

Health, Mind & Body

January 2016

A Special Supplement to

**Delaware Gazette &
The Sunbury News**

Live Long and Healthy

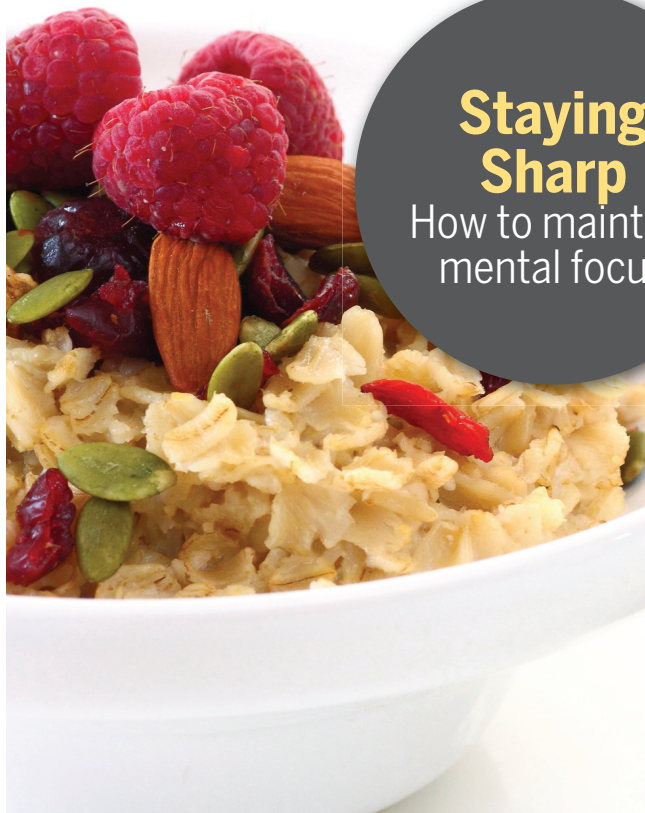
These healthy habits
can have a lasting impact

A New You

Exercise tips for
beginners

Staying Sharp

How to maintain
mental focus





Be smart about antibiotic use

Control and Prevention says that these drugs have been used successfully for the last 70 years to treat patients with infectious diseases.

But antibiotics cannot treat illnesses stemming from viruses, which include most colds and the flu.

As effective as antibiotics can be, antibiotic resistance is a growing problem. The CDC reports that at least two million people become infected with bacteria that have become resistant to antibiotics, and roughly 23,000 people die each year as a result of these types of infections. An April 2014 report from the World Health Organization stated, "This serious threat is no longer a prediction for the future, it is happening right now in every region of the world and has the potential to affect anyone, of any age, in any country. It is now a major threat to public health."

The Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics says antibiotic resistance occurs when an antibiotic has lost its ability to effectively control or kill bacterial growth. The three main ways

resistance develops include natural resistance to certain types of antibiotics, genetic mutation or through the acquisition of resistance from another bacterium. This resistance can occur spontaneously or through misuse of antibiotics or antimicrobials. Prescription medications are not always the culprits, either. Antibiotic use in livestock and food production also may contribute to resistance.

When antibiotic resistance occurs, a stronger drug may be needed to treat an infection that was once taken care of by a milder medication.

Prudent antibiotic use can help prevent the recurrence of resistance. Individuals can help the process in a number of ways.

Become educated. The health resource Medscape, powered by WebMD, says in a recent survey of 796 clinicians, 42 percent of doctors have admitted to prescribing antibiotics 10 to 24 percent of the time even when they are not sure they are necessary. Patient request is a large factor in such offerings. About 25 percent of patients ask their doctor or nurse for antibiotics. Patients who educate

themselves about the proper application of antibiotics may be less likely to request them, and that can help prevent the development of a resistance.

Confirm need. Only take antibiotics when a bacteria-, parasite- or fungus-based illness is identified. These illnesses may include strep throat, urinary tract infections or ear infections.

Take a wait-and-see approach. Wait for lab results to come back for strep throat or other cultures to see if you need an antibiotic. Many viral-based illnesses will go away within two weeks' time.

