



spark16

IGNITE YOUR BEST YOU.

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**SIMPLE WAYS
TO MANAGE
YOUR ANXIETY**

SEE "IGNITING YOUR
BEST YOU!"

A MONTHLY HEALTHLETTER FROM THE WELLNESS COUNCIL OF AMERICA

What Counts as a Drink?

- 1 can of beer (12 oz)
- 1 glass of wine (5 oz)
- 1 shot of liquor (1.5 oz)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines binge drinking as five or more alcoholic drinks for males or four or more alcoholic drinks for females on at least one day in the past month. SAMHSA defines heavy alcohol use as binge drinking on five or more days in the past month.



TOASTING TOO MUCH?

During the holidays, there's usually plenty of occasions and reason to raise your glass. Unfortunately, many American adults may be overdoing it. According to the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 26.9 percent of people ages 18 or older reported binge drinking on at least one occasion a month and 7 percent reported that they engaged in heavy alcohol use on a monthly basis.

Excessive alcohol intake can increase your risk for several chronic conditions, including liver disease and some cancers. Alcohol abuse can also have a negative impact on your job, relationships and safety—both yours and those around you.

KEEP YOUR COCKTAILS IN CHECK

If you drink, the following tips can help ensure you're not overdoing it, and only drinking in moderation.

Track your drinking. You may be drinking a lot without realizing it. Every time you have a drink, write down the day, time, location and how much. Do this for a few weeks or a month. This journal will help you become mindful of your drinking and it will help you identify how much you may need to cut down.

Set goals and limits. Based off your tracking, set goals and limits to your drinking. If you drink daily, you may want to pick a day or two during the week not to drink. Or you may want to completely abstain for a week or longer. Taking a break from alcohol can be a good way to start drinking less.

Follow "best practices" when you drink. When you drink, follow these strategies:

- » Drink slowly; sip your drink
- » Drink water before and after having an alcoholic beverage
- » Don't drink on an empty stomach

Go public and ask for support. Let friends and family members know that you're making an effort to drink less. Ask for their support during this time. Letting them know can help reduce temptation (i.e., they will be less inclined to invite you out for drinks or offer you drinks).

Expect setbacks, but don't give up. As with trying to form any habit, it's common to have a setback. It often takes several attempts to successfully cut down or stop drinking altogether—so stick with it.

If you're still finding it difficult to cut back on your drinking contact your doctor or health care provider.



Warm Beets with Ginger

Eat them often!

3 large beets, diced (about 1/3 in.)

3 leeks, chopped

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 1/2 Tbsp minced ginger

2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Sauté leeks until slightly softened then add garlic, ginger, beets, and salt. Increase heat to medium high and cook stirring frequently for 4 more minutes. Reduce heat to low and cover, cooking until beets are crisp and tender. Season with salt and pepper and serve as is, warm, or chilled. Great as an accompaniment to roasted or grilled chicken or grilled fish.

SERVES: 4-6



Dr. Ann
WELLNESS

With formal training in nutrition and medicine, plus hands-on experience as a mother of four and family physician, Dr. Ann is a unique nutrition expert for the real world.

The whole food ingredients found in Dr. Ann's recipes are the right foods for health and vitality. Nutritional excellence naturally follows.

For more, visit DrAnnWellness.com.

DO WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOUR GUT



Did you know that about **100 trillion bacteria live inside your digestive system**? That may sound alarming, but this bacteria is essential to your health. It lines your intestines and aides your body in digestion. More recently, science has revealed that a healthy and diverse collection of gut bacteria, also known as your “microbiome” can improve immune function, lower inflammation and even protect you from an array of chronic conditions and diseases. For example, a study published in the journal *PLOS ONE* showed that a particular strain of the bacteria (*Lactobacillus johnsonii*) may protect against some cancers. And Research in the *Journal of Applied Microbiology* found that a certain bacterial strain (*Akkermansia muciniphila*) could prevent inflammation that contributes to fatty plaque buildup in arteries.

