

# Newsflash

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## More Exercise Linked with Lower Risk of Irregular Heartbeat

Postmenopausal women who reported the highest amount of physical activity had a 10 percent lower risk of developing atrial fibrillation (AF), a condition characterized by an irregular heartbeat, than women who reported the lowest amount of physical activity. Both obese and normal-weight women reaped the benefits of being more physically active.

The women who had the lowest risk of AF got physical activity that was approximately equivalent to brisk walking for 30 minutes, six days a week, for a total of about three hours a week. Even women who got the activity equivalent of walking briskly for one hour a week had a lower risk of AF than women who got less than 10 minutes of exercise each week.

AF has been identified as a risk factor for stroke and heart failure. The researchers noted that their findings did not support concerns that strenuous exercise might increase the risk of AF in postmenopausal women.



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## Eat Like a Greek A day in the Mediterranean life

Want flavor plus good health? The Mediterranean style of dining has it all. Although a trip to southern Italy or Greece would be nice, you needn't go farther than your local supermarket. If your menu planning usually begins with a meat entrée, then adds a starch and a vegetable dish as an afterthought, you'll want to reprioritize your food choices. Think designing a plate where half of it is taken up with vegetables, another one-quarter is healthy grains, and the remaining quarter lean protein. Of course, you need not separate your food in that fashion, but it gives you a good idea of proportions.

**BREAKFAST:** It's hard to go wrong with whole-grain cereal, fruit, and low-fat milk. Variations include low-fat yogurt with fresh berries and granola, or meaty steel-cut oats topped with fresh fruit, applesauce, yogurt or nuts. Enjoy eggs? Try sautéing vegetables or greens in a bit of olive oil until soft and then scramble in a beaten egg. Go Greek with chopped olives and feta, or top with salsa and avocado for a Tex-Mex flair.

**LUNCH:** Whether you're at home or brown-bagging, a Mediterranean lunch is tastier and healthier than drive-through fare and often faster and cheaper, too. Bagged salad greens provide a base for whatever you have on hand – fruit, vegetables, nuts, cheese, or a bit of leftover grilled chicken or fish. Consider topping it with a low-fat ranch dressing, an olive oil vinaigrette, or just a drizzle of flavorful oil and a squeeze of fresh lemon. Or fill a whole-wheat pita pocket with hummus and as much fresh lettuce, peppers, cucumbers, and tomatoes as you can stuff in. If you're really pressed for time, heat up a can of low-sodium lentil, minestrone, or vegetable soup.

**SNACK TIME:** Keep a ready supply of fruit and veggies on hand so you'll grab them at snack time. Hummus, low-fat yogurt, and salad dressings pair nicely with them. If you don't want to invest the prep time, buy pre-cut. It's also a good idea to keep some nonperishable snacks at your desk or in your car – raisins or other dried fruit, nuts and whole-grain crackers or pretzels.

**DINNER:** This is when many of us lose sight of nutrition goals because it's so easy after a long day to fall into old, comfortable habits. Fortunately, Mediterranean-style dining emphasizes simple foods and cooking methods.

While your pasta boils, for example, you can sauté vegetables in olive oil and garlic, then toss in a few shrimp and cook until they turn pink. Mix it all with a sprinkle of cheese, pour yourself a glass of wine, and sit down to a relaxing dinner in less than 20 minutes. In much the same manner, you can put together a quick stir-fry with slices of chicken breast, vegetables, and rice. Fresh fish is the simplest of entrees because it cooks quickly and doesn't take much dressing up. Spritz with olive oil and your favorite seasonings and broil it, or coat it in bread crumbs and pan fry in a bit of olive oil. Squeeze on fresh lemon juice and adorn with parsley just before serving.

Two things you should have on hand for your evening meal: frozen vegetables, which are usually just as nutritious as fresh, and a plastic container of salad, preferably filled with a variety of greens. It's also a good idea to stock your crisper with seasonal fruit. A bowl of ripe berries, a chunk of melon, or a soft, farm-fresh peach is a delicious and satisfying end to any meal.

Oldways Preservation Trust, a nonprofit organization that promotes healthful eating, has more recipes and menu ideas on the website it sponsors: [www.oldwayspt.org](http://www.oldwayspt.org).