Adhere to dosage guidelines. When prescribed antibiotics for an infection, take them as directed, making sure you complete the dosage cycle. Do not stop simply because you feel better. Stopping early may not be enough to effectively kill the bacteria and may contribute to resistance in the future.

Antibiotic abuse and resistance are concerns that can be addressed by becoming informed and making smart medication choices.

When used correctly, antibiotics and similar drugs known as antimicrobial agents can alleviate infections caused by various bacteria and some types of fungi and parasites. The Centers for Disease

How to shorten the duration of a cold

relief fast.

Colds typically last for a week or more. While there's no cure for the common cold, according to The Mayo Clinic, there are some remedies that can help cold sufferers feel better more quickly.

Rest: One of the best things to do when you have a cold is to get adequate rest. Your body's immune system is working overtime to combat the cold virus, and restricting activity can help it direct efforts where they're needed most. Keep away from strenuous activities, and spend more time relaxing or sleeping to let your body do its job.

Hydration: Consuming plenty of clear fluids can reduce congestion and ensure that you do not get dehydrated. Plus, warm beverages can be soothing to an irritated throat. Avoid coffee, caffeinated sodas and alcohol, which can exacerbate dehydration.

Saline rinses: Intra-nasal saline sprays, neti pots and similar products can help loosen mucus that is clogging the nose and sinus cavities, allowing it to flow out. This makes blowing your nose more effective and may help prevent post-nasal drip. Avoid prolonged use of medicated decongestant sprays. They may work well, but they can cause rebound congestion that's worse than the original stuffiness.

Vitamin C: Vitamin C will not prevent colds, but it could help in other ways. Taking vitamin C before the onset of cold symptoms may shorten the duration of symptoms. Vitamin C also may provide benefits for people at high risk of colds due to frequent exposure, offers The Mayo Clinic.

Soup and tea: Soup is an easy-to-digest meal that provides many of the necessary remedies for a cold, including warm broth to hydrate and soothe, antioxidant-rich vegetables and protein to help fuel the body's recovery process. In 2000, Dr. Stephen Rennard of the Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha actually tested if chicken soup clinically makes people with colds feel better. He found that chicken soup inhibited neutrophils, immune cells that cause congestion. Decaffeinated tea also may help you stay hydrated and relieve many cold symptoms.

Reinfection: Use cleaning products that are effective at killing viruses around the house to prevent reinfection and cold relapses. Also, avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth between hand-washings to keep germs at bay.

Colds can be a nuisance. Most medicines will help relieve symptoms but cannot make colds go away faster. Natural remedies can help the body's immune system work at its best and lessen the severity of a cold.



Few things can be as uncomfortable as the common cold. In their book "Common Cold," authors Olaf Weber and Ronald Eccles say the common cold has been around since the ancient times. More than 200 virus strains can contribute to colds, but the rhinovirus is the most common. Colds produce a bevy of symptoms, including runny nose, congestion and sore throat, so it should come as no surprise that sufferers want to find



Chronic pain can be debilitating and interfere with daily life in various ways. Over-the-counter, anti-inflammatory and analgesic drugs are some of the most widely used medications in the United States, but when such medications prove ineffective, prescription pain relievers, which can be addictive, are often a pain sufferer's next choice.

Consumer Reports indicates that roughly 45 people per day in America die from overdoses of opioid-containing pain medications, which include methadone, morphine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone. Prescriptions for these drugs have climbed 300 percent in the last 10 years. Although opioids can be safe when used properly to treat short-term pain, too often their usage leads to misuse and dependence, especially when they are used to treat chronic pain.

For long-term pain from arthritis, research

suggests that nonopioid medications and even nondrug treatments often provide relief with less risk of addiction and overdose than opioids. Reducing pain using alternative methods with less risk can involve rethinking trips to the medicine cabinet. Doctors and naturalists may advocate for natural pain relievers as a first step to managing pain.

Massage

There's more to massage than working out the kinks of tight muscles. Massage may help boost the body's levels of endorphins and serotonin, both of which are natural painkillers and mood regulators. The Mayo Clinic's Complementary and Integrative Medicine Program has conducted a number of studies on massage as treatment for pain following surgery, ultimately finding that massage significantly relieves pain and reduces anxiety.

