

Tried and true exercise is the way to go

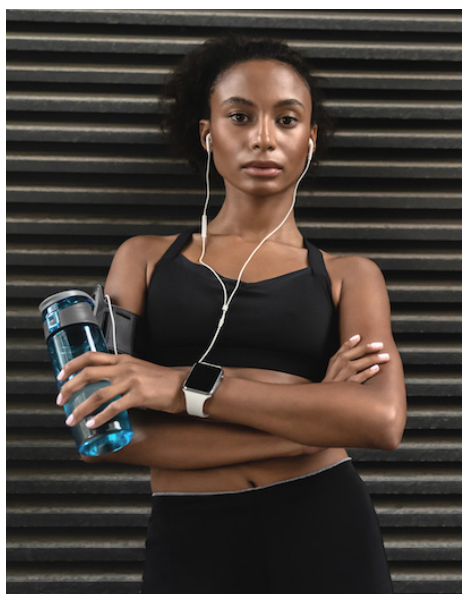
TikTok dance trends may catch a lot of people's attention, and they can be fun to do. But what about the dances that promote weight loss such as the viral "Ab Dance"? Sure, dancing has always been known to get the heart pumping (think Zumba), but Health.com experts agree that the Ab Dance move amounts to little more than pelvic thrusts, and if done incorrectly can hurt you more than help you.

The Ab Dance is based on a practice called "spot reduction". Spot reduction refers to the claim that fat in a certain area of the body can be targeted for reduction through exercise of specific muscles in that desired area. For example, exercising the abdominal muscles to lose weight in or around one's midsection.

Weightwatchers Canada says otherwise, explaining that body fat is simply stored energy in our bodies. When the body turns to fat for energy it draws from fat cells equally throughout our bodies and not just the muscles that are creating the energy demand.

We each store and burn fat differently.

Where your body chooses to recruit fat cells from to use as energy depends on many factors, including gender, hormones and genetics.



Therefore, smashing out hundreds of squats isn't necessarily going to torch thigh fat, nor is the Ab Dance going to give you perfect abs.

Although professionals know spot reduction is a myth, many people still believe that it is possible to choose where fat can be lost on one's body because of the continual misleading information some social media outlets are providing.

Muscle growth in a region does not reduce fat in that region. Instead, fat is lost from the entire body because of diet and regular exercise.

The best course of action, says weightwatchers.com, is to reduce body fat while also toning and strengthening the body is to do full-body aerobic activities, along with strength exercises that incorporate large muscle groups. This could look like swimming and running, along with deadlifts and squat cleans; these exercises work the entire body, which will help burn fat and strengthen muscles.

Remember nutrition and building muscle will be your best friends if you're looking to lose fat and gain muscle. So, to build strong abs, stick to proven exercises, like planks and crunches, and healthy eating to meet your goal.

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Try these three social skills to make you more likable

There are many articles published on the Internet and in magazines about ways to become a more likeable person. For some it comes naturally, for others it takes some practice.

Here are three ways to improve your social skills, shared by contributors at quora.com:

- **Don't just listen — actively listen.**

Simply hearing words doesn't cut it. Likable people show that they're listening to the person they're talking to. Active listening requires four steps; hearing, interpreting, evaluating, and responding. Step one requires dropping what you're doing and paying attention. Next, paraphrase what you've heard and ask clarifying questions. Evaluating means steering clear of quick judgment and jumping to conclusions and finally, give feedback to let the speaker know

that you heard them.

- **If someone is interrupted, ask them to continue.**

Everyone has been that person who is telling a story, gets interrupted, and then has to awkwardly stand by, wondering if anyone was even listening to you. Try being that person's liberator by saying something like, "Hey, your story was getting interesting! Can you please tell me what happens next?" You will instantly put the speaker at ease and make them feel appreciated.

- **End a conversation right.**

Your final words can leave a lasting impression on a person, so use them right. Send people off with a genuine remark like, "I enjoyed getting to know you," or, "I hope you enjoy the rest of your day." It's so easy to do, and can make all the difference.



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Hold that happy thought

There's nothing quite like waking up with a smile on your face. Here are a few tips to get you in a positive state of mind when you get out of bed in the morning:

- **Drink a glass of water as soon as you wake up.**

This rehydrates your body, revs up your digestive system, and gets things flowing.

