

Secrets of Daily Self-Care



The words “self-care” can seem daunting. After all, who has time to book spa treatments when you’ve got deadlines? However, self-care doesn’t have to be intimidating. You can even incorporate it into your daily routine.

To get started, pick one or two of these health-boosting habits:

- ① Take a walk — even ten minutes daily can make a positive difference in your physical and mental health.
- ② Unplug for a half hour after work and enjoy the outdoors or a good book.
- ③ Start your day with meditation, yoga, stretching or walking to center yourself and boost your energy.
- ④ Get seven to nine hours of quality sleep. Begin by going to bed and getting up at relatively the same time every day (even weekends).
- ⑤ Take time to write down or think about what you are thankful for — it can be anything from a meaningful moment, a beautiful day, a kind gesture or a special person in your life. **Tip:** At the end of the day, write down one thing that made you happy. Ideas: found money in your pocket, a phone call from a friend.
- ⑥ Compliment someone. Being kind to others can bring you joy, too.
- ⑦ Eat healthfully and stay hydrated. Bring nutritious snacks and a big water jug with you so you’re not tempted to eat sugary food.
- ⑧ Start a new hobby and dedicate time to it daily — even if it’s only 20 minutes.
- ⑨ Play your favorite song on the way to or from work.
- ⑩ Give yourself at least ten minutes of me time each day. It can be something as simple as sipping a cup of tea on the back porch or visiting a museum.

For days when you have more time, add a few more from this list. You don’t have to do everything on this list every day. Remember: Every small step benefits you.

Nutrition and Chronic Health Conditions

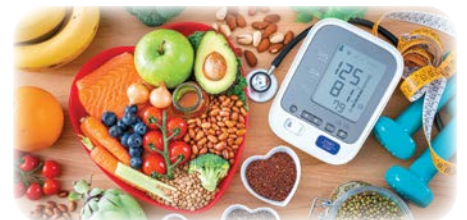
By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

About 60% of adults in the U.S. have at least one chronic health condition, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, arthritis, cancer or Alzheimer’s disease.

Nutrition plays an important role in these chronic conditions — for both treatment and potential prevention.

It is smart to work with a dietitian who can customize a nutrition plan to meet your specific nutrition needs. That’s even more crucial if you are among the 40% of U.S. adults who have two or more chronic diseases. Dietitians can help you build an evidence-based eating plan while accounting for these factors:

- Medical conditions.
- Preferences.
- Budget.
- Cultural or religious needs.
- Food allergies or intolerances.
- Health goals.
- Lifestyle factors (family, cooking skills, schedules, time constraints, etc.).



The diet plans for many chronic health conditions are remarkably similar.

For example, the recommended diet plan for preventing or treating heart disease, high cholesterol, arthritis and cancer is largely the same. It includes:

- Lots of vegetables and fruit.
- Whole grains (whole-wheat bread, oats, brown rice) more often than refined grains (white bread and white rice).
- Plant-based proteins (tofu, beans, chickpeas or lentils) a few times a week.
- Fish, poultry or plant proteins more often than red meat.
- Fat from olive oil, nuts and avocado more often than from butter, lard or tallow.
- Cutting back on sugary drinks, salty snacks, pastries, candy and fast food.

This food pattern has been thoroughly researched, and many studies show that it can reduce chronic disease risk. It may be called the Mediterranean diet, DASH diet, plant-based diet, etc.

Tip: Steer clear of bad advice from social media influencers without nutrition credentials. They often recommend restrictive diets (only red meat; only fruit; etc.) that are not nutritious or balanced (and may be unsafe). Stick to what works based on evidence from nutrition research.



How to Quit Vaping

Many people use vaping as a smoking cessation tool when, in fact, it can be even more addictive. What makes using e-cigarettes more concerning is that people can buy extra-strength cartridges packed with a higher concentration of nicotine or even increase the e-cigarette's voltage to get a stronger hit. That means they're taking in more nicotine than they would with a traditional cigarette. And nicotine is unsafe in any form — it can raise blood pressure and adversely affect your heart rate.

In addition, many vape flavors contain potentially harmful chemicals, and scientists still don't fully know what vaping does to our bodies in the long-term. Studies link it to serious health issues such as chronic lung disease, asthma and heart conditions — especially for those who vape and smoke.

Since both involve a nicotine addiction, quitting vaping can be just as hard as quitting smoking, but these guidelines can help:

Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for a free, confidential, trained quit coach.

Consider cognitive behavioral therapy and medication to help you with withdrawal symptoms.

Talk to your health care provider about prescribing medications or crafting a quit plan to help you manage nicotine withdrawal.

Make your quit plan:

- Pick a date to quit.
- Write down your reasons for quitting: Is it the cost? The effects of withdrawal? Your provider's recommendation? To set a good example? For your family and friends?
- Know your triggers.
- Set yourself up for success. Some ideas include finding a quit buddy or distracting yourself with something fun (a new hobby, playing a game).

For a detailed, personalized quit plan, visit smokefree.gov.

Q: Why do I get sick in the winter?

A: More people catch colds, influenza, RSV, COVID-19 and other respiratory infections during the cold winter months than the rest of year. The highest incidence occurs in October through March. Several factors increase the likelihood of getting sick this time of year.

Cold weather: Lower temperatures reduce the immune response in the nose to viruses. One study found that a decrease of 9°F (5°C) inside the nose cuts immunity to infectious diseases by almost half. Lower immunity makes us more susceptible to getting sick from viruses.

Dry air: Indoor heating lowers humidity. Hairlike cells called cilia in the nose normally sweep viruses out of the nose. But cilia don't work as well in the low humidity caused by heated rooms.

More indoor time: Meetings, parties and gatherings: People tend to socialize inside in the winter. As a result of the close contact and enclosed spaces, any infections going around are more likely to spread. — Elizabeth Smoots, MD



Coping with Holiday Stress

November kicks off the holiday season and, for many people, that sparks stress. In fact, the American Psychological Association reports that about nine in ten Americans feel extra stress this time of year. Worries often mount about expenses associated with holiday shopping and Thanksgiving feasts. Jam-packed schedules, family tensions and concerns about over-eating and weight gain are common and can spark anxiety, too.

While there's no magic way to make all holiday stress disappear, there are strategies to help you cope and find more calm:

Be kind to yourself. Not up to hosting a big Thanksgiving dinner for your family and friends? Consider eating out or scaling down your holiday meal this year.

Enjoy holiday meals but eat consciously. You'll feel better physically and emotionally if you opt for moderation, especially when it comes to alcohol or high-calorie dishes.

Don't overschedule. Give yourself permission to say no when you need to.

Have a plan for family disagreements. It's not unusual for arguments about politics, religion and other contentious subjects to arise over the holidays, even at Thanksgiving dinner. Instead of participating in heated exchanges, excuse yourself and go for a walk. Or change the subject.

Consider meditation, yoga or other ways to relax. Watch relaxation videos or practice calming deep breathing. Walking outdoors is a proven mood booster, too.

Plan a realistic budget for gift giving and stick to it. Don't get swept away with holiday sales which aren't always the bargains they seem.

Take ongoing stress seriously. If the holidays trigger ongoing anxiety or depression, contact your health care provider for an evaluation.



Smart Moves Toolkit: personalbest.com/extras/25V11tools. Printable download: **Bacterial vs. Viral — What's Bugging You?**

11.2025