

Doctor Knows Best: 15 Health Tips from Top Doctors

Along with all the disease stomping, heart reviving, baby delivering, and overall people healing they do, doctors have another full-time job: keeping themselves healthy. Scratch that — keepi...more

By Ted Spiker



ISTOCKPHOTO

How to Head Off a Headache

Start double-fisting beverages the minute the throbbing begins. "I'll have a bottle of water in one hand and a coffee in the other," says Jennifer Ashton, MD, author of *Your Body Beautiful* and cohost of ABC's *The Revolution*. That's because many headaches are caused by dehydration, while caffeine is known to curb

them. If the [drinks](#) don't alleviate the pounding in an hour, she pops ibuprofen.



NICK CARDILLICCHIO

Take a Time Out

"As soon as I feel an illness coming on, I go to sleep for at least nine hours," says Hilda Hutcherson, MD, clinical professor of ob-gyn at Columbia University Medical Center. "I also lie on the floor with my legs elevated and propped against the wall and breathe deeply for five minutes." It helps lower stress, which weakens the immune system.

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!



Soothe Sore Muscles

Even TV-star docs don't get daily massages, so Travis Stork, MD, instructor of emergency medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville and a host of *The Doctors*, does the next best thing: He uses a foam roller after his workouts to break up scar tissue and help his muscles recover. Some of the most neglected parts of the body are the glutes. "These are the big muscles that shape your buttocks and run posteriorly from the back of the hip bone to the top of the thigh bone, and they play a major role in helping you to maintain your posture," Dr. Stork says. To give your glutes some TLC post-workout, sit on a roller and tilt your body to the right until you feel a deep massage in your right glute (buttock); slowly move back and forth for a few minutes and then switch sides. The roller can also be effective for your IT band (the thick tissue that runs down the side of your leg from your hip to your knee) as well as all of the muscles in your lower extremities.



 PIN IT

 SHARE

LISA LOFTUS

Beat Burnout

Get serious about leisure time, says Robynne Chutkan, MD, assistant professor at Georgetown University

Hospital in Washington, D.C., and founder of the Digestive Center for Women in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Dr. Chutkan doesn't work on Fridays, and she has a relaxing routine for her day off — meditation, yoga, massage, and browsing in a bookstore. "The rest of my week is pretty hectic, so having a Friday schedule with plenty of 'me' time really keeps me balanced," she says. "I see quite a few medical problems from too much work and not enough leisure, and I encourage my patients to strive for balance in their lives." Carve out a small portion of each day — or set aside several hours — to do something you enjoy.

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!



PETER ARDITO

Eat Extra Veggies

Instead of having a garden-variety green salad, Margaret McKenzie, MD, assistant professor of surgery at the Cleveland Clinic, tosses napa cabbage, radicchio, edamame, and carrots with ginger-soy dressing. "It gives me a lot of vitamins, antioxidants, and protein and makes me feel full," she says.

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!



 PIN IT

 SHARE

KAREN PEARSON

Manage Stress

"I make it a point to meditate pretty much daily," says Sanjay Gupta, MD, CNN chief medical correspondent and a neurosurgeon in Atlanta. Try doing it in a [quiet](#)  room — without music and with natural light — for a few minutes each day. "I silently focus on a word in my mind. The one I usually use is *gentle*, but you can pick any word that doesn't evoke a strong emotion," Dr. Gupta says. Resting your mind regularly equips you to better handle stressful moments when they pop up, he says.

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!



APPLE

Stay Sharp

An app a day keeps brain farts away. Gary Small, MD, professor of psychiatry and biobehavioral sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles, and author of *The Alzheimer's Prevention Program*, plays Scrabble and Words With Friends on his smartphone most days. These word games are perfect brain boosters, because they build not only verbal and math skills but also spatial abilities as you position letters to create words. "Combining several mental tasks strengthens multiple neural circuits," Dr. Small says. "It's like cross-training for your brain."



 PIN IT

 SHARE

DENISE CREW

Kick-Start Your Mojo

Mark Moyad, MD, a FITNESS advisory board member and the director of preventive and alternative medicine at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor, regularly changes up his workout partners to keep from getting bored and stay motivated. Once a week he takes a Spinning class with his wife. Another day he meets up with buddies for a run. "If one of us slacks off, the other person can pressure him or her to step it up," Dr. Moyad says.

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!



 PIN IT

 SHARE

BLAINE MOATS

Fight Cravings

Mehmet Oz, MD, host of *The Dr. Oz Show*, eats raw walnuts (about one ounce) a few times a day for their hunger-quashing protein and heart-healthy fat. "The rap against nuts is that they're high in calories, but research is showing that our bodies may not actually absorb all the fat they contain," Dr. Oz says. "So we probably end up taking in fewer calories than what's listed on the package."



 PIN IT

 SHARE

J. RYAN ROBERTS

Sleep Easier

Make your bedroom spalike: Dim the lights at least an hour before you go to bed; ban cell phones, laptops, and the TV; ask your partner for a foot rub. "I do deep breathing exercises," Dr. Hutcherson says. "Sometimes I play relaxing music softly."

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!



SARAH KEHOE

Prevent Skin Cancer

In addition to getting annual skin checks from your dermatologist, recruit your hairstylist to scope out your scalp each time you visit, says Mona Gohara, MD, a FITNESS advisory board member and an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Scalp cancers often occur because people neglect to protect their heads, especially the part in their hair, with sunscreen or hats. And the cancers go undetected because they're hard to spot. "Tell your hairdresser to look for any sores that are bleeding or crusting or don't seem to be healing," Dr. Gohara says.



