What Not to Do When You Have a Cold

Colds come and go (and most last only three to five days), but you can sabotage your body’s healing by making these mistakes:

**Exercising in Error**
Doctors have a general guide for exercise when you’re sick: It’s OK if your signs and symptoms are all “above the neck” (runny nose, nasal congestion, sneezing), but don’t exercise if your symptoms are “below the neck” (chest congestion, a hacking cough, an upset stomach, or body chills from a fever). If you do exercise, don’t push it. You could wear down your immune system, or your weakened condition may cause you to workout improperly and that could lead to an injury.

**Adding Alcohol**
Alcohol directly suppresses your immune system and tends to be dehydrating which will most likely prolong your illness. Alcohol can also interfere with your sleep.

**Skimping on sleep**
Not having enough sleep can reduce the function of the immune system and delay your recovery. Interesting note: Sleep is more important for cold prevention than for recovery. In one clinical study, individuals who slept less than five hours a night were nearly three times as likely to develop a cold than those who slept seven or more hours per night.

**Forgetting to Hydrate**
Studies confirm that liquids thin and clear, such as water, tea and broth-based soups shorten the duration and severity of a cold. The liquids help thin the mucus in your body making it easier for your body to clear the mucus from your airways and sinuses.

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Food for Thought

Certain foods can help with depression. For example, bananas can help enhance your mood because they help with the production of serotonin – a chemical needed for nerve cells and for the brain to function. Similarly, oatmeal, eggs, chicken, and peanuts can calm the brain and improve mood and sleep.

*Source: Harvard Health*

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*Source: Health and Real Simple*
Shedding Light on Food Myths

When it comes to food and nutrition, what was true even just a few years ago may have changed. That’s because ongoing research brings new insights. Here are a few examples.

Myth: You shouldn’t eat anything after 7 p.m.

**Reality:** While late-night snacking can lead to weight gain or prevent weight loss, it’s not because of the time of day. Instead, it’s about why you’re eating. If your reason is anything other than satisfying a physical hunger, then the mindless snacking of any type of food can lead to weight gain. Oftentimes snacking simply becomes an evening habit (it’s what you always do) or it’s a result of boredom.

Myth: Low-fat or fat-free products are healthier choices.

**Reality:** Many products labeled low-fat or fat-free contain added sugar or sodium to help make up for the loss of flavor due to removing or reducing the fat. If you eat fat-free products to reduce your calorie intake, the opposite may occur. You may end up with more calories because the fat-free food doesn’t make you feel as full (so you eat more), or you may eat larger portions because you believe it’s healthier food.

Myth: Organic foods are more nutritious.

**Reality:** Organic foods aren’t any different nutritionally from non-organic foods. An organic apple and a conventionally grown apple will both contain the same nutrients and have the same calories. The difference in the labeling is how many pesticides, fertilizers, or preservatives were used in the growing process.

**Source:** Mayo Clinic

Money Matters

The urge to splurge can cause you to buy items you don’t need. Avoid impulse purchases by practicing these shopping tips:

- **Know your weaknesses** – Steer clear of stores where you like to browse and impulse buy. If you must go to that store, make a list of only the items you need, and stick to the list.
- **Set goals to override splurges** – Have a goal for what you’d like to accomplish: pay off a debt, have enough for a car down payment, or take a vacation. Keep that goal in mind when shopping. The thought of having to delay your goals because you purchased unnecessary items can help curb impulse spending.
- **Practice the 5-need rule** – While shopping, when the phrase “I really need this” pops into your head, make a note of it, but don’t buy it. If you make note of it five times over the course of the next several weeks, perhaps you do need it. If it doesn’t come up five times, you probably won’t actually use it.

**Source:** USAToday

Balancing Is a Health Predictor for Older Adults

Your ability to stand on one leg for 10 seconds could be an indicator of your risk for premature death — more so than aerobic fitness, flexibility, or muscle strength. That’s the finding from a peer-reviewed study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

Researchers looked at 1,702 participants ages 51 to 75 who could walk steadily. Participants were asked to stand on one leg for 10 seconds without holding onto anything to support themselves. The participants, who were allowed three tries, were asked to place the front of the uplifted foot on the back of the weight-bearing leg while keeping their arms at their sides and looking ahead. Of those who could not complete the test:

- 54% of 71- to 75-year-olds
- 37% of 66- to 70-year-olds
- 18% of 61- to 65-year-olds
- 8% of 56- to 60-year-olds
- 5% of 51- to 55-year-olds

People who failed the test tended to be in poorer health, with a higher proportion to being obese, having cardiovascular disease and unhealthy blood cholesterol levels. Having Type 2 diabetes was three times more common among people who failed the test than those who passed.

