

TAKE CHARGE!



May 2025

Red Flags for Nutrition and Fitness Fads

How do you know an exercise or nutrition tip on social media is trustworthy or safe? The old adage “If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is” certainly applies to some nutrition and fitness fads. In fact, some “lose weight fast” challenges can even be harmful — especially if they are not based on any solid research or medical facts.

A study published in *BMC Public Health* analyzed thousands of Instagram “fitspiration” posts and concluded nearly two-thirds of them contained information that was misleading or just plain wrong. University of Vermont researchers delved into TikTok posts about nutrition, diet and weight loss and concluded that the “advice” offered was a glorification of fast weight loss. It was not credible information about nutrition and healthy diets. And Australian researchers found that only 48% of nutrition information on social media and websites is accurate.

Researchers have also found frequently visiting social media accounts that push images of “desirable body types” may lower personal body satisfaction, increase worries about sexual attractiveness and contribute to eating disorders.

Ask yourself these questions when scrolling social media and to help recognize red flags:

- ➔ Are influencers promoting real fitness or toxic thinness? Many body types can be healthy, even if they are not stick-thin or lack body-builder muscles. Make sure the images are realistic.
- ➔ Is a hyped exercise or diet program sustainable? A high-intensity training program, a strict “miracle” diet or a “detox” plan may be dangerous for some people.
- ➔ Are they trying to sell you something? Be wary if you need to buy expensive supplements or sign up for a lengthy fitness plan to “get results.”

Bottom line: Do not blindly trust health care information from social media, especially if you have any pre-existing health conditions. Talk to your health care provider before jumping in and potentially wasting time and money — and possibly risking your health.



The Smart Moves Toolkit, including this issue’s printable download, [The Mediterranean Table](#), is at personalbest.com/extras/25V5tools.

city events

Mobile Mammography Screening
Monday, May 6 and Tuesday, May 7
 7:40 am – 3:20 pm [Register here](#)

Deferred Compensation
Introduction to Deferred Compensation
Wednesday, May 7
 12:00 pm – 12:45 pm [Register here](#)

Navigating the Deferred Compensation Website
Tuesday, May 14
 12:00 pm – 12:30 pm [Register here](#)

Nearing Retirement
Thursday, May 22
 12:00 pm – 12:45 pm [Register here](#)

Financial Planning for Life
Monday, May 6
 11:30 am – 12:30 pm [Register here](#)

Benefits of Group Term Life Insurance at Any Age
Wednesday, May 8
 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm [Register here](#)

Basics of Estate Planning
Thursday, May 9
 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm [Register here](#)

The New Realities of Home Ownership
Tuesday, May 13
 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm [Register here](#)

Perimenopause & Menopause: It's More Than a Flash! (1 of 4)
Thursday, May 15
 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm [Register here](#)

Quit for Life Tobacco/Nicotine Cessation
Thursday, May 15
 10:00 am – 11:00 am [Register here](#)

How to Speak to Your Healthcare Provider
Wednesday, May 21
 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm [Register here](#)

From Cravings to Control: How to Stop Emotional Eating in Its Tracks
Thursday, May 22
 10:00 am – 11:00 am [Register here](#)

Tune Up Your Ears

Noise-induced hearing loss is entirely preventable.

That's the good news. The bad news is that it is permanent and irreversible. And even a single exposure to a loud noise can damage your hearing. Hearing loss can happen gradually over time.

Prevent noise-induced hearing loss at home and at work by following these guidelines:

Keep the volume on headphones, earplugs or speakers at a safe level when listening to music, podcasts or playing video games.

Avoid noisy environments. However, if you can't, wear hearing protection. You can find earplugs and earmuffs designed for specific activities at hardware and sporting goods stores.

Wear hearing protection when mowing the lawn or using power tools.

Wear earplugs or earmuffs when attending loud events, such as music concerts, and stay away from the speakers.

