

BETTER HEALTH

40 Things Doctors Do to Live Longer

We asked top doctors around the country to share their healthiest habits.

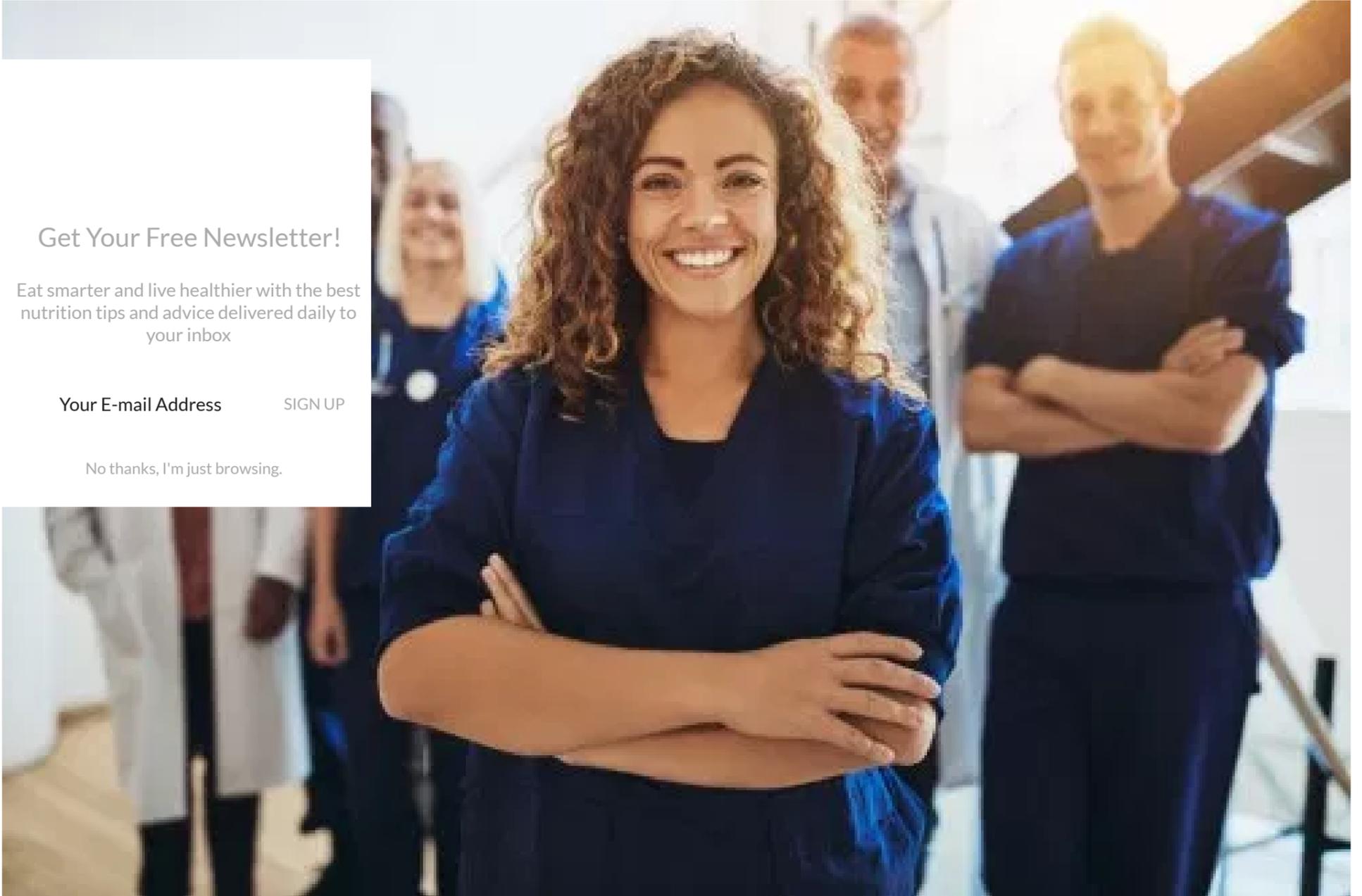
By [ALEK KORAB](#) JULY 5, 2019

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If you know any doctors—we mean, know them well—you know the deep, dark secret hiding under their lab coats: They're human. When they get stressed, they overeat; when they want to party, they'll have some drinks; when they worry about their practice, they'll stay up too late.

