

# TAKE CHARGE!



December 2023

## Everyday Relaxation Guide

**Mind-body workouts** involve a combination of movement, meditation and breathwork. The physical aspects of this practice can produce a mental focus that may help distract you from negative, bothersome thoughts while enhancing your body's flexibility and balance. Mind-body therapies have become increasingly popular in the past two decades. In brief, they include:



**Mindfulness meditation:** This is designed to calm mind and body by reducing negative thoughts that can feel overwhelming. It involves sitting comfortably and focusing on breathing. It may be helpful for people with anxiety, depression or pain.

**Breath focus meditation:** Start by focusing on your breath, silently counting inhalations and exhalations — in (*one*), out (*two*), in (*three*) and so on. This can help you focus on something besides troublesome thoughts. **Suggestion:** Practice at the same time each day.

**Repetitive prayer:** For this technique, you silently repeat a short prayer, or a phrase from a prayer, while practicing breath focus — a method that may be especially appealing if religion or spirituality is meaningful to you.

**Body scan:** This technique blends focused breathing with progressive muscle relaxation. Start with a few minutes of deep breathing. Then focus on one part of your body or group of muscles at a time as you mentally release any physical tension you feel there.

**Yoga and tai chi:** These ancient practices combine rhythmic breathing with a series of postures and flowing movements. Yoga involves holding poses and postures. Tai chi is performed in a dance-like, martial arts form.

**Note:** If you are not normally physically active, have chronic health problems or a painful or disabling condition, you may find these relaxation techniques too challenging. Check with your health care provider before increasing your physical activity.

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Give Yourself the Gift of Health**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/23V12tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/23V12tools).

### city events

**Social Security 101: Everything You Wanted to Know**

Friday, December 1

11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Register [here](#)

### Deferred Compensation Webinars

**End of Year Check-In**

Thursday, December 7

9:00 am – 9:30 am

Register [here](#)

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

**Social Security: Choice of a Lifetime**

Wednesday, December 13

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Register [here](#)

**Effective Communication: Getting Your Message Across**

Tuesday, December 12

12:00 pm – 12:30 pm

Register [here](#)

**Effective Communication: Listening Skills**

Thursday, December 14

12:30 pm – 1:00 pm

Register [here](#)

### BEST bits

■ **Starve a cold, feed a fever?** You need to eat, regardless of what ails you. A daily well-balanced, nutrient-rich diet can help keep your immune system strong, lowering your risk for illness. Essential nutrients that can support immune health include vitamins C and E, as well as beta carotene. Some of the best sources of these nutrients are asparagus, beets, broccoli, cantaloupe, carrots, corn, guava, kale, mangoes, mustard and collard greens, nectarines, pink grapefruit, squash, sweet potato, tangerines, tomatoes and watermelon.

# Year-End Health Assessment

Before assessing your health in 2023 using the list below, consider how your physical health and mental well-being are related. Together, they define what has become known in the past several decades as *wellness*.

- ❖ **Health** refers to a state where your physical body is strong and free from disease.
- ❖ **Wellness** refers to a broad overall balance of your physical, emotional, social, intellectual, environmental and occupational well-being.



For example, physical injuries can lead to mental health issues, while ongoing depression or stress can lead to physical ailments and failing mentality. Regular physical activity and exercise can produce many health benefits, including elevated mood and reduced stress, while healthy eating also can protect and improve your mental health. **Regular physical activity** can also boost brain health, help manage weight, strengthen bones and muscles, improve your ability to perform everyday activities — and reduce your risk for disease.

**How are health assessments useful?** They measure your current health status and identify specific risk factors that might cause potential health problems in the future — such as chronic stress, insomnia, overweight, poor diet and sedentary lifestyle. They can also identify any undiagnosed health concerns that require further examination by a medical professional.

**To improve your health**, you first need to understand your physical and mental health and risk factors for ill health.

**Note:** Personality factors strongly associated with good health and well-being include optimism and self-esteem. Genetic and personality factors are closely related and can influence your sense of well-being and confidence.

**Some people equate wellness with physical health** — nutrition, exercise and weight management — while in recent decades wellness has become more. Wellness is the act of practicing healthy habits daily to reach better physical, mental and emotional health outcomes — so that instead of just surviving, you're thriving.

