



# CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

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## Your Skin And Stools Are The First Responders When Something's Up With Your Gut



Over the years of dealing with my skin woes, I've learned a very important thing: Inflammation is behind a *ton* of conditions, from rogue breakouts to things like rosacea. Usually, said inflammation starts in the gut, which means that while skin is a giveaway that something could be up with the microbiome, so too, are conditions like constipation and diarrhea. In other words: If you suspect something is up with your microbiome, look to your skin and your stools for validation.

When you think about it, though, your entire body sends signals to you about what's going on beneath the surface. "Digestion is the root of all health—something that Ayurveda has known for thousands of years," says Jessa Blades, herbalist and natural beauty and wellness expert. "A healthy body means having ways to get rid of waste and

toxins through different pathways: kidneys and urine, skin and sweat, and through bile and the intestines.”

Since everything’s so incredibly connected, I’m taking a deep dive into the two biggest indicators that something’s up with your gut: your skin and your stools.

## So what’s up with the skin-gut connection?

For starters, a little biology refresher: “Your gastrointestinal tract, or digestive system, runs from your mouth to your anus and includes your stomach and intestines,” explains **Niket Sonpal, MD, a New York-based internist and gastroenterologist**. “It’s responsible for not only breaking down your foods, but also absorbing the nutrients from that food and filtering any waste products or toxins out of your body.” Those nutrients are the building blocks of cells, including skin.

You’ll be able to tell if your body’s not absorbing these nutrients if you have chronic, oily diarrhea: “This is a sign your small intestines are not absorbing nutrients for a variety of reasons,” he explains. “Finding undigested food in your stool once in a while is normal, however, when it becomes chronic you may wonder if you’re having malabsorption or not chewing sufficiently.” Improper absorption of nutrients can also display on skin, according to Dr. Sonpal. “For example, zinc deficiency can cause a type of dermatitis while vitamin C deficiency can lead to breaks in the skin.”

The skin-gut connection is also important because the gut is home to trillions of different strains of bacteria, which maintain homeostasis in the body and skin, he says. “They can also release chemicals that can be associated with conditions like acne, atopic dermatitis, and even eczema,” he adds.

Mona Dan, acupuncturist, herbalist, Traditional Chinese Medicine expert, and Vie Healing founder, agrees, emphasizing the importance of the gut microbiome. “Research shows your overall gut microbiome is reflected in having a normal, daily bowel movement, or it shows that it’s unhealthy if you’re having diarrhea or constipation,” she says. “When you have either extreme, you can make the assumption that your gut microbiome is off—which can be a contributing factor to skin problems.” She also notes, however, that association isn’t fully the causation, and that research suggests inflammatory skin concerns are linked with dysbiosis.

## How do different stool types indicate the state of your skin?

So, yes—for the sake of your skin, you want to have healthy number twos. “Regular, normal bowel movements are an indication that your systems are working optimally,” says Adarsh Vijay Mudgil, MD, medical director of Mudgil Dermatology. “Having bowel movements daily is ideal, though there is natural variation. Constipation or diarrhea can cause a significant imbalance within your body, including your skin.”

Take a glance at the Bristol stool scale to identify what your poop's telling you and whether it's considered healthy. "Typically, with people dealing with constipation, you'll see a dull, more dry complexion due to the lack of hydration in the body," says Dan of the Traditional Chinese Medicine understanding of the bowel movement-skin connection. While there's no study to back this up, considering that dehydration is frequently a marker of constipation, it makes sense that the rest of the body (and complexion) could be parched as well.

If you're dealing with loose stools, on the other hand, that can show up in the opposite way on your skin. Someone dealing with loose stools may have indications of dampness (another TCM philosophy), which can manifest on the skin in the form of oiliness. "It all comes down to hydration, or the amount of fluid the body is able to hold onto," says Dan. "It can show in your pores—you may notice that it looks like your pores can't hold onto fluids and you'll see an unhealthy oily look."

## What's the game plan for a healthy gut?

Ok, so to get things clear on skin and stools, the name of the game is hydration. "Keeping the body hydrated enough so that it doesn't have to hold onto excess damp materials is key," says Dan. "Your cells, your body, and your gut microbiome thrive on water." Proper hydration is also key for healthy skin because drinking water helps your body to flush out toxins and keep fluids circulating through the body.

Chances are, you may already be on the probiotics train—but if not, it's also good to help with your bowels. "Probiotics are essentially beneficial bacteria that can exert positive effects on your gut as well as your skin as they are passing through," says Dan, who recommends eating sauerkraut and kimchi. "They can also attach and colonize to increase your beneficial bacteria load and diversity as well as crowd out harmful bacteria." Topically, fermented beauty products can help since they're more bioavailable for your skin and also contain healthy bacteria.

As far as your diet goes, keep it greens-heavy and full of fiber. "Feed your microbiome with fiber, so eat an abundance of fruits and vegetables—which will also provide a good dose of polyphenols and keep things moving along," says Blades, who adds that you should try and cut your sugar intake since it feeds the bad bacteria in your gut (it's also not great for skin, sadly). In short, by working backwards from the gut, you can decipher what's happening and as a result have a whole happy system moving things along.

**You can also try cutting out dairy for better skin (I've tried it and it helps). And it helps to deal with stress, since stress causes its own set of skin problems.**

<https://www.wellandgood.com/good-looks/retinol-skin-concerns-sephora/>



## Millennials Ditching The Doctor; What's At Stake



**NEW YORK (CBSNewYork)** – More and more millennials are ditching the doctor and many don't even have a primary care physician, according to a survey by the Kaiser **Family** Foundation. Some doctors say this could lead to people overlooking serious **health issues**.

Dr. Niket Sonpal, adjunct assistant professor at Touro College of Osteopathic **Medicine**, joined CBSN New York's Janelle Burrell to explain what's behind this health trend.

"I think there's a few reasons. I think the primary one happens to be access to care," he said. "We found that millennials tend to want to have access to care right away, they want it immediately and they want to be able to see a **doctor** quickly."

"When they **feel well**, they don't want to go to the doctors, and they don't," he continued. "So then when they feel unwell, they're like I want to see a doctor right away and not wait for weeks for an appointment."

So what are the dangers of skipping the doctor's **office** and opting for urgent care instead?

"The big one that we're worried about now, and I think it's a big global **health** crisis, is not getting their vaccinations on time."

They're also missing recommended health exams, like blood pressure, eye, IBS and digestives, mental health and annual check-ups.

"Go see a doctor every year. It might just be a quick check, but it could find something that's missing," said Dr. Sonpal. "And, of course, get your vaccinations."

<https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2019/01/22/millennials-ditching-the-doctor/>



[www.aol.com](http://www.aol.com)

## 9 signs your flu might be deadly

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness that's caused by influenza viruses, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov). There are three types of influenza virus, influenza A, influenza B, and influenza C (though infections by C are mild). Influenza A can also break down into different subtypes; B doesn't have subtypes, but it does have various lineages and strains. All of that adds up to several types of bugs that can make you sick each flu season.

### What are the symptoms of the flu?

It can be difficult to determine whether you've come down with the flu or a cold—though one telltale is the severity of your symptoms. [Cold symptoms](#) such as a runny or stuffy nose, and a sore throat, will be much milder than flu symptoms, which include the symptoms of a cold plus a fever, chills, headaches, and extreme fatigue. If you think you might have the flu, it's important to see your doctor who can run tests for the virus. Check out [these situations that make you think you have the flu](#), but you really don't.

## What about the stomach flu?

Also known as gastroenteritis flu, this can also be caused by a virus—most commonly rotavirus and norovirus, says [Niket Sonpal, MD](#), an NYC-based internist and gastroenterologist. “With gastroenteritis, the main symptoms someone will have include watery diarrhea and vomiting,” Dr. Sonpal says. “You might also have stomach pain, cramping, fever, nausea, and a headache.” Find out [8 ways to prevent getting the stomach flu](#).

<https://www.aol.com/article/lifestyle/2019/01/14/9-signs-your-flu-might-be-deadly/23642366/>



## 5 Key Health Exams You Should Schedule Each Year

Wondering why millennials skip out on important health exams? The internet may be partially to blame, with answers a quick [Google search](#) away. Niket Sonpal, an internist and gastroenterologist, says, “Millennials want fast affordable solutions and often take a DIY approach to health. They’d rather text or FaceTime with a doctor, or visit urgent care to pay \$40 to be done with it, fast.”

A November 2018 survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that 45 percent of people aged 18-29 don’t have a primary care physician, while more than a quarter of people between 30-39 go without one as well. This is especially problematic because, as Sonpal points out, sneaky problems like [stress](#) might go unnoticed for a long time. “This approach may be okay for treating a sore throat or flu, but it could mean a missed opportunity to nip a bigger problem early on,” he says.



Don't beat yourself up if important exams have slipped off your radar; it's better to get back into the healthy habit of scheduling regular checkups now than to put them off for longer. You can even use your birthday as a reminder each year. "With this approach, you'll easily remember when you last saw a doctor for your exams," Sonpal offers.

## 5 HEALTH EXAMS TO GET ON YOUR CALENDAR THIS YEAR

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**1. Schedule an eye exam — even if you don't think you need it.** Spending tons of time in front of a screen might be a job requirement or your favorite way to relax. Either way, the strain that heavy screen time puts on your eyes is real. "Millennials were raised on technology, and their eyes are reaping the cost of this: Spending up to 12 hours a day, even on mobile devices held close to the eye, can lead to 'near-sightedness' or 'short-sightedness' — making it hard to see things that are further away," Sonpal notes. Instead of popping a pill to get rid of a pesky headache (a common symptom), book a visit with an optometrist. [Eye strain](#) can also cause you neck aches or force you to squint to see things better.

**2. Have your blood pressure checked.** As a rule of thumb, you should have your blood pressure checked at least once every two years. High blood pressure can indicate conditions like diabetes, which Sonpal says has hit the millennial generation especially hard following a massive increase in obesity rates in the United States. "Teen obesity rates rose 30 percent from 2001 to 2015, according to the CDC," he notes. "As kids, millennials were part of a supersize culture... this can cause diabetes and heart disease if not monitored." A healthy blood pressure looks like more than 90 over 60 (90/60) and less than 120 over 80 (120/80); a top number over 140 or a bottom number above 90 is an indicator of hypertension, or high blood pressure, and should be discussed with your doctor.

**3. Ask for a digestive screening.** You might follow your gut, but have you had it literally checked out lately? The foods you eat may have hormones or antibiotics and can cause you stomach trouble. "The millennial generation grew up with a diet that was full of processed foods; we see a lot of gluten intolerance," Sonpal shares. Need another reason to skip self-treating your tummy? He tells us that research by the Journal of the National Cancer Institute shows colon cancer is also a surprising risk for people in their 20s,

having risen 2.4 percent per year from the mid-1980s to 2013. “If you’re experiencing chronic stomach pain, see a doctor,” he urges. “Gut health is incredibly important for your overall well-being.”

**4. Consider a check-up for just your mental health — even if you feel great.** Today’s world moves quickly, and the constant info flow that comes with digital devices and apps can be overwhelming. Sonpal has observed some unhealthy trends. “Millennials are a stressed-out generation; according to *Psychology Today*, suicide rates among young adults have tripled since the 50s. In a 2017 report on stress, the APA noted that 63 percent of millennials say they’re attached to their phone or tablet, and young people report feeling disconnected.”

Along with his overview, Sonpal reports a silver lining that’s good for everyone to remember: “The good news is that millennials are willing to discuss their feelings, and studies show that this is the first generation who doesn’t see any stigma about seeing a therapist.” So while it might make the most sense to consider a checkup for your mental health when you realize you’re feeling down, seeing a therapist about ongoing issues or healthy conflicts is a preventive measure that can help you stay healthy.

**5. Whatever you do, don’t skip your annual exam.** A quick reminder: getting a flu shot each year is a good guideline, as well as ensuring you’ve been vaccinated for HPV if you haven’t already. “Your annual physical is a chance to go over your health history and prevent sickness, as well as certain types of cancer,” Sonpal points out. “I urge all young women to keep up with wellness exams, which count a Pap smear and breast exams, along with STD screening and regular blood work.”

