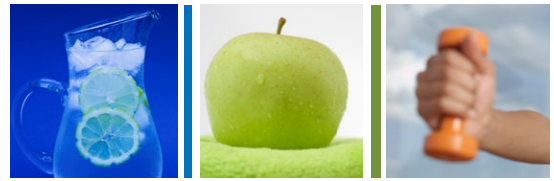


TAKE CHARGE!



November 2023

Mind Your Food Environment

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Food advertisements, social media and grocery stores all influence our daily food choices. Of the \$14 billion food companies spend on advertising each year, more than 80% promote ultra-processed foods, such as sugary drinks, fast food and candy. Unfortunately, high consumption of these foods is linked with an increased risk of developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer.



Studies show that limited access to nourishing foods contributes to poor diet and increased disease risk. Many areas of the country have **food swamps**, which means an overabundance of convenient, tasty, ultra-processed food, or **food deserts**, which have limited access to nutritious options. This is especially common in lower-income areas, where it is easier and cheaper to buy chips and candy than carrots and bananas.

Here are some things you can do to navigate a fast food-heavy environment:

- **Swap the soda.** Water is healthier and is sold near sugary beverages. Choose water most often.
- **Find alternatives.** Fast food is fine on occasion, but fast-casual restaurants that offer salads, sandwiches and grain bowls are often better options.
- **Take a snack.** It's easier to ignore the lure of candy bars and donuts if you've packed a satisfying snack, such as trail mix or an apple.
- **Grocery shop with a list.** Marketing is abundant in supermarkets. You'll make fewer impulse purchases if you stick with your shopping list.
- **Limit exposure to food advertising.** Block social media ads promoting ultra-processed food. Watch ad-free programming when possible.
- **Be skeptical.** Value-sized packages, upsized portions or the allure of fast-food places being open late are marketing tactics that tempt us to overconsume ultra-processed foods.

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Tips to Prevent Burnout**, is at personalbest.com/extras/23V11tools.

city events

Food as Medicine

Wednesday, November 1

12:30 pm – 1:00 pm Register [here](#)

Deferred Compensation Webinars

Social Security: The Choice of a Lifetime

Tuesday, November 7

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm Register [here](#)

Introduction to Deferred Compensation

Wednesday, November 15

9:00 am – 9:45 am Register [here](#)

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

Managing Taxes on Your Retirement Income

Tuesday, November 28

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm Register [here](#)

End of Year Check-In

Thursday, November 30

9:00 am – 9:30 am Register [here](#)

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

It's Holiday Time Already?

Wednesday, November 8

11:30 am – 12:30 pm Register [here](#)

How to Win the Holidays with Weight Watchers

Thursday, November 9

10:00 am – 11:00 am Register [here](#)

Dual Career Relationships

Thursday, November 9

11:00 am – 12:00 pm Register [here](#)

How Financial Stress Affects the Workplace

Monday, November 13

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm Register [here](#)

Motivating Your Staff and Improving Morale

Wednesday, November 15

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm Register [here](#)

Headaches: It's Not Just in Your Head

Multiple Dates in November

Register [here](#)

Self-Care: Getting Organized

Wednesday, November 21

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm Register [here](#)



Prediabetes Action Plan

If you are diagnosed with prediabetes, your blood glucose (sugar) levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes.

That makes prediabetes a serious condition — one that can lead to type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Prediabetes, which is on the rise in the U.S., usually begins with insulin resistance — when the liver, fat and muscle cells do not use insulin properly. Eventually, the body needs more insulin than it can produce, causing blood glucose to rise and causing serious health problems without proper management.

Risk factors for developing prediabetes:

- Obesity, an underlying cause of insulin resistance.
- Age beyond 45.
- Exercising fewer than three times a week.
- Family history of type 2 diabetes.
- Giving birth to a baby that weighed more than nine pounds.
- Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), a hormonal disorder in women.

