

# Focus on Health

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MONTH**

**INSIDE:**  
Healthy eating tips  
Foods that boost eye health  
The skinny on weight loss drugs  
Dejunk your diet  
Ways to avoid burnout  
... plus a healthy recipe!

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-San Francisco Chronicle

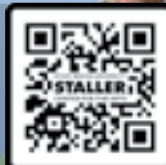
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## Simple ways to make a diet more nutritious

**N**utritious foods are a cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle. The World Health Organization says a healthy diet protects a person against many chronic noncommunicable diseases, such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Nutritious foods also help a person get to or maintain a healthy weight, promote stronger bones and teeth, and positively affect long-term mental health.

Here are some ways to make meals more nutritious.

### **Eat an array of fruits and vegetables.**

Healthline notes a diet rich in fruits and vegetables has been proven to offer many health benefits. Incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables into the meals eaten each day will provide fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Vegetables also are low in calories and fat, which aligns with diets designed for weight management. Health experts suggest eating greens and other vegetables first so that you fill up and are therefore less likely to eat fewer, less nutritious foods during each meal.

**Eat less salt.** Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure. People with high blood pressure are more likely to develop heart disease or have a stroke. Even if you do not add salt to your food, you may still be eating too much. Adults and children aged 11 and over should eat no more than 6g of salt (about a teaspoonful) a day. Younger children should have even less.

**Consume sufficient healthy sources of protein.** Protein is important for managing hunger and sustaining energy and maintaining muscle. Lean sources of protein are best, and can include skinless poultry, unprocessed lean meats, seafood and fish, legumes, and nuts. Eggs also are excellent sources of protein. Fish tends to be low in calories for the amount of protein it provides. Try to incorporate oily fish into your culinary repertoire at least once a week since it’s a source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.



Oily fish includes salmon, trout, herring, sardines, pilchards and mackerel.

### **Choose whole grain carbohydrates.**

When selecting breads, cereals, rices, and other carbohydrates, select higher fiber or whole grain varieties. Whole grains contain more fiber than white or refined starches and will help you feel fuller longer.

**Cut down on saturated fats and sugars.** Be mindful of food labels when selecting ingredients for meals. Opt for foods that are low in saturated fats, which tend to contribute to an increase in the amount of cholesterol in the blood.

Saturated fat is found in many foods, such as fatty cuts of meat, sausages, butter, hard cheese cream, cakes biscuits, lard and pies.

Also, regularly consuming foods and beverages high in sugar increases a person’s risk for obesity and tooth decay. Use food labels to check how much sugar foods contain.

More than 22.5g of total sugars per 100g means the food is high in sugar, while 5g of total sugars or less per 100g means the food is low in sugar.

### **Practice additional smart eating tips.**

In addition to the foods eaten, there are ways to eat in a more healthy manner. Slow down when eating and savor the foods. Gauge whether you feel full before going back for another portion. Eating foods off a smaller plate can trick the brain into thinking you ate more, a tactic that can help to reduce portion sizes. Cook and prepare more foods at home where you can control ingredients. ♦

### **HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR heads to Port Jefferson Station**

Mark your calendars! Port Jefferson Chamber of Commerce will hold its 16th annual Health and Wellness Fest at the Meadow Club, 1147 Route 112, Port Jefferson Station on Saturday, April 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. with over 90 vendors, health screenings, healthy food court, giveaways and more! Call 631-473-1414 for more information.

# Top fruits and vegetables that promote good vision

A healthy diet is perhaps even more beneficial than people realize. Though it's widely known a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fat can help people maintain a healthy weight, various nutritious foods also promote strong vision.

The vision-related benefits of various foods is notable, particularly for adults. While vision loss is often considered a natural part of aging, the National Eye Institute notes it doesn't have to be. Various nutrients help to maintain eye health, and that can make adults less vulnerable to the vision loss many accept as part of the aging process. Individuals who are intrigued by the role nutrients can play in promoting healthy eyes can consider these foods.

**Carrots:** The American Academy of Ophthalmology notes carrots are rich in vitamin A, which has long been linked to healthy eyes. The retina utilizes vitamin A to turn light rays into images. Vitamin A also helps to keep eyes moist, which can help individuals avoid the uncomfortable condition known as dry eye.

**Sweet potatoes:** Carrots are more accessible than sweet potatoes since the former can be eaten raw whereas the



latter must be cooked. However, the AAO notes sweet potatoes are an even better source of vitamin A than carrots. Sweet potatoes may gain extra attention in fall, particularly during Thanksgiving season, but they're available and enjoyable year-round.

