

Welcome to 2017! A new year is always a good time to re-evaluate your healthy lifestyle, and make improvements where needed. Whether you add a few more minutes of exercise to your daily schedule, or start practicing breathing exercises, small changes can have a big impact on your physical and mental well-being.



This issue of *Balanced Living* focuses on multiple small ways to improve your health. We discuss how to create a better dreaming experience when you sleep (a topic that can be fascinating), how supplements may help some people address health concerns, the first in a series of yoga poses to consider trying out this year, a healthy seasonal food – with links to recipes – to add to your grocery list this month, and more.

Yours in health,

Andrew Weil, M.D.

Healthy Resolution: Start A Supplement Routine

If you suffer from occasional indigestion, constipation, gas, irritable bowel syndrome or other digestive complaints, simple lifestyle changes can help. In addition to stress management, regular exercise and prudent supplementation, consider these dietary modifications and make them part of your daily habits this year.

[Nutritional supplements](#) may be especially beneficial for the following:

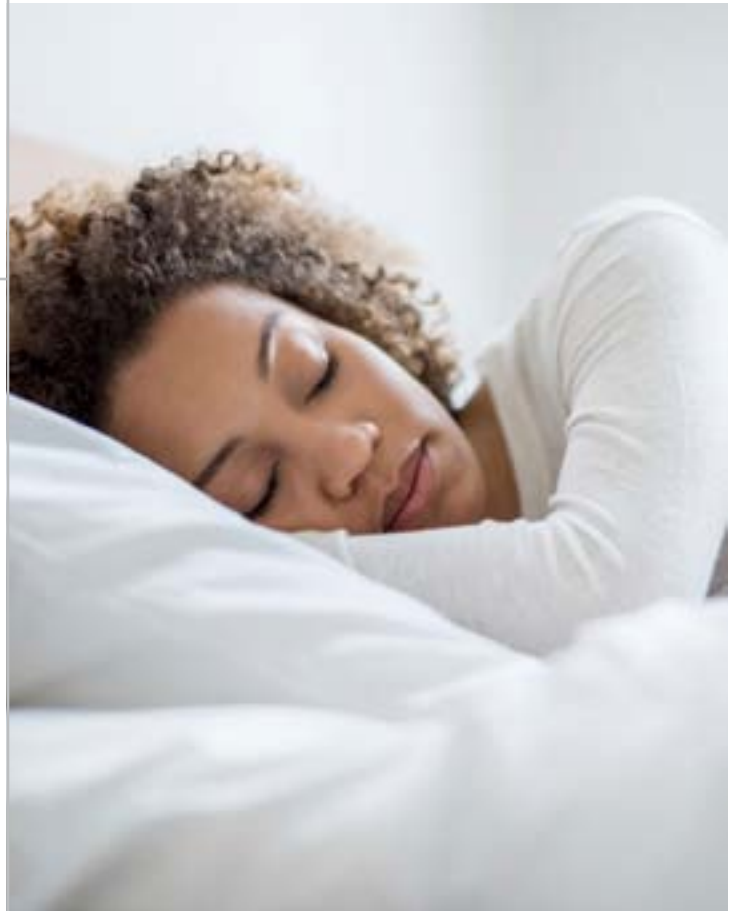
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8 Tips For Healthy Dreaming

Not only is dreaming an important part of good sleep, but it is also essential to good emotional health. According to dream researchers at Chicago's Rush Medical Center, mood disorders are strongly linked to abnormal patterns of dreaming. Conversely, they found that people who dream – and remember those dreams – heal more quickly from depressive moods associated with divorce.

Aside from the proven health benefits of sleeping well, good dreaming contributes to our psychological well-being by supporting healthy memory, the healing of emotional wounds,

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Monthly Wellness Challenge

Early To Bed

Every night this month, challenge yourself to get in bed 20 to 30 minutes earlier, even if you aren't tired. Quality rest and sleep is vital to your physical and mental health, affecting hunger, mental alertness, mood, heart function, immunity and more. By getting to bed a little earlier, you can help to promote the health of the above!



8 Tips For Healthy Dreaming

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cultivating [positive mood](#), and the expansion of ordinary consciousness into broader, spiritual realms.