"Doctors are not really known to take care of themselves as much as they should!" admits [Dr. Thomas Jeneby](#), a plastic surgeon from Texas. "We suffer more depression, burnout, long hours, heart attacks, strokes and general breakdown. But, there are some perks!"

One perk is that they know how to be healthy—better than anyone—whether they live that way or not. Which is why, when we wondered how you could live longer, we asked the experts what they do. Here they share their secrets—consider them "perks" from us to you.

1 They Just Gotta Dance!



Eat This, Not That!

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“Ballroom dancing has been a passion of mine since college at Harvard and MIT, when I was members of ballroom dancing clubs,” says Dr. Ming Wang, MD, PhD, an ophthalmologist in Nashville. “I still practice it today weekly and participate in local and regional championships. I find it to be a great way to relax, relieve stress, as well as stay active.” He also believes it’s helped him become a better doctor. “Through learning ballroom dancing, which requires connection and communications between two people as they move together synchronously, I have learned to feel what a patient feels, to listen to my patients, to communicate with them better, and to be more sensitive and aware of their suffering and needs.”

2 They Own Doggies



“Pet ownership is a 24/7 form of pet therapy and is a personal stress reducer for me,” says Carmen Echols, MD. “Shortly after my husband and I married, we got a dog—that we still own, by the way. After especially challenging days at work, I sit on the couch and watch TV while petting the dog and find that simple activity so relaxing.”

3 They Have a Purpose



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“Some studies have shown that having a purpose in life helps to maintain mental and possibly physical health and benefit longevity. Intuitively this makes sense as it maintains an energetic ‘drive’ in life,” says Jack J Springer, MD, Assistant Professor Emergency Medicine at Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra-Northwell. “This purpose can be intellectual, emotional, physical or spiritual. Before writing my new book, I focus on the purpose—helping people with anxiety—which is energizing physically and mentally. It also allows for more focus which decreases distraction and ‘wasted’ time spent doing things that may, in the short term, feel good, but ultimately are taking time from more beneficial, healthful and rewarding activities.”