The good news? Prediabetes can often be reversed to lower the risk of developing type 2 diabetes — a condition that can cause serious health complications. These include heart disease, chronic kidney disease, nerve damage and other problems with feet, oral health, vision, hearing and mental health stress.

Note: The American Diabetes Association recommends diabetes screening before age 35 if you're overweight and have additional risk factors for prediabetes or type 2 diabetes. Discuss with your health care provider. Check out the online prediabetes test at cdc.gov/prediabetes/risktest.

If you are diagnosed with prediabetes, here are five actions to take now:

1. Get moving. Target at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week, and you will notice improvements in weight control, mental health and energy to help keep you motivated toward positive, ongoing health choices. Include strengthening workouts.

2. Eat nutritious foods. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, whole grains and olive oil is linked with a lower risk of developing prediabetes. Cut back on ultra-processed foods, such as soda, salty snacks and fast food.



Tests for Diagnosing Diabetes

Your health care provider will have you take one or more of the following blood tests to confirm a diagnosis:

A1C test measures your average blood sugar level over the past two or three months. An A1C below 5.7% is normal; **between 5.7% and 6.4%** means you have prediabetes; **6.5% or higher** indicates you have diabetes.

Fasting blood sugar test measures your blood sugar after fasting overnight. A fasting blood sugar level of **99 mg/dL** or lower is normal, **100 to 125 mg/dL** means you have prediabetes and **126 mg/dL or higher** is a diagnosis of diabetes.

Glucose tolerance test measures your blood sugar before and after you drink a liquid that contains glucose. You'll fast overnight before the test and have your blood drawn to determine your fasting blood sugar level. Then you'll drink the liquid and have your blood sugar level checked one hour, two hours, and possibly three hours afterward. At two hours, a blood sugar level of **140 mg/dL or lower** is considered normal, **140 to 199 mg/dL** means you have prediabetes and **200 mg/dL or higher** is diabetes.

3. Lose excess weight. Extra pounds can lead to the development of insulin resistance. If you're overweight, losing just 5% to 7% of your body weight (about 14 pounds if you weigh 200 pounds) can significantly reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes when you maintain the weight loss.

4. Get adequate sleep. Experts recommend seven to nine hours daily.

5. If you smoke, quit. Smokers are 30% to 40% more likely to get diabetes than nonsmokers, according to the FDA.

QuikRisk™ Assessment: Screen Time

By Eric Endlich, PhD

Do you ever wonder if you're spending too much time viewing screens? Answer the questions below:

1. Smartphones, TVs or other screens keep me from getting a good night's sleep. **T F**
2. I'd get involved in other activities if I weren't using screens so much. **T F**
3. Social media use, computer games or other online activities make me less productive at work. **T F**
4. Even when not working, I spend six or more hours daily using screens. **T F**
5. At mealtime, I don't really notice the amount or taste of my food because I'm busy watching screens. **T F**
6. I become irritable or impatient when I can't use electronic devices. **T F**
7. Screens often distract me during conversations. **T F**
8. When I'm bored or upset, I cope by using electronic devices. **T F**
9. I exercise less than I should because of my screen use. **T F**
10. My screen use often substitutes for in-person social contact. **T F**

If you answered True to some of these questions, examine your screen use. Not all screen use is harmful, but excessive screen time — especially more than six hours per day — has been linked to depression. Consider carving out screen-free times (e.g., mealtimes) and seeking out unplugged activities, such as exercising and socializing.





Thanksgiving Day is also National

Family Health History Day.

Gathering with relatives for this American tradition is an opportunity to learn about health problems that run in your family. Even if you miss Thanksgiving dinner, call relatives and find out how they are doing. For example, have relatives had cancer, diabetes, heart disease or osteoporosis? Share information about your relatives' medical history with your health care provider. Find out if you need more frequent checkups or need to modify your lifestyle to lower your risks for certain health problems. To learn more, search for **Family Health History** at cdc.gov.