To foster healthy dreaming, consider the following:

- Limit your exposure to artificial light after 8 pm (this includes television and other electronics with displays like computers, tablets, and smart phones because its [blue light](#) restricts the production of melatonin, a key neurotransmitter that regulates biorhythms and induces sleep). If you **MUST** do some work on a computer, wear amber-tinted sunglasses to shield your eyes from the blue light.
- Avoid excess alcohol and medications that suppress dreams (including Benadryl/diphenhydramine and sleeping medications).
- If you suffer from [sleep apnea](#) - a condition that causes you to stop breathing periodically during sleep - treat it.
- Keep a dream journal and discuss your dreams with family and friends.
- Eliminate caffeine from your diet, especially in the form of soft drinks and coffee as well as over-the-counter drugs (check the labels).
- Take a warm bath before bedtime.
- View dreaming as a type of psychological stretching or therapy session.
- Get at least 45 minutes of [aerobic activity](#) every day. Performing regular physical activity can allow you to get the rest you need and help prevent the health problems caused by poor sleep.

Healthy Resolution: Start A Supplement Routine

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- Those over the age of 55.
- Individuals following weight-loss diets.
- Those who may not always have a healthful diet or don't get enough vegetables, fruits, healthy sources of protein, and healthy fats.
- People taking medications that may affect the absorption of certain nutrients.
- Anyone who has a "leaky gut" causing intestinal malabsorption, often leading to nutritional insufficiencies or deficiencies.

While supplements can help supply nutrients that may be deficient or missing in the diet, dosage is important: it can be the difference between benefit and harm. Always read labels carefully, discuss your supplement regimen with your physician, and ask your pharmacist about any interactions. The latter is particularly important when combining different multivitamins, multiminerals and fortified foods that have similar ingredients – this can lead to a higher intake than is recommended. It is also applicable to people who are combining supplements with medications.

To avoid any potential for toxicity or overdose, you should aim for a supplement routine that is designed for you by a nutrition specialist and that takes overall dosages into account. As a guideline, water-soluble supplements even in excessively high doses will be eliminated by the kidneys, so toxicity is rare. Fat-soluble supplements have higher chances of accumulating in body fat and can reach toxic levels. The [Weil Vitamin Advisor](#) has three evaluations to ensure you are recommended the proper dosages across a wide arrange of vitamins, including vitamins A, D and E, as well as calcium and fish oil.



Yoga Pose: Downward-Facing Dog



If 2017 is the year you want to stretch more, this yoga pose is for you. The Downward-Facing Dog is a popular yoga pose for stretching the muscles of the legs and shoulders. It is commonly used as a rest pose between difficult poses, but can be done on its own anytime you want to stretch your shoulders or legs.

A study review published in a 2012 edition of *Frontiers in Psychiatry* looked at effective treatments for mental illness, and found that yoga may be helpful in treating depression and sleep disorders. While no study has proved the effectiveness of this particular pose, practitioners have reported increased mental acuity from the Downward-Facing Dog pose.

The health benefits of this pose include:

- **Improved immune system, digestion and blood flow.**
- **Calming the mind and relieving stress.**
- **Helping relieve mild depression.**
- **Stretching and strengthening the shoulders, arms, legs and back.**
- **Helping prevent osteoporosis.**
- **Relieving menstrual discomfort.**

Those with high blood pressure, carpal tunnel syndrome and who are pregnant should use caution when performing this pose, as should anyone with wrist or shoulder injuries.

Get [step-by-step instruction](#) for practicing the Downward-Facing Dog pose, or watch a [video demonstration](#) of it.

Vitamins A to Zinc, courtesy of the Weil Vitamin Advisor

Vitamin A

“Vitamin A” refers to retinoids, active compounds that occur in both plant and animal tissues. It is important for supporting bone growth and immune system health, promoting healthy eyesight, and helping the skin and mucous membranes fight off bacteria and viruses. [Learn more about vitamin A and other antioxidants](#), including what to look for when buying it.



Seasonal Food: Walnuts



A constant dietary recommendation – and favorite food – of Dr. Weil, nuts are an excellent vegetarian source of protein and healthy fats. Walnuts are an especially healthy choice, as they are good sources of:

- 1 [Omega-3 fatty acids](#), protective fats that may promote cardiovascular health, help maintain optimal cognitive function, and tone down inflammation.
- 2 Heart-healthy monounsaturated fats.
- 3 Ellagic acid, an antioxidant compound that helps support a healthy immune system.
- 4 L-arginine, an essential amino acid that promotes healthy blood pressure.

While walnuts are relatively high in calories, the FDA says that eating 1.5 ounces of walnuts daily “as part of a low saturated fat and low-cholesterol diet, and not resulting in increased caloric intake, may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.”

Try eating walnuts as a snack, adding them to salads and breakfast foods, or using walnut oil in salad dressings for a nutritional boost.

Walnuts are also versatile – try these walnut recipes:

- [Cilantro Walnut Pesto](#)
- [Garlic Walnut Dip](#)
- [Stuffed Mushroom Caps with Couscous](#)
- [Walnut, Quince and Manchego Bites](#)
- [Insanely Good Chocolate Brownies](#)