<https://www.brit.co/key-health-exams-to-schedule-each-year/>



## 6 Things You Never Realized Can Cure Inflammation, According To Science

Skin issues, digestive troubles, joint pain — these are all symptoms of chronic inflammation. Everything from your genetics to your lifestyle habits can cause inflammation, so it should come as no surprise that engaging in some healthy habits can help reduce it. There are also a number of more surprising things that can cure inflammation, and adding these habits into your everyday life may be able to help your overall health. Understanding what causes inflammation — and what can help alleviate it — can be key to relieving some of your unpleasant symptoms caused by the issue.

"Since the word 'inflammation' is thrown around a lot, what chronic inflammation — and, in turn, anti-inflammatory — actually mean may be confusing," internist and gastroenterologist Dr. Niket Sonpal, tells Bustle. "To understand what chronic inflammation means, it's important to know how it compares to acute inflammation. Acute inflammation is your body's response to fight off infection or heal itself after trauma. Chronic inflammation, however, is much more nuanced. Chronic inflammation is a general term, and it can refer to a specific organ or system in the body."

Thankfully, there are various habits that can greatly reduce inflammation. Here are six things you didn't realize can help with inflammation, according to science.

### 1. Getting Fresh Air

Most of us are exposed to air pollution in today's modern world, and the smallest of particles, called small particulate matter, have been shown to activate receptors on white blood cells, which causes an increase in inflammatory activity. This pollution exposure can eventually lead to issues such as cardiovascular disease, according to research published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology. "Although avoiding all

pollution may be near impossible, certain steps such as avoiding living near major road ways or chemical facilities can be helpful," Ashira Blazer, rheumatologist at NYU Langone Health, tells Bustle. "Home air filters may also reduce pollutants."

## **2. Eating Turmeric**

There is growing evidence that curcumin, a compound found in turmeric, is an anti-inflammatory agent. "A meta-analysis in the *Osteoarthritis and Cartilage Journal* found that curcumin has the potential for relieving symptoms of osteoarthritis, although they recommend further scientific study," Dr. Sonpal says. "Although there aren't tons of studies on curcumin yet, there's enough to show it has potential." Add turmeric to your foods to help combat inflammation.

## **3. Taking A Hot Bath**

Hot water treatment, such as a hot bath, may help improve inflammation and blood sugar levels in people who are unable to exercise, according to a study published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*. "Taking hot baths or getting a warm massage can help reduce chronic and lasting inflammation by increasing blood flow to an inflamed area, thereby increasing those healing benefits of increased circulation to an area involved," Dr. Mia Finkelston, a board-certified family physician who treats patients via telehealth app LiveHealth Online, tells Bustle.

However, in an acute injury, cold or cryotherapy is best to reduce inflammation. "This reduces blood flow to a particular area and can significantly reduce the swelling that causes pain, especially when it is around a joint or a tendon," she says.

## **4. Eating A Mediterranean Diet**

When it comes to reducing inflammation, lifestyle choices, like what you eat, matter. "If you're looking for an eating plan that closely follows the tenets of anti-inflammatory eating, consider the Mediterranean diet, which is high in fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, fish, and healthy oils," Dr. Sonpal says. "The science behind these foods is inherent to their antioxidant properties. Stress and inflammation lead to oxidative stress in our body. These foods combat that."

## **5. Working Out**



When it comes to reducing inflammation, a little exercise can go a long way. As little as 20 minutes of exercise could have anti-inflammatory effects, according to a study published in the journal *Brain, Behavior and Immunity*. "Exercising regularly and avoiding a sedentary lifestyle may go a long way in regulating inflammation," Dr. Blazer says. "As an added benefit, exercise lowers blood sugar and LDL (bad) cholesterol, which relieves inflammation." Exercise also reduces the stress hormone cortisol, which is responsible for many of the symptoms of inflammation and the long-term negative consequences, according to Dr. Sonpal.

## **6.Sleeping More**

Sleep can not only leave you more well-rested, but it can help manage inflammation. "In one study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, white blood cells taken from otherwise healthy sleep deprived individuals produced significantly higher concentrations of inflammatory signals compared to those from rested individuals," Dr. Blazer says. Sleeping can also help manage stress, another cause of chronic inflammation. During sleep, your brain flushes out metabolic debris, and the body is put into a deep healing state, Dr. Sonpal says.

Adopting these habits can help reduce your inflammation and improve your overall health.

<https://www.bustle.com/p/5-women-on-the-found-families-theyve-created-as-adults-13235689>



[www.Bustle.com](http://www.Bustle.com)

## I Tried These 6 Products To Help With My Insomnia & They Changed Everything



As someone with insomnia more often than not, I'm constantly looking for remedies to not only help me fall asleep, but also stay asleep through the night. While some people get prescriptions to help, I prefer the more holistic, old-fashioned approach and decided to see what the best products for insomnia are — and if they work.

But first, I found some comfort in knowing that I'm not alone in my insomnia. **Dr. Sanam Hafeez**, NYC neuropsychologist and teaching faculty member at Columbia University, tells Bustle that roughly 60 million Americans are affected by sleep disorders each year. "Insomnia is a sleep disorder that is characterized by difficulty falling and/or staying asleep," she says. "It is usually considered chronic if a person has trouble falling asleep or staying asleep at least three nights per week for three months or longer."

Dr. Hafeez says that practicing good sleep hygiene is a critical part of preventing insomnia. “One of the most important things anyone can do is to establish a regular sleep pattern, going to sleep and waking up at approximately the same time each night and morning,” she says. “This helps you to keep the same circadian rhythms.” In addition, she says to make sure not to use your phone, tablet, or TV before bed — the blue lights they emit restrain the production of melatonin, the hormone that controls your sleep/wake cycle or circadian rhythm. Dr. Hafeez also says to stop consuming caffeine at least four-to-six hours before bed, including caffeine found in chocolate and certain medications.

In addition to practicing good sleep hygiene, I also decided to test out various products to help me fall asleep — and stay asleep. Below are the six that have been working best for me as far as combating my insomnia.

### 1. **nodpod, \$29.99**



[nodpod](#)  
\$29.99

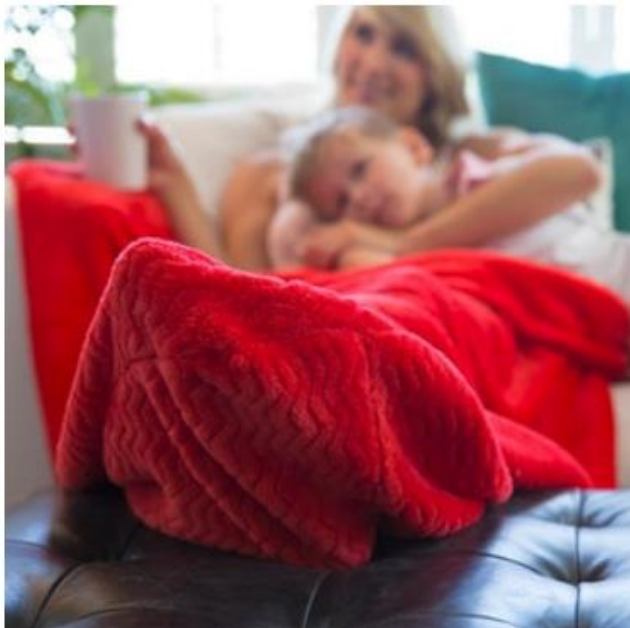
[NODPOD](#)

[BUY ON NODPOD](#)

While weighted blankets may be all the rage, especially when it comes to helping curb insomnia and anxiety, other weighted products are continually coming out, too. For instance, the nodpod is a weighted sleep mask, and when the company reached out and asked if I'd like to try it, I was in the middle of a bad bout of insomnia, so why not? It's unlike any sleep mask I've used before — it's more an eye pillow filled with microbeads — hence, the weight — and is similar to a bean bag feel.

You tie it around your head, but there's no microbead filling in the back, so you don't have to worry about sleeping on the microbead cushioning itself, unless you sleep on your side. In that case, you'll have microbead cushioning under your head (which isn't bad, but a different feeling than I was used to). Also, if you don't tie the mask tightly enough, it may move around and come off, which defeats the purpose. Luckily, I eventually became a pro at tying it just right. The best part about the mask is that absolutely no light comes in through it — whether that's a result of the weighted aspect or wearing the darkest one, in black, I'm not sure — which helps me stay asleep. So, it's become my go-to sleep mask (and I've tested many over the years!).

## 2. PediPocket, \$59.99, On Sale For \$42.00



PediPocket

\$59.99

**\$42**

PEDIPOCKET

[BUY ON PEDIPOCKET](#)

Even though sleep experts recommend keeping your bedroom temperature on the cooler side, I also found that the blanket I use is an important component of getting a good night's rest. Although I used to love blasting the heat, I soon realized that the experts were right — I would often wake up in the

middle of the night and have to turn it down, disrupting my sleep and sometimes keeping me up an hour or two. Instead, I started to listen to the pros and set my thermostat lower — and just had an extra blanket on hand if I got cold.

Enter the PediPocket, also known as the *softest blanket ever*. Not only do I use it at night, but since the bottom has pockets for your feet (!), it's also great for lounging on the couch, taking a nap, or when you don't want to wear socks to bed. (Sometimes, I use it as a pillow, too!) Suffice it to say, I've been sleeping more soundly since having it. My only advice? Most of the PediPockets are 50" x 70" and made for one person, which makes sense, but I'd recommend getting the XXL, which is 60" x 84" and would probably work better if using it as a bed blanket.

### 3. Plant Therapy Lavender Essential Oil, \$7.12



[Plant Therapy Lavender Essential Oil](#)  
\$7.12

[PLANT THERAPY/AMAZON](#)

[BUY ON AMAZON](#)

I'm generally not a fan of lavender, but when a friend gave me an eye mask and Plant Therapy Lavender Essential Oil as a gift since she knew I had trouble sleeping, I became hooked due to its calming effect. She also put a few drops of the oil onto the main eye part of the

mask — make sure not to put too much, as you don't want to irritate your eyes — and recommended that I put a couple drops under my nose and on my wrists, too, right before bed. Plus, since you can get the oil in a small amount, 1/3 fl. oz., it makes it easy to travel with as well, which is important since sleeping in new places can promote insomnia for even the best sleepers out there.

### 4. Walgreens Swim Earplugs, \$3.99



[Walgreens Swim Earplugs](#)  
\$3.99

[WALGREENS](#)

[BUY ON WALGREENS](#)

Over the years, I think I have tested every kind of earplug out there, from foam to silicone to silicone putty ones (the latter of which get stuck in my hair like bubble gum) and from cheap to moderate to pricey ones. Recently, I found the greatest ones ever — Walgreens Swim

Earplugs — and you don't hear a thing: no traffic noise, no loud roommates, and no chirping birds at dawn. I love them so much, I want to give them to every insomniac I know. I've used them on planes, trains, and every night at home.



The only thing is, wearing them took some getting used to since they're not as soft as traditional foam ones — but it's worth the silence.

"Swimming ear plugs are made of medical-grade silicone and have excellent noise cancellation benefits," **Dr. Niket Sonpal**, a NYC internist and gastroenterologist, tells Bustle. "Also, the silicone can be cleaned and reused, meaning no harmful bacteria will linger to cause infection."

Of course, always consult your doctor if earplugs continually hurt your ears or you have any ear trouble.

#### 5. The Comfy, \$39.99



[The Comfy](#)  
\$39.99

[THE COMFY](#)

[BUY ON THE COMFY](#)

If you've ever liked a blanket so much, you wanted to wear it, that's exactly what you can do with The Comfy, which calls itself "the original blanket/sweatshirt."

