

BAKE A BETTER

BROWNIE Replace the all-purpose white flour in brownies, cookies, and pancakes with white whole-wheat flour. It's milder than regular whole-wheat flour but has the same nutrients. Whole-wheat flour has six times as much fiber as refined-wheat flour, and every bit counts.

BE GENEROUS, BE HEALTHY

To improve your outlook and maybe even your well-being, start giving. "Generous actions activate a part of the brain that is associated with feelings of joy, with hormones [linked to] feelings of compassion and calmness, and with slight elevations in immune strength," says Stephen Post, director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at Stony Brook University, in New York. Studies have shown that volunteering for even a few hours per week has a beneficial effect, and older adults who report high levels of volunteerism have been shown to live longer.

PUT SLEEP ON THE MENU Magnesium acts as a natural tranquilizer, relaxing muscles and blood vessels, says Jillian Michaels, a trainer who appears on the TV show *The Biggest Loser*. Take advantage of its sedative properties by incorporating sources such as chickpeas, lentils, sunflower seeds, and spinach into dinner.



GIVE POLLEN THE SLIP Three strategies for staving off allergy attacks: **1.** Close the windows when you sleep. Most pollen is shed at night and early in the morning. **2.** Wear full-coverage sunglasses. Wind can blow pollen into your eyes, irritating membranes and causing itchiness and tearing. **3.** Pretreat your allergies, says Hannelore Brucker, a doctor at Southdale Allergy and Asthma Clinic, in Minneapolis. Take an antihistamine first thing in the morning on high-pollen days to keep symptoms from flaring up.

SPRING-CLEAN THE MEDICINE CABINET

Toss any medications you haven't used in the past year, and check that kids' medicines are age-appropriate (infants' concentrations differ from children's, so don't mix and match).

QUENCH AS NEEDED

The adage about eight glasses of water a day is behind the scientific times. The new advice is to let your thirst be your guide, even in warm weather, says Lewis Maharam, medical director of New York Road Runners.

FLEX YOUR MIND

In a recent study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, women who lifted weights once or twice a week improved their concentration.

HAVE A SPEAR A cup of asparagus delivers two-thirds of the daily recommended intake of folate. The nutrient is essential for pregnant women, because it helps prevent neural-tube birth defects. (For an asparagus salad, see page 66.)

WAVE ARMS, TONE TORSO

Strengthen your core muscles with a move called the Pilates 100. Mari Winsor, a trainer in Los Angeles, explains the exercise: Lie on your back, and lift your legs straight up. Then lift your head and shoulder blades, and lower your legs (to a 45-degree angle, if you can without lifting your back). Holding that position, pump your arms up and down at your sides while breathing in for five counts and out for five counts. "Your tempo should match the rhythm of 'God Bless America,'" Winsor says. Aim for 100 arm pumps total.

REACH FOR A NEW SPOON You know that eating off smaller plates helps limit portions. The same holds true for serving dishes and utensils, says Brian Wansink, of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab. Scoop up a more appropriate amount of food by using a tablespoon, and reserve family-style platters for special occasions.