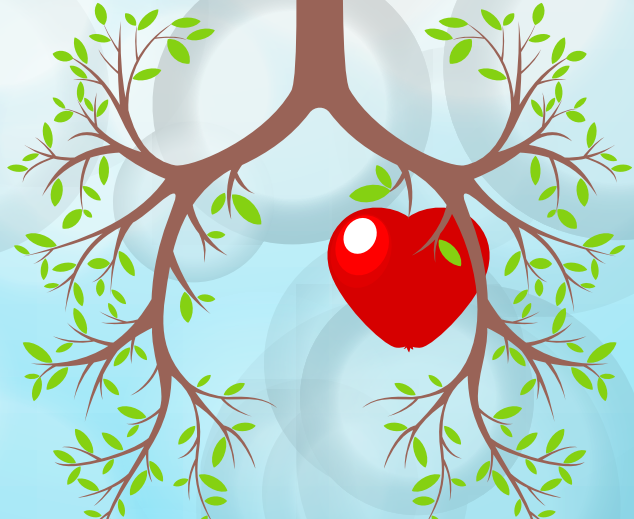


HealthSmart[®] Wellness Advocate

Love Your Lungs!



We often don't consider the important role our lungs play in keeping us strong and well. It's not until we experience problems breathing that we take notice. But the truth is, like the rest of our body, our lungs need daily care and attention.

Breathing feeds oxygen to every cell in the body. Without sufficient oxygen, people are more prone to health problems, including respiratory illnesses, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and even heart disease.

But ordinary, everyday breathing isn't enough to keep the oxygen flowing through the body at peak levels, experts at Rush University Medical Center say. "Lungs at rest and during most daily activities are only at 50% of their capacity," says Jennifer M. Ryan, PT, MS, DPT, CCS, a certified specialist in cardiovascular and pulmonary physical therapy. "Like the rest of your body, lungs thrive on movement and activity."

Since regular day-to-day activity doesn't help you use your lungs to full capacity, you need to challenge the lungs with more intense activity. "And to help counteract the build-up of toxins and tar in the lungs caused by environmental pollutants, allergens, dust and cigarette smoke, you need to help your lungs cleanse themselves," Ryan explains.

Follow these eight tips and you can improve your lung health and keep these vital organs going strong for life:

1. DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Among the many things you can do to keep your lungs functioning properly are some simple breathing techniques, according to Keith Roberts, RRT, CPFT, director of respiratory therapy at Rush. "These techniques can be used for people who are experiencing lung problems related to asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis, as well as healthy individuals," he says.

Diaphragmatic breathing uses the awareness of the diaphragm muscle, which separates the organs in the abdomen from the lungs. "By concentrating on lowering the diaphragm as you breathe in, you'll get a much deeper inhale," says Roberts. "This is the technique that professional singers use to increase their lung capacity."

2. SIMPLE DEEP BREATHING

Deep breathing can help you get closer to reaching your lungs' full capacity. As you slowly inhale, consciously expand your belly with awareness of lowering the diaphragm. Next expand your ribs, allowing the floating ribs to open like wings. Finally, allow the upper chest to expand and lift.

After this, exhale as completely as possible by letting the chest fall, then contracting the ribs and, finally, bring the stomach muscles in and up to lift the diaphragm and expel the last bit of air.

3. COUNTING ON YOUR BREATH

You can also increase your lung capacity by increasing the length of your inhalations and exhalations. Start by counting how long a natural breath takes. If it takes to the count of five to inhale it should take to the count of five to exhale. You'll want them to be of equal length.

Once you've discovered the count for your average breath, add one more count to each inhale and exhale until you can comfortably extend the length of time it takes to fill and empty your lungs. The point is to avoid straining or being uncomfortable.

4. MAKING ROOM: WATCH YOUR POSTURE

Since the lungs are soft structures, they only take up the room that you make for them. "You want to occasionally sit tall and reach overhead, to make more room for your lungs," says Ryan. "A simple technique for giving your lungs even more room is leaning back slightly in a stable chair, lifting the chest and opening the front of your body as you breathe deeply," she says.

5. STAYING HYDRATED

Getting enough water is as important for the lungs as it is for the rest of the body. "Staying well hydrated by taking in fluids throughout the day helps keep the mucosal linings in the lungs thin," Ryan says. "This thinner lining helps the lungs function better."

Regular moderately intense activity is great for the lungs, and when you increase your daily activity you get three things done at once: healthy lungs, a healthier heart and a better mood.

6. A LAUGHING MATTER

"Laughing is a great exercise to work the abdominal muscles and increase lung capacity," says Ryan. "It also clears out your lungs by forcing enough stale air out that it allows fresh air to enter into more areas of the lung."

