



OPTIMISM 101

There's good reason to look on the bright side. For one, optimism can reduce pain and improve quality of life, even for people with a serious disease. And a sunny outlook extends life span by 11 to 15%. Here's how to cultivate optimism.

- **Recognize everything's temporary.** Optimism involves believing things can change for the better. Catch yourself and reverse course if your self-talk includes words like "always" and "never."
- **Write a mission statement.** A sense of purpose goes a long way toward instilling meaning. Give thought to who you want to be and what you want, then write it down and use it as a guide.
- **Have a laugh.** Poking fun at a problem increases your ability to endure it. For instance, people who viewed memes about COVID-19 during the

pandemic reported less stress and better coping. That's likely because the humorous images offered perspective, comfort, and proof that others are going through challenging experiences.

- **Counter your complaints.** Negative thoughts can become a pattern. Use a visual cue to catch them before they add up. For instance, wear a bracelet or a ring you can switch from one hand to the other when you complain. Each time, shift your focus to what's good instead.
- **Visualize, in detail.** Those who imagine a better future are more likely to create one. Research shows imagining yourself in good situations—as if you were seeing yourself from the outside—is linked to optimism. The more vivid your mental picture, the greater the effect.

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EDITOR
Brenda Dale, AVP,
Wellness

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Road Map to a Healthy Heart

Let's say life is a road trip, and a healthy heart is one of the major destinations. Today, we have better directions than ever before—plus an improved GPS.

To keep you heading in the right direction, and away from heart disease, follow these recommendations:



GO!

- Try to get at least 150 minutes (two hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week to improve your health. Even if you can fit in only a few minutes of activity at a time, it counts.
- Rev up on fish like salmon, bluefin tuna, or mackerel at least twice a week.

CAUTION!

- Slow down on fats, salt, and alcohol. You can lower LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol by cutting saturated fat to 6% of your daily calories and keeping intake of trans fats as low as possible.
- Limit sodium to 1 teaspoon per day or less, and alcohol to one drink (for women) or two drinks (for men).



STOP!

- Quit smoking. Ask your healthcare provider about nicotine replacement, counseling, and medications to help you quit. Over time, you will have the same risk for heart disease as a nonsmoker.
- Pass on folic acid and antioxidant supplements as preventives. These won't protect you from heart disease.



health facts

Could More Fruit Help Prevent Diabetes?

Fruit not only adds sweetness to life—one study says it could help lower the risk for type 2 diabetes. Australian researchers studied more than 7,500 adults and followed about 4,600 of them over a five-year period. The more fruit people ate, the better their insulin sensitivity, a measure of how well the body uses this hormone to turn sugar into fuel. Those who ate moderate amounts of fruit also had a 36% lower risk of developing diabetes later than those who ate the least.

Fruit's sweetness comes naturally, not from added sugars, so it poses fewer risks for blood sugar spikes. Plus, fruits contain fiber, which can slow your body's absorption of sugar. Fruits are also rich in vitamins, minerals, and plant chemicals called flavonoids that may fight inflammation and boost the health of your pancreas, which produces insulin.

So, eat up—but make sure you're eating whole, unprocessed fruits. The health benefits aren't the same for juices.

Had COVID-19? You Still Need a Vaccine

COVID-19 vaccines work by helping the body develop immunity to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. But people who've had COVID-19 also build up antibodies to fight the disease in the future. So why get vaccinated if you've had it?

Three recent reports shine a light on the reason:

- One found it's possible to get sick with COVID-19 for the second time in as little as three months.
- A second looked at people who got COVID-19 in 2020. About six months into 2021, those who remained unvaccinated were more than twice as likely to get sick again compared with those who got shots.

- Finally, a third found unvaccinated people who'd been previously infected were 5.49 times more likely to get sick than those who were vaccinated.

The results confirm how important vaccines are. As more new variants emerge, vaccines offer your best chance of preventing another bout of COVID-19.



KNOW THE LATEST?

Stay up to date on COVID-19 at www.gov.bm/coronavirus.



TAKE CONTROL

For tips on living with diabetes, visit the Bermuda Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.bm.

Easy Swaps to Get Started with ... Plant-Based Eating

Introducing more plant-based eating into your diet has its benefits. It may help prevent heart disease and lower cholesterol. Below are a few adjustments you can make to eat fewer animal products or switch to an all-vegan diet, if you choose.

Miss? Try...

Milk in your cereal

Almond or oat milk

Breakfast burrito

A tofu scramble with beans

Comfort foods, like creamy soup or chili

A split pea soup or bean-based chili with dairy-free sour cream

Burgers

A grilled portabella mushroom burger with dairy-free sauce

Deli meat sandwiches

A veggie wrap with hummus or a sandwich with nut butter and fruit on whole-wheat bread



How to Ease into Plant-Based Eating

Adopting a vegetarian diet may contribute to lowering cholesterol, protecting against cancer, preventing heart disease, and managing diabetes. If you're thinking about giving up meat, try adding more plants to your plate slowly. Here's how.

1. Experiment with different strategies. You could start with "Meatless Mondays," ban bacon from breakfast, or try eating a plant-based diet until dinner. Once it's routine, add on.

2. Change your approach to meal planning. Put the emphasis on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans. These are great building blocks to give you the protein, fiber, and other nutrients you need.

3. Keep health at the forefront. Not all vegetarian diets are equal. Sweet treats, chips, and processed meat substitutes shouldn't make up the majority of what you eat. To reap the health benefits of this way of eating, look for foods that are low in sodium, added sugars, and saturated fat.

4. Mind your nutritional needs. Vegetarians should make sure to eat enough calcium, iron, vitamin B-12, and vitamin D. Fortunately, there are good nonmeat sources for all of these.



EAT WELL FOR BETTER HEALTH

According to STEPS to a Well Bermuda 2014, 75% of adults are overweight or obese, 33% have high blood pressure, and 34% have high cholesterol. Lifestyle changes, including healthy eating, are essential to lowering these numbers.

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