



HEALTH & FITNESS



- Exercising too much
- Healthy eating
- Cardio benefits

FILL UP ON healthy eating pointers

Diet and exercise are the key components of maintaining a healthy weight and protecting yourself against chronic disease.

According to the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services, eating smart and being active have similar effects, including reducing risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, some cancers, and diabetes.

In addition, these healthy living strategies can improve personal appearance and improve overall well-being — helping people live longer and maintain their independence.

People may wonder how to eat better when faced with many diets, each of which promises great results. It can be confusing when navigating all of the options, and there is no magic formula to eating better.

Common sense can come into play when attempting to eat better, and individuals also can consider these strategies to make diet work for them as they seek to live healthier.

Choose fiber-rich foods

Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and legumes are good sources of fiber.

Fiber helps people maintain digestive health and can help you to feel fuller longer, reducing the potential for overeating, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Note how you feel after eating

Create a food journal where you jot down notes about how you feel after eating certain foods. If you notice that certain foods or ingredients trigger adverse reactions, it may be worth avoiding that type of food or looking for an alternative.

Stomach upset or bloating after eating dairy, for example, may indicate an intolerance for lactose.

Eat colorful, varied, nutritionally dense foods

Medical News Today says each meal should be 50 percent fruit and vegetables, 25 percent whole grains, and 25 percent protein.

Select an array of colorful foods that will provide most of the nutrients needed.

Explore the Mediterranean diet

While you should avoid fad diets that often produce short-term but unsustainable results, a Mediterranean diet has stood the test of time.

According to the authors of a new study published in JAMA Network Open in October 2023, middle-aged and older adults with overweight or obesity and metabolic syndrome lost visceral fat (belly fat) and showed a greater reduction in the percentage of total fat while adhering to a Mediterranean diet. They also had delayed loss of lean body mass, which often comes with aging.

Mediterranean diets prioritize legumes, seafood, vegetables, and “good” fats like olive oil.

Control portion sizes

Sometimes it’s not what you eat but how much you eat that affects health. Weighing and measuring food can help you control portions and understand how many calories you’re consuming each day.

The National Institutes of Health says eating plans that favor 1,200 to 1,500 calories per day for women and 1,500 to 1,800 for men are good targets to lose weight at a healthy pace when combined with moderate exercise.

Balanced eating is a major component of a healthy lifestyle. While there are many fad diets, eating plans with a proven track record that are supported by the medical community may be your best bet.

(METRO CREATIVE)



Individuals can consider several strategies — such as choosing fiber-rich foods, controlling portion sizes, and keeping a food journal — to make diet work for them as they seek to live healthier.

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How *cardio* benefits your body

Physical activity is a key component of a healthy lifestyle, and an effective fitness regimen is one that combines strength training with cardiovascular exercise.

Recommendations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services urge adults to get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity each week.

Aerobic activity includes cardiovascular exercises like hiking, running, dancing, cycling, or other activities that increase the heart rate and improve cardiorespiratory fitness.

Though cardiovascular exercise is often discussed in terms of its heart healthy benefits, the Cleveland Clinic reports that aerobic activities benefit various parts of the body, including the heart but also the brain, the joints, skin, and muscles.

Cardio and your heart

Routine cardiovascular exercise leads to a decrease in resting blood pressure and



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heart rate. That’s beneficial for the heart because it ensures the heart does not have to work unnecessarily hard. Cardiovascular exercise also improves good cholesterol levels and lowers blood fats, each of which also helps to improve heart health.

Cardio and your brain

The Alzheimer’s Society reports that studies have shown that exercise that

increases heart rate in middle-aged or older adults has led to improvements in thinking and memory and lower rates of dementia. The Cleveland Clinic notes that cardio also decreases stroke risk by increasing blood flow to the brain.

Cardio and your joints

Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones become brittle and fragile from a loss of tissue. That tissue loss can be a side effect of aging, but even though the National Osteoporosis Foundation estimates that half of all women over 50 will develop osteoporosis, older adults are not helpless against the condition. The Cleveland Clinic notes that cardiovascular exercise can help fight osteoporosis and reduce risk for hip fractures.

It’s also important to note that men are not immune to osteoporosis, which has long been considered a more significant concern for women than men. Though women’s risk for osteoporosis is greater than men’s, UC San Diego Health reports

that between 20 and 25 percent of all hip fractures occur in men.

