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**HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWSLETTER**

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February 2020

What's your **snack habit?**

We all snack at work. After all, by 11am, breakfast is a distant memory, and most of us enjoy a little snack at 3.30pm. With a few small changes your snack attack will be a healthy addition to your day.

If you're thoughtful about the foods you choose, snacking can help you to maintain a steady weight, add to your overall daily nutrient intake and reduce the temptation to overeat because you're too hungry.

How good your snack habit is depends on how often you snack, what you choose, and how much you eat.

Keep your snack habit healthy with these quick tips:

1. Eat breakfast. Filling up with a healthy meal in the morning can prevent hunger feelings that result in unhealthy snacking later on.

2. Don't let snacking turn into grazing. When you graze on foods it's easy to lose track of how much you're eating. You're a 'grazer' if you eat with only short intervals

between each snack. Instead, plan your snacks to be no less than two hours before or after a main meal.

3. Plan your snacks. An ideal snack is one that provide a protein base with some carbohydrates and healthy fats. These are likely to keep you fuller for longer and mean your protein intake is spread throughout the day, which is best for your body.

What makes the best snack?

- **Raw nuts.** These are high in protein, healthy fats and nutrients. Good picks are almonds, which provide calcium, Brazil nuts, which are high in selenium and walnuts, which contain Omega-3 fatty acids. One serving is 30 grams, or about a handful. If you feel like a treat, add a few dark-chocolate coated nuts.

- **Legumes.** High in fibre and protein, small packs of roasted legumes, such as chickpeas, make ideal snacks.

- **Fruit.** Rich in fibre and nutrients, fruit is always a good choice. Add some cheese or natural yoghurt for extra protein.

- **Homemade energy balls.** These are typically made from rolled oats, nut butter, seeds, a sweetener, plus dried fruit. They are high in fibre, healthy fats, protein and other nutrients. Find your favourite recipe online.

- **Hummus and veggie sticks.** Hummus is a perfect snack. It's based on chickpeas, which contain fibre and protein, and sesame seeds, which are high in healthy fats and calcium. When combined with vegetables it ticks many nutritional boxes. ✕



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February 4 is World Cancer Day. This event empowers communities and individuals across the world to show support and raise the profile of cancer in a positive and inspiring way. The campaign theme for World Cancer Day 2019-2021 is 'I Am and I Will'. Whoever you are, you have the power to reduce the impact of cancer for yourself, the people you love and the world.

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High blood pressure: more than a heart disease risk

Your pulse is not an indicator of your blood pressure – you can still have high blood pressure with a normal heart rate.

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease – and for good reason – but it can have devastating effects elsewhere in the body too.

Most of us think that we would know if we had high blood pressure – perhaps we'd experience a red face, regular headaches, or sweating. But high blood pressure is often referred to as the 'silent killer' because there are no obvious symptoms. That means many of the one billion people in the world with high blood pressure simply don't realise they have it.

What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the pressure of your blood on the walls of the arteries as your heart pumps it around your body. Blood pressure naturally goes up and down all the time, in response to what you are doing. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is when the force of the blood flowing through the blood vessels is consistently too high.

Over time the excessive force on the blood vessel walls causes damage to the lining of the blood vessel. This results in a build-up of cholesterol plaque, which eventually narrows the blood vessel and reduces the

blood flow, causing blood pressure to rise. If this damage occurs in the blood vessels of the heart it can lead to heart disease; if it weakens the blood vessels of the brain it can lead to a stroke; and if the damage