7. BE ACTIVE

"Regular moderately intense activity is great for the lungs, and when you increase your daily activity you get three things done at once: healthy lungs, a healthier heart and a better mood," Ryan says.

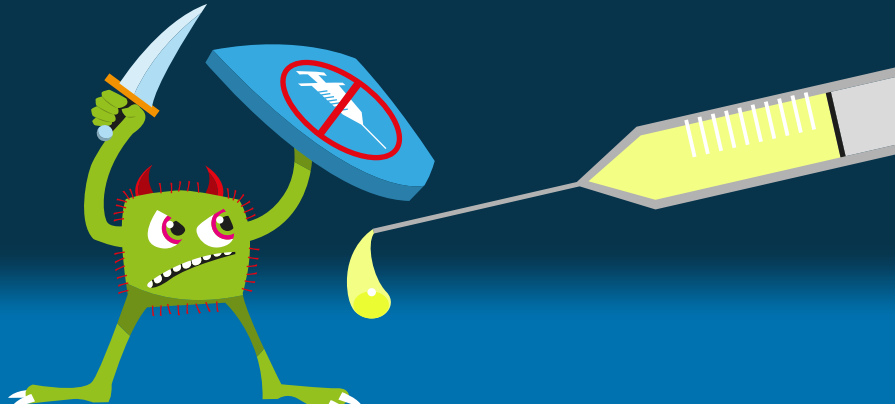
Aim for at least 20 minutes of consistent, moderately intense movement daily, like a brisk walk or bike ride.

8. JOIN A BREATHING CLUB

"If you can't be active because of lung problems, you can join a breathing club," says Roberts. These are support groups for people with lung and breathing problems. You can work on breathing techniques and get encouragement and information to help keep you healthy and improve your quality of life. The American Lung Association offers Better Breathers Clubs throughout the country.

(Source: Rush University)

Vaccines: Our Best Defense



Getting vaccinated is an easy way to stay healthy all year round. During the month of August, take the time to make sure that you and your loved ones have received all of the vaccinations you need. By making sure your vaccinations are up to date, you can help prevent harmful diseases from affecting you and your family. Here's some information about vaccines that people need throughout their lives:

- ▶ Parents can protect infants and children from 14 serious childhood diseases by age 2. [Click here](#) to learn more about immunizations for infants and children.
- ▶ Preteens and teens need vaccines too! Getting adolescents vaccinated will also protect their friends and their family members. [Find out about the vaccines preteens and teens need.](#)
- ▶ Adults: not sure if your immunization schedule is up-to date? [Take this online quiz](#) to see which vaccines you need, and use the Vaccine Finder tool below to find a location near you where you can access vaccines.
- ▶ Seniors may need one or more vaccines, even if they received vaccines as a child or as a younger adult. [Find more information about vaccines for seniors here.](#)

In August, as summer winds down, it's a good time for you and your family to make plans to get the flu vaccine. The vaccine usually becomes available in mid- to late-August. Getting the vaccine early can help prevent you and your family members from getting the flu throughout all of flu season. You can learn more about the flu and flu vaccine at [Flu.gov](#).

Vaccines are the best defense we have against these and other serious diseases, and it's important to make sure that you're up to date on all recommended vaccines. Use National Immunization Awareness Month as your chance to make sure that all your vaccinations are current. Talk with your healthcare provider about what vaccines you and your family need, and keep putting your healthiest foot forward!

SAVE THE DATE

Our Lunch-N-Learn is on Thursday, August 18. The topic is "Managing Anxiety, Depression and Sleep." [Click here](#) for a sneak peak!

Recipe: Zucchini Bread

Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray, for coating loaf pan
1/3 cup walnuts
1 large zucchini
1 1/2 cups whole wheat pastry flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
3/4 cup sugar
1/3 cup vegetable oil
3 tablespoons no-sugar-added apple butter
1 1/4 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 large eggs

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Generously coat a 9- by 5-inch loaf pan with cooking spray.
2. Spread the walnuts out on a baking sheet and toast in the oven until lightly golden, about 7 minutes. Cool and roughly chop.
3. Coarsely grate the zucchini into a bowl and squeeze out the excess liquid; you should have about 1 1/2 cups zucchini.
4. Whisk together the flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.
5. Beat the sugar, oil, apple butter, vanilla and eggs with an electric mixer on medium speed in a large bowl. Add the flour mixture and beat on low speed until just combined, and then on medium speed for 30 seconds. Stir in the zucchini and nuts until evenly combined. Pour the batter into the loaf pan.
6. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 50 to 55 minutes. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for 20 minutes. Remove the bread from the pan and completely cool. Cut into 24 slices and serve at room temperature.

Nutrition Information per serving (makes 24 servings): 199 calories | 1 g fat | 3 g protein | 14 g sugar | 31 mg cholesterol | 3g dietary fiber | 21 g sodium

