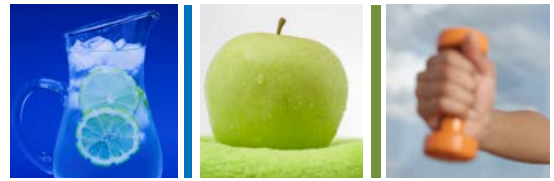


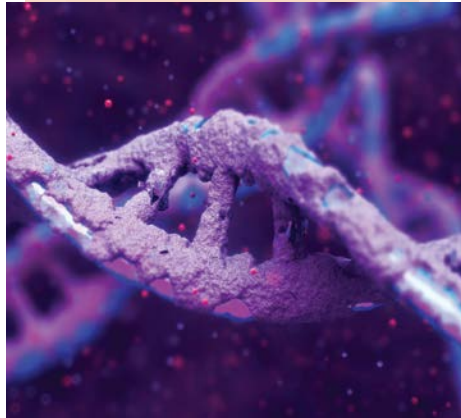
TAKE CHARGE!



August 2025

Genetics and Your Health

Your genes may affect your health. Genes can influence whether you react well or negatively to certain medications, for example. They can also affect your risk for specific diseases or conditions, including some that seem to run in your family.



However, few diseases are caused by a change in a single gene or even multiple genes. Most diseases result from an interaction between your genes and environmental factors, including lifestyle factors, exposure to some pesticides, airborne chemicals, tobacco or water pollution.

You can't change your genes. But you can modify potentially risky habits. Research indicates up to 80% of chronic diseases are due to non-genetic factors. For example, diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use and alcohol consumption are the main risk factors for cancer and other diseases.

The good news? You can often take action to lower your risk of genetic-linked health problems developing by making lifestyle changes, including quitting tobacco, improved nutrition, regular, moderate exercise, limiting alcohol or not drinking it at all, and maintaining a healthy weight.

Some individuals get sick after exposure to things, such as a cold virus or pollen, even though others around them stay perfectly healthy. That's because small genetic differences — sometimes even between close relatives (e.g., siblings or parent and child) — can lead to very different responses to the same substances. And some with certain genetic traits that we don't fully understand have an immune system that makes it difficult to fend off common infections such as the flu.

If you are concerned about a disease — arthritis or type 2 diabetes, for example — that runs in your family, it's a good idea to discuss your family and personal health history with your health care provider.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, [Manage Your Digital Life](#), is at personalbest.com/extras/25V8tools.

city events

Developing a Growth Mindset

Tuesday, August 5

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

[Register here](#)

Quit for Life: Tobacco Cessation Webinar

Thursday, August 7

10:00 am – 11:00 am

[Register here](#)

Benefits 101: Choosing the Right Health Plan for You

Tuesday, August 12

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

[Register here](#)

Deferred Compensation

Introduction to Deferred Compensation

Wednesday, August 13

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

[Register here](#)

Rollovers into Deferred Compensation

Tuesday, August 19

12:00 pm – 12:30 pm

[Register here](#)

Nearing Retirement

Thursday, August 28

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

[Register here](#)

Managing Personal Finances

Monday, August 18

12:30 pm – 1:30 pm

[Register here](#)

Benefits 101: Where You Get Care Matters

Thursday, August 21

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

[Register here](#)

Grocery Savvy: Mastering Smart Shopping and Label Reading

Monday, August 25

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

[Register here](#)

How HIPAA Works

It's important to understand how the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act protects your health information. HIPAA makes it possible for employees to carry forward their health care insurance between jobs and it prohibits excluding people who have pre-existing health conditions.

HIPAA's Privacy Rule sets standards for individuals' rights to understand and control how their health information is used, shared and protected. This has become increasingly important as medical records and communication are commonly shared via encrypted email and stored as EHRs (electronic health records).

The act gives you important rights to accessing your medical records. With very few exceptions, you have the right to receive and review a copy of your medical records, including tests, exam results and billing records held by your health care providers and health plans. You can name a personal representative to have that right, if they have power of attorney.



HIPAA doesn't require that one of your health care providers share information with other providers you have, unless you give permission. If you are being treated by a mental health professional, HIPAA doesn't allow the provider to disclose psychotherapy notes about you unless you authorize it.

The HIPAA Security Rule protects electronic health communications and records. The protective measures include requiring passwords and PINs to access your medical information online and using encrypted emails when your health and test information is shared between you and your health care providers.