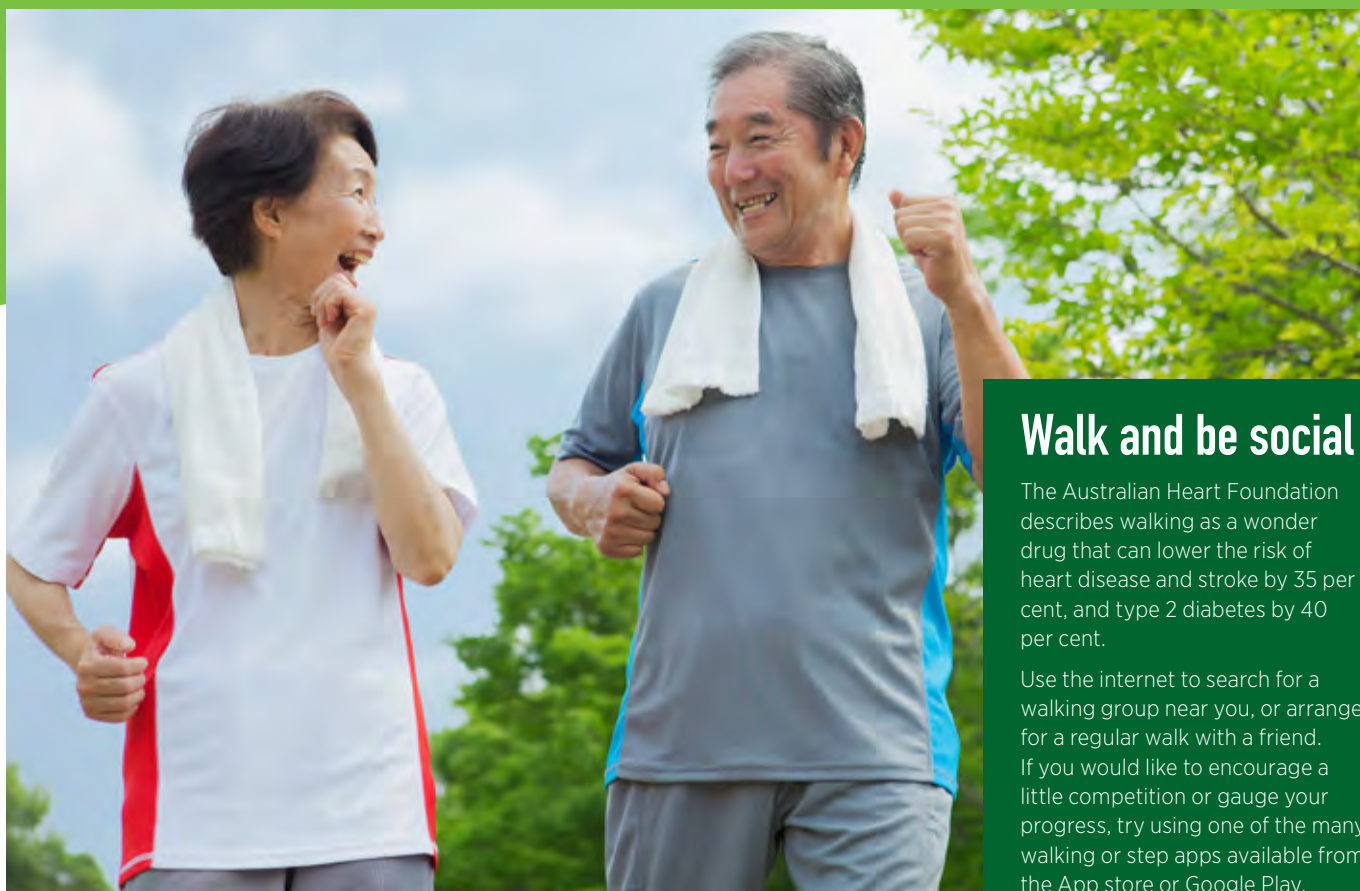
occurs in the blood vessels of the kidney it can cause kidney damage. Hypertension is not isolated to one or two vessels. It will be widespread throughout the body so potentially any organ can be affected. ✕

Who is at risk of high blood pressure?

Men are more likely than women to develop high blood pressure, and our blood pressure tends to increase as we get older. There are other causes, too. Some you can't change, such as family history, while others you do have control over. If you want to reduce your risk of developing high blood pressure, make sure you:

- Don't eat too many salty foods, such as highly processed foods.
- Limit alcohol to no more than two standard drinks per day.
- Ensure you maintain a healthy weight.
- Keep physically active, with at least 30 minutes of activity on most days.

The only way to know if you have hypertension is to have your blood pressure checked every year. A normal reading is 120/80 or below. Many people will check their heart rate by feeling the pulse at the wrist. Unfortunately, your pulse is not an indicator of your blood pressure – you can still have hypertension with a normal heart rate.



Walk and be social

The Australian Heart Foundation describes walking as a wonder drug that can lower the risk of heart disease and stroke by 35 per cent, and type 2 diabetes by 40 per cent.

Use the internet to search for a walking group near you, or arrange for a regular walk with a friend. If you would like to encourage a little competition or gauge your progress, try using one of the many walking or step apps available from the App store or Google Play.

How to make your walk a workout

A walk a day may keep the doctor away. But how can you turn a daily stroll into a worthwhile workout?

Shane O'Mara would love doctors to prescribe a daily walk for everyone. The neuroscientist, who is Professor of Experimental Brain Research at Trinity College, Dublin, is so passionate about the benefits of walking that he's written a book about it: *In Praise of Walking*.

