

September is Cholesterol Education Month.



# Better HDL, Better HEALTH

**Your blood cholesterol levels are key to a strong heart and basic good health.** Cholesterol is essential to our bodies on a cellular level. This waxy fat-like substance is in every cell attached to proteins called lipoproteins. We have 2 major types of cholesterol:

**The bad:** Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol collects on the walls of your blood vessels, causing clotting that can lead to stroke or heart attack.

**The good:** High-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol helps remove some of the bad cholesterol in your blood, returning it to your liver where it's broken down and passed from your body.

**Control with medication?** If your LDL level runs high, your health care provider may prescribe lowering it with medication. Reducing LDL and triglyceride levels can sometimes also improve HDL. But drugs designed specifically to raise HDL have generally not reduced heart attack risk.

**Lifestyle factors?** Unhealthy, low HDL levels often occur in people who smoke or have obesity, high blood pressure or high blood sugar levels — conditions that can be controlled with better health habits. Simple daily choices can lead to healthier levels of both HDL and LDL.



**Talk to your provider** about your cholesterol numbers and everyday ways to improve them. **Primary goals:**

- ❖ **Lose excess weight** with regular exercise and a heart-healthy diet.
- ❖ **Stop smoking.** This can improve HDL and help your heart significantly.
- ❖ **Replace fast food and processed foods** with home cooking and lots of vegetables.
- ❖ **Skip sugar-rich foods** and those containing trans fats.

**Do it for your heart and your long-term health.**

Health is the thing that makes you feel that now is the best time of year.

— Franklin P. Adams

 **The Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Goals for Good Eating**, is at [www.personalbest.com/extras/19V9tools](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/19V9tools).

## Safety Corner: Prepare for an Earthquake

An earthquake is caused by the breaking and shifting of underground rock. The ground will suddenly and rapidly shake during an earthquake. Earthquakes can happen anywhere and without warning. They can do damage to buildings; cause heavy items to fall; and can trigger landslides, flash floods, fires, and tsunamis. Here's what you can do now to prepare for an earthquake:

- **Secure objects in place**, like televisions and objects that hang on walls. Store heavy or breakable items on low shelves or tables.
- **Practice Drop, Cover, and then Hold On!** at least twice a year at home and at work. This is the practice you should use during an earthquake. Drop to the ground on your hands and knees. Cover your head and neck with your arms. Crawl only as far as needed to get to cover from falling materials. Hold on to any sturdy furniture until the shaking stops. Under a sturdy table is a good place to be.



- **Develop a communications plan for home.** Know where to meet if you get separated in the event of an earthquake. Have an out-of-area or out-of-state contact available to you in case you need to evacuate.

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# Snoring is Serious Business

**Snoring occurs when relaxed tissues in your throat vibrate as you breathe during sleep.** It can annoy and keep your partner awake, but snoring can also disrupt your own sleep, causing fatigue and raising the risk of health problems.

**Nasal polyps, enlarged tonsils and a stuffy nose can cause snoring.** Drinking alcohol before bed and simply growing older, too, can cause tongue and throat muscles to relax, resulting in snoring. But **sleep apnea**, marked by breathing that stops briefly and repeatedly during sleep, is the most serious condition linked to snoring.

**Sleep apnea causes choking noises and snoring** during sleep because your airway is

narrowed, often from excess weight. Your brain perceives breathing difficulty and wakes you up, often many times an hour. You may not remember the repeated awakenings, but the result can be morning headaches, irritability, forgetfulness, behavior or mood changes, anxiety and depression.

**If you experience sleep apnea symptoms,** talk to your health care provider about sleep study testing. Treatment for sleep apnea typically includes lifestyle changes, weight loss and a **continuous positive air pressure (CPAP) machine**. Untreated, sleep apnea raises the risk of stroke, heart failure, irregular heartbeats, heart attack and hypertension, according to the National Institutes of Health.



## Menopause Relief



September is  
Menopause  
Awareness Month.

**Although menopause is a normal part of aging in women,** hormonal changes can cause annoying and sometimes embarrassing physical changes, such as the sudden perspiration-producing sensations called **hot flashes**.

But there are ways to reduce or possibly eliminate menopause symptoms with lifestyle changes, according to the National Institutes of Health:

- ❖ Dress in layers and remove some clothing when you feel a hot flash starting.
- ❖ Sipping a cold drink and taking slow, deep breaths can reduce the feeling of heat.
- ❖ Avoiding smoking, spicy food, excess caffeine and alcohol can often keep hot flashes at bay.
- ❖ Hot flashes disrupt sleep so keep your bedroom cool (a fan nearby can help) and sleep in lightweight clothing.
- ❖ Regular exercise can pay off with better sleep quality and help keep weight under control (being overweight is associated with more severe hot flashes).
- ❖ If menopause causes vaginal dryness, over-the-counter water-based lubricants and vaginal moisturizers, used regularly, offer relief.



