

IMPROVING YOUR HEALTH WITH MORE THAN MEDICATIONS

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Taking prescribed medications correctly is a crucial component of managing chronic diseases and improving health. However, there is more to chronic disease management than just taking medications. Modifying lifestyle behaviors and making sustainable changes will improve health and quality of life. It is also important to understand which vitamins and minerals your body needs to prevent disease and function properly. Nutrient deficiencies have symptoms like fatigue and weakness and can contribute to more serious illnesses.



The following articles talk about quitting smoking, dietary supplements, and diets to reduce high blood pressure and improve irritable bowel symptoms.

Benefits of Quitting Smoking

Quitting smoking is the single most important thing a smoker can do to improve his or her health, and benefits may start immediately. Three months after quitting, circulation improves, lung function increases, and shortness of breath decreases. One year after quitting, risk of heart disease shrinks to half that of a smoker's.

Sources: <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/quit-smoking/guide/quit-plan.html>, <https://smokefree.gov/explore-medications>, <http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/guidetoquittingsmoking/guide-to-quit-smoking-benefits>, <https://smokefree.gov/e-cigarettes>; Pictures: <http://www.grandparents.com/health-and-wellbeing/health/food-drug-interactions>, <http://healthfinder.gov/healthtopics/category/health-conditions-and-diseases/diabetes/quit-smoking>

First Steps to Quitting

The first step to quitting is to identify the reasons for quitting. Then choose a quit date and develop a plan. The physical symptoms of withdrawal usually go away after a week or two, but the psychological effects can last longer. It is important to think about potential triggers and how to handle those triggers in a way that changes smoking behavior. Triggers can include morning coffee, driving, or work breaks. It is also valuable to find a support system in family or friends.

Using a Quit Aid

Using nicotine replacement therapy together with counseling from a health care provider may increase the chances of quitting. Some nicotine replacement therapies like the gum, lozenge, and patch are available over the counter. These medications provide a bit of nicotine without other dangerous chemicals and allow the body to gradually give up nicotine. Prescription nicotine replacement therapies and other medications that physicians can prescribe may also aid quitting. Quit-aids are favored over e-cigarettes which are not regulated, vary in the amount of nicotine and numerous other chemicals they contain, and may not be safe or effective. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free advice or speak to a doctor or pharmacist about developing a plan to quit smoking today.



Should I Take a Supplement to Boost my Diet ?

Dietary supplements are a broad category that include vitamins, minerals, herbs, and amino acids. For most people, it is possible to get enough of the necessary vitamins and minerals by eating a healthy diet. However, for some people dietary supplements, like multivitamins for example, may help fill the gaps in their diets.



Supplements may offer critical benefits at certain times of life. For example, it is important for pregnant women and all women of child bearing age to get 400 micrograms of folic acid daily. Vitamin B12 is mainly found in animal products so those following a vegan diet may consider a supplement. Additionally, supplements may offer critical nutrients in the necessary amount for individuals with a known vitamin deficiency.

Dietary supplements can be costly, and taking them cannot replace all of the nutrients found in a healthy diet. Aim to eat a balanced variety of healthy foods to get the necessary amount of vitamins and minerals. Pay particular attention to vitamin D, potassium, calcium, and iron (required on the new nutrition labels) as Americans on average do not consume enough of these nutrients.

While supplements are generally safe for most people if taken at the recommended dose, they can have side effects and interact with other medications that are being taken. For example, increasing Vitamin K levels through a supplement can interact with blood thinners and reduce their ability to work. St. Johns Wort, which is commonly used for anxiety or depression, can interact with numerous medications including birth control pills, antidepressants, and warfarin.

Let your doctor or pharmacist know if you are taking or plan to take any supplements.

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Sources: <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/issue/aug2013/feature1>, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vitamins/>, <https://www.nutrition.gov/dietary-supplements/questions-ask-taking-vitamin-and-mineral-supplements>; Pictures: <http://www.health.harvard.edu/alternative-and-complementary-medicine/the-arguments-against-dietary-supplements>, <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/UCM501646.pdf>

DASH Eating Plan to Lower Blood Pressure

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan aims to reduce high blood pressure by reducing saturated fat, sodium, and cholesterol and increasing nutrient dense foods. The heart healthy DASH diet includes eating more vegetables, fruits, whole-grains, low-fat dairy, beans, poultry, fish, nuts, and limiting sodium, added sugars, and red meat. The sodium goal included in the DASH diet is less than 2,300mg of sodium daily and 1,500mg in some cases.



The DASH diet was not designed to focus on weight loss, but on improving health and preventing disease. However, since it contains many fruits, vegetables and lower calorie foods it can be modified to support weight loss if a lower daily calorie target is chosen. The DASH diet is rich in potassium, calcium, magnesium, and protein. It is also high in fiber, which may cause temporary bloating or diarrhea if one is not used to higher fiber intakes. Gradually increasing fiber over time will aid adjustment. In addition to eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, limiting alcohol intake, quitting smoking, and managing stress are important for reducing blood pressure and improving heart health.

