

Med-Sense Guaranteed Association

# JOURNAL



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## Healthy Eating for Your Lifestyle

Healthy eating is one of the most effective ways to improve your health, but what does eating healthy mean for you? Different lifestyles mean varying nutritional needs, and understanding how to best fuel your body is an important first step to good nutrition. Take a moment to think about how your lifestyle impacts your diet.



### Nutrition for Weight Management

A healthy, balanced diet is important regardless of your weight. Whether you are looking to lose weight or maintain your current weight, here are some tips to get you started:

#### Eat a variety of foods

This will help ensure you get a range of nutrients and also prevent boredom or feeling deprived. Incorporate different fruits and vegetables, lean meats and whole grains to your diet and experiment with recipes and ingredients you have never tried before.

#### Limit your intake of processed foods

Processed foods are often high in calories, fat, sugar and sodium, which can negatively impact your weight management goals.

#### Beware of products labeled low-fat or fat-free

These products often contain additional sugar or sodium to replace the flavor lost by removing the fat.

#### Eat foods that are high in fiber

These include fruits and vegetables with the skin on, whole grains, and legumes such as lentils or black beans. High fiber foods are great for your digestive system and help you feel full.

#### Understand your caloric balance

The key to losing weight is to burn more calories than you consume. Similarly, the key to maintaining your current weight is to balance calories consumed and calories burned. Try an online calorie tracking tool such as the USDA SuperTracker to determine your individual caloric needs and find out how many calories you consume each day. The results may surprise you! **(continued on page 2)**



# Healthy Eating for Your Lifestyle

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## Nutrition for Families and People with Busy Lifestyles

Busy lifestyles and picky eaters can make it tempting to grab what is easy and convenient instead of what is healthy. The key is to make the healthy option, the easy option. To help you maintain a healthy diet on the go, try:

### Stocking up on healthy snacks

Keep healthy, easily accessible snacks on hand such as pre-cut fruits and vegetables (you can reduce cost by slicing them yourself and putting them in small containers for a quick on-the-go snack), packages of dried fruit, granola bars (look for bars high in fiber and low in sugar), cereal or whole grain chips and salsa.

### Mixing in your fruits and vegetables

Try adding fruits and vegetables to your favorite recipes, such as frozen vegetables in spaghetti sauce, fresh veggies on homemade pizza (try whole wheat crust and low-fat cheese), smoothies made with low-fat yogurt, bananas, peanut butter and mixed berries, or lettuce, tomato and cucumber slices on your sandwich.

### Planning ahead

Make double batches of healthy meals to freeze for dinner later in the week or a quick and easy lunch. Also consider making extra servings of foods that can be reused in other recipes, such as grilled chicken, brown rice, or steamed vegetables.

### Looking for kid friendly recipes

Many websites offer creative ways to increase the nutritional value of the foods your kids enjoy.

Content courtesy of the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's Health Promotion and Wellness department



## Basic Tips to Eat Well & Still Enjoy Meals:

- Do not eliminate your favorite foods
  - Depriving your self can lead to binging, and you will not stick to a nutrition plan if you do not enjoy your meals
- Eat less healthy foods in moderation
- Use a smaller plate at dinner
- If you know you are going to be indulging have water, fruits and vegetables beforehand so you will not be as hungry
- Find simple modifications to make your favorite recipes healthier
  - Swap full-fat sour cream for reduced-fat sour cream or low-fat yogurt, replace half of the butter or oil with applesauce when you bake, or use black beans instead of refried beans
- Understand your individual needs
  - Are you a vegetarian? Are you predisposed to conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol? It is important to understand how various factors impact your dietary requirements
- Talk to your healthcare provider about the potential health implications of your diet and work with a registered dietitian to develop a healthy eating plan
- Visit the USDA SuperTracker for personalized nutrition and physical activity plan. Visit [EatRight.org](http://EatRight.org), the official website of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, for helpful tips, the latest nutrition news and reliable information
- Make a list of nutrient-rich foods and brainstorm how to work them into your diet. Look up new recipes. Many sites, such as the recipe finder from the USDA, allow you to search recipes by ingredients – so type in your favorite healthy food and start cooking

## When Your Back Hurts - Don't Let Back Pain Knock You Flat

Is your back hurting? You're in good company. In any 3-month period, about 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. has at least one day of back pain, mostly in the lower back. The back is a complicated structure. Its center is the spine, which is made up of 33 bones called vertebrae, stacked in a column. The nerves of the spinal cord run in a tunnel through the middle of those bones. Spongy discs between the vertebrae act as cushions. Ligaments and tendons hold everything together.

A lot of things can go wrong with your back. A strained muscle or a problem with a disc or a bone can cause pain. Back pain might also arise from a fracture or tumor.

Your back naturally changes as you get older. Discs degenerate and arthritis may develop in the small joints of the back. Those changes may show up on an MRI or other types of imaging scans. But such changes to the back are also seen in a lot of people who don't have back pain.

So it's hard to know if the changes are actually what's causing the pain. People with obesity are more likely to have low back pain, as are people who smoke. Back pain is also more common in people who don't exercise much, or in people who are mostly inactive but have occasional bursts of exercise.