TIP of the **MONTH**

Comfort Food Caveat

If you've ever turned to food in times of stress, new research reveals it may not be as comforting as you think.

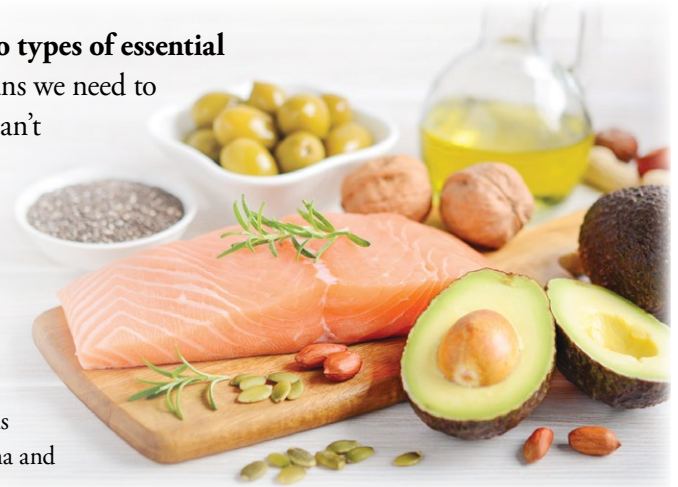
Scientists have discovered that stress interferes with the brain's fullness cue, and eating comfort foods makes us want to eat even more. Stress can also override the pleasure that comes from comfort food, so a tub of ice cream is not your best option. What helps most? **Nature.** Next time you're stressed, go for a quick walk outside and see if that helps more than comfort food.

Omega Fat Matters

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Omega-3 and omega-6 fats are two types of essential polyunsaturated fats. *Essential* means we need to get them from food since the body can't make them on its own.

North Americans get plenty of omega-6 fats from corn and soybean oils, which are abundant in the food supply. But omega-3 fats are harder to come by. While it would be ideal to get a ratio of 4:1 omega-6 to omega-3 fats, most people get closer to 20:1. This high ratio has been linked to heart disease, obesity, asthma and inflammation.



How can you get more omega-3 fats?

There are three main types of omega-3 fats in foods: alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA).

ALA omega-3 fats are found in plant-based foods, such as walnuts, canola oil, chia and flax seeds.

DHA and EPA are abundant in fish, such as salmon, trout and sardines. Vegans can get DHA and EPA from algae or seaweed. **Did you know?** Fish are high in omega-3 because they eat so much algae.

To fix the ratio, any of those omega-3 sources are fine. But for advanced health, most research focuses on EPA and DHA, which have more health benefits than ALA.

During pregnancy and infancy, DHA is important for the normal development of the baby's brain, eyes and nerves. In adulthood, DHA and EPA are important for reducing the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke. For older adults, sufficient DHA and EPA correlates with a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and cognitive decline.

Aim to eat two to three servings of fatty fish each week. If you don't enjoy fish, speak with your health care professional about DHA and EPA supplements.

One-Pan Chicken Parmesan Pasta

EASY recipe

- | | |
|--|---|
| 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil | 1 box (16 oz.) whole-grain pasta (penne or fusilli) |
| 18 oz. boneless, skinless chicken breast | 2 cups broccoli florets |
| 2 tsp Italian herb seasoning, <i>divided</i> | 1 cup shredded mozzarella |
| ½ tsp garlic powder | ½ cup grated Parmesan |
| 3 cloves garlic, minced | ½ seasoned Italian-style bread crumbs |
| 1 jar (24 oz.) tomato marinara sauce | ½ cup chopped fresh basil |
| 4 cups water or chicken broth | |



Set a large oven-proof pan over medium heat and add olive oil. **Add** chicken, 1 tsp Italian herbs and garlic powder. **Cook**, stirring, 5 minutes. **Transfer** to plate and cover to keep warm. **Add** garlic to same pan and sauté 1 minute. **Add** tomato sauce and water and bring to a boil, then reduce to simmer. **Add** remaining Italian herbs, pasta, broccoli and chicken. **Stir** to combine. **Cook** 12-15 minutes or until pasta is tender. **Top** pan with mozzarella, Parmesan and bread crumbs. **Transfer** to oven and broil for 1-2 minutes until cheese browns. **Garnish** with basil and serve.

