

Ask the Doctor

"Can I be overweight and healthy?"

Q I've been trying to lose extra weight, but it's a struggle. How can I protect my health anyway?

A Our new research suggests that regularly eating foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids—such as salmon, walnuts, flaxseed and beans—helps protect the liver from damage caused by obesity and the inflammation and insulin resistance that packing extra pounds triggers.

—Joan Claira, Ph.D., professor, University of Barcelona, Spain

"He's losing his hearing!"

Q My 13-year-old son listens to his iPod at such a high volume, his doctor says he's lost some hearing! What should I do?

A Our research indicates that taking in four nutrients—beta-carotene, magnesium and vitamins C and E—might prevent hearing loss caused by loud noise. First, it's crucial that your son lower the volume of his iPod; new versions of the device have a volume-lock feature that parents can set. Next, be sure he eats a healthy diet, and ask his doctor to suggest a daily multivitamin.

—Colleen Le Prell, Ph.D., director, The Hearing Research Center, University of Florida, Gainesville

"Is jogging okay during pregnancy?"

Q I'm trying to conceive and wonder—is it safe to run while pregnant?

A We analyzed data from almost 93,000 pregnant women and found an association between high-impact exercise during the first 18 weeks of pregnancy and miscarriage. However, the increased risk vanished after four months, and exercises like swimming posed no risk of miscarriage. Exercise during pregnancy can have many benefits, so be sure to discuss your concerns with your doctor.

—Research fellow Mia Madsen, M.Sc., University of Southern Denmark, Odense

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Natural Health

Simple ways to Speed healing!

With such busy schedules, who can afford to be sidelined by an injury or surgery? Not you! To the rescue: easy tricks that hasten healing, so you can feel your best again fast!

1 Reduce pain by closing your eyes

Patients experience less pain and heal faster when they use simple self-hypnosis after surgery, say Harvard researchers. "Hypnosis brings you into a state of relaxation, and that's when your brain can signal your body to begin healing," explains Brian Alman, Ph.D., author of *Self-Hypnosis: The Complete Manual for Health and Self-Change*.

FOR BEST RESULTS: Sit comfortably, close your eyes and visualize your injury, first as the size of an orange, then shrinking to the size of a lemon, a grape, a pea—and finally nothing. Repeat every two hours while awake.

2 Avoid scarring with diaper rash cream!

Zinc oxide—the active ingredient in diaper rash creams like Desitin and A+D—raises levels of tiny proteins called growth factors by 50%. Result: scar-free healing!

FOR BEST RESULTS: Before bed for at least three nights, cover the injured area with a thin layer of the cream.

Hurt your back? You'll heal 25% faster if you quit smoking, even if only for a few days! Toxins in cigarette smoke hinder blood flow to damaged tissues, researchers say.

3 Heal fast with the "pineapple" pill

Taking bromelain—an enzyme found in pineapple—helps your skin repair bruises, burns and surgical incisions 54% faster, a University of Delaware study shows. How? By reducing inflammation, breaking down blood clots and promoting the formation of healthy new cells, researchers say.

FOR BEST RESULTS: Take a 1,000-mg. bromelain supplement daily (at nutrition centers). Important: Check with your doctor before taking a new supplement.

4 Outsmart germs by turning in early

During sleep, your body produces a flood of human growth hormone, which is vital for the repair of damaged tissues. Production of immune cells also jumps 10% during sleep, cutting your risk of infections in half, note researchers.

FOR BEST RESULTS: "Get at least seven hours of shut-eye nightly," says Meir Kryger, M.D., professor of medicine at the University of Connecticut.



Getting enough rest aids healing!



Enzymes in pineapple help skin repair itself more than 50% faster!

Pulled a muscle?

Give it TLC, then stretch and you'll be good as new almost twice as quickly! "Moving your muscles flushes out the waste products that slow recovery and trigger pain and swelling," explains Gary Null, Ph.D., author of *The Complete Encyclopedia of Natural Healing*.

The study-proven strategy: Elevate the achy area—and ice it—as often as possible for the first 48 hours to reduce inflammation. Then switch to slow, gentle stretches (you should feel a pulling sensation, not pain) for one minute, four times daily.

—Brenda Kearns

BEAT STRESS AND BELLY BULGE!

Stress can do a number on your waistline! Your belly is packed with receptors for cortisol, the stress hormone that attracts fat deposits. To help deflate those deposits, turn to Pilates, says Jacquelyn Stathis, Pilates director for Yoga Works. It incorporates deep breathing for relaxation and works your core muscles for a tighter tummy in no time!

Calming hundred breaths

Lie flat with your feet up so your knees are over your hips and your shins are parallel to the ground. Curl your head, neck and shoulders up and look directly at your tummy. With straight arms, lift them about 2 inches. Pump your arms up and down while taking

5 quick breaths in through your nose and 5 quick breaths out through your mouth. Repeat 10 times, then rest.



Tummy-slimming roll-ups

Lie flat with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor, arms extended overhead. Make sure your feet stay rooted down. Tuck your chin toward your chest and peel your back off the floor one vertebra at a time while you bring your arms toward your feet. Then roll back down, vertebra by vertebra, and bring your arms back toward your ears. Repeat 5 times.

