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## Holiday Meal Makeovers

*With a few simple changes, you can prepare traditional dishes with flair, flavor, and fewer calories.*

**N**obody really wants to count calories during the holidays, but overindulging typically leads to weight gain during this time of year. On average, 5 pounds or more is common. If you're hosting a gathering, or taking a dish to one, there are some simple ways to make dishes special without loading them up with fat, sugar, and salt.



*Treat family and friends with deliciously healthy holiday fare.*

### Put a Twist on the Traditional

Most people have traditional dishes that they make for family and friends during the holidays. But it is possible to make healthier versions of holiday favorites. Dana Hunnes, PhD, a registered dietitian at UCLA Medical Center, offers these smart tips to help you create nutritious dishes that don't skimp on flavor.

"Instead of following the instructions on the package of store-bought, white bread stuffing by rote, you can make a mostly vegetable-filled stuffing, where whole-grain bread pieces just act as a flavoring," suggests Dr. Hunnes. "That cuts out a lot of calories, sodium, and improves the healthfulness of the dish."

Yam and bean casseroles are two favorites that appear on many holiday tables. Serve baked yams sprinkled with cinnamon and drizzled with maple syrup as an alternative to high-sugar marshmallows. As for those green beans made with cream-based soup, switch it up by making green bean almondine or green bean salad, offering a fresh flavorful alternative to a casserole made with high-sodium canned soup.

Think also about serving the meal in courses. Starting with a simple salad or a soup can help reduce overall calories. "Ginger pumpkin soup, with a base of vegetable or chicken broth, can reduce the caloric density of the meal, because research has

shown that people who eat soup at the start of a meal tend to eat fewer calories in that meal," says Dr. Hunnes.

Similarly, consider serving a bounty of non-starchy vegetables, which are lower in calories and carbohydrates. Think colorful red, yellow and green peppers and deep purple eggplant—all of which can be served simply baked and beautiful with a little olive oil, vinegar and a pinch of salt or herbs. Summer squashes, green asparagus, yellow baby corn, and a pop of red from radishes and cherry tomatoes can likewise add color, flavor and texture to holiday tables.

### The Perfect Dish

Controlling portion sizes is another way to enjoy a variety of holiday foods without overdoing it. If you're hosting the event, try using smaller plates. One study showed that when researchers gave participants 34- or 17-ounce bowls and told them to help themselves to ice cream, those with bigger bowls dished out 30 percent more. Also, some people may overload their plates at holiday gatherings and finish it all so as not to insult the host.

If larger dishes are the only option, visualize the plate into sections. ChooseMyPlate.gov recommends four sections, with

*Continued on page 7*

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your subscription, check your  
account status, or contact a  
customer service representative.**Study Assesses Dose and Delivery Method for Menopause HRT**

When it comes to assessing the risk of estrogen therapy for menopause, how the therapy is delivered—taking a pill versus wearing a patch on one's skin—doesn't affect risk or benefit, researchers at UCLA and elsewhere have found.

But with the commonly used conjugated equine estrogen, plus progesterone (natural or synthetic progesterone), the dosage does matter. Higher doses, especially over time, are associated with greater risk of problems, including heart disease and some types of cancer, especially among obese women. The Women's Health Initiative Observational Study (WHIOS) established the potential of estrogen therapy to increase or decrease the risk of stroke, breast cancer and heart attack, but research had never compared the risks and benefits of various formulations of estrogen treatments or delivery methods. In this new study, the team examined data from 45,112 participants in the WHIOS to gauge how various types of estrogen pills, different delivery methods (patch versus pill) and different doses of oral conjugated equine estrogen affected women's health. Over an average follow-up of five years per patient, the researchers measured rates of adverse effects, such as coronary heart disease, breast cancer, stroke, pulmonary embolism, hip fracture, colorectal cancer, endometrial cancer and death. They found that women taking oral equine estrogen at daily doses below 0.625 mg in combination with progesterone had a lower risk of an adverse effect compared with women taking higher dosages (0.625 mg per day or more) of the same combination. Further, the risk at a daily 0.625 mg dose was greater after five or more years of use than if taken for less than five years. According to the researchers, these results could help physicians better guide menopausal women on dosage and how long to take hormone therapy. The study was published in the June 2017 peer-reviewed journal *Menopause*.

