



Healthy Returns

Take a shortcut to a better you with habits that provide a double dose of wellness. We know you do a zillion things at once, so we ID'd eight moves that provide a good-for-you one-two punch. That means in the time that it takes to do one thing—like hit your favorite yoga class or grill up an omega-3-rich salmon fillet for dinner—you'll reap twice the benefits. Give yourself a pat on the back for those you already practice and incorporate the others into your routine. Come on, we know you can't resist a two-for-one deal! →

By Jeannette Moninger



Healthy habit
Regular dentist visits

Hidden perk
A fitter ticker

It's no secret that taking care of your pearly whites is good for your heart. Bacteria from gum disease may enter your bloodstream and trigger an immune response that causes arteries to swell, constrict and collect plaque, all of which increase your chance of having heart problems. But it's not only your habits at home that count.

A study from the University of California, Berkeley, found that women who see a dentist twice a year cut their risk for stroke, heart attacks and other cardiovascular problems by at least a third. "Gum disease is as bad for your heart as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Because it has few warning signs, most women don't know they have it until their dentist tells them," says Robert Pick, a spokesman for the American Dental Association. Women with gum disease should see a periodontist (a specialist in gum disorders).

MARK HOOPER

Healthy habit**Core exercises****Hidden perk****A faster 5K**

We all want Jennifer Aniston's abs, but that's not the only reason to rock the plank. "A strong core stabilizes your hips and pelvis when you run, enabling you to go faster and farther," says physical therapist Christine Meizoso, the director of Recovery Physical Therapy in New York City. In a study in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, runners who did six weeks of core training had significantly faster 5K times than those who didn't. But it doesn't just put more pep in your step. "When your core is weak, the leg muscles fatigue at a much faster rate," Meizoso says. "Your body compensates by engaging other muscles to pick up the slack. Eventually this can lead to muscle-tissue breakdown and an increased risk for injury." She recommends incorporating core exercises, like planks, into your strength-training routine two to three times a week. For five must-do moves, go to fitnessmagazine.com/strongcore.

Healthy habit**Eating seafood****Hidden perk****Improved eyesight**

Researchers are still discovering the many benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, which are found in fish, nuts and oils. For starters, it's known that these fats lower triglycerides and improve heart function, and they may boost memory. Now a study in the *Archives of Ophthalmology* suggests they may protect your peepers. Even if you have twenty-twenty vision, your eye muscles become less flexible with age, making focusing more

difficult. You also run the risk of developing age-related macular degeneration. This leading cause of vision loss in older adults develops when oxygen molecules called free radicals damage the tissue that lines the back of the retina. Eating fish, particularly fatty varieties like salmon, sardines and mackerel, twice a week may help. Experts advise consuming at least 1 to 1.6 grams of omega-3s a day—the amount in a fish-oil supplement or about 4 ounces of fish.

Healthy habit**Quitting smoking****Hidden perk****Better brain power**

Cigarettes damage your heart and lungs. But did you know they're also bad for your brain? One study shows that former smokers have better memory skills than people who still light up. "Inhaling high

levels of carbon monoxide from tobacco smoke may diminish the amount of oxygen-rich blood reaching the brain," says lead researcher Thomas Heffernan, Ph.D. In the study, smokers who puffed about 60 cigs a week had 19 percent less memory recall than those who had quit. Even an occasional cigarette is bad news. Smoking just two cigarettes narrows arteries for days afterward. The good news: Being smoke-free for two and a half years ups your ability to remember by 24 percent. Need to quit? Check out becomeanex.org.

Healthy habit**Taking yoga classes****Hidden perk****Less risk for broken bones**

You downward dog to keep stress levels in check, but those asanas serve another purpose: improving

your balance. This may not be something you worry about now, but one in three adults 65 and older takes a spill every year, according to the CDC, and falls are the leading cause of accidental death among older adults. "Balance and flexibility decline with age," says yoga instructor Jasmine Chehrazi, a faculty member in the exercise science department at George Washington University. "The earlier you learn to evenly distribute your weight through yoga, the sooner it will become a habit that keeps you safe later in life." A study in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* found that women ages 23 to 35 who practiced yoga three times a week greatly improved their balance as well as their leg strength and muscle control. To find the right yoga routine for you, go to fitnessmagazine.com/yoga.

