

total **HEALTH** & wellness

For Members of
United Service
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For Health Care

SPRING 2016

Mario Lopez

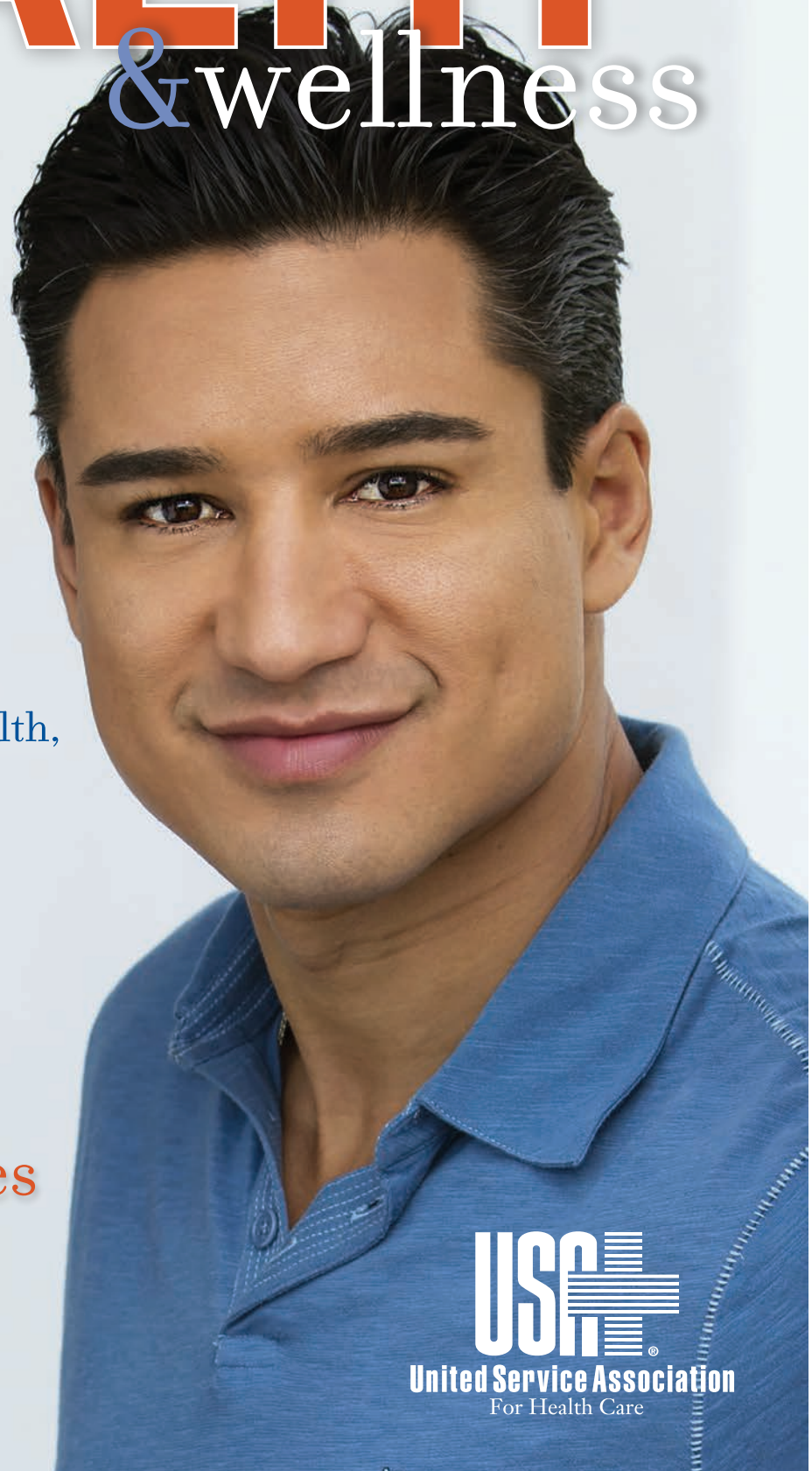
Driven to Succeed—With a
Dedication to Fitness, Health,
and Making a Difference

plus

The Sun: Health
Friend or Foe?

and

Playtime Improves
Your Health—
At Any Age



United Service Association
For Health Care



[cover story]

Mario Lopez
focuses on fitness
and giving back.
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TOTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

Executive Director: M. Cranon

Director of Operations: T. Barton

Director of Operations: R. Davis

Staff Support: C. Mangrum and B. Mayer

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For more information, please contact:

United Service Association
For Health Care
P.O. Box 200905
Arlington, TX 76006-0095
800-USA-1187

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SPRING 2016

Playtime Improves Your Health—At Any Age

Growing up typically means trading jungle gyms for treadmills, crayons for keyboards, and tiddlywinks for taxes. But it doesn't have to mean all work and no play.



→ **TAKING TIME TO PLAY KEEPS ADULTS YOUNG AT HEART IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.** Research increasingly suggests childlike pursuits—from coloring to checkers—protect against serious adult diseases. These include anxiety disorders, obesity, heart disease, and dementia. Here's how to reap the rewards of recreation, at any age.