Dealing with Passive Aggression

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Aggression in any form is never welcome, but passive-aggressive behavior can be particularly tricky to manage. When someone is upset but doesn't say so, their feelings may come across indirectly through various forms such as:

- Silence.
- Neglect.
- Irritability, sullenness or sarcasm.
- Avoidance.
- Inaction.
- Non-cooperation.

These ways of managing feelings are ineffective, as others have no way of knowing for certain what the person might be upset about — or even if they are actually upset.

The key steps in addressing passive aggression:

Recognize the pattern. Since the signs are sometimes subtle, it's okay to take action, even if you are unsure whether you're truly witnessing passive-aggressive behavior.

Wait until you're calm before responding, and remain respectful. Lashing out in anger will only make matters worse.

State what you observe and what you feel — for example, "I notice that you've been rather quiet today, and I'm concerned that you might be upset with me."



Be prepared for the possibility that the person may deny being upset, or may try to turn matters around and blame you, accusing you of overreacting. You still have a right to make reasonable requests even if the other person insists that nothing is wrong.

If the pattern persists, consider using a mediator or counselor, or reducing your exposure to the other person, if possible.

If you are the passive-aggressive one, you may find it helpful to tune into your feelings early on and find more direct, yet appropriate, ways of expressing your needs.

Avoid damaging your cuticles — the protective layer of skin around your nails. Here's why: The cuticle is a layer of clear, delicate skin along the bottom edges of your fingers and toes. It protects new nails from bacteria as they grow. So, it's no surprise that cutting, picking or biting your cuticles can lead to bacterial or fungal infections around the nails with resulting pain, redness, swelling and even pus. If you insist on the look of trimmed cuticles, use an orange stick to push your cuticles back gently. And if your cuticles are cracked or dry, don't reach for the cuticle trimmers. Instead, moisturize your hands and feet with lotion or use a warm paraffin wax treatment designed specifically for nails.



Everyone makes mistakes sometimes. But ruminating on bad decisions can lead to depression and lost opportunities. Instead, treat yourself with self-compassion, the same non-judgmental kindness you'd offer others. Self-compassion helps you learn from mistakes and boosts resilience and happiness, studies show. To get started, the American Psychiatric Association suggests writing a letter to yourself, as if you were a caring friend offering support.

TIP of the MONTH

Fortified Foods and Beverages

Not all fortified foods and beverages are healthful. Health benefits depend on the food and what it is fortified with. In some cases, fortification can help prevent nutrient deficiencies — such as adding vitamin D to milk. But some ultra-processed foods are fortified to make them sound healthier than they are. An example is sugary cereal fortified with B-vitamins and iron. Those added nutrients can't mask the high sugar content. **The bottom line?** Some fortified foods provide vitamins and minerals but also add excess sugar, salt or fat to the diet. It's important to consider the overall nutritional profile rather than only choosing foods because they are fortified.

eating smart

Explore the Atlantic Diet

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

The Mediterranean diet is known to protect against heart disease. Scientists are researching diets in other regions that also support heart health. Enter the Atlantic diet. Originating in northwestern Spain and Portugal, the Atlantic diet emphasizes fresh, seasonal foods, such as vegetables and seafood, just like the Mediterranean diet.

The key components of the Atlantic diet are:

- Fruits and vegetables — especially kale, cabbage and cauliflower.
- Protein — more fish, meat and dairy products than the Mediterranean diet.
- Grains — more potatoes, but less pasta than the Mediterranean diet.
- Fats — lots of extra-virgin olive oil and omega-3 fats from fish and seafood.

How does it compare to the Mediterranean diet? Both patterns focus on more whole foods, more home cooking and regular exercise. The Atlantic diet differs from the Mediterranean diet because it:

- Includes potatoes daily, rather than a few times a week.
- Includes more animal foods, such as pork, veal and cheese.
- Has more chestnuts, which have fewer calories than nuts, such as almonds and walnuts.



Benefits of the Atlantic diet: Studies link this dietary pattern to a reduced chance of developing heart disease risk factors, such as high cholesterol, insulin resistance and high blood pressure. All the studies were conducted in Spain and Portugal.

The red flag: The Atlantic diet is controversial since it contains more red meat and potatoes (foods traditionally linked to heart disease) than the Mediterranean diet. Sometimes, a dietary pattern works in a certain geographical region but cannot be recreated elsewhere. It may be affected by the sun, soil, air, geography, cost of food, exercise patterns and more.

The Atlantic diet may also be beneficial because it positively affects gut bacteria, which helps with overall health. But are the gut health effects specific to the region? Before being widely adopted, the Atlantic diet pattern needs to be tested in other parts of the world.