If it sounds familiar, you may have

seen it on ABC's *Shark Tank*. The Comfy comes in lots of fun colors, from teal to purple — the company sent me a pink one to try out — and it's reversible, too, so you can wear the velour side or the Sherpa fleece side. Although it's marketed to wear anywhere, from outside to hanging out on the couch, I have been using it as a sleep aid and wearing it to bed to stay warm. The hood, too, serves as a makeshift pillow! It's also great for napping — if you curl up into a ball, you can pull The Comfy over your feet. The only thing is, it just comes in one-size-for-all; I'd love if it came in others or had a drawstring to make it more snug.

#### 6. Headspace, Free (And Subscriptions Range from \$7.99-19.99/month)



Headspace  
\$0

HEADSPACE

BUY ON HEADSPACE

My favorite combating-insomnia hack is Headspace. The app has an endless number of meditations to choose from, though I prefer one of their Sleep or Basic ones. I don't know if it's the male narrator's British voice, the content itself, or both, but it's a surefire way to calm your mind and fall asleep. The Basic meditations are free, but you can also subscribe so that you have more personalized choices, such as the sleep meditations, or else ones focused on managing anxiety or relationships.

All in all, the products above have become essential for me when it comes to battling my insomnia and sleeping the whole night through. Of course, what works best for one person may not work for another — but it's worth a try finding out.

<https://www.bustle.com/p/i-tried-these-6-products-to-help-with-my-insomnia-they-changed-everything-16978893>

## What Makes Chocolate Healthy? Science Says Zinc Is The Treat's Health Boosting Mineral



Until about a year ago, I did not buy into the

chocolate hype. If given the choice, I used to pick cookie dough ice cream every time, and I always preferred fruity desserts to anything rich in chocolate. *Dang* was I missing out, though. Once I was converted to team chocolate by a particularly spectacular chocolate Oreo ice cream sundae, there was no turning back. If you're a fellow chocoholic, listen up, because a new study revealed [what makes chocolate healthy](#), and TBH, the overall health benefits of the treat are basically about as numerous as the amount of chocolate chip cookies I can put away in one sitting — you feel me?

The new study, published in the scientific journal *Nature Chemistry*, found that [zinc can help reduce something called your oxidative stress](#), which can contribute to aging and a shorter life expectancy. BTW, [zinc is a nutrient your body depends on](#) to support your immune system and metabolism, among other functions, as per the Mayo Clinic. And while you can opt for a zinc supplement, a ScienceDaily press release about the study states that [the mineral seems to be more effective in combating oxidative stress when combined with food](#), so having zinc in your chocolate — or even coffee or tea,

as per ScienceDaily — may help your body absorb it more easily. In other words, eat more chocolate, and you might just extend your lifespan — yes, really.

### Giphy

The thing about chocolate is, it may be considered first and foremost to be an indulgent dessert, but the stuff actually boasts a pretty decent amount of health benefits. "Chocolate has a very high flavanol content compared to other foods, so it's an easy way to get a high dose of what appears to be an important boost to mental health," Ivana Chapman, a certified strength and conditioning specialist and fitness and nutrition coach, tells Elite Daily in an email.

What's more, apparently chocolate (specifically *dark* chocolate) can also be good for your skin. "Dark chocolate contains zinc and selenium, which are linked to the creation of elastin, a protein forming the main constituent of elastic connective tissue, found especially in the dermis of the skin," Dr. Niket Sonpal, a board-certified internist and gastroenterologist, tells Elite Daily.

Speaking of dark chocolate, that's one slightly big catch to mention here: If you're on team white chocolate, or even milk chocolate, I'm sorry to say that you may not be reaping quite as many health benefits. "When choosing a chocolate, you want to find the highest percent of cocoa possible, as this tells you there has been less 'junk' added to it," says Marissa Meshulam, a registered dietitian based in New York City. But no need to go all the way to unsweetened cocoa, she explains. "I look for 70 percent cocoa as a good number, as this chocolate still maintains its integrity while tasting good, too."

"Those wishing to reap the cardiovascular benefits of chocolate should aim for two tablespoons of non-alkalized (or non-Dutch processed) cocoa powder per day," says Kim Yawitz, a registered dietitian nutritionist in private practice in St. Louis. Personally, I love making my own hot chocolate using dark cocoa powder, or even mixing in a little of the stuff to my smoothies or morning oatmeal for some extra chocolatey goodness. But if you want to go straight for the candy, Yawitz tells Elite Daily, "you can obtain the same level of flavonoids in about 1.75 ounces of 70 to 85 percent dark chocolate, or 10.5 ounces of milk chocolate."

<https://www.elitedaily.com/p/what-makes-chocolate-healthy-science-says-zinc-is-the-treats-health-boosting-mineral-13092635>



[WWW.FOXNEWS.COM](http://WWW.FOXNEWS.COM)

# Biggest mistake dieters make? Not drinking enough water



[Diets](#) come in all shapes and sizes.  
Some are complicated.

A diet dependent on your blood type might seem overly complex compared to a diet, for example, that just requires you to cut out almost all carbs.



On the other hand, an ultra-low-carb diet might seem incredibly convoluted compared to the grapefruit diet. That diet calls on you to eat grapefruit almost exclusively for a few days or weeks.

However, all of these diets, regardless of their intricacy, are doomed to fail if you aren't drinking enough water.

That's according to Dr. Thomas Chi, a urologist at the University of California San Francisco.

Chi told Business Insider that the biggest mistake any dieter can make is focusing so much on their new eating plan that they neglect their water intake.

"People who are on extreme diets, they tend to have higher levels of salt and less hydration," Chi said.

These high salt levels may be particularly problematic for meat-rich diets. A lack of water, combined with an increased intake of meat, can lead to complications like kidney stones, Chi says.

Your body, however, has a natural way to tell you that you need hydration: thirst.

"Thirst is our natural bodily alert that we are running low on fluid," Dr. Niket Sonpal, a New York City internist and gastroenterologist, told Healthline. "You should respond as soon as you can."

Chi's point — that dehydration puts people at risk of sabotaging their healthy eating plans — is valid, according to research. People who don't drink enough water can quickly become dehydrated.

Thirst is easily interpreted as hunger. That pang can lead you to eat a snack, when really all you need is a sip of water.

“Successful weight loss consists of a plan of action that assesses where you are, assesses where you want to be, and how you are going to get there,” Sonpal says.

Should water be a part of that plan of action, with just as much emphasis as the foods you eat?

“Yes, it is an important part, not just of weight loss, but also of general good health,” Sonpal says.

## **How water helps**

Water alone will not be your weight-loss savior, just as any other element of a healthy lifestyle is not solely responsible for weight loss. This includes exercise or healthy foods.

A diet is dependent on a handful of key factors working together.

“On its own, drinking large amounts of water will not be enough to bring about substantial weight loss,” Sonpal says. “But it does help when included into a regimen of nutrition that accounts for a healthy distribution of macronutrients and a diverse consumption of food groups.”

That means water, along with that healthy new diet, just might help you achieve your goals. Ignoring the importance of water could in fact sabotage your plans.

“Water intake is thought to aid weight loss by increasing fat metabolism and decreasing feeding,” Dr. Chirag Shah, a board-certified emergency medicine physician and an assistant professor in emergency medicine at Rutgers University, told Healthline.

A 2016 study of more than 18,000 middle-aged and older adults found that individuals who drank more water were consistently more satisfied (i.e. not hungry). As a result, they ate fewer calories on a daily basis.

That same study found that people who were steady water drinkers consumed less cholesterol, fat, and salt as part of their daily diet compared to people who were dehydrated or didn’t drink enough water.

“Weight loss isn’t going to occur just because you drink water,” Devin Alexander, celebrity chef and author of *You Can Have It!* told Healthline. “If you drink enough water and your meals are [composed] of fried chicken, mac and cheese, and ribs, you’re never going to lose weight.”

“That being said, drinking enough water is a key component to success,” Alexander added. “It’s very easy to mistake thirst for hunger. I know when I’m not drinking enough, I definitely want to eat more. Also, water legitimately fills you up. So if you drink a lot of water between meals, you’ll likely feel fuller faster.”

A 2010 study found that people who drink water immediately before a meal actually have greater weight-loss success than people who do not drink water. That, the authors suggested, may be because the water has a filling effect and helps people eat less.

Water is also a “freebie” for dieters. In other words, it adds no additional calories, sugar, carbs, or fat to the daily totals, unlike many other drinks including sport or energy drinks.

“[Water] helps substitute other drinks that could be adding unnecessary amounts of sugar and sodium into your diet,” Sonpal says.

## **How to put more water in your diet**

You don’t have to wait for thirst to tell you it’s time to drink.

Staying hydrated can have many health benefits, from your skin to your brain. It’s smart to sip — and often.

### **Pack water**

“I carry water everywhere I go,” Alexander says. “I think it’s in everyone’s best interest to find a water bottle you love and attach it to your hip. You’d be surprised how much more likely you are to avoid eating when your body isn’t in need of calories.”

### **Opt for water alternatives**

“To anyone who ‘hates’ water, try opting for a fruity decaf iced tea for some of your ‘water’ drinking,” Alexander says. “But it’s better to drink an herbal iced tea that you love even if you have to spike it with a bit of zero-calorie natural sweetener over not getting enough liquid at all.”

### **Set an alarm**

If you can’t remember to drink water, your phone can — or at least it can remind you. “One strategy that I’ve told patients to help them remember to

drink a glass of water at various times during the day is to set an alarm on one's mobile device to go off in one to two hours," Shah says. "When the alarm rings, it is time to drink a glass of water." Repeat the process every day until drinking water becomes a habit.

## **Hydrate with food**

"Remember there are other fluids that keep you hydrated," Sonpal says.

"There is also water in food, namely vegetables and fruit."

## **Sip, and wait**

If you feel a pang that suggests you're hungry, try a glass of water first. Then wait 15 minutes. If you're still hungry, you're probably actually hungry. If the water satisfied you, your body was just telling you it needed a sip. Drink some more. Your body will appreciate it.

## **The bottom line**

Adequate water consumption is as important to achieving your weight-loss goals as a healthy eating strategy.

Drink water regularly and listen for cues from your body asking for a sip.

Water takes a few minutes to actually hydrate your body when you drink, but water quenches your thirst almost immediately.

Sip before you snack to keep your calorie counts down.

You'll be one step closer to your weight-loss goals.

<https://www.foxnews.com/health/biggest-mistake-dieters-make-not-drinking-enough-water>





[WWW.GREATIST.COM](http://WWW.GREATIST.COM)

## 9 Things Your Fingernails Reveal About Your Health

Most of us don't give a lot of thought to our fingernails beyond how often to clip them or which color to paint them. But besides protecting our fingertips or making a beauty statement, your nails say a lot more about your body than you think.

"The nail matrix, the site of nail growth that hides a few millimeters underneath the cuticle, is affected by each individual's general state of health," says Jessica Weiser, M.D., board-certified dermatologist at New York Dermatology Group. "Illness, fever, surgery, trauma, life stressors, and nutritional deficiencies all have different effects on the nails and their growth."

To clue you in to everything your nails might be telling you about your body—from the minor to the more serious—watch for these nine things.

### 1. Brownish Stripes

**Possible Cause:** Melanoma

Just like you regularly check your skin for moles, you should also keep an eye out for weird color changes in your nails. Melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer, can pop up in your oft-exposed nail beds and go undetected. Any sort of asymmetric pigmentation can be a sign of skin cancer, but melanoma on nails (called subungual melanoma) usually looks like a pigmented vertical band stretching upward from the cuticle.

If a brownish streak on your nail bed shows up suddenly or changes in appearance, see a dermatologist as soon as possible, Weiser says. "If pigmented bands appear on several nails, this can be a sign of a normal variant, but you should still see a doctor to be sure."

## 2. White Lines

### **Possible Cause:** Nutrient Deficiency

Horizontal white streaks spanning the nail are called Muehrcke's lines. The likely cause: a protein or zinc deficiency. "These lines signal that segment of the nail had an interruption while growing and didn't get all the nutrients or blood flow it needed," says Niket Sonpal, M.D., assistant clinical professor at Touro College of Medicine in New York.

