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SPRING 2019

**The Stress-Pain
Connection**

**Ditch Depression
This Spring**

**Dwayne
'The Rock'
Johnson**

A Self-Made Superhero

USA
United Service Association
For Health Care



[cover story]

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson

A Self-Made Superhero

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SPRING 2019

Houseplants Deliver a Breath of Fresh Air

Adding living greenery throughout your home can spruce up any space. Beyond cultivating a Joanna Gaines–worthy abode, houseplants actually have the ability to remove toxins from the air.

→ **THAT'S A GOOD THING CONSIDERING THE FACT** that we spend the majority of our time indoors.

While you can't see them, toxic gases known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) swarm in indoor air. These gases come from many household items, such as cleaning supplies, paint, and furniture. Scientists have linked VOCs with a variety of health-related issues, including headaches; fatigue; nausea; eye, nose, and throat irritation; organ damage; and possibly even cancer.

Fortunately, the humble houseplant can significantly reduce concentrations of VOCs. It isn't just the plants that capture these invisible threats—organisms in potting soil suck them in and break them down, too, research shows.

The Best Air-Purifying Plants

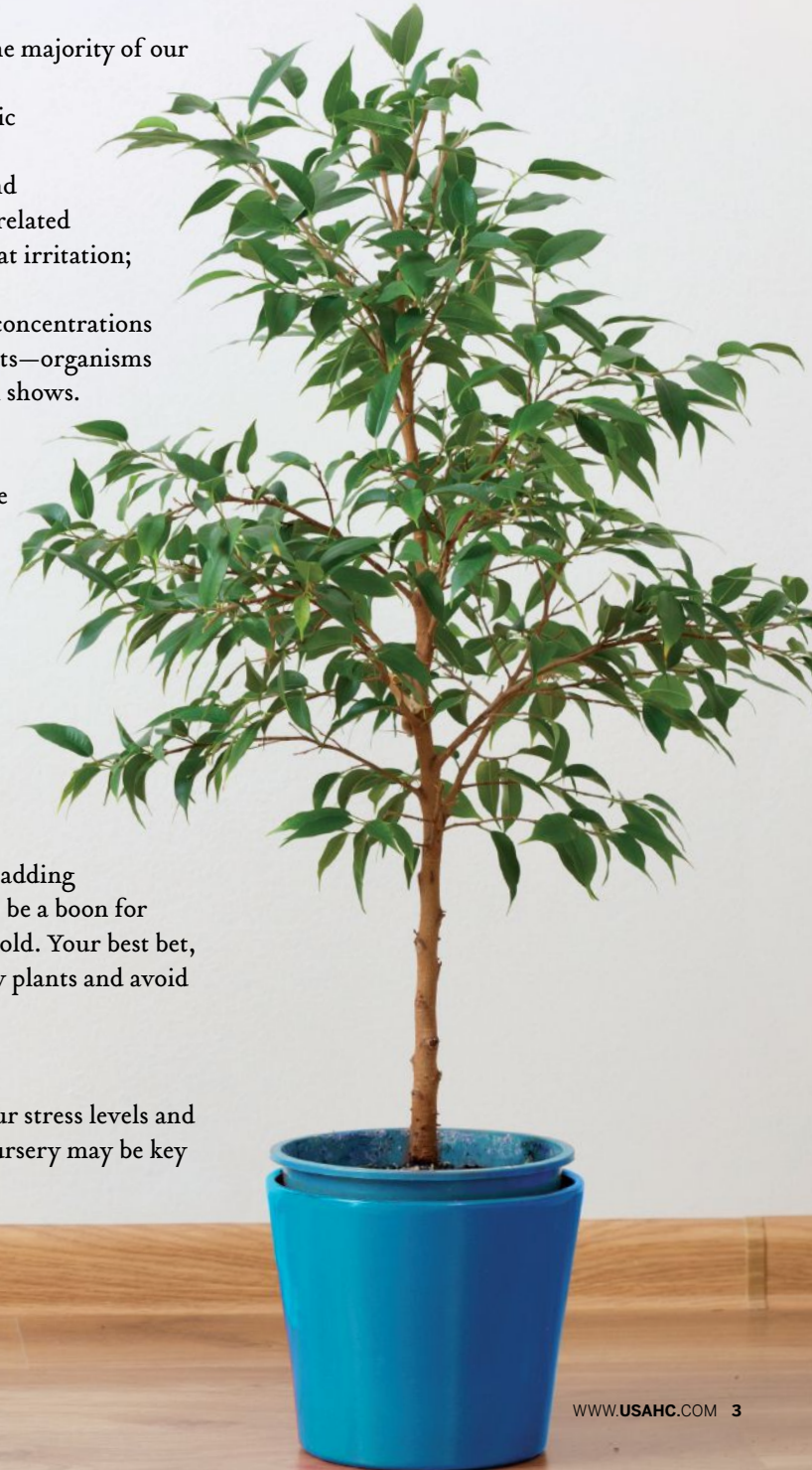
Even if your thumb is anything but green, you can still welcome houseplants into your home. Thankfully, many of the best plants for purifying the air are also pretty low-maintenance. Some examples to consider include:

- Lady palm
- Rubber plant
- English ivy
- Dwarf date palm
- Ficus
- Peace lily

If you suffer from allergies or asthma, ask your doctor whether adding indoor plants may be a smart idea for you. While cleaner air can be a boon for your breathing, houseplants also have the potential to harbor mold. Your best bet, especially if you're sensitive to mold, is to limit yourself to a few plants and avoid overwatering them.

