

# HEALTHY LIVING

10

*feel-good things to do this March*

## No. 1

### LET THE SUNSHINE IN

Should we all be getting more vitamin D (aka the sunshine vitamin), or is it the latest nutrient not to live up to a swell of fanfare? The answer is being vigorously debated by health experts. In recent years, as studies suggested the vitamin might ward off a host of ailments, including cancer and heart disease, the advice was to take supplements

(the body can derive only so much vitamin D from everyday diet and sun exposure).

But a report late last year from the Institute of Medicine concluded that 600 IUs of vitamin D daily is sufficient for most adults and that supplements are largely unnecessary.

Walter Willett, chairman of the nutrition department at the Harvard School of Public Health, is among the high-profile scientists who disagree with the findings. The institute “only studied the effects of vitamin D on a very extreme form of bone health,” Willett says. “There’s a substantial amount of evidence that vitamin D can have benefits for colon cancer, diabetes, and infections,”

### SMART SUN SOLUTION

You’ll have it made in the shade with this handy patio umbrella. It lets in just a bit of light. *Shadylace parasol, in Green, \$390, droog.com.*

although research is ongoing. “It makes sense for most people to take a supplement while evidence is still being collected.” He says a better recommendation for adults is a daily supplement between 1,000 and 2,000 IUs. The amount anyone requires varies based on sun exposure, skin color (the darker your skin, the more you need), diet, and weight. There’s no one-size-fits-all rule, so it’s worth discussing with your doctor and determining what makes sense for you.

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No. 2

**REENACT RECESS**

Why should kids have all the fun? To invigorate employees, organizations around the country are offering afternoon exercise breaks. "After even a few minutes of physical activity, people are more energetic," says Toni Yancey, M.D., of the UCLA School of Public Health. Plus, it stimulates clearer thinking, helps people strategically solve problems, and lifts moods.

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No. 3

**TEND TO YOURSELF BEFORE YOUR PLANTS**

*As you dig and weed this season, your body needs as much attention as your plants. "Low back pain is the main complaint from gardeners," says Christa Bache, a personal trainer in New York City. To prevent pain and injury, try moves that strengthen the core, such as planks, which will help support the lumbar spine.*



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No. 4

**RAISE YOUR RESOLVE**

If you're tempted by potato chips, try clenching your muscles. In a recent study from the University of Chicago, health-conscious people who chose nutritious bites only 30 percent of the time selected something healthy 57 percent of the time when they clenched their hands. The act may have "helped them recruit willpower," says Aparna Labroo, coauthor of the study.

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No. 5

**EAT YOUR HEART OUT**

Artichokes, soon to be at their spring best, are "unbelievably low in calories," says registered dietitian Kristine Clark—about 65 apiece. And each one packs more fiber than a bowl of raisin bran. Try adding thin slices to tuna salad or whole-wheat pasta.

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No. 6

**STAY PRESENT TO FEEL PLEASANT**

*People spend almost 50 percent of their waking hours thinking about something other than what they're doing, and a wandering mind is an unhappy one, a Harvard study finds. The lesson: Pay attention to the task at hand to increase your joy factor.*

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No. 7

**SPRING-CLEAN THE CUPBOARDS**

*Stay healthy by tossing bulging or badly dented cans and expired goods at least once a year. "Most canned foods can last two to five years, but acidic ones—like tomatoes and fruit—go bad after just 12 to 18 months," says Tara Gidus, a registered dietitian.*

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No. 8

**TAKE 10—OR MORE**

Even a little exercise can yield long-lasting benefits. New research at Massachusetts General Hospital shows that metabolic changes in the body (responsible for good stuff like burning fat and controlling blood sugar) induced by 10 minutes of exercise can last at least a full hour. The fitter the subjects, the more pronounced these metabolic changes were.

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No. 9

**SNACK LIKE A SMART COOKIE**

*Having a latte and a cookie in the afternoon may make you sharper. The combination of caffeine and sugar improves cognitive performance, attention, and memory, a study in the journal Human Psychopharmacology: Clinical and Experimental reveals.*



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No. 10

**DISCOVER BEAUTY IN YOUR KITCHEN**

Get your arms and legs ready for their warm-weather reveal: Start by using a gentle exfoliant in the shower. Then, while skin is still damp, seal in moisture by spritzing on safflower oil, which can be found at almost any grocery or health-food store. "It contains linoleic acid, an essential fatty acid that helps the skin retain moisture," says New York City dermatologist Amy Wechsler.

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