A call for balance

By Angela Menghraj, Contributing Editor

Balance is given a lot of attention nowadays. Be careful where you walk, how you walk. Pay attention!

We do this with varying degrees of success. The message is, “Don’t fall.” We are familiar with the consequences from tripping. As important as physical balancing is, this tells only part of the story of keeping equilibrium in our lives.

Paying attention to our mental health has a special place in the balancing act. How does rehashing a hurt inflicted by a relative or friend really help? What do we do when we feel as if our thoughts are driving us crazy? How do we handle rude remarks from a stranger? There are answers. We try not to throw up our hands in defeat. Responses can quiet the mind and calm agitation. How do we change them? For example, if a friend accuses us of not giving her directions to the city as we promised, our response could be, “I recall suggesting that you might take the R train.” (the truth). If her charge continues, a response could be, “If you didn’t hear from me, I wonder why you didn’t call.”

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How healthy is your morning cuppa?

If you’re like millions of Americans who regularly drink tea or coffee with sugar, honey, milk or half-and-half, you may not realize how many extra calories you’re consuming every day.

Citing nutritional recommendations from 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which calls for limiting calories from added sugars, saturated fats and sodium, researchers say these add-ins are empty calories, “dense in energy and fat but low in nutritional value.”

They reviewed 12 years’ worth of data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, examining survey results of more than 13,000 adults who drank coffee and 6,000 adults who drank tea 24 hours before completing the survey. People who drank their coffee and tea black each day, consumed 69 and 43 fewer calories, respectively. Over time, those calorie savings add up: for black coffee drinkers that’s a savings of almost 500 calories a week.

Can’t imagine drinking your coffee or tea black? Try making small changes to cut calories such as:

- Switching from cream, half-and-half or whole milk to low- or nonfat milk
- Reducing or eliminating added sugar or switching from sugar to a no- or low-calorie sweetener

New BP med threshold for older adults

According to a new guideline from the American College of Physicians and American Academy of Family Physicians, doctors should begin treating high blood pressure in healthy adults ages 60 and older when the top number (systolic pressure) is at or higher than 150 mm Hg. This challenges the practice of routinely treating older adults when systolic pressure reaches 140 mm Hg.

The organizations say results of recent studies suggest aggressively treating blood pressure in otherwise healthy older adults can lead to adverse effects such as fainting or blood pressure that’s too low.

However, the guideline advises doctors to take action on a case-by-case basis. Using the previously recommended systolic threshold of 140 mm Hg may be more appropriate for adults age 60 or older who are at high risk for heart disease or who have a history of stroke or ministroke.

If you’re age 60 or older and currently being treated for high blood pressure, speak to your doctor about the new guideline and whether your current blood pressure medication regimen should be modified.

Your pharmacist: Another member of your health care team

If you have a chronic illness and take prescription medications, follow these guidelines to be sure you’re getting the most from your pharmacy services:

- Fill all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy.
- Tell your pharmacist about any supplements or over-the-counter medications you may be taking.
- Ask questions about any potential side effects or harmful interactions in your medications.

While a pharmacist does not replace your doctor, he or she is an expert in medication. Your pharmacist can review your medications for any possible interactions and answer questions you may have about dosing and side effects. Staying in a good relationship with your entire health care team can lead to a healthier you.
We've all had those moments of forgetting where the keys are and blanking on a name right after learning it. But if these types of experiences are becoming a regular occurrence for you, there are measures you can take to reverse the trend and help prevent memory loss. Follow the tips below and start improving your memory:

1 Limit distractions. You'll have difficulty remembering specific facts and details if you weren't giving your full attention when making the memory. Stay focused and in the moment to help improve retention.

   ➔ Quick tip: Close your social media web pages and put your phone on silent when you're trying to learn something new to maintain focus. To remember conversations better, try to meet in a quieter location and face away from any televisions or other distractions.

2 Review information and make associations. Hearing something once is unlikely to commit it to long-term memory. You need to engage with the information and associate what you've just learned with something you find memorable.

   ➔ Quick tip: If somebody says, “Hi, my name is Dave,” you can review the information by reiterating to him, “Nice to meet you, Dave.” Then, you might make an association in your head, such as noticing he has an unkempt beard and creating a rhyme that “Dave is the one who needs a shave.”