DASH Eating Plan Serving Suggestions

Food Group	Servings Per Day			Serving Sizes
	1,600 Calories	2,000 Calories	2,600 Calories	
Grains*	6	6-8	10-11	1 slice bread 1 oz dry cereal† ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal
Vegetables	3-4	4-5	5-6	1 cup raw leafy vegetable ½ cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable ½ cup vegetable juice
Fruits	4	4-5	5-6	1 medium fruit ¼ cup dried fruit ½ cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit ½ cup fruit juice
Fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products	2-3	2-3	3	1 cup milk or yogurt 1½ oz cheese
Lean meats, poultry, and fish	3-6	6 or less	6	1 oz cooked meats, poultry, or fish 1 egg‡
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	3 per week	4-5 per week	1	½ cup or 1½ oz nuts 2 Tbsp peanut butter 2 Tbsp or ½ oz seeds ½ cup cooked legumes (dry beans and peas)
Fats and oils§	2	2-3	3	1 tsp soft margarine 1 tsp vegetable oil 1 Tbsp mayonnaise 2 Tbsp salad dressing
Sweets and added sugars	0	5 or less per week	≤2	1 Tbsp sugar 1 Tbsp jelly or jam ½ cup sorbet, gelatin 1 cup lemonade

The DASH diet is not a replacement for the medications that you may already take for high blood pressure, but following this eating plan may help prevent or reduce high blood pressure.

Sources: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dash>, https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/dash_brief.pdf, http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu/handouts/dash_diet.html; Pictures: <http://www.eatright.org/resource/health/wellness/heart-and-cardiovascular-health/dash-diet-reducing-hypertension-through-diet-and-lifestyle>, https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/dash_brief.pdf

How FODMAPS May Affect Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) affects 1 in 10 Americans each year. Many people who experience irritable digestive symptoms, such as diarrhea, constipation, gas, and cramping, have difficulty pinpointing what types of foods worsen their condition.

What are FODMAPs?

Some evidence has shown that foods high in FODMAPs may cause unbearable bloating and other uncomfortable problems. What are FODMAPs? FODMAP stands for **F**ermentable **O**ligosaccharides-**D**isaccharides-**M**onosaccharides and **P**olys, which are terms for different types of carbohydrates or sugars. Many people are able to tolerate foods high in FODMAPS in small quantities, but some people are highly sensitive to these sugars.

Low FODMAP Foods

Vegetables: Green beans, broccoli, spinach, zucchini, cucumbers, carrots, potatoes, tomatoes

Fruits: Bananas, blueberries, grapes, clementines, kiwis, lemons

Grains: Gluten-free bread, oats, quinoa, rice, sourdough, corn flour

Nuts: Almonds, peanuts, pecans, walnuts

Meats: Just about all








Dairy: Lactose-free yogurt, mozzarella, swiss, cheddar, soy milk

Why are some people sensitive to FODMAPs?

In a problem-free digestive tract, sugars are broken down in the small intestine into nutrients used by the body. Sometimes, the sugars gather in the large intestine, where bacteria in the gut feed on them. When bacteria feed on these sugars, gas is produced and bloating typically follows. The FODMAPs also pull fluid into the gut, leading to cramping and diarrhea. Diets limiting the amount of foods high in FODMAPs might help prevent the uncomfortable digestive symptoms related to IBS. The lists below outline common foods that are low and high in FODMAPs. The goal is not to eliminate all of the foods in a category, but rather to figure out and limit the foods that cause problems. Foods that trigger symptoms may be different for each individual. It is important to talk to a physician or a dietitian before making any drastic dietary changes.

High FODMAP Foods

FOODS THAT MAY *TRIGGER* IBS SYMPTOMS

- Apples 
- Beans
- Broccoli 
- Cabbage 
- Caffeine
- Cauliflower
- Gum, beverages, or foods sweetened w. fructose or sorbitol
- Chocolate 
- Dairy products 
- Fatty foods
- Margarine
- Nuts 
- Orange & grapefruit juices 
- Wheat products

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The FODMAP diet is not a substitution for your current IBS treatment. Be sure to see your physician if you have IBS symptoms, as further treatment may be necessary.

Sources: Prince, Alexis C., Clio E. Myers, Triona Joyce, Peter Irving, Miranda Lomer, and Kevin Whelan. "Fermentable Carbohydrate Restriction (Low FODMAP Diet) in Clinical Practice Improves Functional Gastrointestinal Symptoms in Patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease." *Inflammatory Bowel Diseases* 22.5 (2016): 1129-136. Web. 27 May 2016., <http://www.health.harvard.edu/diet-and-weight-loss/a-new-diet-to-manage-irritable-bowel-syndrome>; Picture: <http://www.health.harvard.edu/diet-and-weight-loss/a-new-diet-to-manage-irritable-bowel-syndrome>