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GOT SLEEP?
COFFEE AND
YOUR HEALTH

Better Health in
15 MINUTES

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Spring Cleaning and

ASTHMA



If you or a loved one suffer from asthma, clearing dust from your home may seem like a good idea. But what you clean your home with can make all the difference.

Many cleaning supplies contain chemicals, including volatile organic compounds (VOCs), that can aggravate asthma and other respiratory illnesses. VOCs can be found in chlorine bleach, detergent, rug and upholstery cleaners, and furniture and floor polish.

How can you clean your home and keep your lungs safe? The American Lung Association recommends using baking soda for scrubbing and a mix of vinegar and water to clean glass and other surfaces. Looking for organic cleaning products? The Environmental Working Group offers a "Guide to Healthy Cleaning" at ewg.org/guides/cleaners.

BREWING Health Benefits



Good news for coffee lovers — regular consumption of coffee may provide significant health benefits, including:

- **Decreased risk of depression.** A study by the National Institutes of Health found those who drink four or more cups of coffee daily are 10 percent less likely to be depressed.
- **Delayed Alzheimer's disease onset.** Researchers from the University of South Florida and the University of Miami found that people older than 65 who consumed higher levels of caffeine develop Alzheimer's disease two to four years later than those with lower caffeine intake.
- **Reduced risk of cancer.** According to the Harvard School of Public Health, coffee drinkers are less likely to develop liver, breast, colon and rectal cancers.



HEART DISEASE:

The Hope in Your Stars

FOR WOMEN, THE CONSTELLATION OF HEART DISEASE RISK FACTORS INCLUDES PLENTY OF HOPEFUL TWINKLES.

Imagine enjoying lunch with three girlfriends. As you talk and laugh, the thought that heart disease will claim the life of one person at the table is the farthest thing from your mind, but that's what current data indicates: One in four American women will die of heart disease, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

Most heart disease risk factors come down to one thing — how you choose to live. Use these tips to stop the stresses and obligations of life from driving your health and start using healthier choices to fuel your life.

- **Don't skimp on sleep.** Inadequate or low-quality sleep can put you at risk for high blood pressure. Aim to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night and seek medical help for suspected sleep disorders.
- **Get diabetes under control.** Diabetes is a particularly serious heart disease risk factor. If you have diabetes, follow your management plan to keep blood glucose levels within your target range.
- **Spend time in life's slow lane.** Stress can drive you to do things that are bad for your heart, such as binge on fatty foods or skip exercising in favor of working late. Devote at least 15 minutes daily to an activity that allows you to relax, reflect and refocus.
- **Watch your weight.** Speak with your doctor to determine your healthiest weight and how to achieve it. Don't jump feet first into dieting and exercise; that approach rarely succeeds. Instead, start by taking 15-minute walks after lunch and dinner and reducing your number of fast-food meals by at least half this week. Build on your successes by incorporating more healthful behaviors each week.

Know your heart health numbers by having an annual physical exam with your doctor. To find a doctor, visit BigBendHealthcare.com and use the "Find a Doctor" tool.

HI, MOM. CAN WE HAVE A HEART-TO-HEART TALK?

Your family is so close-knit that you sometimes finish each other's sentences, but you don't really know the people you love — or yourself — until you become familiar with their heart health history.

Family history is a heart disease risk factor you can't control, but ignorance isn't bliss when it comes to prevention. If you know your grandmother had a stroke at age 67 and your mother has high blood pressure, you can get a step ahead by discussing your heart disease risk with your doctor and crafting a strategy to reduce it.

Don't wait until the next holiday gathering. The next time you call your parents, siblings or grandparents, ask about any cardiac events or vascular conditions they've had and how old they were when the problems occurred.