Going for a daily walk, he says, doesn't just benefit our hearts, lungs and general fitness, it's essential for healthy brain function too. O'Mara argues that our brains evolved to support movement, and if we stop moving about, they won't work so well. Studies back him up, showing that physically active people are less likely to experience depression and develop cognitive decline and dementia compared to inactive people.

But is walking really proper exercise? Surely huffing and puffing or sweating it out at the gym counts for more?

High intensity exercise like running and gym workouts will improve your aerobic fitness, which benefits your heart. The good news is that moderate intensity walking can have the same effect on your heart health.

Pick up the pace

"When you walk, you can cheaply and easily increase intensity by stepping up the pace," Emmanuel Stamatakis, professor of physical activity, lifestyle and population health at the University of Sydney, told the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

You can challenge yourself by walking faster – if you normally walk a certain distance in 30 minutes, aim to do it in 25. As you get fitter you may even manage it in 20 minutes. Moderate intensity is a pace of 100 steps per minute, explains Stamatakis, while 130 steps per minute is high intensity.

Increase your steps

Should we all be taking 10000 steps a day? There is no scientific evidence behind this recommendation – it was actually taken from a marketing campaign for pedometers back in 1965. That said, it's a good goal to work towards.

Health guidelines recommend a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate exercise, most days of the week. This would be about 3000 to 4000 dedicated steps at a moderate pace. In Australia, the average adult accumulates about 7400 steps a day, so an additional 3000 to 4000 steps through dedicated walking would get you to the 10000 steps target. You can reach this target if you build walking into your everyday routine – park further away from your destination, get off your train or bus stop earlier, and choose stairs rather than lifts or escalators. ✕

Are we paralysed by too much choice?

Choice is supposed to make our lives easier, but in a world of unlimited choices it's much harder to make a decision.



Have you ever sat down in front of the television after a long day, only to be so overwhelmed by your options on Netflix that, after searching for half an hour, you conclude that you really can't decide what to watch?

Or perhaps you've been in the supermarket doing your weekly shop. You have yogurt on your shopping list but can't decide between yogurt in a tub, or a tube or a six pack; between low fat, no fat, high protein or sugar free; or between vanilla, berry, passionfruit, strawberry or raspberry. Choice was supposed to make our lives easier, but it actually can make our lives harder.

Option overwhelm

It's easy to think that having more choice will allow us to find exactly what we are searching for, which in turn will make us happier. A quick look at one supermarket website reveals there

are 320 different types of yogurt, 361 types of cheese and 506 types of biscuits. Surely with so much choice we can all find something to suit our individual preferences? And with so much choice available to consumers we must all feel satisfied with our decisions. But do we?

Too much choice does not equate to satisfaction and it does not lead us to purchasing more – in fact, when faced with too much choice the opposite occurs. We are less likely to make a purchase, and if we do buy something, we are often left with feelings of disappointment rather than happiness.

We learnt this from jam. In 2000, social psychologists Mark Lepper and Sheena Iyengar published a ground-breaking study which highlighted that excessive choice is not a good thing. They examined what happened when shoppers at a food market were offered either 24 varieties of gourmet jam, or, on a

different day, just six varieties. Although the larger display of jam generated more interest, people were 10 times more likely to make a purchase when they only had to choose between six types of jam.

"When there are too many choices to compare and contrast, instead of making better choices, we become overwhelmed by choice, sometimes even afraid of it," explained Sheena, from Columbia Business School.

Barry Schwartz, a Swarthmore College psychologist, coined the phrase "The Paradox of Choice" to explain why too much choice is not necessarily a good thing. He identifies three negative effects that occur when we are faced with an overwhelming number of choices, even for mundane things like 320 different types of yogurt.



1. Decision paralysis

Too many choices leave us paralysed with indecision, so we feel incapable of making any choice at all. That's why it can be so hard to decide what to watch on Netflix.

2. Disappointment

If we do eventually make a choice, then the more alternatives we are faced with the more likely we are to be disappointed with our choice. Why? Because if you have 506 types of biscuits on offer then you expect one of them to be perfect. And that expectation often leaves us with a sense of disappointment in our final choice because it is rarely perfect. We can also be burdened with a sense of regret that we made the wrong choice. After all, it is difficult to be completely satisfied when we wonder if one of the many other choices on offer was better than the one we made.

3. Self-blame

Schwartz believes the explosion in choice can be directly linked to an increase in anxiety and depression. He states that too many options and too much choice can make us anxious, while our expectation of perfection often leaves us feeling unhappy about the choices we make – and we blame ourselves. Who else can we blame if we had 506 options and we chose something that made us unhappy?