Hoop It Up

Hula-hooping gained ground as a child's toy in the 1950s. Decades later, there are compelling reasons for adults to pick them back up. An American Council on Exercise study found spinning one around your hips revs up your heart rate and burns about 210 calories in 30 minutes. In other words, it's as good a workout as step aerobics, kickboxing, or boot-camp classes.

Color In—Or Out of—the Lines

The latest coloring books aren't just for kids. Use colored pencils, crayons, or fine-tipped markers to shade in designs like butterflies and tranquil landscapes. Beyond the fun involved in creative expression, coloring intricate designs called mandalas might even ward off anxiety. That's according to a study in *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*.

Hit the Playground

Try a fitness class that will transport you right out of the gym and right back to recess. By having fun and competing in games like hot potato and relay races, you'll burn calories, distract yourself from discomfort, and boost production of brain chemicals that improve cognitive function.

Not into group exercise? Head to the park and use equipment like monkey bars and park benches to build strength and agility.

Roll the Dice

From bingo to bridge, board and parlor games offer more than a good time. Playing them can also shore up your cognitive reserves, stores of brainpower that ward off signs of dementia. In fact, older adults who more often played cards, chess, and other games had 15 percent lower odds of developing dementia over a 20-year period, found a recent French study in the journal *BMJ Open*. They also had lower rates of depression than those who tended to sit out. +

For Better Health, Prescribe Yourself Some Exercise

Regular physical activity can reduce your risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and bone-weakening osteoporosis. But the list doesn't end there. Here are other ways exercise is proving to be the best medicine.

→ Cancer Prevention

Physical activity in any form may lower cancer risk, according to the American Institute for Cancer Research. It helps maintain a healthy weight, which can reduce your risk for cancer.

A Healthier Nervous System

Running may help prevent Parkinson's disease, a neurological disease that's caused by the death of neurons that produce dopamine, a chemical in the brain that controls movement. A study in *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* found that running may protect against inflammation that can lead to the death of these neurons.

A Healthier, Longer Life

People who are physically active for about seven hours a week have a 40 percent lower risk of dying early compared with those who are active for less than 30 minutes each week.

Exercise Rx

For better health, try to log in 150 minutes each week of moderately intense activity, such as brisk walking, or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise, such as jogging or running, and at least two weekly sessions of strength training. +



3 TIPS TO STAY HYDRATED DURING YOUR WORKOUT

Staying well hydrated can keep your energy level up, help you avoid muscle fatigue, and regulate your body temperature to prevent overheating. To prevent dehydration when you're working out, practice these important beverage basics:

- 1 Drink before, during, and after your workout. Drink using these rules:**
 - 16 to 20 ounces of water at least four hours before exercise
 - 8 to 12 ounces of water again 10 to 15 minutes right before working out
 - 3 to 8 ounces of water every 15 to 20 minutes during exercise if you'll be working out for less than 60 minutes, or 3 to 8 ounces of a sports beverage if you'll be working out for longer than 60 minutes
 - 20 to 24 ounces of water within two hours of your workout for every pound you've lost—weigh yourself before and after your workout to track your fluid loss
- 2 Water is all you need for workouts lasting an hour or less.**
- 3 Don't overhydrate during exercise, either.** It can be just as dangerous as dehydration. Don't drink more than 1 quart (32 ounces) of fluid per hour of exercise.

How to Read Your **Blood Test**

When you visit your doctor, he or she may recommend certain tests to assess your well-being. One example is a blood test, or what's formally called a complete blood count (CBC) test.



→ YOUR DOCTOR MAY SUGGEST THIS TEST IN ORDER TO:

- Evaluate your general health
- Diagnose conditions such as anemia, infection, and bleeding disorders
- Monitor an illness to determine if a given treatment is effective

A CBC provides data on three kinds of cells that circulate in the blood—white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets.

Deciphering Your Blood Test

If you get the results of a CBC in the mail, you may need help deciphering

them. Tests from different labs may vary in format but should have the same information.

Most likely, a CBC will contain:

- Test results written as numbers or text
- Highlighted abnormal results
- Results that are critically abnormal and that require immediate attention
- The lab's interpretation of the test results
- A list of medications and health supplements that may affect the results

Understanding Reference Ranges

Receiving test results outside the normal range, known as the reference range, does not indicate you are ill. Rather, it's a sign that further tests are needed to determine why your test showed abnormal markers.

Many conditions can increase or decrease red and white blood cell production, and some of these conditions may or may not need treatment. If you are confused about any figures in your blood test or what steps you should take next, speak with your health care provider. +

Produce May Be the Key to Happiness

The old saying goes “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” But more than just keeping your body healthy, new research says fruits and vegetables may help improve your mood, too.

→ **ONE BRITISH STUDY FOUND THAT THOSE WHO REPORTED FEELING DOWN IN THE DUMPS ATE LESS THAN THREE SERVINGS OF PRODUCE PER DAY.** Meanwhile, those who consumed five servings or more of fruits and veggies had the brightest moods. Researchers surveyed about 14,000 adults with questions about what they ate and their mood. In another study, adults who ate a fruit- and veggie-rich Mediterranean diet had more positive feelings and fewer negative emotions.