Check in with your doc to make sure you're getting the correct daily amount. Daily protein intake depends on your weight and activity level (you can calculate how much you need [here](#)). As for [zinc](#), the recommended daily amount is 11 grams for women and eight grams for men. In rarer cases, Muehrcke's lines could signal more serious issues, including kidney disease or [liver problems](#).

## 3. Vertical Ridges

### **Possible Cause:** Age

If you notice vertical ridges and roughness appearing in your nails that you didn't have a few years ago, it's probably nothing more than a [side effect of aging](#). "They're analogous to getting wrinkles in your skin," Sonpal says, who adds that we usually don't notice these until around age 50. If the ridges seem particularly severe, or they pop up out of the blue, check in with your doctor to make sure there's not something else at play.

## 4. Concave, Spoon-Shaped Nails

### **Possible Cause:** Iron Deficiency or Anemia

This nail deformity is not subtle, and definitely weird-looking enough to catch your attention. [Koilonychia](#), known as "spoon nails," are most commonly due to an iron deficiency. In this case, the nail gets so thin that it actually becomes concave (as if it could hold a drop of water).

If you notice this, have some lab work drawn to determine if anemia is the issue, Weiser says. If you are iron deficient, your doc will probably recommend an iron supplement. Other causes include working with petroleum-based products or trauma. In very rare circumstances, koilonychia can be associated with [thyroid disease and heart conditions](#).

## 5. Brittle or Dry Nails

**Possible Cause:** External Factors

Cracked, dry, and brittle nails that break easily aren't out of the ordinary—and probably a major reason why so many people stock up on nail-boosting supplements like [biotin](#). Once in a while, brittle nails are normal, Sonpal says. If you're a regular at the nail salon or working with water or cleaning supplies all the time, dry, cracking nails aren't that unusual.

But if brittle nails are becoming a regular trend, then speak to your primary doctor and have your thyroid checked, since chronically brittle nails can be a [sign of hypothyroidism](#).

## 6. Huge Half-Moons

**Possible Cause:** Renal Failure or Liver Disease

Everyone has little white half-moons at the base of the nails, but how big they are can clue you into some serious health issues. If they take over half the nail bed, it could be a signal of [renal failure](#), which tends to occur in people who have diabetes or high blood pressure.

If the moons extend two thirds up the nail bed, they're called [Terry's nails](#), and you've got another issue. "Terry's nails are classically associated with liver failure," says Jennifer Chen, M.D., clinical assistant professor at Stanford School of Medicine. Liver failure is pretty serious, and treatment depends on the underlying cause. Certain liver problems might be easy to fix with a lifestyle change, such as cutting out alcohol or losing weight, while others [might require medication or surgery](#). Either way, it's important to see your doctor.

## 7. Red Streaks

**Possible Cause:** Heart Condition

Bloody-looking streaks on your nail bed are *not* normal (unless you've just slammed a finger in a car door). [Little longitudinal lines of blood](#)—especially on the half of the nail closest to your body—are called [splinter hemorrhages](#). They can indicate a heart infection affecting the valves or inner lining of the heart, Chen says.

[Heart infection](#), or endocarditis, is usually caused by a bacterial infection, and risk is higher for people who have implanted heart devices, congenital heart defects, a

history of drug use, or have had heart attacks. It can be accompanied by flu-like symptoms, weight loss, muscle pain, coughing, and more. Treatment will typically involve antibiotics. Bottom line: If you notice little red lines, see a doc, stat.

## 8. Pitted Nails

**Possible Cause:** Psoriasis

Little dents and tiny craters in the nails are known as “pitting” and are often a symptom of psoriasis, a chronic skin condition that causes an itchy, scaly rash. But this particular symptom could mean more complications later on. “When you see nail involvement with psoriasis, it’s associated with a higher instance of arthritis down the road,” Chen says. Typically, pitting occurs in around half of people with psoriasis and 80 percent of people with psoriatic arthritis, she adds.

Dented nails can also be a sign of alopecia areata, an autoimmune condition that causes you to lose your hair, Weiser says. If you’re not already being treated for psoriasis, see a dermatologist to figure out what’s going on.

## 9. Rounded or "Clubbed" Edges

**Possible Cause:** Pulmonary Problems

If the nail looks curved and rounded (like an overturned spoon) and fingertips look swollen, it could signify an issue called clubbing. “Clubbing is classically the result of a wide variety of lung conditions that cause lower-than-normal oxygen levels in the blood,” Weiser says. Lung cancer is the most common cause, but it can also be associated with an overactive thyroid or liver disease. Just remember: Clubbing is not a normal finding and should always be evaluated by a doctor to determine the underlying cause.

<https://greatist.com/live/what-nails-reveal-about-health>

## 6 Ways to Get Over the Stomach Flu Faster

Flu season is upon us, which means it's also the season for stomach flu—which isn't influenza, of course, but a catchall phrase for that miserable mix of diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps usually caused by a type of virus called [norovirus](#)[this link opens in a new tab](#).

Winter is a common time for norovirus because of the increase in the number of holiday-related meals, since norovirus can be transmitted through food that's been prepared by an infected person, explains [Niket Sonpal, MD](#)[this link opens in a new tab](#), assistant clinical professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine in New York and St. George's University School of Medicine, specializing in gastroenterology and internal medicine. “Additionally, in the winter, we tend to spend more time indoors with people who are sick, and hand washing may decrease because it's cold. Thus, the virus spreads more easily,” says Dr. Sonpal.

Washing your hands frequently and making a point to not share foods or utensils with people who are already infected can help you dodge the stomach flu. Too late and you're already doubled over in your bathroom? While there's no cure for norovirus, these tips will help you feel better sooner.

### Drink lots of water

“Fluids are critically important, since you're losing vital bodily fluids through sweating, vomiting, and diarrhea,” says Dr. Sonpal. “If you're having trouble keeping liquids down, try taking small sips at regular intervals or chewing ice chips.” If you can't keep *anything* down or start showing signs of [dehydration](#)[this](#)

[link opens in a new tab](#) like a headache, muscle cramps, dark yellow pee, or not being able to pee very much, call your doctor or consider going to urgent care. You may need IV hydration.

## Give your body rest

You won't get any points for coming into work if you're basically hugging a toilet all day. (This is especially true if you work around food or people who are more susceptible to getting sick like children or the elderly.) Plus, "when you have the stomach flu, your body needs rest in order to fight off the infection," says Dr. Sonpal. "Get plenty of sleep and reduce the amount of activity you normally do during the day. This is doctor-recommended Netflix binge time."

## Go on the BRAT diet

Once you think you can handle eating solid food again, start with the BRAT (bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast) diet. "These four foods are easy to digest, contain carbohydrates to give you energy, and replenish nutrients," says Dr. Sonpal. Bananas help replace the potassium you lose through vomiting and diarrhea, and applesauce contains pectin, which puts the brakes on diarrhea. Also, both brown rice and whole-wheat bread contain fiber, which can be tough on your raw, inflamed intestines. So stick with the easier-to-digest white versions.

## Consume ginger

"Some people use ginger to control their [stomach flu] symptoms," notes [Van Pham, DO](#), [this link opens in a new tab](#) primary-care physician at MemorialCare



Medical Group in Long Beach, California. Whether ginger chews or ginger tea, some form of this remedy is worth a try if you can keep it down. Research shows that not only can [gingerthis link opens in a new tab](#) reduce nausea, but it may help cut the duration and severity of vomiting by up to 20%.

## Try anti-diarrhea meds

Over-the-counter anti-diarrhea medication, like loperamide hydrochloride (Imodium) or bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol), can provide some short-term relief, but “check with your doctor before trying OTC options,” cautions Dr. Sonpal. “It’s often better to let your body clear the diarrhea then to slow it down with these meds.” And remember: Pepto-Bismol isn’t safe to take if you’re [allergic to aspirinthis link opens in a new tab](#) or other salicylate drugs and should never be given to kids under the age of 12.

## Pop Tylenol for stomach cramps

“Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is often recommended for the stomach flu, unless you have liver disease,” Dr. Sonpal notes, since it relieves aches, has fewer side effects than ibuprofen, and is less likely to irritate your stomach.

## If your stomach flu symptoms don't stop

If more than [four days have passed](#) and you're still experiencing the awful symptoms, call your doctor. This is especially true if you can't keep down any food

or water, are running a fever, have severe abdominal pain, or notice blood in your stool. If that's the case, "seek help immediately," says Dr. Pham.

When you do start feeling better, don't host a holiday party just yet. "Even after you recover from diarrhea and other symptoms, you can still pass [the stomach flu] on to others for 2 to 3 more weeks," Dr. Pham cautions. You'll continue to shed the virus through your stool during that period, so be extra cautious about washing your hands after you use the bathroom and before you handle any food.

<https://www.health.com/digestive-health/stomach-flu-remedies>



[www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com)



# How to Exercise Safely During Intermittent Fasting

Scroll through any social media platform or online health and fitness publication, and you're bound to read about someone doing [intermittent fasting \(IF\)](#) while still [maintaining their exercise routine](#).

While the attention the IF craze is getting seems to be over the top, this type of lifestyle isn't new. There's decent research and anecdotal reports about how to make IF work — especially if you're planning to exercise while doing it.

Check out what the experts have to say about how to safely and effectively exercise while fasting.

## Can you exercise while on a fast?

If you're trying IF or you're fasting for other reasons and you still want to get your workouts in, there are some pros and cons to consider before you decide to work out in a fasted state.

Some research shows that exercising while fasting affects muscle biochemistry and metabolism that's linked to insulin sensitivity and the steady control of blood sugar levels. Research also supports eating and immediately exercising before digestion or absorption occurs. This is particularly important for anyone with [type 2 diabetes](#) or [metabolic syndrome](#).

Chelsea Amengual, MS, RD, manager of Fitness Programming & Nutrition at [Virtual Health Partners](#), says that an upside while fasting is that your stored carbohydrates — known as glycogen — are most likely depleted, so you'll be [burning more fat](#) to fuel your workout. Though, studies on this are small and countered by [studies](#) saying that you don't burn more fat when you work out on an empty stomach.

Does the potential to burn more fat sound like a win? Before you jump on the fasted cardio trend, there's a downside.

While exercising in a fasted state, it's possible that your body will start breaking down muscle to use protein for fuel, says Amengual. "Plus, you're more susceptible to hitting the wall, which means you'll have less energy and not be able to work out as hard or perform as well," she adds.

Priya Khorana, EdD, a nutrition educator at Columbia University, believes that intermittent fasting and exercising long-term isn't ideal. "Your body depletes

itself of calories and energy, which could ultimately end up slowing your metabolism,” she adds.

## You’re fasting, should you work out?

- You may burn more fat
- If fasting long-term, you could slow down your metabolism
- You might not perform as well during workouts
- You may lose muscle mass or only be able to maintain, not build, muscle

## Getting in an effective gym session while fasting

If you’re set to try [IF](#) while continuing your exercise routine, there are some things you can do to make your workout effective.

### 1. Think through timing

Registered dietician [Christopher Shuff](#) says there are three considerations when making your workout more effective while fasting: whether you should exercise before, during, or after the fueling window.

[LeanGains 16:8 protocol](#) is one popular method of IF. The concept refers to consuming all food within an 8-hour fueling window and then fasting for 16 hours.

“Working out before the window is ideal for someone who performs well during exercise on an empty stomach, while during the window is better suited for someone who doesn’t like to exercise on an empty stomach and also wants to capitalize on postworkout nutrition,” he explains. For performance and recovery, Shuff says during is the best option.

“After the window is for people who like to exercise after fueling but don’t have the opportunity to do it during the eating window,” he adds.

## 2. Choose the type of workout based on your macros

Certified personal trainer [Lynda Lippin](#) says it’s important to pay attention to the macronutrients you take in the day before you exercise and when you eat after. “For example, strength workouts generally require more carbohydrates the day of, while cardio/HIIT [high-intensity interval training] can be done on a lower carb day,” she explains.