**Midlife Cardiovascular Risk Factors May Increase Dementia Risk**

A large, long-term study suggests that middle-aged Americans who have vascular health risk factors, including diabetes, high blood pressure and smoking, have a greater chance of suffering from dementia later in life. The study, published in *JAMA Neurology*, was funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The study was led by Rebecca Gottesman, MD, PhD, professor of neurology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Her team analyzed the data of 15,744 people who participated in the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study. From 1987-1989, the participants, who were black or white and 45-64 years of age, underwent a battery of medical tests during their initial examinations at one of four centers in four different states. Over the next 25 years they were examined four more times. The researchers discovered a link between dementia and prehypertension, a condition in which blood pressure levels are higher than normal but lower than the clinical diagnosis of hypertension. "Our results contribute to a growing body of evidence linking midlife vascular health to dementia," said Dr. Gottesman. "These are modifiable risk factors. Our hope is that by addressing these types of factors early, people can reduce the chances that they will suffer from dementia later in life."

**More than 100 Million Americans Have Diabetes or Prediabetes**

More than 100 million U.S. adults are now living with diabetes or prediabetes, according to a new report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The report finds that as of 2015, 30.3 million Americans—9.4 percent of the U.S. population—have diabetes. Another 84.1 million have prediabetes, a condition that if not treated often leads to type 2 diabetes within five years. The report confirms that the rate of new diabetes diagnoses remains steady. However, the disease continues to represent a growing health problem: Diabetes was the seventh-leading cause of death in the U.S. in 2015. About 25 percent of people over age 65 have diabetes, and nearly one in four adults overall didn't know they had the disease, according to the study. "Diabetes is a contributing factor to so many other serious health conditions," says Ann Albright, PhD, RD, director of CDC's Division of Diabetes Translation. "By addressing diabetes, we limit other health problems, such as heart disease, stroke, nerve and kidney diseases, and vision loss." The CDC's National Diabetes Prevention Program is an evidence-based, year-long, behavior change program that helps people transition to lifelong healthier habits. ■

# Bunions and Hammertoes: An Uncomfortable Relationship

*How to relieve and possibly avoid these common foot problems.*

Often painful and unsightly, bunions are the bane of more women than men. These boney maladies typically run in families, but they also occur in people who are “hypermobile,” meaning too flexible. Having an inflammatory condition, such as rheumatoid arthritis, can cause also bunions. And finally, the overwhelming culprit: shoes. In particular, wearing overly tight and pointy shoes, such as pumps with high heels, can cause and exacerbate the bone shifting that results in a bunion.

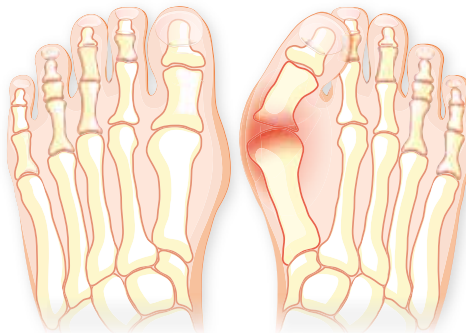
“The bone on the inside of your foot starts to move inward,” explains UCLA orthopaedic surgeon Joan Williams, MD. “Over time, tissues stretch out and you see a big bump on the outside of your foot. That can press on your second toe, which also can cause a problem.”

That problem is hammertoes. The toes start to curl and lift, which can then rub against the top of shoes. Before you think you’re destined to wear only flip-flops, there are some at-home approaches that can help both these common foot problems.