Make the Right Call

Why produce? Well, researchers believe one reason is related to the feel-good boost you get from knowing you're eating healthy. By now, almost everyone has heard that fruits and vegetables form the cornerstone of a nutritious diet. So you should rightfully feel proud of placing them on your plate.

Boost Your Brain Power

But that's not all. Healthy compounds in produce help your brain function properly, improving your psychological health. Some of the best nutrients to look for are:

- B vitamins, including folate and vitamin B-6. Your body needs these nutrients to produce brain chemicals called neurotransmitters. Fall short and your emotions tend to run off track.
- Complex carbohydrates. All carbs provide an instant lift as glucose, insulin, and serotonin flow through your veins. But unlike simple sugars, which often cause you to quickly crash, complex carbs from starchy veggies and fruits keep your blood sugar and hormone levels steady.

Some evidence also suggests that antioxidants in fruits and vegetables, including vitamins C and E, may help combat a process in your body that triggers cell damage. The jury is still out, but it's possible antioxidants in fruits and vegetables may help keep your mood intact, and in particular, protect against depression.

Reach for the Best

Health experts recommend at least five to nine servings per day of fruits and veggies. Create your own mood-boosting shopping list with these picks. They're easy to find, low-cost, and can all fit into dishes your whole family will love.

- Bananas (contain complex carbohydrates and vitamin B-6). Think beyond cereal—try bananas blended into smoothies, sliced lengthwise and topped with frozen yogurt, or even tossed with apples, lettuce, and peanuts for an unexpected salad.
- Peas (rich in complex carbohydrates). Mix into pasta, stir into salads, or combine with onion, garlic, broth, and seasonings for a tasty soup.
- Spinach (good source of the B vitamin folate). Use as a pizza topping, heat up frozen greens as a side dish, or heat in a pan with chickpeas for a tasty beans-and-greens sauté. +

Spring Vegetable Sauté



Ingredients

1 tsp. olive oil	¾ cup sugar snap peas, or green beans
½ cup sliced sweet onion	½ cup quartered radishes
1 garlic clove, finely chopped	¼ tsp. salt
3 to 4 tiny new potatoes, quartered	¼ tsp. black pepper
¾ cup sliced carrots	½ tsp. dried dill
¾ cup asparagus pieces	

Directions

- 1 Heat the oil in a skillet. Cook the onion two minutes. Add the garlic and cook another minute.
- 2 Stir in the potatoes and carrots. Cover, turn the heat to low, and cook until almost tender.
- 3 If the vegetables start to brown, add 1 to 2 tablespoons of water.
- 4 Add the asparagus, peas, radishes, salt, pepper, and dill. Cook, stirring often, until just tender—about four minutes more.

Serve immediately.

Makes four servings.

Per Serving—Calories: 80, Total fat: 1.5 g, Saturated fat: 0 g, Cholesterol: 0 mg, Sodium: 200 mg, Fiber: 3 g, Protein: 3 g

Want to Avoid Back Surgery? Quick, Head to Physical Therapy

No magic pill can make back pain instantly disappear. In fact, the best and most cost-effective remedy might not involve medicine at all. Instead, consider a prompt prescription to physical therapy.

→ **THAT'S ACCORDING TO A NEW STUDY OF MORE THAN 750,000 PATIENTS WITH A NEW BOUT OF LOW BACK PAIN.** About 17,000 of them received early physical therapy—within two weeks of their first doctor's visit. Their sessions focused on active treatments.

Two years later, those patients were less likely to have undergone advanced imaging, had surgery, or received spinal injections. Plus, their care cost 60 percent less. That's compared to others who went to physical therapy later or not at all.

The Healing Power of PT

Heading straight to the physical therapy clinic might have several important benefits, the study authors note. In general, doctors recommend stretching and resuming normal activities as soon as possible after short-term back pain develops. This increases flexibility and speeds healing, compared with resting in bed.

Physical therapy might help you comply with this direction. What's more, it may provide a psychological boost. Physical therapists offer practical tools and techniques to stay active without worsening pain. In the process, they instill hope and self-confidence. Meanwhile, imaging tests often provoke fear and worry—even if they don't reveal a serious problem.