Bring on the Green

In addition to swifter air, indoor plants may decrease your stress levels and boost your mood. With benefits like these, a trip to your local nursery may be key for creating a healthier home. +



Making Cents of High Blood Pre\$\$ure

If you have high blood pressure, like an estimated 85 million people in the U.S. do, it'll cost you.

→ **A NEW STUDY IN THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION** found that people with high blood pressure—a top number, or systolic pressure, measuring 130 or more, or a bottom number, or diastolic pressure, measuring 80 or more—generate about \$2,000 more in yearly health care expenses compared with those without the condition. And total health care costs for high blood pressure add up to about \$131 billion per year.

Treatment Cuts Costs

The good news? Not treating high blood pressure can be even more expensive. High blood pressure increases your risk for heart disease and stroke. And the median out-of-pocket cost for a hospital

visit for heart attack and stroke is \$53,384 and \$31,218, respectively. But preventing or delaying these and other complications can ultimately help reduce health care costs.

Save Money and Your Health

Bottom line? Controlling your blood pressure can be a lifesaver and a money saver. Less than 55 percent of people in the U.S. with high blood pressure have it controlled. Don't count yourself among them. If you're prescribed lifestyle changes and medication, follow your doctor's advice as directed to reduce your blood pressure. If you're not sure whether you have high blood pressure, get a checkup and have it tested. +



BETTER BP NUMBERS WITH HOME MONITORING

Keeping track of your blood pressure at home may help you keep it under control. Frequent readings give the truest picture of what's happening in your body and can tell your doctor if blood pressure treatments are working. The American Heart Association recommends home monitoring, in addition to regular doctor visits and treatment, for all people with high blood pressure.

Use an automatic cuff-type upper-arm monitor. Have your doctor check that you're using the device correctly. Bring the monitor to appointments so your doctor can ensure the readings are accurate.

Record at least two readings one minute apart—once in the morning before taking medications and then in the evening before dinner. Measure at the same time every day. Write down the date, time, and blood pressure numbers at each reading. Discuss them with your doctor at each visit.



The Stress-Pain Connection

Stress and chronic pain have a complex relationship. Living with pain day after day can be stressful. It can also lead to mental health problems.

→ **IN FACT, ONE-THIRD OF ADULTS WITH ARTHRITIS EXPERIENCE ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION.**

When Pain Leads to Stress

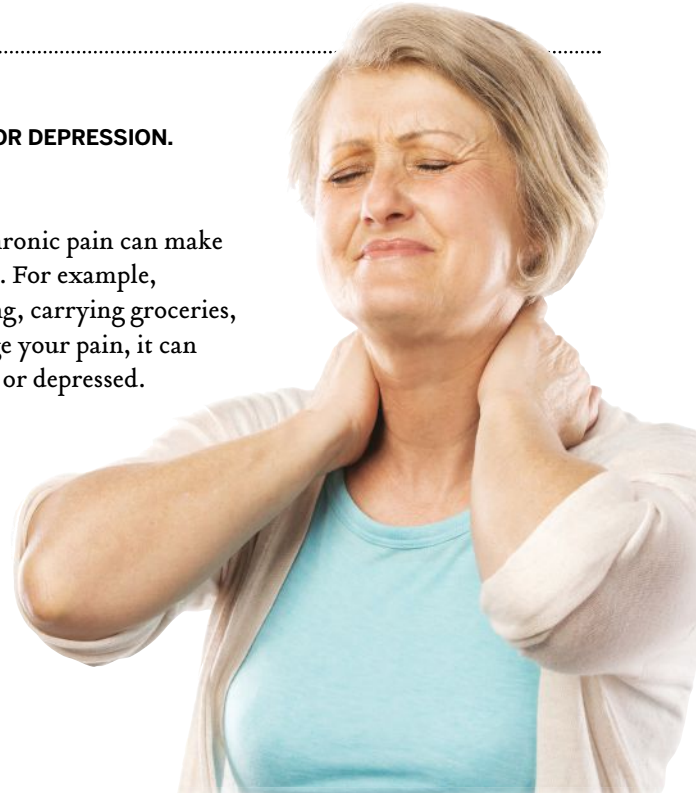
When you have chronic pain, it's always on your mind. Living with chronic pain can make you feel like you're not able to do some of the activities you want to do. For example, people with arthritis can have trouble with simple tasks such as bending, carrying groceries, or climbing stairs. If you've had a difficult time finding ways to manage your pain, it can take a toll on your emotions—you may feel angry, frustrated, anxious, or depressed.

How Stress Can Be a Pain

Stress can make chronic pain worse. Stress causes your muscles to tense or spasm, which increases pain. When you feel stressed, levels of the hormone cortisol rise. This can cause inflammation and pain over time.