## 3. Eat the right meals after your workout to build or maintain muscle

[Dr. Niket Sonpal](#) says the best solution for combining IF and exercise is to time your workouts during your eating periods so your nutrition levels are peaked. “And if you do heavy lifting, it’s important for your body to have protein after the workout to aid with regeneration,” he adds.

Amengual says to follow up any strength training with carbohydrates and about 20 grams of protein within 30 minutes after your workout.



# How can you safely exercise while fasting?

The success of any weight loss or exercise program depends on how safe it is to sustain over time. If your ultimate goal is to decrease body fat and maintain your fitness level while doing IF, you need to stay in the safe zone. Here are some expert tips to help you do just that.

## Eat a meal close to your moderate- to high-intensity workout

This is where meal timing comes into play. Khorana says that timing a meal close to a moderate- or high-intensity workout is key. This way your body has some glycogen stores to tap into to fuel your workout.

## Stay hydrated

Sonpal says to remember fasting doesn't mean to remove water. In fact, he recommends that you drink more water while fasting.

## Keep your electrolytes up

A good low-calorie hydration source, says Sonpal, is coconut water. "It replenishes electrolytes, is low in calories, and tastes pretty good," he says. Gatorade and sports drinks are high in sugar, so avoid drinking too much of them.

## Keep the intensity and duration fairly low

If you push yourself too hard and begin to feel dizzy or light-headed, take a break. Listening to your body is important.

## Consider the type of fast

If you're doing a 24-hour intermittent fast, Lippin says you should stick to low-intensity workouts such as walking, restorative yoga, or gentle Pilates. But if you're doing the 16:8 fast, much of the 16-hour fasting window is evening, sleep, and early in the day, so sticking to a certain type of exercise isn't as critical.

## Listen to your body

The most important advice to heed when exercising during IF is to listen to your body. "If you start to feel weak or dizzy, chances are you're experiencing low blood sugar or are dehydrated," explains Amengual. If that's the case, she says to opt for a carbohydrate-electrolyte drink immediately and then follow up with a well-balanced meal.

While exercising and intermittent fasting may work for some people, others may not feel comfortable doing any form of exercise while fasting. Check with your doctor or healthcare provider before starting any nutrition or exercise program.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-exercise-safely-intermittent-fasting#1>

# INSIDER

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## 10 signs you're not lactose intolerant, even if you think you are

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- Lactose intolerance is something that a lot of people experience over the course of their lives or, at least, they might think that they do.

- But there are a lot of symptoms of lactose intolerance that can also be symptoms of other conditions, like irritable bowel syndrome, allergies, food sensitivities, and more.
- Knowing what sorts of things might point to you not being lactose intolerant is worth it because it might actually be something else entirely — and once you're armed with that information, you can better address what's really going on.

Chances are there's someone in your life that doesn't eat dairy products. And though many might make that choice because of ethical considerations and the like, others choose to abstain because they feel that dairy products make them feel bloated and gassy, resulting in painful cramps, diarrhea, or other sorts of digestive upset. It's just not worth it if eating those sorts of foods make you feel sick. But it might not actually be lactose intolerance that's the culprit. Rather, you might be mistaking what you're experiencing for lactose intolerance, but it could actually be something else. Here's what you may need to know.

**You accidentally ate or drank something that contained dairy, but didn't experience any negative side effects within about two hours.**

Typically, symptoms and complications



related to lactose intolerance are going to show up relatively quickly.

"A person who is lactose intolerant will feel nauseous with 30 minutes to two hours of consuming milk or dairy," **Dr. Niket Sonpal, MD**, a New York City-based gastroenterologist and an adjunct assistant professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine, told INSIDER. Longer than about two hours could indicate another condition.

**You're also dealing with some serious fatigue.**



Fatigue is a good reason to go talk to your doctor.

Even if you have a number of digestive issues that suggest you might be lactose intolerant, if you're experiencing other symptoms as well, that could also be a hint that it's not actually lactose intolerance with which you're dealing. **Sonpal** said that fatigue is one such symptom that could mean that a doctor may need to further investigate to find out what's really going on.

**A doctor has never diagnosed you with lactose intolerance.**



You need to be diagnosed with lactose intolerant by a doctor.

A lot of people who think they have lactose intolerance don't actually know that they have it — they've diagnosed themselves. But if a doctor has never diagnosed you with lactose intolerance, the fact of the matter is that you might not actually have it.

"Lactose intolerance has gone mainstream with a lot of over the counter remedies leading to a lot of self diagnosis," **Sonpal** said. "It is however, important to see a doctor and get a full exam to see if there isn't anything more serious going on."

**You've unexpectedly gained or lost some weight recently.**





Fluctuation in weight is probably something out.

Gaining or losing weight can also be a potential indication that your abdominal issues aren't actually due to lactose intolerance. Weight gain can be due to food sensitivities, according to Nusbaum, while weight loss too could mean something more significant than just lactose intolerance, **Sonpal** said.



[www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com)

## 11 Things You Should Do at the First Sign of Flu



### **First, don't catch the flu**

'The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year,' says [Niket Sonpal, MD](#), a New York City-based internist and gastroenterologist. While a flu shot will significantly decrease your chances of getting the flu, it is still possible to contract the virus, so make sure to take extra precautions (like the ones outlined here) in addition to getting vaccinated, especially if you start to feel the symptoms associated with the flu.



### **How to know if you're getting the flu**

Dr. Sonpal says the first signs of flu can include feeling feverish, having chills, a cough, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, fatigue, and vomiting or diarrhea (though the last two tend to happen more in children than adults). If you have one or more of these symptoms, talk to your doctor to see if you have the flu and follow these early treatment tips. Here are [10 signs your flu might be deadly](#).

### **Wash your hands**

If you are starting to feel like you might have a cold or the flu, washing your hands can reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others. 'This is an easy way to stop the spreading of germs,' Dr. Sonpal says. In fact, a [study](#) published in *Tropical Medicine & International Health* found that good hand washing hygiene reduced the risk of respiratory illness by 16 percent.

### **Rest**

Stop exercising and try not to overexert yourself, recommends Dr. Sonpal. Trying to keep up with your regular routine will only dehydrate you and make your symptoms worse. 'Remember there is no quick fix for the flu, and many people don't feel

completely back to normal for about three weeks,' Dr. Sonpal adds. Here are [9 ways to prepare for the flu](#) before it hits.

### **Don't ask for antibiotics**

'Antibiotics don't kill viruses,' Dr. Sonpal says. 'Although many people believe their favorite antibiotic will cure any illness they have, that just isn't the case.' If you catch your flu within the first 48 hours of infection, your doctor may prescribe Tamiflu, an antiviral medication that can shorten the lifespan of your flu; however, says Dr. Sonpal, in most patients it only saves about one day of illness.

### **Try over-the-counter pain relievers**

What will ease your flu symptoms are OTC pain relievers, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, especially if you have a fever. It can help reduce your symptoms and provide flu relief. Dr. Sonpal says to use these as directed on the label, as getting the proper dosage is key to relieving body aches, headaches, and pain symptoms related to the flu. Check out [four home remedies doctors use for pain relief](#).

### **Make sure not to overdo it on the vitamins**

It's fine to continue taking your daily multivitamin if you feel up to it, but be aware that taking too many vitamins can have negative effects. 'Ultra-high doses of vitamin C can cause diarrhea,' says Dr. Sonpal. 'Although a few studies suggest vitamin C might shorten the duration of a cold, other studies contradict this, and no major studies show benefit for influenza.' Find out the other [vitamin myths you should stop believing](#).

### **Fuel with food**

'If you are able to eat, stock up on foods that can help boost your immune system,' recommends Dr. Sonpal. This includes yogurt, fruits like blueberries and vegetables like broccoli. For those feeling nauseous, chicken soup is another option, Dr. Sonpal adds. 'Chicken soup can help reduce inflammation, clear up mucous, and ease congestion,' he says. Here are [14 foods that may help your symptoms](#).

### **Drink up**

Water is always best to keep you hydrated and help loosen up mucous, but any liquid without caffeine will do, says Dr. Sonpal. If you're starting to have water fatigue, he recommends Gatorade, ginger ale, diluted juice, broth, or decaffeinated tea.

### **Skip caffeine**

Coffee and tea with caffeine can dehydrate you, says Dr. Sonpal. Dehydration may make your symptoms feel worse and your sickness last longer. And while this probably goes without saying, alcohol has the same effect: Though it may be tempting, that hot toddy isn't going to help you feel better. You won't believe some of these [old-time remedies that were once used to treat the flu](#).

**Cancel social engagements**

Stay home from work, school, and all social events. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you steer clear of others for [at least 24 hours after your fever is gone](#). Flu symptoms can start anywhere from one to two days after the virus has entered the body, meaning you could be spreading it to others before you even realize you have it. This makes it even more crucial to reschedule events the moment you start to feel off.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/weightloss/30-things-no-one-tells-you-about-losing-weight/ss-BBUXLov>



[WWW.PIX11.COM](http://WWW.PIX11.COM)

## Deep freeze, bitter cold descends on tri-state area



Despite sunny skies on Thursday, temperatures will only be able to rise into the mid to upper teens during the day. Keep in mind, it will remain rather breezy, keeping wind chills down at around 0 through the day. Wind chill temperatures will range from -10 to -20 over much of the area, with some spots in Ulster and Sullivan counties experiencing wind chill temperatures of -20 to -30 degrees.



Friday features more clouds as a system passes to the south. There could be a stray flurry as a result. Temperatures will remain rather cold, but the winds should be calmer, making it feel more tolerable. Highs are expected to climb into the lower 20s. Wind chills will be around 10 degrees above zero.

Through the weekend, temperatures will continue to moderate as the jet stream starts to lift across the eastern half of the nation. Temperatures climb through the 30s and into the lower 40s by Sunday.

Early next week, highs could actually be in the 50s due the southerly flow. Some rain could accompany the warm up, but, for now, heavy rainfall should hold off until Wednesday when the next storm system passes.

<https://pix11.com/2019/01/30/deep-freeze-bitter-cold-descends-on-tri-state-area/>

# Reader's Digest

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## 11 Things You Should Do at the First Sign of Flu

“The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year,” says [Niket Sonpal, MD](#), a New York City-based internist and gastroenterologist. While a flu shot will significantly decrease your chances of getting the flu it is still possible to contract the virus, so make sure to take extra precautions (like the ones outlined here) in addition to getting vaccinated, especially if you start to feel the symptoms associated with the flu.



### How to know if you're getting the flu

Dr. Sonpal says the first signs of flu can include feeling feverish, having chills, a cough, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, fatigue, and vomiting or diarrhea (though the last two tend to happen more in children than adults). If you have one or more of these symptoms, talk to your doctor to see if you have the flu and follow these early treatment tips. Here are [10 signs your flu might be deadly](#).

## **Wash your hands**

If you are starting to feel like you might have a cold or the flu, washing your hands can reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others. 'This is an easy way to stop the spreading of germs,' Dr. Sonpal says. In fact, a [study](#) published in *Tropical Medicine & International Health* found that good hand washing hygiene reduced the risk of respiratory illness by 16 percent.

## **Rest**

Stop exercising and try not to overexert yourself, recommends Dr. Sonpal. Trying to keep up with your regular routine will only dehydrate you and make your symptoms worse. 'Remember there is no quick fix for the flu, and many people don't feel completely back to normal for about three weeks,' Dr. Sonpal adds. Here are [9 ways to prepare for the flu](#) before it hits.

## **Don't ask for antibiotics**

'Antibiotics don't kill viruses,' Dr. Sonpal says. 'Although many people believe their favorite antibiotic will cure any illness they have, that just isn't the case.' If you catch your flu within the first 48 hours of infection, your doctor may prescribe Tamiflu, an antiviral medication that can shorten the lifespan of your flu; however, says Dr. Sonpal, in most patients it only saves about one day of illness.