GUT CHECK

Many experts believe that it’s not the presence or absence of one particular type of bacteria that creates a healthy microbiome, but rather the diversity of bacteria. Daily lifestyle habits, especially dietary choices, can help ensure you’re maintaining a healthy and diverse microbiome. Here are some research-backed tips that are good for your gut:

Hone in on prebiotic foods. When it comes to gut health, you may have heard about probiotics, but not as much attention is given to prebiotics. Prebiotics are types of dietary fiber, and they’re

essential for a healthy digestive system. Prebiotics “feed” the friendly bacteria in your gut, which help your body produce nutrients for your colon cells. Potent prebiotic foods include **almonds, asparagus, bananas, whole grains, mushrooms, legumes, garlic and onions.**

Get some good bacteria. Probiotics are live, “good” bacteria and yeasts that are good for your overall health, but especially your digestive system. One of the best sources of probiotics is yogurt. It has good bacteria like lactobacillus or bifidobacteria. Look for “live or active cultures” on the label to ensure the yogurt you choose has them. Other good sources of probiotics include naturally fermented foods such as sauerkraut, pickles, miso, sourdough bread and fermented beverages like kefir and kombucha.

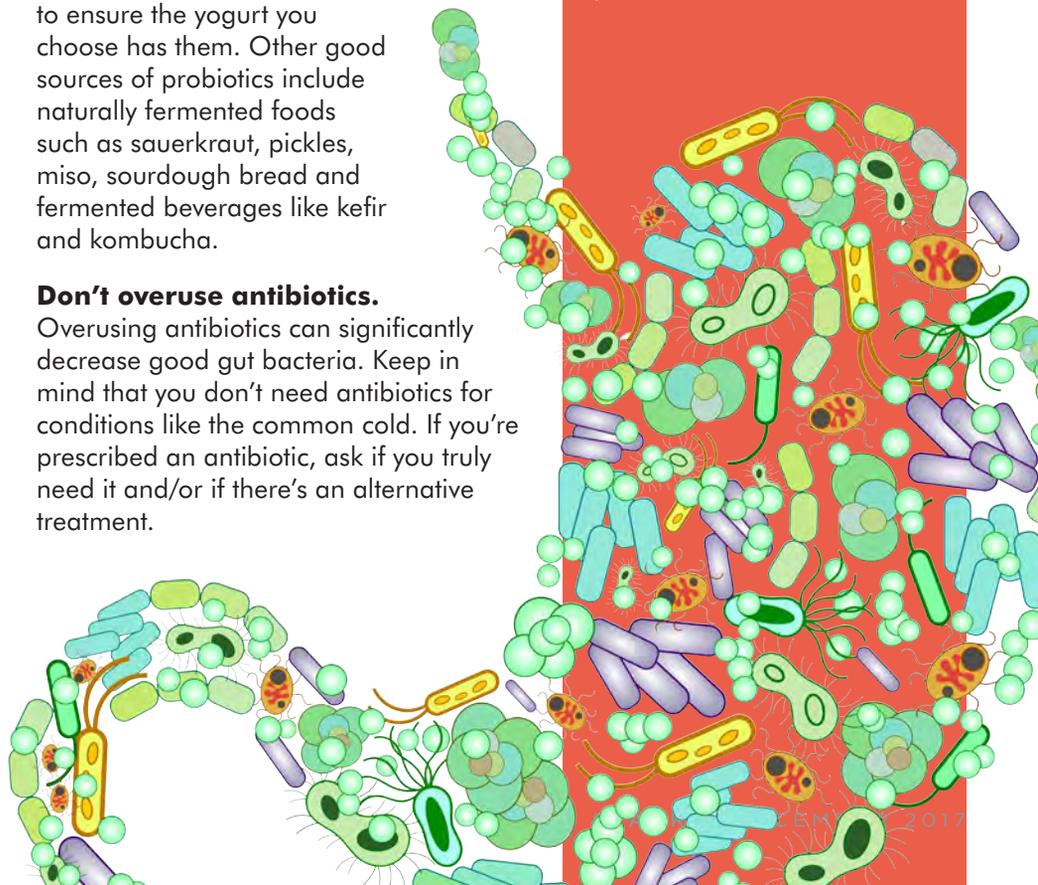
Don’t overuse antibiotics. Overusing antibiotics can significantly decrease good gut bacteria. Keep in mind that you don’t need antibiotics for conditions like the common cold. If you’re prescribed an antibiotic, ask if you truly need it and/or if there’s an alternative treatment.