## Adjusting to the Change

Over-the-counter pads and splints provide padding and can pull the big toe back into alignment somewhat. This won’t fix the problem, but it can help slow down the progression of it. Corn pads, toe spacers (like those used in pedicures), and applying ice to a bunion can relieve swelling, as can NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen and naproxen.

While pain will keep many people out of high heels, even if the bunion doesn’t hurt, it’s best to avoid wearing high heels and shoes with pointed toes, because that can only worsen the problem. Instead, choose breathable shoes with a wider toe box and plenty



*Bunions can become quite swollen and painful as the bones continue to shift.*

of cushion. Beware, however, of shoes with thick treads, as these can be tripping hazards, especially on carpeting.

Finally, there are toe and foot exercises that can help bring more circulation and mobility to your toes. See the towel curl example below. Because everyone’s foot issues are different, a physical therapist can recommend the most effective exercises for you.

## Surgical Interventions

As a bunion bump gets worse, it can be filled with fluid and extra bone, which is often quite painful. If pain persists despite changes in footwear and other interventions, or if you have difficulty walking because of bunions and hammertoes, surgery may help. There’s a spectrum of sur-

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- > **Avoid** wearing narrow and high-heeled shoes.
- > **Wear** shoes with a wide toe box.
- > **Relieve** swollen bunions with ice and/or NSAIDs.
- > **Try** over-the-counter pads and splints.

gical options for both hammertoes and bunions. It all depends on the degree of deformity. Osteotomies refer to cutting and re-aligning the bone, whereas soft tissue procedures tighten or release tissues. Often both these procedures are done together.

“The biggest risks of any surgery on the foot are infection and nerve injury,” says Dr. Williams. “Functionally there should not be any limitations after surgery, although most patients should be aware that when a hammertoe is fixed, that toe will no longer be able to be curled like the other toes.”

Post-surgical recovery can take anywhere from six weeks to six months. Full recovery can take up to a year. While the surgery can be successful, Dr. Williams says there is risk of recurrence of the bunion or hammertoe deformity.

To find a qualified surgeon, consult with those who commonly perform these procedures. For more information, check out Dr. Williams’ UCLA MD Webchat on YouTube at <https://tinyurl.com/y7lsxv9f>. ■

## TOWEL CURLS (You should feel this exercise at the top of your foot and your toes.)

**Repetitions:** 5

**Days per week:** Daily

**Main muscles worked:** Plantar flexors

**Equipment needed:** Hand towel

**Step-by-step directions:**

- Sit with both feet flat and place a small towel on the floor in front of you.
- Grab the center of the towel with your toes and curl the towel toward you.
- Relax and repeat.

**Tip:** You can make this exercise more challenging by placing a weight on the edge of the towel.

SOURCE: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=a00667>



Illustration: Alayna Paquette

# Psoriasis May Put You at Greater Risk for Heart Disease

*Study sheds light on risk factors for symptomless coronary artery disease and screenings that help physicians see problems early.*

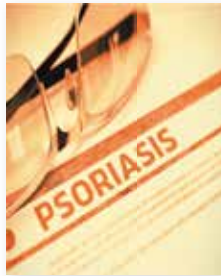
**P**soriasis is a chronic inflammatory disease characterized in most patients by red, raised patches of skin, or plaques, covered with silvery-white scales. According to recent studies, the inflammatory effects of this skin disease can impact the entire body, which may lead to cardiovascular issues, including coronary artery disease (CAD).

CAD is the leading cause of fatalities in the U.S. for both men and women. The list of the most common risk factors includes high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, type 2 diabetes, and a sedentary lifestyle. But that list is by no means an exhaustive one. It's been known for some time that chronic inflammation (such as from psoriasis) can contribute to CAD.

Hallmarked by arteries blocked by plaque that can calcify, CAD can be symptomless. Making it even more insidious, patients can have normal blood cholesterol levels and yet still have CAD.

