11 one-minute solutions to improving your health

Here are eleven ways to boost your health in just one minute.

Give someone you love a hug
There’s nothing quite like a good hug. And while a warm embrace certainly makes us feel happier and more relaxed, there are also physical health benefits of hugging, like lower blood pressure and heart rate.

Laugh
There’s a good reason laughter has a reputation for being the best medicine. Not only is it one of the body’s natural stress relievers, it also mimics (at least a little) some of the physiological responses in the body to physical activity.

Nibble some dark chocolate
The natural plant compounds in cocoa can protect the heart in a whole number of ways, from lowering blood pressure, raising levels of “good” cholesterol while lowering the “bad” and even helping with circulation. There’s some evidence to suggest chocolate can also help ward off diabetes and protect the skin. Now that’s sweet news.

Find the silver lining
A little optimism goes a long way. Looking on the bright side has been associated with a healthier heart and stronger immune system, so next time you’re voicing a complaint, take a minute to reframe those thoughts.

Wash your hands
This one also only takes 20 seconds --- and it is well worth it. Simply educating communities about hand-washing can lower the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 31 percent, according to the CDC.
To do it right, wet hands with clean, running water, lather with soap and scrub for at least 20 seconds. That’s roughly about the length of time it would take to hum “Happy Birthday” twice. Raise your hands under running water and dry completely.
Buckle your seat belt
Most American adults consistently buckle up in the car, but not everyone: According to the most recent data available, about 87 percent of adults wear their seat belts. For the 13 percent who haven’t quite gotten the message, it takes mere seconds to protect yourself, whether you’re driving or just along for the ride. More than 2 million adults are treated for car accident injuries each year, and more than half of teens age 13 to 20 died in car crashes in 2012 were not wearing seat belts at the time of the crash, according to the CDC.

Rest in child’s pose
It’s one of the most relaxing, restorative yoga poses, but it’s also a gentle, reinvigorating stretch that may help relieve back and neck pain. Sit back and hold for that entire glorious minute.

Wear sunscreen
Nearly 5 million Americans are treated for skin cancer each year, and sun exposure is one of the biggest causes of the diseases. Yet it hardly takes any time at all to lather up against harmful UV rays. To cover yourself completely, aim to use about an ounce of the stuff if most of your skin is exposed.

Smile
It’s no surprise that people who smile a lot are usually happy people, but 2010 research suggests that people who smile widest also live the longest. Even if you’re feeling stressed, faking a smile can eventually make you feel more at ease – and it only takes a moment.


Healthy Body Often Equals a Healthy Brain

Experts stress that exercise, good diet help maintain memory as much as mental challenges.

People who want to stay sharp as they age often turn to brain teasers, puzzles and games, figuring correctly that they’ll lose it if they don’t use it.

But healthy body is key to maintaining a healthy brain, and that’s something many people tend to overlook.

We’re just now starting to get people to recognize that eating right and exercising and maintaining your health can play into the graceful aging of your brain. Healthy living tips make up more than half of the “10 Ways to Love Your Brain” recently released by the Alzheimer’s Association, as part of June’s Alzheimer’s & Brain Awareness Month.

An estimated 47 million people worldwide are living with dementia in 2015, and this number is projected triple by 2050, according to the Alzheimer’s Association.
Medical science cannot stop the progression of either dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, but everyone can take steps to maintain their ability to think, problem solve and remember as they grow older.

There’s no specific thing that if you do this, you will reduce your risk. It’s really a balance of these top 10 ways to love your brain, you’re going to age as healthfully as you can. Maintaining the health of your heart and your circulatory system appears to be a key factor in protecting your mental capabilities.

Researchers now believe that micro-strokes -- tiny decreases in blood flow to the brain – can add up and, over time, cause a person to suffer a loss of their faculties.

By keeping the brain both healthy and active, a person can preserve what’s called their “brain reserve” – the ability of the brain to weather various insults, including aging.

The more brain reserve a person brings to the table, the older they can get without showing signs and symptoms of memory loss.