## **Try over-the-counter pain relievers**

What will ease your flu symptoms are OTC pain relievers, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, especially if you have a fever. It can help reduce your symptoms and provide flu relief. Dr. Sonpal says to use these as directed on the label, as getting the proper dosage is key to relieving body aches, headaches, and pain symptoms related to the flu. Check out [four home remedies doctors use for pain relief](#).

## **Make sure not to overdo it on the vitamins**

It's fine to continue taking your daily multivitamin if you feel up to it, but be aware that taking too many vitamins can have negative effects. 'Ultra-high doses of vitamin C can cause diarrhea,' says Dr. Sonpal. 'Although a few studies suggest vitamin C might shorten the duration of a cold, other studies contradict this, and no major studies show benefit for influenza.' Find out the other [vitamin myths you should stop believing](#).

## **Fuel with food**

'If you are able to eat, stock up on foods that can help boost your immune system,' recommends Dr. Sonpal. This includes yogurt, fruits like blueberries and vegetables like broccoli. For those feeling nauseous, chicken soup is another option, Dr. Sonpal adds. 'Chicken soup can help reduce inflammation, clear up mucous, and ease congestion,' he says. Here are [14 foods that may help your symptoms](#).

## **Drink up**

Water is always best to keep you hydrated and help loosen up mucous, but any liquid without caffeine will do, says Dr. Sonpal. If you're starting to have water fatigue, he recommends Gatorade, ginger ale, diluted juice, broth, or decaffeinated tea.

## **Skip caffeine**

Coffee and tea with caffeine can dehydrate you, says Dr. Sonpal. Dehydration may make your symptoms feel worse and your sickness last longer. And while this probably goes without saying, alcohol has the same effect: Though it may be tempting, that hot toddy isn't going to help you feel better. You won't believe some of these [old-time remedies that were once used to treat the flu](#).

## **Cancel social engagements**

Stay home from work, school, and all social events. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you steer clear of others for [at least 24 hours after your fever is gone](#). Flu symptoms can start anywhere from one to two days after the virus has entered the body, meaning you could be spreading it to others before you even realize you have it. This makes it even more crucial to reschedule events the moment you start to feel off.

<https://www.rd.com/health/conditions/stop-first-sign-flu/>



## Sorry, Vitamin C Isn't the Miracle Cure Your Mom Told You It Was



You've probably heard that to avoid getting sick, you need to make sure you're taking in plenty of vitamin C. Maybe you've also heard it helps you feel better sooner if you've already developed a nasty cold. Is there any truth to vitamin C being a big cure-all for what ails you? Probably not, but there is a little bit of good news. Let's take a look.

### Vitamin C & the common cold

The common cold is caused by any number of respiratory viruses. A virus cannot be treated with antibiotics. Usually, the person who is suffering from a cold just has to manage symptoms while they wait for their illness to end. It's no wonder, then, that people are very interested in finding something that will either prevent colds in the first place — or will shorten their duration.

Unfortunately, vitamin C doesn't seem to prevent most people from catching a cold. A large-scale study by the University of Helsinki in Finland looked over 29 medical trials that involved 11,306 people who used at least 200 milligrams per

day of vitamin C supplementation. They didn't find any evidence that taking vitamin C daily reduced most people's risk of catching a cold. There were a few outliers, though, as marathon runners and skiers *did* show a risk reduction of around 50 percent, which is great news if you're a serious athlete.

This study also looked at whether vitamin C supplementation had any effect on the duration of a cold, and there may be a bit of good news. Supplementation shortened the duration by 8 percent in adults and by 14 percent in kids. However, when this was put to therapeutic trial, researchers were unfortunately not able to replicate these results.

Other potential benefits

Even though vitamin C supplementation probably won't prevent a cold, the possibility that it *can* help is encouraging, and taking recommended amounts of vitamin C certainly won't hurt you. Dr. Monisha Bhanote, a triple board-certified physician, explains that vitamin C has antioxidant properties and is an important part of the synthesis collagen, which helps make up our skin, tendons, bones and ligaments.

The benefits don't stop there, though. "Other less[er]-known benefits include decreased systolic blood pressure in patients with hypertension and decreased requirement for inhaled steroids for asthma patients," Bhanote tells SheKnows.

However, is this going to cure your influenza or keep germs at bay in the middle of virus season? No.

You probably don't even need vitamins — at all

Dr. Niket Sonpal, assistant professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine, tells SheKnows that vitamins aren't really necessary for most of us. The key, though, is a good diet that's chock-full of fruits and vegetables. "Additionally, eating your nutrients [through food] promotes health not only by providing known vitamins, but also because it contains fiber and other less well-defined nutrients and replaces meat and animal fat."

He does note that those on restricted or special diets or those living in regions of the world with widespread malnutrition, may need vitamins, but most of us don't.

To make sure you're getting enough vitamin C from the foods you eat, make sure you have plenty of citrus fruits on hand, including oranges and grapefruit. However, there are loads more foods that have vitamin C on board.

“Let’s not forget jalapeños, tomatoes and tomato juice,” Sonpal says. “I tend to remind patients that... kale and parsley are also packed with vitamin C.” Don’t stop there, though. Other great sources include red pepper, kiwifruit, broccoli and green pepper.

Don’t overdo it

If you do use vitamin C supplements, here’s just a word of caution — there are a few side effects to look out for, according to Dr. Arlene Dijamco, an integrative physician. “For most, there are very little risks supplementing vitamin C, as your body will get rid of any excess in the urine,” she tells SheKnows. “Some people may experience gastrointestinal upset, such as diarrhea, nausea and/or abdominal pain.” Also, high doses of vitamin C supplementation can increase the risk of kidney stones, which you definitely do not want.

So, bottom line — vitamin C won’t prevent you from getting a cold, but it may shorten the duration of your illness by 8 percent, which isn’t a whole lot. However, there is something to be said for eating a varied diet and getting all your vitamins the natural way, and if you want to pop some vitamin C, it probably won’t hurt as long as you don’t go wild.

<https://www.sheknows.com/health-and-wellness/articles/1994367/vitamin-c-not-cure-all/>



## Healthy Travel Snacks Approved by Kids & Nutritionists



Whether you're traveling to a far-off destination or simply running errands, it's likely you'll be hungry at some point. It's super-easy to get food on the go, but your choices may be limited to fast food or airport cafés, and they also may not be all that healthy — which is especially a concern if kids are involved. We talked to doctors, nutritionists and dietitians to find out what healthy snacks *they* take along when they're on the go. Pack these tasty snacks before your next road trip, flight or long day of shopping — not only will you love them, they'll also be a hit with the kids.

# Shelf-stable, portable snacks

## *Nuts*

If you're not allergic to nuts, they're one of your best bets for snacking. [Samantha Cassetty](#), a registered dietitian, says nuts can be a handy, filling snack option.

"As you likely know, nuts are high in fat and calories, yet [studies](#) show that they're a top choice for combating hunger, and people who snack on nuts tend to eat a little less at later meals, so they don't promote weight gain," she tells SheKnows. Also, she suggests you do *not* eat them quickly, as the longer you chew your nutty snacks, the longer you'll feel full.

## *Popcorn*

Cassetty also notes that [popcorn](#) can make a great snack in a pinch. "For one, it's a whole-grain snack that's rich in fiber — a nutrient known to help promote feelings of fullness," she explains. Also, you don't consume a ton of calories, even if you eat a lot of popcorn, which can go a long way in taming hunger. If you have a choice of chips or popcorn, always go for the popcorn, especially if it comes in handy, snack-size portions.

## *Prunes*

While you may equate prunes with old people (or people with constipation), [Erin Palinski-Wade](#), a registered dietitian, says they make an excellent on-the-go snack. "When I am craving a sweet on the road, one serving of prunes satisfies my cravings with 3 grams of fiber," she tells SheKnows. She also points out they have a low glycemic index, which helps provide energy throughout the day, and it can also help prevent bone loss. Score!

## *Bananas*

[Dr. Niket Sonpal](#), a physician and associate program director of the internal medicine residency at Brookdale Hospital Medical Center in Brooklyn and assistant professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine, says bananas may be one of the best foods for energy. "They are an excellent source of

carbohydrates, potassium and vitamin B6, all of which can help boost energy levels in your body,” he tells SheKnows.

## *Homemade trail mix*

Elizabeth Hartley, a registered dietitian and nutrition tutor with Varsity Tutors, says homemade trail mix offers protein and fiber to help keep you satisfied while avoiding some of the high-sugar ingredients in some store-bought mixes. “I like to mix almonds, walnuts or peanuts with dried fruits like raisins, apricots, cranberries or dates,” she tells SheKnows.

## *Whole-grain crackers*

Hartley also says whole-grain crackers are a smart choice too, as they provide that satisfying crunch with a bit of saltiness without the high fat content of other snacks, like chips.

## *Snack-size bags of cereal*

This may sound odd, but Michelle Hyman, a registered dietitian, wants you to hear her out here. “Cereal doesn’t just have to be for breakfast!” she tells SheKnows. “My golden rule for choosing a healthy cereal is no more than 6 grams of sugar per serving and at least 3 grams of dietary fiber per serving.”

She suggests buying a big box and packing small snack-size bags to take along for you or your family. “If you decide not to eat them on the plane, mix it into some yogurt at the hotel breakfast, and you’ve got a filling meal,” she says.

## *Fruit bars*

There are tons of different brands of fruit bars out there, and a lot of them aren’t exactly what most people would call healthy. Hyman says she likes the That’s It brand of fruit bars because each one contains the equivalent of two servings of fruit and they have no added sugar. “It’s a great option for when fresh fruit isn’t available,” she says. “I pack multiple bars in my purse/suitcase, not only for the plane ride, but also for the rest of the trip.”

## These snacks need a cooler

### *Babybel cheese*

Palinski-Wade likes to carry portable protein options when traveling to help keep her satisfied in between meals. “I usually keep Babybel cheese in an insulated cooler bag since they are individually wrapped and contain 5 grams of filling protein per serving,” she explains.

### *Yogurt*

Sonpal suggests yogurt as a travel snack because it’s a great source of high-quality protein to fill you up and provide basic energy for the brain. “The best part about this food is it pairs well with pretty much everything,” he says. “Add some granola, nuts or fruit to amp up its flavor. It’s easy to take with you and the good bacteria in it also help your gut stay healthy.”

## Healthy snacks are always the right choice

Yes, it’s easy (far too easy, really) to just grab a bag of whatever or hit up the nearest basket of greasy fries to stave off hunger, but with a little careful planning, you’ll not only be able to last until your next meal, but you’ll be healthier for it too — even when you’re on the go.

<https://www.sheknows.com/health-and-wellness/articles/1974824/healthy-travel-snacks/>



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## What Are Hernia Symptoms?

**A lump in your groin or abdomen, reflux and bloating or constipation are possible signs of a hernia.**

**IN EARLY 2018, KAREN A. DiBernardo** White noticed a growth about the size of a golf ball that was just below her belly button, on her left side. Within months, the protrusion grew to the size of an orange, and then about the circumference of a grapefruit.

"It was causing discomfort at first, then it got more painful as time went on," says White, who lives in Midland, Michigan. The growth reminded White of the classic 1979 horror movie "Alien," in which monsters grow inside victims and pop out of their skin. "I was expecting it to come out and say hello," she says. "It was really strange. You could see it jutting out from my clothing. I was lopsided."

Five years earlier, White had [had a hysterectomy](#), treatment for [early-stage uterine cancer](#), so she worried the growth was cancerous. A gynecological oncologist ordered a CAT scan, which revealed the protrusion wasn't cancer – it was a hernia. Scarring from her hysterectomy had apparently led to an opening in the wall of her stomach, which allowed an organ to protrude. "I was so relieved," White says. "I think I cried, I laughed. It's only a hernia. I was happy." White says she will eventually have laparoscopic hernia repair surgery. Untreated, her hernia could lead to a bowel obstruction, her physicians told her.