Makes 8 servings. Per serving: 418 calories | 28g protein | 11g total fat | 3g saturated fat | 4g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 56g carb | 8g sugar (0 added sugar) | 10g fiber | 467mg sodium

Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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News & Notes

- **Looking for Financial Self-Care Tips?** November's Self-Care Spotlight focuses on financial self-care, emphasizing the importance of a healthy mindset toward earning, spending, and saving money. See podcasts and more on <https://bit.ly/SelfCare23>. Register for the November webinars on the front page of this newsletter.
- **Check Your 2023 Flexible Spending Account (FSA) balances.** All health and daycare expenses must be incurred by December 31, 2023. For a list of eligible expenses, log into your account at NaviaBenefits.com. You may also purchase eligible FSA products at FSAStore.com. Remember, up to \$550 of unused 2023 Health Care FSA account balances will carry over to 2024 accounts by the end of January 2024. If you didn't elect a 2024 Health Care FSA, 2023 account balances under \$120 will be forfeited. Daycare FSAs don't have a carryover feature.
- **Update Your Mailing Address** in ess.seattle.gov to receive important documents (such as your W-2) and benefits information.

EXPERT advice — Elizabeth Smoots, MD

Q: Flu vaccine safety?

A: The flu shots recommended each fall for everyone aged six months and older have an excellent safety profile, according to the CDC. You cannot catch the flu from a flu shot since they're prepared from inactivated viruses. The nasal vaccine will not cause influenza either since it contains live, weakened viruses.

Despite the good safety record, adverse effects can occur. Most common are injection site redness or soreness, fever, muscle aches, headache or fatigue. The side effects are usually mild and resolve on their own in a few days. Patients can report adverse reactions to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System at vaers.hhs.gov/reportevent.html.

Certain people should not get a flu shot. Talk to your health care provider if you have an allergy to eggs or other vaccine ingredients, or if you have ever had Guillain-Barre Syndrome. The CDC also advises those who are moderately or severely ill should wait until they recover before receiving a flu vaccine.

Smart Wheelchair Moves

Unless you know someone who uses a wheelchair, you might not always think about your actions around people who rely on them. For example, always ask someone if they want assistance before helping them, and never touch or move a wheelchair without the user's permission. Some other guidelines:

Remember that bathroom stalls designed for wheelchairs should be left for wheelchair use. Bathrooms can be a huge source of stress for people who use wheelchairs.

Stay cognizant of your surroundings if you are pushing someone in a wheelchair. Watch for obstacles that could catch on the chair, wheels or foot rests.

Keep in mind that if someone in a wheelchair asks for directions, they will need to know the distance and any possible physical obstacles that may affect their travel.

Be especially careful when pushing a wheelchair downhill. **Tip:** On a steep hill, go down backward slowly to prevent the person in the wheelchair from being tipped forward.

Always lock the brakes or turn off power when stopping a wheelchair for a period of time.

Never lean on someone's wheelchair.

Avoid hanging heavy loads on the back of a wheelchair. Keep loose objects away from the wheel spokes.

Never let children play on a wheelchair.



November is COPD Awareness Month. Breath-robbing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease affects almost 16 million Americans. It restricts air flow in and out of airways. Smoking is the main cause, but multiple respiratory infections and exposure to various air pollutants can also result in COPD. Talk to your health care provider if you have possible COPD symptoms. While there's no cure for COPD, early diagnosis and treatment can improve the quality of life. To learn more, search for **COPD** at lung.org. If you have COPD and have tried older inhalers unsuccessfully, ask your provider about trying a newer one.

