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It may also reduce cravings and your desire to snack late at night (51, 52, 52a).Doing aerobic exercise, or cardio, is one of the best things you can do for your mental and physical health.It's particularly effective at reducing belly fat, the harmful type of fat that builds up around your organs. Reduced belly fat may lead to major improvements in your metabolic health (53).According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, we should strive for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity each week (54).Smoking, harmful use of drugs, and alcohol abuse can all seriously negatively affect your health.If you do any of these actions, consider cutting back or quitting to help reduce your risk for chronic diseases. (54a, 54b) There are resources available online – and likely in your local community, as well – to help with this. Talk with your doctor to learn more about accessing resources.Extra virgin olive oil is one of the healthiest vegetable oils you can use. 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Note that you may still encounter some foods that contain small amounts of naturally occurring trans fats, but these are not associated with the same negative effects as artificial trans fats (69).There is a variety of herbs and spices at our disposal these days, more so than ever. They not only provide flavor but also may offer several health benefits as well (70).For example, ginger and turmeric both have potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects, which may help improve your overall health (71, 72).Due to their powerful potential health benefits, you should aim to include a wide variety of herbs and spices in your diet.Social relationships – with friends, family, and loved ones you care about – are important not only for your mental well-being but also your physical health.Studies show that people who have close friends and family are healthier and live much longer than those who do not (73, 74).Some people may benefit from working out how many calories they eat is by weighing their food and using a nutrition tracker (75, 76). Tracking can also provide insights into your protein, fiber, and micronutrient intake.However, while tracking, may help some people manage their weight, there is also evidence it can lead to disordered eating tendencies (74, 77, 78, 79).Always speak with a doctor before using this strategy.Excessive abdominal fat, or visceral fat, is a uniquely harmful type of fat distribution that is linked to an increased risk of cardiometabolic diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease (80).For this reason, your waist size and waist-to-hip ratio may be much stronger markers of health than your weight.Reducing refined carbs, eating more protein and fiber, and reducing stress (which can reduce cortisol, a stress hormone that triggers abdominal fat deposition) are all strategies that may help you get rid of belly fat (81, 82, 83, 84).Diets are generally ineffective and rarely work well long term. In fact, past dieting is one of the strongest predictors for future weight gain (85).This is because overly restrictive diets actually lower your metabolic rate, or the amount of calories you burn, making it more difficult to lose weight. At the same time, they also cause alterations to your hunger and satiety hormones, which make you hungrier and may cause strong food cravings for foods high in fat, calories, and sugar (86, 87).All of this is a recipe for rebound weight gain, or "yo-yo" dieting.Instead of dieting, try adopting a healthier lifestyle. Focus on nourishing your body instead of depriving it.Weight loss should follow as you transition to whole, nutritious foods – which are naturally more filling while containing fewer calories than processed foods (14).Despite the constant back and forth about eggs and health, it's a myth that eggs are bad for you because of their cholesterol content. 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Additionally, the participants in the meditation group reported improved mental and physical wellness (91).A few simple steps can go a long way toward improving your eating patterns and wellness. Still, if you're trying to live a healthier life, do not just focus on the foods you eat. Exercise, sleep, and social relationships are also important. With the evidence-based tips above, it's easy to introduce small changes that can have a big impact on your overall health.This article is based on scientific evidence, written by experts and fact checked by experts.Our team of licensed nutritionists and dietitians strive to be objective, unbiased, honest and to present both sides of the argument.This article contains scientific references. The numbers in the parentheses (1, 2, 3) are clickable links to peer-reviewed scientific papers. x Other Languages ￼￼￼￼français 中文 The foundation of a healthy lifestyle consists of lasting habits like eating right, watching your weight, exercising regularly, managing your mental health, and getting routine medical exams. But even daily, small steps toward these goals also can have a significant impact. Here are some practices that can help support your ongoing health journey. While you might find it unrealistic to follow them all the time, try to include them in your daily life as much as possible. 1. Do a morning stretch Stretching before getting out of bed wakes up the body, improves circulation, and promotes relaxation, helping to set the day's tone. While you're still lying in bed, move the covers aside, then flex and release your lower limbs several times. Bend your knees and lift your legs into the air. With your legs still elevated, flex your feet up and down and rotate them side to side. Next, sit up and slowly look left and then right. Roll your shoulders several times. Flex your wrists up and down, and open and close your hands repeatedly. 