

HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time

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National Blood Donation Month

Donating blood has benefits for your emotional and physical health. According to a report by the Mental Health Foundation, helping others can:

- Reduce stress
- Benefit your physical health
- Help get rid of negative feelings
- Improve your emotional well-being
- Provide a sense of belonging and reduce isolation

Research has found further evidence of health benefits that come from donating blood.

Lower risk of heart disease

Blood donation may lower the risk of heart disease and heart attack. This is because it reduces the blood's viscosity.

A 2013 study found that regular blood donation significantly lowered the mean total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, protecting against cardiovascular disease. Researchers note this is consistent with findings in other studies which found that blood donors had a lower risk of heart disease and heart attack.

Donating blood regularly may also lower iron stores. This may reduce the risk of heart attack. High body iron stores are believed to increase the risk of heart attack.

Lower risk of cancer

A 2008 study found a small decrease in the risk of certain cancers in people who regularly donated blood. These included cancers that are linked to high iron levels, including cancer of the:

- Liver
- Esophagus
- Colon
- Stomach
- Lung

A 2016 study also found that donating blood can lower inflammatory markers and increase antioxidant capacity.

Free health checkup

In order to give blood, you're required to undergo a health screening. A trained staff member performs this checkup. They'll check your:

- Pulse
- Body temperature
- Blood Pressure
- Hemoglobin levels

This free mini-physical can offer excellent insight into your health. It can detect problems that could indicate an underlying medical condition or risk factors for certain diseases.

Your blood is also tested for several diseases. These include:

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV
- *Trypanosoma cruzi*
- West Nile Virus
- Syphilis

35,000 pints of blood are needed every day in the U.S.

The national blood supply must cover every day needs and unexpected disasters. Frequent volunteer blood donors ensure that blood is ready (collected and tested) and available year-round whenever and wherever it is needed.

A common misunderstanding about blood usage is that accident victims are the patients who use the most blood. Actually, people who receive the most blood include those:

- being treated for cancer
- undergoing orthopedic surgeries
- undergoing organ and marrow transplants
- undergoing cardiovascular surgeries
- being treated for inherited blood disorders

Every two seconds someone in the United States needs blood.



Your somebody's type...give blood!



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Choose Health in 2019

The new year can be an exciting time, brimming with the promise of fresh starts and new beginnings. It's also an opportunity to recommit to your health and well-being. Here are some tips from Johns Hopkins to help you be a healthy YOU in 2019.

1. Practice mindful eating

These days, it's common to chow down with your eyes glued to a screen, but eating when you're distracted leads to overeating. Take time to slow down and pay attention to your food, pausing to put down utensils between bites. "When you eat mindfully, it's easier to notice when you feel full, plus you're more likely to enjoy the foods you eat," says Johns Hopkins dietitian and research nutritionist Diane Vizthum.

2. Chill out and rest up

According to Johns Hopkins sleep expert Rachel Salas, M.D., when it's time to sleep, it's time to chill – literally. Knocking the thermostat down to 68 degrees or lower before you tuck into bed can help you sleep better. Darken your room by drawing the curtains or dimming the display on your alarm clock to really get those quality Zs.

3. Adopt an attitude of gratitude

Take some time at the beginning or end of the day to reflect on what you're grateful for. "A daily grateful check-in or keeping a grateful journal is a way to shift your focus and minimize the distorting influence of stress. Reminding ourselves of the small, everyday positive aspects of our lives helps to develop a sense of balance and perspective that can enhance well-being," says Johns Hopkins psychiatrist Susan Lehmann, M.D.

4. Find 30 minutes a day to walk

Getting the recommended 30 minutes of exercise each day can be as simple as taking a walk. If you've got a busy schedule, take three 10-minute walks throughout your day. "That's 10 minutes before work, 10 minutes at lunch and then 10 minutes after work. Make it fun! Grab a partner at work to get you through your lunch routine. Then have a friend or family member meet you for an evening stroll," suggests Johns Hopkins physical therapist Stacie Page.

5. Commit to a 30-day fitness challenge

Pick a fitness activity that's easy and doesn't require equipment, and commit to it for 30 days. There are many options to challenge yourself: practicing yoga, taking regular walks or joining a fitness class. "Find what motivates you. Whatever you do, make yourself accountable or find an accountability partner. Whether your goal is to lose weight, lower cholesterol or have more energy to play with young ones, you have the power to make a change," encourages Page.

Choose
Health



Choose You...Choose Health!

