

March is Nutrition Month.



Vitamins on Your Plate

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



While sales of vitamin supplements continue to skyrocket, the best source of vitamins doesn't come from a pill. It comes from your plate.

The foods you eat — from vegetables to eggs to fish to whole grains — are filled with the essential vitamins your body needs.

Few vitamins act alone. They often need to be paired with other nutrients to do their job, and these pairings naturally occur in foods more readily than in supplements. For example, the naturally occurring fat in egg yolks helps the body absorb vitamins A, D and E found in the eggs.

Vitamins from foods tend to be in smaller quantities than what's in high-dose supplements, but that's a good thing. Studies show that taking excessive amounts of vitamin supplements has no advantage in preventing heart disease or premature death and may cause and increase risk of certain cancers. More is not always better when it comes to vitamins.

Plus, foods contain a mixture of compounds that supplements can't adequately replicate, such as fiber, antioxidants and phytonutrients. Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit, a quarter with whole grains, and the remaining quarter with protein-rich options, such as fish, poultry and legumes.

There are some exceptions, such as deficiency in a certain vitamin.

For example, vitamin D is found in relatively few foods (fatty fish, eggs and fortified milk are known sources),

so supplements are often required, especially in areas that don't have year-round sunshine. Ask your health care provider to test your vitamin D level.



The Wonders of Walking

You've been doing it since you were a toddler — and it's now labeled as “the closest thing we have to a wonder drug,” offering important health benefits. Regular, brisk walking can:

Boost immunity. Studies show routine exercise walking can help protect you from illness during cold and flu season.

Reduce the risk of developing breast cancer. An American Cancer Society study on walking found that women who walked seven or more hours a week had a 14% lower risk of breast cancer.

Protect your joints and reduce joint pain, according to several studies — and walking five to six miles a week can even prevent arthritis from forming.

Walking can also improve your cardiovascular fitness, muscle endurance and sleep, reduce stress and strengthen your bones and muscles. The faster, farther and more frequently you walk, the greater the benefits. And walking can be a very pleasant way to get fit. Invite a friend to join you.

Just starting? Try walking briskly at three miles per hour (walking a mile in 17 minutes), beginning with ten minutes per day for the first three weeks. Slowly increase the time you walk by five minutes per week until you are able to walk 30 minutes per day, six days per week. If you are already in good shape, start at this level.

Spring Forward with Care



Plan ahead to adjust to Daylight Saving Time (DST), which begins on Sunday, March 13.

It's easy to move the clock up an hour on the night before the change, but you can't reset your body's internal clock that quickly. And lack of sleep can reduce your productivity and even raise the risk for accidents and some illnesses. *Continued on back page. >>*



Sleep Studies

If you never seem to feel rested, a sleep study can help pinpoint why.

Then, with a diagnosis, you can get appropriate treatment. Not getting enough quality sleep is linked to several chronic health problems, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, depression and obesity. Sleep deprivation also can lead to driving mishaps and mistakes at work.

Without a sleep study, why you toss and turn all night or wake up feeling like you haven't slept at all may be a mystery. For example, many people with sleep apnea (which interrupts deep, restorative sleep) have no idea they stop breathing for brief periods. But a sleep study can help your health care provider diagnose sleep apnea, sleep-related seizure disorders, restless legs syndrome and other sleep robbers.

Sleep studies are usually done at a sleep center in comfortable bedroom settings.

Removable sensors are placed on your scalp, face, eyelids, chest, legs, and a finger to record your heart rate, brain waves, breathing (including periods of stopped breathing), oxygen levels, and muscle movements before, during and after sleep. Some sleep studies, primarily those testing for sleep apnea, may be performed at home using a portable monitor, which is easy to use. A sleep technician or your provider will explain how to set it up.

Your provider or a sleep specialist will review your sleep study results and develop a treatment plan for any diagnosed sleep disorder which may include lifestyle changes and/or medication.

Post-Pregnancy: What to Expect

Physical and emotional changes are normal after having a baby.

But some may come as a surprise. Here's a look at common postpartum experiences.

- **Contractions aren't always gone after childbirth.** The body uses contractions, especially during breastfeeding, to reduce the uterus back to pre-pregnancy size.
- **Bleeding can come as a surprise.** Lochia — a discharge of blood and tissue that lined the uterus during pregnancy — can last a few weeks. If the discharge is heavy, talk to your health care provider.
- **Healing from a vaginal or C-section birth can take a while.** If you had an episiotomy to ease a vaginal birth, you may have discomfort while the area heals. A C-section can leave you with pain in the lower abdomen for weeks. Don't lift anything heavier than the baby until your provider says it's okay.
- **You may be more tired than anticipated.** Losing sleep as you tend to the feeding and care of your newborn can be exhausting. Staying hydrated and making sure your diet is healthy can help.
- **Hormonal changes can cause surprising mood swings.** As your hormone levels go through ups and downs after your body returns to pre-pregnancy normal, your moods may fluctuate, too. But if you experience ongoing post-pregnancy depression, marked by extreme sadness and anxiety, talk to your provider.
- **Breastfeeding can have unexpected advantages.** You probably know breast milk has many advantages for your baby. But nursing can have perks for you, too, including lower odds of postpartum depression.



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These strategies can help you adjust more easily:

- **Gradually change your bedtime a few days before DST begins.** Go to bed 15 minutes earlier than usual. Then increase the early bedtime by 15 minutes every few nights. Also set your clock to wake up 15 to 20 minutes earlier than usual, as you slowly adjust to springing forward.
- **Set your watch and household clocks the night before DST begins (your phone and computer will update automatically).** Although the time change doesn't officially occur until 2 a.m., waking up to all devices set at the new time can help you get used to the change faster.
- **Step outside and get some sunshine, especially on days immediately after the time change.** Daylight helps your body's internal clock adjust to your new timing of sleeping and waking.
- **If you feel extra sleepy until you adjust to DST, short catnaps may help.** But the Sleep Foundation advises only napping for 20 minutes or less to prevent feeling groggy.



Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Garden Shape-Up**, is at personalbest.com/extras/22V3tools.



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