Cardio and your skin

Physical activity increases circulation, which the Cleveland Clinic reports leads to clearer, healthier skin. Cardio promotes better blood flow to the skin cells on the face, which can reduce signs of aging and improve complexion.

Cardio and your muscles

Cardio increases oxygen supply to the entire body, and the Cleveland Clinic notes that allows muscles throughout the body to work harder and more efficiently.

In addition, routine cardiovascular exercise allows muscles to adapt to an increased workload, which can improve daily life by making routine physical activities easier.

Cardiovascular exercise is a key component of an effective fitness regimen. By committing to cardio, adults can benefit various parts of their bodies.

Sleep and mental health are intertwined, and the link between the two may be even more significant than was once believed.

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The link between sleep, mental health

Sufficient sleep is often an unsung hero of overall health. When people get enough sleep, their bodies are in better position to fend off illness and the rest ensures they have enough energy to tackle whatever challenges they confront.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Sleep Research Society jointly recommend that adults get at least seven hours of sleep per night.

A good night's sleep is often discussed in terms of how it can affect physical health, but adequate rest also can have a profound impact on mental health. Sleep and mental health are intertwined, and the link between the two may be even more significant than was once believed.

- Sleep and depression: The Sleep Foundation notes that sleeping issues have historically been seen as a byproduct of depression. Indeed, the National Center for Biotechnology Information indicates that roughly three in four individuals with depression exhibit symptoms of insomnia. However, the Sleep Foundation reports that

growing evidence now indicates poor sleep may induce depression.

- Sleep and anxiety disorders: Data from the National Institutes of Health indicates that one in five adults are affected by an anxiety disorder. The Mayo Clinic reports that feelings of nervousness and fear are hallmarks of anxiety disorders, and such feelings can make it hard to fall asleep. However, a 2013 study published in the journal *Neuroscience* found that poor sleep can activate anxiety. In addition, the Sleep Foundation reports that chronic insomnia may be a predisposing trait among individuals who eventually develop anxiety disorders.

- Sleep and bipolar disorder: A 2015 study published in the journal *Sleep Medicine Clinics* found a strong association between sleep disturbances and symptom worsening in bipolar disorder.

The study highlighted evidence that suggests sleeping problems worsen or induce the manic and depressive episodes that are a hallmark of bipolar disorder.

Researchers believe that successful treatment for insomnia, which would produce fewer sleep disturbances, can reduce the impact of bipolar disorder.

- Sleep and ADHD: The Sleep Foundation notes that sleeping problems are common in people with ADHD. Difficulty sleeping is commonly and correctly seen as a side effect of ADHD. However, the Sleep Foundation indicates sleep problems also may aggravate issues affecting attention and behavior that characterize ADHD.

The link between sleep and mental health is noteworthy. Sleep issues were once believed to be a byproduct of mental health issues.

Though that remains true, there's growing evidence that sleeping problems also can exacerbate or even trigger mental health problems. More information is available at sleepfoundation.org. Sleep and mental health are intertwined, and the link between the two may be even more significant than was once believed.

Did you know?

There's no one-size-fits-all strategy when it comes to calorie consumption, and that can contribute to some confusion as adults try to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Dietary guidelines established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services promote nutrient-dense foods and beverages, but many people prefer to know how many calories they should consume each day.

Though that's understandable, the quality of the calories consumed goes a long way toward determining how nutritious a diet is. The Cleveland Clinic notes that the DHHS guidelines have historically recommended adults 21 and over consume between 1,600 and 3,000 calories per day.

However, staying within those parameters does not necessarily mean a person's diet is healthy. Though individuals should keep total calorie consumption in mind when planning their diets, it's equally important to recognize what else the DHHS has to say about diet, particularly foods to avoid.

The DHHS recommends limiting consumption of foods and beverages that are high in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium. Limiting consumption of alcoholic beverages is another way to ensure your diet is working for you and not against you.

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SIGNS YOU'RE **exercising too much**

The formula for healthy living has remained the same for decades. Healthy eating paired with regular exercise can lower risk for a number of ailments, including chronic diseases. But it's important that individuals avoid overdoing it in regard to exercise. Too much of anything can negate its benefits, and exercise is no exception.

The current Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans indicate adults need 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity and two days of muscle-strengthening activity each week.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says children between the ages of three and five need to be active throughout the day. Kids between the ages of six and 17 need to be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day.

Meeting these exercise guidelines is a good step in a healthy direction. Those tempted to exercise even more or to extreme levels should be advised of the potential pitfalls of too much exercise, or something called "overtraining."

