

## Work out this winter—right at home

When it comes to working out, sometimes it feels like there just aren't enough hours in the day. Especially in the winter months, it can seem like a chore to get out and get moving.

But what if working out was as convenient as walking into your living room? Here's the thing—it can be! You can work out at home any time of the day or night.

Home workouts have many unique advantages. A few to think about:

- When your children see you work out, you're setting a good example of an active lifestyle.
- Working out at home may help you stick with exercise, since it's so easy to keep up with your routine.
- You can watch your favorite TV shows while you exercise.

### EXERCISES YOU CAN DO AT HOME

Many home exercises don't require any special equipment. Here are some ideas for physical activities you can try at home:

- Dance to music or play a dancing video game. Just make sure you're working out hard enough. On a scale of 1 to 10, aim for an intensity of 5 or higher.
- Do simple strength exercises that require only your body weight. You probably know how to do more than you think: push-ups, sit-ups and lunges are all good options.
- Jump rope. Only 20 minutes of jumping rope burns 250 calories.
- Rent exercise videos from your local library. Or record an exercise pro-

gram on your TV so that you can do it later.

- Stretch or practice some yoga poses.

Check with your doctor first if you are new to exercise or have a health condition such as diabetes or heart disease. Your doctor can also answer questions you may have about how much exercise you do and what types of activity are best for you.

### KEEP IT UP, KEEP IT INTERESTING

Pick activities that you like to do and you'll be more likely to continue doing them. You can make exercise more fun by working out in front of the TV or playing your favorite music.

Try to make exercise part of your routine by working out at the same time every day. This is good to keep in mind if you are setting new fitness goals in the new year. Remember, it takes about 3 weeks to form a new habit, so don't feel discouraged if you miss 1 workout. Just make sure you get back into it the following day. ♦



Do you need help getting started with an exercise plan? Call a health coach at **1.866.262.4764** for tips on how to get active.






## HERE COMES THE FLU AGAIN

Up to 49,000 Americans die of influenza—or the flu—each year. But you can take steps to avoid becoming a statistic. Here are 2 strategies that can help protect yourself and your family:

1. Talk with your doctor about flu vaccinations. A vaccination is still the best defense against the flu, according to health experts. Currently, there are 2 forms of administration: a shot and a nasal spray. Your doctor will be able to recommend the right choice for you.
2. Follow these simple hygiene practices to help prevent the flu—and teach your children to do so, as well:
  - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
  - Cover your nose and mouth if you sneeze or cough.
  - Touch your eyes, nose and mouth as little as possible.

 If you're starting to feel under the weather and aren't sure what care to seek, call our 24/7 Nurse Now line at **1.866.442.2583**.

# Eat right for a good night's sleep

Another bout of insomnia? It's true that a glass of milk before bed might actually help you sleep easier—but getting the best kind might be more hassle than it's worth. Cows milked at night in the dark produce milk that's higher in the sleep hormone melatonin, research shows.

You may consider cherry juice the next time you experience insomnia. Like the nocturnal cow milk, cherry juice is also significantly higher in melatonin than regular milk.

If your shut-eye has been off-kilter lately, here are 5 other foods packed with nutrients that support a good night's sleep.

## PEANUT BUTTER

Niacin (Vitamin B-3) supplements helped insomniacs sleep more soundly, one study found. The vitamin helps your body use more of the snooze-inducing brain chemical serotonin. Find niacin in poultry, fish, peanuts and peanut butter. (Eating too much peanut butter can make it easy to pack on fat and calories, however, so make it part of an overall healthy diet.)

## JASMINE RICE

Carbohydrates increase levels of the hormone insulin, which transports sleep-promoting substances to your brain. In one study, people fell asleep 10 minutes earlier when they ate Jasmine rice with dinner versus a dinner with another type of rice. That's because the carbs in Jasmine

rice have a higher glycemic index, which stimulates a bigger insulin response.

## SPINACH

Magnesium, found in spinach and other leafy green vegetables, may help you sleep better. The mineral affects sensors in the brain that promote sleep. Try a small spinach salad topped with almonds; both are rich in magnesium.

## CLAMS

Don't skip past the seafood section next time you go grocery shopping. Clams and other mollusks naturally contain Vitamin B-12, which may help regulate your sleep-wake cycle. Heating them up boosts the amount of Vitamin B-12 even more.

## TUNA AND SALMON

Whip up a tuna fish sandwich the next time you raid the kitchen before bed. Tuna's healthy omega-3 fatty acids (even found in the canned kind) could help your brain produce melatonin. Prefer fresh fish? Salmon is actually the fish with the highest amount of omega-3 fatty acids—and is low in mercury, too. ♦



Still having trouble drifting off each night? Visit [cdc.gov/sleep](https://www.cdc.gov/sleep) for more tips on how you can fall asleep and stay asleep.





## Women face unique stroke risks

Unlike heart attacks, strokes are more common among women. In fact, these events—which occur when blood flow to the brain is blocked, because of either a clogged or ruptured artery—rank as women's third leading cause of death (for men, they're fifth). More than 400,000 U.S. women each year suffer from a stroke, and more than 75,000 die.