**When lifestyle changes aren't providing enough help, talk to your health care provider about other treatments, including prescription medications and low-dose hormones, that may be appropriate for you, depending on your medical history and symptoms.**

QUIKRISK™ assessment

### When Your Head Hurts

**Check your symptoms. Your headaches could be serious if they:**



- Are unusually painful.
- Increase with movement.
- Get steadily worse.
- Affect your mental ability.
- Occur after a head injury.
- Occur with fever.
- Prevent normal activities.
- First start after age 50.

**If you checked any of these symptoms,** consult your health care provider. Get prompt attention for headache with fainting, convulsions, stiff neck or slurred speech.

### Head-Smart Habits for Frequent Headaches:

- 1 Avoid your triggers by learning what's causing them.** Track your symptoms, behavior and surroundings for a few weeks using our Headache Diary download at [www.personalbest.com/extras/THWC/RightNavigation/PBest-Headache-Diary.pdf](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/THWC/RightNavigation/PBest-Headache-Diary.pdf).
- 2 Get enough sleep.** Adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep nightly on a regular schedule.
- 3 Don't skip meals.** Avoid alcohol and limit caffeine — too much of either can produce headache.
- 4 Reduce stress.** It's a major trigger of chronic headaches. Simplify your schedule; try yoga, tai chi or meditation to help balance your days.
- 5 Exercise regularly.** It may reduce the frequency and severity of migraine and stress-related headaches.


## TIP of the MONTH

### WHOLE Nutrition



September is Whole Grains Month, so celebrate with amaranth, brown rice, oats, millet or quinoa. Whole grains are more nutritious than their refined counterparts (white rice and white flour products), because the whole versions contain more fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. So swap brown rice for white, and choose whole-grain breads and pasta for a nutritious change. Look for foods that list **whole grain** first in the ingredients or are labeled **100% whole grain**.



 **Need encouragement to exercise more?** You aren't alone. The CDC says more than 60% of American women aren't getting enough physical activity and 25% don't exercise at all. **Women's Health & Fitness Day on September 25** can help kick-start a new or low-key fitness plan. On this day, join 50,000 other American women and get moving during health and fitness events offered by hundreds of parks, recreation centers, health clubs and community organizations.



# HEALTH at the End of the RAINBOW

eating smart



September is Fruits and Veggies — More Matters Month.

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**Filling half of your plate with vegetables and fruit at every meal** is a great way to ensure you get enough of these wholesome foods each day. But which vegetables and fruits are the healthiest? They are all good.

**Your best bet is to choose a variety of options from all colors of the rainbow.** Each hue comes with a unique set of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and phytonutrients (health-friendly plant compounds), so variety is important. The vibrant colors in vegetables and fruits are more than just pretty — they are functional, too. The pigments that make carrots orange, tomatoes red and spinach green work collectively to help protect whole body health.

**The exact type and amount we need of each vegetable and fruit is not fully understood,** so the best advice is to capture the rainbow during your daily meals and snacks. Include these beauties for:

**Lycopene:** In tomatoes, watermelon and pink grapefruit. It's linked to a reduced risk of certain cancers, especially breast and prostate.

**Anthocyanins:** In blueberries, blackberries and purple cabbage. They're linked to heart health, brain health and better cognitive function.

**Carotenoids:** In carrots, leafy greens, sweet potatoes and pumpkins. Carotenoids may help prevent cataracts and other age-related eye diseases.

**Flavonoids:** In cherries, berries and red grapes. These pigments have shown anti-inflammatory effects, and may also protect heart and brain health.

**Sulforaphane:** In broccoli, cauliflower, kale and cabbage. This plant compound has been shown to reduce cancer cell growth in lab and animal studies.



**Remember,** there isn't 1 superfood in the produce section that will fully protect your health on its own, but a variety of colorful vegetables and fruit are part of a balanced diet that has proven health benefits.

## Quinoa Tabbouleh

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 cup quinoa, rinsed                | 2 green onions, white parts only, chopped |
| 3 medium tomatoes, diced            | ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil              |
| 1 English cucumber, diced           | ¼ cup fresh lemon juice                   |
| 2 medium carrots, peeled and grated | 1 clove garlic, finely minced             |
| 1 cup fresh chopped parsley         | ½ tsp salt                                |
| ½ cup fresh chopped mint            | Pinch pepper                              |

**In** a medium pot, combine quinoa with 2 cups water. **Bring** to a boil. **Reduce** heat and simmer for 15 minutes or until water is absorbed. **Fluff** with a fork and set aside. **In** a large bowl, combine tomatoes, cucumber, carrots, parsley, mint and onions. **Add** quinoa to vegetables and mix well. **In** a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt and pepper. **Pour** dressing over quinoa and toss to combine. **Serve** with lemon wedges.



