

TH TOP HEALTH[®]

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter.

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Yoga: Something for Everyone

Millions of people worldwide practice yoga for its exceptional benefits. You can too, regardless of your age, weight or flexibility. If you've been wanting to try yoga, here are some basics:

Well-documented rewards:

- Increased strength, flexibility and balance.
- Reduced back pain and tension.
- Stress relief and enhanced relaxation.
- Improved mental focus and concentration.

Yoga involves movements, positions, breathing, relaxation and meditation that can lead to gradual changes in physical and mental well-being. Yoga has the potential to aid numerous health problems, including arthritis, diabetes, asthma, insomnia, fibromyalgia, high blood pressure and heart disease.

The American College of Sports Medicine lists 15 varieties of yoga. They vary in pace and emphasis, from slower-moving practice with breathing and meditation to faster, flowing sequences combined with rhythmic breathing for a full-body workout.

For starters, you can try a basic yoga class if you're generally healthy. If you have any major injuries or ailments, consider a class offering an easier form of yoga designed for people with chronic conditions and limited abilities. See your health care provider first if you are pregnant or have back, blood pressure, or balance problems or other health conditions.

You can modify yoga postures based on your abilities; always practice at your own pace. Choose an instructor certified by a known teaching organization. Learn more at the Yoga Alliance Registry: www.yogaalliance.org.

{ "Start where you are. Use what you have.
Do what you can." – Arthur Ashe }

Live Well With Type 2 Diabetes



When you take care of your diabetes, you feel better. Your everyday choices may help prevent problems with your kidneys, eyes, feet, legs and cardiovascular system.

A smart daily plan includes choosing balanced meals, tracking your blood sugar and taking your meds, if prescribed. Another important step – one you can enjoy – is to stay active.

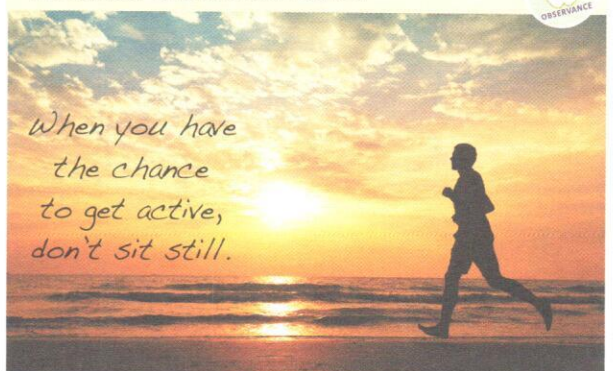
Routine exercise and other physical activity help control weight, improve circulation, boost energy and improve blood sugar. Even better, consistent exercise may improve your blood glucose and A1C levels, which might lead to taking less insulin and fewer other medications.

Physical activity also plays a major role in preventing type 2 diabetes. The Diabetes Prevention Program showed that we may cut our diabetes risk by half with modest weight loss (5% of your body weight) and moderate aerobic exercise (such as brisk walking).

Fit in 30-minute (or 3, 10-minute) heart-pumping routines at least 5 days a week. Also do 2 muscle-strengthening workouts per week to aid fat burning and glucose control. Finally, just get up and move more every day.

Talk with your health care provider about your exercise goals, especially if you've been inactive. Discuss which activities you're planning, the best time to exercise and the potential impact of increased activity on your blood sugar related to eating and medications.

November is Diabetes Month.



When you have
the chance
to get active,
don't sit still.

The Lowdown on Fructose

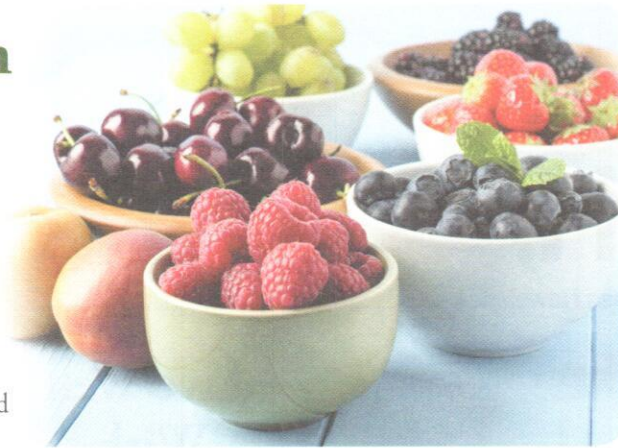
By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

What is fructose? Fructose is a small sugar molecule that's naturally found in honey, fruit and sweet vegetables, such as beets and corn. It also can be paired with glucose and processed into high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), a sugar additive popular with food manufacturers.