- **Do not check your email or phone for at least an hour.**

Do you sleep with your cell phone next to you and grab for it first thing when you wake? This is not a good habit. If you choose to resist the temptation to check your email and Facebook feed until at least an hour after waking up, you'll find that your mind is more clear, focused and happy.

- **Think of one thing for which you have gratitude.**

This sets the stage for positivity throughout the day. If you come up with three or five things, even better.

- **Move your body.**

You don't have to do an intense workout before breakfast, but moving your body even a little is a great way to get the blood flowing and shake the body into wake-up mode. Simply doing a few stretches is a great option.

- **Take time to eat a healthy breakfast.**

Focus on getting real foods in your body. Eggs, soaked oats, and smoothies are all great options.

- **Give yourself a pep-talk.**

Look into the mirror and say something positive to yourself. Some ideas:

- I will accomplish my goals today.
- I will take good care of myself.
- I feel great when I can help others.





Help your kids sleep better

If you're like most parents, at some point or another, you've had a battle on your hands while trying to get a kid to settle in for the night, fall asleep, and stay asleep. If those rough nights have become routine, you might want to consider some of the following common causes of insomnia:

1. Anxiety and stress

Anxiety and stress are major contributors to sleep difficulties in children. Kids may worry about school, relationships, or life events, making it difficult to fully unwind and rest. Come up with a calm and relaxing bedtime routine that leaves little room for anxious thoughts, including story time, or a warm shower or bath. While bedtime isn't the ideal time to discuss difficult issues, you can help your kids identify, articulate, and manage their stressors and provide them with coping mechanisms.

2. Electronic devices

The use of electronic devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and televisions, can prevent kids from falling asleep. The blue light emitted from their screens suppresses the production of melatonin, a sleep-regulating hormone. Also, the content on these devices can wind your kids up before bedtime. Try setting a screen-free time at least an hour before bedtime and encouraging other pre-bedtime relaxing activities.

3. Poor sleep environment

A poor sleep environment can also contribute to sleep difficulties in children. This includes factors such as a room that is too hot or too cold, too bright or dark, or too noisy. You can help by creating a

comfortable and conducive sleep sanctuary, such as installing blackout curtains, and using a white noise machine or soothing music to block out any disruptive sounds. Soft, breathable bedding and sleepwear go a long way, too.

4. Inconsistent sleep schedule

As much of a challenge as it may be, getting your kids to go to bed at a consistent time is essential to healthy sleep. Children need regular bed-down and wake-up times to help "program" their internal body clock. Once healthy patterns are set, sleep comes more naturally. Develop a consistent bedtime routine and stick to it, even on weekends.

5. Nutrition and diet

Nutrition and diet can also play a role in sleep difficulties in children. Certain foods, such as sugary or caffeine containing foods, can affect a child's ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. Try encouraging a healthy daily diet and limiting or avoiding high-sugar foods close to bedtime.

6. Medical conditions

Certain medical conditions, such as sleep apnea and restless leg syndrome, can also contribute to sleep difficulties in children. Consult your child's doctor if you suspect they have a medical condition affecting their sleep.

7. Developmental and behavioural Issues

Autism, ADHD, and other developmental and behavioural issues can also cause a child to experience sleep difficulties. Kids with these conditions may have difficulty regulating their behaviour and emotions, which can affect their ability to fall and stay asleep. Consult a pediatrician or a specialist if you think your child may have a developmental or behavioural issue affecting their sleep.

Saunas and your health

A sauna is any room or building where high heat (generally of at least 160°F or 71°C) is used as a form of therapy. While there are a variety of different kinds of saunas -- traditional woodburning, electrical, and infrared -- what all have in common are certain health benefits.

One benefit of visiting a sauna derives from what saunas do to muscles. High heat has a therapeutic effect on strained, tight, and sore muscles. As the body warms, blood circulation increases, helping the body heal muscle trauma. A sauna can thus be a great way to help recover from an intense workout. The increase in circulation can also reduce pain from other conditions (such as arthritis) and improve joint mobility.

Stress relief is another area in which saunas provide benefit. Experiencing the high heat of a sauna triggers the release of dopamine, endorphins, and serotonin, all of which are brain chemicals associated with positive emotions such as euphoria and calm. By allowing the body to relax, saunas also aid in the regulation of the stress hormone cortisol. Stress relief itself has numerous health benefits, such as improving sleep quality.