Mood swings and irritability

Pushing too long and too hard can actually cause a person to feel overworked and tired. This may lead to trouble sleeping, which can cause irritability and mood swings, says MedlinePlus.

Immune system impact

Overdoing exercise may adversely affect the immune system. When the body

Those tempted to exercise even more, or to extreme levels, should be advised of the potential pitfalls of too much exercise.

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is run ragged, it cannot do its job well. Illnesses may be able to sneak past the body's defenses even easier, particularly if exercising too much is paired with calorie restriction that affects balanced nutrition.

Overtraining syndrome

According to Alena Luciani, M.S., C.S.C.S., a strength and conditioning specialist, if a person exercises too much

for weeks at a time, the body is put at risk of overtraining syndrome. In order for stronger muscles to form, the natural process involves exercise breaking down muscle fibers and the body repairing and rebuilding them. Without time for repair, the body's rebuilding process is interrupted, which affects its ability to build strength. This results in chronic stress known as overtraining syndrome.

Overuse injuries

Sore muscles and heavy limbs come from exercise sessions and can be signs of muscle breakdown and repair. Overuse can lead to injuries to various parts of the body, particularly if workouts are not varied.

Missed menstrual periods

The Office on Women's Health says exercising too much can cause missed menstrual periods or make a woman's period stop entirely. Athletes who train hard regularly have been known to have irregular or missed periods.

Weight gain

Many people exercise to lose weight, but overdoing it can have the opposite effect. Healthline says exercising too much without resting in between can lead to low testosterone levels and high levels of the stress hormone cortisol. These hormonal changes often are associated with loss of muscle tissue, weight gain and even excess belly fat.

Decline in performance

Overtraining may cause a person to plateau or experience decreased performance rather than improvements in physical ability. Less strength, endurance and agility can make it hard to reach fitness goals.

Exercising a lot may seem like it is a good thing, but overtraining can be dangerous.



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HOW CHERRIES BENEFIT YOUR BODY

The first image to come to many people's minds when they think of cherries may be one of these tiny stone fruits sitting atop an ice cream sundae. That's an undeniably appealing image, but cherries are more than just a must-have sundae topping.

Cherries benefit the body in various ways. Nutritious and delicious, cherries may find their way into even more people's diets once people recognize the many ways cherries can improve overall health.

- **Cherries and blood sugar:** The American Diabetes Association notes that cherries can help people with diabetes control their blood sugar levels. The glycemic index (GI) is a system that rates foods which contain carbohydrates, and foods with a low GI rating slowly release glucose into a person's blood. Cherries have a low GI and can help anyone living with diabetes manage their blood sugar more easily.

- **Cherries and inflammation:** Cherries are rich in antioxidants, which means they boast similar anti-inflammatory properties to fruits such as blueberries. Vitamin A, vitamin C and vitamin E are antioxidants present in cherries, and the Cleveland Clinic notes that one study found that consuming 45 cherries per day can reduce inflammation brought on by free radicals. However, anyone considering consuming so many cherries is urged to speak with their physician first, as individuals with sensitivity to salicylates could suffer

gastrointestinal issues from consuming cherries.

- **Cherries and sleep:** The Sleep Foundation reports that studies have found that consuming tart cherry juice can promote a better, more restful night's sleep. Tart cherries are a rarity in that they are one of only a handful of natural food sources of melatonin, a hormone that is secreted at certain times of day to facilitate the transition to sleep. The Cleveland Clinic adds that cherries also contain serotonin, which helps the body make melatonin, and tryptophan, which helps the body produce serotonin. A small glass of tart cherry juice after dinner may help people sleep better.

- **Cherries and arthritis and gout:** The Arthritis Foundation® reports that studies have found that cherries may help to alleviate joint pain in people with osteoarthritis and lower the risk of flare-ups in individuals with gout. Some people with arthritis look to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as Advil®, to alleviate the pain associated with their conditions.

The Arthritis Foundation® reports that some researchers have compared the anti-inflammatory benefits of cherries with those provided by NSAIDs.

Cherries are more than just sundae toppings. A closer look at the benefits of cherries reveals that they help the body in various ways.



Nutritious and delicious, cherries may find their way into even more people's diets once people recognize the many ways cherries can improve overall health.

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Sweet potatoes offer a host of nutritional benefits that make them worthy of inclusion on any dinner table.