SUPER STAR FOOD OF THE MONTH:

ginger

Inflammation is a key driver of most chronic diseases and the anti-inflammatory power in ginger is off-the-charts. The potent inflammation busters in ginger are called xanthines. These valuable agents are also work horses for boosting immunity and fighting viral infections. For optimal results, include ginger, powdered or fresh, in your diet regularly – daily is best. It really is one of the best all round spices for broad spectrum disease protection.





→ REMEMBER

Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

16 Simple Ways to MANAGE YOUR ANXIETY



If you're regularly affected by anxiety, visit the Anxiety and Depression Association of America where you can get more information and professional help:

www.adaa.org/understanding-anxiety

1 Take a stroll outside, preferably in a green or wooded area.

The fresh air, exercise and greenery can calm your nerves. In fact, one Japanese study found that people who walked through a forest for 20 minutes had lower stress hormone levels after their walk than those who took a comparable walk in an urban area.

2 Mix some omega-3s into your diet.

Foods like tuna, salmon, walnuts, and flax seeds are

all great sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Some research shows that omega-3s may ease anxiety symptoms by lowering levels of stress chemicals such as adrenaline and cortisol in the body.

3 Take a second to gauge how you're breathing.

Chances are if you're anxious, you're taking short and shallow breaths. Deep diaphragmatic breathing, on the other hand, activates your body's relaxation response. Try slowly inhaling to a count of

4 and slowly exhaling to a count of 4 and repeat several times.

4 Acknowledge it.

Trying to deny your feelings of anxiety often just worsens it. Acknowledge what you're feeling and tell yourself this is temporary and something you can overcome.

5 Stop what you're doing (if possible) to calm yourself.

Anxiety can have physical and

sometimes scary effects, such as increased heart rate, shakiness and headaches. If your anxiety is making you feel ill, stop what you're doing and try to relax (close your eyes, do some deep breathing). The physical effects of anxiety usually pass after you take some measures to calm yourself.

6 Ask yourself "what's the worst that could happen?" If you lost your job would you be homeless? Probably not. Asking yourself and honestly answering this question can help ease anxiety.

7 Do something meaningful. Sitting around doing nothing except obsessing over your worry is probably one of the worst ways to address your anxiety. Activities like housework, exercise, volunteering or playing with your kids can serve as a distraction and give you power over your anxiety.

8 Create a "worry list". As soon as you start worrying about something, write it down. Don't think about it again until later in the day or evening. Review your list—maybe there are things you can do to address that trouble or maybe that particular worry has now passed.

9 Create an anxiety mantra. Repeating statements like, "I can handle this" or "This will pass" can help you cope with the negative chatter and thoughts that come along with anxiety.

10 Have a cup of tea (yes it really works!). A cup of chamomile or green tea may help calm you down. Some compounds in chamomile bind to the same brain receptors as anti-anxiety drugs. And an amino acid in green tea can help your heart rate and blood pressure slow down.

11 Cut down on processed foods. Researchers in London found that people who mainly ate fried food, processed meat, and sweetened desserts had a 58 percent higher risk of depression than those who ate whole foods such as fish and vegetables.