2. Stay hydrated Proper hydration supports digestion, improves brain performance, and increases energy, among other health benefits. Drink a big glass of water after you wake up and with every meal. 3. Floss Maintaining good oral health includes daily flossing, but make sure you do it right. First, wrap the floss around your middle fingers, which helps you reach the back teeth. Then loop the floss around one side of a tooth, so it makes a C shape. Beginning at the gum line, slide it up and down the tooth several times. (Don't move the floss back and forth in a sawing motion. You miss cleaning the entire tooth, and the friction can irritate the gum.) Repeat on the other side of the tooth, and then the other teeth. 4. Apply sunscreen Sunscreen is the best defense against skin-damaging rays. After washing your face in the morning, apply a facial moisturizer that contains sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30. Or blend equal parts sunscreen and a regular moisturizer. Use one or two nickel-sized dollops to cover your entire face, neck, ears, and any bald or thinning spots on your head. 5. Go nuts When you crave a snack, reach for unsalted nuts and seeds like almonds, walnuts, peanuts, and cashews. They contain many beneficial nutrients and help prevent cravings for highly processed foods. Nuts are high in calories, so keep to a palm-sized portion. 6. Nap Afternoon naps can recharge a weary body and may boost cognitive function. A study published online on Jan. 25, 2021, by General Psychiatry found that nappers scored higher on cognitive tests than non-nappers. The researchers found that shorter and less frequent naps – lasting less than 30 minutes, no more than four times a week – were associated with the most benefit. Schedule naps for the early afternoon, and use a timer so you don't oversleep. 7. Bust some moves Break up bouts of sitting with small bursts of movement. For example, dance across a room instead of walking. When you brush your teeth, suck in your lower gut for 30 seconds, which activates your abdominal muscles. Do 10 air squats or push-ups (on the ground or against the kitchen counter). Make it a habit to stand up "twice" each time you stand up – that is, get up, sit back down, and then get back up. 8. Take a breather Alternate nostril breathing, in which you breathe through one nostril at a time, is believed to help reduce stress by slowing your breathing and forcing you to take deep, full breaths. Using a finger or thumb, keep your intake to less than 4 cups per day and avoid high-calorie, high-sugar additives like sweetened creamer.Fish is a great source of high-quality protein and healthy fat. This is particularly true of fatty fish, such as salmon, which is loaded with anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids and various other nutrients (20, 21).Studies show that people who eat fish regularly have a lower risk for several conditions, including heart disease, dementia, and inflammatory bowel disease (22, 23, 24).The importance of getting enough quality sleep cannot be overstated.Poor sleep can drive insulin resistance, can disrupt your appetite hormones, and reduce your physical and mental performance (25, 26, 27, 27a).What's more, poor sleep is one of the strongest individual risk factors for weight gain and obesity. People who do not get enough sleep tend to make food choices that are higher in fat, sugar, and calories, potentially leading to unwanted weight gain (28, 29).The bacteria in your gut, collectively called the gut microbiota, are incredibly important for overall health.A disruption in gut bacteria is linked to some chronic diseases, including obesity and a myriad of digestive problems (30, 31).Good ways to improve gut health include eating fermented foods like yogurt and sauerkraut, taking probiotic supplements – when indicated – and eating plenty of fiber. Notably, fiber serves as a prebiotic, or a food source for your gut bacteria (32, 33).Hydration is an important and often overlooked marker of health. Staying hydrated helps ensure that your body is functioning optimally and that your blood volume is sufficient (34).Drinking water is the best way to stay hydrated, as it's free of calories, sugar, and additives.Although there's no set amount that everyone needs per day, aim to drink enough so that your thirst is adequately quenched (35).Meat can be a nutritious and healthy part of your diet. It's very high in protein and a rich source of nutrients (36).However, problems occur when meat is charred or burnt. This charring can lead to the formation of harmful compounds that may increase your risk for certain cancers (37).When you cook meat, try not to char or burn it. Additionally limit your consumption of red and processed meats like lunch meats and bacon as these are linked to overall cancer risk and colon cancer risk (38, 39, 40, 41).When you're exposed to bright lights – which contain blue light wavelengths – in the evening, it may disrupt your production of the sleep hormone melatonin (42).Some ways to help reduce your blue light exposure is to wear blue light blocking glasses – especially if you use a computer or other digital screen for long periods of time – and to avoid digital screens for 30 minutes to an hour before going to bed (43).This can help your body better produce melatonin naturally as evening progresses, helping you sleep better.Most people do not get enough vitamin D. 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