Natural ways to relieve chronic pain

Dietary changes

Pain is often linked to inflammation in the body. When eating, choose foods that won't worsen existing inflammation. Eating less sugar, dairy, and gluten products, which can contribute to inflammation, can help a person feel better. Increase consumption of foods that reduce inflammation, such as raw vegetables.

Hot and cold therapy

Cold compresses can reduce inflammation quickly and also serve as a local anesthetic. Heat therapy can ease aches and pains and make muscles more flexible. Try applying a hot compress prior to stretching to make limbs more limber.

Take the sun

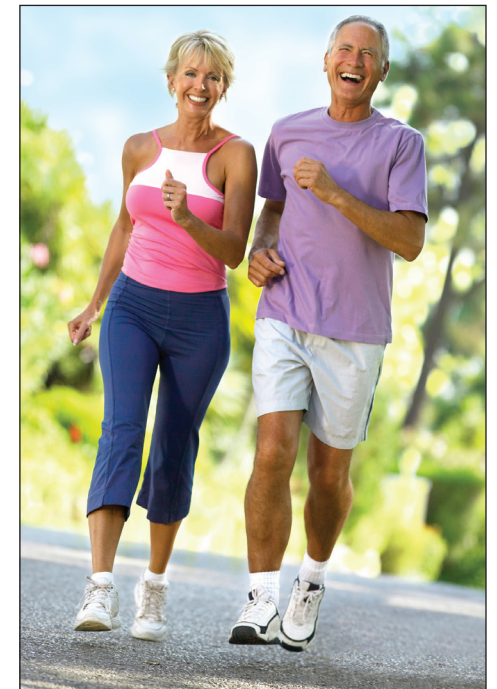
A Boston University study that examined 221 men and women with knee osteoarthritis found that those who spent 15 to 20 minutes in the sun increased their body's production of vitamin D and experienced less pain as a result. When the sun is scarce, it's advisable to get between 400 and 800 IUs of vitamin D daily through supplements and foods.

Brisk walking

Fast walking is a low-impact cardiovascular exercise that utilizes most of the body. Walking encourages blood circulation, removes toxins, burns calories, and stabilizes blood fats and sugars. Plus endorphins released from exercise can help a person feel good. A great thing about walking is just about anyone can do it.

Mind-body exercises

Exercises that combine focus with stretching can alleviate physical pain and improve mental clarity. Look for yoga, pilates and meditation classes and give them a try. Chronic pain may be relieved with the use of natural remedies, which help pain sufferers reduce their reliance on over-the-counter or prescription medications.



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Parkinson's disease: Recognize early onset symptoms

Parkinson's disease is a neurological movement disorder. Classic motor symptoms, such as tremor, rigidity and extreme slowness of movements and reflexes, called bradykinesia, are typically used to identify Parkinson's. However, identification of other, more subtle symptoms may help identify the disease years before more obvious motor conditions present themselves. Since Parkinson's is a chronic and progressive neurological disease, symptoms are often mild at the onset, becoming more severe over time. Initial symptoms may be so subtle that they're even difficult for specialists to detect, according to the The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. Symptoms also may be different for some patients than others and may progress at different paces. Dopamine loss is a major contributor to the onset of Parkinson's disease. Dopamine controls movement and mood, so when dopamine is affected, walking, talking and writing can be impacted. Depression or anxiety may accompany other symptoms.

The National Institutes of Health says Parkinson's disease affects as many as 500,000 people in the United States. An early diagnosis may help improve quality of life and delay the onset of greater motor issues. Here's what to look for and discuss with a doctor.

Micrographia and other handwriting issues occur. Those with Parkinson's disease may start experiencing changes in their handwriting. Penmanship may look cramped, and letters tend to be smaller than normal (micrographia). Individuals may find it difficult to hold a pen and write.

Tremors take place in a limb. Tremors usually begin in the hands or fingers and may even mimic a pill-rolling technique, which is a tremor between the thumb and forefinger. Tremors usually occur when the limb is at rest.

