



# A Healthy You

Healthy eating | Retinal eye exams | Emotional well-being  
5 simple ways to keep blood pressure under control | Managing diabetes



# Welcome to *A Healthy You!*

The choices you make every day play an important role in your health and well-being — and an *A Healthy You* guide from Independence Blue Cross (IBX) can help make those decisions easier.

Want to learn more? Visit [ibx.com/good-living/age-fearless](https://ibx.com/good-living/age-fearless).

If you or a loved one is a Medicare beneficiary, visit [ibx.com/medicare](https://ibx.com/medicare).

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## Make your own smart snacks

A 100-calorie snack once or twice a day is a great way to control hunger between meals. To keep energy and blood sugar steady, Frances Largeman-Roth, RD, author of *Feed the Belly*, suggests we eat a combination of carbohydrates, protein, and healthy fats.

“Create your own calorie-controlled snacks!” she says. “You can either use zip-top snack-size bags or, better yet, the reusable kind.” Here are ten healthy snacks with about 100 calories each, the nutrients your body needs to function, and fiber to make them filling.

## 10 homemade 100-calorie snacks

- 7 walnuts
- 25 pistachios
- 3 cups air-popped popcorn + little sea salt + a tiny drizzle of oil
- 1/2 cup fat-free Greek yogurt + 1/3 cup fresh mango cubes
- 1 small apple + 1 teaspoon almond butter
- 1 ounce light cheese + 1 – 2 whole-grain crackers
- 5 spears of broccoli + 2 tablespoons hummus
- 25 frozen grapes
- 1/2 cup plain cooked oatmeal + 5 sliced strawberries
- 2 cups kale chips

# Healthy food swaps

Reduce unnecessary calories, fat, and sugar with these healthy, balanced alternatives.

Try this	Skip that
Trail mix / dried fruit	Chips / snacks
Zucchini fries / sweet potatoes fries	French fries
Lettuce wrap	Bread rolls
Unsweetened applesauce	Sugar (baking)
Agave syrup	Sugar
Cauliflower rice	Rice
Hummus / Greek yogurt / avocado	Mayonnaise
Grape seed oil / extra virgin olive oil	Vegetable oil
Coconut oil	Butter
Steam	Boil
Bake / broil	Fry



## What is a healthy serving?



**1 OUNCE** = A GOLF BALL

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**1 TABLESPOON** = A POKER CHIP

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**½ CUP** = A LIGHTBULB

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**1 CUP** = A BASEBALL

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**3 OZ OF MEAT OR POULTRY** = A DECK OF CARDS

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Source: WebMD, Portion Control and Size Guide, webmd.com

# Build a healthy plate

Whether you're trying to lose weight or simply aiming for a more balanced diet, you should know how much of each food group you need to eat per meal.

<p>Choose 1 <b>Vegetable</b> per meal</p>	<p>Choose 1 <b>Fruit</b> per meal</p>	<p>Choose 1 <b>Protein</b> per meal</p>
<p>½ – 1 carrot, zucchini, cucumber, celery, or corn 1 small or ½ large tomato ½ – 1 cup leafy greens: lettuce, spinach, cabbage, romaine, etc. ½ – 1 cup beans or peas 3 florets of broccoli or cauliflower</p>	<p>½ – 1 small apple or ½ – 1 cup applesauce ½ – 1 cup grapes ½ – 1 small orange ½ – 1 cup fruit juice ½ – 1 cup pineapple ½ – 1 banana 4 – 8 strawberries</p>	<p>3 ½ ounces of meat, poultry, or fish 1 egg 1 cup cooked beans 2 ounces tofu ½ ounce of nuts or seeds (e.g., 12 almonds or 7 walnut halves)</p>
<p>Choose 1 <b>Grain</b> per meal</p>	<p>Choose 1 <b>Dairy</b> per meal</p>	<p>Choose 1 <b>Oil</b> per meal</p>
<p>½ cup cooked beans 1 mini bagel ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles, barley, buckwheat, polenta, or quinoa 1 slice of bread ½ medium roll or flatbread</p>	<p>1 cup milk 1 cup yogurt 2 ounces of American cheese 1 cup pudding made with milk 1 cup frozen yogurt 1 cup soy milk</p>	<p>2 teaspoons oil: Olive, canola, peanut, sunflower 1 tablespoon mayonnaise 2 tablespoons salad dressing ¼ of an avocado 2 teaspoons margarine</p>

Source: [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov)



## Retinal eye exams

### What you should know

#### Get the most from your test with this guide

If you care about your sight, look here: You may need more than a standard vision test to keep your eyes healthy.