After accounting for factors such as age, sex, BMI, history of heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol, the researchers found that the risk of death within 10 years was nearly two times higher in participants who failed the balance test.

While researchers pointed out that this is an observational study and can’t establish cause, they still recommend that people take a balance test of their own to use as an indicator of their well-being.

**Source:** USA Today
Sugary Drinks Can Sabotage Your Health

Certain beverages that we believe to be healthy often contain added sugar and calories which could lead to high blood pressure, weight gain, diabetes, heart disease and fatty liver disease. That’s why the following beverages should be avoided or considered “once-in-a-while” drinks.

Coconut water

Plain coconut water can be a good workout drink because it provides electrolytes and has fewer calories than most sports drinks. It still contains calories, however, so be mindful of how much you drink. One 11-ounce carton has 60 calories and if you drink several in one day, the calories can add up. Try to avoid flavored coconut water as most brands contain more than 30 grams of added sugar per 16-ounce bottle – that’s an additional 116 calories.

Tonic water

Tonic water is most often used in alcoholic mixed drinks, but some drink it over ice. Be aware that 12 ounces of tonic water adds 124 calories and 32 grams (8 teaspoons) of sugar to your body. When ordering a mixed drink, ask for seltzer instead. It’s sugar- and calorie-free.

Flavored “nutritional” waters

Some healthy brands do exist, but you’ll want to avoid those that have added sugar. Check the nutrition label: some sugar-added brands contain 30 grams of sugar (7 teaspoons) or more.

Smoothies

Smoothie drinks appear to be a healthy drink, but many contain sherbet, juice, and frozen yogurt. Those ingredients can add unwanted calories and sugar to your daily intake:

- A DQ Tripleberry Premium smoothie contains 470 calories and 100 grams of sugar.
- A Captain Immunity smoothie from Planet Smoothie has 760 calories and 125 grams of sugar.
- A Strawberry Hulk from Smoothie King packs 1,770 calories and 256 grams of sugar.
- Even a Naked brand “no-sugar added” Green Machine contains 270 calories and 53 grams of sugar – much more than a 12-oz. can of Coke at 140 calories and 39 grams of sugar. Opt instead for making your own smoothie where you can control the ingredients.

Source: Health.com

Did You Know?

Stopping to take several deep breaths can reduce anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed. When you start to get anxious, try this simple breathing exercise:

- Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. Your abdomen should expand, but your shoulders should stay relaxed.
- Once you’ve fully inhaled, hold your breath for a slow count of four.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth. As you blow out air, purse your lips slightly, but keep your jaw relaxed. You may hear a soft “whooshing” sound as you exhale.
- Repeat the above cycle three more times.

Practice this technique often to lower your heart rate, decrease your stress and anxiety, and begin to feel more relaxed. This works well if you wake up in the middle of the night and need to calm your mind.

Source: WebMD
Pop Into Fall

The fall season offers few excuses when it comes to outdoor exercise. The weather is cooler, and God provides a scenic backdrop with the changing colors of trees and shrubs. You can’t help but notice the bright leaf colors that “pop” in contrast to their more lackluster counterparts. One downside for outdoor autumn exercise does exist, however, and that’s shorter days with fewer daylight hours – especially in the mornings and evenings. If those are your favorite times for outdoor exercise, make sure that you “pop” in contrast to your surroundings. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, most pedestrian traffic deaths and injuries happen during low light conditions.

The goal is to be seen by drivers, so before you step outside, look in the mirror. Can you see yourself in the way that drivers will (or won’t) see you? As you stare at your image, are you going to absorb or reflect the light from car headlights? Think back to what you learned in grade school: lighter colors reflect light and darker colors absorb light making them the least visible. Not enough early-morning or late-evening walkers and runners are asking the absorber/reflector question before heading out the door. If you’re decked out in dark-colored clothing, you’re not being seen.

It seems that most active wear you can purchase from a store is black. Perhaps the manufacturers believe that we’ll think we look cool dressed in all black – it’s a sleek color (suggesting speed), it doesn’t show dirt and it’s easy to accessorize. Whatever the reason, we should be less concerned that drivers see us as being cool or properly accessorized, and instead be more concerned that they actually see us! You may spot cars approaching an intersection as you cross the street or as you’re walking along a road, but chances are, if you’re wearing covert special-ops black, they won’t see you.

Don’t ignore the simple ways to make those early morning or evening jaunts safer and more enjoyable. Make sure your top layer is a bright color. Wear wrist reflectors or a reflective vest. Buy a lightweight work headlamp from a hardware store. That will help you to not only see tripping obstacles, but also be noticed by drivers. “Be Well, Serve Well” encompasses all areas of caring for our well-being, including preventing injuries while being active. Before you head out the door, take a moment to stop and see if you “pop.”