Psychologically, a sauna is a place where a person can get away from their cares and worries. A sauna is a quiet room without distractions. When the door to a sauna is shut, the outside world temporarily goes away. Many people find visiting a sauna to be an intensely relaxing experience. Simply setting aside time for an activity that makes no particular demands on attention and focus can improve mental wellness.

While saunas appear safe for most, people with uncontrolled high blood pressure and heart disease should check with their doctors before taking a sauna.

Here are some general precautions according to health.harvard.edu:

- Avoid alcohol and medications that may impair sweating and produce overheating before and after your sauna.
- Stay in no more than 15-20 minutes.
- Cool down gradually afterward.
- Drink two to four glasses of cool water after each sauna.
- Don't take a sauna when you are ill, and if you feel unwell during your sauna, head for the door.





Family dinner talk tips

(NC) Anyone who has kids knows how hard it can be to get everyone to put down their phones, enjoy each other's company and have a good conversation with a meal. Fortunately, there are a few tricks parents can try to help their children ditch the "ums" and "I don't knows" and spark an engaging chat.

Talk about yourself

This may sound counterintuitive, but like most other behaviours you want your child to adopt, you have to walk the talk. Or in this case, talk the talk. So be a good role model and avoid putting them on the spot by sharing something about your day, a weekend activity you're looking forward to or a funny thing your co-worker said. Don't be afraid to be vulnerable - this will encourage little ones to be too.

Make it a game

Turning the conversation into a game is a great way to break the ice, especially on a night when no one is feeling too chatty. The glad-sad-mad game is a great for kids (and adults) of all ages, where everyone shares one thing that made them glad, sad and mad that day. Another good one is "would you rather?" Younger kids will love questions like "would you rather be a T-rex or a raptor?" and older ones will enjoy ones that are a bit deeper, like "would you rather go on vacation to the rainforest or a snowy destination?"

Look to the food

You'd be surprised how many conversation starters are right on your table - you can talk about where the food came from, what's in season and even new recipe ideas everyone would like to try. If your kids show interest in how food gets onto our plates, encourage them to learn more about the science of agriculture. Food starts with research, and scientists use game-changing technology to help farmers improve and protect crops and produce food in an environmentally friendly way. Kids can meet Canadian scientists, discover their work and see how their research impacts us at agriculture.canada.ca/fields-science.

The ugly side of Botox

Are you considering Botox as a cosmetic procedure? Make sure you know the pros and cons beforehand. Botox is a popular cosmetic procedure for reducing the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines. While Botox injections can give satisfying results, as with most things, there are also downsides to consider before signing up for this anti-aging treatment.

Any time you inject something underneath your skin, there's the potential for things to go wrong. Botox is a purified protein that blocks the transmission of signals from nerves to muscles. When injected into a muscle, it relaxes the muscle, making it harder to contract. If you get Botox, make sure a professional performs the procedure for you.

As with any medical procedure, Botox carries the risk of side effects. Here are some possible side effects:

- **Swelling, redness, and bruising at the injection site:** These side effects are usually mild and resolve on their own within a few days.
- **Temporary weakness in the muscles around the injection site:** In some cases, the muscles around the injection site may feel weak or paralyzed. This is a normal and temporary side effect of the treatment.
- **Headache:** Some people experience a headache after receiving Botox. This is typically a mild side effect that goes away on its own within a few days.
- **Dry mouth:** In rare cases, Botox injections in the forehead may cause dry mouth.
- **Allergic reaction:** In rare cases, people can have an allergic reaction to the ingredients in Botox. Symptoms of an allergic reaction can include rash, itching, and difficulty breathing.

These are all issues to discuss with a healthcare provider before receiving treatment. Know what you can expect before taking the plunge.

Botox isn't a permanent solution to wrinkles. The effects of Botox last three to five months and a shorter time in muscles that you move more. To maintain the results, you'll need to repeat the injections. The frequency depends on how long the effects last for you and the recommendations of your healthcare provider. Some people need to repeat the injections every three to four months, while others may need them less often.

