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 **Healthyroads**™

01

Wellness and Healthy Living A More Mindful Life

Do you sometimes feel you're drowning in devices, apps, and tasks? Many people do these days. Perhaps that's why the ancient practice of mindfulness has gone mainstream. Studies suggest it can ease stress and boost health and well-being. But what exactly is mindfulness? Can you learn mindfulness and apply it to your daily life?

With roots in Buddhism, mindfulness is the practice of tuning in to what's going on within you, as well as around you. It's about being fully engaged in the moment. Mindfulness teaches you to observe events and your own thoughts without judgment. Mindfulness also helps shift your focus from regrets about the past, or worries about the future. In that way, it can help still your mind so you are free to savor simple pleasures.

Research suggests it may lower blood pressure and help you sleep better. It may also aid weight loss, treat addiction, ease chronic pain, and lessen depression.

How can you learn mindfulness? Meditation is one path to a more mindful life. You can learn how to meditate with the help of books, audiotapes, and classes. But you can start to cultivate more mindfulness by practicing it as you go about your day.

Try these ideas:

- * When you brush your teeth today, try not to think of your upcoming commute or plans for the day. Instead, focus on the feel of the bristles across your gums and teeth, the water swishing in your mouth, and the clean taste afterwards.
- * Take a walk at lunch and focus on the color of the sky, the sounds around you, and the feel of the air on your skin. Or pay close attention to how your body feels with each stride or as each foot touches and leaves the ground. If your thoughts stray, bring them back to the moment.
- * Sit for 5 minutes and just focus on your breathing, how your body feels, and any feelings that come up. Let go of any judgment about these. Ignore any urge to fidget or scratch. As soon as your mind wanders (and it will), gently bring it back to the present.

Plan to do one thing each day more mindfully. Eating, talking with a friend, driving to work—these are all chances to practice living a more mindful, healthy, and happy life.

Welcome to HEALTHYROADS!

In this monthly newsletter, you'll find a collection of articles on popular health and wellness topics. If you'd like additional support in your quest to lose weight, improve nutrition, develop an exercise plan, reduce stress, or quit smoking, visit us online at www.healthyroads.com.

There, you can find a collection of tools to help you reach your health goals.

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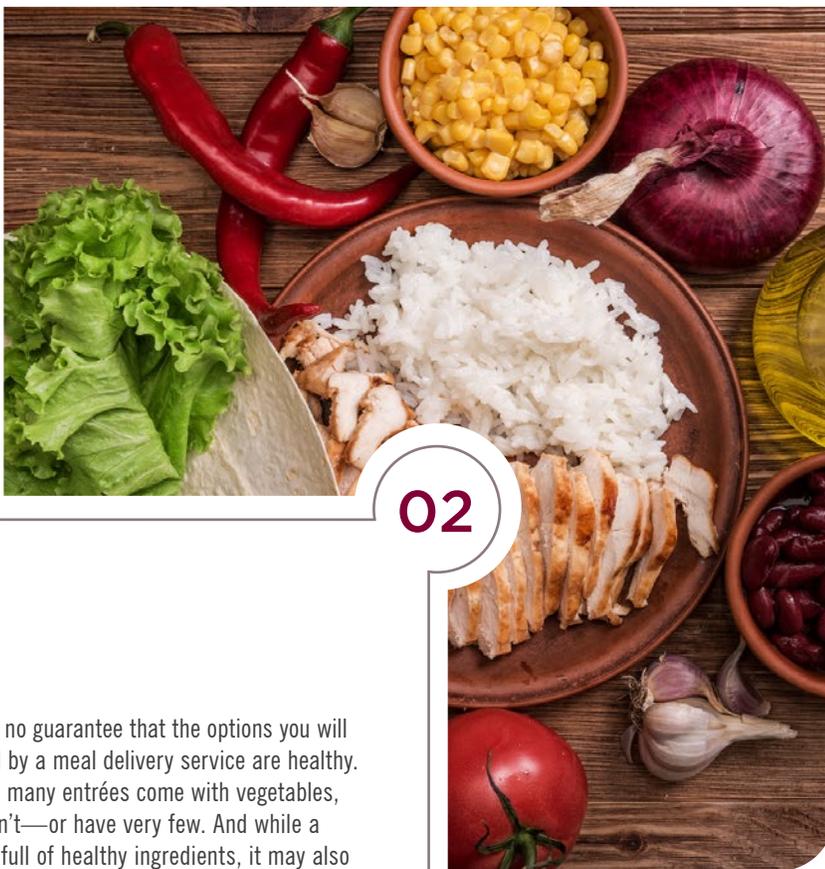
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Life Skills
How's Your Hygge?