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The nutritional benefits of *sweet potatoes*

Sweet potatoes are enjoyed throughout the year, but their popularity may peak during fall and winter when they are an important part of holiday meals. Sweet potatoes were cultivated in Central or South America at least 5,000 years ago. They eventually were introduced to Europeans by explorers like Christopher Columbus, and soon these bright-orange delights became staples of diets across the globe.

According to WebMD, sweet potatoes are not potatoes, but sweet roots in the morning glory family. There are hundreds of varieties of sweet potatoes. While the

most common have bright orange pulp, other varieties are yellow, red or purple.

There are many good reasons to enjoy sweet potatoes regularly. According to Healthline, sweet potatoes offer a host of nutritional benefits that make them worthy of inclusion on any dinner table.

- **Low in calories:** A one cup serving of sweet potatoes is around 180 calories with negligible fat content, 41 grams of carbohydrates, and 6.6 grams of fiber.

- **Help stabilize blood sugar:** Sweet potatoes are higher in fiber than white

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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Is *soup* the ultimate *cold medicine*?

Having a cold is not fun. A stuffy nose, sniffles, sore throat, and other symptoms make having a cold a generally unpleasant experience.

According to data collected by the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, the average consumer shops for over-the counter medicine 26 times a year, with peak visits occurring in the wintertime, when colds and flu infections are more prominent.

To make cold-related matters worse, a U.S. Food and Drug Administration panel concluded in September 2023 that the popular decongestant phenylephrine, which is found in many over-the-counter cold remedies, is ineffective when taken orally. Phenylephrine became the standard decongestant in formulations when pseudoephedrine, another decongestant, became more closely regulated due to its usage in the production of illegal drugs like methamphetamine. Phenylephrine products then became the go-to, as they did not need to be stored behind pharmacy counters and “signed out” like products that included pseudoephedrine.

Rather than accepting their cold symptoms this season, individuals may want to turn to something much more natural that also has great promise: soup. It is no old wife’s tale that soup can be helpful for colds and other illnesses. In fact, Egyptian Jewish physician Moshe ben Maimonides prescribed chicken soup as a treatment for respiratory tract illnesses as early as the 12th century. Penn Medicine advises that soup can be a



Soup can be a go-to food to combat illness because it is light, easy-to-digest, nourishing, and even restorative.

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go-to food to combat illness because it is light, easy-to-digest, nourishing, and even restorative.

Here’s a look at some of the ways soup can help when people are feeling under the weather.

Hydrating broth

Staying hydrated is one of the ways

the body can more effectively fight off illness. Broth-based soups are hydrating and tasty. They may be tolerated more readily than sports drinks or water for a person who needs fluids.

Soothing

The warmth of soup can soothe an irritated throat. Furthermore, soups

usually have softened ingredients in them, making it much less likely that sharp or tough ingredients will scrape an inflamed throat.

Nutrient-dense

Most soups are loaded with vegetables, beans and other healthy ingredients. They provide many of the vitamins and minerals the body needs, and may even help replenish nutrients that have been depleted due to illness.

Sodium content

Sodium is an essential mineral the body needs. Proactive Health Labs says soup regulates body fluids and transmits electrical impulses in the body. Sodium in moderation may be good when a person is feeling ill. In addition, sodium and other seasonings in soup can awaken taste buds that are dulled when sick with a cold. Salt also helps alleviate sore throat pain and can help clear nasal congestion.

Garlic infusion

Soups that contain garlic or garlic extract may reduce the severity of cold and flu symptoms, according to a University of Florida study published in the journal Clinical Nutrition.

Soup may be the best medicine when a person has a cold. Its many properties may help make soup as effective, or even more so, than some products at the pharmacy.

SWEET POTATOES • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

potatoes, which can provide more stability for blood glucose, says Everyday Health. The fiber in the sweet potatoes helps slow the digestion of sugar from the food, resulting in a steadier rise and fall in blood sugar.

- Loads of vitamin A per serving: Sweet potatoes contain 213 percent of the Daily Value of vitamin A. Vitamin A is important for eye health and can boost the immune system. It’s also good for organs like the heart and kidneys. The vitamin A in the potatoes can reduce the risk of macular degeneration and age-related cataracts.

- Beta-carotene connection: Sweet potatoes also are high in beta-carotene, which is a carotenoid that can be converted to vitamin A. Along with other carotenoids, beta-carotene helps with macular health and could sharpen vision.