Mango Salad with Peanut Dressing

6 cups chopped Romaine lettuce
1 red pepper, diced
1 mango, peeled and diced
¼ cup fresh chopped cilantro
¼ cup creamy peanut butter
¼ cup lime juice

1 tbsp reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
1 tsp toasted sesame oil
½ cup thinly sliced green onion
¼ cup roasted peanuts

In a large serving bowl, combine lettuce, pepper, mango and cilantro. In a small bowl, blend the peanut butter, lime juice, soy sauce, vinegar and oil. **Whisk** until uniform, adding a bit of water if it is too thick to pour. **Pour** dressing over salad and toss to coat. **Serve** topped with green onions and peanuts.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 237 calories | 9g protein | 14g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 5g mono fat | 5g poly fat | 23g carbohydrate | 14g sugar (0g added sugar) | 5g fiber | 150mg sodium

EASY recipe



Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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EXPERT advice

— Eric Endlich, PhD

Q: How to find mental health care resources?

A: Finding help for mental or emotional challenges might seem daunting at first, but there are many options available:

- ➔ If you or a household member has an employee assistance program benefit through work, contact the EAP; they may be able to connect you with appropriate resources.
- ➔ Speak with your health care provider. If you need medication, your provider may be able to prescribe it; if you need psychotherapy, your provider may recommend local therapists or a referral service.
- ➔ Contact your health insurance plan. Your ID card may have a mental health phone number or link to an online directory of in-network providers.
- ➔ You may be able to find support or self-help groups through an online search, local newspapers or bulletin boards. You can also call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline at **1-800-662-4357**.
- ➔ In an emergency, you can call or text **988** for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, call **911**, or go to your closest hospital emergency room.

The bottom line: Help may be only a phone call, text or mouse click away.

News & Notes

Health FSA Planning – Anticipate Your 2026 Healthcare Costs: Are you planning to elect the health care Flexible Spending Account (FSA) during Open Enrollment? Now is a great time to estimate your expected expenses for 2026. Start thinking ahead and consult with your health care provider to identify non-essential or elective services you may need next year. Planning in advance can help you budget for higher-cost items such as non-emergency crowns, prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses, orthodontia, or elective procedures.

Dental Visits – A Smart Choice for Well-being: Regular dental visits help catch issues like cavities, gum disease, and infections early—before they get serious. Cleanings remove plaque and tartar brushing can't, and dentists screen for oral cancer while offering hygiene tips. It's the best way to keep your teeth healthy and your smile bright. Need a Dentist?

- **Delta Dental of Washington:** Visit www.DeltaDentalWA.com to log in or create an account and find in-network providers.
- **Dental Health Services:** Go to www.dentalhealthservices.com, click "Plan Members" to search for a dentist, and set up an account.

Save the Date! We're excited to announce that **Open Enrollment for 2026 Benefits** will take place from **Monday, October 6, through Friday, October 31, 2025**. This is your annual opportunity to review, update, or make changes to your benefits selections, including medical, dental, vision, and other coverage options. Be sure to mark your calendar and keep an eye out for additional details, plan highlights, and enrollment instructions coming your way this Fall.

Guard Your Child's Online Life

As a parent or guardian, it's up to you to watch over your children's online behavior. Have ongoing conversations with your children and follow these FBI guidelines:

Know which websites, social media platforms, software, games and apps your children use.

Preview media, entertainment and tools before you let your child use them. Install parental controls.

Make sure children use privacy settings to restrict access to their online profiles. Educate them about using strong passwords.

Check their social media, gaming profiles and posts. Talk candidly about what is and isn't appropriate.

Explain the permanency of photos, comments and posts. Explain that once they are shared, they never disappear.

Make it a rule that children cannot meet with someone they met online without your permission or knowledge. **Best bet:** Tell your children not to engage with anyone they don't know in real life.

Report inappropriate contact between your children and adults to law enforcement.

Remind your children that making threats

online is against the law, even if it is a joke.

Set limits.

Provide clear rules for how much time your child can spend viewing digital media for non-school reasons.

Talk to your children about artificial intelligence.

Use of AI on social media and other online media is widespread. While using it can be a valuable skill for a teen, AI can also be used to mislead minors with fake content and can pose a threat to their online safety and privacy. Misuse of AI also can involve violating intellectual property laws. Educate your child and yourself about the pros and cons of AI as well as legal issues so they use it responsibly and ethically.