4 Smart Back-Savers

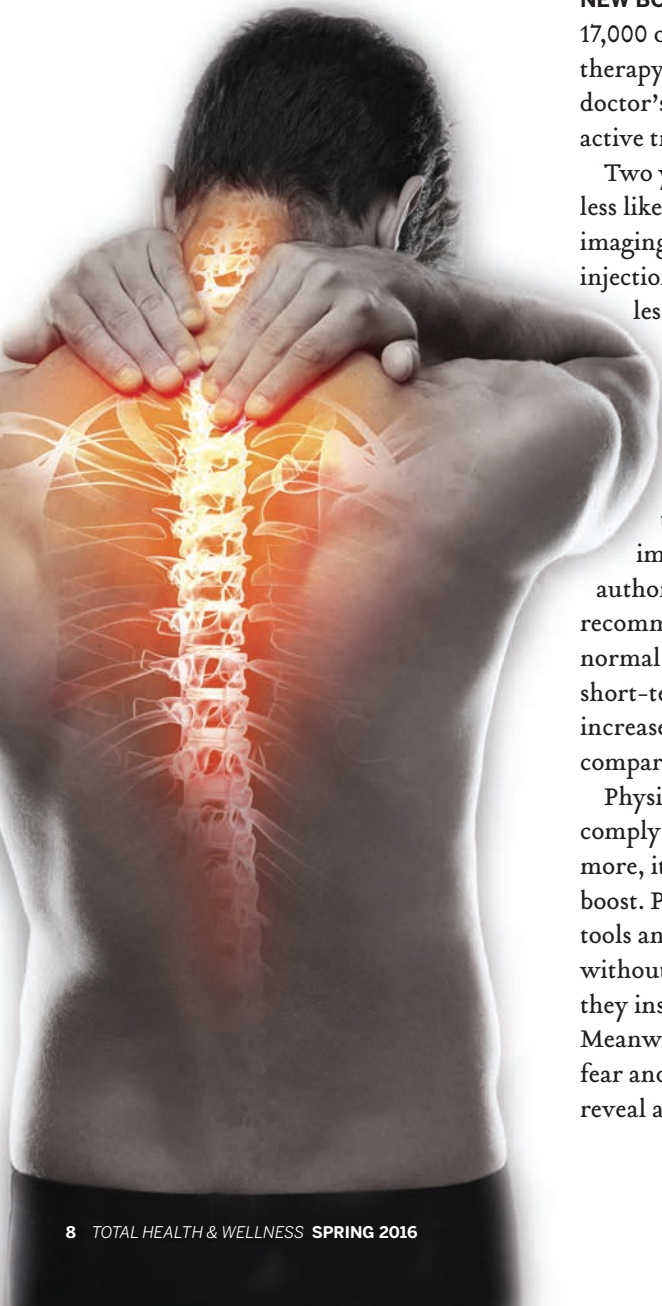
In addition to physical therapy, healthy lifestyle choices can also prevent back pain and ease it after it occurs. To stabilize your spine:

1 Exercise. Beyond strengthening and stretching moves, aerobic workouts keep your weight in check. This reduces the pressure on your back. If you've coped with back pain before, ask your doctor or physical therapist about the best routine for you.

2 Eat a healthy diet. Watching portion sizes also prevents back-straining weight gain. Also, eat foods containing calcium and vitamin D to promote strong vertebrae and other bones. Good choices include green leafy veggies and fortified orange juice.

3 Maintain good posture. Don't slouch when standing or sitting. Reducing the curve in your spine helps your lower back better support your weight.

4 Lift safely. If you must hoist a heavy load, keep your back straight. Rather than bending over the item, lift by putting stress on your legs and hips. +



Are You Using Aspirin Inappropriately?

A recent study found that the risks of taking a daily low-dose aspirin may outweigh the benefits for some adults. The daily dose could be doing more harm than good.

→ **MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF U.S. ADULTS TAKE A DAILY ASPIRIN TO LOWER THEIR RISK OF HAVING A HEART ATTACK OR STROKE.** While doing so can help some people prevent these conditions, it's not the case for everyone. A recent study in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found some people who take aspirin may be doing themselves more harm than good.

Researchers analyzed the medical records of more than 68,800 Americans taking a daily aspirin to reduce their risk for heart disease. The researchers found that 12 percent of these adults should not be taking aspirin because the risks of doing so outweigh the benefits. According to the authors, people with a risk for heart attack or stroke that is less than 6 percent over the next decade should not be taking a daily aspirin.

When Aspirin Is Appropriate

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration:

- People who have had a heart attack or stroke can reduce the risk for recurrence by taking a daily aspirin.
- People who have not had a heart attack or stroke and are not at high risk for these conditions should not take a daily aspirin because the risks, such as bleeding in the stomach, outweigh the benefits.

If your doctor recommends that you take a daily aspirin even though you have not had a heart attack or stroke, you should ask why. You should also never take aspirin on a daily basis without your doctor's approval.

Aspirin Risks

You should not take a daily aspirin if you:

- Are allergic to aspirin
- Regularly drink three or more alcoholic beverages in a day
- Have asthma, liver or kidney disease, high blood pressure, or bleeding disorders

Help Your Heart

Fortunately, there are ways to lower your risk for heart attack other than taking a daily aspirin. You can start by making these changes to your lifestyle:

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise regularly.
- Quit or don't start smoking. +



Driven to Succeed

Mario Lopez's dedication to fitness, health, and making a difference



Mario Lopez

His trademark smile, upbeat demeanor, and enviable dance moves probably come to mind when you think of Mario Lopez, right? And, let's face it: the 42-year-old's defined abs and fit physique are hard to ignore. From the cover of fitness magazines and spotlight of dance competitions to the host of numerous TV shows, Lopez's unrelenting drive has undoubtedly landed him prolific work in Hollywood. But it's also helped him achieve a healthy lifestyle he's willing to share with others.