- Promote gut health: The fiber and

antioxidants in sweet potatoes are important for digestion. Sweet potatoes contain soluble and insoluble fiber which can help move stool along. The fiber also can be fermented by digestive bacteria to create a healthy digestive biome that keeps the intestines healthy, according to Healthline.

- Might reduce inflammation: Consuming the beta-carotene in sweet potatoes may do more than just boost vision. Some researchers believe this antioxidant can clean the body of free radicals that may cause inflammation in the body. Some studies indicate low levels of beta-carotene is associated with higher risk of heart disease.

These are just some of the benefits of including sweet potatoes in your dietary regimen.



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Tips to maintain your commitment to exercise

At one point or another, millions of adults across the globe have resolved to be more physically active. The benefits of routine exercise are too numerous to cite, but some of the more notable ones include a lower risk for chronic disease and illness, improved self-esteem and greater overall health.

With so much to gain from routine exercise, it's no wonder so many people aspire to be more physically active. But it's easy to lose motivation when aspiring to exercise more.

Each year, one of the most popular New Year's resolutions is to exercise more. In fact, Statista conducted a survey regarding New Year's resolutions for 2023 and found that exercising more was the most popular resolution.

However, a study published in the International Journal of Environment Research and Public Health found that 64 percent of people abandon their New Year's resolutions within a month of making them.

Exercising more requires commitment, and there are some ways to make it a little easier to maintain that commitment over the long haul.

• **Break it up** – The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health notes that people don't need to exercise all at once to reap the rewards of physical activity.

If time is tight, break up a workout over the course of your day. Some strength-training exercises in the morning can be followed up with a brisk walk or run over a lunch break. This approach makes it easier to fit a full workout into your daily routine.

• **Employ the buddy system** – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that working out with a partner increases exercise motivation and encourages individuals to be more consistent with their exercise routine so they do not let their partners down.

The authors behind a study published in the International Journal of Research in Exercise Physiology recently suggested the efficacy of the buddy system may require further study before researchers



Exercising more requires commitment but there are some ways to make it a little easier to maintain that commitment over the long haul. Things that may help include scheduling exercise time, working out with a friend and breaking up a workout over the course of a day if short on time.

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can definitively say it's an effective motivation strategy for people who want to exercise more.

But there's no denying that many individuals feel that they are more likely to exercise with a friend than they are if they go solo.

• **Schedule exercise time** – Busy professionals book work meetings, family obligations and other daily tasks in their schedules, and the T.H. Chan School of Public Health recommends doing the same with exercise.

Allotting time to exercise each day may decrease the likelihood that you'll skip a workout, and once results start to manifest you may be more motivated to

stay the course.

• **Identify what progress may look like** – It's easy to become discouraged if a commitment to routine exercise does not produce visible results. But just because your abs are not becoming chiseled a month into a workout routine or the scale is not reflecting significant weight loss does not mean your routine is not working.

As the human body ages, it becomes more difficult to transform it. So, a workout routine that left you looking lean and chiseled in your twenties may not produce the same body in your forties. But that does not mean the exercise isn't working and ultimately helping you get

healthier.

Adults are urged to speak with their physicians and identify what progress with a workout routine might look like for someone their age. Progress may look different than it did years ago, but if the end result is a healthier you, then that should be all the motivation you need to keep going.

It's no secret that making a commitment to routine exercise can be difficult. But various strategies can increase the likelihood that individuals will stay the course as they seek to exercise more frequently.

(METRO CREATIVE)

Exercising when you have high blood pressure

Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, is a serious medical condition and a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. The National Library of Medicine National Center for Biotechnology Information offers that hypertension is responsible for the majority of cardiovascular mortality. Hypertension is associated with an inactive lifestyle, so becoming more active can prevent or even reverse a hypertension diagnosis.

Hypertension is blood pressure that is 140 or higher on the systolic (upper) number and 90 or higher on the diastolic (lower) number. Exercise can help lower high blood pressure and may provide an energy boost and relieve stress.

For people adopting a more active lifestyle after a hypertension diagnosis, it is preferential to start off gradually. WebMD says in the event of hypertension, any activity that enables one to breathe harder and make

the heart beat a little faster can be sufficient; it is not necessary to purchase a gym membership, but doing so may provide the motivation some need to commit to a workout regimen. Activities like swimming, jogging, brisk walking, biking, or doing rigorous yard work also can help lower blood pressure.

