



# Walking brings benefits to your mind and body

## “Let’s go for a walk.”

It’s a phrase we hear hundreds of times over the course of our lives. It can evoke memories of time spent with babies in strollers, walking the family pet, stretching our legs after a big meal and jaunts through local parks and green areas.

However, walking lowers our risk of depression and heart disease, improves our overall health and stimulates our brains.

Simply taking a 20-minute walk every day—adding up to 2.5 hours a week—will bring those benefits and more.

**People**

**who walk  
2.5 hours weekly<sup>1</sup>**



**reduce their  
risk of depression by**

**25%**

## Take your first step

Walking is something almost everyone can do. It doesn't require special clothes or gear other than comfortable, sturdy shoes. The investment is simply your time and your effort. But the physical return on investment is off the charts. Regular walking helps:<sup>2</sup>

- Maintain a healthy weight and lose body fat
- Prevent or help manage various conditions, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, cancer and type 2 diabetes
- Strengthen your bones and muscles
- Increase energy levels
- Improve your mood, cognition, memory and sleep
- Improve your balance and coordination
- Strengthen your immune system
- Reduce stress and tension

## Mental rewards

Generally, what's good for the body is good for the brain.<sup>3</sup>

What's more, walking in green spaces—parks, nature trails, forests or even suburban wooded areas—bumps up the benefits. Time spent walking in nature can reduce stress and negative thoughts and may help prevent burnout.<sup>4</sup>

Another surprising benefit is a boost to your creativity and focus. It's been shown that creative thinking and concentration improve while you are walking outdoors and continue thereafter. There really is truth to the idea of taking a walk to clear your mind and find inspiration.<sup>5</sup> It's no wonder that walking meetings are on the rise.



## Now grab a friend, colleague or your pet and get walking!

\*It's always a good idea to talk with your healthcare provider before you start any new physical activity.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/11/defeating-depression-naturally>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/walking/art-20046261>

<sup>3</sup><https://news.northeastern.edu/2024/05/09/racquet-sports-longevity/>

<sup>4</sup><https://magazine.hms.harvard.edu/articles/walk-woods-may-boost-mental-health>

<sup>5</sup><https://health.ucdavis.edu/blog/cultivating-health/3-ways-getting-outside-into-nature-helps-improve-your-health/2023/05>



## Bite-sized actions for better **mental** **health**

There is more to being healthy than exercise or eating your vegetables. Think about getting healthy from the top down. What's good for your brain is good for your body and vice versa.<sup>1</sup>

Tackling your mental health may feel like a giant task. Does it involve seeing a therapist or taking prescription medications? Will it be expensive and take all your extra time? It doesn't have to.

Simply acknowledging you want to work on your mental health is a step in the right direction. Whether you're struggling with stress, feelings of anxiety or depression, or just want to feel better emotionally, you can take bite-sized actions toward mental well-being.



# Start anytime

It doesn't matter when you start working on your mental well-being, only that you do. Taking baby steps toward feeling better can help. Try these simple actions as a start:

## Check in with yourself

Step away from distractions and just be still. Pay attention to your inner voice. If you're hearing negative self-talk, change the conversation. The same goes for anything that is worrying you. Try to clear this mental clutter.<sup>2</sup>

## Get some sleep

Rest and mental health are intertwined. If you're not getting a solid seven to nine hours nightly, try:<sup>3</sup>

- Limiting screen time
- Relaxing before bedtime
- Going to bed a little earlier

## Eat with intention

Sometimes, we use food as consolation when we're feeling stressed or sad. Before you eat your first bite of a meal or snack, ask yourself, "Am I hungry?" If not, look at what need you're trying to satisfy. Work to be more mindful of physical or emotional cues.<sup>4</sup>

## Reach out

Seeing family and friends on social media may feel like a catch-up, but it's no substitute for the real thing. Pick up the phone and chat for a few minutes. Getting support and making connections are healthy steps to take.<sup>3</sup>



## Breathe

Rather than screaming at the top of your lungs or bottling up your feelings, take some deep breaths. Try these breathing tips:<sup>5</sup>

- Gently close one nostril with a finger while you breathe, forcing yourself to inhale and exhale more slowly.
- Lie flat on your back. Since this is a position we normally reserve for sleep, it can naturally signal your brain to slow down your breathing.
- Breathe deep into your belly. This turns off your stress response, telling your body that everything is going to be OK.

**Improving your mental health and feeling better about yourself isn't out of reach when you break it down into simple steps.**

\*If you feel you could use more help with your mental health, reach out to a licensed mental health professional for support.