4 They Go to the Doctor

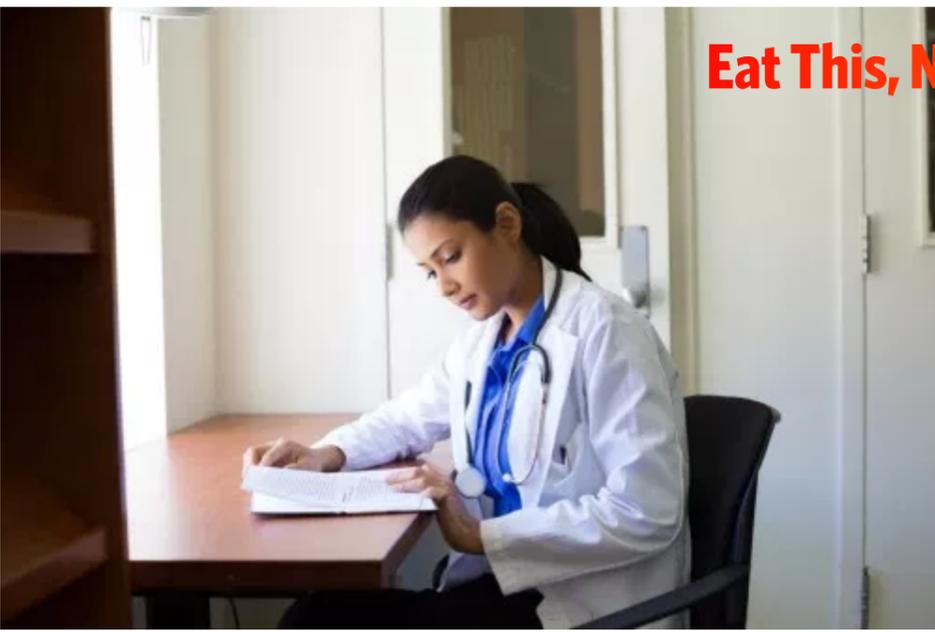


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“One thing physicians do to live longer is to go to the doctor!” says Carmen Echols, MD. “Many people assume that we physicians can take care of our own health concerns merely because we have the medical knowledge to do so, but that simply is not for the best. It is always wise for us to have the objective expertise of a colleague when it comes to personal physical and mental health.”

5 They Stay Updated

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“We have access to peer reviewed studies on health,” says Dr. Jeneby. “When we read about what’s going on with our own health, most of us can get to the peer reviewed sites—not just ‘Dr Google’—and have premier access to real studies rather than not chat rooms.”

6 They Skip the Lines



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“Docs use their resources/leverage to get expedited care,” says Dr. Jeneby. “When we finally need to see someone, we call them up first. We usually don’t have a terribly long wait time, so we are more apt to treat our ailments quicker.”

7 Yes, They Use All Those Machines When You’re Not Around



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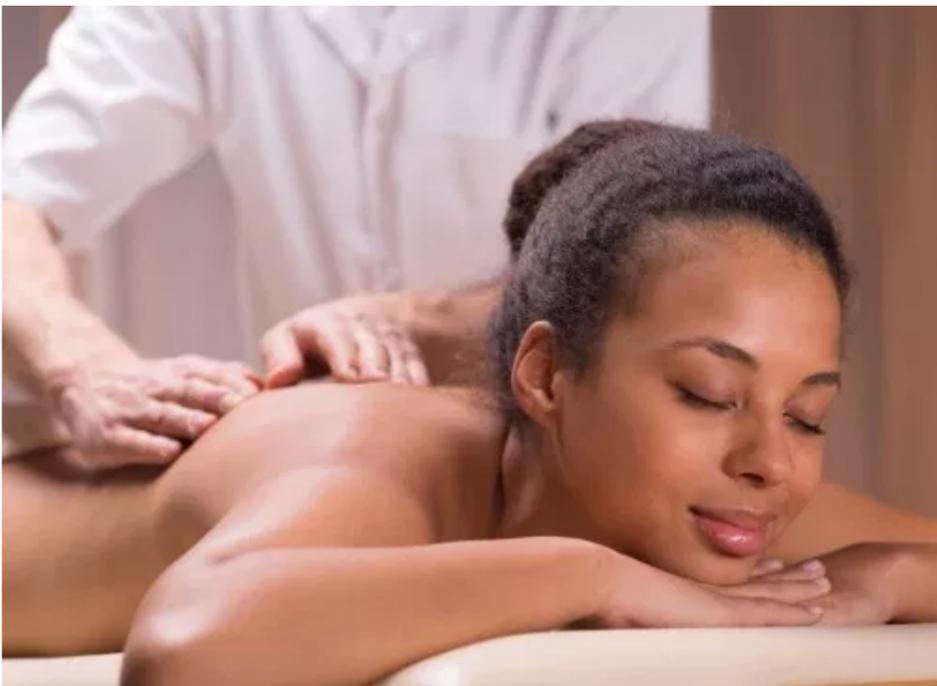
“We take advantage of our access to diagnostic equipment,” says Dr. Jeneby. “When doctors don’t feel well, we call our friends to get in to see them, and we often can get a diagnostic workup faster than the layperson. To this end, we are more efficient in finding out real problems up to 10 times faster because we can personally call the radiologist or lab that we went to.”

8 They Are Diving Into Genetic Testing



“The field of epigenetics is where doctors are looking when it comes to reversing rapid aging and preventing disease,” says Dr. Elena Villanueva of [Modern Holistic Health](#). “With genetic testing doctors can uncover their unique individualized ‘operations manual’ to understand what foods, environmental toxins, and lifestyle choices they should make. Then they can even understand what type of exercise will benefit them the most, what sleeping patterns they should adhere to, and what supplements will benefit them.”