## Put Your Feet First

**Foot problems can hike the risk of falls and infections, but they're usually preventable and treatable.**

When your feet hurt, the simple act of walking can become an ordeal. And this kind of discomfort often comes with age. A study published in the journal *Gerontology* found that one in five older adults has foot pain regularly. Here, some of the most common foot complaints of aging, what's likely to be behind the symptoms, and how to treat them.

### SKIN AND NAIL CONDITIONS

**What the problem could be.** Corns and calluses (hard, thick patches of skin caused by rubbing) are the most frequent factors in foot pain for older adults. A close runner up? Nail conditions such as ingrown toenails and fungal infections.

**What to do.** Prevent them with footwear that fits without pinching or rubbing, and don't go sockless. If you develop a corn or callus, your doctor can help you safely remove the extra layers of skin.

To avoid fungus, always wear footwear in public places such as locker rooms. If you notice discoloration or a thickening of your nails, a podiatrist can confirm whether it's a fungal infection and prescribe medication. Cutting toenails straight across and filing them to the sides to avoid jagged edges helps prevent ingrown toenails. If you have difficulty with this, go to a podiatrist for toenail grooming.

### BONE AND JOINT PAIN

**What the problem could be.** In older adults, bone deformities such as bunions (when the big-toe joint becomes misaligned) and hammertoes (when one or more smaller toes is bent in the middle) often cause pain. These may occur in part because of footwear that puts pressure on toes, especially shoes with a narrow front or a high heel. Toe arthritis can also cause foot pain.

**What to do.** To prevent or ease pain caused by bunions and hammertoes, choose shoes with a round, deep toe box. In severe cases, some choose surgery. For arthritis, especially of the toes, footwear with a stiffer sole helps reduce pain by keeping foot joints from having to bend so much.

### TINGLING OR NUMBNESS

**What the problem could be.** About a third of people with diabetes have foot numbness and tingling. With numbness, wounds on the feet may go unnoticed and untreated – and worsen. Tingling may signal a problem elsewhere, such as a pinched nerve in your back.

**What to do.** If you have diabetes, check your feet daily for cuts and blisters, and talk with a doctor or podiatrist about care. If you don't have diabetes, a doctor can determine whether an injury might be causing your tingling feet.

and all at once,  
Summer collapsed into fall.  
- oscar wilde

## End-of-Summer Cleanup

Whether you've had the grandkids over for sleepovers, swim parties and BBQs...or you've spent your summer gardening and lounging on the deck, before you get caught up in all the back-to-school activities, spend some end-of-summer time returning items to their best possible state before you store them away. This will prove to be a time saver when you want to use them again next spring.

**Musty beach towels:** Launder, using the hottest water that's safe for the fabric. Add a small amount of fabric softener to the final rinse. Machine-dry thoroughly.

**Sandy sleeping bag:** Turn the bag inside out. If the sand is damp, let the bag air out until the sand is dry. Shake the bag to remove as much of the loose sand as possible, then brush or vacuum away the remaining residue. If the bag is soiled, clean according to the sleeping bag's care label instructions.

**Muddy tennis shoes:** Let the mud dry completely. Then take the shoes outside and bang the soles together to remove as much of the dried mud as possible. Using a solution of warm water and hand dishwashing liquid and an old toothbrush, scrub gently to remove the remaining dirt. For stubborn dirt marks, scrub with a nylon pad. Wipe with a damp sponge or damp paper towels. Stuff the tennis shoes with clean paper towels and let them air-dry.

**Grungy plastic tablecloths:** A wipe-down with a soapy sponge may clean the top of the tablecloth, but not the flannel backing. To clean the whole thing, machine-wash, using the gentle cycle. Machine-dry on the delicate cycle for about 15 minutes. This is just enough time to remove the creases caused by machine washing, but not long enough to harm the vinyl. If the cloth is still damp, line dry.

**Grubby molded-resin outdoor furniture:** Clean with a mild detergent and water. Avoid abrasive powders, chlorine bleaches and silicone cleaners.

**Soiled outdoor cushions:** Acrylic, polyester and cotton fabrics should be spot-cleaned by sponging with a solution of liquid dishwashing detergent and lukewarm water. Rinse with clear water and air-dry.

**Dirty plastic pool toys:** Mix  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of chlorine bleach per gallon of water. Soak the prewashed toys for five minutes. Rinse and then air-dry. If the toys aren't used during the winter, store them in a closed container so they'll stay clean and dust-free.