3 Stay social. Regular socialization is associated with better mental health and a reduced chance of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia. It's hypothesized that this may be at least partly due to the mental stimulation that comes with social interaction.

   ➔ Quick tip: Make regular plans to see friends and family, especially if you live alone. If you're separated by distance or your schedules never align, try joining a club or religious group, or take up a new activity like golf or gardening. You might just make some new friends with similar interests!

4 Get a good night's sleep. Are you catching enough zzz's (seven to nine hours for the average adult)? Studies suggest the quantity and quality of your sleep has an impact on focus and memory. This may be partly due to sleep deprivation's association with high blood pressure, diabetes and narrowed blood vessels. These conditions can decrease the flow of blood in the brain, reducing mental performance.

   ➔ Quick tip: Improve your sleep quality and ability to fall asleep by keeping a consistent sleeping schedule, limiting naps, getting exercise each day, managing your stress and restricting caffeine to the morning and early afternoon.

5 Eat a healthy diet. Food is the fuel for your entire body, including your brain. To help keep your brain healthy, avoid foods that are high in cholesterol and saturated and trans fats. Instead, stick to foods with healthy, unsaturated fats and other foods that are considered heart healthy. Food that's good for the heart is beneficial for the brain as well.

   ➔ Quick tip: Try substituting some of your staple foods with healthier choices. For example, instead of white bread, buy whole wheat. And instead of ground beef, consider trying ground turkey.
Protect your diabetes gear

When it’s hot and humid, you’ll need to safeguard the items you rely on to manage your diabetes, such as medications, supplies and equipment. Store your blood glucose meter, strips and oral medications in a cool, dry place. Keep insulin and injectable drugs cool by storing them in a cooler — but not directly on ice or a gel pack — if you’re out for the day at a hot, sunny location such as the beach.

If you use an insulin pump, protect it from prolonged exposure to the sun by covering it with a towel. In temperatures above 100 F, use a cooling device such as a small pouch containing a cold gel pack to protect the pump.

There are a variety of reasons people with diabetes may react differently to heat than others:
- Diabetes can cause complications such as damage to blood vessels and nerves that affect the sweat glands, leaving some people unable to cool down effectively.
- People with diabetes may become dehydrated more quickly. Not drinking enough water can raise blood sugar, which in turn makes you urinate more, resulting in dehydration.
- Some medications like diuretics (commonly prescribed to control high blood pressure) can dehydrate you, too.
- Finally, high temperatures can change how your body uses insulin.

STAY SAFE WITH THESE TIPS
The following steps can help keep you safe in high heat and humidity.

1. Drink plenty of water, even if you’re not thirsty, so you don’t get dehydrated.
2. Avoid beverages with alcohol or caffeine. They can lead to water loss.
3. Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
4. Stay inside in air conditioning when the heat and humidity are highest.
5. Test your blood sugar more often and adjust your insulin dose, activity level and what you eat and drink.
6. Exercise during the coolest parts of the day, such as early morning or evening, or work out indoors in an air-conditioned space.
7. Avoid sunburn by wearing sunscreen and a hat. Sunburn can raise your blood sugar levels.
8. Watch for signs of heat exhaustion, especially if you’re exerting yourself. These include: feeling weak, dizzy or faint; sweating heavily; cold, pale or clammy skin; muscle cramps; rapid heartbeat; or nausea/vomiting. If this happens, move to a cooler place; lie down and loosen clothing; apply cool, wet cloths; sip water and seek medical attention if symptoms don’t improve within one hour.

LEARN MORE
The more you know about how your body reacts to heat, the better able you'll be to stay active and enjoy life, even when the temperature soars.

8 summertime precautions for people with diabetes
**Summer vegetable salsa**

Chop up fresh veggies and cilantro in a salsa that's perfect with dipping with your favorite tortilla chips.

Number of servings: 4

**INGREDIENTS**

1. medium zucchini, diced
2. medium white onion, diced
3. Roma tomatoes (or 1–2 large tomatoes)
4. jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced (optional)
5. cloves garlic, minced
6. cup fresh cilantro or parsley, chopped
7. teaspoon salt
8. cup lime juice

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Rinse all vegetables and herbs under cool running water.
2. Dice zucchini, onion and tomatoes into small pieces and put into medium bowl.
3. Remove the seeds from the jalapeño (wear latex gloves when handling the jalapeño, because it can burn the skin) and mince it. Add the seeded and minced jalapeño and garlic to the tomato mixture.
4. Add cilantro, salt and lime juice to the tomato mixture. Stir well.
5. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes before serving.