What You Can Do

Many of the steps you can take to control stress will also reduce your pain. Here are some lifestyle changes that can improve both:

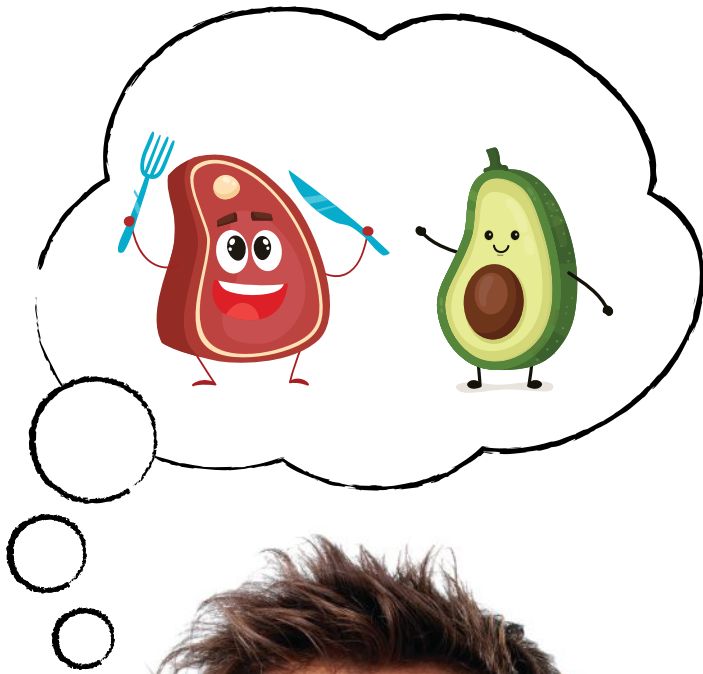


- **Stay active**—increasing your physical activity reduces stiffness and boosts mood. Try low-impact activities such as biking, swimming, and walking.
- **Sleep well**—getting enough sleep at night is important for your physical and emotional well-being. Try going to bed and waking up at the same time every day. Avoid caffeine late in the day so it doesn't affect your sleep.
- **Find distractions**—when you're in pain, find ways to take your mind off of it. You could take a walk, watch a movie, or meet up with a friend. Activities that you enjoy doing can help you better cope with pain.

If you experience chronic pain along with stress, anxiety, or depression, talk with your doctor. He or she can make sure you're on the best treatment plan for your condition and symptoms. You might also be referred to a mental health provider who can help you develop new coping skills, which can make a difference in how you feel in your body and mind. ✚

To Meat or Not to Meat?

You may have heard that transitioning to a vegetarian lifestyle could help you lose weight and improve your health. That sounds terrific—but you'd also appreciate a perfectly grilled chicken breast or juicy lean burger once in a while.



→ **NO PROBLEM.** A flexitarian, short for “flexible vegetarian,” diet could be your solution. Flexitarians primarily focus on eating plant-based foods, but they also eat meat, poultry, or fish occasionally—once a week or less.

The flexitarian diet is common among people who have health-related concerns, as it can help them decrease the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol they eat.

Unlike many fad diets, this one is tightly grounded in science. Research suggests that a flexitarian diet might help you control your weight, reduce your risk of developing cardiovascular disease and diabetes, and reap even more health benefits.

Flexitarian vs. Vegetarian

Like a vegetarian diet, flexitarian eating revolves around plant-based foods. Examples of nourishing foods that belong to this category include:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Whole grains
- Beans
- Hummus
- Unsalted nuts
- Tofu
- Fortified soy drinks

Other meatless alternatives that may be included on the flexitarian menu are eggs and low-fat or nonfat milk and dairy products. Some vegetarians consume these foods as well.

The primary difference is that vegetarians completely avoid meat, poultry and, usually, fish. Flexitarians, by comparison, eat these foods now and then—just not very frequently.

For a significant number of flexitarians, not having to give up meat entirely eases the adjustment to a mostly plant-based diet. They're veggie lovers but not meat haters, so the middle-ground approach can be a good solution.

Things to Keep in Mind

If you decide to go flexitarian, it's still important to make smart food choices. Eat a varied, balanced diet—this may be easier for you than for a vegetarian because you have more options. Focus on nutritious foods, such as the ones listed earlier. Whenever possible, remove less nutritious choices from your diet—these include desserts, sugary drinks, salty snacks, and refined grains, like white bread and white rice.

When you eat meat, ensure it's lean. And if you purchase processed meat substitutes, such as veggie burgers and soy hot dogs, always check the nutrition labeling. A plant-based food isn't automatically a healthy option.

When you're going meatless, strive to eat foods that contain high amounts of

protein, such as legumes, nuts and nut butters, seeds and seed butters, soy foods, and intact whole grains. Your plate should be filled with foods that contain whole grains, zinc (cheese, beans, and nuts), potassium, calcium (dark leafy greens), iron (broccoli, raisins, and tofu), vitamin C (oranges), vitamin D (fortified soy milk), and vitamin B-12 (eggs), to ensure you are getting the right amount of nutrients. Keep an eye out for signs of nutritional complications, too, such as alterations in your weight, skin, or hair.