The good news is most back pain goes away by itself. But for some people, the pain continues. If your back hurts most of the time for more than 3 months, you have chronic back pain.

What doctors do about chronic pain depends on the source of the pain. Some chronic back pain requires prolonged medical attention. If the pain comes from a fracture or tumor,



those problems can be treated. Surgery can help if the pain is caused by a ruptured (herniated) disc or certain other conditions like spinal stenosis (narrowing of the spinal column, which can put pressure on the nerves) or degenerative spondylolisthesis (when one vertebra slips over another). But surgery isn't the right choice for everyone.

There are many treatment options for back pain, so be sure to talk to your health care provider about which approach is right for you. For most people, even chronic pain eventually clears up without surgery. Research has shown that patients who stay active are better off. Just be sure to avoid activities that might strain the back.

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# MSGA College Scholarship Information

The scholarship program is designed to provide education financial assistance to members of the MSGA and/or a legal dependent or household relative of a member. If the member's MSGA membership status is terminated before the scholarship award is paid, the applicant will be disqualified.



**Scholarships will be awarded in the Fall for the 2016-2017 school year.**

## **Awards are based on the applicants:**

- Essay
- Community Involvement
- Work history

## **Eligibility Criteria**

- Applicants must be high school of senior rank or currently enrolled in a 2 or 4-year college or university.
- Applicants are only eligible if a member of the MSGA and/or legal dependent or household relative of such a member.
- You must have a minimum 2.0 GPA.

## **Application Process**

For the first time, members can apply online at: [www.medsensemembersonline.com](http://www.medsensemembersonline.com). The application can also be printed and mailed to: Med-Sense Guaranteed Association, 917 Clocktower Drive Suite 100, Springfield, IL 62704.

You must include one letter of recommendation from a professor, employer, or character reference.

## **Deadline**

July 1, 2016 is the deadline for all completed applications to be submitted. MSGA's Scholarship Committee will review applications after this date. All information is confidential. An anonymous screening committee will choose the award recipient(s).

## **If You Get an Award**

If you win an award, you will be required to provide a letter at the end of your scholarship period to update the selection committee on your academic progress and/or enhancement of your skills.

## **Permission**

By applying for a scholarship, you agree that if an award is granted, your name and the name of the university you attend may be made public for promotional purposes.

# The Beauty of Sleep

Did you know that there is a single activity that when performed once a day can improve memory and mood, prevent weight gain, decrease risk of chronic illness and injury, strengthen the immune system, and lead to better judgment? A good night's sleep (seven to eight hours for adults) can provide all of those benefits, and sleep is something you already do every day. The question is, do you get enough quality sleep?



Research indicates the majority of adults do not get the recommended seven to eight hours of sleep per night. While many view insufficient sleep as a way of life, lack of sleep can negatively impact how you function throughout the day.

## Not getting enough sleep can lead to:

- Slower reaction times
- Weight gain, particularly in younger individuals
- Poor concentration
- Weakened immune system
- Negative moods and lack of motivation
- Impaired memory and judgment
- Increased incidence of accidents

Each of these factors can lead to decreased performance, resilience and readiness.



## Getting Quality Sleep

While it may not be possible to get eight hours of rest every night, there are things you can do to increase the amount and quality of your sleep:

### Avoid stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine, particularly later in the day

Effects of caffeine can take up to 8 hours to wear off completely.

### Avoid alcohol immediately before bed

Alcohol has been shown to decrease the quality of sleep. It can also cause you to wake up in the middle of the night more frequently.

### Maintain a consistent sleep schedule

Try to go to bed and get up at approximately the same time every day.

### Avoid naps after 3 pm

Although 10–30 minute naps can be very beneficial, napping later in the day can lead to difficulty falling asleep at night.

### Maintain a good sleep environment

Keep your room cool and minimize bright lights and noise.

### Unplug from technology 15-30 minutes before bed

TVs, computers, smart phones and other electronics negatively impact both the ability to fall asleep and the quality of sleep. Engagement in these activities stimulates the brain and the glow from the screen decreases the release of melatonin, the hormone that induces sleep. (Continued on Page 6)



# The Beauty of Sleep

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## Exercise

Just not within 5 hours of bedtime

Do not stay in bed if you cannot fall asleep – if you are not able to fall asleep after 20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing until you are sleepy. Try reading with low light, listening to relaxing music, or practicing deep breathing techniques or guided imagery exercises.

If you continue to have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, or if you continue to feel tired during the day despite spending enough time in bed at night, consult your healthcare provider.

Content courtesy of the Navy and Marine Corps  
Public Health Center's Health Promotion and  
Wellness department

For information regarding your membership  
and association services, please call or write:

**Membership Services Office  
Med-Sense Guaranteed Association  
16476 Wild Horse Creek Road  
Chesterfield, MO 63017**

**1-800-992-8044 or (636) 530-7200**

Articles in this newsletter are meant to be informative, enlightening, and helpful to you. While all the information contained herein is meant to be completely factual, it is always subject to change. Articles are not intended to provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.