Also, know that Botox doesn't stop the aging process. It's a temporary way to smooth dynamic wrinkles that show up when you move your face, not the static wrinkles that are there when your face is at rest, even when you aren't smiling or frowning. Static wrinkles are typically caused by factors such as sun exposure, aging, and genetics. They are not affected by Botox. If you have static wrinkles, other treatments, such as dermal fillers or laser treatments, may be more effective in reducing their appearance. A dermatologist or plastic surgeon can help you determine the best action.

Botox could cause muscle atrophy if you use it for an extended period or too often. Muscle atrophy is a condition in which the muscles weaken and shrink due to disuse or lack of stimulation. When Botox paralyzes the muscles in a specific area of your face, you may lose some muscle tone in that area. This can lead to the muscles becoming weaker and smaller over time. So, if you use it, do so in moderation and know the risks.



Foam rolling an option to increase range of motion

Foam rollers have become more prevalent in gyms, exercise classes and therapy clinics during the past 10 years. Many physical therapists use foam rollers to help patients recover from injuries – and for good reason, according to uclahealth.org. This flexible piece of equipment can help to increase range of motion, shorten recovery time, and enhance healing.

However, you don't have to be recovering from a procedure or injury to appreciate their usefulness. Anyone who experiences muscle soreness from stress, poor body mechanics or a workout can benefit from using a roller. A foam roller is a long, cylindrical roll of hard foam. Foam rollers are used as a form of self-massage. A person lies or sits on the roller such that pressure is applied to a targeted muscle, then either holds the position or rolls back and forth.

It isn't hard to learn how to use a foam roller. Nor does it take very long to roll out a given muscle. Foam rolling is helpful to both people in great shape and those with sedentary lifestyles (sitting for long periods creates lots of muscle tension). A wide variety of foam rollers are available, including rugged, hard rollers for the experienced, and softer rollers for those starting out.

Here are a few reasons to use one:

1. Loosen tight muscles. Muscles can develop knots (also called adhesions or trigger points) as they are used. A knot occurs when a muscle becomes stuck in a contraction, unable to relax. A knotted muscle is weak and unable to function properly. Applying deep pressure, however, will cause the muscle to relax, releasing the adhesion. A foam roller is one way to apply such deep pressure.

2. Pain relief. Knots and tightness in the muscle usually cause pain. The pain is not necessarily limited to the muscle itself, but often radiates to other areas. A weak, tight muscle may force another muscle to work harder, resulting in pain in the latter muscle. While rolling out a sore muscle can itself be quite painful, the long-lasting relief that follows is worth it.

3. Improved range of motion and flexibility. A tight, knotted muscle is not be able to function as it should, resulting in the muscle's range of motion being reduced. Loosening muscle adhesions will restore range of motion and flexibility.

4. Reduced injury risk and improved recovery. Applying deep pressure to a muscle increases blood flow to that area, which can significantly aid recovery from injury. Tight, knotted muscles are more likely to be torn or suffer strain. Tense, weak, and inadequate muscles can also cause injuries in other muscles by forcing those muscles to work too hard.

5. Stress relief. Mind and body are closely related. Tense, knotted muscles and the accompanying pain can greatly increase stress. An area that remains constantly sore and tight can seriously drain mental energy. Relaxing sore, tight muscles will engender feelings of calm and relaxation. Relieving stress can itself enhance sleep quality and increase mental clarity and focus.

Keep in mind that foam rolling is designed for soft tissue, not joints. It may cause joints to hyperextend and cause more pain. So don't roll over knees, elbow, ankles, hips, and shins.

Tips to take time back as a parent

(NC) Becoming a new parent is truly one of the greatest joys in life. It can also be exhausting and at times feel all consuming. Here are a few ways you can find some time for yourself while you adjust to your new life as a parent.

Listen and learn

Make feeding time multi-tasking time. While you're nursing, pop in your ear buds and turn on your favourite podcast or an audiobook, or binge that series you've been hearing so much about. If the sound disturbs your baby, turn on closed captioning and hit mute.

Engage the family

If you have older children, get them to help out with age-appropriate chores. Younger kids can be tasked with keeping their room clean and tidying up common areas. Teach older kids how to run the laundry or dishwasher, and get them to take care of things like shovelling.

Catch up on your rest

If you're having a hard time relaxing, try a warm bath and soothing music, or give meditation a go. Comfy clothes like soft joggers, fleecy zip-ups and cozy socks can help you chill out.