How to simplify your choices

His advice on dealing with the huge number of decisions we need to make each day? He suggests we should be simplifying life by limiting our choices and not expecting perfection with everything we buy. We should be saving our energy for the decisions that really matter. Not what type of jam to buy. ✕

“Learning to choose is hard. Learning to choose well is harder. And learning to choose well in a world of unlimited possibilities is harder still, perhaps too hard.”

Barry Schwartz, The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less

Stay safe on ladders

Working at heights is risky, with falls from a height a leading cause of death and serious injury.

According to WorkSafe Australia, half of fatal falls involve falling three metres or less, often from ladders. Ladders and stepladders don't offer any protection from a fall. Before using a ladder, aim to eliminate the chance of a fall by doing as much of the preparation work as possible on the ground.

If ladders cannot be used safely, then use a more suitable type of access equipment, such as scaffolding or a work platform.

Ladders should:

- Only be used for light work of a short duration – 30 minutes or less.
- Be used by a person trained or supervised to work safely.
- Be in good condition - no loose rivets, no splits in the stiles, no missing, worn or damaged feet, and all safety components

working correctly.

- Be placed on firm, level ground free of loose material.
- Be positioned and secured at the top and bottom to prevent movement (if a leaning ladder).
- Stand one metre out at the base for every four metres of height (if a leaning ladder).
- Be used when locked in the fully-open position (if an A-frame or stepladder).

When using a ladder:

- Don't overreach – keep the line of your belt buckle inside the stiles and both feet on the same rung while working.
- Always carry tools on a tool belt – don't rest them or other items on the steps or hanging from the rungs.

- Don't climb or work past the second-last rung of a ladder, and never straddle the top of an A-frame or stepladder.
- Keep both feet on the same rung or step throughout the task.
- Don't overload yourself – the combined weight of you and the items you're taking up the ladder should not exceed the ladder's working load limit.
- Never lean or reach away from the ladder while you're using it. ✗

"Ladders must stand one metre out at the base for every four metres of height. "

The 3 points rule

When using a ladder, keep three points of contact at all times – two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand while climbing, and two feet and one hand when working.

If using a stepladder and you need to use both hands for a brief period, keep two feet on the same step and your body (knees or chest) supported by the stepladder to maintain three points of contact.



Ask an expert about ...

The NSW Food Authority replies:

Food poisoning affects at least 600 million people every year and can range from mild to fatal. It can have very serious health consequences for anyone considered at risk, such as pregnant women, the elderly and anyone with a compromised immune system.

Some foods are definitely higher risk, with meat and chicken at the top of this

Q Is meat the food most likely to cause food poisoning?

list. It's important to cook mince, sausages, stuffed meats and chicken right through to the centre. You should not be able to see any pink meat and the juices should be clear. Steak, chops and whole cuts of red meat are a little different – you can cook these to your preference as food poisoning bacteria are mostly on the surface. Just make sure you don't put cooked meat back on a plate that held raw meat.

Dairy products, eggs and egg products are also considered high-risk foods, as are hams and salamis, and seafood. Make sure these

are eaten or refrigerated as soon as possible after cooking.

What we often overlook is the risk in foods such as cooked rice and pasta, prepared salads like coleslaw, fruit salads and ready-to-eat foods like sandwiches, rolls and pizza. These foods are often left out of the fridge when it's full, but they may harbour heat-resistant toxins that can cause food poisoning. These foods should not be kept out of the fridge for any longer than two hours. And remember, if in doubt, throw it out – you don't want to risk food poisoning.

App of the month

Simple Habit.

If you've heard about all the benefits of meditation but feel you just don't have the time for it, then try Simple Habit. This app is designed for busy

people who can find just five minutes a day for a guided meditation to reduce stress, improve focus, sleep better, breathe easier and much more. The meditation sessions from Simple Habit are designed for life's daily problems and guided by trained teachers.

Available free and by subscription from the App Store and Google Play.

News Bites



One more reason to floss

Gum disease, also known as gingivitis, has been linked to a higher risk of heart disease. Now a study published in the journal *Science Advances* says that the bacteria that cause gingivitis may also be connected to Alzheimer's disease. Researchers found evidence of high levels of an enzyme released by a bacteria species associated with gingivitis in the brains of people who had died from Alzheimer's.

What can you do? You can fight gingivitis with good oral health habits – daily flossing, brushing twice a day, and regular dental check-ups. ✕

Could your watch save your life?

