

## Don't Let Your Health Take a Holiday

**The busy season ahead can quickly lead to a hectic schedule.** To lessen your stress, maintain energy and avoid getting sick. Treat yourself well:

» **Take time for basic needs.** That means 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep and 3 balanced meals, plus 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise (e.g., brisk walking) weekly — the best Rx for sustaining energy and feeling positive.



» **Watch for exercise opportunities.** Park in the back 40 of the shopping mall and walk to it.

» **Snack for energy.** Have some fruit, nuts and seeds with you when working or traveling.

» **Minimize your treats.** It takes lots of exercise to burn the empty calories in calorie-laden beverages and holiday desserts. At most, have 1 food splurge during celebrations.



» **Keep your hands clean.** And keep your distance from sick coworkers and family members.

» **You don't have to do it all.** You're not being a Grinch if you need to say **No** to family and friends to relieve stress and recharge.

» **Quiet your mind.** Check out meditation apps to create mindfulness and help you to relieve stress or pain or quit smoking.

» **Relax in the moment.** Open your mind and your eyes to the warmth of your surroundings — listen to music or enjoy a wintry walk followed by a cup of hot tea.



» **Encourage others.** Wear a smile, offer compliments, and be patient with those who appear stressed. When a friend seems upset or blue, lend an ear and just listen. That's the spirit!

## Winterize Your Exercise

**Don't let chilly, dark days dampen your fitness goals.** Your body needs year-round exercise, so start booking activities on your calendar every week. Try something new and have fun:

**Pool classes** provide a perfect warm-up plus excellent exercise routines, including lap swimming, shallow or deep-water muscle workouts, and yoga routines for improved flexibility, strength and vitality.

**Indoors?** You can't beat the convenience of at-home exercise to save time, money and fuss — and you're more likely to stick with it. Get a floor mat for core exercises and yoga. Try tai chi workouts. Include strength-training options. Add some music.

**Outdoors?** Cold weather can pose risks, including darkness, frostbite and icy pavement, but exercisers can usually avoid trouble: Check the forecast. Warm up first indoors. Cover your head and hands and bundle up in windproof, layered clothing to combat wind chill. Use reflective tape for visibility.

**Partner up.** Walk your dog, play soccer or ice skate with the kids. Or ride a bike when the sun shines. Or try snowshoeing, Nordic skiing or enjoy an invigorating jog.

**Added benefit:** Winter exercise boosts your immunity during cold and flu season. Just a few minutes a day can help prevent simple bacterial and viral infections, according to the CDC.



Nothing's better than the wind to your back, the sun in front of you, and your friends beside you.

— Aaron Douglas Trimble

# Pain Relief: Drug-Free Strategies

**Chronic pain can interfere with all aspects of life. It can lead to insomnia, impaired physical activity, isolation and depression.** The most common chronic pain conditions are arthritis, back of neck, joint and nerve pain, and migraine.

**Fortunately, we now have several strategies for relieving chronic pain.** They include:

**Physical and occupational therapies** can be great allies in fighting your pain. Physical therapists guide you through mild exercise routines that help improve your strength and mobility. Occupational therapists teach you how to perform everyday activities in ways that don't aggravate your pain.

**Yoga and tai chi** have been successful in reducing or controlling pain from many conditions, including backache, headache, arthritis and lingering injuries. Movements emphasize strengthening the back and core muscles.

**Massage therapy** is especially effective for reducing muscular backache and pain from surgeries and injuries, as it relieves stress and anxiety.

**Mind-body techniques**, such as breathing exercises, can help you manage your perception of pain. Regarding your pain in a calmer way can reduce anxiety that otherwise would increase pain.



## PRACTICAL Habits for Chronic Pain

- Gentle cardio exercise can boost endorphin brain chemicals that help block pain signals.
- Protect your sleep quality (e.g., alcohol and stress aggravate sleep problems).
- Quit smoking, as it can cause circulation problems and worsen your pain.
- You can learn from a support group.
- Track your pain level and activities every day.
- A well-balanced diet is essential to feeling stronger.

**Pain researchers see the best results** when treatments are prescribed after a thorough evaluation of each individual, often using a combination of therapies that can lead to improving your day-to-day quality of life.

## 5 Cooking Tips You May Not Know



**Bring some chef-inspired knowledge into your kitchen with these 5 culinary tips:**

### 1 Use the right cutting board:

Choose a non-porous board made from resin, marble or glass for cutting meat, poultry and seafood. They are easier to clean, and bacteria from raw meat won't get trapped in the grooves. Porous wood boards absorb everything, so they are best for cutting bread, vegetables and fruit — not for raw meat.

### 2 Invest in good-quality knives:

You don't need many — just a chef's knife, paring knife and bread knife. And get a knife sharpener, too — sharp knives are key to making food prep easier. Avoid putting knives in the dishwasher; detergent is abrasive and damages the sharp edge.

### 3 Keep lemons handy:

If you're not getting the best flavor from a dish, try adding a sprinkle of salt and some acid — grated lemon or lime zest, a squeeze of citrus juice or a splash of vinegar can make a dish sing.

### 4 No more tears:

If chopping onions makes you cry, try chilling them in the freezer for 10 minutes before slicing. The cold reduces the amount of sulfenic acids released into the air by the onion, thus reducing tears. Or, use a pair of onion goggles to stop the fumes from reaching your eyes.

### 5 Buy and freeze:

Enjoy a bounty of your favorite fruits and vegetables when they are in season, and freeze them for winter. You'll save money, enjoy the variety and reap health benefits, too. Frozen vegetables and fruits have just as many vitamins and minerals as fresh versions.



## Q: Vitamin D test?

**A:** Blood tests can measure your recent vitamin D levels from foods, supplements and sunlight exposure on your skin.

Routine testing is not usually necessary in adults at normal risk. But if you have factors that raise your risk for vitamin D deficiency, your health care provider may order testing to ensure you are getting enough.



**Deficiency risks:** Limited sun exposure is a common cause of low vitamin D. Older age or not regularly going outdoors often limits sun exposure. Other risks for D deficiency include dark skin, obesity and osteoporosis. Unhealthy diet or poor absorption of nutrients — as occurs in those with celiac disease or inflammatory bowel disease — can also make low vitamin D more likely. If in doubt, ask your provider if you need the test. — Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP



The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Cold-Weather Workouts: Dress Code**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/19V12tools](http://personalbest.com/extras/19V12tools).

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