Then make the most of this trendy approach to eating. A flexitarian diet isn't about excluding entire food categories. Instead, it's about savoring a variety of delicious, nutritious foods—and that includes the occasional salmon filet or chicken enchilada. +

THE BENEFITS OF PLANT-BASED FOODS

How can plant-based foods help your health? Plant-based foods contain a vast array of nutrients that promote wellness and fight off disease. Plants are the lone source of these nutrients; you can't find them in meat. For example, plants contain thousands of phytochemicals, such as carotenoids and flavonoids, which have numerous benefits, including:

- Antioxidants that neutralize free radicals (chemicals that damage cells and may contribute to the development of cancer)
- Anti-inflammatory components
- Immunity enhancements
- Protection against osteoporosis, macular degeneration, and cataracts

Furthermore, flexitarians can benefit from dodging certain aspects of animal products, such as:

- Saturated fats and dietary cholesterol, which can lead to heart disease
- Antibiotics, which are given to livestock to avoid infections
- Chemicals formed from cooking meat at high temperatures
- N-glycylneuraminic acid (Neu5Gc), which promotes chronic inflammation
- Carnitine, which your body may transform to trimethylamine N-oxide, which is associated with inflammation, atherosclerosis, heart attack, stroke, and death



Zucchini Noodles with Mushroom Marinara Sauce

Ingredients

- Olive oil spray
- ¼ cup diced yellow onion
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 4 oz. mushrooms, sliced
- 1 cup crushed tomatoes, no salt added
- ½ tsp. salt-free Italian seasoning
- ½ tsp. sea salt
- ⅛ tsp. black pepper
- ⅛ tsp. cinnamon
- 4 oz. zucchini noodles
- 1 tbsp. minced fresh basil

Directions

1. Heat a medium-sized pot over high heat for one minute. Remove from heat, spray with olive oil spray, then return to heat for one minute.
2. Add onion and garlic, reduce heat to medium high, then sauté for one minute.
3. Add mushrooms, sauté for one minute or until mushrooms, onions, and garlic are cooked through.
4. Add crushed tomatoes, Italian seasoning, salt, pepper, and cinnamon, reduce heat to medium low, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes.
5. While sauce is cooking, heat a nonstick pan on high heat for one minute. Remove from heat, then spray with olive oil spray, and return to heat for one minute.
6. Add zucchini noodles and sauté until just barely cooked through, about two minutes.
7. Toss zucchini noodles into the sauce, then cook for one minute.
8. Turn heat off and add minced basil. Stir, then serve.

Per Serving

Makes two servings. A serving is ¾ cup of noodles and sauce. Each serving contains about 69 calories, 0.7 g fat (0.1 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat), 0 mg cholesterol, 180 mg sodium, 15 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 3 g sugar and 4 g protein.



Ditch Depression This Spring

Even in the spring, when the sun is shining and the birds are chirping, you can feel a little less than sunny. You can even feel depressed. Usually, these feelings improve and you feel better.

→ **BUT IF YOUR SADNESS CONTINUES** for two weeks or more and affects other areas of your life, you could be depressed.

Symptoms of Depression

Depression is a mood disorder that impacts how you think and feel. You could be depressed if you experience signs such as:

- Feeling sad, hopeless, anxious, or empty
- Loss of interest in activities you normally enjoy
- Fatigue
- Problems with concentration, memory, or decision making
- Changes in sleeping and eating habits

- Irritability
- Aches, pains, headaches, or digestive issues
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Treating Depression

Depression is serious. Seek help if you think you might be depressed. Visit your doctor or a mental health professional such as a psychologist or psychiatrist.

Depression is treated with therapy, medications, or both. Your doctor may prescribe an antidepressant if you have mild to moderate depression.

If you start taking an antidepressant, don't stop taking it on your own even if you're feeling better. Talk with your doctor about stopping your medicine and how to safely do so.

With help from health care professionals, you can beat depression and return to brighter days. +



CAN MEDICATIONS CAUSE DEPRESSION?

Many Americans count on prescription medicines to maintain or improve their health. But medications can have side effects, including depression.

A recent study in *JAMA* found that adults who took at least one medication that had depression as a potential side effect were more likely to be depressed.

Common Culprits: Blood Pressure and Pain Medicine

Researchers reported that the most commonly used medications that have depression as a potential side effect included:

- High blood pressure drugs
- Proton pump inhibitors
- Pain medicines
- Hormonal contraceptives

Talk with Your Doctor About Medication Side Effects

According to the study, more than 200 medications used by adults in the U.S. have side effects associated with depression or suicidal symptoms. To stay safe, be sure to ask your doctor about the medications you take and their risks.





Make the Grade **with EQ**

Do you think your intelligence predicts your success? What about your emotions? You may be surprised to learn that some of the most successful people don't always have the highest IQs.

→ **BUT THEY DO TEND TO HAVE HIGH LEVELS** of emotional intelligence, or EQ.

EQ is your ability to recognize your own emotions and respond to others' moods. And some experts argue it is becoming even more important.

That's because our abilities to empathize, motivate, and make decisions based on complex needs allow us to perform certain tasks better than the best artificial intelligence ever will. In other words, it's the stuff robots can't take over!

Two Sides to EQ

EQ is generally divided into your understanding of yourself and others.

Personal competence is your ability to perceive and manage your own emotions. For example, do certain work situations trigger defensiveness in you? Are you able to pause and choose your response?

Social competence means you accurately identify emotions, motives, and behaviors in others to help you manage communication and improve relationships. This could mean noticing that your coworker is distracted or upset, and asking whether he or she needs time or space before continuing a discussion.