## Pay Attention to Risk Factors

Having a risk factor doesn't mean a disease will manifest. But it does warrant screenings and other actions that may prevent or detect a disease in early stages. According to cardiologist Boback Ziaeeian, MD, PhD, clinical instructor, UCLA Division of Cardiology, cardiovascular risk assessment is an important part of preventing cardiovascular diseases. Guidelines from the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association recommend using the atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) risk calculator to determine



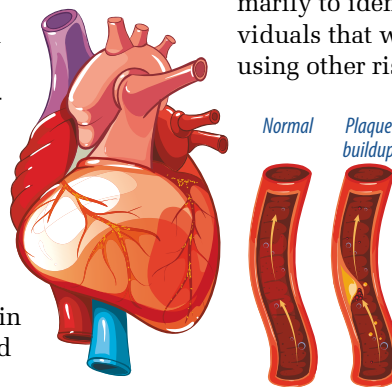
an individual's 10-year risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

"Once risk is assessed, those with a risk of 7.5 percent or higher are recommended to take a statin to reduce their risk of heart attack and stroke," Dr. Ziaeeian explains. "Certain popula-

tions with inflammatory conditions such as psoriasis have observably higher rates of cardiovascular events, and current risk calculators do not include them because of the limited research on these populations."

## Expanding Detection of Symptomless Heart Disease

Research has shown that in up to 60 percent of cases, the first time heart disease is discovered is when a heart attack or death occurs. A recent study at Baylor Medical Center compared coronary artery calcium scores between patients with psoriasis and type 2 diabetes (a recognized high risk factor for heart disease). Coronary artery calcium (CAC) testing measures the presence of calcification in coronary arteries, and is a strong predictor of risk for future heart events. A CAC score is obtained through a noninvasive, quick CT scan of the heart. Coronary calcium builds up at the site of coronary plaque, so a CAC scan can be effective in detecting even minute amounts. People with type 2 diabetes who do not have heart disease symptoms are commonly



Calcified plaque in coronary arteries can be detected through a CT scan.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- **Coronary** artery disease (CAD) is also a form of atherosclerosis.
- **Both** cholesterol and chronic inflammation contribute to CAD.
- **Psoriasis**, an autoimmune disease, affects more men than women.

advised to have a CAC screening. A recent study investigated if those with psoriasis should also follow the same recommendation. The study, published in *JAMA Dermatology*, found that the prevalence of moderate to severe coronary calcification was similar between patients with type 2 diabetes and those with psoriasis, and about five times higher than in the healthy control patients. While the lack of biological data prevented them from establishing a cause-and-effect relationship between CAD and psoriasis, the researchers believe that the CAC screening is appropriate for those who do not have any heart disease symptoms, and have at least one risk factor for heart disease, such as psoriasis, lupus, or rheumatoid arthritis.

"The point of the CAC test is primarily to identify higher-risk individuals that were labeled "low risk" using other risk calculators," explains

Dr. Ziaeeian. "For people with psoriasis and a calculated risk of less than 7.5 percent, it may be reasonable to obtain a CAC screening test to further assess cardiovascular risk to determine if an individual is at higher risk for cardiovascular events and would benefit from statin therapy and more rigorous management of cardiovascular risk factors."

Earlier detection may help prevent worsening of CAD and dire heart events through lifestyle modifications and medication, when appropriate. ■

# Tips to Fall Asleep Naturally

*Get the nightly rest you need with these smart strategies.*

**S**leep has many important health benefits: It cleanses the brain, allows memories to consolidate, helps the immune system to function optimally, and restores and rejuvenates tissues. Not enough sleep impairs judgment and physical function. And let's face it, when tired, most of us can be rather irritable and grouchy. Serious health problems can result from poor sleep, including feeling more depressed and increasing the risk of falls.

