

# HEALTHY LIVING



10

*feel-good things  
to do this February*

No. 1

## **GROW FLOWERS (AND HAPPINESS)**

In addition to looking lovely, flowers can improve your mood. Having blooms around makes people feel more positive, compassionate, and energetic, a Harvard study found. Winter is the perfect time to plant tender bulbs indoors (we recommend amaryllis, prechilled hyacinths, and paperwhites). Bring some buds into your life. Within weeks you'll have a cheerful display.

## **BULB BASICS**

When growing an amaryllis, left, or any other tender bulb indoors, make sure to keep it in bright, indirect light. This will ensure steady growth and help extend the flower's bloom period. To keep your flowering plants happier and healthier, lower your thermostat. Dry winter heat isn't good for plants (or people), and cooler temperatures will result in greener, more even development.

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No. 2

**BE NICE TO YOUR NECK**

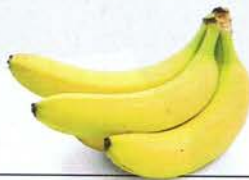
Sitting at a desk all day causes muscles in the upper back and neck to become tight, says Christa Bache, a personal trainer in New York City. Try this simple move to stretch away neck tension: While you are sitting, extend your right arm toward the floor. Tilt your left ear toward your shoulder; use your left hand to tilt your head further. Hold for 20 seconds; switch sides.

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No. 3

**PEEL A BANANA, BAKE A POTATO**

*Foods brimming with potassium, such as bananas, greens, potatoes, and white beans, can help keep your heart in top form. Getting the recommended 4,700 mg per day of the mineral helps flush out excess sodium and regulate blood pressure, says Lydia Bazzano, assistant professor of epidemiology at Tulane University Health Sciences Center.*



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No. 4

**PLAY IN THE SNOW**

"Snowshoeing is a great aerobic exercise that almost anyone can do," says Michael Duffy, outdoor-sports manager at Canyon Ranch in Lenox, Massachusetts. An hour of snowshoeing burns 600 calories. Plus, when you walk on snow (as opposed to land) your hamstrings and gluteal muscles get a better workout. Use poles to challenge your triceps and shoulders.

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No. 5

**GET SQUEAKY CLEAN**

The secret to staying healthy this winter may be washing your hands. Lather up for a full 20 seconds. Less than that and you might not remove most of the pathogens that cause colds, flu, and other ailments. And reach for standard soap. Antibacterial varieties are not more effective, and bacteria can become resistant to their compounds.

No. 6

**SAVE A LIFE**

*According to the American Heart Association, CPR performed by a bystander can double—or even triple—a victim's chance of survival in an emergency. Learn how to keep a heart pumping with CPR Anytime (\$35, 800-233-1230), an at-home learning kit.*

No. 7

**BE CHATTY**

*Having a friendly talk might make you smarter. A study from the University of Michigan found that after a pleasant 10-minute conversation, subjects did better on cognitive tests. Keep it light; discussions with a competitive edge were not as beneficial.*

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No. 8

**MAP OUT YOUR NEXT VACATION**

Dreaming of warm, sandy beaches? Or of heading to Machu Picchu? Pull your head out of the clouds, and start planning a spring or summer trip. "Taking time for leisure has both mental and physical health benefits. Research shows it increases happiness and overall quality of life," says Howard Tinsley, a psychology professor at Southern Illinois University.

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No. 9

**HIT THE SNOOZE BUTTON**

*Getting more sleep may help your dieting efforts, according to researchers at the University of Chicago. They put 10 overweight subjects on a calorie-restricted diet for two 14-day periods and asked them to sleep either five and a half or eight and a half hours per night. All the subjects lost weight, but those who slept longer lost 55 percent more body fat.*

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No. 10

**EMBRACE THE BUDDY SYSTEM**

One of the many perks of having pals: Close relationships can improve your health. "Having social connections is linked to lower blood pressure and better immune function," says Julianne Holt-Lunstad, associate professor of psychology at Brigham Young University. Plus, friends and family can encourage us to live a healthier lifestyle and can help keep stress at bay.

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