**Cantaloupe:** Cantaloupe is a juicy fruit that many people find particularly refreshing during summer. WebMD

notes that cantaloupe is rich in beta-carotene, which converts into vitamin A, a conversion that promotes healthy eyes.

**Oranges:** Vitamin A is not the lone vitamin that promotes healthy eyes. The antioxidant vitamin C can protect against environmental factors that can harm the eyes, including the sun's rays. In addition, the AAO notes that the Age-Related Eye Diseases Study found that antioxidants

such as vitamin C can prevent or delay the onset of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. The AAO reports that additional sources of vitamin C include peaches, red bell peppers, tomatoes, and strawberries.

**Leafy green vegetables:** Kale, spinach, romaine lettuce, collards, turnip greens, and broccoli all contain useful amounts of lutein and zeaxanthin. That's notable because these antioxidants, according to the AAO, are essential to protecting a part of the eye known as the macula, which provides central, detailed vision.

**Beans:** Beans such as black-eyed peas, kidney beans and lima beans are legumes, which contain both zinc and copper. The AAO notes zinc is important for eye health because it helps to maintain a healthy retina and may protect the eyes from some damaging effects of light, including cataracts and sunburn. But zinc also can reduce the amount of copper in the body, which is necessary to form red blood cells. That's what makes legumes such as beans so beneficial: they provide eye-healthy zinc and help to maintain copper levels.

A healthy diet benefits the body in various ways, including promoting long-term eye health.♦

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## Get the skinny on the latest weight-loss drugs



**A**chieving and maintaining a healthy weight is beneficial for a number of reasons. A healthy weight lowers a person's chance of developing diabetes, sleep apnea, certain cancers, heart disease, and various other health conditions. Some find that when they are at a healthy weight they have more energy and feel better about themselves overall.

People often lament that it is easy to put on weight, but shedding excess pounds is far more difficult. That is perhaps why there has been so much buzz surrounding the class of drug known as a GLP-1 agonist.

Medications with the brand names Ozempic, Wegovy, Zepbound, and Mounjaro have garnered substantial attention for their association with weight loss.

Some of these prescriptions were originally designed to lower blood sugar levels in people with type 2 diabetes. But doctors quickly discovered the drugs had a knack for helping the same patients shed a lot of weight, and some prescribed the medications with that goal in mind. Drug manufacturers soon developed offerings of the drug that are expressly approved for use in weight loss.

It may seem like everyone is taking a GLP-1 agonist these days, but individuals who are considering using one of these medications to help them lose weight should still do their own research prior to making that decision.

### It isn't a magic fix

Although weight loss is a byproduct of taking medications that contain semaglutide, the active ingredient in the Ozempic and Wegovy brands (Wegovy is simply double the dose of Ozempic and FDA approved for weight loss), there are some caveats. The Columbia Surgery Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery says the average person can lose 10 to 17 percent of his or her starting weight on these medications.

For someone at 250 pounds, that would be, on the low end, a 25-pound

weight loss. Although that's considerable, it doesn't provide the 60- or 70-pound weight loss that bariatric surgery can offer. Furthermore, UC Health says if someone loses weight with one of these medications, it is likely he or she may need to keep taking them forever to keep the weight off. Those who stop taking these drugs often gain weight back quite quickly.

### Explore the side effects

The side effects of these drugs tend to be similar. Health.com says they can include:

- nausea and vomiting
- abdominal pain
- constipation or diarrhea
- headache
- belching
- fatigue

Higher dosages of these medications may also increase risk of kidney injury, pancreatitis, gallstones, and hypoglycemia. Some people also have complained about looking older due to dropping weight in the face, a condition known as "Wegovy face" or "Ozempic face."

### Consider the expense

Some health insurance plans do not cover the costs of these medications. In the United States, one month of Ozempic (1.0 mg dose) costs about \$900 without insurance, while Wegovy (2.4 mg dose) costs about \$1,350 without insurance, according to the Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker.

In addition, due to increased demand, many GLP-1 agonists are listed on the FDA's Drug Shortages list. People also must consider their comfort level regarding injections, which is the form of delivery for these medications.