The best part? You can improve your EQ.

Boost Your EQ

Follow these tips to start improving your EQ:

- 1 ENJOY ACHIEVEMENT.** This means giving up perfectionism and the sense of failure it produces. Focus on what you got done, rather than what you didn't.
- 2 STAY PRESENT.** Getting stuck on past mistakes can cause you to stop taking calculated risks that produce growth. Learn from failure, then move on.
- 3 STICK WITH UPBEAT PEOPLE.** Folks who complain can bring down even the best performer. Set limits and distance yourself from negativity.
- 4 GIVE UP GRUDGES.** Let past slights go and make room for smarter responses in the present.
- 5 DON'T FORGET.** Forgiveness helps you move forward. But to protect yourself emotionally, remain wary of those who might do you harm. +



DWAYNE 'THE

A Self-Made Superhero

For many of us, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson seems almost superhuman. And watching him on the big screen playing larger-than-life heroes (Hercules, anyone?) reinforces that persona. To be sure, the beloved wrestler-turned-blockbuster star’s presence is a big one. His enthusiastic personality and jaw-dropping muscles both command attention, as does his humble approach to success and heart for helping others. How did Johnson get to where he is today? His own hard work, plain and simple. Let’s just call him a self-made superhero.

“I’m always asked, ‘What’s the secret to success?’ But there are no secrets. Be humble. Be hungry. And always be the hardest worker in the room,” Johnson explained to *Fortune*.

Hard Work, Persistence

Johnson learned the lesson that hard work is the key to success early on. The son of a professional wrestler and a Samoan mother, his early life wasn’t glamorous. He grew up poor and got in trouble frequently, often getting expelled from school and arrested for fighting or theft. It wasn’t until his family was evicted from their apartment, and Johnson saw his mother’s reaction, that he resolved to become a success. And he never stopped. “I was determined to take control of the situation. I would never be homeless again and I’d never, ever, see my mom cry like that again,” Johnson recalled to *Muscle & Fitness*.

Photo by Matt Winkelmeyer/Getty Images

ROCK' JOHNSON

Johnson began to work out intensely and pursue football. But after a successful college career, his dreams of making it to the NFL fell through. Johnson felt defeated but didn't give up. Instead, he turned his sights on professional wrestling.

At World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), Johnson quickly became a fan favorite. Nicknamed "The Rock," Johnson went on to become an eight-time WWE World Heavyweight Champion.

Before long, his outgoing personality and fit physique caught the attention of Hollywood, where he was cast in the movie *The Mummy Returns*. Since then, Johnson has become one of the highest paid actors of his time, starring in countless movies, from *The Fast and the Furious* franchise and *Jumanji* series to Disney's *Moana* and more.

"Not an easy concept to process, but the idea that sometimes our biggest and most important dreams that don't come true are oftentimes the best thing that never happened," said Johnson on social media.

Insane Fitness

It's difficult to think about Johnson without focusing on his amazing fitness—and the dedication necessary to achieve it. Johnson is well-known for his unrelenting diet and exercise regimen. He reportedly wakes up at 4 a.m. every day to eat and do an hour and a half of cardiovascular exercise before turning to heavy weight training and conditioning. "Training is my anchor," Johnson said to *Fortune*. "Being on a regimented schedule, setting a goal, failing at a goal. It's the philosophies of being an athlete that carry me today."

"Not an easy concept to process, but the idea that sometimes our biggest and most important dreams that don't come true are oftentimes the best thing that never happened."

In addition to his intense workout sessions, Johnson follows a very careful diet plan, eating five to seven times a day. To fuel his workouts and his 6-foot-5, 250-pound frame, Johnson eats large quantities of fish and other lean proteins and incorporates plenty of vegetables and good carbohydrates, such as rice, into his diet.

Emotional Strength

But Johnson doesn't rely on just muscles to fuel his strength. He also recognizes the importance of strong mental health and well-being. And he's not ashamed to talk about it. Johnson has been vocal about difficult times in his life when he's overcome battles with depression, encouraging others to seek help when they need it. "Depression never discriminates," Johnson tweeted on social media. "Took me a long time to realize it, but the key is to not be afraid to open up."

His encouragement and inspiration have reached a tremendous number of people. With more than 80 million followers on social media, Johnson's status as a positive role model (or should we say superhero?) does not go unnoticed. In fact, he regularly interacts with and personally encourages his fans. He was even honored with the Horizon Award by the Joint Leadership Commission of the Congressional Award Foundation, in part, for setting an exceptional example for young people through his success in life.



Reaching for the Stars Charity Dinner—Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson and the After-School All-Stars (Photo by Barry King/WireImage)

Focus on Others

This concern for others is a major focus for Johnson. In addition to his busy schedule acting, running a production company with his ex-wife (with whom he shares one daughter), and being a family man to his longtime girlfriend and their two daughters, Johnson is heavily involved in charitable efforts. His primary focus? Children.

"The single most powerful thing I can be is to be myself," Johnson said to *Fortune*, which describes how he approaches work on behalf of others. Although he supports charitable causes financially, he also personally humbles himself by showing up and giving his time.