9 They Get Massages



“Massage therapy is an excellent way to improve muscle spasms and help relax,” says Dr. Allen Conrad, BS, DC, CSCS of [Montgomery County Chiropractic Center](#). “Not to mention relieve stress.”

10 They Release Endorphins



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“I find that exercise is a very important part of my routine to control stress and be healthier,” says Nathan Rock, OD, FAAO. “As doctors, we know that exercise has positive benefits in many ways including promoting excellent cardiovascular health and promoting a balanced mood through release of endorphins. Personally, I have found that exercise, when possible, both before and after work can help to prepare for a successful day as well as relieve any stress from a day’s work.” He enjoys yoga “in the morning, as they very first thing to start my day. In the evenings, I enjoy running and weight lifting.” Don’t discount the power of doing it with others. “I have found I enjoy exercising with others, so I have joined two running clubs in my community which I run with on two weeknights. This adds to the social aspects of exercise and helps me keep motivated and accountable.”

11 They (Try to) Sleep Enough



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“As a 49-year-old physician, there are several things I try to do in order to live healthier and longer. Getting enough sleep is crucial, and I aim to get at least 6 hours a night,” says Dr. Monique May, a physician. (Most healthy adults need between 7 to 9 hours.)

12 They Check Their Pee

Eat This, Not That!



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“I also stay well-hydrated by drinking enough water each day so that my urine is clear and not dark yellow,” admits Dr. May. “The amount of water I drink can vary depending on how much exercise I have done for the day, so I go by the color of my urine as a good indicator. Also, when I feel hungry I drink water. If I drink water before I eat I do not eat as much, and it prevents thirst. By the time one feels thirsty, he or she is actually already dehydrated, so one should drink when they feel hunger to prevent that.”

13 They Kickbox



“I also exercise at least 3-5 times a week, and do a variety of activities, such as spin class, yoga, and kickboxing. I also like to dance as well,” says Dr. May.

14 They Cut Back on Meat



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“Eating right is key, and I have recently incorporated more fruits and vegetables in my diet as I cut down on my meat intake,” says Dr. May. “I still have to have a juicy burger every now and then!”

15 They Know The Dangers of Weight Gain



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“There are so many diseases that arise with an increased body mass that maintaining a healthy weight is crucial to longevity,” says Dr. Thanu Jey, Clinic Director at [Yorkville Sports Medicine Clinic](#). “Extra weight also puts a substantial burden on your joints causing earlier joint problems like arthritis—wear and tear—and tendonitis.”

16 They Stretch Consistently



“Stretching your muscles helps keep you flexible and mobile, which helps prevent many compensatory injuries,” says Dr. Jay. “Stretching increases blood circulation, joint health, mobility, balance and much more that’ll help you live a longer, happier life.”

Eat This, Not That!

17 They Get Extra Oxygen



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“I have been utilizing my Hyperbaric Chamber which increases the volume of oxygen absorption by increasing atmospheric pressure,” says Dr. Rudy Gehrman, DC Executive Director and Founder of [Physio Logic NYC](#). “It can create new blood vessels, essentially enabling new circulation and oxygen to areas that are depleted. It can reduce inflammation and speed up healing. These treatments can also help the immune system kill harmful bacteria and viruses. In simple terms, the fastest way to kill a human being (outside of trauma) is to deplete them of oxygen. What better way to reverse signs of aging than to push oxygen at a cellular level throughout your body!”

18 They Get Hot and Cold (or At Least This Guy Does)



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“Three to four days per week I implement whole body hot and cold contrasts treatments by soaking in a hot bath to induce a fever, followed by an ice cold shower,” says Dr. Rudy Gehrman, DC, Executive Director and Founder of [Physio Logic NYC](#). “This process pumps up the lymph system which is responsible for moving inflammation causing movement of stagnant fluids through the body.”

19 They Bring Their Own Lunch

Eat This, Not That!