12 Identify your triggers. Take note of what makes you feel anxious. Once you learn your triggers you may be able to avoid them, or at the very least be a little more prepared to manage and address them.

13 Nix negative people. If possible, try to eliminate or cut back on the time you spend with people who are

always negative and leave you feeling stressed.

14 Categorize your anxiety into controllable vs. uncontrollable. If you can do something about it, start an action plan. If you have no control over your worry (i.e., weather, stock market) let it go.

15 Address the now. Nervous about a presentation hours away? Stop thinking about it—you'll only get more anxious. Instead, focus on the present and what you need to do at this very second. If you break time down this way, you'll likely discover that everything is fine for the moment.

16 Know that there's help if you need it. If anxiety is taking over your day and you can't complete normal everyday functions, seek professional help. Anxiety disorders are highly treatable.



ANXIETY APP

"Anxiety Free" is a free app that provides users with audio recordings intended to spur relaxation and teach listeners relaxation techniques.



CAN'T GET RID OF THAT COUGH?

What to do when that cough won't go away



A stubborn, chronic cough is not only uncomfortable and annoying for the person suffering from it, but also those who have to work and live with that person. There are several reasons why a cough may linger on for weeks. The first step to improve and treat your cough is identifying the cause.

COMMON COUGH CULPRITS

Infection: Most cold and flu symptoms go away after a few days, but a cough can hang around for weeks. This is because cold and flu viruses can cause your airways to become swollen and oversensitive, triggering the cough response. When your airways are raw and irritated after a cold, it's much easier for bacteria to invade and lead to sinus infections, bronchitis or pneumonia, which only further exacerbates your cough (see the "When to see the doctor" sidebar for signs of these infections).

Overusing over-the-counter (OTC) nasal decongestant sprays: Using a nasal spray for more than three days can cause your nasal membranes to swell, which triggers more congestion, postnasal drip, and coughing.

Chronic health conditions: Chronic conditions like allergies, asthma, acid reflux and sleep apnea can cause a chronic cough. See your doctor for diagnosis and treatment if you think you may have one of these conditions and have a chronic cough that isn't related to any of the other causes listed. These conditions are treatable.

COMBATting YOUR COUGH

Drink plenty of fluids: Staying hydrated helps thin the mucus in your throat. Make water your beverage of choice. Warm liquids, such as broth or tea with honey can also soothe your throat.

Try a lozenge: Some lozenges can numb the back of the throat and can ease a dry cough and soothe an irritated throat.

Use cough medicines as directed: Most experts recommend that you only use an OTC cough medicine if your cough is causing a lot of discomfort. Be sure to follow the dosing instructions.

Moisturize the air: Dry air can irritate a cough. Use a humidifier or take a steamy shower.

Avoid tobacco smoke: Smoking or breathing secondhand smoke can make your cough worse.

Count to 10: Some chronic coughs turn out to be acquired habits. Try counting to 10 before coughing. This can help stop your need to cough every time you feel the urge.



WHEN TO SEE THE DOCTOR

Call your doctor if your cough doesn't go away after several weeks or if you:

- Have a fever or pain along with your lingering cough
- Are coughing up thick, greenish-yellow phlegm
- Are wheezing or experiencing shortness of breath





Whittle

YOUR MIDDLE

SURPRISING STRATEGIES FOR A SLIM WAIST

Having a slim and trim waist offers more than just aesthetic benefits. In fact, a slim waist may actually help you live longer. At least that's the conclusion of a study from the American Cancer Society, which tracked the health of more than 100,000 people over nine years. The study, published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, found that having a large waist size doubled the risk of dying from any cause during the study period compared to those with smaller waists. Having a larger waist was associated with a higher risk of death whether the person was normal weight, overweight or obese. This means that even if your weight is normal for your height, if your waist size is increasing, it's time to start making a few small changes to slim your middle down. Here's a plan to get you there.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS. A quick and easy waist tape measurement can tell you if you're in an ideal range.