Pace or activities slow down. Parkinson's disease may reduce one's ability to move and may slow down movements. An early symptom may be a noticeable slowing down in steps or ability to react to something, like

a ball being thrown one's way. Some with Parkinson's may drag their feet or shuffle as they walk or find it difficult to get out of a chair.

Loss of automatic movements and functions can occur. Difficulty with unconscious movements, such as blinking, smiling or even swinging arms, may occur when a person has Parkinson's disease. Movements may be uncoordinated and stiff. Increased salivation and perspiration also may be indicators.

Poor balance and loss of posture may develop. People with Parkinson's disease may hunch over more and more and be unable to stand up straight. Balance issues, such as greater incidences of falls or being able to tip over more easily, may occur.

Speech can change. Changes in speech can begin, including hesitating before speaking, slurring words or speaking in a monotone voice.

Others may notice a masked face. This describes a vacant or fixed stare and lack of facial animation.

Tremors in the hands, loss of balance, handwriting changes, and slowed movements may be early indicators of Parkinson's disease.



Sleep issues may increase. Parkinson's disease can affect sleeping patterns and behaviors. People with Parkinson's may experience vivid dreams and nightmares, as well as an inability to stay asleep. Daytime drowsiness may also occur. Parkinson's disease is rare, and symptoms that mimic those of Parkinson's may be caused by other conditions. However, if you or someone you know is experiencing repeated symptoms of any of the ones described here, speak with your general practitioner or a neurologist.

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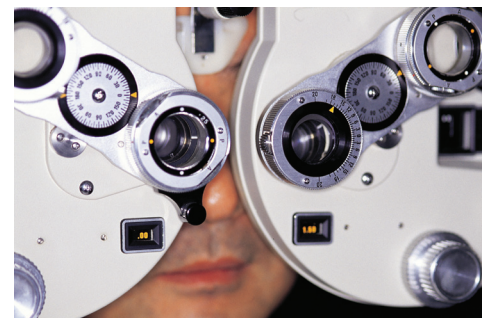
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Did you know?

Eye examinations are recommended to identify potential vision problems in their infancy stages. Many eye experts advise that the average person should have an eye exam every one to three years, depending on his or her age. The American Optometric Association says children should have their first eye exam at six months of age. Subsequent exams can take place at age 3, and then when the child is beginning school. If an eye doctor determines a person has a particular condition that requires monitoring, more frequent eye exams will be advised. Children require less frequent eye exams, but as a person gets older, he or she should schedule eye exams every year. Consult with an eye doctor if you have questions on when to schedule an eye examination or if you are experiencing vision problems.



Working past retirement age may help some men and women stay more mentally sharp.

A long and healthy life is the ultimate goal for many people. While a host of factors beyond a person's control, such as genetics, impact how long that person lives and how susceptible to certain medical conditions he or she may be, there are many things men and women can do to improve their chances of living long, healthy lives.

Keep working. While many working men and women dream of the day when they can leave the daily grind behind once and for all, they might want to think more about a second career than a long, carefree retirement. A study from British researchers published in the *International Journal of Geriatric*

Healthy Habits that can have a lasting impact

Psychiatry found that each extra year that men and women work was associated with a six-week delay in the onset of dementia. While men and women may want to retire from their professions, finding second careers or volunteering close to full-time hours may improve their long-term health and quality of life.

Stay on your toes. A healthy diet is a key component of a healthy lifestyle, but diet alone is not enough to promote a long and healthy life. According to the Johns Hopkins Medicine Health Library, the risks associated with a physically inactive lifestyle are considerable. Such risks include a greater risk of developing high blood pressure and coronary heart disease and even a greater risk for certain cancers. In addition, physical inactivity can add to feelings of anxiety and depression. Inactivity tends to increase with age, so men and women aiming for long and healthy lives should make physical activity a vital part of their daily lives.

Get your whole grains. Whole grains may be another key ingredient to a long and healthy life. Numerous studies have shown that increasing whole grain consumption can help prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes. Researchers who conducted a systematic review of studies examining the

link between whole grains and type 2 diabetes prevention in 2007 found that eating an extra two servings of whole grains per day decreased a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 21 percent. That's an important finding, as additional research has found that people with diabetes have an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, a neurodegenerative condition that can dramatically reduce quality of life.

