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# Healthy LIVING



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# Cherries offer some sweet perks

## BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Eating healthy, diverse food offerings is a step in the right direction for overall wellness. Foods rich in essential vitamins and minerals should be front and center in most people's diets, and one particular fruit is quite literally the cherry on top when it comes to nutritional value.

Cherries, which are small stone fruits (fruits that have a pit or seed inside), boast some impressive benefits. Michigan grows most of the sour cherries in the United States, while Washington, California and Oregon grow 90 percent of the sweet cherries. Whether they're tart or sweet, the nutritional benefits of cherries abound. Here's a look at some

of the health benefits.

### • High in antioxidants:

Cherries are high in plant chemicals (polyphenols and anthocyanins) that have antioxidant properties. The Cleveland Clinic says antioxidants fight free radicals, which can cause cell damage and contribute to chronic diseases. Cherries contain vitamins A, C and E.

### • Reduce inflammation:

These same plant chemicals also are vital in reducing inflammation throughout the body. Healthline says cherries can reduce inflammation by blocking inflammatory enzymes and lowering inflammatory markers. This is good news for people with arthritis or gout, who may find that consuming cherries



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or drinking cherry juice can alleviate symptoms.

### • Promote restful sleep:

Tart cherries contain key compounds that support better sleep, says WebMD. These include melatonin, serotonin and tryptophan.

These natural chemicals help promote relaxation and sleep-wake cycles.

### • Low glycemic index:

Cherries are low-glycemic index foods. The fiber from the skin facilitates a slow increase in blood sugar, which

makes cherries a treat for those with diabetes when enjoyed in moderation. Research is underway to see if a healthy diet that includes cherries may reverse prediabetes, says the Cleveland Clinic.

It's always best to thoroughly wash cherries to remove any dirt and pesticide residue. WebMD says cherry pits naturally have small amounts of cyanide in them. One would have to eat a lot of crushed pits for them to be harmful, but it's best to spit out the pits. Pits should be removed before giving cherries to children. Select cherries that have bright green stems, plump fruit and a darker color, which have a better flavor profile.

# Help With Your Health Goals

## BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Technology has touched every facet of our lives — including wellness.

Recent innovations like cellphone apps, smart watches and fitness trackers have made it easier than ever to establish and reach individual health objectives. Whether your goal is to stay fit, lose weight or enhance your general well-being, there's breakthrough technology to help you get there. Nowadays, we can even schedule and conduct some doctor visits online.

### Nutrition And Meal-Planning Apps

A balanced diet plays an essential role in achieving any health

objective, whether you want to build muscle, lose weight or simply promote overall wellness. Applications now help users record their meals, record macronutrient levels and keep up with calorie consumption. Some of these programs even generate customized meal plans and shopping lists catering to individual dietary preferences or restrictions.

### Trackers And Smartwatches

Among the newest and most sought-after tools are fitness trackers and smartwatches. These devices are worn on the body, where they keep tabs on a range of metrics, including calories burned, steps taken, heart rate and sleep patterns. Some measure additional indicators such as oxygen saturation. You can set daily targets like taking 10,000

steps or burning a specified number of calories, then maintain your own accountability with technology. Many trackers offer reminders to move after prolonged inactivity.

### Telehealth Services

The era of obligatory doctor visits for all health issues is now behind us. Telehealth services have transformed healthcare accessibility, enabling patients to connect with healthcare professionals from the comfort of home. Whether you need guidance on a minor issue or are dealing with a chronic condition, online consultations can help without the inconvenience of traveling across town. In addition to virtual consultations, many telehealth platforms provide secure messaging options that allow for

on-the-go questions or prescription refills.

### Mental Health Apps

Health applications can assist with mental health, addressing issues with anxiety, stress and other challenges. Some fitness and wellness platforms provide guided meditation, mindfulness practices and even therapy sessions. Many incorporate goal-setting tools and community features that let users engage with others who have similar objectives. You can log workouts while interacting with others, fostering a sense of camaraderie and friendly competition. Take part in challenges, motivate new friends and track your progress in the spirit of inspiration and accountability.