Pamper yourself

Feeling good about yourself is a great way to boost your mood even when you're feeling worn out. Being outside with baby in the sunshine can brighten your spirits and provide health benefits for both of you. Consider personal grooming service providers such as hairdressers and estheticians who offer in-home services. If your body is feeling beaten down – and that "if" is probably redundant – consider booking yourself an at-home massage.



A pantry full of protein

Our bones, hair, blood cells, muscles, antibodies, organs, digestive enzymes, skin, tissues and hormones all depend on protein.

Research shows that getting enough protein can help support weight loss efforts by helping you feel fuller longer, but sometimes it's tough to get enough protein into your daily diet.

Here are three suggestions to get the protein in your daily diet:

1. Beans and lentils all the way. Legumes make a perfect base for an inexpensive bowl of hearty soup or stew, a vegan option for salads and wraps or even a great base for a high fibre pasta sauce.

2. A little fish. Most of us consume less than half of the recommended weekly serving of fish, which means we're out on nutritional benefits like omega-3s, high quality-protein and vitamin D. For example, there are several healthy, nutrient-packed ways to prepare and eat tuna. Salads are a nutritious way to combine tuna with an array of other healthy foods for a light lunch or dinner.



Along with drained, canned tuna, include dark greens, such as romaine lettuce, spinach or kale, which are rich in vitamins C, E and calcium, and cannellini beans or garbanzo beans for additional protein and fibre.

3. Go nuts. Try pre-packing nuts in small sandwich bags for an easy snack that you can keep at your desk, in your purse or in your gym bag. Spruce up your breakfast with a sprinkle of chopped nuts, adding a crunch to yogurt, oatmeal or cereal.

energy zone

Eggs are so nutritious that they're often referred to as "nature's multivitamin," according to Healthline.com. They also contain unique antioxidants such as lutein and zeaxanthin which can help in the reduction macular degeneration and cataracts.

Whole eggs are nutritious, containing a very large amount of nutrients compared to calories. The nutrients are found in the yolks, while the whites are mostly protein.

Studies show that eggs actually improve the cholesterol profile. The cholesterol in eggs doesn't seem to negatively affect the human body compared to other sources of cholesterol. For example, eggs typically are eaten with other foods high in salt, saturated fat and

Eggs!

cholesterol, such as bacon, cheese and butter. These foods are known to increase heart disease risk and should be eaten sparingly.

Eggs are also a great source of vitamins A, D and B12, as well as choline, a nutrient essential in many steps of metabolism.



A worry-free season with three essential vitamins

Spring is just around the corner and while we hate to put a damper on your enjoyment of much-needed sunshine and fresh air, it's important to keep a few tips in mind to enjoy a worry-free spring. The best way to do this is to remember the ABC's of vitamins:

• **Protect your skin with vitamin A.** It's essential to ensure your skin is healthy year-round. So just because you've gotten through the dry winter air doesn't mean that you can stop taking care of your skin. One way to keep your skin looking and feeling great is to make sure you're getting enough vitamin A. Did you know that vitamin A is a vital nutrient which promotes skin repair and maintenance? In fact, people with vitamin A deficiencies are more prone to dry, flaky skin. Make sure you're getting enough vitamin A in your diet from foods such as sweet potatoes, spinach and fish oils.

• **Stay active with vitamin B.** Spring is the time for adventures and exploring nature. But this means you'll need enough energy to keep up. "B vitamins" is a term that actually includes eight different vitamins, some of which you may recognize, such as riboflavin and folic acid. They help your body convert the carbohydrates you eat into glucose, fuel for your body. They can be found in a variety of foods, such as almonds, pork, poultry and whole cereals.

• **Keep allergy symptoms at bay with vitamin C.** Vitamin C should stand for vitamin "Classic" because every season, vitamin C proves to be a jack-of-all-trades nutrient. You've probably been taking it the past few months to lessen the severity of your cold symptoms, but vitamin C is also a natural antihistamine. Histamines are what our body creates when something triggers our allergies, an unfortunate side effect of spring. Vitamin C can decrease your allergy symptoms by minimizing the formation of histamines. Try adding some vitamin C-enriched foods to your picnic basket, such as citrus fruits, strawberries, tomatoes, and leafy greens.

When making changes to your diet, remember to keep track of your intake of calories, fats, sodium and other vitamins.