High-fructose corn syrup is a corn-based sweetener that's widely used in processed foods, especially soft drinks. It's been the subject of lively debate among nutrition pundits. Some believe it contributes to the obesity epidemic, while others think it's just another sugar – no different than what's in your sugar bowl.

Some studies suggest excessive consumption of added sugars is linked to insulin resistance, high triglycerides, heart disease and liver damage, but more research is needed.

With no consensus on either side of the debate, nutrition experts do agree on 1 thing: Most North Americans consume



too many added sugars and not enough fruit. Per person, consumption of fructose added as HFCS to foods has risen five-fold during the past 100 years.

Is sugar in fruit safe to eat? Yes. In fact, guidelines suggest eating at least 2 cups of fruit every day (more or less depending on your individual needs). At this intake level, your fructose consumption will be relatively low – and it's naturally occurring, not added, sugar. Plus, the fiber, vitamins and antioxidants in fruit are part of a healthy diet. Learn more at choosemyplate.gov.

Consider this: An average 16-ounce soft drink has 53 grams of sugar, while a pear or an apple has just 12 grams. **Bottom line:** If you consume sugar, it's better to get it from fruit than from processed foods.

The Scoop on Energy Drinks

Getting revved up on energy drinks day after day may have health consequences. The primary concern is that such beverages are high in caffeine and other stimulants designed to boost mental or physical performance.

The caffeine amounts range from 80 to 175 milligrams (mg) per 8-ounce serving; some containers have multiple servings. The maximum amount the FDA considers safe in cola-style beverages is 71 mg per 12 ounces. For comparison, an average 8-ounce cup of coffee has 130 mg, a 16-ounce latte averages 240 mg, and a 12-ounce cola averages 37 mg.

When choosing your drink, check labels for the caffeine amount. Note: Not all drinks list caffeine content, as the FDA does not require it on product labels.

Be aware that:

- They are often used as mixers with alcohol, especially by young people. The stimulants in energy drinks can mask intoxication, reducing one's awareness of their effects.
- Their stimulating effects can boost heart rate and blood pressure, contribute to dehydration and, like other stimulants, prevent sleep.
- They are linked to at least 34 deaths and numerous hospitalizations.
- They should not be used while exercising; the combination of fluid loss from sweating and the diuretic effect of caffeine can lead to severe dehydration.

Watch your sensitivity to these drinks, educate your children about the risks and don't over-consume them.



Smoking: Quitters Win

People often say quitting smoking was the hardest thing they ever did. The primary reason people stop smoking is to improve their health. It's a good reason, considering about half of cigarette smokers who don't quit die from a smoking-related disease.

Other forms of tobacco use are also risky. **Smokeless tobacco** contains carcinogens and nicotine; using an average-size dip for 30 minutes releases as much nicotine as smoking 3 cigarettes. Smoking **cigars?** Heavy or regular use and inhaling deeply raise the risk for various cancers, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Regular **hookah** smoking is equivalent to heavy smoking.

If you're concerned about the challenges of quitting, consider the benefits:

- Withdrawal typically lasts just 1 to 3 weeks.
- Cravings last only a few minutes, and over time the urges get weaker and come less often.
- Every day you spend without tobacco builds new routines that keep you stronger and feeling free.

It helps to meet with your health care provider when preparing to quit. You can discuss the best ways to cope with nicotine withdrawal based on your health and any prior quit attempts.



Why not set a quit date this month?
The Great American Smokeout is November 20.



Smart Moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/Nov14tools.

Next Month: What Are Empty Calories?