Retinal eye exams are especially important for older adults and those with diabetes. “The exam looks for changes in the retina, the light-sensing tissue in the back of the eye,” says Virginia Mason Medical Center ophthalmologist Connie Chen, MD.

Here are the key things you should know about this important test. Plus, what to expect if you get one.

### What is a retinal eye exam?

A retinal eye exam is different from a standard vision test. It checks to see if you have good blood flow to your retina and looks for signs of tissue damage. If these signs are spotted early, you can prevent them from affecting your vision.

## How do I know if I need one?

Retinal eye exams aren't always part of an eye checkup. Ask your doctor if you need one. It may be important if:

- You have diabetes. Having high blood sugar can cause swelling or poor blood flow in the eyes, explains Dr. Chen.
- You're 50 or older. Retinal eye exams can spot signs of age-related macular degeneration. This is a common condition that blurs the vision in the center of your eye, making it harder to read or drive.
- You often see floating spots or flashes of light. These may be signs that your retina is torn or has pulled away from the back of your eye.

## What should I expect?

Retinal eye exams are longer than standard eye exams. But they're easy and painless.

Here's how they work:

- Your doctor will start by putting drops in your eyes. These drops widen your pupils, so your doctor can see the inside of your eyes.
- Your doctor will examine your eyes with a bright light once your pupils are dilated. They may also scan your retinas to check whether your blood flow is healthy.
- Your vision may be blurry and sensitive to light for a few hours after your exam. Wearing sunglasses can make you more comfortable. It's also a good idea to arrange for someone to bring you home. You may not be able to see clearly enough to drive yourself.

Retinal eye exams are simple, but they can help protect your vision. At your next eye exam, ask your eye doctor if this valuable test is right for you.

## The right kind of eye doctor

For people with diabetes, it's important to see an optometrist or ophthalmologist, since these are the types of eye experts who can do all of the types of testing needed to check for any eye damage due to diabetes. An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor who has extra training in treating the eyes. An optometrist is a health care provider who can do screenings, but if you have eye disease, you'll need to go to an ophthalmologist.

Some ophthalmologists have special training in treating diabetic eye disease. They may be called retinal specialists or diabetic eye disease specialists. Ask your diabetes doctor if you'd like to be referred to one of these health-care pros.



## The road to wellness: Emotional well-being

When someone asks about your health, it's natural to think about how your body feels. Do you have a cold? Nagging back pain? Or maybe you think about how you should get out for more walks or work more vegetables into your diet.

Too often, we focus on our physical well-being and forget how important our emotional well-being is. But emotional well-being is a must for your overall health, and when it's lacking, your physical health can suffer, too.

### What is emotional well-being?

Emotional well-being refers to how we feel — happy, sad, angry, silly, frustrated, hopeful — the whole range of emotions we experience and how well we are able to express (and control) these feelings. All these emotions are normal and healthy, and they each serve a purpose.

For example, anger is a defense mechanism meant to protect you from harm while fear is also meant to protect you from danger by causing you to run. You may have heard of this referred to as “fight or flight.” And while it's normal to feel angry from time to time, it's not normal — or healthy — to feel this way constantly.

## How can I control my anger?

Every day, there are countless triggers that make us angry. In fact, the average person gets angry between 15 and 20 times a day. But what's important is how long your anger lasts and how you deal with it. Most people resort to one of four ways to "mismanage" their anger:

- Keeping their anger bottled up inside
- Yelling and swearing
- "Getting even"
- Binge eating, exercising excessively, shopping, or other obsessive-compulsive behaviors

Even if it feels good at the time, none of these anger styles are good for you and they can even put you at risk for several physical ailments, including migraines, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and fibromyalgia.<sup>1</sup>

Pay attention to what triggers your anger and what your reaction is. Think about whether you can change your expectations, avoid this type of situation, or try to resolve the issue. Try different methods to practice control and see what works best for you.