Animal studies have shown that lack of sleep results in the buildup of certain proteins, particularly beta amyloid, which has been implicated in the development of Alzheimer's disease. During sleep, however, a very important system is hard at work: It's called the glymphatic system. Most active during slumber, the glymphatic system flushes out toxins and waste products from the brain, including beta amyloid.

## Improve Your Sleep

"What we find helpful is the avoidance of excessively bright light, noise, and hot temperature in the bedroom," says Alon Y. Avidan, MD, MPH, Director of the UCLA Sleep Disorders Center. "Sixty-eight degrees is more conducive to the production of melatonin."

Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone that ushers in sleep. In addition to cooler temperatures, melatonin is triggered by darkness. Indoor light, including that which emanates from electronic devices, can be enough to inhibit its release. To induce sleep, create a dark, cool, quiet room and turn off all devices.

## The Ideal Time for Exercise

Getting enough physical activity during the day may lead to better quality sleep, according to a National Sleep Foundation poll, which surveyed 1,000 adults between the ages of 23 and 60. Self-described exercisers



*A good night's sleep helps improve mood and overall wellbeing.*

reported better sleep than non-exercisers even though they slept about the same amount of time, seven hours. Vigorous exercisers were almost twice as likely to report they had a good night's sleep, and they were the least likely to report sleep problems. But don't do anything strenuous just before you go to bed.

The National Institute on Aging recommends that people exercise at regular times each day *but not within three hours of bedtime*. A little light stretching, however, can help you relax.

## The Best Drink

While alcohol can help you relax initially, it ruins rest. According to Dr. Avidan, alcohol disrupts sleep architecture, meaning you may not pass through all the needed sleep stages, and that will inhibit good quality sleep. "Drinking alcohol can also make breathing more difficult," says Dr. Avidan. "It can turn someone with a little snoring into someone who has full sleep apnea."

Instead, try warm chamomile tea or any herbal tea, so long as there is no caffeine. Check the product's label to be sure. Do know that green tea *does* contain caffeine. Some people also swear by a glass of warm milk with honey, which can be helpful.

## Treat Sleep Apnea

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is the most common form of sleep apnea.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Keep** your bedroom cool; 68 degrees is ideal.
- **Avoid** bright lights, especially blue light from electronic devices.
- **Allow** at least three hours between exercise and bedtime.
- **Don't** use alcohol as a sleep sedative; try a chamomile or herbal tea instead.
- **Treat** sleep apnea.

People with OSA stop breathing many times throughout the night and each time they awaken. It's subtle, so people aren't aware of it, though a sleep partner will likely be aware of the loud snoring, a symptom of OSA along with daytime sleepiness. Health problems associated with OSA include high blood pressure, obesity, memory loss and heart attack. The most successful treatment is a CPAP, continuous positive airway pressure, which features a mask worn at night. It helps you breathe better, sleep better and typically eliminates all snoring, enabling a sleep partner to get a good night's rest, too.

## Establish Nightly Rituals

Take time to relax before bedtime each night. For some people, that can mean reading something (on paper rather than an electronic device is best), listening to soothing music, or soaking in a warm bath. Mindfulness meditation practices, such as a body scan, can be especially useful if you find yourself struggling to fall asleep. Bring your awareness to each body part from toe to head, take a deep breath, and exhale slowly while you invite relaxation. It may be surprising to discover how much tension you may be holding in your legs or shoulders.

People who struggle to fall asleep may find themselves becoming anxious before bedtime. Establishing a nightly habit that invites slumber might be just what's needed to overcome this mindset. ■

# Foam Rollers for Self-Massage

*Roll out tight muscles with this inexpensive tool.*

**F**oam rollers have been used by massage therapists, athletes, and physical therapists for decades. Though they have multiple uses, their primary purpose has been as a self-massage tool. When you lie on a foam roller and roll up and down, the dense foam provides pressure. It feels similar to the long, strong strokes of a good massage therapist, but you're controlling the pressure and rate of speed. From this you gain the many benefits of massage, which include keeping muscles flexible, free of knots, and ready for action.