White's bulge is a common hernia symptom, says Dr. Abtin H. Khosravi, a general surgeon and hernia specialist at [St. Joseph Hospital](#) in Orange, California. "The most common sign of a hernia is a painless bulge," Khosravi says. "They can develop over time or present more acutely after a heavy lifting. As they grow, patients will often complain of discomfort or awareness of it with certain activities, including standing for prolonged periods of time or sitting for prolonged periods." Some patients may report [feeling intermittent pain](#) after eating a heavy meal, which may indicate that the tissue that's in the hernia has been pinched off, Khosravi says.

## Types of Hernias

At any given time, about 5 million people in the U.S. have an abdominal hernia, says Dr. Michael Rosen, a general surgeon at the [Cleveland Clinic](#). A hernia occurs when an internal organ or other body part protrudes through the wall of muscle or tissue that typically contains it.

There are more than a half-dozen specific types of hernias, including:

- Inguinal hernia, which occurs when tissue, like from an intestine, protrudes through a weak spot in the abdominal muscles.
- Incisional hernia, in which an organ or tissue juts through [a scar or incision](#) from a previous abdominal surgery, like an appendectomy.
- Umbilical hernia, which occurs when part of the intestine or abdominal tissue peeks out through or near the navel, creating a bulge.
- Hiatal hernia, which happens when the upper part of your stomach bulges through the large muscle separating your abdomen and chest.

## Treatment for Hernias

Not all hernias necessarily require treatment, says Dr. E. Alexandra Zubowicz, an advanced minimally invasive surgeon at [MedStar Washington Hospital Center](#) in the District of Columbia. She specializes in general and bariatric surgery. "If a hernia is extremely small and the patient is not having any symptoms, it's OK to hold off on repairing it," Zubowicz says. "However, over time, some hernias will likely get bigger and need to be repaired. Sometimes intestines can get stuck in the hernia leading to bowel obstruction or damage to the intestine, requiring emergency surgery. This is the primary reason why once a hernia becomes a certain size, a physician will recommend getting the hernia repaired."

Treatment approaches depend on the type and severity of the hernia. For example, most hiatal hernias don't cause symptoms and won't require treatment. However, if you have a hiatal hernia that's causing heartburn or GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease), your physician may recommend over-the-counter antacids that neutralize stomach acid, OTC medication to reduce acid production and either over-the-counter or prescription drugs to block acid production and heal the esophagus, according to the Mayo Clinic.

For more serious problems, the Mayo Clinic says there are three types of surgery:

- Open surgery, which involves a cut made into the body at the location of the hernia. In this procedure, the protruding tissue is set back in place and the weakened muscle wall is stitched back together.

- Laparoscopic surgery, which is similar to open surgery. However, instead of a cut outside the groin or abdomen, tiny incisions are made. These smaller incisions allow the surgeon to insert surgical tools to complete the repair.
- Robotic hernia repair, which is also performed with small incisions. With this type of procedure, the surgeon handles surgical instruments from a console in the operating room. Robotic surgery can be used for some smaller hernias or weak areas, and can also be performed to reconstruct the abdominal wall.

## What Causes Hernias?

A variety of factors can lead to hernias, says Dr. Niket Sonpal, a [gastroenterologist](#) and adjunct assistant professor of medicine at the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine in New York City.

Factors that can cause hernias include:

- Stress
- A weak abdominal wall
- Difficulty urinating or making bowel movements
- Strenuous activity
- Pregnancy
- Chronic sneezing or coughing

Medical professionals can diagnose hernias with a physical exam, says Dr. Flavio Malcher, director of the abdominal wall program in the surgery department at the Montefiore Health System in New York City. "If (a patient) believes he or she has a hernia, the best option is to be examined by a general surgeon or his or her primary care physician," Malcher says.

## Hernia Symptoms

Here are some potential symptoms of a hernia:

- A lump or a bulge in the groin or around the belly button
- Pain in the affected region
- Reflux, or GERD
- Bloating and constipation

### **1. A lump or a bulge in the groin or around the belly button.**

The most common sign of a hernia is a painless bulge in the groin or near the belly button, Khosravi says. These bulges often develop incrementally over time. "As they grow, patients



will often complain of discomfort or awareness of (the bulge) with certain activities, including [standing for prolonged periods of time](#) or sitting after a heavy meal," he says.

## **2. Pain in the affected region.**

Pain and discomfort in the area around the lump, whether it's in the groin or belly region, can be a sign of a hernia, Khosravi says. Some people may report feeling intermittent pain after consuming a heavy meal, which can mean that the tissue in the hernia has been pinched off. "Usually this will go away if the patient pushes the hernia back in," Khosravi says. A hard bulge with severe pain and overlying skin redness could be a sign of an emergency that requires surgery.

## **3. Reflux, or GERD.**

Hernias that develop through defects in the diaphragm typically don't cause an abdomen bulge, says Dr. Abraham Krikhely, assistant professor of [surgery](#), minimally invasive and robotic, bariatric and general surgery at Columbia University Irving Medical Center in New York City. A hiatal hernia is a common type of hernia through the diaphragm associated with the upward displacement of the junction between the esophagus and stomach and possibly other abdominal organs in the chest, he says. This can lead to [reflux, or GERD](#), which occurs when your stomach contents come back into your esophagus. Shortness of breath, difficulty with passage of food after swallowing and obstruction of the stomach can also occur with larger hiatal hernias.

## **4. Bloating and constipation.**

Hernias can sometimes lead to obstruction of the intestines that can result in symptoms related to blockage, like [bloating, abdominal cramps and constipation](#), Krikhely says. In some cases, hernias can create intestinal blockages that keep food or liquids from either your small intestine or your large intestine, or colon, according to the Mayo Clinic. Without treatment, the blocked parts of the intestine can die, which could create serious problems, like an infection that creates a surgical emergency, Krikhely says.

<https://health.usnews.com/health-care/patient-advice/articles/2019-01-31/what-are-hernia-symptoms>



[www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)

## A Patient's Guide to Crohn's Disease

Know the basics on symptoms, diagnosis and treatment to help as you battle the condition.



We've all had an upset belly at one time or another – after a bit too much junk food, for example – and have experienced cramping, bloating, nausea, pain or gas as a result. Such episodes typically don't last very long – a couple days at most. But for some people, similar periods of upset stomach become a perpetual problem, and when this happens, they may be dealing with an autoimmune disorder called Crohn's disease.

“Crohn’s disease is a type of inflammatory bowel disease, which means it causes inflammation in the lining of the gastrointestinal tract,” says Dr. Miguel Regueiro, chair of the department of gastroenterology, hepatology, and nutrition at [Cleveland Clinic](#) in Ohio. It’s often grouped together with another condition called [ulcerative colitis](#) under the umbrella of inflammatory bowel disease.

“Crohn’s disease can occur anywhere in the digestive tract from the mouth all the way down to the rectum or the anus,” Regueiro says. The inflammation can show up in patchy sections anywhere along the digestive tract and isn’t necessarily continuous in nature. By contrast, in cases of [ulcerative colitis](#), the inflammation is confined to the large intestine and rectum. “The most common place (for Crohn’s disease to appear) is the small intestine.”

Although Crohn’s and colitis are often talked about together, “Crohn’s disease should not be confused with ulcerative colitis, which is another type of IBD,” says Dr. Niket Sonpal, a New York-based gastroenterologist and internist and adjunct professor at Touro College in New York. “The disease consists of inflammation throughout the gastrointestinal tract and reactions to different types of foods and substances.”

Crohn’s is an autoimmune disorder in which the body’s immune system, which is designed to protect the body from foreign infectious agents, gets confused and begins attacking the body’s own cells. “It’s an immune-mediated disease, meaning that our own body’s immune system begins to attack the intestine to cause this inflammation,” Regueiro says.

## Causes of Crohn’s Disease

Crohn’s disease was first described in the 1930s, Sonpal says. “Early on we thought that it was caused by diet and stress. But as more research and observation has taken place in the nine decades since, doctors are still not able to pinpoint the exact cause of this disease. We do know, however, that diet and stress can exacerbate the symptoms of the disease.”

Regueiro says “current research has demonstrated that it is likely a variety of factors,” that may include:

- Environmental influences.
- Genetics.
- Diet.

“There is likely some environmental influences on the gastrointestinal tract,” he says. “We don’t know if it’s diet or something in the environment that leads to this trigger for the immune system to begin to attack itself,” but it seems likely that genetics also plays a role, given that some people develop the disease while others don’t. However, Regueiro says many gastroenterologists believe that environment is probably the biggest factor “because the microbiome and bacteria in the gut probably play a role, but we clearly know the immune system is attacking an otherwise normal intestine to cause these ulcers and this inflammation.”

## Signs and Symptoms

“The most common symptoms related to Crohn’s disease are usually abdominal pain and [diarrhea](#),” Regueiro says. “However, those are the most common symptoms. The disease can present in many different ways.”

Sonpal adds that “individual patients are affected by the disease differently. The pain they feel may be caused by different foods, their severity of the pain may differ and other symptoms like abdominal cramps, diarrhea, and rectal bleeding may vary in degree.”

The Mayo Clinic reports that common symptoms of Crohn’s include:

- Diarrhea.
- Abdominal pain and cramping.
- Fever.
- Fatigue.
- Bloody stools.
- Unintended weight loss and reduced appetite.
- Sores or lesions in the mouth.
- Pain and inflammation around the anus.
- Inflammation of the skin, eyes, joints, liver or bile ducts.
- [In children](#), delayed growth or sexual development can also be a sign of Crohn’s.

Regueiro says that if you’re concerned that you might be dealing with a case of Crohn’s disease you should see your doctor. Particularly if you’ve had diarrhea and abdominal pain that’s lasted more than a few days, seek help. And if you’ve experienced any “alarm symptoms” those should send you immediately to seek medical attention. These symptoms would include abdominal pain and diarrhea lasting longer than a week, especially when such is associated with weight loss. “If there’s bleeding or fevers, though would be things we want someone to seek medical attention for,” Regueiro says.

## Risk Factors

Although Crohn’s disease can be diagnosed in anyone at any age, it tends to be more common in adults. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that an estimated 3 million adults in America – about 1.3 percent of adults – had either Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis. Sonpal notes that studies vary in their estimation of the number of people in the U.S. with Crohn’s but it’s likely anywhere from 700,000 to 1.5 million.

The Mayo Clinic reports that some risk factors appear to be associated with a higher chance of developing Crohn’s disease, including:

- **Age.** Most people are diagnosed with Crohn’s disease around the time they’re 30 years old.

- **Sex.** “In terms of population studies, research shows that women are more susceptible to Crohn’s disease than men,” Sonpal says, “though men can still be affected by the disease.”
- **Ethnicity.** “Though people of all ethnicities can be and are affected by Crohn’s, studies show that Caucasian people are diagnosed at a higher rate followed by African Americans, whose diagnosis rate has been on the rise, according to recent information gathered on the disease,” Sonpal says.
- **Family history.** If your parent, sibling or child has Crohn’s disease, you’re more likely to develop it, too.
- **Cigarette smoking.** Smoking has been associated with the development of Crohn’s disease and is the most easily controlled risk factor.
- **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication use.** Although medications that include over-the-counter pain killers such as ibuprofen and naproxen sodium don’t directly cause Crohn’s disease, they can lead to inflammation of the bowel that can exacerbate a case of Crohn’s.
- **Geography.** People living in urban or industrialized nations are more likely to develop Crohn’s, suggesting that environmental or dietary factors may be causing that increased incidence.

People with Crohn’s and colitis are also more likely to have other chronic health conditions as well, including:

- Cardiovascular disease.
- Respiratory disease.
- Cancer.
- Arthritis.
- Kidney disease.
- Liver disease.

## Diagnosing Crohn’s Disease

The Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation reports that “a variety of tests are used to diagnose and monitor Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis, the two main types of inflammatory bowel disease. Procedures range from simple blood tests to barium X-rays and colonoscopy, which require preparation the day before the tests. A proper diagnosis of IBD involves determining the disease type (Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis), extent and severity of disease, and any related complications.”