## How can I find happiness?

There's no arguing the need for happiness in our lives. It's even written in the *Declaration of Independence*. But as the oft-quoted Benjamin Franklin said, "The Declaration of Independence only guarantees the American people the right to *pursue* happiness. You have to catch it yourself."

So how do we catch it? If money can't buy happiness, then what does? True happiness is about attitude, perspective, and gratitude. It requires us to be grateful for what we have and stop wishing for what we don't.

We need to spend more time with the people who make us happy, and less time with those who don't. We need to take risks, take breaks, and take walks. We need to find and follow our purpose, see the good in ourselves, and think about how we can use it to help others. And we need to laugh more!

## How can laughter help my well-being?

Laughter is good for the soul. It makes you happier, it relieves stress, and it eases anxiety. But laughter is also good for the body — decreasing muscle tension, lowering your resting blood pressure, and releasing neurochemicals that make you feel good.

If you want to follow doctors' orders, you should try to get at least 15 good laughs a day. If that sounds like a lot, then you may want to get some pointers from a youngster because the average four-year-old laughs 300 times a day.

1 Seaward, Dr. Brian Luke, *The Road to Wellness*. The Wellness Council of America. Omaha. 2013.



## 5 simple ways to keep blood pressure under control

### Protect your heart, your brain, and your health with these smart changes

Did you know that monitoring high blood pressure (or hypertension) is one of the most important things you can do to protect your health? Research proves it: People who use medication to bring their blood pressure to a healthy range reduce their risk for a stroke by at least 35 to 40 percent, their chance for a heart attack by 15 to 25 percent, and for heart failure by up to 64 percent. And on the flip side, you're far more likely to experience a heart attack, stroke, heart failure, vision loss, kidney failure, and other medical problems if you leave high blood pressure unchecked.

Protect your heart, your brain, and your health with these smart (and manageable) medication and lifestyle tips.



#### 1. Take your medications as prescribed by your doctor.

Drugs that control your blood pressure work properly when you take them every day, according to the American Heart Association. If your doctor has prescribed two or more different blood pressure drugs, or you currently take another drug for something else, be sure to take everything exactly as directed. Some prescriptions can counter the effectiveness of others and can even create dangerous results when combined.



## 2. Don't stop on your own.

Just because your blood pressure levels stabilize doesn't mean it's time for a break from your medicine. Studies show that when people with high blood pressure don't take their medications regularly, even after levels are healthy again, their risk for strokes and heart attacks increases. If you have concerns about a medication you are taking and want to stop, it's important to talk with your doctor right away.



## 3. Make remembering your medication easy.

Remembering to take your medications, especially when life becomes hectic, can be a challenge. Cut out the guesswork with a pillbox that organizes your medications for each day of the week and each time of day you need to take them. If possible, take them at the same times of day you do other routine daily activities, such as making morning coffee, brushing your teeth, or feeding a pet. Set an alarm on your clock, phone, or computer. And don't forget to keep your medications together in one place, out of reach of children.



## 4. Keep up with blood pressure checks.

Although you can check your blood pressure at home with various devices, it's important to see your physician regularly to have your levels checked officially. If you haven't been in for an appointment within the last few months, now is the time to schedule: Recent changes in national blood pressure guidelines could affect your treatment and lead to even more protection for your health.



## 5. Follow a healthy lifestyle.

As with most conditions, leading an active, healthy lifestyle will be one of your best medicines. Aim to exercise regularly, cut out smoking, and fill up on plenty of fruits, veggies, and whole grains. Try to limit your alcohol consumption, too: Sticking to just one drink a day for women, and two for men, has been found to help lower blood pressure.

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**Pro tip:** Ask your pharmacy to automatically refill and mail your prescriptions to your home, which is usually low- or no-cost.

The easier it is to get and manage your medications, the more likely you'll be to take them regularly.