**Makes 6 servings. Per serving:**

222 calories | 6g protein | 11g total fat | 1g saturated fat | 7g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 28g carbohydrate | 3g sugar | 4g fiber | 220mg sodium

## EASY recipe

## Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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## Benefits News & Notes

- ▶ **MPERS 2 contribution rate increase effective 07/01/2019.** The rate increased from 7.41% to 7.90%.
- ▶ **Flu Shot Clinics: Mark the dates!** Additional information will be posted on Our House.
  - Central Office – September 24: 7:00 – 10:00
  - MLK Facility – October 9: 7:30 – 9:30
- ▶ **Benefit Fairs and Open Enrollment coming in October:** Open Enrollment allows employees to make changes to healthcare plans and optional benefit plans. Information will be posted on Our House. Changes made during Open Enrollment will be effective January 1, 2020.

## Safety Corner: Prepare for an Earthquake >> Continued from page 1.

- **Get a kit together.** Make a supply kit that includes food and water for at least 3 days, a flashlight, a fire extinguisher, extra batteries, cell phone chargers, and a whistle. Also include any medication you or your household may need. Keep the needs of your pets in mind as well.
- **Inspect your home for any structural issues** that would make it more vulnerable to collapse during an earthquake.

## EXPERT advice — Eric Endlich, PhD

**Q: Does exercise relieve depression?**

**150 minutes per week**

**A: For mild to moderate depression, exercise is**

**sometimes as effective as antidepressant medication** — without the side effects.

**Exercise promotes improvement through brain changes:** neural growth, reduced inflammation and feel-good chemicals (endorphins). It can also help by distracting you from negative thoughts, promoting social connections (through exercise classes or clubs) and fostering self-esteem.

**To reap these benefits, try 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity exercise (e.g., brisk walking):** one 30-minute, two 15-minute or three 10-minute sessions, 5 days a week. Of course, any physical activity is better than none. After being cleared for exercise by your health care provider, start with several minutes of activity and increase your time each day. Choose an activity you enjoy, reward yourself to stay motivated and add variety to prevent boredom. Stick with it and you may soon feel better in mind and body.



## A Clean Kitchen = A Safe Kitchen

Everyone likes a clean kitchen, but beyond the aesthetic motivation, cleanliness equals health.

Here are some tips to keep your kitchen not only sparkling, but reduce your risk of food poisoning.

**Wipe up spills and crumbs immediately** after food preparation; bacteria can grow quickly.

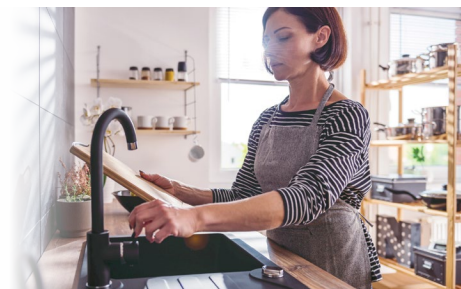
**Wash vegetables before preparation,** but do not wash eggs, meat or poultry (see “**To Wash or Not to Wash?**” below).

**Use separate utensils and cutting boards for meat and vegetables** to avoid cross contamination. Always wash your hands with warm soapy water after handling raw meat.

**Store meat — even when defrosting — in a shallow container on the bottom rack of the refrigerator** to prevent meat drippings from contaminating other foods.

**Set a calendar reminder to clean the refrigerator once a week.\*** Wipe up spills, check for spoilage and wipe handles weekly.

**Monthly:** Check expiration dates; empty drawers and shelves and then wash.



**Clean your dishwasher drain and remove food deposits monthly.** Run a vinegar wash cycle and then a baking soda wash cycle.

**Scrub your sink with soap and warm water,** and disinfect with diluted bleach at least once a week to remove bacteria. Remember the faucet, too.



**Replace the sponge.** Kitchen sponges harbor large amounts of bacteria, as much as a toilet. Use a dishcloth instead and wash it after a few uses. **Tip:** If you do use a sponge, replace it every week. Wash it and microwave it wet for 1 to 2 minutes or boil it for 5 minutes daily.

**\*Don't forget the office refrigerator.** Create a cleaning schedule with coworkers who use the fridge.

## To Wash or Not to Wash?

**Washing raw poultry may seem like a good idea,** but according to food safety experts, it isn't. Washing poultry will spread the bacteria around, causing cross-contamination. It also doesn't eliminate all of the bacteria on the poultry. **Best bet:** Leave it alone, and wash your hands thoroughly with warm water and soap after handling raw poultry.

**SAFETY corner**