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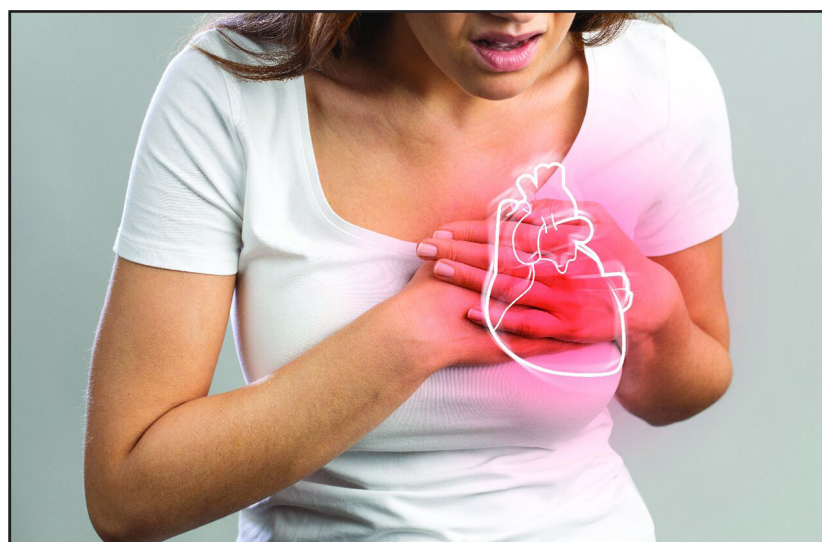
# Symptoms of common heart conditions

## BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death around the world, indicates the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Globally, CVDs were responsible for around 19 million deaths in 2022. In the United States, heart disease affects around 128 million adults. Learning to recognize symptoms of potential heart conditions can ensure people know when to take action that may prevent further problems down the road.

Heart conditions can present in many ways, and symptoms of various conditions can overlap. This general guide, based on data from the Mayo Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic, serves as a warning and not a diagnosis. Those with any sudden, severe or “not right” symptoms are urged to seek immediate medical attention.

• **Coronary artery disease:** CAD can result in chest pain (angina),



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often with exertion. Shortness of breath, fatigue, and pain that may radiate to the arm, jaw, neck, or back are possible.

• **Myocardial infarction (heart attack):** A heart attack can produce different symptoms in men and

women, so it's best to treat any out-of-the-ordinary signs with caution. Intense chest pressure or squeezing; pain spreading to arms, jaw, back, or stomach; shortness of breath; nausea; cold sweats, lightheadedness; fatigue; or back

pain merit medical attention.

• **Heart failure:** Those experiencing heart failure may have persistent shortness of breath; swelling in legs, feet or abdomen; rapid weight gain from fluid retention; fatigue; and difficulty lying flat due to breathing trouble.

• **Arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat):** Irregular heartbeat can lead to palpitations or fluttering of the heart; dizziness or fainting; shortness of breath; chest discomfort; and fatigue.

• **Atrial fibrillation (AFib):** AFib is an irregular and often rapid heart rhythm that starts in the heart's upper chambers. It can cause fast heartbeat; fatigue; shortness of breath; dizziness; and chest discomfort.

Heart conditions can lead to a variety of symptoms, many of which will overlap. For a thorough diagnosis, it is best to first see a primary care physician, who may then refer patients to a cardiologist.

# I don't like the gym. Now what?

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Exercise is an important component of overall health. Experts say that adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise each week, along with muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week. Some believe heading to the gym is the best way to get the exercise they need, and it very well may be... unless it's not. Some people don't like going to a gym and are therefore unlikely to do so with enough consistency to benefit from a membership. However, the gym is not the only place where individuals can meet fitness requirements.

Those who are not necessarily enamored with the idea of exercising at a gym for a variety of reasons can rest assured that it's still possible to be fit and healthy. In 2023, Civic Science polled thousands of Americans on how they chose to exercise and found that exercising at home is more popular than heading to the gym. Fifty-two percent of respondents said they exercised regularly at home, while 28 percent exercised regularly at a gym.