The Alzheimer’s Association tip sheet urges everyone to:

- Engage in regular physical activity. A number of studies have linked exercise to reduced risk of brain decline.
- Quit smoking. Smoking increases risk of brain decline, and quitting can reduce a smoker’s risk down to levels comparable to people who never smoked.
- Treat conditions that can affect heart health. Chronic problems like obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes take a toll on your brain as well as your heart.
- Get enough sleep. Studies have linked sleeplessness with problems in memory and thinking, the association says.
- Maintain your mental health. Depression, anxiety and stress can speed a person’s brain aging, if they are a left untreated.
- Protect your head. Brain injuries as mild as a concussion can increase risk of brain decline and dementia. Wear a seat belt, use a helmet when on a bike or playing contact sports, and try to avoid failing down.
- Eat healthy low-fat diet that’s rich in fruits and vegetables. A good diet can help address nearly all chronic illnesses, and therefore will ultimately help your brain.
The remaining tips offered by the Alzheimer’s Association focus on keeping your brain busy and active, which also can help by forcing the brain to preserve and build up its neural connection. These Brain-centered tips from the Alzheimer’s Association include:

- Keep Learning. Continuing education can help reduce risk of brain decline and Dementia.
- Remain social. People who have an active social life have been shown to have more active and healthy brains.
- Challenge your brain. Do something that requires thought, whether that is solving a puzzle, creating a piece of art, building something for your home, or playing a game that forces you to think strategically.

We have a lot of knowledge about ways to prevent the deterioration of the brain due to aging, and they appear to be beneficial in terms of preserving the health of the brain.


**Smoking: Does it cause wrinkles?**

Yes. So if you need another reason to motivate you to quit smoking, add premature wrinkles to the list. Smoking can speed up the normal aging process of your skin, contributing to wrinkles. These skin changes may occur after only 10 years of smoking. The more cigarettes you smoke and the longer you smoke, the more skin wrinkling you’re likely to have – even though the early skin damage from smoking may be hard for you to see.

And smoking doesn’t cause wrinkles only on your face. Smoking also is associated with increased wrinkling and skin damage on other parts of your body, including your inner arms. While the skin wrinkles may not be reversible, you can prevent worsening wrinkling risk by quitting smoking now.

How does smoking lead to wrinkles? The nicotine in cigarettes causes narrowing of the blood vessels in the outermost layers of your skin. This impairs blood flow to your skin. With less blood flow, your skin doesn’t get as much oxygen and important nutrients, such as vitamin A. Many of the more than 4,000 chemicals in tobacco smoke also damage collagen and elastin, which are fibers that give your skin its strength and elasticity. As a result, skin begins to sag and wrinkle prematurely because of smoking. In addition, repeated exposure to the heat from burning cigarettes and the facial expressions you make when smoking – such as pursing your lips when inhaling and squinting your eyes to keep out smoke - may contribute to wrinkles.

Sleep apnea and caffeine: Any connection?

A small amount of research has been conducted in the potential connections between caffeine use and obstructive sleep apnea.

One study showed that caffeinated soda use may be associated with more severe sleep-disordered breathing, such as obstructive sleep apnea. However, tea or coffee use didn’t appear to be associated with more severe sleep-disordered breathing.

In another study, caffeine seemed to improve thinking (cognitive) function in people with obstructive sleep apnea.

In addition, doctors sometimes prescribe caffeine for premature infants to reduce episodes of interrupted breathing during sleep.

More research is needed to study how caffeine use affects people with obstructive sleep apnea.

These lifestyle changes may help manage some cases of obstructive sleep apnea:
- Lose excess weight
- Avoid alcohol
- Avoid medications that relax the muscles in the back of your throat
- Sleep on your side or stomach rather than on your back

Often, however, you may need certain devices to keep the airway open. In some cases, your doctor may recommended a surgical procedure.


Vegetarian diet: Can it help me control my diabetes?

A vegetarian diet probably won’t cure your diabetes. But it may offer some benefits over a nonvegetarian diet – such as helping to better control your weight, reducing your risk of some diabetes-associated complications and possibly even making your body more responsive to insulin.

There’s no single vegetarian eating plan. For example, some allow dairy products while others don’t allow any animal products (vegans). The benefits of a vegetarian diet depend on the type of diet you choose and the food choices you make when following the diet.
For most, however, eating a vegetarian diet:

- **Promotes a healthy weight.** Vegetarian diets are often lower in calories than are nonvegetarian diets, which can help with weight management. Also, people following a vegan diet tend to have lower body mass indexes (BMIs) than do people who follow a nonvegetarian diet. A healthy body weight can improve blood sugar control and reduce your risk of diabetes complications.