Find out if noise at your workplace is hazardous. OSHA's permissible exposure limit (PEL) is 90 dBA for an eight-hour, time-weighted average (TWA) with a 5 dBA exchange rate. This means every 5 dBA increase halves the safe exposure time — 90 dBA allows just four hours. **Tip:** Use a sound level meter app, such as NIOSH's Sound Level Meter at [cdc.gov/niosh/noise/about/app.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/noise/about/app.html), to check noise levels.

Reduce your exposure to work-related noise by wearing hearing protection, taking breaks, maintaining equipment and using engineering solutions to reduce noise.

Wear the correct hearing protection. If your job requires working in a noisy environment, choose self-forming, well-fitting earplugs or earmuffs depending on noise level.

Remember to protect young children's hearing since they cannot do so themselves.

Finally, have your hearing tested if you think you may have hearing loss.

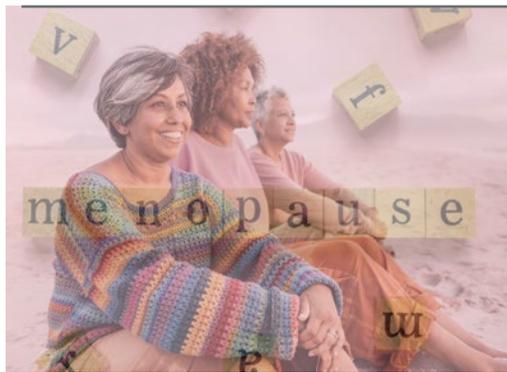


Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease where the immune system attacks the body's tissues, causing inflammation and affecting the skin, joints, heart, lungs, kidneys, blood and brain. Symptoms include fevers, arthritis, rashes, hair loss, sores and swelling. People with lupus experience flares of varying severity and remission. With treatment, it is manageable.



To self-manage lupus:

- Recognize flare-up warning signs.
- Know your triggers.
- Take medications.
- Manage fatigue.
- Understand your limits.
- Eat healthily.
- Get quality sleep.
- Try to exercise every day with your health care provider's okay.



Managing Menopause

Menopause can bring uncomfortable symptoms. Although some women sail through the “change of life” without much difficulty, others find everything from their sleep to energy levels impacted. There are many symptoms, including hot flashes, night sweats, insomnia, brain fog and mood swings. That's why understanding what's going on in your body is important.

Perimenopause begins when women start having symptoms. Once you've gone through 12 consecutive months without a period, perimenopause ends and you begin menopause. Menstruation is typically irregular before totally stopping as menopause progresses. (However, if you've had chemotherapy, surgery or hormone treatments due to cancer, menopause may begin abruptly.)

Here are some tips to manage symptoms:

- ➔ Avoid spicy foods and limit or eliminate alcohol and caffeine to reduce hot flashes.
- ➔ Keep your home, especially your bedroom, on the cool side to help with hot flashes and improve your sleep. Dress lightly and in layers.
- ➔ Yoga and swimming are good exercise choices if aerobics spark hot flashes. Regular exercise also can help your mood and sleep.
- ➔ Relieve vaginal dryness with over-the-counter vaginal lubricants (don't use regular skin moisturizers). Talk to your health care provider about prescription options, if needed, including low-dose vaginal estrogen.

Because there are so many possible symptoms, it's a good idea to see your provider. If symptoms are severe, you may be a candidate for HRT (hormone replacement therapy). If HRT isn't right for you, discuss other prescription options to reduce hot flashes and help with sleeping difficulties. Antidepressants can help with symptoms, too.

Another reason to talk to your provider about menopause — osteoporosis (bone thinning) and cardiovascular disease risks rise at this time of life. Make sure you get all the preventative care and regular screening tests, including mammograms, that your provider recommends.

Learn more about menopause at mymenoplan.org.

STUDY: Physical activity helps you think quickly. Although moderate-to-vigorous exercise is known to benefit body and brain, Penn State research suggests any kind of physical activity is good for your brain.

