

A HEALTHY DOSE

Get Involved in Your Care

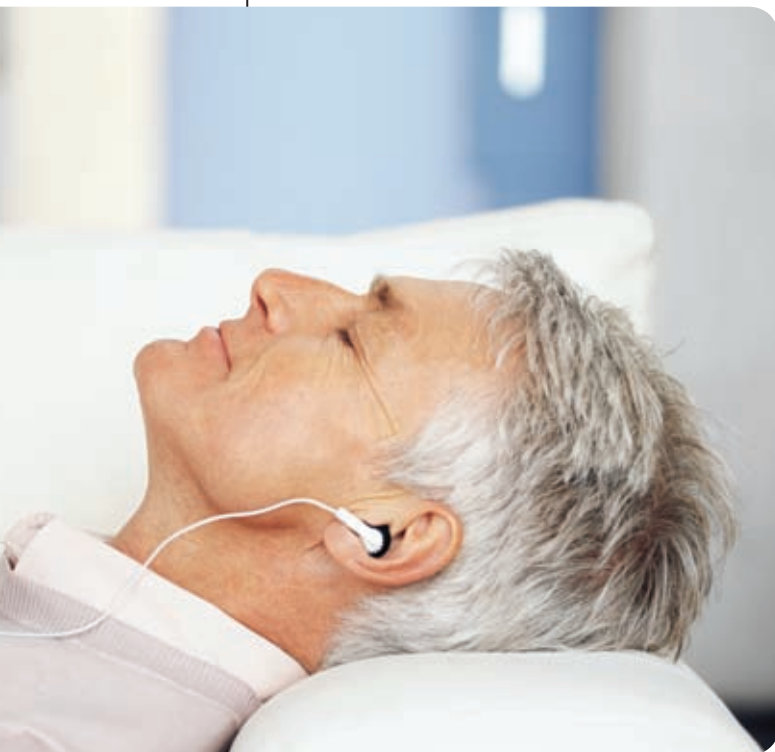
On average, you have 16 minutes to discuss a nagging health worry with your physician and agree on a treatment plan. So how do you get the most out of that time? The American Medical Association and AARP have created an online pamphlet, "The Patient-Physician Relationship: A Partnership for Better Health Care and Safer Outcomes," a guide to better communication with your physician. Here are three key pointers:

- ◆ Don't hesitate to ask your physician questions.
- ◆ Be open about money or other issues that might keep you from receiving care.
- ◆ Work with your physician to choose medical treatments that are right for you.

"It's important that patients and physicians know how to optimize their time together so patients can get the most benefit from their healthcare," says AMA board member Peter Carmel, M.D.

Free Guide

A free copy of "The Patient-Physician Relationship: A Partnership for Better Health Care and Safer Outcomes" is available from the American Medical Association. Go to ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/17344.html.

