

Elemente

WELLNESS
SPIRITUALITY

EDITED BY
MARGENA A. CHRISTIAN

DR. OZ'S GUIDE TO...

A Healthier, Happier You at Every Age

FIGHT THE BIGGEST THREATS TO YOUR HEALTH, FEEL GREAT
AND LOOK EVEN BETTER WITH HELP FROM OUR FAVORITE TV DOCTOR

By MELISSA JOHNSON

HYPERTENSION. HIGH CHOLESTEROL. DIABETES. These medical conditions plague our people in record numbers—in fact, they are so common, we tend to think in terms of when we'll be diagnosed, not if. "That might lead you to believe they're inevitable, but nothing could be further from the truth," says Mehmet Oz, M.D., host of *The Dr. Oz Show* and a vice-chair and surgery professor at Columbia University. You're never too old—or too young—to benefit from a healthy makeover, but don't panic: You don't have to jump into a strict diet and exercise routine to reduce your risk factors or improve an existing condition. The following lifestyle changes can help you get it together in your 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and beyond.

REDUCE HYPERTENSION.

HERE'S THE HARD REALITY: Forty percent of African-Americans have hypertension, also known as high blood pressure. "Hypertension is the leading cause of heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure—essentially, it's what keeps me working round the clock to keep my patients healthy," says Dr. Oz. "African-Americans in particular need to pay attention to their blood pressure, as they are at higher risk for hypertension."

A healthy reading is below 120/80, but Dr. Oz favors a slightly lower goal. "115/75—that's the number you want to work toward," he says. When the top number goes over 120, it's time to pay your doctor a visit.

IN YOUR 20S: SAY NO TO SALT.

The major food factor for hypertension is salt, says Dr. Oz. "Where salt goes, water will follow. Think of your blood vessels as a hose: the more water in the hose, the greater the pressure."

Replace all that salt with flavorful mixed herbs—oregano, peppers and Indian blends.

Another salt-free substitute: capsaicin-based sauces, which add a spicy kick and provide a bonus benefit: "Capsaicin reduces your appetite." Capsaicin is found in chile peppers, the

common ingredient in most hot sauces. Cut back on processed and take-out foods, opting instead for fresh

food when possible. "Ninety percent of the salt we eat comes from processed foods," says Dr. Oz. And watch your intake of the "salty six," common foods often loaded with extra salt: bread, cold cuts, pizza, poultry, such as chicken nuggets, soups and prepared sandwiches. Read the labels.

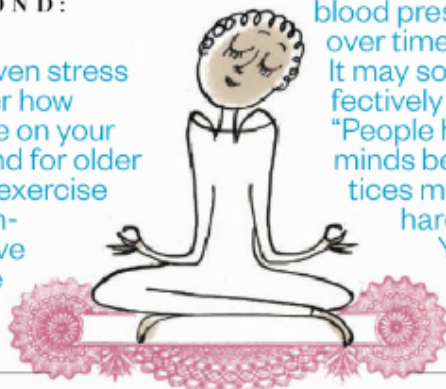


IN YOUR 40S: Load up on potassium.

FIGHT THE PRESSURE-ELEVATING EFFECTS OF SODIUM WITH THIS ESSENTIAL MINERAL. "POTASSIUM AND SODIUM COMPETE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN YOUR BODY," DR. OZ EXPLAINS, "AND EATING FOODS WITH LOTS OF POTASSIUM REDUCES THE AMOUNT OF SODIUM." AVOCADOES, BANANAS, ORANGES, POTATOES, TOMATOES AND BANANAS ARE A FEW OF THE POTASSIUM POWERHOUSES HE WANTS TO SEE IN YOUR GROCERY CART.

IN YOUR 50S AND BEYOND: MEDITATE REGULARLY.

Meditation is a proven stress reliever, no matter how many candles are on your birthday cake. And for older adults who don't exercise as hard as they used to, the ancient practice can help improve overall mental health, improve focus and reduce essential hypertension, a type of high



blood pressure that tends to develop over time and has no underlying cause. It may sound easy, but meditating effectively takes commitment and focus. "People have a hard time letting their minds be free," says Dr. Oz, who practices meditation himself. "For me, it's harder than running a marathon. You can daydream when you're running, but when you meditate, you have to let your brain be quiet."

