



Social Network Good for Your Health

“Hey bro, let’s hang out.” “Call me.” “Let’s do lunch.” These are invites you should make and accept more often. No, it’s not for networking. It’s for your health.

New research shows that strong social ties can be good for your health. And you don’t have to be the life of the party or have the most friends on social media. The study found that people with strong social bonds (quality matters more than quantity) were healthier.

Researchers found that those with strong social ties had:

- Lower blood pressure
- Smaller waist sizes
- Lower body fat levels
- Less inflammation

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The health benefits of strong relationships
tinyurl.com/okgjwzg

It’s nice to know you’ve got people in your life you can talk to and count on. But these aren’t the only benefits to having good friends. Strong social ties can improve your health and lower your risk for chronic diseases.

So how do you improve your social ties? Be more social at work, at home, and everywhere else.

Here are some things you can do:

- **Say “yes”** more often to meeting up with co-workers after hours.
- **Participate** in work-related activities like a wellness program, service project, or special event with the rest of the office staff.
- **Make time to get together** with family and friends often.
- **Join a club**, sports team, or church group.
- **Host a party**, game-night, or social hour.
- **Stay in touch** with people you care about. Meet in person, talk on the phone, or catch up online.

When you make the effort to be social, you’ll have more friends and stronger social ties. You’ll also be happier and healthier.

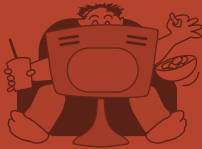
*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.
National Institutes of Health.
Harvard School of Public Health.®*

THE Y AXIS



Y-Axis: Tune in to This

Attention all Super Bowl fans, *American Idol* diehards, *Downton Abbey* addicts, and TV binge-watchers. Too much time in front of the tube can make you fat.



Your choice of snacks and drinks are only part of the problem when you’re in couch-potato mode. Grab the remote and tune in to this.

You burn more calories reading and sitting in a chair than you do watching TV. In fact, Harvard researchers found that you burn an average of 30 percent more calories!

Do yourself a favor. Swap some TV time for reading a book or magazine.

COMMENTS?

Send comments to the editor:
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Be Flexible to Protect Your Joints

Meet Mr. Peabody. He’s well-mannered. He’s a multi-talented genius, inventor, and academic. He’s that self-trained cartoon dog that lives high above New York City in a swanky penthouse suite. It’s been 55 years since he first appeared on TV, and he’s still pretty flexible.

When the movie *Mr. Peabody & Sherman* begins, he’s standing on his head, paws crossed and folded. “Oh sorry, caught me doing my yoga,” he says. “You were expecting a downward dog, perhaps?”

You might not be able to teach an old dog new tricks. But there is something Mr. Peabody can teach you. Being flexible is good for your health and joints, especially as you age.



“Some joints lose up to 50 percent of motion as we age,” says Dr. Raymond Monto, of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. And that impacts how well we can move.

So how do you get more flexible? No, you don’t need to twist yourself into hard yoga poses. Instead, do basic stretches. Here’s how:

- ✓ **Start by warming up with light exercise.** Take a walk. Play a little basketball. Use the treadmill.
- ✓ **Once you’re warmed up, take a few minutes to stretch** your legs, hips, back, shoulders, and arms. You can do this in five minutes, or take longer if you have time.
- ✓ **Hold each stretch** for 10 to 30 seconds, and then release.



RECIPE Easy Black Beans

Eat more legumes (aka beans). It's good advice. Beans are high in fiber. Studies show eating beans can help control blood pressure, lower cholesterol, and aid in weight management. Try this recipe for Easy Black Beans.

Ingredients

- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp ground ancho chile pepper
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- 2 15-ounce cans black beans, rinsed
- 1 C water
- 1 T tomato paste

Directions

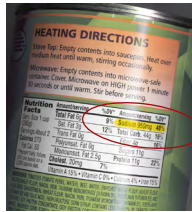
1. Heat oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat.
2. Add onion and cook 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Add garlic and cook, stirring for 30 seconds.
4. Add ground chile, cumin and oregano. Cook, stirring about 30 seconds more.
5. Add beans, water and tomato paste. Stir to combine.
6. Bring to a simmer, reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally for 8 to 10 minutes.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Shake the Salt Habit for Heart Health

How much sodium do you consume in a day? If you don't know, you're not alone. But if your diet looks anything like the typical American's, it's too much.

Foods like burgers, fries, pizza, breads, packaged meals, canned soups, and processed meats might be convenient. But they're also loaded with sodium.



The average person consumes about 3,500 mg of sodium per day. But for

best health, you should limit sodium to no more than 1,500 mg per day.

Why? Too much sodium is one reason 1 in 3 adults in the United States has high blood pressure. It's also a factor that raises the risk for heart disease and stroke, both among the top 10 leading causes of death in the U.S.

What can you do about it? Shake the salt habit, or at least cut back on the amount of sodium in your diet. It's one recommendation found in the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Here are some ways to shake the salt habit:

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Infographic: The Salty Six
tinyurl.com/mveuyyq

- **Start by reading food labels.** And track the amount of sodium you eat.
- **Eat more fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables.** If you do buy canned vegetables, rinse them before eating to wash away some of the salt.
- **When you do your grocery shopping, look for low-sodium, reduced-sodium, or no-salt added options.**
- **Cook at home more often** using fresh ingredients.

- **Use unsalted margarine** with no trans fats for cooking.
- **Try seasoning foods with herbs and spices,** instead of salt.
- **If you do go out to eat, look for low-sodium options** on the menu, or ask that no salt be added to your food.

Cut back on sodium, and you'll discover the true taste of food. You'll also lower your risk for high blood pressure and other health problems.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Morbidity and Mortality Report. National Institutes of Health. @

Be Flexible to Protect Your Joints (continued from page 1)

- ✓ **Breathe deeply** as you slowly ease into each stretch.
- ✓ **Don't bounce,** or continue stretching if it hurts. This can cause injuries.

MORE

Stretching Exercises
tinyurl.com/hjfphtb

If you haven't been stretching to stay flexible and keep your joints healthy, now is a good time to begin. Start with basic stretches or

take a yoga or pilates class to learn more. Over time, your flexibility and strength of your joints will increase.

And that's good for running, jumping, digging, and playing, even if you're not a dog.

Harvard School of Public Health. American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. University of California. @



Take the February Health Challenge!

Rescue Your Resolutions: Take action to achieve your wellness goals.

Ask the Wellness Doctor:

This month Dr. Don Hall answers the question:
How much do I really need to exercise?