More than 10 years ago, Johnson created the DJ Rock Foundation to empower and enrich the lives of children who are hospitalized as well as improve child health and self-esteem through physical fitness and obesity prevention. For the past few years, though, Johnson has refocused his philanthropic efforts elsewhere, such as stepping up as a spokesman for the National AfterSchool Association. He has also become one of the directors of the Beacon Experience, which encourages kids to continue their educations beyond high school. Johnson also works closely with the Make-A-Wish Foundation, as well as numerous other youth-focused charities.

"Success isn't always about greatness. It's about consistency. Consistent hard work leads to success. Greatness will come," Johnson said to *Fortune*.

It seems living by those words and working for the right goals has truly propelled Johnson to the top. And it gives us inspiration to be our best selves, too. Who knows, maybe we can all be self-made superheroes. ✦



United Service Association
For Health Care Foundation
Giving from the Heart

YOUR USA+ MEMBERSHIP HELPS OTHER PEOPLE, TOO!

Many people are facing significant challenges: financial, emotional, or physical problems that severely impact the quality of their lives. And many times, all that is usually needed is some assistance from someone who truly cares. On the other hand, there are many people who would love to participate in charitable causes—they just might not know how to reach out and help. Maybe you're one of those people. If so, it might be comforting for you to know that your United Service Association For Health Care (USA+) membership includes an extra benefit: philanthropy.

As a member of the USA+ family, a portion of your membership fee is donated to the USA+ Foundation, which gives to charities that make a difference and are committed to saving and improving lives. Through the combined contributions of our members, more than \$8 million has been awarded to more than 200 worthwhile charities, community programs, and national research programs. Remember: Together, we can make a real difference.

For additional information regarding the USA+ Foundation or to request a Donation Grant Application form, please email us at info@usahc.com or call 800-872-1187.



Don't Resist Resistance Bands

Resistance bands can give you a total body workout, virtually anywhere. This alternative to standard weight-lifting equipment, such as dumbbells or barbells, is portable and versatile and requires minimal space.

→ **RESISTANCE BANDS ARE SMALL ELASTIC LOOPS** or long elastic tubes that vary in color. Each color indicates a resistance level, from light to very heavy. If you are new to resistance band training, start light and work your way to heavier resistance as exercises start to feel easier.

In some exercises, resistance bands can activate your muscles more than standard weights. Research suggests this could be because a resistance band is more unstable and requires more strength to keep it from going slack.

Try these exercises to start feeling the burn:

- **Hamstring curl:** Stand behind a chair and step both feet inside the loop. Position the band around your ankles and place one or both hands on the chair for balance. Shift your body weight to one leg. With knees aligned, contract one hamstring and bend your “free” leg 90 degrees toward your buttocks. Lower and repeat.
- **Upper back:** While standing, grasp the band so your hands are slightly wider than your shoulders. With palms facing the floor, lift your arms to chest height. Pull your shoulder blades together as you stretch the band. Return to center and repeat.

- **Bicep curl:** While sitting, place the center of a resistance band under your feet to hold it steady. Hold each end of the band with palms facing inward. Keep elbows at your sides. Bend your elbows and bring your hands toward your shoulders. Lower and repeat.

Quick Tips

- Do not place a resistance band directly over a joint; put it above or below.
- Use resistance bands for 10 to 20 minutes twice a week.
- Complete one or more sets of 20 slow repetitions of each exercise.

Train on the Go

Resistance bands are easy to take with you anywhere—work, on vacation, the park, even a friend’s house. The next time you step out for a walk or go on vacation, find a spot in your bag for your resistance bands and figure out ways to work them into your day. +



Choosing Fresh Fruits and Veggies

EATING A DIET rich in fruits and vegetables is good for your health, and it may reduce your risk for many chronic illnesses. Here's how to choose produce at the peak of its freshness so you'll enjoy it even more.

BANANAS

Look for bananas that are firm, without bruises. Choose those that are yellow, tinged with a bit of green. Brown specks give ripe bananas a fuller flavor. Once ripe, store in the fridge. The skin will turn dark, but the flesh will not.



APPLES

Look for apples that are firm to the touch and the right color for their variety. Soft apples tend to have a mealy texture. Store ripe apples in plastic bags in the crisper of your fridge.



CANTALOUPE

Ripe cantaloupes will have a delicate aroma. Choose fruit with a thick netting pattern that's raised against the yellow skin underneath.



BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Look for small sprouts with compact, bright green heads. Fresher sprouts have a better flavor, but you can store them for up to a week in the fridge.



COCONUTS

A ripe coconut is heavy for its size. Avoid those with eyes that are moldy or wet. Once you cut it open, there should be milk inside. A coconut without milk has spoiled.



AVOCADOS

Ripe avocados will yield to gentle pressure. The color will range from green to black. Unripe avocados will ripen in a few days when left out at room temperature.



PINEAPPLE

Look for a fruit that's golden yellow and slightly soft. A green pineapple may not ripen. The fruit should have a slightly piney aroma.



BEETS

Choose firm, round beets with fresh-looking tops and deep red roots. Avoid beets with rough areas and long roots, as they may be tough. You can store them for one to two weeks in the fridge.





An Easy Trick to Eat More Veggies

Which would you be more likely to choose: green beans labeled “light ‘n’ low-carb,” or “sweet sizzlin’ green beans and crispy shallots”? Chances are, you’d feel more inspired to put the “sizzlin’” beans on your plate.

