

TAKE CHARGE!



April 2025

AGE: More Than a Number

You're never too old to have good health.

That's why it's important to know about well-researched strategies that can help you be as healthy and fit as possible as you enter your 40s, 50s and 60s. And, if you are in your 20s or 30s, you'll get an early start on taking action to live a long and healthy life.



↔ **Get active.** Regular exercise lowers your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity, such as brisk walking, a week. Get your health care provider's okay first if you are new to exercise.

↔ **Don't ignore your skin.** Skipping sunscreen when you are in the sun for any length of time can hasten wrinkles. It raises the risk for skin cancer, too. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30.

↔ **Manage stress.** Your 30s and 40s are often years when work and home responsibilities are extra-demanding, resulting in chronic stress and sleep difficulties. Practice relaxation techniques, such as yoga and meditation, exercise more and seek counseling, if needed.

↔ **Commit to getting enough sleep.** All adults, no matter your age, need seven to nine hours of sleep, according to the National Institute on Aging. Get serious about keeping your bedroom quiet and comfortable and stick to a bedtime routine.

↔ **Make healthy eating a priority.** Fill plates with vegetables, fruit, whole grains and protein-rich foods, such as fish, poultry and beans. Reduce your intake of fast food and sweet or salty treats. This eating pattern helps reduce the risk of chronic diseases as we age.

↔ **Get annual check-ups.** Regular screenings can uncover health concerns you may be unaware of that need treatment. Your provider can also advise you about exercise and diet and refer you to specialists or counselors as needed.

The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue's printable download, [Q&A: What is occupational therapy?](https://personalbest.com/extras/25V4tools), is at personalbest.com/extras/25V4tools.

city events

Deferred Compensation

Introduction to Deferred Compensation

Wednesday, April 2

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

Register [here](#)

Deferred Compensation Investment Options

Tuesday, April 8

12:00 pm – 12:30 pm

Register [here](#)

Nearing Retirement

Thursday, April 17

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

Register [here](#)

Benefits 101 – 10 Ways to Save on Prescriptions

Thursday, April 3

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

Register [here](#)

Maximizing Your Flexible Spending Accounts

Tuesday, April 8

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Register [here](#)

Why, When, and How to Get a Second Medical Opinion (with Accolade)

Thursday, April 10

10:00 am – 11:00 am

Register [here](#)

Hobbies for Physical and Mental Health

Tuesday, April 15

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Register [here](#)

Caring from a Distance

Thursday, April 17

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Register [here](#)

Staying Healthy as a Family

Monday, April 21

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Register [here](#)

Supporting Family Members as They Age

Tuesday, April 22

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

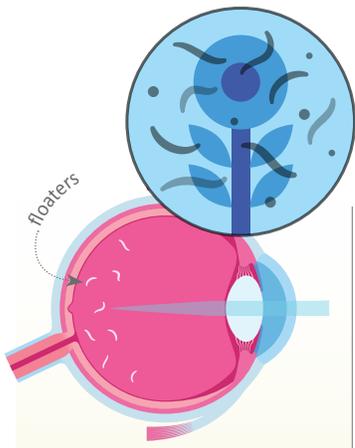
Register [here](#)

Feeling Stuck? Practical Ways to Get Yourself Moving Again

Thursday, April 24

11:30 am – 12:30 pm

Register [here](#)



Ever see tiny specks or cobweb-like blobs in your field of vision? Odds are, they're common, harmless **floaters** — shadows occurring when tiny clumps of cells or vitreous humor (a jelly-like substance which protects eyes) pull away from an eyeball. Although floaters are common, being nearsighted or having eye surgery can increase them. If you have an unexplained increase in floaters or new symptoms, such as flashes of light or persistent dark areas in your vision, contact your eye care provider immediately.

Think Before You Drink

Drink Less. Be Your Best. That's the campaign the CDC has launched to increase awareness of the harmful effects of excessive alcohol consumption. Did you know that using alcohol excessively a few times a month isn't harmless? Instead, it's a serious danger to health.

The CDC defines binge drinking as downing at least four alcoholic drinks (for women) or at least five (for men) in two hours. That raises blood alcohol levels to .08, causing too much impairment to drive safely. But a CDC survey of more than 400,000 Americans revealed a substantial number of those who admitted to being binge drinkers typically consumed even more alcohol — seven alcoholic drinks in a couple of hours, multiple times a week.

While that finding is concerning because of the risk for accidents while under the influence of alcohol, binge drinking is also associated with a host of potentially serious medical consequences, including liver, stomach, heart and kidney health problems and cognitive issues ranging from short attention spans and memory problems to depression.

The impact of binge drinking can be severe and even deadly for those who consume high amounts of alcohol. Alcohol poisoning is not uncommon, according to the Cleveland Clinic. It occurs when the body can't remove toxins quickly enough when blood alcohol levels are extremely high. Alcohol poisoning symptoms include confusion, difficulty staying conscious, seizures, vomiting, irregular pulse and breathing and hypothermia. The outcome can sometimes be death.