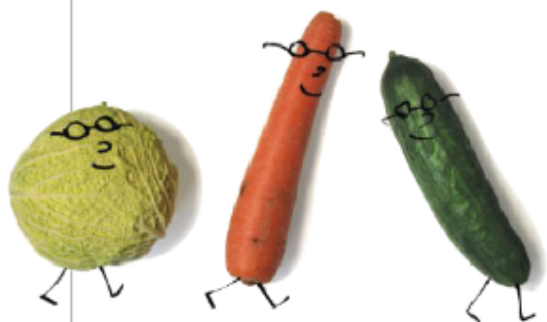


IN YOUR 30S: BALANCE OUT YOUR WORKOUTS.

"To lower your blood pressure, it's absolutely essential to exercise," says Dr. Oz. A mix of cardio and strength training is ideal, but make sure you don't wimp out on those weights: "Muscles are like metabolic furnaces," he explains. "They'll help you burn through more of those calories, even when you're not exercising." No time for the gym? Pick up a set of exercise bands: The resistance they provide challenges your muscles as well as old-school free weights and weight machines, and they're easy to pack up and take wherever you go.

PREVENT DIABETES.

YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD YOUR ELDERS refer to diabetes as "sugar," but according to Dr. Oz, there's nothing sweet about it. "The end result is, all too often, heart attack or stroke," he says, "but the ravaging effects of high blood sugar can be seen elsewhere, too—including the delicate blood vessels in your eyes." Untreated diabetes can also lead to blindness, kidney failure and amputation as a result of nerve damage.



IN YOUR 20S: DRESS UP YOUR VEGGIES.

Vegetables help lower blood sugar, but let's be real: They can be boring. "You don't want to go naked," says Dr. Oz. "I encourage people to have something on their veggies, like a low-fat dressing or tzatziki (a Greek yogurt-based) sauce, or make them part of the dish, like a casserole or fajitas."

IN YOUR 30S: AVERT BLOOD SUGAR SWINGS.

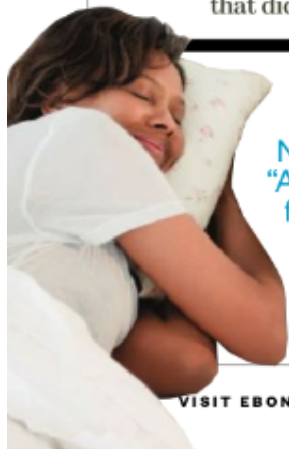
"Chromium polynicotinate helps prevent blood sugar spikes and dips that can cause problems," Dr. Oz explains. It can be found in broccoli, whole-grain bread and other foods, but consider a supplement: In a recent study, those who took 1,000 mcg/day of chromium polynicotinate lowered their blood sugar levels 15 to 19 percent more than those that didn't.

IN YOUR 40S: Try low-impact exercises.

INCREASING YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVEL CAN DECREASE YOUR RISK FOR DIABETES BY AS MUCH AS 60 PERCENT," SAYS DR. OZ. THE GOOD NEWS? YOU CAN BENEFIT FROM LOW-IMPACT EXERCISES. DR. OZ FAVORS YOGA: "IT'LL HELP EASE STRESS—YET ANOTHER FACTOR THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO INSULIN RESISTANCE." THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF YOGA. IF YOU'RE AN ABSOLUTE BEGINNER, CONSIDER ANUSARA OR IYENEGAR, WHICH CAN BE MODIFIED FOR ALL FITNESS LEVELS. NEED MORE OF A CHALLENGE? DROP IN ON A VINYASA OR POWER YOGA CLASS.



IN YOUR 50S AND BEYOND:
GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.
Nodding off in front of the TV? Bad idea, says Dr. Oz: "Anything that disrupts healthy sleeping patterns affects blood sugar levels." While you're at it, turn off the disruptive dings, pings and other alerts on your electronic devices, and make sure your room is dark enough and the climate is comfortable enough to encourage restful slumber.