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<sup>1</sup><https://news.northeastern.edu/2024/05/09/racquet-sports-longevity/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/food-body-love/202309/eating-well-is-more-than-the-food-you-put-on-your-fork>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/gaining-and-sustaining/202405/strengthening-your-relationship-with-yourself>

<sup>5</sup><https://library.teladochealth.com/hc/en-us/articles/360009313373-Relieving-Stress-in-the-Moment>

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# Secrets for living healthier longer

Longevity is a hot topic these days. Living better and longer is the goal. However, physical ailments, especially chronic conditions, often catch up with many people in their elder years.



**10,000**  
people turn 65  
every day in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>



By **2040**  
the senior citizen  
population will increase  
by about 20.5 million.<sup>2</sup>

With more Americans becoming senior citizens than ever before, the data is growing on what habits could keep you in better shape longer. Much of the focus is on how to extend your health span, not just your lifespan, to promote more healthy years of life.





Studying those who are living longer, more active lives has uncovered five factors for a longer health span. They include:<sup>3</sup>

#### **Healthy eating**

Follow meal plans that can lower the risk of hypertension, memory loss and other chronic conditions. The Mediterranean, DASH and MIND diets include whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and healthier fats from nuts, olive oil and fish.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Regular exercise**

Increased activity benefits your whole body and mind.

#### **Limiting alcohol**

People who drink moderately can have a lower risk of early death from cardiovascular disease.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Maintaining healthy weight**

Speak with your doctor to understand what a healthy weight is for you considering health conditions, body type and family history.

#### **Not smoking**

Smoking harms nearly every organ in your body.





**“SuperAgers”** are people 80 or older who have the cognitive function of people half their age. While these people could be naturally long-living, they follow the habits mentioned, plus:<sup>5</sup>

### Challenging themselves mentally

Exercising your mind is just as important. Read, take classes or learn a new game to stimulate your brain.

### Being social

Social relationships help keep your brain active. Creating new memories can improve cognitive function. Social interaction requires a heightened level of attention. Social connections also help prevent loneliness and isolation, which can lead to physical and mental decline.



Choosing to live a healthy lifestyle at any age can impact your health span. However, earlier is always better. In a multiyear Harvard study, women at 50 who practiced four or five of these healthy habits lived about **10 more years free of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer** than women who did not.<sup>3</sup> For men, it offered another **seven years free of chronic disease**.

**Let's start tonight with a heart-healthy recipe for dinner (see next page).  
Its Mediterranean-inspired flavors fit any healthy diet.**





# Greek-style chicken with lemon-pistachio rice

This dish has an intoxicating savory lemon aroma. Mediterranean-inspired flavors and ingredients taste like health in every bite.<sup>6</sup>

**Makes 4 servings**

**Prep: 10 min**

**Cook: 1 hour**



## Ingredients

- 1½ cups fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup uncooked, instant brown rice
- 10 oz frozen, chopped spinach (thawed, squeezed dry)
- 2 large tomatoes (chopped)
- 2 tsp lemon zest
- 2 Tbsp + 2 tsp fresh lemon juice, divided
- 4 Tbsp chopped, roasted (shelled) pistachio nuts, divided
- ¼ tsp pepper
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 Tbsp finely chopped, fresh oregano or 1 tsp dried oregano (crumbled)
- 1 Tbsp snipped, fresh dill weed or 1 tsp dried dill weed (crumbled)
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 4 ounces each), all visible fat discarded
- 8 oz fat-free or low-fat, plain yogurt
- Fresh oregano, dill weed and lemon zest for garnish, optional

## Preparation

Preheat the oven to 375° F. In an 8-inch glass or metal baking dish, stir together broth, rice, spinach, tomatoes, lemon zest, 2 Tbsp lemon juice, 2 Tbsp pistachios, oregano, dill weed, cinnamon and pepper. Add the chicken breasts. Spoon a small amount of the rice mixture over them. Cover with aluminum foil. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes or until the chicken is no longer pink in the center and the rice is tender. Meanwhile, stir together the yogurt and 2 tsp lemon juice. To serve, spoon the yogurt mixture over the chicken, rice and vegetables. Sprinkle with the remaining pistachios. Garnish with oregano, dill weed and lemon zest.

## Nutrition

Serving size: approx. 3 oz chicken and 1 cup rice and vegetables.



Calories: 308 | total fat: 7 g | saturated fat: 2 g | sodium: 475 mg | cholesterol: 78 mg  
total carbs: 29 g | fiber: 6 g | sugars: 5 g | protein: 35 g | potassium: 1043 mg

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.hhs.gov/aging/index.html>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ncoa.org/article/get-the-facts-on-older-americans/>

<sup>3</sup><https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/healthy-longevity/>

<sup>4</sup><https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/healthy-weight/diet-reviews/mediterranean-diet/>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/4-habits-super-agers>

<sup>6</sup><https://recipes.heart.org/en/recipes/greek-style-chicken-with-lemon-pistachio-rice---delicious-decisions>

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