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At-home exercisers also were 21 percent more likely than gym-goers to say they worked out once a week or more.

People who want to find ways to stay fit without a fitness club membership have plenty of options.

• **Get at-home equipment.** Setting up gym equipment in a spare room, the basement or the garage can help at-home fitness fans exercise. All it takes is some compact

weights, perhaps a treadmill or elliptical and a few additional items to exercise effectively at home.

• **Tune into streaming services.** Many content providers upload exercise videos online so people can follow along at home or elsewhere. A quick search of YouTube offers a variety of options that fit with the type of exercise one desires. From 30-minute aerobic walking workouts to rebounding to yoga videos,

content is there and also may be free to watch.

• **Head outdoors.** Walking or jogging around the neighborhood or on local trails can be effective. Plus, it exposes a person to sunlight and fresh air, and provides an opportunity to see people in the community.

• **Play a sport and/or join a club.** Individuals may want to take up a physical activity, like joining a sports team or participating in a club that has physical activity, such as a hiking club. The Better Health Channel says exercising with a friend is a great way to stay motivated, as each person can spur on the other.

• **Turn on some tunes.** Dancing around to favorite songs is a fun way to engage in physical activity. If other exercise ideas seem uninspiring, upbeat songs that get a person moving can help. Union Health says keeping one's heart rate between roughly 114 to 135 beats per minute is a good workout. Search for songs that will help achieve that rate.

If heading to the gym isn't a person's first choice for exercise, there are several other ways to exercise.



# Simple ways to add more fiber to your diet

## BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

A healthy diet includes a mix of various vitamins, minerals and nutrients. In fact, those seeking to eat healthy may sometimes be overwhelmed by medical advice recommending an array of items so wide it can seem difficult to squeeze everything in without eating too much food. Thankfully, there are many simple ways to get enough of what you need, and that includes fiber.

The Mayo Clinic notes that a high-fiber diet supports a healthy body in various ways. A high fiber diet can reduce risk for constipation, help people maintain low cholesterol levels, promote bowel health, and slow the absorption of sugar, which can improve blood sugar levels in people with diabetes. With so much to gain from including fiber in your diet, the following are some strategies to do just that.

- **Begin the day with fiber.** One of the most effective ways to eat enough fiber is to choose the right breakfast cereal. Many breakfast cereals contain ample amounts of fiber, and the Mayo Clinic advises looking for one that contains five grams or more of fiber per serving. Though this is not always the case, and shoppers are urged to read nutrition labels before purchasing a new cereal, products that contain the descriptors whole grain, bran or fiber in the name tend to feature ample amounts of fiber.

- **Supplement your cereal.** Another simple way to start the day with fiber is to add berries or sliced bananas to your cereal bowl. Blueberries (roughly four grams per cup) and strawberries (about three grams per cup) are high in fiber and also can up the flavor profile of your morning cereal. The USDA



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National Database for Standard Reference indicates a medium-sized banana contains roughly three grams of fiber, making any of these, or a combination of them, great additions to a cereal bowl.

- **Replace white bread with wheat bread and traditional pasta with whole grain alternatives.** Verywell Health notes that wheat bread is generally

considered healthier than white bread due in part to its higher fiber content. The same dynamic plays out with whole grain pasta compared to traditional pasta. Traditional pasta is made from refined flour that has the bran removed during processing, whereas the fiber-rich bran is not removed when making whole grain pasta. It can take some getting used to,

but opting for whole grain pasta and wheat bread over more traditional but less nutritious alternatives can be a great way to include more fiber in your diet.

- **Eat healthier snacks.**

Nacho lovers might be surprised to learn that tweaking their nachos recipe can be another way to eat more fiber. When making nachos for the big game, prepare them using whole-grain tortilla chips, legumes like black beans or red beans, and fresh vegetables like diced bell peppers. Another way to eat more fiber when snacking is to reach for whole-grain crackers, dried fruits without added sugar or a small amount of nuts in lieu of processed snacks like traditional potato chips.

