

HEALTHY MIND HEART BODY

Health Tips for Heart, Mind, and Body

By [Jeanie Lerche Davis](#)

If you only do 5 things to boost health, what should you do?

Unhealthy lifestyle. It's a common contributor of our biggest health problems: stroke, heart disease, diabetes, cancer. What do the nation's top physicians recommend to keep your heart, mind, and body in optimally good health?

For the secrets to a long healthy life, WebMD turned to Richard A. Lange, MD, chief of cardiology at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

His advice:

1. Daily Exercise.

You brush your teeth every day; exercise is equally important for your daily routine. Turn off the TV or computer, and get at least 30 minutes of exercise every day.

To work your heart, it's got to be aerobic exercise. You've got lots of options: walking, jogging, biking, rowing machine, elliptical machine, swimming. But don't feel like you have to be an athlete. Walking is great exercise. Get 10 minutes here and there during the day. It all counts.

Start with something simple, like parking in the far corner of the parking lot -- so you get those extra steps to the door. Take the stairs one or two flights instead of the elevator. If you take public transportation, get off one stop early and walk the rest. Get out at lunch to

walk. Or walk with your significant other or your spouse after work. You'll get a bonus -- relaxation and stress reduction.

2. Healthy Diet.

Quit eating junk food and high-fat fast food. Your heart, brain, and overall health are harmed by foods high in saturated fats, salt, and cholesterol. There's no getting around it. You've got to replace them with healthy foods: lots of fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts, olive oil -- what we call the Mediterranean diet.

3. Weight Loss.

Too much body weight puts your health at great risk. When you take in more calories than you burn, you get fat -- it's that simple. You've got to eat less. You've got to exercise more. You've got to push yourself to make these lifestyle changes -- but you've got to do it to help avoid serious health problems like heart disease, diabetes, or stroke.

4. Regular Physical Exams.

Tell your doctor your family medical history. Learn your personal risk factors, and the screening tests you need. Women may have mammograms to screen for breast cancer and Pap tests for cervical cancer. Men may have prostate cancer PSA tests. Routine screening for colorectal cancer should start at age 50, perhaps earlier if colon cancer runs in your family. You also need regular diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol tests. Make sure your immunizations are up to date. You may need flu and pneumonia shots, depending on your age.

5. Less Stress.

When a person says they're too busy to exercise, it tells me other things are crowding out what's important in life: They don't spend time with family and friends; don't exercise enough; don't eat right; don't sleep properly. All these things reduce stress in your life, and that is critical to your health and longevity.

To be healthy, we need to set boundaries -- and set limits on work hours. We should not be working so hard that we're neglecting the things that keep us healthy. This is important advice, too, for people who take care of elderly parents or young children. Make sure you're getting proper exercise and sleep -- and that you're not trying to do too much.