

LIVE Healthy



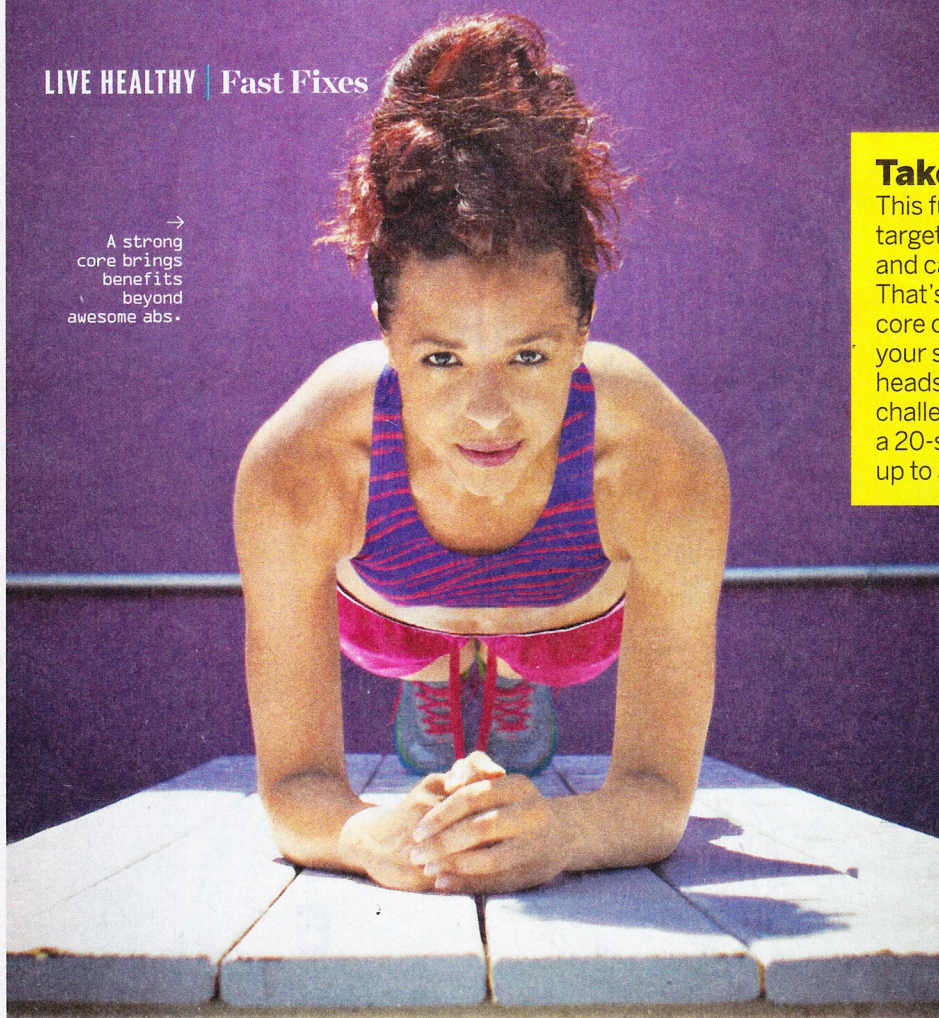
Feel great
in 60
seconds or
less.
←

One Minute to a Healthier You

From doing a full-body stretch to taking a proper belly breath, these small moves have a big wellness payoff.

By JESSICA MIGALA

→
A strong
core brings
benefits
beyond
awesome abs.



Take a Plank Break

This fundamental fitness move targets your abs and lower back and can help you avoid injury. That's because strengthening your core can help provide stability to your spine, explains Pagoto. (She heads up the Plank a Day Twitter challenge: #PlankADay.) Start with a 20-second plank hold and work up to a minute.

a hiking trip. "Sometimes getting started is the hardest part," notes Pagoto. You can use that first step as a springboard to a larger habit.

BREAK OUT THE FLOSS

We know, we know—it's the last thing you feel like doing at the end of a long day. But flossing—along with brushing twice a day and heading to the dentist at least twice a year—is essential to removing bacteria and keeping your teeth and gums disease-free, says the American Dental Association. It may even help you live longer: According to a 2011 study of older adults, those who never flossed had up to a 30 percent higher risk of dying during the study than those with a daily flossing habit. Get on it.

HIT PAUSE

Before you reach for that afternoon chocolate candy fix or dive into a bag of pretzels, wait just 25 seconds. That may be long enough to cajole yourself into making a healthier pick, per new preliminary research from Rush University in Chicago, which examined how people order from

→ **NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO** devote every minute of your life to getting healthy. Sometimes just one minute will do. All it takes to adopt new good-for-you habits is a bit of creativity and a willingness to do them whenever—and wherever—you can. "There are so many things you can do for your health right now that give you a nice return on a quick time investment," says Sherry Pagoto, PhD, professor of medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. That's because even little tweaks (a snack switch here, an extra plank there) will help you become your fittest, happiest self. Try these suggestions to make the most of the spare moments you have.