Some of the same factors that increase the odds of stroke in men also apply to women, including diabetes, family history, smoking and extra weight. But biology also deals women a few extra challenges.

The new guidelines on women's stroke risk from the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association highlight:

- **High blood pressure.** Of course, men have hypertension, too—but women often have a harder time controlling theirs, especially as they age. And some studies suggest the condition may predispose women more strongly to stroke. Seeking treatment to bring high numbers down can help women ward off strokes.
- **Pregnancy and its complications.** Moms-to-be face a slightly higher risk for stroke, especially during the third trimester. Those

who develop preeclampsia—a blood pressure disorder—go on to have twice the risk for stroke later in life. Women with high blood pressure before pregnancy—which raises preeclampsia risk—might need aspirin or other drugs to reduce it. And those who do develop preeclampsia should be watched closely for strokes later in life.

- **Oral contraceptives.**

Though strokes are still rare in young women using low-dose pills—2 strokes per 10,000 women per year—they still face an elevated risk compared with women who don't use hormonal birth control. If you're on the pill for any reason, take extra steps to control other stroke risk factors, such as blood pressure, diabetes and weight.

- **Migraine headaches with aura.** The combination of these hard-hitting headaches and cigarettes boosts your stroke risk by a factor of 10. If you suffer from them, avoid smoking, or if you use tobacco, talk with your doctor about help quitting.
- **Atrial fibrillation.** The most common type of irregular heartbeat, atrial fibrillation leads to 4 to 5 times the stroke risk among older women. Those ages 75 and older should be screened for this condition. ◆

Take control of your health with our online tools at [bcnepa.com](http://bcnepa.com). You can set up goals and track your progress, as well as read up-to-date health information.

## DISPOSE OF YOUR MEDICATION PROPERLY

If you take prescription or over-the-counter (OTC) medications, disposing of them the right way can help keep people, animals and the water supply safe from harm.

That's because failure to store and dispose of unneeded or unused prescription drugs properly increases the risk for accidental poisonings, intentional abuse and water contamination.

The safest way to dispose of your expired or unneeded medications is to bring them to a drug take-back event. Contact your city or county household trash department or your pharmacist to find out if there is a take-back program in your community.

If you can't find a take-back program, follow these steps to dispose of medications at home:

- Remove the drugs from their containers and combine them with an unappealing substance, such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds.
- Place the mixture in a disposable plastic container with a tight-fitting lid, such as a margarine or yogurt tub.
- Add the container to your household trash for collection.
- Mark out your name and prescription number on empty prescription drug bottles before recycling them or throwing them away with your household trash. This prevents someone from gaining access to your personal information.





**BlueCare HMO/HMO Plus:** This managed care plan may not cover all your health care expenses. Read your contract carefully to determine which health care services are covered. 1.800.822.8753

Self-funded group benefits may be different from the benefits and services described here. See your Summary Plan Description for complete details of your coverage.

This material is not intended as medical advice. Talk with your doctor about this and any other health information.

To speak with a health coach, call **1.866.262.4764**, weekdays, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. ET.

Follow us on Facebook for news, photos, events and more. Visit [facebook.com/BCNEPA](https://facebook.com/BCNEPA) today!

## Healthy ways to avoid holiday blues

The holidays are a difficult time of year for those feeling depressed or lonely. It can be tempting to indulge in unhealthy behaviors to help you cope. You may be tempted to drink, smoke, take drugs or overeat.

These tips can help you navigate through tough times:

**Keep your expectations realistic.** You may feel pressure to take on more tasks than you have energy for. Only commit to things you know you'll be able to do. If people ask for more than you can handle, you can always say no.

**Make time for exercise.** When you're active, your brain releases chemicals that improve your mood and decrease stress. Not only does exercise keep your body healthy, but

it also protects your mind. Experts recommend 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, such as brisk walking, each week.

**Talk with someone.** Talk about your problems with someone close to you, such as a friend or family member. They may recommend solutions you haven't considered before. Be honest with your doctor, too. Tell him or her what you are going through. There are treatments for depression that can help.

**Take care of yourself.** When you treat your body right, you're able to deal with problems more easily. Get 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night. Avoid sugar and caffeine, which can cause a dip in your energy level. And fill your diet with health-boosting foods like fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains. ◆



To hear personal stories of hope and recovery from mental health problems, visit [mentalhealth.gov](https://mentalhealth.gov) and click on "Latest Videos."

### RECIPE: LIMA BEAN, MUSHROOM AND BARLEY SOUP



#### INGREDIENTS

1 cup large, dried lima beans  
3 tbsp. coarse pearl barley  
6 cups low-sodium vegetable broth  
2 cups sliced portobello mushrooms  
1 cup chopped onion  
1 cup diced carrots  
½ cup chopped celery  
2 tbsp. chopped parsley

#### DIRECTIONS

Wash lima beans and barley separately in cold water. Drain and transfer to a soup kettle. Add vegetable broth and remaining ingredients; cover and bring to a boil. Cook over low-medium heat until lima beans are soft, about 2 hours. Serve hot.

**PER SERVING** Serves 8. Each serving provides 120 calories, 0 g total fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 130 mg sodium, 24 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 6 g sugar, 6 g protein.