 PIN IT

 SHARE

PETER ARDITO

Fuel Up for the Day

The most important meal is breakfast, says David Katz, MD, director and founder of Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center in Derby, Connecticut. He often has two breakfasts, divvying up his morning meal so that he eats half before his workout and half after. "It helps with portion control, and it establishes a daily eating pattern," Dr. Katz says. Plan your breakfast at night to start the next day on a [healthy](#)  note.

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!



TIM HILL/ALAMY

Satisfy a Sweet Tooth

James Beckerman, MD, a cardiologist at the Providence Heart and Vascular Institute in Portland, Oregon, and author of *The Flex Diet*, eats a handful of semisweet chocolate chips when he gets a sugar craving. Recent research from the *European Heart Journal* found that people who consumed the most chocolate reduced their risk for cardiovascular disease and strokes compared with nonchocoholics. "I'm a firm believer that if you like something, don't try to make a substitution that you won't enjoy as much," Dr. Beckerman says. "You can have a small portion as long as 90 percent of what you eat otherwise is healthy."



 PIN IT

 SHARE

GEORGE DOYLE/GETTY IMAGES

Tame Tension

Try this move Dr. Oz swears by: Stand upright, bend over, and lean forward as if you're touching your toes. Let your head and arms hang down and relax your lower back and hips. Hold for a minute or two. "It forces the back, hips, and neck to loosen up, which helps you instantly de-stress so you can get back to focusing on the task at hand," he says.

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!



 PIN IT

 SHARE

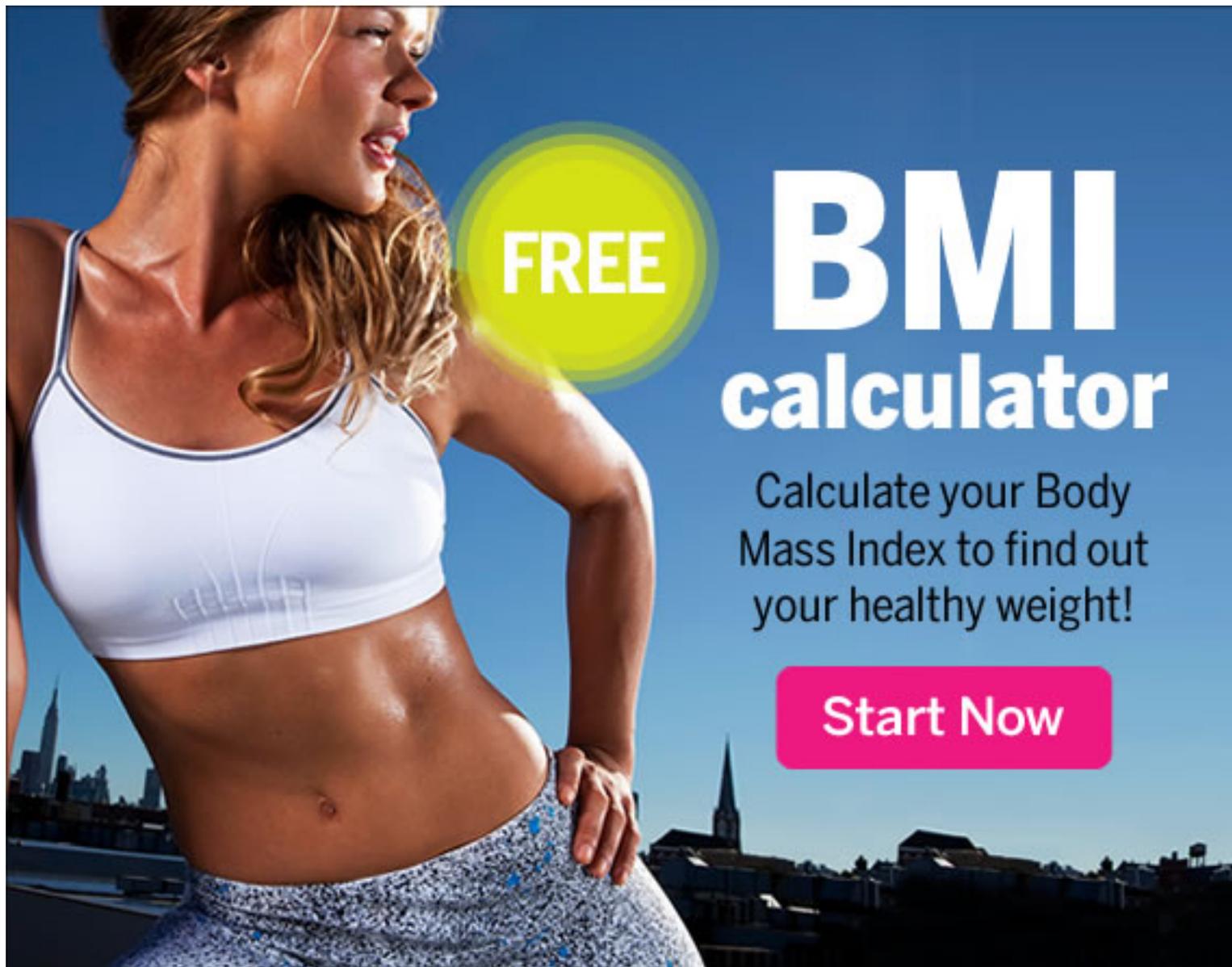
LAURA DOSS

Outrun PMS

"I get pretty bad cramps, and the last thing I want to do is move, but I always feel a thousand times better after I exercise," Dr. Ashton says. Regular aerobic exercise can help reduce PMS. Her personal prescription: 45 minutes of moderate cardio, like jogging, to work up a good sweat and slash symptoms.

Originally published in FITNESS magazine, February 2012.

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!



FREE

BMI calculator

Calculate your Body Mass Index to find out your healthy weight!

[Start Now](#)

Full Year of Shape® magazine just \$5.99!