Press the button in an elevator. Hold on to the stair rail. Grab a door handle. Some nasty germs have probably joined you on your journey. In a recent study, researchers found 549 kinds of bacteria in a typical office, most of which came from the mouth, nose, or intestinal cavities of another person. Touch your mouth or your eye with bacteria on your hands and you could be calling in sick with a cold, the flu, or worse.

Do not fret, there’s a secret to avoid getting sick, and it’s not a pill, fad diet, or bleach-cleaning frenzy. One of the best ways to prevent bacteria from making you sick is washing your hands the right way. It’s one of the most important things you can do to help stop the spread of infection and stay healthy. Here’s how to wash your hands:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap.
2. Rub your hands together to make a lather, and scrub them well. Be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Continue rubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel, or air dry them. If soap and running water are not available, use hand sanitizer.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The Healthy Workplace Project

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Pack Your Own Lunch

If you wait until lunch time to think about food, you’re in trouble. Without a plan, fast food is an easy option that too many people use to satisfy their hunger. In a recent study, researchers found people who ate fast food for lunch were 38 percent more likely to be overweight or obese than those who didn’t. That one meal a day can also shape other eating habits outside the office. Fast food eaters consume more fatty meats and sugary drinks, and eat fewer fruits and vegetables. Researchers also found fast food eaters had higher bad cholesterol levels than those who made their own midday meal.

If fast food is a regular part of your diet, you are at increased risk for heart disease, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other health problems. So, pack your own lunch. Make a turkey sandwich with whole-grain bread, lettuce, and tomato. Add an apple, orange, blueberries, or banana. Bring along some freshly cut vegetables like carrots or celery. Try low-fat or nonfat yogurt mixed with nuts, or granola. Bring leftovers from a healthy homemade meal, and drink water. Making your own healthy lunch does require a little planning. But it’s worth it. You will eat fewer calories and less fat. You will save time and money on going out to eat. You will also be healthier.

American College of Cardiology
National Restaurant Association
Leafy Greens Deliver Powerful Punch

Cartoonist Elzie Segar created a comic strip about a sea-hardy sailor almost a century ago and he never imagined it would encourage people to eat healthy foods. That is exactly what happened. Every time the spinach-loving character named Popeye gobbled some leafy greens, he received a boost of super-human strength. The more bad guys he battled, the more readers ate spinach.

Segar was right. Spinach really does pack a powerful punch. It may not be super-human, but it is a rich source of vitamins and nutrients. Spinach contains high levels of vitamin K, vitamin A, and folate. Vitamin K helps your blood clot normally. It also strengthens your bones and protects your arteries. Vitamin A supports healthy skin, teeth, your immune system, and eyesight. Folate supports growth and development and may prevent some types of cancer.

That’s not all. A recent study suggests that nitrates found in spinach can actually make you stronger. In the study, researchers measured the oxygen intake of people using exercise bikes. One group then added a serving of spinach a day to their regular meals. When this group rode the exercise bikes again, researchers found the nitrates in spinach helped reduce the amount of oxygen riders needed to perform the exercise. Nitrates found in leafy green vegetables like spinach help expand blood vessels, lower blood pressure, and improve circulation.

It’s easy to add spinach to your diet. Try a spinach salad mixed with dried cranberries, walnuts, red onions, and vinaigrette dressing. Enjoy the leafy greens in soups or dips, or even fresh on a sandwich.

Journal of Cell Metabolism
National Institutes of Health

Even One Soda a Day Raises Diabetes Risk

Pop open a can or twist the cap on a soft drink. The fizzy sound can trigger a gulping reflex for some people. The average American drinks 44 gallons of soda a year. That’s the same as drinking about 470 cans of soda and tossing back 41 pounds of sugar. It’s one reason why health experts believe one in three people could have type 2 diabetes by 2050. Just one can of soda a day may increase the risk for this disease that can lead to poor circulation, kidney problems, blindness, and early death.

Researchers recently studied soda consumption habits of more than 28,000 people. They found drinking one can of sugar-sweetened soda a day raised the risk for type 2 diabetes by 22 percent. There was no significant increase in diabetes risk for those who only drank pure or diluted fruit juice.