Nutritional information per serving: 25 calories; 0 g total fat; 0 g saturated fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 198 mg sodium; 1 g fiber; 3 g total sugars; 1 g protein; 6 g carbohydrates; 212 mg potassium.

Recipe courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, recipefinder.nal.usda.gov.

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**FIND YOUR INNER PEACE**

We have answers for these feelings within us. This is what's so wonderful about taking charge of our inner experience.

What it takes is consciousness and a willingness to pay attention to the attitudes that affect the way we feel. This is where our own inner conversation helps. What would you tell a friend facing the same dilemma?

What about our social life? This is another component of balancing in life. We can think of ways we connect with people, neighbors or friends, for example. It might be as simple as a phone call. Balancing our lives need not be hard or complicated. It takes an awareness of what it is we truly need. It takes organizing our inner and outer activities to provide ourselves with a certain level of peace within and without. We all have had the experience of running around trying to get everything done and accomplishing little.

What do we accomplish may not turn out the way we intended. For example, we may answer emails or make phone calls, leaving out important information because we are in a hurry. There is a message for us in this: Slow down!

When Jane decided to put her life in balance, she allotted certain amounts of time to different activities. She gives a half-hour to straightening out her room, 15 minutes for quiet meditation, 20 minutes for breakfast. Jane factors in the things that might interfere with her morning routine. When the unexpected happens, she is ready. Jane will put her schedule in place as best she can. She knows flexibility is also important for her.

When we balance our lives making time for physical, mental and spiritual activities, things just seem to work better.

**RECOMMENDED READING**

*Peace Is Every Step* by Thich Nhat Hanh

*The Tiny Buddha* by Lori Deschene

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**Mark Your Calendars!**

Open House — Isabella House
Gracious living for adults 62+.
Saturday, September 16, 2017
11:00 am to 3:00 pm

“Fall into Health” Health Fair
Wednesday, October 11, 2017
10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Isabella | 515 Audubon Avenue | NY, NY 10040 | 212-342-9539
10 ways to reduce your risk of stroke

Stroke is a leading cause of death in the U.S., but there’s good news. According to new research, 90 percent of strokes can be prevented by addressing these 10 risk factors.

1. **Control high blood pressure.** The scientists agree that lowering your blood pressure is the most effective way to reduce your chance of stroke.

2. **Increase physical activity.** Exercise can lower your blood pressure and improve your overall heart health. Aim for 150 minutes of moderate activity a week.

3. **Lower lipids.** Reducing the amount of saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol in your diet can help prevent plaque from forming in your arteries.

4. **Eat a healthy diet.** Include lots of fruits and vegetables, and limit sodium by avoiding prepared and packaged foods.

5. **Watch your weight.** Being overweight contributes to other stroke risk factors. Losing as little as 10 pounds can lower your blood pressure, reducing your risk.

6. **Quit smoking.** Smoking raises your own risk of stroke, and others’ risk through secondhand smoke.

7. **Address heart issues.** Some types of heart disease can lead to blood clots in the heart. Clots can break free from the heart and block vessels to the brain.

8. **Check stress.** Find healthy ways to ease stress, such as practicing relaxation techniques, getting enough sleep, being active, reaching out to others for help, laughing more and worrying less.

9. **Limit alcohol use.** Heavy drinking can increase your risk for conditions such as high blood pressure, arrhythmia (an irregular heartbeat) and liver disease, all of which may lead to stroke. The American Heart Association recommends one drink a day for women and one to two drinks a day for men.

10. **Manage diabetes.** Diabetes can lead to serious health complications, if left untreated. That’s why it’s important to get your blood sugar tested and keep it in check through diet, exercise, weight control and medication.

Your doctor is your partner in good health, so schedule an appointment to learn how to take charge of your stroke risk factors.
You’ve probably heard the advice that you should get at least 30 minutes of exercise five days a week. But did you know that you should incorporate four different types of exercise into your routine to get the greatest benefits? A well-rounded workout routine improves your strength, endurance, flexibility and balance.