A Growing Focus on Health

Lopez developed a love of physical activity at a young age—he began boxing and dancing when he was a young boy. Growing up in Chula Vista, California, Lopez joined the local chapter of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. There, he began to wrestle on the club team, which helped him stay active and out of trouble.

"The Boys & Girls Clubs of America had a huge impact on my life. I never forget where I come from or the mentors who helped me get here; I really loved my experience there," Lopez says.

Then, at the young age of 16, Lopez struck fame when he was cast in the role of jock A.C. Slater on NBC's sitcom *Saved by the Bell*. But he continued to attend public school at Chula Vista High School, where he was a star wrestler. Already, Lopez's dedication to health and fitness was center stage in his life.

Following a Passion

Lopez never lost his passion for boxing and dancing. As a young man, he continued to participate in intense boxing sessions, even boxing competitively. And his popularity surged in 2006 when he became runner-up on the third season of reality show *Dancing with the Stars*, showing off his moves—and his muscles—to millions.

His career and life focus—as well as his approach to health—changed as he matured. Lopez wanted to inspire others to follow a healthier lifestyle, too. In 2008, he published his first book, *Mario Lopez's Knockout Fitness*, which offers readers detailed advice on workouts and meal planning.

Beyond his first book to boost the public's health, he has gone on to make fitness a family matter, also. Lopez and his wife, professional dancer Courtney Mazza, who he met while performing on Broadway's *A Chorus Line*, are passing on their passion for physical activity to their children, Gia and Dominic.

"My wife [and I] take our kids hiking constantly, we play with them outside all the time. My daughter is involved in many different activities from gymnastics to ballet; my son is pretty busy as well," explains Lopez.

"Health and fitness are top priorities," Lopez said in a previous interview. "Working out complements everything else that I do, in every aspect of my life. ... Because if you don't have your health, then what good is everything else?"

A Sensible Approach

But with his exhausting schedule, how does Lopez have time to spend with family and maintain his amazing shape? To him, fitness is a way of life. And he hasn't let his thirst for competition and self-improvement lag.

"I try to break a sweat every day. It makes me feel awake; I work out more for sanity than vanity," Lopez says. "I box about three times a week. I'll go hiking, swimming, running. I like to mix it up."

**"Because if you don't have your health,
then what good is everything else?"**

To make fitness work, he suggests to readers: "You need to make health your top priority. Do whatever it is you like that will get you moving every day."

In addition to exercise, he believes that eating well is key to a healthy lifestyle. And when it comes to diet, Lopez says he doesn't believe in rigid rules. He tries to eat unprocessed foods, combining protein, carbs, and fat at every meal. He eats often throughout the day to keep his metabolism high and watches portion sizes. But he doesn't deprive himself of foods he loves. When he chooses to indulge, Lopez opts for sweets like cake and chocolate.



Above left: Mario Lopez attends his new Boys & Girls Clubs of America BE A STAR billboard unveiling in West Hollywood, California.



To help make the building block of healthy eating simple, he published the *New York Times* best-selling cookbook *Extra Lean* in 2010. One year later, he published its sequel *Extra Lean Family*, to encourage others to follow the model he sets in his home for healthy eating for the whole family.

Giving Back

Lopez's personal focus on health and fitness has been a big part of his life. And he continues to share it. Although Lopez is involved in many charitable causes that support the needs of ill or at-risk children, including the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and Orangewood Children's Foundation, he is most passionate about helping children in the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Lopez serves the organization as Alumni Ambassador of Fitness. As part of the role, he helps write nutrition and physical fitness programs for the organization. He also travels around the

country talking with kids about the importance of health and fitness.

"I always want to give back and help kids from the Boys & Girls Clubs because they come from a neighborhood like I did, usually intercity with parents who are working," says Lopez. "I love what they represent."

On Top

Today, Lopez's career is shining as bright as ever. He continues to host the daily program *Extra*—a role he's enjoyed for nearly a decade—and is heard throughout the country on his nationally syndicated radio show *ON with Mario*.

Clearly, life is not slowing down for Lopez anytime soon. And while we may not all have television producers, fitness magazines, and book publishers running after us, he has taught us one thing: With determination, we can shape our lives and our health however we want. ✦

GET YOUR KIDS MOVING

As the Alumni Ambassador of Fitness for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Mario Lopez takes children's health and fitness very seriously. He dedicates his time to keeping kids healthy and active—his own kids included.

Keeping kids and teens active can seem like an uphill battle. But kids need exercise to build strength and bone mass, stay at a healthy weight, reduce stress, and feel good about themselves. Here are some suggestions to help you keep your kids active:

- Invite your child's friends to play outside.
- Turn your garage, basement, or spare room into an all-weather playroom.
- Give gifts that encourage fitness, such as a basketball, a bicycle, or in-line skates.
- Explore your neighborhood with your child and hit the streets on foot or bike.
- Have your kids help with chores.
- Encourage your child to join a local club or community team.
- Volunteer with your child for active community service.
- Find fun outdoor activities in your community.