15 Minutes of HEALTH

BUSY, BUSY, BUSY. THAT SEEMS TO BE AMERICA'S MANTRA. WITH OUR CONSTANT RACE AGAINST THE CLOCK, HOW CAN ANYONE FIND TIME FOR HEALTH? TRY THESE IDEAS TO BOOST YOUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING IN 15 MINUTES OR LESS.



AT HOME

EAT

HAVE BREAKFAST OUTDOORS.

We all know eating a well-balanced breakfast is crucial to your health, but why outside? A 2014 study by researchers at Northwestern University found that people who are exposed to bright morning sunlight have lower body mass indexes (BMIs) than those who aren't. Researchers believe morning light exposure keeps your metabolism in sync, helping you burn more fat throughout the day.

PLAY

TOUCH YOUR TOES.

Stretching increases blood flow to your whole body, helping you feel more awake and alert. Staying loose also helps counteract your physical response to stressors so you can remain relaxed and pain-free as the day wears on. To get the most benefit, follow the American College of Sports Medicine's guidelines for static stretching: Hold each stretch for between 15 and 30 seconds, repeating three to five times on both sides of the body.

RELAX

MIND YOUR Xs AND Os.

Giving your spouse a hug and a kiss when you get home from work isn't just good for your marriage. It's also great for your physical and mental health. Affectionate physical contact lowers blood pressure and heart rate and releases feel-good hormones that kill stress and negative feelings. Showing affection to any loved one can have the same effect, so give a bear hug to your kids, your friends — even your neighbors.

FACE FIRST

YOU MAY HAVE YOUR DAD'S EYES, YOUR MOM'S SMILE AND YOUR GREAT UNCLE BERNIE'S NOSE, BUT HOW YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR FEATURES IS ALL YOU. TRY THESE TIPS TO KEEP YOUR FACE HAPPY AND HEALTHY:



The American Optometric Association recommends turning your eyes away from your screen every 20 minutes and focusing on objects farther away for 20 seconds. This reduces your risk for eyestrain and computer vision syndrome.



Nosebleeds become more common after age 50. To prevent them, the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery recommends swabbing the lining of your nose three times a day with petroleum jelly.



Regular flossing helps prevent gum disease, which — according to the American Dental Association (ADA) — is associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease. Yet only half of Americans floss every day, according to the ADA. To help you remember, keep your floss on your nightstand rather than in your medicine cabinet.

AT WORK

STOCK YOUR SNACK STASH.

It's hard to resist that box of doughnuts in the conference room, especially when it's 3 p.m. and your stomach is growling. Keep healthy snacks in your desk drawer to satisfy your urge to indulge. Your snack stash can include unsalted mixed nuts, granola bars, or peanut butter and whole-wheat crackers. To avoid weight gain, keep your snacking to 150 calories or less in the morning and afternoon.

TAKE A STAND.

Researchers at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory found that moderate-intensity walking reduced people's risk for hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes nearly as much as vigorous running did. Getting up from your desk, stretching and walking around for 10 minutes is one of the easiest things you can do to prevent long-term health problems.

JUST BREATHE.

One of our first physiological responses to stress is shallow breathing. You may not even notice yourself doing it, which is why it's important to perform breathing checks throughout your workday. Remind yourself to take deep, slow breaths, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.

AT PLAY

TAKE A SALAD DETOUR.

When dining out, order a healthy salad as your side and pause midway through your main meal to eat it — taking care to eat as slowly as possible. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, it takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain it's full. Stopping halfway through dinner to crunch on your greens will give your brain more time to catch up. After your salad, you may just decide to save the second half of that burger for a takeout box.

DON'T PARK IT AT THE PARK.

When you take your kids or grandkids to the playground, don't let them have all the fun. If allowed, swing, climb and slide along with them, or go for a brisk stroll around the perimeter of the park while they play. For people who weigh around 150 pounds, every 15 minutes of vigorous walking burns approximately 115 calories. The more you weigh, the more you'll burn.

LAUGH OUT LOUD.