→ **ACCORDING TO A STUDY IN *JAMA INTERNAL MEDICINE***, people were more likely to select veggies when they had an indulgent label compared with a healthy one, even though they were prepared exactly the same way.

What’s in a Label?

For the study, a university cafeteria served vegetables each day that were labeled in different ways. When the veggies sported an indulgent label, such as “rich, buttery roasted sweet corn,” or “zesty, ginger-turmeric sweet potatoes,” about 40 percent more people selected the veggie compared with when they had a healthy label like “reduced-sodium corn” or “cholesterol-free sweet potatoes.”

Why were people more likely to put the indulgently labeled foods on their plates? Simply put, when foods have exciting and flavorful names, people expect them to taste better.

Rev Up Your Family’s Taste Buds

You can use the same tactic for your family. Instead of highlighting what veggies don’t have (such as “low-calorie” or “low-sodium”), focus on what they do have. For example, “citrus-glazed,” “garlic-ginger,” or “tangy lime-seasoned.”

The findings are also a great reminder that veggies don’t have to be bland or boring. Here are some ways to kick up their flavor:

- Sauté with oil, garlic, and herbs such as basil, oregano, or thyme.
- Squeeze fresh lemon juice on steamed greens.
- Sprinkle Parmesan cheese on roasted veggies. +

TROUBLED BY JUNK FOOD CRAVINGS?

Have you ever had your plans to eat healthy derailed by junk food cravings or nighttime snack attacks? Turns out that the culprit may be lack of sleep.

The Sleep/Craving Connection

Research reveals that shorting yourself on sleep can make you hungrier during the day, making it natural to want to choose high-calorie foods. Some research suggests that a lack of sleep may affect chemicals that make you more likely to eat for pleasure, not just out of hunger.

Control Cravings with Better Sleep

For better-quality sleep—and more self-control—go to bed at the same time every night, and keep your room dark and quiet.

If you can’t curb cravings, try eating more healthy foods during the day. You can also try a healthy option, like air-popped popcorn or low-fat yogurt, to take the edge off before bed.

Slashing Alcohol Intake Could Add Years to Your Life

Hold on to your wine glass because a new study reveals that the recommended alcohol intake for men may be too high.

→ **CURRENTLY, RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE U.S.** state that if you drink alcohol, you should limit your intake to 14 drinks (196 grams) per week if you're a man and seven drinks (98 grams) per week if you're a woman.

In the study of nearly 600,000 men and women who currently drink booze, researchers found that downing more than 7.14 drinks (100 grams) per week was linked with a higher risk for a slew of serious health issues as well as early death. The findings were published in the journal *The Lancet*.

The Sobering Facts

For the study, researchers followed participants for about six years. They found that those who drank more than 100 grams of alcohol per week had an increased risk for:

- Stroke
- Heart disease (excluding heart attack)
- Heart failure
- Fatal aortic aneurysm

Folks who only drank up to 100 grams per week had the lowest risk for death due to any cause. The researchers estimated that for guys, reducing alcohol consumption from 196 grams per week to 100 grams or less per week could mean they might increase their longevity by one to two years.

Rethink Your Drink

Despite the widespread belief that alcohol—particularly red wine—is a heart-healthy sip, it can raise your blood pressure and take a toll on your ticker. The bottom line? Like most things in

life, moderation is key. In this case, however, moderation may mean men drinking less than the current recommendations suggest.

If you currently consume more than seven drinks per week, here are some ways to decrease your intake and reduce your risks for alcohol-related problems:

- Measure your drinks at home to make sure you're not overpouring.
- Avoid topping off your glass.
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with nonalcoholic ones.
- Eat food when you drink so that the alcohol is absorbed into your system more slowly.

If you have any concerns about your health or alcohol intake, discuss them with your health care provider. †



Work with Your OB-GYN to Protect Your Heart

Did you know that heart disease is the number one killer of women? In fact, it kills more women than all types of cancer combined.

→ **IF THIS IS NEWS TO YOU, REST ASSURED**—you're not alone.

To ensure that more women receive the care they need to help keep heart disease at bay, the American Heart Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recently issued a joint advisory encouraging OB-GYNs to screen and counsel women about heart health during annual well-women exams. Teaming up with your OB-GYN to assess and treat any heart disease risk factors you may have could protect your ticker for many years to come.

Putting Women's Health First

Many women think of their OB-GYNs as their primary care providers (PCPs), especially during their childbearing years. According to the advisory, OB-GYNs should use the annual well-woman exam as an opportunity to provide a heart-health screening. This includes:

- Taking a thorough family history
- Screening for heart disease risk factors, such as smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes, and abnormal cholesterol levels
- Counseling women about healthy lifestyle changes, such as improving their diets and increasing their physical activity, if needed

OB-GYNs are also a key resource for protecting women's heart health because there are several heart disease risk



factors that are unique to women. They include:

- Pregnancy complications, such as pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes, gestational hypertension, preterm delivery, and having a low-birth-weight baby
- Polycystic ovarian syndrome
- Autoimmune disorders that occur more often in women, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus erythematosus, and scleroderma
- Breast cancer treatments

Along with traditional risk factors, it's crucial for health care providers to consider these factors, too, in order to

gain a more comprehensive assessment of your heart health. This information may also guide their decisions about treatments they recommend, such as using medications to manage blood pressure or prevent blood clots.