Weight loss medications are helping many people get their health on track, but they're not the answer for everyone. Individuals should have a discussion with their doctors about the pros and cons to GLP-1 agonist medications. ♦

### HEALTH FAIR heads to Farmingville

Save the date! Town of Brookhaven will hold its 5th Annual Health and Wellness Fair at Town Hall, 1 Independence Hill, Farmingville on Saturday, May 17 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Fair will feature representatives from the health and wellness industries who will provide valuable information and plenty of free giveaways. 631-451-6331



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# Surprising foods and behaviors that can derail weight loss

**W**eight loss is a popular topic of conversation, particularly at the start a new year when health and fitness resolutions are on the minds of many. According to a recent survey by Statista, roughly 47 percent of men and 55 percent of women in the United States indicated they had interest in losing weight.

It has long been established that creating a calorie deficit, wherein a person consumes fewer calories than he or she needs, and regular exercise to boost metabolism to burn calories more efficiently, are effective means to losing weight. People diversify their diets in different ways to facilitate weight loss. However, they may be inadvertently foiling their plans in the process. Certain foods and behaviors billed as “diet-friendly” may be doing more harm than good. The following are some sneaky things that can knock diet and weight loss plans off track.

## Foods high in salt

The Lamkin Clinic for Optimal Health says most Americans consume more than 50 percent of the daily recommended amount of salt. Having too much sodium can contribute to water retention, bloating, high blood pressure and other conditions. Turkey bacon is a good example of a “lean” and seemingly healthier option than regular pork bacon that is actually less healthy due to salt. Karen Ansel, RD, says turkey bacon has upwards of 180 milligrams of sodium per slice.

## 'Reduced fat' offerings

Check the labels before eating foods billed as “reduced fat.” Oftentimes food manufacturers will remove one or



Many salad kits contain dressings that are high in saturated fats. more ingredient only to substitute a laundry list of not-so-healthy ingredients to compensate for texture or flavor. This could be added sugar, salt, artificial flavorings, and more.

Examples include low fat spreads like margarine, low fat flavored coffee drinks, low fat yogurt, low fat salad dressing, reduced fat peanut butter, low fat muffins, low fat frozen yogurt, skim milk, reduced fat cheese, and low fat cookies, cereal bars and sweetened breakfast cereals.

Although calorie-for-calorie you may be able to eat a

reduced-fat item and stay within your calorie goal, the price to pay may be a lot of unnecessary extras. Sometimes a smaller portion of a regular fat option is a better choice.

## Prepared salad kits

Salad is billed as a healthy option, and people frequently chow down on greens for a low-calorie meal. However convenient they may be, ready-made salad kits may be tipping the calorie scales due to their ingredients. Kits with full-fat cheeses, salty, oil-soaked croutons, dressings containing high levels of saturated fats due to ingredients like mayonnaise, cream, or certain oils, and lettuces with little nutritional content may be compromising efforts to eat healthy.

## Smoothies and juices

Juice drinks and smoothies often are touted as nutritional options and meal replacements. But people need to be careful to check the portion size and what is going into those drinks, particularly if they're premade.

Tammy Lakatos Shames, author of *The Nutrition Twins' Veggie Cure*, says some drinks may contain between 600 and 1,000 calories. Fruit and vegetable juices also are not a replacement for fresh fruit and vegetables, which are much lower in calories than the same amount of juice.

In addition to these foods, rushing through meals, eating a meal or snack while doing something else and failing to get enough sleep can affect weight-loss plans. A consultation with a registered dietician can help individuals determine if their eating habits are adversely affecting their overall health.♦

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# 5 easy ways to take a pause from the daily grind

**S**tress affects just about everyone. The American Institute of Stress estimates 80 percent of adults in the United States experience stress on a regular basis. Worldwide, the World Health Organization reports that more than 75 percent of adults experience stress at some point in their lives.

Health woes, employment, politics, and negative news all can contribute to people feeling stressed. So can engaging in a daily routine that elicits the “Groundhog Day” effect, or when each day seems like a carbon copy of the one before. Finding ways to take a break from a daily routine can help individuals become happier and healthier.

## FOCUS ON SELF-CARE

People need to dedicate time for activities that help them unwind, such as meditation, yoga, reading, or taking a walk outside. Just a few minutes of self-care each day can help. Individuals can incorporate some deep-breathing exercises into a lunch hour or use time after dinner to stroll the neighborhood with the dog or family to decompress.

## PRIORITIZE EXERCISE

The Mayo Clinic says exercise can alleviate stress and release endorphins, which can improve mood and reduce

anxiety. Exercise also can clear the brain by helping a person focus on movements instead of worries. Make exercise a non-negotiable component of daily life. Taking the stairs, walking to work or school, parking further away from stores in parking lots, and doing little bursts of activity several times a day can ensure exercise becomes part of the routine.