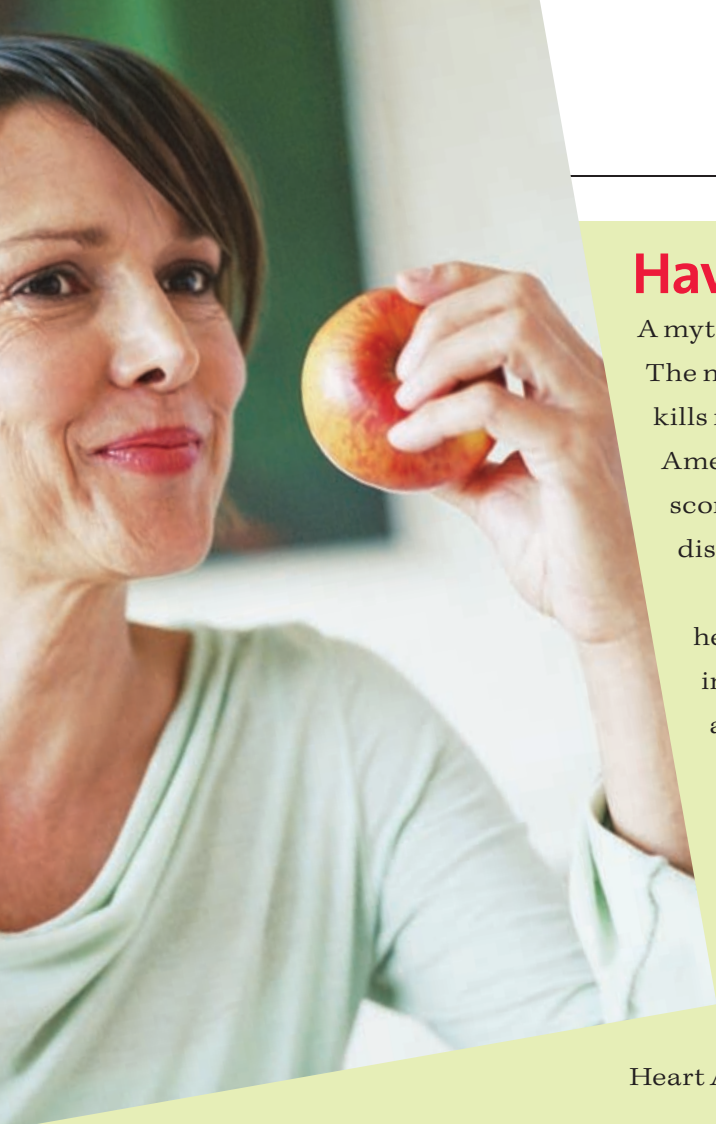


Get Healthy. Take a Nap

Next time your boss catches you snoozing at work, you have a good excuse: New research shows that a daytime siesta helps reduce the risk of fatal heart problems.

In a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, researchers followed 23,681 healthy Greek adults for an average of 6.3 years. The study participants who napped for a half-hour at least three times a week had a 37 percent lower risk of dying from heart attacks or other heart problems than those who did not nap.

Researchers suggest that naps benefit the heart by reducing stress.



Have a Heart

A myth about heart disease is that it's a man's condition. The numbers tell the true story. Cardiovascular disease kills nearly 500,000 women each year, according to the American Heart Association. New AHA guidelines underscore the importance of preventing and treating heart disease in women.

The 2004 guidelines focused on short-term risks for heart disease and stroke, but the 2007 guidelines—which include new directions for using aspirin, hormone therapy, and vitamin and mineral supplements as well as expanded recommendations on physical activity, nutrition and smoking cessation—emphasize the need for healthcare professionals to focus on women's lifetime risks.

To study up on heart disease risk and women, call **888-MYHEART (694-3278)**, and receive a free kit that includes a women and heart disease brochure, wallet card and red dress pin from the American

Heart Association.

Lose Weight and Win

It's not just about looking good in those new jeans. Dropping excess pounds is critical to your health. People who are overweight are at increased risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and especially diabetes. In fact, nearly nine out of 10 people with newly diagnosed type 2 diabetes are overweight.

"The diabetes epidemic has taken a devastating toll on families and communities across the country," says Larry Deeb, M.D., president of medicine and science for the American Diabetes Association. "Early detection and treatment can help prevent type 2 diabetes or serious complications associated with diabetes."

One way to find out if your weight puts you at risk for diabetes and other diseases is to look at your body mass index, or BMI, which is based on a calculation of your height and weight. Your doctor can help you figure out your BMI, or you can use online calculators.

If your BMI is high, be sure to consult with your doctor about the best way to lose weight and get to a healthy size.

It Figures

To figure out your body mass index, try the BMI calculator on the American Diabetes Association's website. Go to **diabetes.org**, click "Weight Loss & Exercise," then "Weight Loss" and "Diabetes and Metabolic Health."

Is Gravity Your Downfall?

You'll accept the wrinkles—reluctantly. And you can handle the stronger eyeglass prescription. But one thing you don't have to passively accept as you age is a lack of balance.

Falls are a leading cause of injury for older adults. One in three adults older than 65 fall each year. The National Athletic Trainers' Association and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) have developed guidelines to help older Americans avoid falls and lower the incidence of serious injury when falls occur.