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“It can be easy with the busy routine of medicine to fall into poor eating habits,” says Dr. Wang. “After all, fast food and unhealthy options are much easier to come by. I feel it is important to make conscious decisions to eat healthier. The easiest way to do this is bring my own lunch to work when I can. Because food cooked at home can generally be prepared much more healthy than what is bought from a restaurant, it is a good way to control exactly what I am eating in the correct portion. It also has another benefit of avoiding the stress that can come from trying to grab a lunch if the lunch hour is busy.”

20 They Never Skip Breakfast



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“I can single out a simple way to get started to increasing longevity: Eat a good breakfast on a regular basis,” says [Morton Tavel, MD](#), Clinical Professor Emeritus of Medicine, Indiana University School of Medicine. “Those who regularly consume this meal enjoy greater longevity and find it easier to maintain a lower weight. Breakfast is more apt to contain more nutritious foods such as fruit and protein. Protein also provides more persistent satiation that delays hunger and, therefore, the desire for mid-morning snacks. Protein is especially helpful, for it not only provides a lengthier sense of fullness but also burns up more energy while being digested, resulting in fewer excess net calories to deal with. Therefore, don’t forget to include protein sources such as eggs, yogurt, low-fat milk, cheese, nuts, etc.”—like the recipes in [Zero Belly Breakfasts](#), for example —“but minimize such processed meat sources as bacon, sausage and the like, for the latter pose, in themselves, significant threats to health.”

21 They Wear Sunscreen



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“I have two tips for living a longer, healthier life,” says Dr. Joshua D. Zuckerman, a plastic surgeon. “First, I wear sunscreen! Skin cancer is pervasive, and melanoma especially is aggressive and can be deadly. Photodamage (sun damage) from UV exposure is cumulative, so it’s important to wear sun protection every day whether it’s cold and cloudy or warm and sunny. I typically recommend higher SPF than most: 30+ for medium skin tones and 50+ for those with fair skin.” Read on to hear his second tip!

22 They Keep Their Skin Tight



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“Second, I try to maintain a stable weight,” says Dr. Zuckerman. “Whether by diet and exercise or other means, a stable weight helps an individual maintain activity levels and general life satisfaction. In addition, as we age it can be more difficult to lose weight, and losing weight can have side effects such as leaving excess skin or sag. This is due to tissues losing elasticity as we age, and once stretched beyond the limit of its elasticity, tissue cannot fully contract back down.”

23 They Have Dinner With the Fam



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“Physicians make thousands of decisions every day, answer a million questions, and work long hours. I have two strategies to live longer. One, I have dinner with my wife and kids every evening,” says Dr. George Hennawi, director of the department of geriatrics at [MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital](#) in Baltimore. Read on for his second tip!