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02

Nutrition and Weight Management Can a Meal Service Deliver Healthy?

Meal delivery options are a hot new trend. These services deliver ready-to-prepare meal kits—or in some cases, heat-and-eat meals—right to your door. They can offer a convenient and fun way to try new dishes. But don't assume the meals are healthy. They may be—but only if you know what to look for.

The idea is simple. You sign up for a meal delivery subscription and make your weekly selections online from a changing list of dishes. In a few days, a box is delivered to your doorstep. Inside are premeasured ingredients packaged with ice packs, along with a recipe card. All you have to do is prepare the meal. Some areas also offer services that deliver prepped meals ready to pop in the oven.

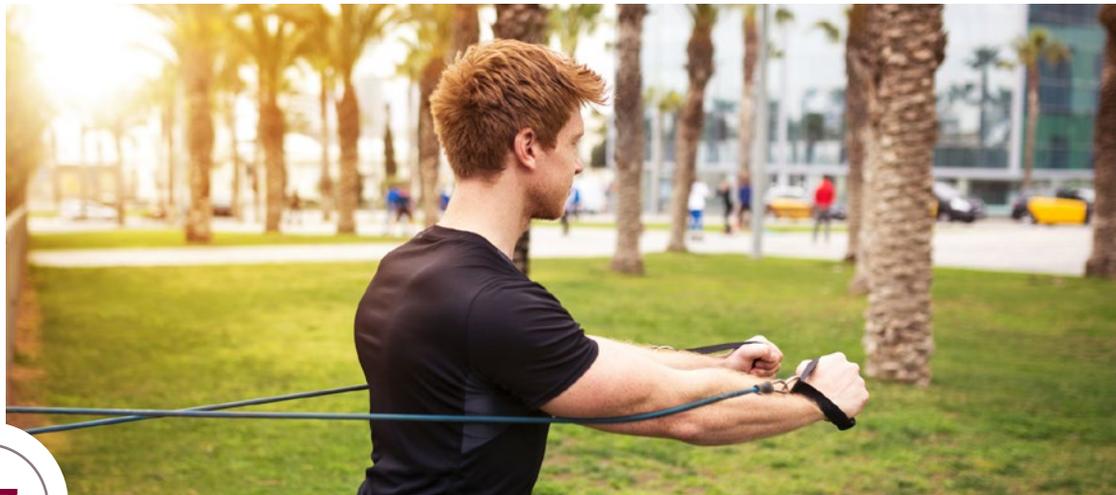
With their wide variety of ingredients, flavors, and dishes, meal services can be a fun way to get out of your nightly dinner rut. The kits may also be a great option for those looking to expand their culinary skills or eat more home cooking. And research shows that home cooking supports a healthier diet. Those who eat home-cooked meals tend to eat more fruits, veggies, and whole grains. And they tend to eat less fat, added sugar, and sodium.

Still, there is no guarantee that the options you will be presented by a meal delivery service are healthy. For instance, many entrées come with vegetables, but some don't—or have very few. And while a dish may be full of healthy ingredients, it may also be full of rich and fatty ones. Another concern is sodium. Many recipes call for salt to be added at multiple stages during the cooking process. This can add up to way too much sodium. And, each serving may be high in calories. On top of these pitfalls, gauging whether a dish is healthy or not may be tricky. Some services provide extensive nutrition info online and on their recipe cards. Others provide very little.

So be your own health advocate. If you choose to try one of these services, evaluate the meals they offer and make healthy choices. Look for entrées that have plenty of whole grains, veggies, and lean proteins. Watch out for fatty sauces, creamy or heavily cheesy dishes, and added sugar and salt. Go light on that salt shaker while cooking. Be mindful of the calories per serving and your portion size. And choose a service that clearly posts all of its nutrition information online. A meal delivery service can be both convenient and healthy. But the healthy part is up to you.

HEALTH TIP:

Cook-at-home meal kits are convenient and fun. They can also be healthy when they're based on whole grains, fresh veggies, and lean proteins. Watch out for those that have heavy cream sauces or lots of sugar and salt.



03

Active Living Fitter in 2017: Your 12-Week Plan

In the second part of this 3-part series, we'll look at how to step up your workout routine with a focus on strength training.

Last month, you learned about the health benefits of aerobic training. And you kicked off the first 4 weeks of your 12-week plan with a walking routine and some basic strength and core training. For weeks 5 – 8, you'll learn more about strength training, and build on your progress.