Can wearable devices identify potential heart problems? It seems so, with Apple Inc's Heart study finding that an Apple Watch could accurately detect atrial fibrillation, the most common type of irregular heartbeat.

Researchers at Stanford University School of Medicine tested the Apple Watch's heart rate sensor and algorithm in more than 400,000 participants who signed up for the eight-month trial. During the study, 0.5 per cent of participants received a warning that they had an irregular pulse, and of these, 35 per cent were later found to have atrial fibrillation.

Flex your way to better blood pressure

Yoga is extremely popular worldwide as a cardio, strength and flexibility exercise, with an estimated 300 million practitioners worldwide. Yoga's focus on physical postures, breathing techniques and meditation appeals to all age groups, and it has been shown to help relieve stress, improve sleep, reduce lower back and neck pain and can lead to gradual, moderate weight loss.

The results of a recent systematic review published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* showed that regular yoga practice (at least three times a week) was just as effective as aerobic exercise to reduce blood pressure. ✕

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Published by: Healthworks®

Suite 3.06, 55 Miller Street Pyrmont NSW 2009 Australia
ACN 624 842 351 **Phone:** 1300 90 10 90

Website: www.healthworks.com.au

Editorial Team:

Editor: Jenny Boss MHumNutr

Subscriptions: Janelle Gibb

Email: well@healthworks.com.au

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Smaller serve sizes count

We know that if you serve people more food they will eat more. But is it the size of each food item or the number of items that matters most? A study published in *Appetite* journal set out to find the answer.

Researchers offered people a plate of brownies to eat while watching a video. Each plate held one, two, four or eight brownie squares in one of three sizes: small, medium and large.

People tended to eat more when the plate held a smaller number of large brownies than when it held a larger number of small brownies. For example, 60 per cent of participants ate two large brownies, whereas only 40 per cent ate four medium brownies and 18 per cent ate eight small brownies (even though each of the plates held the same weight of brownie).

So if you want to eat less, stick with smaller-size items.

1

THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



Switch off your phone when eating

Paying more attention while you're eating, rather than focusing on eating less, might be one of the simplest things you can do to help you shed excess kilos or stop you overeating. One way many of us get distracted during eating is constantly checking our phones, while at other times we eat at our desks or when watching TV.

A team of scientists from the University of Birmingham, UK, looked at the medical literature on how attention and memory affect food intake. They found that slowing down and savouring your food can help you control your intake – some people called this mindful eating. The studies showed that being distracted or not paying attention to a meal tended to make people eat more at that meal, while paying attention to the food you're eating was linked to eating less later on.

One explanation is that when we're distracted we miss the satiety signals sent out by our brain. After you start eating, it takes at least 20 minutes before your brain gives out the 'I'm full' messages that turn off your appetite. If you're in a hurry or not paying attention to these signals, it's easy to eat more than you need.

What's more, eating in a hurry is also more likely to lead to heartburn, bloating, belching and stomach pain. Time to slow down!

Smart Eating Week, supported by the Dietitians Association of Australia, runs from 10 to 16 February. ✕

EAT SMARTER

Make your own muesli

Commercially made muesli can be expensive and is not always a healthy option. Plain muesli is generally okay (just check the sugar content), but any products labelled 'granola', 'crunchy', or 'clusters' may have too much added sugar and fat.

It's really easy to make your own muesli, and you can add exactly what you like.

The grains

Start with a base of wholegrains. Most muesli contains rolled oats, but you can also add rolled barley, rice, rye or quinoa for a change.

A word about wholegrains. Some people say we should eliminate grains from our diet altogether. That would be a mistake, says Australian scientist Professor Felice Jacka. An expert in the relationship between diet and mental health, Jacka says fibre from wholegrains is extremely important to gut health. Removing it is likely to have an impact on the diversity of our gut bacteria, she explains, which evidence suggests can affect us physically and mentally. Eating nutrient-rich wholegrains is also linked to a reduced incidence of chronic inflammation, a longer lifespan and a reduced risk of cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

The fruit

Dried fruit offers natural sweetness, vitamins, minerals and fibre. You can try different types like dried strawberries, sour cherries, figs or mango. And if you dislike dried fruit? Leave it out and add your own fresh berries or banana.

Nuts and seeds

Nuts and seeds are nature's multivitamins in a crunchy package. Include almonds, Brazil nuts, walnuts and macadamias for their texture, micronutrients and healthy fats. Toss in some pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and chia seeds for added fibre and minerals. After extra flavour? Add some coconut flakes, dried ginger or cinnamon. ✕



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