Although don’t bank on switching to diet soda as the answer. A separate study followed 66,118 people for 14 years also found a link between type 2 diabetes and diet soda. Maybe it’s time to rethink your drink. Drink more water, add a lemon or lime for flavor. Or replace soda with 100-percent fruit juice. Anything you can do to reduce your risk of developing diabetes is worth the effort.

American Journal of Clinical Nutrition
Journal of Diabetologia
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Walk the Path to Wellness with a Pedometer

Did you Know? The average human walking speed is 3.1 mph.

Did you Know? When you take one step, you are using up to 200 muscles.

Sedentary people average 1,000 to 3,000 steps per day. That’s walking to the car, the refrigerator, and the couch. You need more exercise than that (30 to 60 minutes a day) to manage your weight and improve your fitness level. Use a pedometer to track your steps and set a goal to increase your steps per day. Then get moving. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Take a walk break. Be sure to keep a log of your progress to see your success and stay motivated. Aim for 7,000 to 8,000 steps daily for good health, 10,000 steps for excellent health. With a few more steps per day, you will be on your way to better health. Track your steps with a free pedometer app: such as www.accupedo.com.

Journal of the American Medical Association
Harvard School of Public Health
Do Multivitamins Make You Healthier?

Large studies show no significant health advantages to taking multivitamins, but they may help people with certain conditions:

- Women show fewer birth defects if they take folic acid before and during pregnancy.
- If you don’t get enough sun in winter, you can lower your risk for several health problems if you take a vitamin D supplement, at least 1,000 IU daily. Most multivitamins have such a low dose of vitamin D, they are not effective.
- As you age, you don’t absorb vitamin B-12 as well. It is an important nutrient that supports brain health and memory. Some studies on seniors show that as many as 30 percent of the population has low vitamin B-12 levels.
- If you are a vegetarian, you could also benefit from a B-12 supplement. Studies show that vegetarians are often low in B-12 and could be at risk for brain atrophy.
- Many foods are fortified with calcium, but your diet may not include enough of this mineral. A calcium supplement can help to support strong bones and teeth. Too much calcium in the diet may also pose health risks. How much you need depends on your age. Adults age 19 to 50 should aim for 1,000 mg per day.
- Some people have problems absorbing nutrients from food due to specific health conditions, such as celiac disease. If you have a unique health condition, you may also benefit from a multivitamin. For most people, a healthy diet is the best source of vitamins and nutrients. Skip the multivitamins and eat more healthy foods. Limit animal fats, cholesterol, refined grains, and foods high in sugar. Eat more fruits and vegetables. And add more nuts, legumes, and whole grains to your diet.

Archives of Internal Medicine
U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Low-Intensity Exercise Lowers Blood Pressure

An estimated 25 percent of adults in the United States have high blood pressure. This condition increases the risk for heart disease, stroke, and other serious health problems. Heart disease claims the lives of 17.3 million people in the world every year.

If your blood pressure is higher than 120/80, you should take action. If it is 140/90 or higher, your doctor may recommend medication and weight loss. One effective way to lower your blood pressure is low-intensity exercise. Just taking a short walk a few times a week could make a difference.

In a recent study, researchers found as little as 20 minutes of low-intensity exercise three to five times a week helped lower blood pressure. The results started to show up almost immediately. You can lower your blood pressure by doing low-intensity exercise most days of the week with activities such as:

- Light walking
- Stretching or beginner’s yoga
- Gardening
- Vacuuming
- Mopping
- Washing the car

Exercise is an effective way to lower your blood pressure. It’s also a good way to prevent high blood pressure, before it becomes a problem. It doesn’t take a lot of work. When you make the effort to move a little more, your heart will be healthier. Just remember to be active daily when possible.

National Institutes of Health.

Brain Food Boosts Mind Power

If your diet does not include the right vitamins and nutrients, your brain health might be at risk.

Your brain needs omega-3 fatty acids for its best health. Omega-3s are found in flax meal, canola oil, pumpkin seeds, walnuts, tofu, soy products, and fish. Studies show low levels of omega-3s may be linked to memory problems and Alzheimer’s disease.

In one study, researchers looked at the healthy brains of 1,575 people. Each person performed a memory test. They also provided a blood sample to measure levels of omega-3s. Those with higher levels scored better on memory tests. Another study found that fish-eaters had healthier brains and were less likely to develop Alzheimer’s.