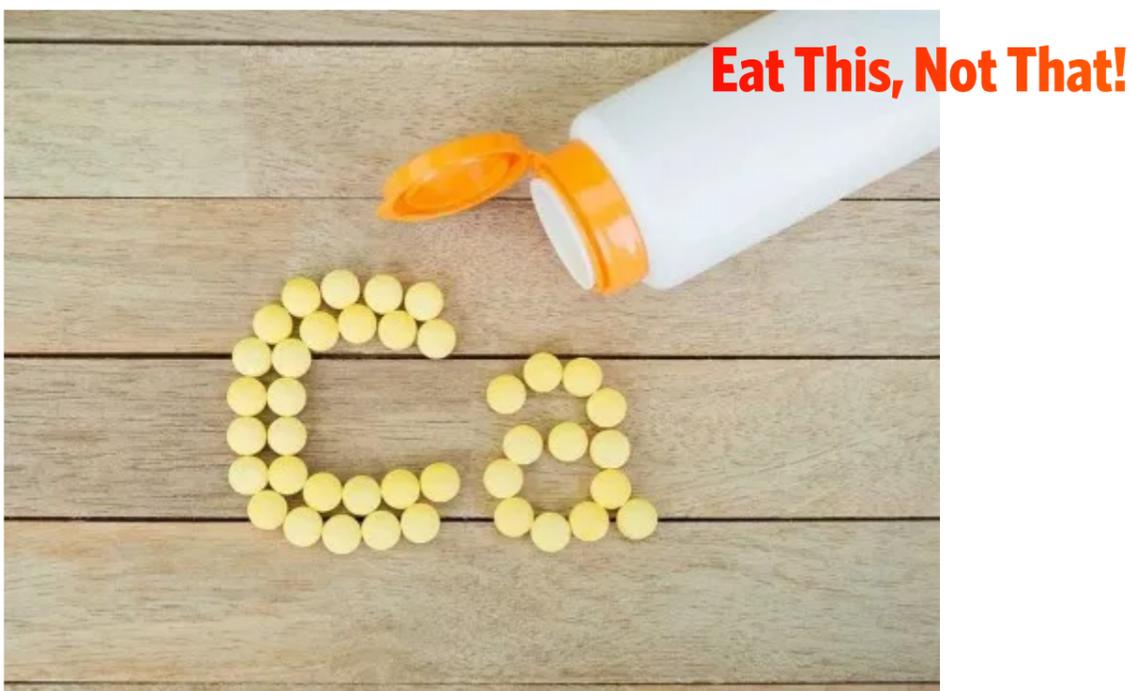
24 They Bucketize Problems



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“Two, I categorize my decisions into buckets,” says Dr. Hennawi. “One bucket is people wanting to vent—so I listen and sympathize. Another bucket is a systemic issue that needs a deeper dive and time to answer. The last bucket is an urgent matter that needs attention as soon as possible. As you may guess, a lot falls into the first category, which allows me to reduce stress and live longer, hopefully.”

25 They Take Calcium and Vitamin D Supplements



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“There are several ways we can stay healthy and live a longer, higher quality life,” says Anthony Kouri, M.D., an Orthopedic Surgeon at the University of Toledo Medical Center. “I personally take calcium and vitamin D supplementation daily. Something that is not appreciated by many people is the effect that low calcium and vitamin D can have on us as we age. It is most common in post-menopausal women, and both genders after age 50, however it can be found in young people as well. Our peak bone density is found in the second and third decade of life, typically around age 30. Nearly 50% of all people are deficient in vitamin D, which can lead to osteopenia, osteoporosis, and has been linked to breast, prostate and colon cancers, as well as hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Many people don’t feel the effects of vitamin D deficiency until it’s too late.”

26 They Run For Their Lives



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“Though any exercise is better than no exercise at all, the type of exercise makes a difference when it comes to bone health,” says Dr. Kouri. “From the age of 30, we begin to lose bone mineral density. Studies have demonstrated that moderate-impact exercise is ideal for maximizing bone mineral density as we age. Moderate impact running and jogging in the elderly leads to a significant increase in bone mineral density when compared to those who do minimal activity. Preventing osteoporosis or osteopenia from occurring is the best way to avoid big, life-altering problems in the future.”

27 They Are People Persons



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“Spend as much time with close friends and family,” recommends Dr. Springer. “Loneliness is closely tied to poor health (over time) and certainly decreased longevity. It is epidemic in many areas of the world (especially the ‘Western’ highly developed countries) it is a killer of spirit and life, literally. Intimacy (in person!) is a great human need. This connection is vital to the health of humans and its absence is probably a major factor in the global epidemic of anxiety and depression. People with whom you can be yourself and not hold back for fear of judgement. To understand the importance, think about how you feel mentally and physically after a few hours talking or laughing or just sitting with someone close to you.”

28 Like State Farm, They Are Good Neighbors



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“Develop a sense of ties to the community around you: this could be semi-regular block parties, clubs, service organizations, religious or spiritual groups,” advises Dr. Springer. “This ties together both a sense of purpose and intimacy.”

29 They Stimulate Their Brain



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“Keep learning: whether crossword puzzles, Sudoku, a new language, instrument, or hobby—expressive ones such as art/performance may be best,” says Dr. Springer. “Again, group activities are ideal.”