1. Start at the top of your hip bone, then bring the tape measure all the way around your body, level with your belly button.
2. Make sure it's not too tight and that it's straight, even at the back. Don't hold your breath while measuring.
3. Check the number on the tape measure right after you exhale.

TONE YOUR TUMMY

Here are some quick and easy ways to start toning your tummy. You can do these practically anytime and anywhere—even at work!

Nix the back of the seat. If you're driving or sitting, hold yourself up from the back of your chair instead of leaning back on it. Keep your shoulder blades down and your abs lifted. You can even try flexing

and holding your abdominal muscles for a few seconds and then relaxing. Repeat as many times as you can.

Seated side bend. Put one hand on the back of your head and extend the opposite arm out in front of you. Engage your core muscles and bend towards the side with the extended arm in a controlled manner. Squeeze through your obliques, or side ab muscles, to pull yourself back up to starting position. Start with 10 reps on

An ideal range is less than 40 inches around for men, and less than 35 inches for women.

SET REALISTIC GOALS. Flat, "six-pack" abs are nice, but not realistic for most people. However, most people can achieve a healthy weight and a trim and toned midsection. Rather than a six-pack, set your goals on fat loss and muscle gain.

FOCUS ON YOUR DIET AND STRIVE FOR SMALL CHANGES. If you regularly eat a high-caloric diet comprised mostly of processed foods, you're not going to lose belly fat (even if you're exercising). Focus on eating a variety of vegetables and fruit, with smaller amounts of lean protein and whole grains.

TORCH CALORIES AND FAT WITH CARDIO AND WEIGHTS. Regular cardiovascular exercise is key to burning fat around your midsection. Aim for 30 minutes (this can be broken up throughout the day) of moderate activity like brisk walking most days of the week. Also aim for at least 15 minutes of resistance training a few times a week. Building lean muscle mass helps your body burn calories more efficiently.



each side and gradually build up to as many as you can.

Seated twist. Grab a full water bottle and hold it at chest level. Keep your knees and hips pointed forward, and slowly twist your upper half to

the left. Go as far as you can while still being comfortable; your abs should contract as you're moving. Twist back to the center, and then repeat on the right. Repeat 10 times and gradually build up to as many reps as you can.



100
 TRILLION

About 100 trillion bacteria live inside your digestive system.



>40
 INCHES

An ideal waist measurement is less than 40 inches for men, and less than 35 inches for women.



5
 DRINKS

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration defines binge drinking as five or more alcoholic drinks for males or four or more alcoholic drinks for females on the same occasion.

ALCOHOL'S IMPACT ON YOUR BODY

Although there's some evidence that moderate drinking can offer some health benefits, chronic and excessive alcohol consumption can wreak havoc on your body. Here are some key findings reported by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

- » In 2013 (the most recent data available), of the 72,559 liver disease deaths among individuals ages 12 and older, 45.8 percent involved alcohol.
- » Among males, 48.5 percent of the 46,568 liver disease deaths involved alcohol. Among females, 41.8 percent of the 25,991 liver disease deaths involved alcohol.
- » Among all cirrhosis deaths in 2013, 47.9 percent were alcohol related. The proportion of alcohol-related cirrhosis was highest (76.5 percent) among deaths of persons ages 25–34.
- » In 2009, alcohol-related liver disease was the primary cause of almost 1 in 3 liver transplants in the United States.
- » Drinking alcohol increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, esophagus, pharynx, larynx, liver, and breast.



WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?

5
 MINUTES

The median wait time for an Uber vehicle is usually shorter than five minutes. Get a sober drive home if you've had too much to drink!



6
 MONTHS

In all states, first-offense DUI or DWI is classified as a misdemeanor, and punishable by up to six months in jail. Some states mandate more severe punishments for DUI or DUI offenders whose blood-alcohol content at the time of arrest was particularly high.