## Find Relief from Muscle and Tissue Release

According to physical therapist Ashley McLeish, DPT, UCLA Medical Center, rollers are especially useful for patients whose therapy visits have run out, those who don't medically need therapy but have aches and pains to work out, or people who would benefit from massage therapy or myofascial release but cannot afford regular sessions.

"Foam rollers can break down adhesions in muscle tissue and the surrounding connective tissue," says Dr. McLeish. "This restores proper length and tension in muscles, which will reduce pain and knots, as well as increase the function of the muscle."



*Physical therapists and personal trainers can advise you on foam roller techniques.*

Using a foam roller increases circulation to injured or tight areas, which is required for proper healing. Typically, increased blood flow occurs at the time of a sudden or acute injury. But if muscles and other tissues have been tight for a long time, that blood flow may no longer be happening sufficiently. Using a foam roller improves blood flow to the area of injury, and it can help remove built-up lactic acid, both of which can reduce pain.

## Foam Roller Massage Techniques

Rollers can be used before, during or after workouts, or on an as-needed basis to massage out tight spots. A recent study found that a 20-minute foam rolling routine after a workout relieved sore muscles and improved range of motion. Used before a physical activity, it can improve flexibility and range of motion. Regardless of when you do it, it's important to keep the pressure only on soft tissues—avoid rolling over bones and joints.

Stretching before a workout has

long been advised. But if you have muscle knots, stretching can be akin to pulling the ends of a shoelace, tightening the knot even more. A roller, on the other hand, provides a smooth pressure that can help press out the knot, like a rolling pin smoothing dough.

"The slower you go, the deeper the effects are," says Dr. McLeish. "The more quickly you move, the more superficial it is. Most people will roll quickly over a muscle when starting and then go slower as they learn to tolerate the pressure."

Start far from the area of the main symptoms. For example, a lot of people have tight quadriceps, the muscles on the front of the thigh. Lie on your side with the roller near the hip joint and slowly work your way down (see exercise). The closer you get to your knee, the tighter and more painful it can get. How much pain should you endure? On a scale of one to 10 with 10 being the most painful, you should never be above a seven. The amount of pressure is within your control, depending on how much body weight you allow to be on the roller. Also, you can roll gently over the very tight areas, hold it for a few seconds, and/or rock a bit side-to-side. Don't spend more than five minutes on any one muscle group. And be sure to exhale slowly and completely to help the tissues relax.

## Types of Rollers

Rollers come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and densities. In general, grey or black are the hardest foam, followed by blue and white. If you are super-sensitive to pressure, bruise easily, or on blood thinners, start with a white one. There are also rollers made of other materials. Some have textured surfaces, grids, and treads. While these appear painfully intimidating, the spaces between the pattern actually allow a little breathing room for the tissue as you roll or hold the position.

You can find rollers for sale at some physical therapy offices, sporting goods stores, and online. Orthopedic Physical Therapy Products (OPTP.com) and Amazon.com have a wide variety from which to choose. ■

**IT (ILIOTIBIAL) BAND.** This fibrous tissue runs from the hip to the knee along the outside of your leg and is a common tight spot when doing aerobic activity like jogging, or from regular movements like walking and squatting. A tight IT

band can also be the source of knee pain.

### Step-by-step directions:

- Lie on one side with the foam roller placed horizontally and just below your hip bone. Support yourself by placing your other leg in front of the outstretched one and with both hands on the ground.
- Slowly roll the foam roller down and stop above the knee (don't roll over your hip or knee). Roll back and forth for one minute.

