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# Wellness Matters

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## Your Wellness Journey

# Jumpstart a Healthier Lifestyle

*Leading a healthy lifestyle is a great way to prioritize your overall well-being, keep chronic conditions at bay, and potentially reduce your health care costs. However, if you're not sure where to start, it can be easy to get overwhelmed with the wide variety of health and wellness information out there. Fad diets, detox drinks, and "quick-fix" solutions could put you at risk for injury or illness.*

*In this new series, **Your Wellness Journey**, learn how to safely jumpstart healthy lifestyle practices such as visiting your doctor, eating well, exercising, prioritizing sleep, and, in this issue, how to manage stress. Consult your doctor if you have questions about changing your lifestyle. Watch for more info in coming issues.*

### Managing Stress

According to a Gallup poll, 55% of Americans experience stress on a daily basis—making the United States one of the most

stressed-out nations in the world. Unfortunately, chronic and long-term stress can greatly increase your risk of developing serious health condition.



### What Is Stress?

Stress is your body's natural response to any type of demand. It's a feeling of emotional or physical tension in response to an event or thought that causes you to be angry, nervous, or frustrated. For example, you may feel stressed about meeting a deadline or when traveling.

While short-term instances of stress are not typically harmful,

prolonged stress that isn't addressed can become a serious health concern and can lead to burnout. Examples of chronic and long-term stress factors include ongoing financial troubles and heavy workloads. Unchecked stress can contribute to health issues like heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity.

### Symptoms of Stress

Stress affects your mental health, but it can show itself in other ways too. Back pain, poor focus, and headaches can all be symptoms of stress. Here are other signals that you may be feeling stressed:

- Trouble sleeping or fatigue
- Feelings of anxiety, irritability, anger, depression or restlessness
- Upset stomach
- Change in appetite
- Social withdrawal
- Chest pain

Look for tips on how to address stress in our next issue.

## Are You Prepared for a Disaster?

Disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes can strike with little or no warning. September is *National Preparedness Month*, making it a good time for you and your household to make a plan in case you need to evacuate your home or get trapped inside for days. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends the following steps for creating an emergency plan:

1. Discuss the following questions:
  - How will I receive emergency alerts / warnings?
  - What is my shelter plan?
  - What is my evacuation route?
  - What is my household communication plan?
  - Do I need to update my emergency preparedness kit?
2. Consider specific needs in your household.
3. Fill out a household [emergency plan](#).
4. Practice your plan with your household.

These tips pertain to your home, but remember that emergencies can happen anywhere. Visit FEMA's website—[ready.gov](#)—to learn more about preparing for emergencies at home, at work, and on the road.

### Emergency Supply Kit Checklist



Water



Nonperishable food



Flashlight



Whistle



Dust mask



Local maps



Manual can opener



Battery-powered radio



First aid kit



Pet supplies



**Mindful eating focuses on being present and aware of one's feelings, thoughts, physical sensations and environment during meals.**

## Healthy & Nutritious Mindful Eating

Taking time to be mindful of your eating process and not focusing on restricting calories could enhance your awareness of the experience, improve your relationship with food, and help you lose weight. Mindful eating can be an essential practice in today's multitasking world. Multitasking while eating can lead to less satisfaction with meals, less awareness of the food and, often, overeating.

Mindful eating may sound simple, but it takes practice. Consider the following tips:

- Evaluate your appetite and continue to assess while eating.
- Start with small portions to help respect your hunger and satiety cues.
- Engage your senses while eating, noticing what you see, smell, feel, taste, and hear.
- Eliminate distractions as they can fuel a negative relationship with food or lead to overeating or emotional eating.
- Chew your food more, allowing additional time for digestion and recognizing your body's cues.
- Don't skip meals since it can increase your risk of extreme hunger, often leading to quick and unhealthy food choices.

You can start small by attempting the practice once a week—for example, establish a *Mindful Monday*. Contact a registered dietician if you need additional help or guidance with mindful eating or general eating habits.