

# Health and Wellness

## News You Can Use

## Tips for staying youthful and healthy

Though aging is inevitable, we are all in search of a “Fountain of Youth” that can keep us younger. Though it might not be possible to reverse aging, we can slow down the process. Here are some health tips for staying young and healthy!

### 1. Get mental stimulation.

Through research with mice and humans, doctors suspect that brainy activities stimulate new connections between nerve cells and may even help the brain generate new cells, developing neurological “plasticity” and building up a functional reserve that provides a hedge against future cell loss. Any mentally stimulating activity should help to build up your brain. Read, take courses, try “mental gymnastics” such as word puzzles or math problems. Experiment with things that require manual dexterity as well as mental effort, such as drawing, painting and other crafts.

### 2. Get physical exercise.

Research shows that using your muscles may also help your mind. Animals who exercise regularly increase the number of tiny blood vessels that bring oxygen-rich blood to the region of the brain that is responsible for thought. Exercise also spurs the development of new nerve cells and increases the connections between brain cells (synapses). This results in brains that are more efficient, plastic and adaptive, which translates into better performance in aging animals. Exercise also lowers blood pressure, improves cholesterol



levels, fights diabetes and reduces mental stress, all of which can help your brain as well as your heart.

### 3. Improve your diet.

Good nutrition can help your mind as well as your body. Here are some specifics:

- Keep your calories in check. In both animals and humans, a reduced caloric intake has been linked to a lower risk of mental decline in old age.
- Eat the right foods. That means reducing your consumption of saturated fat and cholesterol from animal sources and of trans-fatty acids from partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.
- Remember your Bs. Three B vitamins: B9 (folic acid), B6 and

B12, can help lower your homocysteine levels, high levels of which have been linked to an increased risk of dementia. Fortified cereal, other grains and leafy green vegetables are good sources of B vitamins.

### 4. Improve your blood pressure.

High blood pressure in midlife increases the risk of cognitive decline in old age. Use lifestyle modification to keep your pressure as low as possible. Stay lean, exercise regularly, limit your alcohol to two drinks a day, reduce stress and eat right.

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### 5. Improve your blood sugar.

Diabetes is an important risk factor for dementia. You can fight diabetes by eating right, exercising regularly and staying lean. But if your blood sugar stays high, you'll need medication to achieve good control.

### 6. Improve your cholesterol.

High levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol increase the risk of dementia, as do low levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol. Diet, exercise, weight control and avoiding tobacco will go a long way toward improving your cholesterol levels. But if you need more help, ask your doctor about medication.

### 7. Consider low-dose aspirin.

Observational studies suggest that long-term use of aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may reduce the risk of dementia by 10%–55%. It's hopeful information, but it's preliminary. Experts are not ready to recommend aspirin specifically for dementia.

### 8. Avoid tobacco.

Avoid tobacco in all its forms.

### 9. Don't abuse alcohol.

Excessive drinking is a major risk factor for dementia. If you choose to



drink, limit yourself to two drinks a day. But if you use alcohol responsibly, you may actually reduce your risk of dementia. At least five studies have linked low-dose alcohol with a reduced risk of dementia in older adults.

### 10. Care for your emotions.

People who are anxious, depressed, sleep-deprived or exhausted tend to

score poorly on cognitive function tests. Poor scores don't necessarily predict an increased risk of cognitive decline in old age, but good mental health and restful sleep are certainly important goals.

### 11. Build social networks.

Strong social ties have been associated with lower blood pressure and longer life expectancies.

## Recipe

### Black bean and salmon tostadas

#### Ingredients

- 8 6-inch corn tortillas
- Canola oil cooking spray
- 1 6- to 7-ounce can boneless, skinless wild Alaskan salmon, drained
- 1 avocado, diced
- 2 tablespoons minced pickled jalapeños, plus 2 tablespoons pickling juice from the jar, divided
- 2 cups coleslaw mix or shredded cabbage
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed
- 3 tablespoons reduced-fat sour cream
- 2 tablespoons prepared salsa
- 2 scallions, chopped
- Lime wedges (optional)



#### Directions

1. Position racks in upper and lower thirds of the oven; preheat to 375°F.
2. Coat tortillas on both sides with cooking spray. Place on 2 baking sheets. Bake, turning once, until light brown, 12 to 14 minutes.
3. Combine salmon, avocado and jalapeños in a bowl. Combine cabbage, cilantro and the pickling juice in another bowl. Process black beans, sour cream, salsa and scallions in a food processor until smooth. Transfer to a microwave-safe bowl. Cover and microwave on High until hot, about 2 minutes.
4. To assemble tostadas, spread each tortilla with some bean mixture and some salmon mixture and top with the cabbage salad. Serve with lime wedges, if desired.

Source: EatingWell.com