Talk with Your Doctor

Even if you feel healthy today, you could still be at risk for heart disease. It's estimated that 90 percent of women have at least one risk factor for heart disease. During your next visit with your PCP or OB-GYN, be sure to ask about your heart health. Find out whether you have any risk factors and what you can start doing to control them. †

Keep Gardening Safe

From azaleas to zinnias, a garden is a joy to behold. Keep your gardening safe and enjoyable with these tips.

→ Here's How to Tool Up

- Before doing any major digging, contact your local utility companies to find out where cables and lines are buried.
- When you use power trimmers and other power tools, wear safety glasses and take off your jewelry.
- Check the labels on tools and extension cords to make sure they are safe for outdoor use.
- Put away garden tools after every use. That way, no one will trip on them.

Keep Bees and Other Pests Away

If a family member is allergic to bees or other stinging insects, ask your doctor what to do in case of a sting.

To reduce the number of bees in your garden, plant carnations, daisies, red dianthus, geraniums, marigolds, roses, strawflowers, or zinnias. Bees are not as attracted to these flowers. Try to avoid flowers that secrete large amounts of nectar or pollen. Flower color also is an attraction for bees, especially yellow and white flowers.

Take Care with Pesticides

Buy and use pesticides that have been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency. Read the entire label before opening the container. And follow the directions to measure the dosage exactly. When handling pesticides, be careful to:

- Never mix pesticides in food or drink containers.
- Avoid spraying pesticides when it is windy.
- Never eat, drink, or smoke when you are applying pesticides.
- Store pesticides in their original containers, locked up and far away from children's reach.

Keep Your Eyes Open

- Know how to recognize poison oak, poison ivy, and sumac, and steer clear of them.
- Keep watch over your children and pets in the garden. Drownings can happen in garden ponds.
- Strangling injuries can occur in children who play with nonreleasing plastic garden ties.
- Make sure children and pets do not eat poisonous garden plants, including azaleas, climbing nightshade, crocuses, daisies, tiger lilies, and rhubarb. +



5 Ways to Prevent Mosquito Bites

Like melting ice cream cones and sandy toes, mosquito bites seem like a natural part of summertime. But mosquito bites can be more than a temporary annoyance—they may make you sick. Mosquitoes can pass on diseases including Zika, dengue, and chikungunya. The best prevention is to protect yourself against bites in the first place. Here's how.

COVER UP

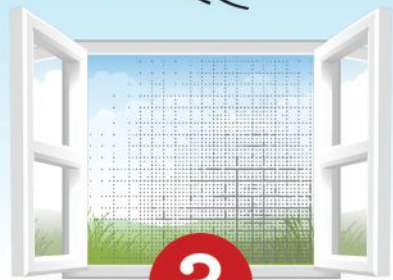
Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.



APPLY PROTECTION

Use insect repellent that's EPA-registered. This means it's proven safe and effective for preventing mosquito bites. Insect repellent should contain one of these active ingredients:

- DEET
- Picaridin
- Oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol
- IR3535
- 2-undecanone



SCREEN THEM OUT

Make sure all windows and doors have screens.



REMOVE STANDING WATER

Empty any items outside that hold water. Mosquitoes lay their eggs near water. Check buckets, toys, containers, or planters once a week.

SPRAY INSIDE, TOO

Use an indoor insect spray to kill mosquitoes that may live in dark and damp places such as under the sink, beneath furniture, inside closets, and in the laundry room.



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Financial Stress?

Don't Pay the Price with Poor Health

When your wallet takes a hit, like last winter's holiday shopping, your health may suffer, too. It's a common problem.

→ **IN A 2017 SURVEY, 62 PERCENT OF AMERICANS** said they felt stressed out about money. That could be bad news for their bodies.

The High Cost of Stress

An unplanned expense could send your stress level soaring. Depending on how you react, this may lead to:

- Upset stomach
- Sleep problems
- Headaches
- Frequent colds
- Back pain

If you're living paycheck to paycheck, stress can become routine. Long-lasting stress may contribute to:

- High blood pressure
- Depression
- Heart disease
- Anxiety
- Diabetes

Managing Financial Strain

It may take a while to build up your savings or pay off your credit card. But there are things you can do to reduce your financial stress starting today. And that can pay dividends in better health. Consider the following:

- **Take charge of your financial situation.** Track your spending to see where the money goes. Then look for ways to trim your expenses or stretch your money farther. If you're drowning in debt, ask about setting up a payment plan.

- **Create a written budget and stick to it.** At first, this may lead to more anxiety. But in the long run, having a plan can reduce your stress.
- **Focus on one big financial decision at a time.** Tackling too much at once can leave you feeling overwhelmed. Space out major purchases.
- **Avoid falling back on unhealthy habits.** Some people react to financial woes by smoking, drinking, gambling, or eating junk food. These behaviors only add to the physical toll.
- **Learn healthy ways of keeping stress in check.** Relax with deep breathing, meditation, a walk, or a warm bath. Connect with supportive family and friends. These healthy strategies work well to ease stress. +