Visit your physician annually if not more frequently.

While many people, especially those who feel healthy, are hesitant to visit their physicians, doing so may just save your life. Several diseases, including cancer and heart disease, are more effectively treated when detected early. Annual physicals and discussions with your physician may uncover a disease in its early stages when it is most treatable. Waiting until symptoms appear may not be too late to treat a condition or disease, but taking a proactive approach increases the likelihood of early detection, which increases your chances of living a long and healthy life.

Healthy habits improve peoples' quality of life while also increasing the likelihood that men and women live long, healthy and productive lives.

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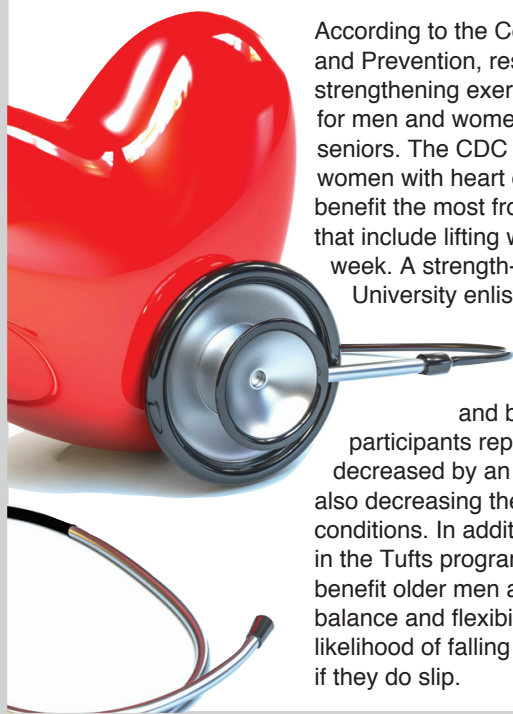
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Did you know?



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, research has shown that strengthening exercises are safe and effective for men and women of all ages, including seniors. The CDC also notes that men and women with heart disease or arthritis may benefit the most from exercise regimens that include lifting weights several times per week. A strength-training program at Tufts University enlisted older men and women with moderate to severe knee osteoarthritis. The program lasted 16 weeks, and by the end of those 16 weeks, participants reported that their pain had decreased by an average of 43 percent while also decreasing the disability caused by their conditions. In addition to the benefits uncovered in the Tufts program, strength training can benefit older men and women by improving balance and flexibility, which can decrease their likelihood of falling and the severity of those falls if they do slip.

Exercise tips for beginners



a new exercise regimen. Gradually build up your exercise tolerance, exercising two or three days per week and taking a day off between workouts when you start. As your body becomes more acclimated to exercise, you can start to workout more and with more intensity.

Stretch after working out. Stretching can improve flexibility, and that may decrease your risk of future injury. In addition, improved flexibility may improve your exercise performance by improving your range of motion and helping your muscles work more effectively. Muscles contract during a workout, and stretching after workouts can help reset those muscles to their natural position. Include both static stretching and foam rolling in your post-workout stretching routine.

Find a routine that works for you. Many men and women feel they must sign up for a gym membership upon resolving to adopt a more active lifestyle. While gyms afford you the opportunity to strength train and get in your cardiovascular exercise, they're not for everyone. The best approach and the one that's likely to be most successful over the long haul is to find an exercise routine that engages you and that you find enjoyable. If the gym is not for you, try to find a routine that still includes both strength training and cardiovascular exercise. Strength training can make your body more durable, and cardiovascular exercise can reduce your risk for various health problems, including heart disease.

Track your progress. One way to stay motivated is to keep track of your progress. If you're working out but not monitoring your results, you may not feel like you're getting anywhere. Keep a workout diary, tracking both your successes and failures, so you can see what's working and what's not. The longer you stay committed to your workout routine, the greater the likelihood that you will be tracking more successes than failures, and those successes can provide the motivation to keep you going on those inevitable days when you want to skip workouts.