DAB SPF ON YOUR EARS

You put it on your face—now take three seconds and smooth it on each ear, too. Nonmelanoma skin cancer that's located on an ear has been found to be more aggressive; these tumors grow larger and deeper than those appearing on the face. (While they're typically not deadly, they can result in nerve and muscle injury.) And because of the ear's shape and the fact that you can't see all its parts, it can be difficult to spot potential changes that would indicate skin cancer.

UPGRADE YOUR SMOOTHIE

While everyone is tossing turmeric into their

blenders, go for ground coriander in yours. "Derived from cilantro seeds, coriander contains a blend of oils that help calm your gut," says Patricia Bannan, RDN, author of *Eat Right When Time Is Tight*. That can help relieve bloating and flatten your belly, she says. Use a quarter teaspoon in a single-serve smoothie.

START SOMETHING BIG

Ask yourself, "What small step can I take right now that will move me closer to one of my goals?" suggests Pagoto. Let's say you want to exercise more regularly. You might download the Couch to 5K app, text a friend to invite her to spin class, or email a group for

vending machines. Nuts are a great snack choice: Adding an ounce a day to your diet could lower your risk of diabetes by 39 percent, heart disease by 21 percent, and cancer by 15 percent, suggests research published in *BMC Medicine*. (Stash 100-calorie packs in your purse, desk drawer, or gym bag so there's always a good option on hand, suggests Bannan.)

STRETCH AWAY STRESS

Having one of those days? Pop into Downward Dog pose. "It's a great full-body stretch that really targets the muscles in your shoulders and back that tend to hold stress," says Pagoto.

CHECK THE BOWL

After you go number one or two, give a little glance—your pee and poop can tell you a lot about your health, says Michael S. Langan, MD, an internal medicine doctor at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. If your urine is dark yellow, that's a signal to drink more H₂O (the ideal: pee that's clear or very light yellow). Pinkish or

reddish pee could signal a urinary tract infection or other health problem—see your doctor. Take clues from your poo, too. "Stool that's hard, pellet-like, or difficult to pass is an indication of constipation," says Dr. Langan. Staying hydrated and eating at least 25 grams of fiber a day (fill up on fruit, vegetables, and whole grains) will promote regularity. If your BMs are routinely very loose, watery, or mucousy, talk to your doc, who will want to rule out underlying conditions such as IBS. Black or tarry stools may indicate GI bleeding, another reason to make an appointment with your doctor right away.

SIT UP STRAIGHT

Slouching in your chair is a one-way ticket to feeling blah. On the other hand, sitting upright with good posture (spine in line, shoulders back) helped people with depressive

symptoms feel more enthusiastic and less fatigued, found a recent study published in *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*. Other research suggests that good posture may boost brain activity.

BREATHE RIGHT

When things go wrong, belly breathe, says Sheenie Ambardar, MD, a psychiatrist in Beverly Hills who specializes in happiness. Slow, deep breaths reduce heart rate, lower blood pressure, and send a signal to the rest of the body to relax, adds Pagoto. Here's how to do it: Breathe in through your nose, hold for a count of three, and breathe out through your mouth, all while envisioning your abdomen expanding and contracting with each breath. Just five of these breaths can relieve pent-up tension and anxiety, says Dr. Ambardar. Ahhh! ■

Mighty Multitasking Moves

Can't carve out even a single spare minute? Boost wellness while doing something else entirely.

While you wait in a long line...call a friend.

► Maintaining relationships with loved ones is one of the most important things you can do to protect your health and longevity, says psychiatrist Ranna Parekh, MD, director of the Division of Diversity and Health Equity at the American Psychiatric Association.

While you brush your teeth...drop down in squats.

► Brushing takes two minutes (or, uh, it should). Spend 30 seconds to a minute doing full squats, then challenge yourself with a 20-second squat hold at the end.

While you drive...smile.

► Giving a big grin can help you survive crazy traffic. Smiling has been shown to lower heart rate and buffer anxiety responses to harried situations. Fake it till you make it, right?

While you have a quick meeting with a coworker...get up and walk.

► Being sedentary (like sitting on your butt in an office all day) was found to be a risk factor for back pain in young women; plus, it's associated with conditions like heart disease. Instead of calling or emailing someone from your cube, meet at her desk and chat while you walk for five minutes. Taking short walking breaks between periods of sitting can improve energy and mood and lessen fatigue, reports a study in *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*.



↑ Soak dish towels in a bleach solution to sanitize them.

Grab a Fresh Towel

Dish towels are some of the scummiest things in your kitchen. In fact, nearly 90 percent of towels sampled contained coliform bacteria (the kind found in feces), and 25 percent had *E. coli*, per research in *Food Production Trends*. To avoid spreading germs, use a new rag daily.