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## The Art of Delegating

**Learning how to delegate successfully is the key to achieving more.** Handing chores or responsibilities off to others can give you energy and time for matters that need your specific attention. But how do you delegate — without being overly bossy or seeming demanding?

**Try these tips for delegating successfully:**

**Start with your reasons about what needs to be done.** People are more likely to care about performing specific assigned tasks well if they understand why the work you are delegating to them matters.

**Don't micromanage.** It's fine to check how a task is going now and then, but constantly asking for updates can frustrate the person you delegated a task to and waste your time. In fact, sometimes the hardest part of delegating work to others is letting go of at least some control.

**Provide deadlines.** If a task or project has a short turnaround time, make sure you've made it clear. If the task has a longer time frame, specify when you'll need brief updates as work progresses.

## Online Pharmacies

There's no doubt that prescription drugs can be costly. Sometimes, insurance may not cover medications prescribed by your health care provider, or you may have a high copay.

**Many people save money on prescription drug expenses by using online pharmacies.** With much less overhead than traditional pharmacies, web-based stores can typically offer lower prices on prescription drugs and deliver them by mail.

**But are all online pharmacies safe?** Unfortunately, the answer is no. There are fraudulent online pharmacies selling fake versions of medications and/or selling expired or damaged drugs that have been stored improperly.

**If you are considering using an online pharmacy**, take these steps to protect yourself:

**Never** use a medicine from an online pharmacy that looks different from what you receive at your usual pharmacy.

**Never** take ordered drugs that arrive in damaged packaging, have an expired date or no expiration date and have only foreign language instructions.

**Only** use an online pharmacy that requires a health care provider's prescription.

**Verify** that an online pharmacy is a legitimate U.S. company. Check the pharmacy's license in your state's board of pharmacy license database by using the location tool at [fda.gov/drugs/besaferx-your-source-online-pharmacy-information/besaferx-resources-consumers](https://www.fda.gov/drugs/besaferx-your-source-online-pharmacy-information/besaferx-resources-consumers). Only use online pharmacies on the list.



# Maximize Exercise with Food

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD



'Tis the season to get in the slow lane.

Warning: Hurrying is dangerous to your health and safety. It's time to get out of life's fast lane and consciously slow down. Rushing to meetings and constantly multi-tasking can be life-threatening. Distracted driving and speeding cause deadly car accidents and hurrying is a primary cause of serious injuries from falls, according to the National Safety Council. And rushing spikes stress hormones, raising your blood pressure.

**Being physically active is wonderful for overall health.** Benefits include improved mood, more energy, better sleep, stronger muscles and a decreased risk of developing heart disease and cancer.

**Pairing exercise with the right dietary pattern is even more beneficial than exercise alone.** To maximize the benefits of exercise, ensure that you fuel your body with the nutrients it needs before, during and after your activity. Your exact nutrient needs will depend on the type and duration of exercise, but these tips should be top of mind:

**Carbohydrates provide energy during exercise.** Foods, such as whole-grain bread, pasta and rice, as well as fruit, provide carbs and can be eaten before a workout to fuel up, and after a workout to replenish what's been used.

**Muscles are broken down during exercise,** so protein is vital after exercise to repair muscles and body tissues. You probably don't need protein powders or bars after basic exercise. Instead, choose a post-workout meal with protein-containing foods, such as milk, eggs, chicken, tofu or cheese.

**Staying hydrated with water is vital.** When you exercise, water is lost through sweat, and it needs to be replenished. Keep a water bottle handy and sip before, during and after exercising.

## Do I need a sports beverage?

**Sports drinks contain water, sugar and electrolytes,** such as sodium and potassium. They are recommended when you lose fluid and electrolytes via sweat. This happens only when you exercise at a vigorous intensity for more than one hour and you are sweating heavily — for example, after a hockey game, hour-long run or intense spin class. Plain water is all you need after moderate activity with minimal sweat.



## TIP of the MONTH

### Season to Taste

You may find the words **season to taste** in your recipes. What does that mean? Seasoning refers to salt, pepper, herbs and spices. Some people may like a bit more or less of these flavors, so you can adjust to suit your taste buds. How? Taste the final cooked dish, and then add a pinch of flavor and taste again. Repeat until you've reached the desired flavor. **Note:** Do not taste dishes with raw meat, eggs or poultry. Wait until they are fully cooked.