Returning to exercise after an extended period of inactivity can be quite the challenge, but it's nothing motivated men and women cannot overcome.

Stretching after a workout can improve flexibility and help muscles work more effectively.

The right combination of diet and exercise is one of the keys to a long and healthy life. While many people find adapting to a healthier diet challenging, that challenge often pales in comparison to the intimidation felt when working out for the first time in years.

Exercising after an extended period of inactivity may intimidate people who choose to workout at gyms, where fellow gym members may appear to be in tip-top shape. Overcoming that intimidation factor can be as simple as working out with a friend or working with a personal trainer, each of whom can offer the support and guidance beginners need when reacclimating themselves to more active lifestyles. In addition to the buddy system, beginners can employ the following strategies to make their return to exercise go as smoothly as possible.

Gradually build up your exercise tolerance. When you exercise, your body releases neurotransmitters known as endorphins, which trigger positive feelings in the body. Those positive feelings can be addictive, but it's important that beginners do not go too hard too quickly when beginning



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The benefits of reading

Many people are avid readers, feeling that a good book remains the most entertaining form of escapism. But reading provides more than just an opportunity to leave the daily grind behind.

While many people may read to immerse themselves in something other than a movie or a television show, they may not know about all the additional benefits they are enjoying when cuddling up with a good book.

Reading can improve brain function. A recent study from researchers at Emory University discovered that reading a novel can improve brain function in various ways. During the study, researchers found that reading fiction improves connectivity in the brain. In addition, reading fiction improved readers' ability to put themselves in other peoples' shoes, which might help them relate better to people in both the present and future.

Reading can benefit long-term brain health. While readers engrossed in a great book might only be worried about what's coming on the next page, the benefits to reading are much more long-term than the next chapter.

Researchers at the Rush University Medical Center in Chicago found that reading is one of a handful of mentally stimulating activities that can benefit brain health in old age. In their Rush Memory and Aging Project, researchers examined nearly 300 elderly men and women, giving them tests of memory and thinking throughout the final years of their lives. When participants, who were surveyed as to how often they engaged in mentally stimulating activities such as reading, passed away, their brains were examined for signs of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Researchers discovered that the participants who engaged in mentally challenging activities most often had slower rates of memory decline. In addition, even those who had symptoms of brain damage that are commonly associated with Alzheimer's and dementia seemed to benefit from the stimulation that mentally challenging activities produced.

Reading can help reduce stress. Another big benefit of reading is its relationship to stress. According to a 2009 study from researchers at the University of Sussex in England, reading can reduce stress by up to



68 percent. In addition, reading might help relieve that stress even faster than other forms of stress relief because it allows for a more immediate escape from the stress of daily life.

Reading can help you get a more restful night's sleep. According to the National Sleep Foundation, engaging in a calming activity for an hour before going to bed can help your body wind down and ready itself for sleep.

Some people may struggle to fall asleep after reading on an electronic device, such as a tablet or e-reader, as the light that emanates from such devices may be activating the brain. If need be, stick to reading traditional print books and magazines before going to bed. Reading is not only a favorite activity for many people, but it's also something that can benefit the body in myriad ways.

Save money and still get in shape

The costs of getting fit can sometimes seem formidable. Men and women on tight budgets may feel that gym memberships, home exercise equipment or costly personal training sessions are simply beyond their means. Such concerns can have long-term negative impacts on individuals' health, which only highlights the need to find ways to save when attempting to get in shape. While there is no shortage of ways to spend money when trying to get back in shape, there are even more ways to save when adopting a healthier lifestyle.

Buy in bulk. Many professional fitness services, whether it's gym memberships or personal training sessions, offer greater discounts to individuals willing to make bigger commitments. Men and women who commit to a 12-month gym membership instead of going month-to-month can typically save a substantial amount of money each month by making such long-term commitments. For example, a gym may charge \$89 for a month-to-month membership, but only \$69 per month for people who commit for a full year. That's a savings of nearly 23 percent. Personal trainers also typically offer considerable discounts to clients who commit to a greater number of sessions than those who simply purchase one session at a time.

