

WellBeingMD, LTD

Read Food Labels to Control Weight

When you go grocery shopping, do you read the food labels on packaged goods before you drop them into your cart? When you go out to eat, do you find out how many calories are in your entrée before you order? Most people don't. But a new study suggests that the simple act of reading food labels can help you manage your weight.

In the study published in the *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, researchers looked at the shopping habits of 25,640 people. They also collected personal health information, and asked about health and eating habits. They found that people who read food labels weighed nearly nine pounds less than people who didn't. Researchers also found that women were more likely to read food labels than were men. And people who smoke were the least likely to read food labels.



Every packaged food item you buy contains a nutrition facts label. At a glance, you can see what a serving size is and how many calories it contains. The label also includes the amount of fat, sodium, cholesterol, carbohydrates, sugar, and protein in a serving.

Find out how many calories are in your favorite foods: tinyurl.com/y88hgz

More restaurants are also providing this information for their menu based on a proposal by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Make it a habit. Read food labels to help you eat the right amount of calories per day, choose healthier foods, and control your weight.

Journal of Agricultural Economics.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



You Are Your Own Gym

There are no good excuses for lack of exercise. It's that simple. You can lose weight, increase strength, and improve your cardiovascular health. And you don't need a gym membership, expensive equipment, or a personal trainer. You can get adequate exercise using your own body weight.

Body weight exercises include things like curl-ups, push-ups, jumping jacks, and squats. And you can modify these exercises based on your fitness level.

The American College of Sports Medicine ranked body weight training as one of the top three fitness trends in 2013. Research shows that body weight exercises can:

- Build muscle strength
- Improve agility

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Four Ways to Fight Depression

If you ever feel sad, discouraged, or down in the dumps, you're not alone. Over the course of a lifetime, one in five women and one in nine men will experience depression. Some people rebound quickly after feeling blue for a short time. But others struggle with depression and need treatment to overcome it.

Talk therapy and medication may be the best clinical option to help people adjust their thoughts and feel better when depressed. Other important therapeutic options (and good preventive actions) for depression include:

1. **Eat nutritious meals.** Eat more unrefined foods like fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. And include healthy fats such as omega-3 fats in your diet (found in fish oils and nuts). These foods are high in vitamins,

minerals, and antioxidants that help promote mental health.

2. **Get regular exercise.** Aim to get at least 30 minutes of exercise daily. Studies show that exercise improves mood and creativity.
3. **Keep your mind active.** Read a book, solve crossword puzzles, or learn to play a musical instrument.

Looking for ways to keep your mind engaged helps change your focus to accomplishing a task rather than dwelling on feeling depressed.

4. **Be social.** Make the effort to spend time with your friends. Play games, go dancing, or just visit and catch up. Research shows that people who have a support group or social network of friends are happier and

handle depression better than those who are isolated and alone.

National Institutes of Health.
Duke University School of Medicine.

Take the quiz: How to Recognize Depression: tinyurl.com/79gkaqq



The Truth About Trans Fats

Bake a frozen pizza. Eat fast food. Make a cake from a packaged mix. Use margarine for cooking. If this sounds like you, you should know that one common ingredient in these types of foods may soon be banned by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration: trans fats.

It's no mystery that trans fats aren't healthy for you. Health officials believe that trans fats are directly related to an estimated 20,000 heart attacks and 7,000 deaths in the United States every year. In a recent statement, the FDA said that partially



hydrogenated oils (trans fats) are no longer "generally recognized as safe." This means food manufacturers may soon be banned from using trans fats in foods to control costs and prolong shelf life.

But you shouldn't wait until they are formally banned to limit trans fats in your diet. Trans fats raise LDL (bad) cholesterol, which is a major risk factor for heart disease. About 71 million Americans have high LDL cholesterol levels, and only 1 out of 3 have it under control, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. High levels of LDL cholesterol promote fatty deposits in artery walls that can block the flow of blood and lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Currently, the average person consumes about 1 gram of trans fats per day from processed foods. But that's still too much, according to the FDA. Take a closer look at your diet, and look for ways to avoid foods high in trans fats, like eating more plant-based foods, and making healthier meals from scratch (rather than from a box or in place of going out to eat).

*U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

Soup's On! January is National Soup Month

Archeological evidence suggests that the first bowl of soup cooked up to cure ailments was made around 6,000 B.C. And the main ingredient wasn't anything you'd find at your local grocery store (hippopotamus!). For ages, soup has been a mainstay of diets around the world. And January is National Soup Month.

The late President John F. Kennedy almost always had soup and a sandwich for lunch. Frank Sinatra dined on chicken and rice soup before he went on stage. And French ladies of King Louis IX's court preferred soup because they thought chewing food caused wrinkles. Whether you slurp it, drink it, or eat it with a spoon, people consume billions of bowls of soup every year.

Soup can be tasty, healthy and filling. But not all soups are created equal. Canned soups contain high levels of sodium, and often skimp on the good stuff like tomatoes, legumes, carrots, peas, onions, celery, broccoli, and spices. But prepared the right way, soup can aid in weight loss and deliver a host of health benefits with



Pick from these 31 soup recipes in January tinyurl.com/m7tpo36

a palate-packed punch of flavors, vitamins, nutrients, and antioxidants.

If you're going to eat soup, give it a shot and make your own with broth and fresh or frozen vegetables. If you're pressed for time, look for low-sodium, canned options. Also look for broth-based soup rather than cream-based, because they're generally lower in fat and calories. Soup, it's mmm-mmm-good for you.

*U.S. Department of Agriculture.
University of Illinois.*

*Journal of Physiology and Behavior.
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.*

You Are Your Own Gym

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and flexibility

- Strengthen heart and lung function
- Aid in weight loss

Body weight exercises can improve your overall health. They can also make everyday activities like loading groceries into a car, picking up a child, or walking up a flight of stairs easier.

You can group body weight exercises together to create your own workout. Or you can perform them separately throughout the day. Take a break and do some push-ups. Or do jumping jacks during TV commercials. Start with a simple workout, and gradually increase repetitions and exercise time as you get stronger.

*American College of Sports Medicine.
Journal of Sports Science and Medicine.
National Strength and Conditioning Association.*

ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

Q: Why is serving size so important for a healthy diet?

A: Go to www.wellsource.info/wn/ask-serving-size.pdf to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: evan@wellsource.com, subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

Health Challenge: "Develop Healthy Brain Habits" available at: www.wellsource.info/wn/hc-healthy-brain.pdf

Cultivate humor and happiness by laughing more.