"Seniors can help protect themselves against injuries by making some very simple changes around the house and by adopting an exercise regimen," says AAOS President James H. Beaty, M.D. Here are a few things you can start doing.

To keep your muscles and bones strong:

- ◆ Exercise at least three days a week to improve strength, flexibility and balance.
- ◆ Choose low-impact exercises to avoid stress on your joints.
- ◆ Stretch daily to improve flexibility and mobility.
- ◆ Practice exercises designed to help improve balance.

To make your home safer:

- ◆ Make sure you have good lighting. And avoid extension cords—they're easy to trip on.
- ◆ Opt for slip-resistant walking surfaces, and get rid of throw rugs.
- ◆ In the bathroom, plug in a nightlight and install grab bars.
- ◆ Install handrails on both sides of stairs, and make sure they extend one foot beyond the last step.

Live Independently

When seniors fall, the risk of injury, including bone fracture, is high, and the result can mean a loss of independence. To make sure you or your loved one can live as independently as possible, take steps today to keep your home safe. Find more tips at cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/spotlite/falls.htm.

Noise Alert!

With autumn in full swing, it's high season for mowing, mulching and blowing leaves. But lawn mowers, leaf blowers, chain saws and power drills can do serious damage to your hearing (the duration of exposure is a factor). If you use power tools that produce noise louder than 85 decibels, it's time to invest in foam earplugs.

Plus, be sure to take care of your hearing all year. Here are the decibel levels of common noises:

Chain saw, rock concert	110 to 120 decibels
Personal stereo players at maximum level	100 decibels
Farm machinery	90 to 110 decibels
Snowmobile	100 decibels
Motorcycle, lawn mower	90 to 95 decibels

Source: National Institutes of Health





Get Your Kids off the Couch

Experts recommend that kids get no more than one or two hours per day of “screen time” with a TV, computer or video game. But most kids get four to six hours. Here are tips from the American Heart Association on saving your kid from becoming a couch potato.

- ◆ Offer alternative activities. Try family game night, shooting some hoops, walking the dog or exploring a nearby park.
- ◆ Be active with your kids. Don't just send them out to play—go play with them!
- ◆ Don't position your furniture so the TV is the main focus of the room. Remove TVs from bedrooms.
- ◆ Plan TV watching in advance. Go through the TV guide and pick the shows you want to watch. Turn the TV on for those shows and turn it off afterward.

More Than a Bad Dream

Forget bedbugs and bad dreams. The things that really keep us up late at night affect our physical health.

When you're trying to fall asleep, are you bothered by an irresistible urge to move your legs? Feel like climbing the walls? If so, you probably have restless legs syndrome (RLS).

Up to 10 percent of Americans have this neurological condition. “Cases range from

mild, like people who shift uncomfortably during a long airplane ride, to severe, like people who are forced to get out of bed and walk, sometimes for hours, to get momentary relief from the sensations in their legs,” says Georgianna Bell, executive director of the RLS Foundation.

Those with RLS usually use the words *creeping*, *itching*, *pulling*, *creepy-crawly*, *tugging* or *gnawing* to describe the sensation. Relief typically comes with movement of the legs.

Take Action

Physicians recommend eliminating alcohol and caffeine and exercising regularly to decrease the symptoms of restless legs syndrome. There are also medication options. You can study up on RLS at rls.org. Then talk to your doctor about your options.

Play It Safe

With kids back to school and the sports season under way, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following steps to help your children avoid injuries:

Wear the right gear. Players should wear appropriate equipment such as pads, helmets, mouthpieces, face guards, protective cups and eyewear.

Increase flexibility. Stretching before and after games can increase flexibility.

Strengthen muscles. Conditioning during practice and before games strengthens muscles used in play.

Take breaks. Rest periods during practice and games can reduce injuries and prevent heat illness.

Play safe. Strict rules against headfirst sliding (baseball and softball), spearing (football) and body checking (ice hockey) should be enforced.

Avoid heat injury. Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise or play; decrease or stop practices or games during high heat and humidity; wear light clothing.