Bottom line: There's nothing harmless about binge drinking. In fact, when it is chronic and difficult to stop, it is considered a type of Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). If you or someone you know needs help to stop binge drinking, contact your health care provider for help, which can include counseling and medication. Learn more at [cdc.gov/drink-less-be-your-best/about/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/drink-less-be-your-best/about/index.html).



MENTAL HEALTH CHECK: Languishing

By Eric Endlich, PhD

While people are generally familiar with the concepts of depression and happiness, the in-between state of *languishing* is less well-known. Those who are languishing are emotionally stagnating and tend to lack joy, motivation and purpose.

Although languishing is less severe than depression, it can still impact your well-being and productivity and may increase your risk for other mental disorders.

Common signs of languishing are:

- Lack of enthusiasm.
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating.
- Feeling disconnected from others.
- Having a sense of emptiness or aimlessness.
- Struggling to get excited about or engaged in activities.

Here are some strategies that can help you move from languishing to its opposite, flourishing:

- **Practice mindfulness.** Being tuned into the present moment helps counteract worries about the future and promotes well-being.
- **Set small goals.** Picture what you'd be doing if you were flourishing, and take concrete steps to work toward that vision.
- **Pursue meaningful activities.** Community service, learning a new skill or doing something creative can lift your spirits.
- **Take care of yourself.** Regular physical activity, adequate sleep and good nutrition are all essential contributors to feeling your best.
- **Build social support.** Make time to maintain and enhance existing relationships, or join groups or classes to develop new connections.
- **Find a purpose.** Think of a time in your life when you felt more motivated, and consider what you were doing during that period that was more energizing for you.



By taking some of these steps, you can shift from stagnating to thriving.



Humor is a great stress

reliever. It's no joke — researchers say finding the humor in even highly stressful situations can reduce anxiety. How? Laughter can trigger physical changes in your body by boosting the release of endorphins in your brain. A hearty laugh quickly eases your stress response, briefly raising and then lowering your heart rate and blood pressure, which can leave you feeling calm and uplifted. The next time you feel stressed, look for the humor or find it by viewing silly videos, reading joke books, memes or comic strips, listening to humorous podcasts, attending a comedy show or watching a funny movie. **April is National Humor Month** — celebrate it with a laugh.

TIP of the MONTH

Home-Grown Produce

If you are thinking of growing vegetables this year, April is the perfect time to get started. Vegetables, such as kale, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and broccoli, thrive in spring's combination of sunny days and chilly nights and can withstand spring frosts. Plus, these hardy vegetables are so versatile; using seeds or seedlings, you can plant them in a garden or in containers on a balcony or porch. Come late summer, you'll have the ingredients for perfect kale salad or roasted broccoli. They will brim with vitamins A, C and K, fresh from the garden.



How to Spot Ultra-Processed Foods

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

eating smart

The term *ultra-processed foods* was developed by scientists to help them categorize foods when conducting clinical research. When studying how dietary patterns affect health, researchers separate food into four categories, known as the NOVA Classification, which is simplified here:

Research shows that people who eat the most ultra-processed foods have a higher risk of developing cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Health professionals suggest choosing whole or minimally processed foods more often than ultra-processed foods.

How can you tell if a food has been extensively processed?

Here's a telltale sign: If the food is branded, convenient, ready-to-eat, made with low-cost ingredients and high in sugar, salt or fat, it's likely ultra-processed.

Another clue? Ultra-processed foods stay fresh for a while and are filled with additives and preservatives, such as:



- Artificial colors or flavors.
- Bulking agents (e.g., carrageenan, guar gum).
- Artificial sweeteners (e.g., aspartame, sucralose).
- Emulsifiers (e.g., xanthan gum, lecithin).

If the food contains a list of ingredients you would not normally buy in a grocery store or cook with in your kitchen, it's probably ultra-processed. For example, the ingredient list may say: *sugar, flour, palm oil, high fructose corn syrup, salt, soy lecithin, xanthan gum, artificial color, artificial flavor.* How many of those ingredients are in your pantry? Probably just sugar, flour and salt.

Finally, ultra-processed foods also go through industrial processes to get their final shape, such as extrusion, molding and deep-frying. If your food has a distinct shape, such as a gummy bear or twisted pretzel, it's ultra-processed.

NOVA Classification

GROUP 1: Unprocessed or minimally processed foods, such as vegetables, fruit, meat and whole grains.

GROUP 2: Processed culinary ingredients, such as oil, sugar and salt.

GROUP 3: Processed foods, such as canned fish, cheese and fresh bread.

GROUP 4: Ultra-processed foods, such as soft drinks, candy, chips and fast food.