Join a gym at the right moment. Many gyms capitalize on people's New Year's resolutions

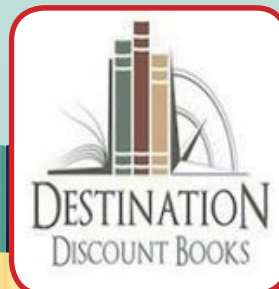
to get fit by offering steep discounts to men and women who sign up at the end of December or in January. Others may discount memberships in late winter when people want to get in shape before the return of beach season. Signing up during the height of discount season or when gyms are offering special discounts, such as anniversary or holiday deals, can save you a lot of money over the course of the year.

Investigate your health insurance. Many health insurance providers offer gym membership rebates to their customers. If you have never had a gym membership in the past, you may not even know if your provider offers this benefit. Gym membership rebates typically require that policy holders visit their gyms 'X' number of times in a six- or 12-month span (i.e., 50 times in six months or 100 times in 12 months) in order to earn rebates. A \$400 annual rebate on a gym membership that costs \$69 per month cuts the yearly cost of that gym membership by nearly 50 percent. If your existing insurance plan does not offer such rebates, speak with your employer about including it when the time comes to renew the insurance offerings in the future. Getting fit does not have to break the bank. Health-conscious men and women can find numerous ways to save on their journeys to living more active lifestyles.

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How to maintain mental focus

The technological advancements made in the 21st century have undoubtedly made life easier in many ways, but this golden age of gadgets has not come without some negative side effects. Thanks to the near-constant availability of the Internet and devices like smartphones and tablets, many men and women find it difficult to maintain their focus throughout the day. But while such distractions are never too far away, there are some ways to stay focused and productive.

Get more exercise. Studies have shown that exercise and improved mental focus are linked. In a 2013 analysis of 19 studies involving more than 500 children, teenagers and young adults, researchers found that exercise sessions between 10 and 40 minutes immediately boosted concentration and mental focus. That improvement might be a result of exercise increasing blood flow to the brain. Men and women who find themselves struggling to focus at work after lunchtime may benefit from incorporating some exercise, whether it's a brief walk or a more strenuous

workout, into their midday routines.

Perform breathing exercises. Nervousness is an oft-overlooked cause of loss of focus. When nervous, breath can become shallow and restricted, which can have a negative impact on the flow of oxygen to your brain, making it more difficult to concentrate. Professional athletes have long espoused to the virtues of breathing exercises as a means to calming their nerves, and professionals can follow suit. Some simple breathing exercises can help busy professionals multitask more effectively by helping them concentrate on the tasks at hand and overcome the distraction of having so much to do at one time.

Stay hydrated. A recent study published in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that dehydration caused loss of focus and a sense of fatigue among women. While the loss of focus was considered insubstantial and the study only examined women, remaining hydrated throughout the day may make it easier to focus on work and other tasks throughout the day.

Get adequate sleep. One of the best ways



to improve focus during the day is to make sure you're getting enough sleep at night. Sleep deprivation produces a host of negative consequences, not the least of which is its impact on cognitive functioning. Research has shown that sleep deprivation compromises alertness and concentration, making it more difficult to focus at work and tackle tasks that require deep analysis and thought. In addition,

a survey from the National Sleep Foundation found that sleep-deprived men and women are less likely to exercise and eat healthy diets, each of which can boost mental acuity. Focusing in today's atmosphere of constant distractions can be difficult, but men and women can overcome diversions by employing a handful of successful strategies aimed at improving concentration.

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Did you know?

Research indicates that people who laugh a lot are much healthier and may live longer than those who don't find time to chuckle. A good, deep belly laugh can provide your body and mind with a great workout. Dr. Lee Berk at the Loma Linda School of Public Health in California found that laughing lowers levels of stress hormones and strengthens the immune system.

The organization Laughter Works, which teaches people how and why to laugh, says laughter can cause blood pressure to drop, blood to become oxygenated and endorphins to kick in, which can improve mood. And that's just the beginning. Laughing can help reduce stress and promote stronger relationships between people who laugh together. Data indicates children around the age of six laugh the most, laughing roughly 300 times per day, while adults average only 15 to 100 laughs per day.