5 Reasons Your Vision Is Changing

Older eyes may require reading glasses. But age isn't the only thing that can affect your vision. Here are five surprising factors that can cloud your view.

→ 1 Your smartphone addiction.

The more digital your lifestyle, the greater your risk for computer vision syndrome. Desktop monitors, laptops, tablets, e-readers, and cellphones all strain your sight over time. Signs include blurred vision, headaches, dry eyes, and neck and shoulder pain. Though most symptoms improve once you power down, some problems—such as blurry distance vision—can linger and worsen with time.

2 A torn retina.

The light-sensitive cells at the back of your eye help you see clearly. People who are nearsighted, have weak spots in their retina, or sustain a serious eye injury risk small rips in this tissue. Fluid can leak behind the retina tear, separating the retina from the eye and threatening your vision. Warning signs include a sudden increase in floaters—dark spots in the eye—or flashes of light. You might also see a shadow to the side of your vision or a gray curtain move across it.

3 A poor diet.

Carrots have a reputation for enhancing vision. But they're not the only food linked to healthy eyesight. In fact, a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can also keep you seeing clearly. Pay special attention

to foods containing omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin C, lutein, zeaxanthin, and zinc. Eye-smart choices include kale, salmon, oranges, and legumes.

4 Your medicine cabinet.

The drugs you take to treat other conditions in your body might cause problems with your vision, as well. Many allergy drugs, decongestants, and treatments for high blood pressure and depression dry out your eyes. And some types of chemotherapy blur your vision, promote the formation of cataracts, or damage your optic nerve.

5 A stroke.

Stroke can cause sudden loss of sight in one or both eyes. Even if your vision returns, seek immediate medical attention. Temporary blindness can also mean a stroke is about to occur. Prompt treatment can prevent severe damage or even death.

While some vision changes are minor, others signal a serious issue with your eyes or your health. Talk with your primary care physician or an eye doctor if you notice changes in your eyesight. Sometimes spotting—and treating—problems early can save your sight or even your life. +



Being Mindful at Work

Think you've got to bend your legs like a pretzel and sit for hours to achieve mindfulness? Think again.



→ The Gift of Presence

At its heart, mindfulness is observing what is happening in the present without calling it good or bad. Observing without judging keeps us out of a past we can't change or a future we can't control.

When we practice mindfulness at work, we think more clearly. We respond rather than react. We take events less personally. We make better decisions. In short, our brains slow down. We reduce our stress levels while simultaneously increasing our effectiveness.

Mindful Without the Yoga Mat

The latest research shows you can gain mindfulness benefits anytime. Here are a few activities to get you started:

- **Take a walk.** Walking's repetitive motion immediately relaxes you.
- **Stretch.** Step away from work for several minutes. Roll your shoulders, reach for the sky, and get your blood flowing. Remembering your body brings you back to the present.
- **Lunch well.** Enjoy the tastes, textures, and smells of your food. Avoid junk food, which can hurt your brain and disrupt your focus.
- **Breathe.** Put your hand on your belly and take three deep breaths. Increasing oxygen and the moment-by-moment awareness of this basic life-sustaining act will help bring you back to now. +

4 TIPS FOR STAYING ALERT AT WORK

We've all been there: splashing cold water on our faces or drinking coffee at 3 p.m. to stay alert. But are there better ways to manage energy levels and stay engaged at work?

The following actions might help you become more awake, alert, and effective—no matter what type of job you do.

1 Eat a healthy breakfast. Healthy proteins alongside complex carbohydrates, such as fruits and vegetables, can help shore up your day's energy from the beginning.

2 Drop sugar. Stock healthier snacks, like fruits, vegetables, crackers, nuts, nut butters, yogurt, cheese, and lean meats, for pick-me-ups throughout the day.

3 Hydrate, take a walk, and breathe. Grab a cool drink of water. While you're up, take a brisk walk, stretch your arms, and take three deep breaths. You'll immediately re-energize, lower your stress levels, and experience a mini mood lift.

4 Be positive. Make an effort to react positively and constructively when someone offers up an idea. An encouraging attitude keeps creativity at the forefront and helps increase the energy of your whole team.

Sit Less, Live Longer: Fit More Motion into Your Day

Thanks to modern technology, we can now work, bank, shop, and commute without taking more than a few steps. This inactivity has potentially disastrous health effects.

→ **THE HUMAN BODY'S 640 MUSCLES SUGGEST IT WAS MADE TO MOVE.** But, many people spend up to eight or nine hours a day sedentary.

Even those who exercise aren't protected. A slew of recent research finds regardless of whether you work out, sitting too much can:

- More than double your risk of developing diabetes
- Increase your risk for heart disease, obesity, and cancer
- Decrease your life expectancy by two years

Being sedentary adds extra pounds and also may contribute to clogged arteries, scientists say. When the large muscles of your legs are immobile, your body can't clear harmful fats from your bloodstream.