- **Improves blood sugar control and insulin response.** Eating vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes and nuts – features of a vegetarian diet – can improve blood sugar control and make your body more responsive to insulin. This may mean taking less medication and lowering your risk of diabetes-related complications. But even a vegetarian diet can have the opposite effect on blood sugar if it is rich in simple carbohydrates — especially starches, such as potatoes, white rice and white bread.

- **Reduces your risk of cardiovascular diseases.** A strict vegan diet is cholesterol-free, low in saturated fat and usually high in soluble fiber. A low-fat vegetarian diet can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease – a common complication of people who have diabetes.

If you’re considering a vegetarian diet, it may be helpful to speak with a dietitian who can help you create an eating plan that provides all the necessary nutrients and the right number of calories to maintain a healthy weight. As with any diet, it’s important to stay within an appropriate calorie range to lose weight if that’s your goal.


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**MAOls and diet: Is it necessary to restrict tyramine?**

Tyramine (TIE-ruh-meen) is an amino acid that helps regulate blood pressure. It occurs naturally in the body and is found in certain foods. When taking monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAO), you need to avoid consuming foods high in tyramine. These foods can cause a dangerous increase in blood pressure when combined with MAOls.

MAOls block an enzyme called monoamine oxidase, which breaks down excess tyramine in the body. Blocking this enzyme helps relieve depression. However, tyramine can quickly reach dangerous levels if you eat high tyramine foods, which may cause a spike in blood pressure and require emergency treatment.
Tyramine is naturally found in small amounts in protein-containing foods. As these foods age, the tyramine level increases. Some foods high in tyramine include:

- **Aged Cheeses.** Such as aged cheddar and Swiss; blue cheeses such as Stilton and Gorgonzola; and Camembert. Cheese made from pasteurized milk is less likely to contain high levels of tyramine, including American cheese, cottage cheese, ricotta, farm cheese and cream cheese.

- **Cured meats,** which are meals treated with salt and nitrate, such as dry type summer sausages, pepperoni and salami.

- **Fermented cabbage,** such as sauerkraut and kimchee

- **Soy sauce, fish sauce** and shrimp sauce.

- **Yeast-extract spreads** such as Marmite

- **Improperly stored foods** or spoiled foods.

- **Broad bean pods,** such as fava beans.

Tyramine amounts can vary among foods due to different processing, storage and preparation methods. While you’re taking MAOi, your doctor may recommend eating only fresh foods – not leftovers or foods past their freshness dates.


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**Hot mess: The grossest health concerns of summer**

You are not the only one who thrives in the summer and loves its warm, long days. Bacteria and other microbes that cause food poisoning, diarrhea and just general grossness also flourish, threatening to make it a season to be sick. Foodborne pathogens follow an annual cycle, and we tend to see peaks of them, especially bacteria, in the summer, at picnics, potlucks and all the outdoor events.

Your gut is not the only part of your body at risk of assault by bacteria such as E. Coil in the summer months. Bugs lurk in air conditioning filters, especially when it is hot and humid, ready to cause trouble for those with breathing problems. And the skin that protects you from infections can become a portal for them after a bad, blistering sunburn.

Of course, even if some dangers await you at the picnic, pool or beach, it is worth it to get out and enjoy yourself. You can most likely handle what comes your way.
Don’t pee (or poop) in the pool
The burn you feel in your eyes after a dip in the swimming pool is not because of chlorine. It is because pee, poop and sweat from fellow swimmers (and maybe you) react with chlorine and from chloramine compounds, and this combination is what really stings your peepers. Aside from the gross factor, the formation of these compounds means there is less chlorine left in the water to kill bacteria, such as E. coli. Chloramines can also irritate the airways, and when they build up in the air, such as at indoor pools, they trigger asthma attacks. It is recommended that you not pee or poop in the water and shower before you go in.

A 2010 CDC report found that one out of 10 public pools don’t have proper chlorine levels. To make sure you’re not about to take a dip in bacteria-laden pool, you can use pool test strips at the pool supply or big box store to check the chlorine levels. (The CDC recommends chlorine levels in pools between 1 and 3 parts per million and PH of 7.2 to 7.8.)