Fiber is a key component of a healthy diet, and there are many simple and flavorful ways to eat more of it each day.

# Tips to safeguard your mental health each day

## BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

When seeking to be as healthy as possible, it's important that people do not overlook the importance of protecting mental health. The World Health Organization says more than a billion people across the globe live with a mental health condition. The need for action on mental health is urgent and undeniable, as safeguarding mental health is integral to a person's well-being.

The National Institute of Mental Health says that mental health is more than just the absence of a mental illness. It includes emotional, psychological and social well-being. Self-care and action play key roles in maintaining good mental health and getting support and treatment if a serious issue is present. Here are steps anyone can take each

day to protect their mental health.

- **Exercise regularly.** Just 30 minutes of exercise most days, which can include walking, can boost a person's mood and improve health. The NIMH says small amounts of exercise add up, so it's possible to spread out the 30 minutes over the course of the day. Exercising outdoors also exposes a person to natural sunlight, which is proven to boost mood.

- **Foster relationships.** Good relationships are important for mental well-being. If possible, a person should take time each day to be with family, friends or colleagues. Volunteer work at a local school, community group or hospital can foster socialization for those who may not be able to get together with friends or family with regularity.



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- **Learn new skills.** The United Kingdom-based NHS Services says research shows learning new skills can improve mental well-being by boosting self-esteem and self-confidence. It also helps identify a sense of purpose.

- **Relax.** People should schedule time for relaxation and stress management. Yoga, meditation, reading,

or spending time in nature are great ways to slow down, relax and recharge.

- **Seek help.** Anyone with a mental health concern should seek someone to talk to. For some, simply talking things through with a friend or family member may be enough to resolve issues. Others may find that talking to a therapist or counselor

is the best course of action. There also are support groups where others who understand similar experiences can provide validation and support.

- **Curtail harmful behaviors.** Some people turn to drugs and alcohol to mitigate mental health issues. This self-medication is harmful and can exacerbate mental health conditions. Individuals should consult with medical professionals if they suspect they may need medication or additional help to treat mental health issues.

Efforts to safeguard mental health are essential. Anyone who has concerns about their mental health or the mental health of others should speak first to a primary care provider. He or she can then offer a referral to a qualified mental health professional.



# Tips to ensure a better night's sleep

**BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION**

A state of sleep is necessary to give the body and mind time to recharge and prepare for the next day. Though such benefits are widely recognized, a significant percentage of individuals across the globe are failing to get sufficient rest, a dangerous reality that could be putting people at risk for various diseases and conditions.

Lack of sleep is such a prominent problem that the research team behind a 2024 study published in the journal The Lancet: Diabetes & Endocrinology dubbed insufficient sleep as a “neglected public health issue.” That study surveyed 2,000 adults in the United Kingdom and found that 90 percent of respondents reported current sleep problems, with two-thirds of those individuals indicating they had experienced their issues for

more than six years. And it's not just adults suffering from sleep issues, as a 2023 peer-reviewed editorial written for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the modern 24-hour lifestyle and pervasive utilization of electronics and social media is normalizing insufficient sleep among children and adolescents.

Sleeping problems are not to be taken lightly, as the National Institutes of Health notes sleep deficiency has been linked to heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, obesity, and depression. Children who are not getting enough sleep may experience difficulty paying attention, which could adversely affect their academic performance, and might be prone to misbehavior. Of course, many of these side effects can be avoided by getting sufficient sleep. With that in mind, adults, parents,



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children, and adolescents can consider these strategies to get a better night's sleep, courtesy of the Sleep Foundation.