Having good balance is important for many everyday activities such as walking, going up and down stairs and getting up from a seated position. Exercises that improve balance can help prevent falls for those at increased risk of falling, such as older adults and people who’ve had a stroke. Balance exercises can also benefit overweight people, whose weight may not be distributed evenly throughout the body.

Practicing tai chi or yoga can improve your balance. The following simple exercises that you can do at home — or anywhere, really — can help, too. Before starting a new exercise routine, be sure to consult your doctor.

5 SIMPLE BALANCE EXERCISES

To start, do these exercises within arm’s reach of a wall, table or sturdy chair for balance. Keep your gaze focused on a spot ahead of you to help keep yourself steady.

1. Walk heel-to-toe. Walk by placing the heel of one foot just in front of the toes on the other foot — touching, if possible. Repeat for 20 heel-to-toe steps.

2. Stand on one foot. Stand up straight, then shift your weight onto one foot and lift your other leg out in front of you, a few inches off the floor. Hold for eight counts. Slowly return your outstretched leg to the starting position. Repeat 10 to 15 times with each leg. To add more challenge, do this with your eyes closed.

3. Leg swings. Stand on your right leg and raise the left leg 3 to 6 inches off the floor. With your arms at your sides and torso staying erect, swing your left leg forward and backward. At first, allow it to touch the ground between the forward and backward positions. Then keep it off the floor for the entire movement. Finally, swing the left leg out to the left side, holding your right arm out. Switch legs and repeat.

4. Balance walk. Raise your arms out to the sides at shoulder height. Walk slowly straight ahead, pausing for a second as each leg is lifted before stepping forward. Repeat for 20 steps. Try it again, looking side to side as you walk.

5. Stand on tiptoe. Stand on your toes, then rock back to balance on your heels. Hold each position for a count of 10. 😊
People can fall at any age. According to the National Institutes of Health, falls are the leading cause of death, hospitalizations and Emergency Department visits among adults 65 and older. Dizziness from an incidence of low blood pressure, inappropriate footwear, side effects from medication are a few are other factors. Stephen Robinovitch, the principal researcher in an article that appeared in The Lancet, created a video that acts like the black box in an airplane. The video shows misjudgments, overcorrections and incorrect transfer from walker to chair or shifting body weight. These are the culprits when it comes to falls of the elderly.

In an interview, Sonia Moorehead, OTD, OT/L, Director of Clinical Education, Graduate Occupational Therapy Program, explained the breadth of the program at Isabella. The aim is to improve activities of daily living for people dealing with a variety of physical and mental disabilities. This year, the emphasis was on falls prevention. Other annual topics cover dementia and diabetes. The program began in Isabella’s Adult Day Health Care Program with the help of graduate students of Mercy College. Under the guidance of Sonia Moorehead and Patricia Rincon, ADHC Director, college students developed a curriculum based on clients’ needs. This year’s program included information about falls and other practical techniques to avoid and recover from falls, as well as suggestions to make the home safe. At the end of seven weeks of the customized program, students evaluate the clients to see how much instruction they absorbed and can apply.

The Mercy College graduate program incorporates a variety of learning methods in its curriculum including an innovative “learning by doing” philosophy. Mercy College students attend classes to learn clinical aspects of Occupational Therapy and then apply their theoretical knowledge to the work they do at Isabella. There are a variety of occupational needs evidenced by participants. Students are aware of the limits of each client and address his or her specific therapeutic needs in ways that are both supportive and avoid embarrassment.

In addition to the education provided by the program, the students and the ADHC clients have fun and develop trusting relationships. Many share personal concerns or specific questions as to how they may improve their lives and improve their overall health. One of the clients, Mercedes Arias, spoke about the things she has learned. “The program is very good. I have learned a lot, especially about leg strengthening and shoulder exercises.”

Pat Rincon shared her thoughts about the Occupational Therapy program that has been serving Isabella clients for five years. “We have an important relationship with Mercy College Occupational Therapy students. They are driven by important goals, have integrated themselves into our program and have become part of the team. Our program clients love working with these enthusiastic and caring students.”

For more information, call (212) 342-9539.