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## 10 things you should do annually to manage your diabetes

“Diabetes is a devastating disease if not treated,” notes Nora Saul, MS, RD, a certified diabetes educator with Joslin Diabetes Center. Thankfully, there are many treatment options — but people living with the disease need to be their own best advocates. People with diabetes should request an annual diabetes care review from their physician. That review should include a check-in of much of what’s on the list below — but note that some of these checks may require additional appointments from other providers.



### 1. Blood glucose review and check of A1C levels\*

The A1C test measures the glucose (blood sugar) in your blood by assessing the amount of what’s called glycated hemoglobin. An A1C level below 5.7 percent is considered normal. An A1C between 5.7 and 6.4 percent signals prediabetes. Type 2 diabetes is diagnosed when the A1C is over 6.5 percent.

At your annual check-ins, make note in writing of where your levels are, and where you and your doctor would like them to be.



### 2. Weight, body mass index, and height

If your weight or BMI have increased year over year, talk to your provider about lifestyle strategies to manage them.



### 3. Blood pressure, triglycerides, and cholesterol\*

At your exams, also make note of these in writing, as well as where your doctor would like them to be.



### 4. Eyes

Get a dilated retinal exam by an ophthalmologist or optometrist. If improperly treated, diabetes can lead to diabetic retinopathy, which can cause blindness.



### 5. Feet

Have your doctor examine your feet at least once a year, including checks for blood circulation, nerve detection, and sensitivity. Check in with your doctor about your foot health more regularly than once a year if you have problems; make sure to share info about redness, swelling, calluses, cracks in the skin, warmth, or pain or discomfort.



### 6. Kidneys

Have your urine and blood checked at least once a year for albumin and creatinine, the levels of which determine how your kidneys are functioning.



### 7. Mouth

See a dentist to have your teeth, gums, and tongue checked twice annually, or as often as recommended by your physician.



### 8. Vaccines

Get the flu vaccine every year, and the pneumonia vaccine if appropriate for your age and recommended by your doctor.



### 9. Mental health

Check in with your doctor about your general mental state, including feelings of depression, stress, or sexual dysfunction, all of which can be more common in people with diabetes.



### 10. General health

Also check in about your diabetes management generally — your medications, your weight, your energy levels, your diet and exercise regimens, and any other health issues that may have arisen over the past year. If you need more support or education around managing your diabetes, discuss this too. Remember, your health care provider is a key partner in managing your disease.

\* May need to be done more regularly. Discuss with your provider.



# 10 foods that can help manage blood sugar

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**Walnuts**


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**Avocado**


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**Sprouted grain**


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**Pumpkin seeds**


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**Strawberries**


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**Chia seeds**


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- 
**Ginger**


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- 
**Spinach**


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- 
**Cinnamon**


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- 
**Tomatoes**


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Source: [medicalnewstoday.com/articles/317112](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/317112)

# Banana nut pancakes

Servings: 4

Cook time: 25 minutes

## Ingredients

- 1 ripe banana
- 1/2 cup milk (soy, almond, coconut, etc.)
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- 1 flax egg (1 tablespoon ground flax mixed with 3 tablespoons water)
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3/4 cup oat flour (or gluten-free all-purpose flour)
- 3/4 cup walnuts, chopped (optional topping)

## Directions

1. Preheat skillet or griddle with cooking spray or butter.
2. Mix the wet ingredients in one bowl and dry in another. Add wet to dry, stirring thoroughly. Pour by 1/4 cup in skillet and cook 1 – 2 min per side.





## Kale and cranberry salad

**Servings:** 6

**Cook time:** 25 minutes

### Salad

- 4 cups loosely packed shredded kale
- 2 cups shredded Brussels sprout leaves
- 1 cup chopped raw broccoli
- 2 cups cooked quinoa
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup walnuts
- 1/2 cup feta cheese

### Directions

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl.

## Greek yogurt dressing

### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons honey
- 1/2 cup Greek yogurt
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### Directions

- 1.** Whisk ingredients together in a bowl. Refrigerate until ready to serve. The dressing keeps well for 3 – 4 days.
- 2.** Toss the salad and dressing together in a large bowl.





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