Healthy habit

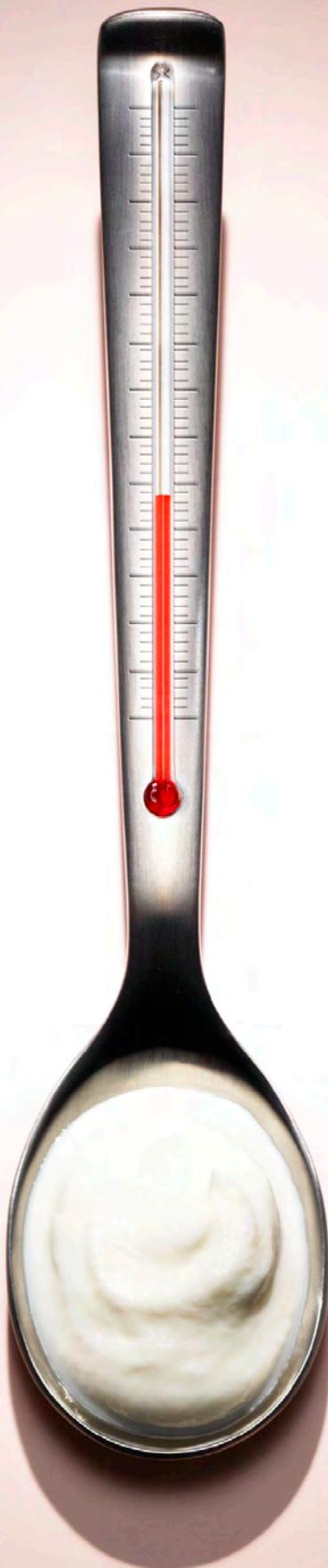
Snacking on low-fat yogurt

Hidden perk



Fewer colds

Yogurt is a true superfood: low in fat and calories yet high in hunger-fighting protein, bone-building calcium and stomach-soothing probiotics. Turns out, probiotics also fight the sniffles. A recent review of 10 studies suggests that these good bacteria (look for "live and active cultures" on yogurt-container labels) can reduce your chance of getting colds by 12 percent. But not all yogurts are created equal. "A six-ounce container that's premixed with fruit can have close to seven teaspoons of sugar," says Susan Dopart, R.D., the author of *A Recipe for Life by the Doctor's Dietitian*. Stick with the low-fat plain Greek kind (it's higher in calcium and probiotics), topped with fresh fruit and a drizzle of honey, and aim to have one cup a day.



Healthy habit

A great sex life

Hidden perk

Headache relief

Forget the not-tonight-honey excuse. Sex doesn't only reduce stress, zap calories, promote closeness and rock your world, but it can also help your head. In a study at the Headache Clinic at Southern Illinois University, half of the female migraine sufferers reported some relief after sex. "The brain process related to orgasm may override the headache," says the study's lead author, James R. Couch, M.D., Ph.D. Endorphins released during orgasm may also speed pain relief. As with most migraine treatments, the key is to act fast. The majority of sufferers found relief if they had sex shortly after their headache began. No partner in the picture? Go the self-service route.

Healthy habit

Getting massages

Hidden perk

A stronger immune system

You don't need experts to tell you a rubdown feels great, soothes sore muscles and is blissfully relaxing. But it did take a study, published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, to discover that certain types of massage may strengthen your immune system. "Swedish massage seems to increase production of lymphocytes, cells that help defend against harmful substances and diseases," says lead researcher Mark Hyman Rapaport, M.D. In the study, 45 minutes of this type of kneading did the trick. Follow-up research suggests that more massage is better: Weekly sessions were even more beneficial than a single massage. So go ahead and book a spa treatment or two. You deserve it for taking such good care of yourself! ●