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# Asset HealthTalk

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

**THIS JUST IN:**

## How to Interpret Health Headlines

From morning shows to the evening news and social media, we're bombarded with health headlines. It seems like one day we read something is good for us, and the next, it's not. It's hard to know what to believe.

Many health headlines are crafted to grab your attention. But when it comes to your health, exaggerated information can be harmful. The problem isn't usually the science, but how it's reported. Journalists sometimes lack the scientific background to properly interpret health findings.

Whether you tune into health research because you're trying to live a healthier lifestyle or want to know about the latest treatment options for someone battling a serious disease, don't let conflicting health stories discourage your wellness efforts. Health research is complex and is often oversimplified in the media.



### HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Contradictions between studies exist; it's part of the scientific process.
- Just because a study is newer, doesn't make it more reliable.
- Think about how the new study fits into what we already know. If it's different, more research is needed.
- A single study is rarely enough to change a health recommendation or fact; a finding needs to be reproduced. One study didn't discover that smoking can cause cancer; it was the result of a long process.
- Be careful of provocative headlines. They may be misleading if you don't read the whole story.
- Just because a study is reported by a trustworthy news source (or many), doesn't mean the way it was reported is correct.
- A credible health article should report the strengths and limitations of the study, and provide context for the finding.
- Watch out for blogs and health sites with lay health "experts" who lack appropriate credentials. Take the advice of self-proclaimed gurus with a grain of salt.
- If a cure-all treatment seems too good to be true, it probably is.

A healthy dose of skepticism can protect you against overstated claims. Science is a work in progress and our bodies and minds are complex mechanisms to understand. Each study is a piece of the puzzle to determine a new medical "truth."

Learning more about the scientific process can help you better understand health news and not have to rely on a reporter's interpretations. Health professionals can be great resources as well. Don't hesitate to ask about a health claim or study you've come across at your next appointment.



# Celebrate the Seniors in Your Life This Spring

With both Mother's Day (May 14) and Father's Day (June 18) right around the corner, spring is a wonderful time to take the opportunity to celebrate the seniors in our lives.

Spending time together is the best gift you can give an aging loved one. Here are some creative ways to make the seniors in your life feel special:

*Plan a special day* where you go out to lunch, a movie, concert, sporting event, museum or local festival, something they will enjoy.

*Surprise your loved one with a random act of kindness*—bring a homemade dinner, a pastry from their favorite bakery, or help out around the house with chores.

Everybody loves receiving unexpected mail, so *write your loved one a letter* reminding them how much they are cherished.

Before you reach for the phone to give your loved one a call, opt to *visit them in person* instead, if you live nearby. If you have children, bring them along, too!

Do you love your mother's apple pie or father's Thanksgiving stuffing? *Ask them to teach you* how to make their family-famous recipe. It's a wonderful opportunity to spend quality time, learn a new skill and make lasting memories.

*Look through photo albums together*—you might be surprised how much of your family's photographic record you haven't seen. Alternatively, watch family movies if you have them.

*Play a game together.* Mental exercise is beneficial for everyone, so break out that deck of cards or a favorite game.

*Exercise together.* Lack of physical activity can result in health complications. If your loved one is able to do low-impact exercise, go for a walk in the park or try a new exercise class together that is specifically geared toward seniors, such as yoga, Pilates or water aerobics.

Ensure your loved one has a way to have fun and be social. *Encourage them to get involved* with a local senior center where they can participate in activities with peers and join support groups.

*Spend time together outdoors.* Sit on a bench at a local park and enjoy the sunshine, go on a picnic or work in the garden.

Does your loved one have a doctor appointment? *Offer to take them*, then stop at coffee shop to chat on the way home.









*Give the gift of touch*—give your loved one a hug, take them to get a massage, hold their hand, or take them to have their hair or nails done. Who doesn't like to be pampered?

And most importantly, *say "I love you."* It's a simple phrase, but is powerful and means so much.

"Gifts for Elderly: Spending Quality Time Together," Tennille and Kevin, caring-for-aging-parents.com, April 5, 2017.



## Quick Tips for Eating Healthy on a Budget

-  **Use more whole grains and beans.** Foods like brown rice, lentils and dry beans are inexpensive, healthy staples to have on hand and they really help to bulk up a meal with plant-based protein so you don't have to include as much meat.
-  **Shop once a week.** Consolidate your shopping to one day – even if you hit multiple stores. The less you shop, the more you save – in money, gas and time!
-  **Buy milk at a drugstore or convenience store.** Some experts have found that milk costs 30 to 50 cents less when purchased at drugstores.
-  **Skip the packaged sliced meat.** Rather than buying packaged sliced meat, purchase larger chunks of meat and have the deli workers slice it for you.
-  **Buy frozen seafood.** In the seafood department, some fish on display can have a small disclaimer stating it has been "previously frozen." This is the same as fish in the frozen section but it can cost more. Save yourself the money and buy seafood in the frozen section instead.
-  **Use apps to photograph and submit your receipts.** You can earn cash back on groceries when using apps like SavingStar or Checkout51. Take a photo of your receipt and submit it to earn money back on items that are on sale.
-  **Shop alone.** Shopping in groups encourages people to spend more. One study showed that 65 percent of items in the cart when group shopping tend to be unplanned or impulse purchases – this is an eight-percent increase over shopping alone.
-  **Bring your own music.** Studies show that many stores play relaxing music or music with a slow tempo to encourage you to move slowly through the store, which means you are likely to buy more. Combat this marketing psychology by listening to your own music – and particularly, music at a faster pace.

"29 Ways to Save Hundreds on Groceries," Kerri Renzulli, time.com/money, Oct. 17, 2014.