Even at the right levels, chlorine does not wipe out everything. A new CDC report found that a parasite called cryptosporidium, which can cause diarrhea and lives up to 10 days in a chlorine pool, was associated with 37 (54%) of the 69 outbreaks of illness at pools and water parks. To protect yourself, it’s about not swallowing the water you swim in, and to protect others don’t swim if you have diarrhea.

Beware the picnic burgers
The thought of potato salad sweltering in the heat at the summer picnic may make the burgers on the grill sound pretty appetizing, but think again. Actually potato salad has of a bad rap, but it is not really a particularly high-risk food. But people tend to bring frozen (burger) patties and throw them on the grill before they are fully thawed (and) ground meat that is not thoroughly cooked is one of the riskiest items, because it can have E. Coli.

Ground beef and pork should be cooked to 160 degrees Fahrenheit, ground chicken and turkey to 165 degrees. And yes, that means using a meat thermometer to test the temperature in the middle of the burger.

Of course, bacteria can still lurk in a big bowl of gooey potato or pasta salad, but not for the reasons you may think. Ingredients such as potatoes, pasta and eggs, not the mayonnaise, are prone to contamination. To play it safe, keep containers of anything you’re supposed to eat cold such as potato salad in big bowls or coolers full of ice.

Bacteria screams for ice cream (Machines)
An issue that can plague an inadequately cleaned soft-serve ice cream dispenser is bacteria Listeria (bacteria) is a really sneaky pathogen in that it likes to live cooler temperatures and populate machinery. Listeria infections can cause fever and muscle aches, and they are especially dangerous for pregnant women, who may miscarry as a result.
**Burn baby burn**
Sunburns may seem like a sweet souvenir from a day at the beach, but they should really be thought of as potentially harmful wounds. In the most severe cases, people can develop blisters and need to be treated like burn victims. The skin sloughs off, (and) if there’s any kind of raw wound, it can predispose you to an infection and should be treated with a prescription antibiotic ointment.

Worse yet, even just a few serious sunburns may greatly increase your risk of developing skin cancer.
A 2014 study found that white women who had five or more blistering sunburns when they were teens were 68% more likely to develop melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

**Brush with jellyfish**
Rinsing the wound with saltwater is one of the most recommended ways to relieve the stinging, redness and swelling that follow a brush with a jellyfish tentacle.

A more surprising but also effective treatment is vinegar. Who knows firsthand it can make the pain go away almost instantaneously. It happed to me, it hurts a lot, and I actually went to the lifeguard station, and they had vinegar spray.

**Grossness flourishes in air conditioning filters**
When air conditioners are working around the clock in hot summer months, dust, mold and pollution from outdoor air or indoor air tend to build up on the filter of AC units. Not only does this slash the air conditioner’s efficiency, it can also carry health risks.

People who are already having problems with breathing or lung health – so people with allergies or respiratory disease -- are going to be affected if the filter is not properly removing dust, mold, dander and other detritus.

To keep your filter in tiptop shape, clean or replace it every three months, but take precaution when you do. Mold and bacteria love to grow on filters, especially in the summer humidity. You don’t want to breathe in mold spores and bacteria. We recommend that you wear gloves and a mask.

The HITECH ACT

The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH Act or “The Act”) is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) ARRA contains incentives related to health care information technology in general (e.g. creation of a national health care infrastructure) and contains specific incentives designed to accelerate the adoption of electronics health record (EHR) systems among providers.

Because this legislation anticipates a massive expansion in the exchange of electronic protected health information (ePHI), the HITECH Act also widen s the scope of privacy and security protections available under HIPPA; it increases the potential legal liability for non-compliance; and it provides for more enforcement.

Source: http://www.hipaasurvialguide.com/hitech-act-summary

Understanding Health Information Privacy

The HIPAA Privacy Rule provides federal protections for individually identifiable health information held by covered entities and their business associates and gives patients an array of rights with respect to that information. At the same time, the Privacy Rule is balanced so that it permits the disclosure of health information needed for patient care and other important purposes.

The Security Rule specifies a series of administrative, physical, and technical safeguards for covered entities and their business associates to use to assure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of electronic protected health information.

Source: http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/