Stand Up at Work

Chained to a desk? Make your move by:

- Setting a computer or phone alarm each hour. When it goes off, take a three-minute walk down the hall or a staircase.
- Jiggling your foot, shifting in your seat, or chewing a stick of gum. Fidgeting can burn 350 calories daily.
- Asking for more casual days. Research suggests employees are more active in less formal attire.
- Getting off a stop or two early, if you ride the train, subway, or bus to work, and walking the rest of the way
- Pacing while you're talking on the phone
- Taking walk breaks instead of coffee breaks
- Having a walking meeting outdoors with one or two others, instead of a sit-down meeting
- Meeting at a restaurant you can get to on foot, if you have a lunch date

Stand Up at Home

Start by keeping a log of TV time. You might be shocked to add up how many hours you lose in front of the tube. For the average American, it's more than 150 each month. Try setting a daily limit and:

- Avoiding channel surfing. After your favorite show, hit the off switch and go take a walk.
- Lifting dumbbells, stretching resistance bands, or pacing around the room during commercials
- Taking breaks to do something active, such as tending to the garden or cleaning the house +



A Trip to the Doctor's Isn't a Walk of Shame

If you've ever felt uncomfortable talking with your doctor about sensitive topics, such as intimacy or bowel trouble, you're not alone.



→ **A RECENT STUDY FOUND THAT NEARLY 50 PERCENT OF PATIENTS HAVE FELT ASHAMED DURING A DOCTOR'S OFFICE VISIT.** Unfortunately, this led many patients to lie to their doctors about health concerns or avoid going back for follow-up treatment. But holding back could have detrimental effects on your health and prevent you from getting treatment. On the flip side, honesty and open communication can help your doctor provide the best possible care.

Speak Up

Keep in mind that your most mortifying health issues probably seem routine to your doctor. Taking care of the whole body is part of the job. And remember—

doctor-patient confidentiality protects all your talks.

Here is a sample of health concerns doctors are readily available to help you treat or manage. Don't shy away from talking openly with your doctor.

1 You might feel embarrassed that extra pounds added up to a bigger pants size.

But if you are overweight, your doctor can help provide safe, practical strategies for shedding pounds.

2 Ask for help with anxiety or depression symptoms.

If you feel sad all the time for more than a few weeks or experience ongoing

anxiety, alert your doctor. Depression or anxiety disorders are medical conditions just as real as any physical ailment.

3 Don't fret over talking about incontinence and digestive issues.

Medications, exercises, and surgery can help you make it to the bathroom in time if incontinence is your problem. In some cases, stomach troubles such as constipation and gas can be relieved with lifestyle changes. But sometimes even these common stomach symptoms can signal a more serious health problem, so it's important to tell your doctor.

4 Your doctor can help identify underlying intimacy issues.

Often there's a medical reason for sexual dysfunction, both in men and women. And sometimes, changes in your sex life act as warning signs of heart disease, diabetes, or other conditions. Your doctor can suggest methods to restore both desire and function.

5 Discuss any worries you have regarding memory loss.

Forgetfulness isn't always a sign of old age. Medication side effects, vitamin deficiencies, or some thyroid, kidney, or liver diseases can also cause memory problems. Your doctor might be able to help you pinpoint the cause. +

Is Your Pet Helping or Hurting Your Health?

A combined 79 million U.S. households have either a cat or a dog. Call them pets—or extensions of the family—these furry friends are reliable sidekicks and fun play partners. But have you considered how Fido or Fluffy affects your health and wellness?

THE PERKS

Healthier Heart

Owning a pet—especially a dog—may lower your risk for heart disease.

Fitness Buddy

Dog owners are more likely to get the recommended 2½ hours of physical activity each week.

Creature Comfort

When loving animals are around, kids with autism aren't as anxious and people with Alzheimer's disease may be less agitated.

Less Stress

Pet ownership often comes with lower blood pressure. And studies show the presence of pets may help people recover better from stressful situations.

THE PERILS

Allergy Attack

No dog or cat is 100% allergy-free. That's because a certain protein in pet skin is the problem, not the hair. Think you might be allergic? Ask your doctor about testing to confirm—and treatment to help.

Asthma Alert

For people with asthma, pet allergies can cause wheezing and chest tightness. Make sure bedrooms and furniture are off-limits for pets if you have asthma.

Litter Box Toxins

Outdoor cats may carry a parasite in their feces, leading to an infection in humans called toxoplasmosis. It can be passed to a baby during pregnancy. Moms-to-be, it's OK to keep your cat: Just leave litter box duty to someone else.

Critter Carriers

In the spring and summer, dogs and cats are more likely to bring home unwelcome visitors: fleas and ticks. Ask your vet about tick-control products. Vacuum often to ward off fleas.



The Sun: Health Friend or Foe?

Balancing out the benefits and risks of sunshine with this pros and cons list can help you emerge on the bright side of the equation.

Pros:



Increases vitamin D levels

Our bodies need this important nutrient to absorb calcium, boost bone health, and help cells grow properly. Our skin produces vitamin D when exposed to harmful ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. But researchers can't be sure that exposing our skin to the sun unprotected for even a few minutes a day outweighs the risks. Talk with your doctor.