- **Replace an old mattress.** Old mattresses can be uncomfortable and thus make it harder to fall asleep.
- **Block out light.** Light exposure adversely affects circadian rhythm, so keep external light out of your bedroom and dim lights as bedtime approaches. Avoiding bright light as you transition to bedtime can contribute to the production of the hormone

- melatonin, which facilitates sleep.
- **Set an appropriate temperature.** The Sleep Foundation advises setting a bedroom temperature thermostat to between 65 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit to prevent feelings of being too hot or too cold when going to bed.
- **Wake up at the same time each day.** A routine that includes the same wake-up time each day can acclimate the body to a healthy sleep routine.
- **Begin to relax 30**

- minutes before bed.** A pre-bedtime routine focused on relaxation can facilitate sleep. The Sleep Foundation notes activities like quiet reading, low-impact stretching, listening to soothing music, and mindfulness meditation can help you ease into sleep.
  - **Avoid devices an hour before bed.** The light emitted by tablets, smartphones and laptops can suppress melatonin production, making it hard to fall asleep. Make the hour before bedtime each night a device-free time.
  - **Exercise each day, but avoid intense activity close to bedtime.** Daily exercise has been found to promote sleep, but intense exercise right before bed can make it hard for the body to settle down.
- Insufficient sleep is an emerging issue for people of all ages across the globe. Some simple strategies can be employed to facilitate a better night's rest.

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# Probiotics may provide a healthy boost

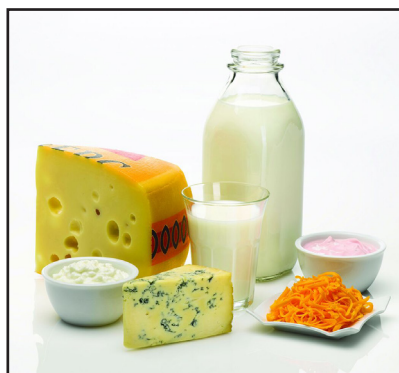
## BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

It's easy to view bacteria and yeasts through a particular lens, without realizing that these microorganisms serve various functions. Certainly, bacteria can lead to infections, but certain bacteria also are important for maintaining health.

Probiotics are live microorganisms (mostly bacteria and some yeasts) that may offer various health benefits. Probiotics are sometimes referred to as “good” or “beneficial” microbes due to their role in balancing the gut ecosystem. The Mayo Clinic reports that research suggests probiotics may be helpful, but it hasn't yet been proven that probiotics improve health and are safe for everyone. While side effects from probiotic supplements seem to be rare, it's best to consult a physician before taking such products.

### What are some common probiotics?

The National Center for



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Complementary and Integrative Health says the most common probiotics are bacteria that belong to groups called Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium. Others are yeasts such as Saccharomyces boulardii. Probiotics are found in various foods, including fermented dairy products like yogurt, kefir and cheese as well as other fermented foods, including sauerkraut, kimchi, pickles, tempeh, miso, sourdough, salami, olives, and kombucha. Additional forms of probiotics include probiotic capsules and powders.

### What are prebiotics?

The terms prebiotics and probiotics cannot be used interchangeably. Harvard Health says prebiotics are ingredients in certain foods that the intestines cannot fully digest. One can think of prebiotics as the food upon which probiotics feed. Prebiotics also may trigger the growth of good microbes in the digestive tract.

### Potential probiotic benefits

Probiotics may benefit health through several mechanisms. They may restore gut microbe balance after a poor diet, illness or antibiotic use. Probiotics can help crowd out harmful pathogens in the gut. They may reduce “leaky gut” by supporting gut barrier integrity. Probiotics also may calm inflammation and help boost the immune system.

### Additional uses for probiotics

Probiotics are largely known for their use in the digestive tract, but probiotics also come in topical

versions or suppositories to target specific areas. Harvard Health says vaginal probiotic supplements are hugely popular and are designed to promote beneficial bacteria. Some common gynecological conditions are thought to be caused by an imbalance of bacteria inside the vagina. However, as of now, the benefits of suppositories like these are unknown and should be discussed with a gynecologist before use.

Topical probiotics have demonstrated beneficial effects for the treatment of certain inflammatory conditions like acne, rosacea, psoriasis, and others, says the National Institute of Health. But again, caution should be heeded and any new products should be discussed with a doctor.