**Tip:** If the position is difficult to hold, have a personal trainer or physical therapist assist you.

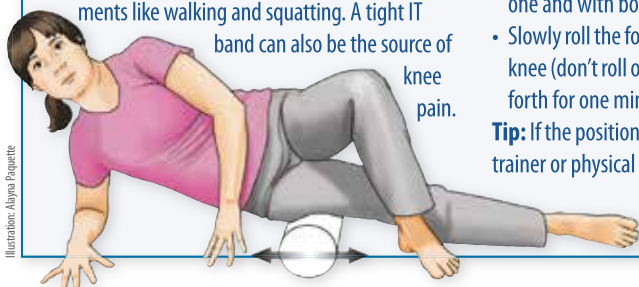


Illustration: Alyssa Paquette

## Holiday meals—cont. from page 1

vegetables taking the starring role, followed by equal portions of fruit, protein, and grains. Using smaller serving utensils can also help control how much food is served, especially if platters are placed on the table.

Another option is a buffet table, which requires guests to get up in order to get another serving. Creating a buffet table that focuses on healthier choices can be achieved by filling larger platters with fruits and veggies, and smaller ones with starchy and richer foods.

## Just a Little Sweetness

“Your best option is to serve one dessert,” says Dr. Hunnes. “Research shows that in a dessert buffet, people tend to eat more, because of the novelty of flavors. I serve one type of dessert, perhaps a low-sugar pie. People will tend to feel more satisfied than if there were many dessert options.”

Enjoying a festive meal together with family and friends is what makes holidays special. After the plates have been cleared, a stroll outdoors can help refresh the mind, aid

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Make** reduced-calorie versions of traditional dishes.
- **Use** smaller serving utensils, platters, and plates.
- **Serve** simple salads or soups to start a meal.
- **Cooking** at home allows you to control portions and ingredients.

the body’s digestion, and allow the conversation to continue. ■

## MIND & MEMORY

# Healing Through Forgiveness

*Releasing hurt and resentment can be good for physical and emotional health.*

**M**ost people have experienced what holding a grudge can do to a relationship and how emotionally taxing it can be to maintain a grudge. Stress, hurt, anger, and revenge fantasies can all be part of it. The resulting stress can manifest into, or exacerbate, high blood pressure, heart disorders, anxiety, and depression, as well as over-eating, over-drinking and other habits used in attempt to escape the pain.

Whether it is siblings who no longer speak, or divorced spouses whose hatred is palpable when they’re in the same room, the resulting anger is toxic to body and soul. Forgiveness, however, can dissolve it, and the pain.

### What Forgiveness Is and Isn’t

“Forgiveness is an act of the heart,” says Diana Winston, Director of Mindfulness Education at UCLA Semel Institute’s Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC). “We forgive for the freedom it brings to our own hearts.”

Forgiveness can lead to better physical and psychological well-being. But it’s not necessarily going to be easy or happen immediately. When someone has been injured, whether intentionally or uninten-

tionally, physically or emotionally, there is suffering. Focusing on the injury continues that suffering. At some point, the idea of letting go, or healing, becomes a part of the internal conversation. According to Winston, the process of forgiveness starts with understanding that resentment must be released for healing to begin. An apt analogy is finally dropping a hot coal that’s been burning your hands. It’s akin to letting go of negative thoughts, feelings, or ideas about revenge toward the person who injured you. It’s an act of the heart to heal your own heart.

Forgiveness does not, however, excuse or justify the actions of the injurer. It may or may not include reconciliation because there may be concerns about trust and safety. Rather, as author and forgiveness therapy pioneer psychologist Robert D. Enright, PhD, has written, “forgiveness contains merciful restraint, generosity and moral love.”

### Forgiveness as a Process

This process involves the willingness to do what is usually emotionally difficult work. Support can be found through meditation workshops,



*Forgiveness therapy can help you heal emotional wounds by forgiving yourself and others.*

such as those offered by Diana Winston at UCLA, or through counselors who specialize in forgiveness therapy. As a therapeutic approach, it’s been around for several decades. Studies have shown that forgiveness therapy can have positive effects on emotional and physical health. One study with elderly cancer patients showed improvements in their ability to forgive, have hope, a better quality of life, and decreased anger. Another with cardiac patients found that after experiencing forgiveness therapy, patients had better functioning arteries and reduced risk of chest pains.