Controls sleep cycles

Humans naturally wake up when it's light and sleep when it's dark. Exposure to the sun's bright light sparks our hypothalamus into making us feel energized and awake.

When the sun goes down, a pea-sized organ called the pineal gland jumps into action, producing the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin. Morning light blocks melatonin's release so we can stay alert until it's time to hit the hay.



Boosts mood

When the seasons change and days grow shorter, many people are faced with biochemical imbalances in their brains, leading to sadness, fatigue, and a loss of interest or pleasure in once-enjoyed activities. People with seasonal affective disorder should sit near a window or use a light therapy box. It can help you feel better without the risks of excess UV exposure.

Cons:



Causes skin cancer

Exposure to UV rays from the sun causes more cases of skin cancer than any other preventable source. Unprotected skin sustains damage in as little as 15 minutes. Tans and sunburns mean your skin's DNA has been altered. Over time, these mutations can lead to malignancy.



Ages you

UV rays have many other undesirable effects on your dermis. Years of tanning, either outdoors or in tanning beds, can leave you wrinkled, dry, and pocked with age spots. The sun reduces your skin's elasticity and produces a thick, leathery effect.



Suppresses your immune system

UV radiation hampers your immune responses, meaning you're less likely to fight off foreign invaders. Sunburns harm your white blood cells—important germ fighters—for up to 24 hours after you escape to the shade. And extended periods of UV radiation may cause lasting immune-system damage.

The bottom line

Though we couldn't survive without the sun, the health harms of overexposure add up quickly. Stay in the shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when UV rays blaze most intensely. When you do go out, protect yourself with a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. +

TIPS FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT SUNSCREEN

How do you know which sunscreen brand, formula, and strength will best protect you and your family from the sun's harmful rays? Just follow these guidelines.

CHECK THE SPF.

The sun protection factor (SPF) explains the degree to which a sunblock prevents burning. According to the Food and Drug Administration, an SPF of 15 or higher not only blocks burns, but also slows skin aging and reduces the risk for skin cancer.

GO BROAD.

Another label term to look for: "broad spectrum." These formulas protect against both ultraviolet A (UVA) rays, which can cause wrinkling and aging, and UVB rays, which cause reddening, burning, and play a key role in skin cancer development.

EMBRACE THE RESISTANCE.

Sunscreens can no longer claim to be waterproof or sweat-proof. Choose a water resistance of 40 or 80 minutes. It's best to reapply after swimming, heavy sweating, or drying with a towel. And always reapply every two hours, even if you stay completely dry.

AVOID ALLERGENS.

Steer clear of preservatives, fragrances, and the ingredients PABA or oxybenzone. Sunscreens that form a physical block against the sun—including those containing zinc oxide and titanium dioxide—tend to cause fewer skin reactions.

MAKE IT FUN FOR KIDS.

Look for gentle formulas with colorful packaging, which may make the sunscreen more appealing to playful youngsters.



Articles in this magazine are written by professional journalists or physicians who strive to present reliable, up-to-date health information. Our articles are reviewed by medical professionals for accuracy and appropriateness. No magazine, however, can replace the care and advice of medical professionals, and readers are cautioned to seek such help for personal problems. Developed by StayWell 5426M

Stretch Your Grocery Budget Without Stretching Dollars

If you think eating healthy is expensive, think again. You can keep your diet nutritious without busting your supermarket budget. You just have to plan ahead and stick to your budget. Here's how.

Before You Shop

Advance planning can save time and money. Tips on what to do before you shop include:

- Plan your meals for an entire week and write down the ingredients you will need. Shopping for a week in one trip helps save gas money.
- Consider low-cost, healthy substitutions, such as beans instead of meat for a protein source.
- Check your supplies on hand. Use these items rather than purchasing duplicates.
- Make a grocery list and stick to it to avoid purchasing food items you don't need.
- Don't visit the supermarket hungry, or you will be more likely to make impulse purchases.
- Look at grocery sales flyers and shop where you can get the best price for the items you need.
- Clip coupons, but only for items you need. Don't buy unnecessary food just because you have a coupon.

Save at the Store

Once you have your shopping list in hand, here are ways to save money while at the store:

- Search for the lowest priced items on the top or bottom shelves rather than at eye level, where stores often stock the most expensive products.
- Opt for store brands over name brands. Store brands usually offer more savings.
- Buy produce in season, such as cantaloupe and cherries during the summer months; out-of-season produce is more expensive.
- Choose value-packaged sizes of meat and poultry. Freeze what you don't need.
- Consider canned fish as a low-cost option to fresh fish.
- Buy larger sizes of milk, yogurt, and other dairy products to save money—but only if you can use them by the expiration date.

Finally, skip the cookie and candy aisles, especially if your children are shopping

with you. You'll avoid the temptation to add calories to your diet and dollars to the grocery tab. +

SHOP SMART

For more information on how to save money at the supermarket, visit www.choosemyplate.gov and search for "shop smart to fill your cart."