Probiotics are an all-natural alternative that many people consider when seeking to improve personal health. It's important to speak with health care providers about the efficacy of probiotics and whether they are safe and effective for particular needs.

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# Staying on Schedule

## BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Unfortunately, some tend to think of a doctor's visit only in terms of sickness or injury.

While it's important to seek prompt medical attention in those cases, regular well visits and health screenings play an essential role in sustaining overall health. Don't underestimate the importance of these periodic checkups. Schedule at least one appointment each year, regardless of how healthy you feel. Many insurance plans cover these visits, and Medicare often provides them at no charge.

## Prevention And Early Detection

Well visits help doctors spot concerning health trends and diagnose unseen problems. Both are key to averting health issues down the road. During these sessions, healthcare professionals perform tests that offer a detailed overview of your current status. The consultation typically involves reviewing your medical history, as well as physical assessments and routine screenings. By the end of the appointment, you'll have established vital health benchmarks.



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They'll be referenced and regularly monitored to minimize your risks of illness or other future complications. Visits may include things like mammograms, mental health evaluations and checks for colorectal cancer. Doctors then make key recommendations or prescribe medication as

needed.

## Overall Well-Being

In addition to illness prevention and treatment, well visits help with patients' overall health. Your healthcare provider will talk about better lifestyle practices during your visit, including exercise, stress management,

nutrition and mental health. These visits may include vaccinations that are meant to protect you and your community from preventable illnesses. As needed, you could receive advice on weight management, smoking cessation or other tailored recommendations. In the end, you'll have a customized plan that encourages healthier behaviors and improves your quality of life.

## What To Talk About

Establishing and maintaining a straightforward, honest relationship with your healthcare provider is vitally important. The end result of these regular well visits should be a complete picture of your health and lifestyle with action items based on your specific health needs. You'll be encouraged to voice any questions or concerns. Your doctor will offer personalized health guidance that fits your individual situation. During follow-up visits, discuss any changes you have experienced since the last appointment. Your medical recommendations may change over time with age-appropriate therapies and tests.

# Debunking Health Myths

## BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Now more than ever, we're surrounded by misleading or completely false information.

Blame, in some cases, goes to the internet. But many health myths go back much further, as stories handed down from generation to generation. Here's a look at several very common — but completely wrong — health myths.

## Catching A Cold

Perhaps you got caught in the rain. Or maybe, after a long day, you simply find it too exhausting to dry your hair after taking a shower. Heading to bed with damp hair will almost certainly result in messy hair in the morning — but it won't lead to a cold. Experts say the temperature or moisture of your body doesn't have anything to do with catching viruses like the common cold. There is one worry when it comes to going to bed with wet hair: Wet pillows are more likely to harbor bacteria so doctors say those who are prone to acne should frequently change their pillowcases.



SIAM PUKKATO

## Weight Watchers

Being healthy involves a variety of factors, with your body weight representing only one aspect. Doctors report that it's not unusual to encounter patients who are thin and have lots of health problems. The reverse, of course, is also true.

Plenty of overweight people are perfectly healthy. Body mass index alone does not indicate good health.

## Sun Exposure

For years, people believed that getting a so-called "base tan" before a beach outing would protect the

skin from sunburn. Some people would even frequent tanning salons for this specific purpose. But skin requires much more than that to be protected. Experts say these kinds of tans may provide a sun protection factor of only 1 to 4. The minimum recommended SPF is 30. Any form of tanning heightens the risk of developing skin cancer and can accelerate skin aging.

## Fat-Burning Alternatives

There are plenty of supplements and foods currently being promoted as fat-burning options. These claims have typically not been evaluated by actual doctors. The only reliable way to burn fat, encourage weight loss and boost metabolism is through exercise. There's a direct correlation between inactivity and negative health outcomes like heart disease. Diets focusing on limited food options or even a single item risk depriving your body of essential nutrients. Being physically active also strengthens our social connections.



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