The process of forgiving can occur in mere moments, but it typically takes a long time. It can require months or even years, according to Winston. But the outcomes can be quite beneficial. “I have found that people can become more flexible no matter what their age or circumstance,” she says.

For retreats and free meditations, go to <http://marc.ucla.edu>. ■



Editor-in-Chief  
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of Geriatrics

**Q** I've heard that pulses are very healthy. Can you tell me more about what they are and why that is?

**A** Pulses are the dried edible seeds in the legume family, such as beans, lentils and peas. They are an inexpensive, versatile source of fiber and plant-based protein. Because they contain resistant starch, fiber and protein, pulses slow digestion and reduce spikes in blood sugar, which can help control blood sugar levels. Some studies have also suggested they may lower LDL, the so-called "bad" cholesterol, thus decreasing heart disease risk. Because they help you feel fuller longer, this low-calorie food can assist in fighting obesity. Pulses are also more versatile than they may seem. Consider enjoying stewed beans with rice or whole-grain bread for breakfast, or add whole pea flour to a smoothie to boost fiber, protein, and minerals. Hummus, which is traditionally made with chickpeas (but other pulses can be used), is easy to whip up in a blender and make to your taste. Experiment with your favorite flavors (try blending in lime, spices, or roasted veggies). Use hummus instead of butter or mayonnaise. It's also excellent as a dip for fresh vegetables. Some people may be concerned about gas and bloating from pulses. Cooking thoroughly can reduce this, as undercooked starches can cause excess gas. For those who are ecologically minded, pulses have a low-carbon footprint, making them an eco-friendly food choice.

**Q** I'm in my early 60s, have all my natural teeth, and I want to keep it that way. What's the best way to keep my teeth healthy?

**A** Getting older does not necessarily mean losing your teeth, and I suspect you have some very good oral hygiene practices already. Flossing (before you brush) continues to be important across all life stages. Though cavities may seem to affect mostly younger people, older adults with dry mouth can be more vulnerable to cavities. Prescription medications can cause dry mouth, and there are products that can help—

look for the ADA (American Dental Association) Seal of Acceptance on these and other oral health products. As for toothbrushes, a soft bristle with a head small enough to reach the back of your mouth is recommended. Use moderate pressure. If the bristles splay out, you're brushing too hard. Replace toothbrushes every three or four months. And while it may be tempting to brush immediately after a meal, it's best to wait about an hour because the acids in some foods can temporarily weaken enamel, and brushing can damage it while in that weakened state. Be careful also with teeth-whitening products as they can cause sensitivity in both teeth and gums, and overuse can damage them. Mouthwashes can help reduce bacteria that cause bad breath and are a fine addition to an overall healthy mouth routine. Regular dental checkups and cleanings can help identify any issues when they're easier to treat.

**Q** How can I get rid of hemorrhoids?

**A** The most common cause of hemorrhoids is constipation. That's defined as having fewer than three bowel movements per week and/or having dry, hard stools. The tissues in the rectum and anus can become weaker with age, and straining to pass hard stools can lead to hemorrhoids. There are several lifestyle remedies to try. Chief among them is increasing dietary fiber and drinking more fluids. Adding more foods like whole grains, fruits with skin (apples, pears) and vegetables (sweet potatoes, Brussels sprouts) can help. Drink more fluid when you add more fiber to help soften the stool. If you don't, constipation can actually get worse. Increasing physical activity can help relieve constipation because physical movement helps keep intestinal muscles and stools moving. Some medications can cause constipation, such as opioid pain medications, blood pressure medications, antidepressants, and diuretics. Warm baths and medicated creams can help. If, however, you have a bloody stool or blood in the toilet bowl, see your doctor as soon as possible because it could be a symptom of a more serious condition. ■

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back pain with  
yoga

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