By washing their hands, people can cut off this easy entryway for germs.

Handwashing also presents germs from entering the body while eating. Germs from unwashed hands can get into people’s food and drinks, and can even multiply in some foods and beverages, potentially contributing to illness. Washing hands also prevents the spread of germs by preventing them from being transferred from hands to handrails, table tops or toys, where they can then spread to other people’s hands.

Handwashing is a simple yet effective way to stop the spread of germs. And it just might be the simplest way to avoid illnesses.
I Will Remember You

“I’m worried my grandbabies will forget me when I’m gone,” she said, fighting back tears as she laid in her hospital bed. When faced with the reality that our own death will come, what will we fear at the end? For so many at end-of-life, the fear of not being remembered by loved ones is at the forefront of their minds. In hospice care, this is observed all too frequently by the providers who support patients in their journey. Music therapy, however, is a powerful way to transform these worries into a beautiful legacy. Music therapists are board-certified healthcare professionals, who work directly with patients to help identify their needs and establish individualized goals. Through music therapy, patients receive personalized care in a meaningful and non-intrusive manner while physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social needs are being addressed.

When a hospice patient acknowledges a fear of being forgotten, music therapists are able to offer them a variety of legacy building options. This may include interventions such as heartbeat/voice recordings and legacy songwriting. Through these interventions, patients can openly express their thoughts/emotions while feeling supported and empowered within their circumstance. Those who were once afraid often feel a sense of peace after their project is complete. Families and friends cherish these legacy projects even more, because their loved one’s voice, heartbeat, and/or favorite song is forever available to them after they pass away.

“I can’t believe my littlest grandson is going to remember what my voice sounds like,” she cried. “Music therapy is amazing.” Yes, it certainly is.

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Submitted by Carrie Whatley Music Therapist, MT, BC
Carrie is a Board-Certified Music Therapist at State of the Heart Care.

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Nutritious diets and routine exercise are two hallmarks of a healthy lifestyle. Combining the two can lower people’s risk for various diseases and contribute to a high quality of life. But food and physical activity are not the only things people should do to improve their chances of living long, healthy lives. Preventive care is important. One of the most effective principles of preventive care is to schedule an annual checkup with a physician. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, routine health exams and tests can find problems before they start. During annual check-ups, doctors may notice some red flags, such as high cholesterol, that men and women won’t detect on their own. These warning signs could be increasing people’s risk for disease and/or discomfort. Many of these red flags are undetectable without proper screenings, which is why annual checkups are integral to maintaining one’s health. Annual checkups also serve as a great time for adults to be screened for certain cancers. The American Cancer Society notes that cancer screenings are used to find cancer before a person develops symptoms. That’s a vital benefit of annual checkups, as cancers caught in their early stages are more easily treated. In addition, catching cancer before it has metastasized greatly improves patients’ prognosis. Another reason to schedule annual checkups is that they make perfect opportunities for patients to discuss their family histories with their physicians. This is especially important for adults over 40, as age and family history are significant risk factors for a host of conditions and diseases. Men and women concerned about conditions and diseases that their family members have had can discuss those concerns with their physicians during their annual checkups. Physicians can then recommend ways for patients to balance their risk, calming patients’ concerns and giving them a road map to reduce their risk for conditions and diseases that seem to run in their families. Annual checkups are as vital a component of a healthy lifestyle as nutritious diets and routine exercise. By scheduling annual checkups with their physicians, adults can closely monitor their overall health and potentially uncover issues before they escalate into major health risks.
What is body mass index?

People who are attempting to improve their physical fitness may hear a lot about body mass index, or BMI, and wonder just how important a good BMI is to their overall health. That can be hard to determine, especially for people who are unsure just what BMI measures. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, BMI is a person’s weight in kilograms divided by the square of his or her height in meters. For those unfamiliar with the metric system, that explanation of BMI might not be too helpful. So how is BMI used and what purpose does it serve? BMI might be most useful in a screening capacity, as the CDC notes it is an inexpensive and easily performed method of screening for weight category. For example, by calculating a patient’s BMI, doctors can quickly determine if the patient is underweight, has a normal or healthy weight, or is overweight or obese. Conditions associated with being overweight include heart disease and diabetes, so an easily calculated index determining if a person is overweight (or underweight or obese) can be an effective tool in combatting some potentially dangerous conditions. But physicians won’t base their opinions on patients’ overall health based on BMI alone. In fact, if physicians determine a BMIs is a health risk, they will likely perform further assessments, including skinfold thickness measurements and evaluations of things like eating habits, physical activity and family history. So while BMI might be somewhat confusing, it can still be a valuable tool for people looking to determine just how healthy or unhealthy they are.
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