For the study, published in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, middle-aged volunteers were questioned five times a day for a week about their recent physical activity. Then they played two different brain games via a phone app. A game required tapping a symbol at the bottom of the participants' screens to match a symbol found at the top; a location-memory task asked participants to locate three dots which were only seen briefly in a grid before the dots were hidden.

The symbol-search game scores improved after periods of physical activity. Location-memory scores didn't improve but response time was faster after physical activity.

Bottom line: Any kind of physical activity appears to boost how fast a person thinks.

TIP of the MONTH Food Dyes

In September 2024, California became the first U.S. state to ban six artificial food dyes in public school meals due to concerns about their impact on children's behavior. California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment investigated food dyes and health risks. They issued a report that said food dyes are linked to hyperactivity and ADHD in children. While some experts agree with the ban, others suggest more research is needed to determine how genetic factors play a role and which children are more susceptible to harm from food dyes. Also, in January the FDA banned FD&C Red Dye No. 3 in food and ingested drugs. (Manufacturers who use this dye in food and ingested drugs will have until January 15, 2027, or January 18, 2028, respectively, to change their products.) Concerned for your child? Read food labels and choose foods with no artificial colors.

Say CHEESE

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Once maligned for its fat content, cheese is back in the spotlight for its health benefits.

Filled with bone-building calcium and protein, it's time to rethink cheese and its endless culinary possibilities. Here are some of the health benefits of cheese.

Promotes good gut health: Some types of cheese are made through fermentation. Eating fermented cheese may provide beneficial bacteria to the gut, which helps promote normal digestion. Choose cheeses that have been aged but not heated afterward, such as Swiss, provolone, Gouda and cheddar.

Supports healthy bones: Milk products such as cheese are positively associated with bone mineral density. Cheese contains calcium, phosphorus and protein, which support bone health.

Benefits heart health: For years, studies indicated that foods high in saturated fats, including meat and cheese, may increase heart disease risk. While the case still remains for reducing meat intake, the story on cheese is different. Studies show that people who eat cheese have a lower risk for ischemic heart disease, coronary heart disease and stroke.

Maintains healthy blood pressure: Cheese can be part of the diet to reduce high blood pressure, likely due to its calcium content. Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet includes two to three servings of dairy foods daily, including reduced fat cheese such as mozzarella.

In recipes, cheese has unparalleled versatility. It offers flavors that range from sharp to buttery to piquant to salty, and it elevates many dishes. Textures can vary from creamy and melty to crisp and crumbly. It's perfect for pasta, salads, soups, casseroles, omelets and more. Cheese also pairs well with fruit and nuts on charcuterie boards.

When choosing cheese, stick to real cheese instead of processed cheese slices. Real cheese has more vitamins and minerals and much less salt than processed cheese.

eating smart



Cheesy Black Bean Bake

2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil	1 tsp ground cumin
1 red onion, diced	¼ tsp red pepper flakes (optional)
3 garlic cloves, minced	2 cans black beans, drained and rinsed
1 red pepper, seeded and diced	Few pinches salt and pepper
1 zucchini, diced	1½ cups grated Cheddar cheese
½ cup tomato paste plus ½ cup water	½ cup cilantro, freshly chopped
1 tsp smoked paprika	

Preheat oven to 450°F. **Set** ovenproof skillet over medium. **Add** olive oil, onion, garlic, red pepper and zucchini. **Cook**, stirring occasionally, about 8-10 minutes until vegetables soften. **Stir** in tomato paste, ½ cup water, spices, beans, salt and pepper. **Stir** well to combine. **Top** with cheese. **Bake** in oven until cheese melts, about 10 minutes. **Broil** if you like cheese to crisp. **Serve** warm topped with cilantro.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 286 calories | 19g protein | 1g total fat | 3g saturated fat
4g mono fat | 3g poly fat | 30g carbohydrate | 7g sugar (0g added sugars) | 9g fiber | 407mg sodium

EASY recipe



Stay in Touch

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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News & Notes

• **Have Questions About Menopause?** Employees and family members are invited to a new women's health education series and discussion group, **"Perimenopause & Menopause — It's more than a flash!"** Learn from Dr. Chevon Rariy about the signs, symptoms, frequency, and severity of perimenopause and menopause. **Register now** to reserve your spot on Thursday, May 15, 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm.