Lemony Quinoa with Peas

- 1 cup quinoa, rinsed
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3 cups frozen peas
- 1 tbsp lemon juice and zest of 1 lemon
- ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper
- ½ cup chopped fresh basil



EASY recipe

Cook quinoa according to package directions. Set aside. In a large pan over medium heat, add oil. Stir in onion and cook, stirring until softened, about 2 minutes. Add peas and quinoa. Heat about 5 minutes, until frozen peas soften. Stir in lemon juice, zest, feta cheese, salt and pepper. Top with basil and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 204 calories | 10g protein | 6g total fat | 1g saturated fat | 2g mono fat | 2g poly fat | 30g carbohydrate | 5g sugar (0g added sugars) | 6g fiber | 269mg sodium

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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• **Change of Address?** If you move, be sure to update your address in Workday and with the United States Postal Service (USPS). By updating your address in Workday, you will receive important benefits mailings timely. If you only change your address with USPS, the letter will come back to the City and not to your new address.

• **Recognize Your Triggers and Silence Them.** The Quit for Life Program can help you quit smoking or vaping by teaching you how to develop new thinking skills and how to behave differently in everyday situations. The program factors in the mental aspect of battling a nicotine addiction and includes strategies to cope with stress. Available to all regular employees and their adult family members at no cost to you. Get started by visiting www.quitnow.net or calling 1-866-784-8454.

• **Finding Care for Your Aging Family Member:** Many families face the challenge of caring for elderly parents or relatives. ComPsych's elder care services are specifically designed to help you manage the demands of caring for aging loved ones while balancing your own life. Services include caregiver support and education, caregiver counseling, elder care resource referrals, including in-home care providers, nursing homes, hospice care, crisis support, and legal and financial guidance. ComPsych is available to all City employees and their household members at no cost to you. Find ComPsych services at Guidance Resources Online (registration web id: SeattleEAP) or by phone at **1 (800) 858-6715; TRS: Dial 711.**

EXPERT advice

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD

Q: Do I need a shingles vaccine?

A: People older than age 50 are at increased risk for shingles.

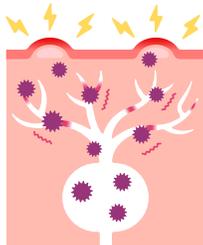
Chickenpox and shingles are caused by the same virus. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays inactive in the body; it can reactivate years later to cause shingles. The Shingrix vaccine helps prevent the painful, blistering rash of shingles and its complications, such as postherpetic neuralgia.

Adults aged 50 and older should get the shingles shot, according to the CDC. The CDC recommends the vaccine even for people who have already had shingles, or were vaccinated with an older, less-effective shingles shot. Adults aged 19 and older with a weak immune system should also consult with their health care provider to see if they should be vaccinated.

Shingrix is given in two doses, two to six months apart.

It is made from part of the shingles virus and is not a live vaccine. Side effects

can include local redness, swelling and soreness or headache. Side effects are more common in younger people.



Keep Your Workplace Safe



OSHA defines violence on the job as “any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior [at work]. It ranges from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and even homicide.” If you encounter any threat of physical violence, walk away from the situation if you can do it safely. Follow your company’s policy or report the act or threat immediately to your supervisor and HR department.

To reduce the odds of encountering workplace violence:

- **Attend** workplace personal safety training programs so you can learn how to recognize, diffuse or avoid potentially violent situations.
- **Review** workplace violence policies and know what to do in case you feel unsafe.
- **Do not** enter any location that makes you feel at risk.
- **Do not** engage with someone who makes you feel unsafe.

If you encounter any workplace violence, here is what to do:

- **Maintain** a safe distance and leave if you feel threatened.
- **Stay** calm; don’t raise your voice. Try to find out

the source of the person’s anger by asking open-ended, empathetic questions. Give the person choices by asking things, such as “I can see you’re upset. What is it you want me to do?” or “Can you tell me what happened to make you feel this way?” Listen to their answers.

- **Notice** if the person becomes more aggressive in language or voice volume. If you aren’t comfortable, leave the situation.
- **Don’t** be afraid to ask others for help. Before engaging, check if anyone is around and note where exits are in case you need to leave quickly.
- **If** the situation is escalating and you feel threatened, call security or 911.
- **Use** respectful and courteous language. Do not raise your voice, belittle the person or use sarcasm.



STUDY: Good News About Prostate Cancer and Diet

Can a healthy diet keep low-grade prostate cancer from progressing? Not all men diagnosed with prostate cancer have aggressive cases of the disease. Low-grade prostate cancer doesn’t always advance quickly or sometimes at all. That’s why men with that grade of the disease can opt for active surveillance (regular biopsies and checkups to look for any progression of the disease) instead of immediate aggressive treatment. Now, for the first time, Johns Hopkins researchers have found a healthy diet rich in foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables) that keep inflammation at bay may keep low-grade prostate cancer from progressing to a more advanced state.

“Our findings-to-date should be helpful for the counseling of men who choose to pursue active surveillance and are motivated to modify their behaviors, including quality of diet,” said Christian Pavlovich, MD, a professor in urologic oncology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and co-senior author of the study.