## Leftover Turkey Caesar Wraps

EASY recipe

- 2 cups cooked turkey, chopped
- 4 cups Romaine lettuce, torn to bite-sized pieces
- 1 large tomato, diced
- ¼ cup croutons, coarsely chopped
- 3 tbsp Parmesan cheese
- 3 tbsp creamy Caesar dressing
- 4 large whole-wheat tortillas



In a mixing bowl, add turkey, lettuce, tomato, croutons and Parmesan cheese. **Coat** with Caesar dressing and mix well. **Add** a quarter of the salad mixture to each of the four tortillas. **Roll** tightly and enjoy.

**Makes 4 servings. Per serving:** 382 calories | 41g protein | 10g total fat | 2g saturated fat | 4g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 31g carb | 4g sugar (0 added sugar) | 5g fiber | 543mg sodium

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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- **Use Your 2023 Health and Daycare Flexible Spending Account (FSA):** Are you looking for creative ways to spend your remaining Health FSA balance by December 31, 2023? See eligible expenses [here](#) or search [FSAstore.com](http://FSAstore.com) for 100% FSA-Eligible products. If you want to use your remaining Daycare FSA balance, see eligible expenses [here](#). Navia Benefits will carry over up to \$550 of unused 2023 Health FSA balances by the end of January. There is no carry-over provision for the Daycare FSA.
- **See Your Dentist if You Haven't.** With the end of the year approaching, there's no better time than now to use your dental benefits if you haven't. Your dental benefit maximum doesn't roll over into next year, and neglecting regular check-ups and cleanings can result in undetected issues that can worsen over time.
- **Access CVS Discounts:** You and your household members may receive 20% off regular-priced exclusive CVS Health brands. The discount applies to more than 4,000 products. To access the deals, visit the Resources for Living Employee Assistance Program (EAP) member website at [resourcesforliving.com](http://resourcesforliving.com); login: city of seattle; password: city of seattle. Go to Life & relationships > Managing life > Shopping & planning and select CVS Discounts.

## EXPERT advice — Elizabeth Smoots, MD

### Q: Sinus infection relief?

#### A: Sinus infections are all too common this time of year.

Characteristic symptoms include facial pain and pressure, drainage down your throat, nasal congestion and yellow mucus. Here are some ways to find relief.

**Simple home remedies:** Drink plenty of liquids. Inhale warm water vapor or apply warm compresses over your sinuses; to avoid burns, don't let it get too hot. Use a neti pot or saline nasal spray a few times a day to remove thick secretions. And get plenty of rest.

**Medication:** Nasal corticosteroids reduce inflammation around the sinus openings so they can drain. Tablet or spray decongestants relieve congestion. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen can reduce pain. Antibiotics are usually unnecessary unless the infection persists or becomes severe.

**When to seek medical care:** Call immediately if you have a high fever, pain or swelling around your eyes, confusion, vision changes or a stiff neck. Also contact your health care provider if your symptoms worsen after seeming to improve, or the infection lasts more than a week.



December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month.

## Annual Safety Gift Guide

'Tis the season for giving with safety in mind. There may be something for everyone on your list with these innovative gift ideas:

**For the traveler:** There are many options, such as portable door locks, door stop alarms, portable safes, RFID wallets or purses and travel money belts.

**For the fashionista:** Wearable safety jewelry is all the rage. Check out necklaces, fitness bands, bracelets and even hair scrunchies that have safety features with buttons and apps designed to send alerts.

**For the adventure seeker:** GPS satellite messengers are great for when people are off the grid (out of cell phone reach). And you can also tuck a hybrid flashlight into their stocking.

**For the DIYer:** Protective gear, such as gloves or goggles, are thoughtful and practical.

**For the runner or biker:** LED flashlight gloves can come in handy when running or biking at dusk. Portable keychain alarms are also a great gift for the athlete on your list.



**You may have seen this in the news last year:** Rutgers University researchers looked at two decades of health data on half a million Americans and concluded having an elevated body mass index (BMI), including obese levels, didn't raise the risk of death. Because being overweight has long been deemed unhealthy and even dangerous, the surprising new findings were labeled a paradox that does not agree with a large body of scientific evidence. The study isn't the final word on this issue and being overweight remains a well-established risk factor for developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer. **Bottom line:** Keep extra pounds in check and remember that one study isn't conclusive.