• **Celebrate World Tobacco Day – May 31:** Thinking about quitting tobacco, whether for a day or for good? Join millions around the globe on World No Tobacco Day and take the first step toward a tobacco-free life. Quit for Life on Rally Coach will help you create a personalized Quit Plan and get 1:1 access to coaches via phone, chat, or text. Plus group video sessions, nicotine replacement therapy, and more. This program is free for regular City employees and their adult family members. Get started at quitnow.net or call **1-866-784-8454 (TTY 711)**.

• **Balancing Parenting and Work This Summer?** Finding summer childcare can be tricky — Kinside is here to help. Log in or create your account using your City email address at join.kinside.com/city-of-seattle to explore real-time childcare openings and resources tailored to your needs. There is no cost to use the Kinside platform for City employees.

EXPERT advice

— Eric Endlich, PhD

Q: What causes addiction?

A: Addictions can develop not only to illegal drugs such as heroin and cocaine but also to legal substances such as alcohol and certain prescription medications. Over time, excessive use can lead to cravings, ability to tolerate higher doses and withdrawal symptoms when the substance is taken away. Addictions appear to be triggered by multiple factors, including:

Genetics: Having a close blood relative with a history of substance abuse can raise one's risk for addictions. Exactly how this works has yet to be determined.

Other mental health issues: Conditions such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder can increase the chances that someone will turn to addictive substances to cope.

Environment: Being around others who abuse substances, or having ready access to habit-forming drugs, can increase the chances of developing an addiction.

Addictions can have serious, even life-threatening, complications. Fortunately, there is help available. Visit [FindTreatment.gov](#) or ask your health care provider for a referral.

Social Media Financial Apps

By Jamie Lynn Byram, Ph.D., CFP, AFC, RSSA

Social media financial apps are transforming the way people manage money. They combine traditional financial services with social elements, making managing finances more accessible and engaging. Read below for examples of how social media and personal finance can connect.

Peer-to-peer payments (P2P) enable users to instantly send or receive money from friends, family or even businesses. P2P payments eliminate the need for physical cash or credit card transactions, making reimbursing someone for lunch or a grocery run simpler. Also, with businesses passing credit card fees on to consumers, it can save money.

Crowdfunding, where users can pool resources for shared financial goals, has also gained popularity through financial apps. Fundraising apps allow individuals to collect money for personal projects, medical expenses or business ideas. Crowdfunding connects those with similar goals, making financial support more accessible than traditional fundraising; the #GivingTuesday campaign in December is a popular example.

Social commerce allows businesses to reach customers through social networks and digital media. After buying, the customer can review, rate and recommend their favorite products without having to visit the retailer's website. They can also share their new purchases on social media.

Many users also get their financial education from online outlets. Social platforms offer resources that educate users in investing and saving, helping them make informed decisions. These apps often include tutorials and community discussions, making financial knowledge accessible to everyone, regardless of their experience level.

While social media financial apps provide opportunities for financial empowerment, they also raise concerns about privacy and data security. Turn on increased security measures, such as two-factor authentication, anytime you send or receive money or share financial information.



Many people swear by neti pots or other sinus rinse systems for relieving sinus congestion. While they are safe when used correctly, using them wrongly could lead to a serious infection. Here are some tips:

- Wash your hands before doing any sinus rinse procedure.
- Use only boiled (cool it down to lukewarm before using) or distilled water.
- Purchase saline packets or use a specific recipe to make your own solution.
- Clean your neti pot or sinus rinse bottle according to instructions.



May is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month.