When you strength train, parts of your body move against some kind of resistance. That could be free weights, weight machines, or your own body weight. But it can also be resistance bands or household items, like a milk jug filled with sand or water. Over time, strength training can help you build lean muscle and bone density.

Strength training can benefit your health in a number of ways. It can improve your balance and reduce your risk of falls. It can make doing daily tasks easier, as well.

Building muscle can also help you manage your weight. And strength training can help you manage or reduce your risk of many chronic health problems.

To get these health benefits, experts recommend strength training at least 2 days a week, with each session lasting about 30 minutes. Choose a range of exercises that work the major muscle groups in both your upper and lower body, as well as your core. And rest for 48 hours between strength training sessions that work the same muscle groups. Your muscles need this rest to recover and grow stronger.

To help you stay safe and avoid injury, talk with your doctor before you start. Ask a physical therapist or certified personal trainer to show you the proper form for each exercise. And build up slowly. This 12-week plan can help you do just that.

SERIOUS ABOUT QUITTING?

We at Healthyroads understand the challenges of quitting smoking. That's why we offer a variety of online tools and articles to help you quit—once and for all. Our web-based tools give you every chance to succeed. For anyone considering quitting smoking, take the first step and visit www.healthyroads.com.

SAMPLE WORKOUT PROGRAM: WEEKS 5 - 8

	Type of Training	Warmup	Workout	Cooldown & Stretch
WEEK 5	Aerobic (5 days)	5 minutes	Brisk walk: 13 minutes	5 minutes
	Strength & Core (2 days)	5 minutes	Sit to stand from chair; wall push-ups; bridges (3 x 15-20)	5 minutes
WEEK 6	Aerobic (5 days)	5 minutes	Brisk walk: 15 minutes	5 minutes
	Strength & Core (2 days)	5 minutes	Sit to stand from chair; table push-ups; bridges with steps (3 x 10)	5 minutes
WEEK 7	Aerobic (5 days)	5 minutes	Brisk walk: 18 minutes	5 minutes
	Strength & Core (2 days)	5 minutes	Sit to stand from chair holding a gallon jug of milk (3 x 10); table push-ups (3 x 10); planks from knees (3 x to fatigue)	5 minutes
WEEK 8	Aerobic (5 days)	5 minutes	Brisk walk: 20 minutes	5 minutes
	Strength & Core (2 days)	5 minutes	Sit to stand from chair holding a gallon jug of milk (3 x 10); table push-ups (3 x 10); planks from knees (3 x to fatigue)	5 minutes



Life Skills How's Your Hygge?

Despite its cold, dark winters, Denmark rates as one of the happiest countries on earth. And it may have something to do with “hygge.” Pronounced somewhat like “hoo-ga,” this Danish word translates roughly as coziness, though it means so much more. And having plenty of it in your life may make you not just happier, but healthier, too.

Hygge connotes a sense of warmth and comfort in being together. Think of a homey gathering of friends around the fireplace in winter, enjoying good food and the pleasure of one another's company. This is hygge. But it is more than simple comfort and togetherness. It is a sense that this time together is sacred, something to be nurtured. It is a shared commitment to leave stress and conflict at the door and be caring toward one another. It is a safe space to be yourself, a focus on enjoying the moment.

The positive social ties found in hygge can benefit not only your happiness, but also your health. They can boost your mood and help you weather stress, reducing its harmful effects on your body. They may also help strengthen your immune system, lower your risk of illnesses like heart disease, and help you live a fuller life.

So, can you hygge alone and still get the health benefits? While, in essence, the concept is social, it is possible to evoke the cozy, relaxed, tranquil spirit of hygge in moments of pleasure you take for yourself. And this can help lower your stress, improve your mood, and bring meaning and joy to your life.

Ready to try hygge? Here are some ways to get started, both alone and with others.

- * **On your own:** Light candles, pull on warm socks, and listen to soothing music. Snuggle in with a good book under a blanket. Take a warm bath at the end of the day. Or go for a stroll somewhere beautiful. Look for ways to feed your soul.
- * **With others:** Cook a favorite dish with your family. Invite friends over to share a meal or play a game. Cuddle with your loved one in front of the fire. Or rotate hosting a small gathering with friends. Think good friends, good food, good feelings.

Remember, hygge relies on each person's commitment to creating a safe and enjoyable space. So let go of judgments and controversial topics. Contribute as part of a team. And open up and be yourself. Make enjoying the experience your highest priority.

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