Listen to a podcast of your favorite comedian when you're walking or driving. Aside from reducing stress, research shows that laughing can temporarily increase antibodies in the mucous lining the nose and respiratory passages. More antibodies mean a stronger immune system, which can help protect you from seasonal illness.



The Mystery of MENOPAUSE

HOT FLASHES AND FLUCTUATIONS IN MOOD CAN SIGNAL THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLES, ALSO KNOWN AS MENOPAUSE.

Menopause is defined as one year without a period. The hormone estrogen is released during menstruation. Fluctuations in this hormone during perimenopause (when a woman's body begins transitioning to menopause) and menopause can cause many women to experience a variety of symptoms, including:

- abnormal bleeding or spotting between periods
- hot flashes
- moodiness, including feeling tired, sad or angry
- night sweats
- sleep disturbances
- urinary tract infections or incontinence
- weight gain in the abdominal or hip area

Menopause differs for every woman. Some women experience it in their 30s, while others aren't affected until their 60s. The best indication of when a woman will enter menopause is the age the woman's mother went through menopause.

The intensity of symptoms can also vary. Some women may experience no symptoms while others have multiple symptoms. If symptoms keep you from the activities you enjoy, schedule an appointment with your doctor to discuss treatment options, including hormone replacement therapy.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to uncomfortable symptoms, a decrease in estrogen also leads to an increased risk of osteoporosis, a condition affecting bone strength and density. The National Institutes of Health recommends all women undergo dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) screenings beginning at age 65 or at age 60 for those at high risk. DEXA screenings are covered at no cost under many insurance plans for women older than age 60. Check with your insurer for specifics.

CHANGE IT UP

Here's how to cope with menopause's most pesky symptoms.

- **Deflate hot flashes before they start.** Certain things may trigger a hot flash, such as alcohol, caffeine, spicy foods, and changes in the weather or restrictive clothing. Jot down when you have hot flashes and if any of these stressors were involved, then modify your diet or activities to stay cool.
- **Manage moodiness with a timeout.** Feeling teary or irritated? Take five minutes to regroup by taking a quick walk or calling a close friend.
- **Stick to your sleep schedule.** Having a set bedtime will help you drift off to dreamland. Dress in light, cool layers to keep from getting overheated.
- **Talk with your doctor about hormones.** Some women benefit greatly from hormone therapy as they transition through menopause. Discuss whether this option is right for you.

Roane McLaughlin, M.D., OB/GYN, an independent member of the medical staff at Big Bend Regional Medical Center, is accepting new patients at Big Bend Regional Health Center. To schedule an appointment, call (432) 837-0430.