30 They Check Their Hearing



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Leslie P. Soiles, Chief Audiologist at [HearingLife](#), recommends visiting a hearing health center to get your ears assessed, as side effects from hearing loss can impact living a long and healthy life. Hearing problems can lead to other serious physical and mental health issues such as, balance issues, dementia, depression and Alzheimer's.

31 They Don't Eat Their Kids' Leftovers



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“My non-obvious health tip: don’t eat your children’s leftovers,” says Dr. Edna Ma, MD. “I grew up eating all the food from my plate before being allowed to leave the dinner table. **Eat This, Not That!** This was probably due to our family’s poor economic status at the time. My parents were first generation Chinese immigrants who grew up during China’s worst famine. This aversion to food waste also deepened during my time as a *Survivor* (yes, the TV show!) contestant. Now that I am a parent, it’s still hard for me to see food waste. As adults, our nutritional needs are different that children’s. And eating their leftovers will lead to unnecessary caloric intake and weight gain.”

32 They Try to Love Life



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“Living longer isn’t just a recipe to eat this, use this cream, or do crossword puzzles everyday,” says Dr. Jacqueline Darna, N.M.D. “Instead longevity of life is about a state of mind. I have heard countless friends who stop doing what they love, working as a physician, and start to decline in health. Do what gives you purpose and love life. As a physician I want my patients to see I live a healthy life by example, I cycle every morning so I can enjoy food and not count calories, I don’t put poisons in my body and choose natural remedies, I dance everyday (from the shower to the car), and I always look on the bright side.”

33 They Don’t “Click to Buy Now”



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“The cliché is true: ‘The things that you own are the things that own you,’” says Dr. Will Kirby, a board certified dermatologist and the Chief Medical Officer of LaserAway. “And no one was ever on their deathbed and said, ‘I wish I spent more time buying crap on Amazon.’ So recognize that physical possessions only make you happy very temporarily while less tangible

pastimes will give you a more stable, long term endorphin boost! I'm not naive enough to think that we aren't consumer but I sold my expensive car and walk it bike or use ride sharing. I don't own an expensive watch, and I try to minimize the physical possessions I own. After all, I don't own them... they actually own me!"

Eat This, Not That!

34 They Eat More Fiber



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“Fiber is an excellent way to stay healthy and lose weight” states Dr. Conrad. “People who regularly eat a lot of fiber have lower blood pressure and lower cholesterol, and fiber is a healthy low sugar option for diabetics. Foods high in fiber include oatmeal, flax seeds, chia seeds, broccoli and beans.”

35 They Mentor



“Contribute to society through mentorship: Humans are social creatures and for tens of thousands we worked in collective groups to benefit our cause,” says Dr. Kirby. “In modern society, that has all but disappeared—we are no much more selfish and driven to only accomplish quantifiable persists. So it's my contention that one of the best things that you can do to live a long life is to find meaning and purpose by helping others in your community or profession.”

36 They Don't Avoid Stress



Eat This, Not That!

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“Don’t avoid stress: So many people want to minimize stress for longevity but not only is stress is terribly misunderstood and it is a mistake to attempt to avoid it,” says Dr. Kirby. “Many people who live though incredible hardship live a long time. And I’m not advocating monthly trips to Everest but embracing the concept that stressful events eventually pass and you often because emotionally (and even physically!) stronger following stressful events.”

37 They Listen to Their Spouses



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“I listen to my wife,” says Eric Branda, AuD, PhD at [Signia](#). “All jokes about marriage aside, many of us put the well-being of our families and significant others above our own health. Consequently, we may neglect being as attentive to our own health needs. It’s important to remember that those significant others in our lives may pick up and call attention to changes in our health that we may be slower to act on.”

38 They Meditate

Eat This, Not That!



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“I’ll tell you my experience in the field of holistic medicine what I’ve learned from other top doctors,” says Dean C. Mitchell, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine.