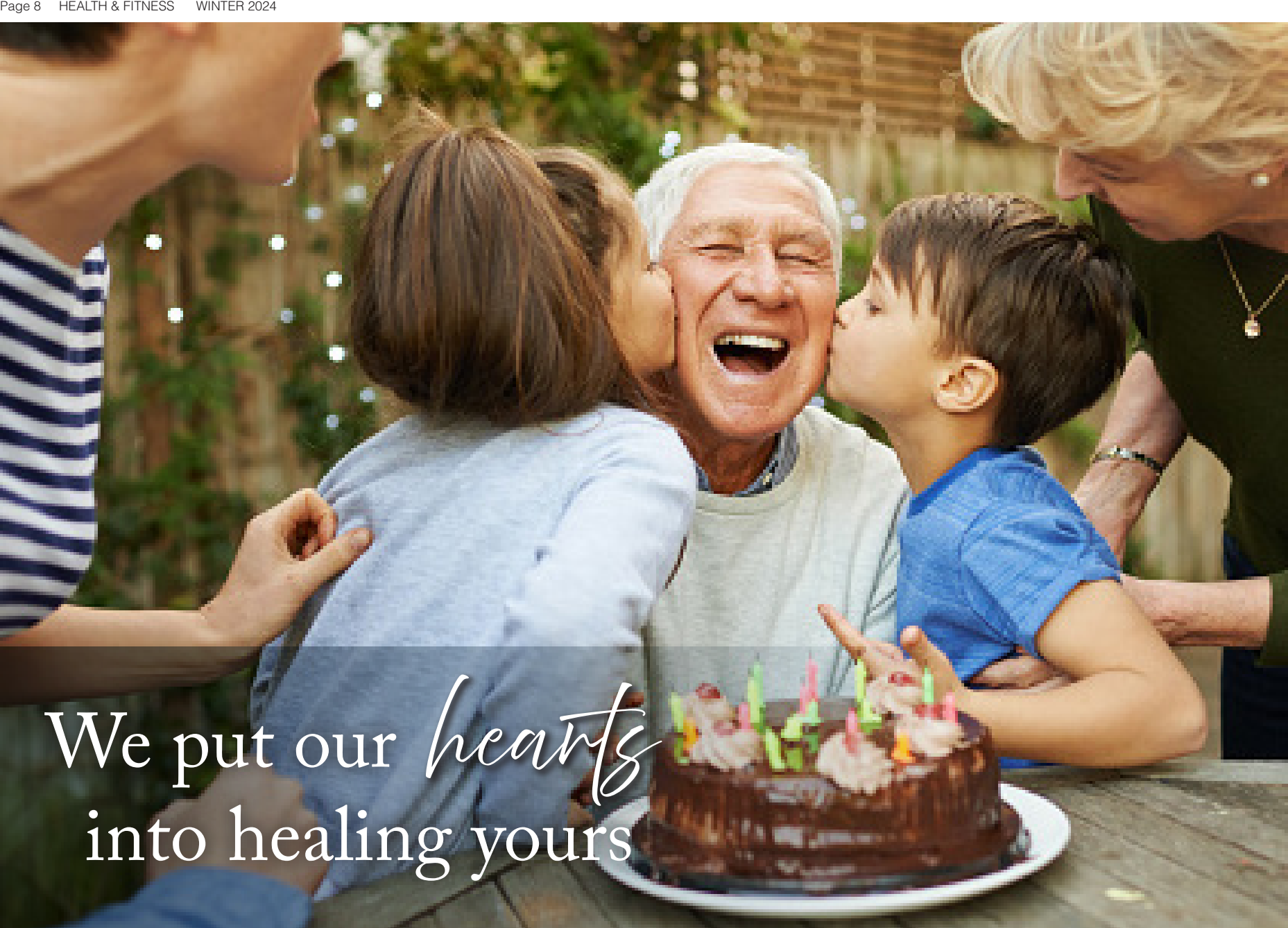
The American Heart Association says for most people, 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity physical activity is recommended. This amount of exercise can be broken up any way a person desires, like 30 minutes per day, though the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services advises exercising over the course of several days each week. People should make time for stretching and muscle-strengthening as well. Regular physical activity can lower blood pressure by anywhere from five to eight mm Hg. By keeping active, a person can prevent blood pressure from creeping up again.

Exercise is a vital component of addressing hypertension. After receiving such a diagnosis, individuals can work with their physicians to devise a safe and effective fitness regimen.

Hypertension is associated with an inactive lifestyle, so becoming more active can prevent or even reverse a hypertension diagnosis.

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