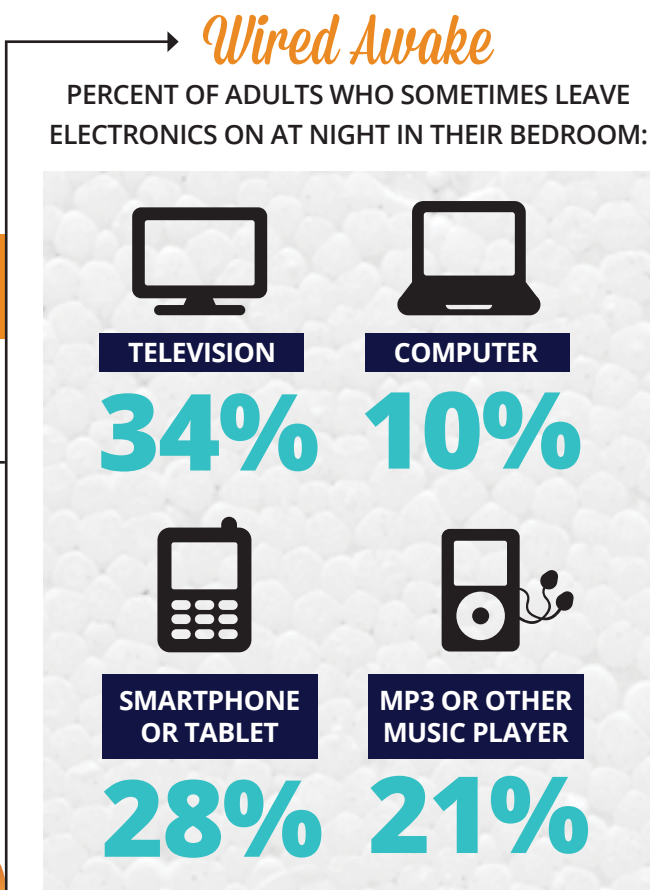
THE SECRET TO A *Good Night's Sleep*

DEEP, RESTORATIVE SLEEP DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ELUSIVE.

We're a nation of toss-and-turners. According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), more than half of American adults say they have trouble falling asleep or frequently wake during the night several nights a week. Even those whose sleep is peaceful aren't getting enough of it. A 2013 Gallup poll found that 40 percent of Americans slept an average of six hours or fewer each night, less than the seven to eight hours recommended by the NSF.

If you're restless and easily awoken at night, or frequently wake up in the morning feeling groggy, you may have poor sleep habits. Think back on your previous seven nights of sleep — or start a sleep diary for the coming week — and use this checklist to identify any sleep improvements you can make:

- I slept at least seven hours most nights.
- I consistently went to bed and woke up at the same times.
- I went to bed when I started feeling sleepy but before I was overly sleepy.
- I stopped looking at screens (TV, phone, computer, tablet) at least an hour before bed.
- I performed my usual sleep "cues" (brushing teeth, putting on pajamas, light reading, etc.) each night.
- I stopped drinking caffeine after lunch and alcohol after dinner.
- I exercised for at least 30 minutes each day.
- I didn't have any stressful or negative emotional interactions before bed.
- I didn't snack before bed.



* Source: 2014 Sleep in America Poll, Gallup

Did You Know? **SEVENTY**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are more than 70 known sleep disorders.



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Cooking to Keep Your Food HEALTHIEST



CONDIMENT CONUNDRUM

Don't let your healthy cooking techniques be for naught — watch out for these calorie-boosting condiments.

- **Dips and dressings** can pack a punch, especially if they are cream-based. Always serve these items on the side, or substitute healthier oils or yogurt for mayonnaise.
- **Pickles**, while crisp and delicious, can add extra salt to your plate. The same goes for any other briny vegetables. Try making low-sodium pickles at home or look for reduced-sodium versions at the grocery store.
- **Sauces**, from gravies to compotes, can add extra fat, sodium and sugar to your meal. Use sparingly.
- **Ketchup** isn't high in calories but adds a lot of sugar and sodium you probably aren't expecting. Each tablespoon of this common condiment packs nearly 3½ grams of sugar and 167 milligrams of sodium — with little nutritional value.

HOW YOU COOK YOUR FOOD CAN BE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT YOU COOK.

Healthy cooking doesn't have to be complicated or boring. Go beyond steaming and add these simple cooking techniques to your culinary repertoire.

- **Blanching** is a fast way to cook cruciferous and starchy vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower or potatoes while retaining their nutrients.
- **Grilling** can take the place of pan-frying, which can add extra calories to your meal. Grill lean cuts of steak or place fish with lemon slices and fresh herbs in tinfoil packets for a flavorful and calorie-conscious entrée. When grilling produce, the less time fruits and vegetables stay on the grill, the more nutrients are retained.
- **Roasting** is a great alternative to frying savory vegetables and proteins. Roasting typically brings out the natural sweetness in most veggies without losing nutrients. Cut up chunks of potatoes, onions and fennel in a roasting pan alongside Italian sausages or skinless chicken breast and then cook for 30 minutes at 425 degrees Fahrenheit.

Not sure which foods to eat? A dietitian can help. Call (432) 837-3447 for information.