Most patients with Crohn’s begin by seeking help from a [primary care provider](#) and may be referred for additional [testing and treatment by a gastroenterologist](#). “Initially it’s very reasonable to start with the primary care doctor who will examine the patient and get blood work, which is a very good first step to get an understanding whether the patient has anemia or if there’s inflammation in the body,” Regueiro says. Your primary care provider will also likely check for infections, because “sometimes gut infections or gastrointestinal infections can be present with some of these same symptoms.”

Your doctor may order several different kinds of tests to determine whether your symptoms are being caused by Crohn's or another condition. These tests may include imaging studies:

- **X-rays** to look for intestinal narrowing or scarring.
- **A CT scan** to look for abscesses, fistulas and intestinal blockages.
- **An MRI scan** to look for fistula and other complications, especially in the anal area or small intestine.
- **An endoscopy or colonoscopy** in which a flexible tube with a camera in it is inserted into the gastrointestinal tract so your doctor can get a good look at the inside of your digestive tract and pinpoint problem spots that need further examination or treatment.

You'll also likely be offered some additional lab work to determine the extent of the inflammatory response you're having. These tests may include:

- **Routine blood tests** to look for infection, anemia and inflammatory markers such as C-reactive protein. You may also have liver function tests and an electrolyte panel to check your levels of important minerals, especially if you've been having a lot of diarrhea.
- **Antibody blood tests** that look for specific inflammatory biomarkers (proteins in the blood that indicate there's inflammation) that help your doctor distinguish between Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Because symptoms of Crohn's are often associated with other digestive disorders, making a diagnosis isn't always easy. Regueiro says that often, the initial diagnosis is irritable bowel syndrome, which is a more common condition that has similar symptoms – diarrhea, pain or constipation. "Stress and diet play a role, but IBS doesn't have inflammation. Many people with Crohn's will come in with diarrhea and pain will be told it's irritable bowel, but later on as they lose weight or the blood test becomes abnormal or as more severe symptoms arise then a colonoscopy shows they have Crohn's disease," Regueiro says.

## Complications

Because Crohn's disease is a chronic, inflammatory disease, symptoms can progress over time and complications can arise. Particularly for those patients who have Crohn's in the small intestine over time, that recurrent inflammation can lead to the development of scarring and intestinal strictures, which is a narrowing of the intestine. "The diameter of the bowel gets very narrow and food will get caught. That can lead to a bowel obstruction," Regueiro says. In severe cases, people with intestinal strictures or bowel obstructions may need surgery to correct the problem.

Other complications that your doctor will look for are ulcers and fistulas. Ulcers are sores that develop inside the digestive tract. They can be very painful and become infected. Some people also develop fistulas, which is a form of penetrating inflammation. "The inflammation goes through the lining, through the bowel wall," and it can become infected.

As these ulcers or fistulas grow, some people may experience bowel perforations, or ruptures, in which the bowel wall tears. This can be a life-threatening complication that usually requires surgery to correct.

Malnutrition can also develop if you're unable to absorb enough nutrients from the food you eat because of symptoms like pain and diarrhea. The presence of fistulas in the bowel can reduce your ability to absorb nutrients from food.

Having Crohn's disease also raises your chances of developing [colorectal cancer](#), so your doctor may advise you to begin [screening for colon cancer](#) earlier than age 50 which is when most people without Crohn's are advised to get their first colonoscopy.

## Treatment for Crohn's Disease

"The most common treatment approach is some type of medication," Regueiro says. Although there is still no cure, he says the medications that are available now are much better than they were even just 10 years ago. "We have a lot of new medicines that are targeted at parts of the immune system that control the inflammation. These are what we call biologic medicines or biologically active medicines," and they can bring down the level of inflammation in the body and reduce your experience of symptoms.

"Depending on your case a doctor might treat your disease with anti-inflammatory medication to reduce inflammation, steroids, immunosuppressant medication to reduce your body's response in attacking cells in the GI tract and sometimes antibiotics to stop any harmful bacteria from growing," Sonpal says.

Medications used to treat Crohn's typically fall into one of the following categories:

- **Anti-inflammatory drugs.** Corticosteroids such as prednisone can reduce inflammation in the body. These are powerful medications that can bring down inflammation quickly but aren't usually the best option for long-term control of the disease.
- **Immunosuppressants.** Drugs such as infliximab (Remicade), adalimumab (Humira) and methotrexate (Trexall), which are also often used to treat other inflammatory autoimmune conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis may be used to treat Crohn's disease.
- **Antibiotics.** Drugs such as ciprofloxacin (Cipro) and metronidazole (Flagyl) can help treat complications, such as fistulas and abscesses. The Mayo Clinic reports that "some researchers also think antibiotics help reduce harmful intestinal bacteria that may play a role in activating the intestinal immune system, leading to inflammation."
- **Anti-diarrheal medications.** Your doctor may recommend that you take an over-the-counter anti-diarrheal medication such as loperamide (Imodium A-D) to quell excessive diarrhea if you're having it. Some patients also find that by adding a fiber supplement such as psyllium powder (Metamucil) or methylcellulose (Citrucel) their stool gets bulkier and they have less diarrhea.



- **Over-the-counter pain relievers.** Drugs such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) may help relieve pain. However, your doctor will likely warn you away from nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory pain relievers such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB) and naproxen sodium (Aleve) because these drugs may make symptoms worse.
- **Vitamin and mineral shots and supplements.** Many people with Crohn's have deficiency of certain vitamins and minerals, such as [vitamin B-12](#), calcium and vitamin D. Your doctor may want to boost your intake of these essential nutrients with a shot or daily pill. Many people also have anemia because of intestinal bleeding, so your doctor may prescribe an iron supplement.

## Crohn's Disease Diet

Because some doctors think that [diet](#) plays a role in the development of Crohn's your health care provider may include diet as part of your treatment protocol. "Depending on your individual case, your specialist might go over a nutrition plan to help you avoid foods and substances that aggravate your condition. Individuals with this disease are affected differently so this is something you have to assess with your specialist," Sonpal says.

Some doctors recommend avoiding:

- Alcoholic beverages.
- Fats such as butter, mayonnaise and oils.
- Carbonated beverages.
- Caffeinated drinks such as coffee or tea.
- Chocolate.
- Dairy products.
- Fried or fatty foods.
- High-fiber foods.
- High-fat animal proteins such as beef.

On the other hand, eating [easy to digest foods](#) such as rice, potatoes and oatmeal may help soothe an inflamed gut. Diets rich in cooked (baked or steamed) fruits and vegetables, eggs and fish may also be indicated as good options for people with Crohn's disease, but it's important to talk with our doctor about what's best for your situation.

## Managing Crohn's Disease

"Crohn's is a chronic disease for which we have no cure at the moment," Sonpal says. Therefore, "patients must assess the severity of their condition with their doctor in order to learn how to manage their symptoms. This condition presents challenges that can stress patients out, but it is possible to lead an active and happy life while dealing with Crohn's. Be patient with your body and system and know that there will be days when your symptoms flare up but with proper treatment, you can manage the disease."

Regueiro agrees that you can live a relatively normal life with Crohn's, but that it's important to work with your doctor to achieve and maintain remission of symptoms. "This shouldn't be a disease with a stigma attached to it. In the past, people often would not talk about their diagnosis or their disease out of embarrassment or social isolation." But as awareness of the disease's prevalence increases, managing it becomes easier. "Getting patients to the right doctors and health care providers is really important. Realizing it's probably more common than we think and it's more treatable than it ever has been before" is important, he says.

<https://health.usnews.com/conditions/crohns-disease>



<https://tonic.vice.com>

## Slow Your Roll and Chew Your Food

Eating more slowly is an under-appreciated way to be a little healthier.



Ever heard of **Horace Fletcher**? He was a health food enthusiast of the Victorian-era who argued that food should be chewed about 100 times before being swallowed. "Nature will castigate those who don't masticate" was his motto and it was his firm belief that food had to be chewed to a pulp to enable the enzymes in saliva to do their thing. The Great Masticator's beliefs on the importance of eating slowly actually made him millionaire and, 99 years after his death, a wealth of research suggests that he was onto something. Here's what making a point of not inhaling your food could do for you.

## **Eating slowly could improve your digestion**

Horace Fletcher and physiologist Ivan Pavlov were born in the same year, 1849. Through their work, both knew that as soon as humans or their four-legged friends see, smell, or even think about food they begin salivating to prepare for putting that food in their mouths. Famously, Pavlov was studying conditioning whereas Fletcher's interests lay solely in the digestion of food and how to optimize it.

Fletcher knew that digestion begins in the mouth where enzyme-containing saliva gets a jump on breaking food down. He saw this as the first step in a chain reaction that would lead to the stomach producing more acid, the small intestine readying itself for some peristalsis and so on. He also knew that if the process is rushed, the GI tract has difficulty dealing with the influx.

A 2011 University of Rhode Island [study](#) looked at how eating speed affected the early stages of digestive processing by observing 60 young adults eat a meal. They found that slow eaters consumed two ounces of food per minute while fast eaters ate 3.1 ounces per minute, took larger bites, and chewed less before swallowing. That meant that fast eaters' food was sailing down their alimentary canals in lumps and not as chyme. Chyme is a liquid mix of partially digested food, hydrochloric acid, digestive enzymes, and water that passes through the pyloric valve on its way to elimination.

Food that isn't properly broken down into chyme can lead to indigestion and other potential GI problems. "When we eat quickly, two things are taking place: First, we're not fully chewing our food, and secondly, we are taking in more air when swallowing quickly. This can cause bloating, distention and discomfort," says Niket Sonpal, New York City-based gastroenterologist and professor of clinical medicine at Touro College.

## **It will also help you taste your food**

Another benefit of eating more slowly is that you will taste your food more. Prolonging the time it takes you to eat a meal will enable you to experience more of the flavors, textures, and aromas of the food on your plate. In essence, eating will become more interesting.

"By slowing down you actually taste and enjoy your food," says New York-based registered dietician Amy Shapiro. "This often means you are not preoccupied by outside elements as well and therefore you are more satisfied with your food because you are being mindful, enjoying the experience, taste, texture, and company."

Researchers from the University of Chicago and Ohio State University put this idea to the **test** and challenged study participants to consume unexciting foods in novel ways. They found that people consistently rated their experiences as more enjoyable when they slowed their roll or otherwise changed things up.

In one part of the study, participants were given ten kernels of popcorn. Some were asked to eat with chopsticks, while others could eat with their hands. The researchers found that those who used chopsticks reported a more intense and focused eating experience. “When you eat popcorn with chopsticks, you pay more attention and you are more immersed in the experience,” Ohio State assistant professor of marketing Rob Smith, one of the study's authors, told OSU’s press office. “It’s like eating popcorn for the first time.”

## **You’ll feel fuller faster**

Eating too fast may result in us not feeling as full as we should, says New York-based nutritionist Stephanie Di Figlia-Peck. “We often fall victim to this when we get overly hungry, or are very distracted,” Sonpal says. It takes about 15 or 20 minutes for us to feel full once we have started eating. “Most can pack on the calories before the brain gets the ‘I am full’ message, and the resulting response that it is time to stop eating.”

Another University of Rhode Island **study** looked at what happens to portion size when people are encouraged to eat quickly or slowly. On two occasions they invited 30 normal-weight women to eat a giant bowl of pasta to until they were comfortably full. On the first visit, they told the volunteers to eat as quickly as possible but on the second visit, they were instructed to eat slowly and put down their utensils between bites. Researchers found that when eating quickly, the women consumed 646 calories in 9 minutes. When eating slowly, the women consumed 579 calories in 29 minutes. That’s a difference of 67 calories which, as another study demonstrated, can really make a difference over time.

A five-year **study** that looked at the eating habits of 60,000 people with type 2 diabetes in Japan found that eating speed was a reliable predictor of obesity. Compared to people who described themselves as fast eaters, researchers found that those who said they ate at a normal speed were 29 percent less likely to be obese while people who identified as being slow eaters were 42 percent less likely to be obese.

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