If you want to keep your brain healthy, eat foods with omega-3 fatty acids. The Institutes of Medicine recommends adults get about 1-1.6 grams of omega-3 fatty acids per day. A 1-ounce handful of walnuts contains 2.6 grams of omega-3 fatty acids. A tablespoon of ground flax meal contains 1.8 grams of omega-3 fatty acids. Plant-based sources for omega-3 fatty acids include nuts, seeds, and soy products. Fish is also a good source for omega-3s. If you are a vegetarian, you can take an omega-3 supplement to make sure you get enough DHA and EPA (two types of omega-3).

Keeping your mind healthy is not the only benefit. Omega-3 fatty acids also reduce the risk for heart disease, cancer, and arthritis.

American Academy of Neurology
Radiological Society of North America
American Heart Association
Institutes of Medicine
Make Plans for a Healthier Halloween

About 93 percent of all children in the United States will trick-or-treat on October 31. On Halloween night, the average kid will haul in 250 pieces of candy. That’s about 9,000 calories and three pounds of sugar. It is a recipe for cavities, weight gain, and diabetes, but Halloween doesn’t have to be that scary.

Here are some ways to enjoy the holiday and cut back on all the candy.

- Sort through the candy when you get home. Toss out the taffy, hard candy, and sour-flavored treats first. These candies can quickly make your mouth more acidic, break down tooth enamel, and cause cavities. Keep the dark chocolate. It contains less sugar than traditional chocolate. It’s high in antioxidants that can protect the heart and brain.

- Find a local dentist who buys Halloween candy from kids at: www.halloweencandybuyback.com. Many dentists involved in this nationwide program buy Halloween candy back for $1 a pound. They also offer free toothbrushes and dental floss.

- If you want to give out healthier treats, consider sugar-free fruit roll-ups and candy-coated nuts or hand out inexpensive toys like miniature cars, yo-yos, puzzles, play dough, or whistles.

It does take some creativity, but you can make Halloween a fun experience without a lot of candy.

National Confectioners Association
American Dental Association
American Academy of Pediatrics

Staying Safe on the Road

When we think of safety hazards, we typically think of what happens inside the workplace. One of the greatest threats to ones safety is not in the workplace but rather on the road.

- Someone is injured every 14 seconds
- 431,000 are injured due to distracted driving annually
- Distracted driving kills over 3,000 people annually
- 1 in 4 fatal work injuries involves a vehicle accident

Distracted driving is one of the main causes of vehicle accidents. Some of these distractions include:

- Texting
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Using navigation systems
- Adjusting a radio
- Watching a video

Distractions are not the only cause of accidents. Be aware of other hazards when out on the road. These include:

- Reckless driving
- Fatigue
- Poor vehicle condition
- Driving under the influence
- Bad weather conditions
- Difficult road conditions
- Heavy traffic
- Poor lighting or glares

The best way to keep yourself safe is to be educated about the dangers driving poses. This includes understanding what is causing vehicle accidents, and what you can do to stay safe out on the roads.

Safety Management Services

Feast On Fiber To Prevent Diabetes

Cases of type 2 diabetes are on the rise. Today, nearly 29 million Americans have type 2 diabetes. That’s expected to triple over the next 40 years. This condition can lead to poor circulation, kidney problems, blindness, or worse. A recent study by the American Diabetes Association suggests that what you eat can help prevent type 2 diabetes.

Researchers looked at the eating habits of 3,428 people for 20 years. None of the participants had diabetes at the start of the study. After 20 years, those who had eaten the least amount of fiber (less than 20 grams a day) had the greatest chance of developing type 2 diabetes. Those who had eaten the most fiber per day were least likely to develop the disease. The best fiber sources are whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, and nuts.

To increase the amount of fiber in your diet:

- Eat at least three servings of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta daily.
- Leave the skin on potatoes, apples, and carrots. The outer layer is highest in fiber.
- Snack on raw vegetables or a handful of nuts.
- Add cooked beans and peas to soups, stews, casseroles, and salads. Women should aim for 25 grams of fiber daily. Men should aim for 38 grams per day.

American Diabetes Association
Journal of Diabetes Care
National Institute of Medicine
Journal of Nutrition

Try these healthy Fiber recipes goo.gl/E9tn2