## MAKE TIME FOR HOBBIES

Individuals can treat hobbies and other interests just as they would personal or work obligations. Add time for hobbies to your daily calendar and assign them the same significance as work-related tasks.

## THINK ABOUT A NEW JOB

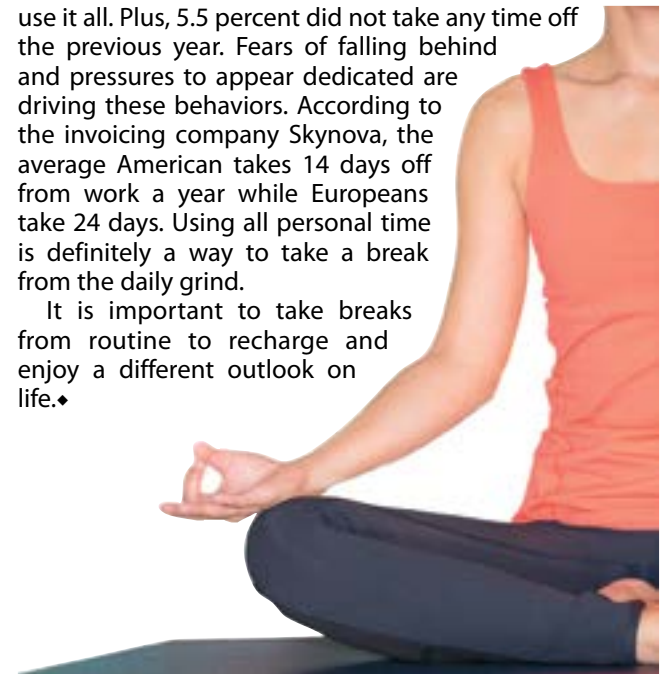
If work obligations are eating into personal time and responsibilities are growing exponentially, it might be time to seek a new path that offers a better work-life balance.

## UTILIZE PERSONAL AND SICK TIME

Many people are letting their vacation and other personal days go to waste. A 2023 survey released by the fintech lending firm Sorbet found that 62 percent of American workers with personal time off (PTO) did not

use it all. Plus, 5.5 percent did not take any time off the previous year. Fears of falling behind and pressures to appear dedicated are driving these behaviors. According to the invoicing company Skynova, the average American takes 14 days off from work a year while Europeans take 24 days. Using all personal time is definitely a way to take a break from the daily grind.

It is important to take breaks from routine to recharge and enjoy a different outlook on life. ♦



# Super Brain Recipe: A power boost for women's health

BY INDU KAUR

**M**arch is Women’s History Month—a time to honor the strength, resilience, and contributions of women throughout history. As women juggle work, family, and daily responsibilities, maintaining optimal brain function, hormonal balance, and mental clarity is essential.

To support this, I’m sharing my Super Brain Recipe—a delicious, nutrient-packed energy bite that helps keep the brain sharp and alert.

## Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp flax seeds (ground for better absorption)
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 cup walnuts
- 1 tbsp pistachios
- 1 tbsp pumpkin seeds
- 4 seedless dates
- A few pieces of dark chocolate (at least 70% cacao)

## Instructions:

Heat a dry pan on low to medium heat. Add flax seeds, chia seeds, walnuts, pistachios, and pumpkin seeds to the pan. Roast them together until you hear a slight popping sound, stirring occasionally to prevent burning. Remove from heat and let the mixture cool slightly. Once cooled, transfer the roasted mix to a blender. Add dark chocolate and seedless dates to the blender. Blend the mixture until it forms a smooth, thick paste. Scoop out small portions and roll them into round balls, about the size of a small laddoo or a meatball. Store in an airtight container and keep in a cool, dry place.

## How to Use:

Eat one laddoo per day to support brain function, enhance memory, maintain hormonal balance, and boost energy levels throughout the day.

## Why It Works:

**Flax & Chia Seeds:** Rich in omega-3 fatty acids for brain health.

**Walnuts:** Improve cognitive function and memory.

**Pistachios & Pumpkin Seeds:** Provide essential minerals for hormonal balance.

**Dark Chocolate:** Boosts focus and reduces stress.

**Dates:** Natural sweetness and a source of quick energy.

Taking care of our mental health is just as important as physical health. With this simple yet powerful recipe, you can give your body and mind the nourishment they need to stay balanced and strong—every single day!

Stay healthy and keep shining! ♦





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