VISIT EBONY.COM / APRIL 2013

FIGHT THE FAT FACTOR

Hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes may affect different parts of the body, but they have one big risk factor in common: obesity. "African-Americans are 1.4 times more likely to be obese than non-Hispanic Whites," says Dr. Oz. To be clear, we're not talking about a little extra thickness here: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention define obesity in adults as having a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher (check out a BMI calculator online to find out where you fall). Why are we so heavy? Dr. Oz says one possible explanation is difference in diet, and he points to an Ohio State University study showing that African-Americans tend to eat more fat and more saturated fat than recommended by dietary guidelines. Our increasingly sedentary lifestyles could also be to blame.

No matter how old you are, if you fall within the obese range, losing weight will help you get healthier and live longer. And always be mindful of your mental health. According to a recent study, obese people are three to four times more likely to be clinically depressed than people whose BMI is in a healthier range.

If you're having a hard time losing weight, a positive attitude and a healthy self-image will help you avoid the vicious cycle of losing, regaining and beating yourself up. "You need to find things you love to do, and eat foods you enjoy that happen to be good for you."





IN YOUR 20S:

STOP SMOKING.

You already know it's bad for you, but let's break it down: Cigarettes lower your high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol levels, the "good" cholesterol your body needs to clean out the "bad" artery-clogging LDL cholesterol. It's best not to start, of course, but the sooner you quit, the better. You could go cold turkey, but Dr. Oz advises against it: "Your chances of succeeding with medication is six to seven times higher than without," he says. Give nicotine patches a try, and get involved in a good smoking-cessation program.

CUT YOUR CHOLESTEROL.

WHEN LOW-DENSITY LIPOPROTEIN (LDL) CHOLESTEROL—the bad kind—is too high, it starts to build up in your arteries. "Think of it like a lane-merge during rush hour," explains Dr. Oz. "It's harder for your blood to get by in that narrower space. If the build-up gets too big, it'll actually block off your blood vessel completely. If this clot is blocking blood flow to the heart, the end of the road is a heart attack; if it's blocking flow to the brain, it leads to a stroke."

IN YOUR 40S:

Move your body.

A 2009 STUDY FOUND THAT THE CHOLESTEROL-LOWERING EFFECTS OF EXERCISE WERE MORE SIGNIFICANT FOR MIDDLE-AGED AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN THAN WHITE WOMEN—A GOOD REASON TO GET YOUR WORKOUT ON, REGARDLESS OF YOUR GENDER. THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO JOIN A GYM: "THE THING THAT PEOPLE WHO LIVE A LONG TIME HAVE IN COMMON IS REGULAR ACTIVITY," SAYS DR. OZ. "IT'S A PART OF THEIR DAY—WALKING TO WORK, TAKING THE STAIRS—THEY'RE IN ENVIRONMENTS WHERE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS MANDATORY." IF FASHIONABLY FIERCE FOOTWEAR IS YOUR NORM, CARRY SNEAKERS TO WORK AND SLIP THEM ON WHENEVER YOU HAVE TO DO EXTENSIVE OR STRENUOUS WALKING.



IN YOUR 50S AND BEYOND:
SHED SOME POUNDS.

Here's the good news: If you're not there, you don't need to get back to your high school weight to be healthy again. "Lose just a little weight," suggests Dr. Oz. "Dropping five to 10 percent of your weight can significantly lower your cholesterol." To do this safely and effectively, start by finding a fitness regimen you enjoy, learn to control your portion sizes and eat more fiber, which will help you feel fuller longer.

"People don't get enough soluble fiber in their diets, and that's a shame, because it's one of the best things you can eat," says Dr. Oz. Fiber-rich foods are your best bet.



IN YOUR 30S:

CUT THE FAT. You may be surprised to learn that high-cholesterol foods don't raise your cholesterol: "Your LDL goes up when you eat foods that are high in saturated fats and trans fat," explains Dr. Oz. "When you eat them, they are converted in the liver into artery-clogging LDL cholesterol." Look for leaner cuts of meat with less visible fat. Can't give up the bacon? Try baking rather than frying it; then drain off the fat and use a paper towel to blot the excess. Better yet, switch to turkey bacon: It may have the thick, fatty texture of the pork bacon you crave, but it's much leaner and is tasty in its own right.