- “Some form of meditation: it can be walking, swimming or even sitting—preferably in nature.”
- “Careful with their diet: Plant-based being main item on their plate; eating lots of natural foods: nuts, seeds, fruits.”
- “Exercise: cardio and weight-training.”
- “Stretching or yoga—flexibility is so important as you age.”
- “Keeping your brain young by taking on new challenges: travel, vacations every two months is great for mental sharpness, learning new areas and listening to music.”

The simple things really work!

39 They See the World



“I personally travel to a least a new country every year alone,” says Colin Zhu, DO, DipABLM of the Thrive Bites podcast. “For me, solitude gives me stress relief and balance and clarity. Also, it helps me to re-engage my five senses again. On a daily basis, it would be cooking at home. It’s very therapeutic for me and also reinforces social connection especially when I cook with others!”

40 They Lift

Eat This, Not That!



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“Weight-bearing exercise can help slow bone loss,” says [Carolyn Dean](#), MD, ND, author of *The Magnesium Miracle*. “Putting weight on your bones by walking, running and/or lifting weights stimulates the growth of new bone. Exercise can also help keep joint cartilage healthy. Strong muscles support joints and reduce the load on them.” And to live your happiest and healthiest life, be sure to avoid these [50 Unhealthiest Habits on the Planet!](#)

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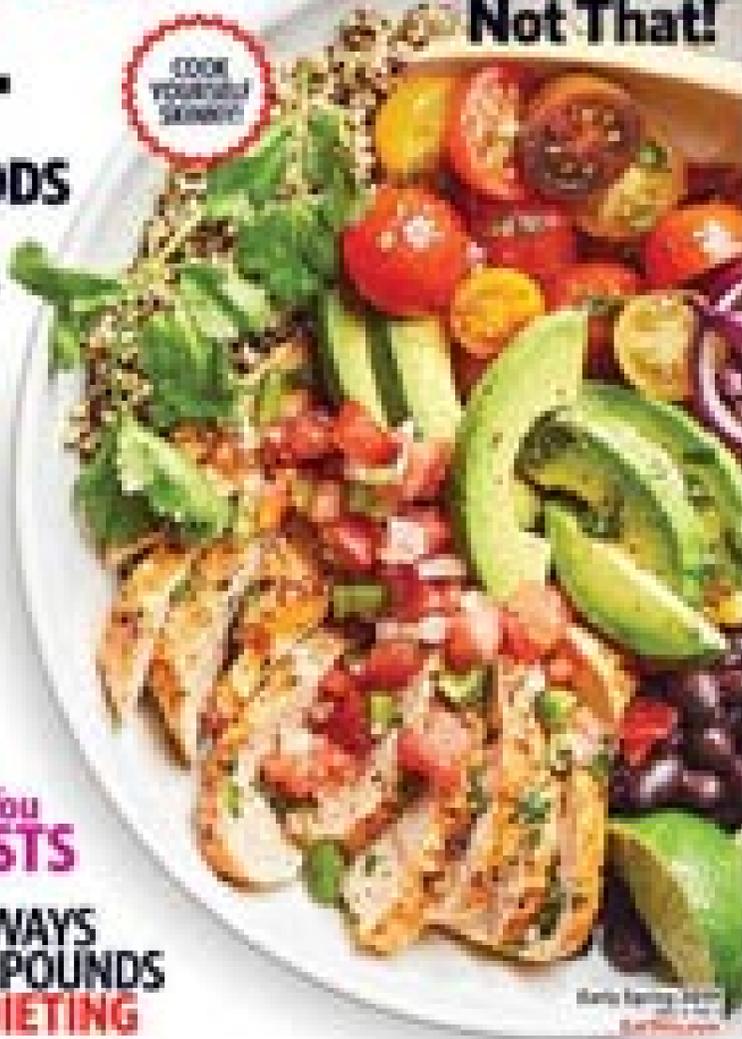
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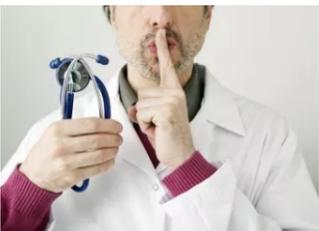
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