Why You Should Know Your Numbers

Numbers guide behaviors. Just as your bank account balance influences your spending habits, careful monitoring of your key health metrics can help you make better decisions about your health.

When your numbers fall outside the recommended target ranges, you are more likely to be motivated to take actions that help reduce your risks for developing chronic health conditions, like diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

For that reason, knowing your numbers is the first step toward better health. Here are some health numbers you should know and why:

**Weight**
Carrying extra weight also carries negative health risks such as heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke. Fortunately, research has shown that even modest weight loss can bring about big results. For example, losing just 5% of excess body weight has been shown to reduce the risk of developing diabetes by 58%.

**Blood Pressure**
Higher than normal blood pressure values are associated with a higher risk for chronic health conditions, like stroke and dementia. Regularly monitoring can help alert you to take immediate action and seek guidance from your doctor.

**Cholesterol**
Elevated lipids place added strain on your cardiovascular system, so if your numbers have been creeping up over time, it may be helpful to take a closer look at your eating and exercise habits.

**Blood Sugar**
High blood sugar (sometimes called glucose) may indicate that your body is not managing or using insulin properly. Periodic monitoring of your blood sugar values can help you make better decisions about your daily choices.

Eat This, Not That: Heart-Health Edition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eat This</th>
<th>Why It’s Better</th>
<th>Not That</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baked:</strong> sweet potato with skin</td>
<td>Sweet potatoes contain higher amounts of vitamin A, vitamin C, potassium, B12, and fiber, making them a better choice than traditional white mashed potatoes, which generally also contain more salt and butter.</td>
<td>Mashed white potatoes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Liquid vegetable oils</strong></td>
<td>Fats that are liquid at room temperature are more easily processed in the body. Olive oil and other vegetable oils contain healthy mono- and polyunsaturated fats that your body needs. Solid fats, like butter and margarine, are associated with increased cholesterol levels.</td>
<td>Solid fats</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Oatmeal</strong></td>
<td>Oatmeal is full of fiber and B vitamins, while many highly-processed breakfast bars contain high amounts of added sugars and other unnatural flavorings.</td>
<td>Highly processed breakfast bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low-fat sour cream</strong></td>
<td>Low-fat yogurt is lower in saturated fat than regular sour cream, making it a great substitute for many dishes.</td>
<td>Regular sour cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poached or steamed fish</strong></td>
<td>If your objective is to improve your cardiovascular health, choose your cooking methods carefully. Poaching and steaming require less fat and preserve more key nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin D compared to other cooking methods like grilling, broiling, or frying.</td>
<td>Grilled, broiled, or fried fish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Bonus Tips:**

1. To poach fish, simply add a small amount of water, stock, or wine to the dish before placing it in the oven.
2. Choose reduced-fat or part-skim cheeses to reduce fat.
3. While coconut oil remains popular, it is still a saturated fat, so use it sparingly.
4. Aim for at least two 4-ounce portions of fatty fish each week (salmon, albacore tuna, sardines, etc.).
5. Replace the salt shaker with herb seasonings. For example, use garlic power instead of garlic salt.

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4. [https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/healthiest-way-to-cook-fish#section3](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/healthiest-way-to-cook-fish#section3)
Cancer Prevention and You

Poor diet, carrying excess weight, physical inactivity, tobacco use, and overexposure to the sun have been identified as common causes of cancer. The good news is, all of these factors are preventable. While they may seem insignificant, the little decisions you make every day, like what to have for dinner or whether or not to go to the gym, can have a dramatic impact on your health.

Here are some key strategies for cancer prevention:

Eat at least 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables daily
Fruits and vegetables contain protective phytochemicals and antioxidants that have been shown to stimulate immune function, slow cancer growth, and reduce inflammation.

Go easy on the red meat
The cooking methods commonly used to prepare red meats, like grilling and smoking, produce carcinogenic chemicals known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. For that reason, the American Institute for Cancer Research recommends limiting red meat consumption to 18 ounces or less per week.

Avoid processed meats
Similar to concerns related to red meat consumption, processed meats like bacon, sausage, and lunch meats can contain harmful compounds like nitrates and nitrites, which have also been linked to cancer.

Let go of excess weight
Being overweight (BMI above 25) can place you at greater risk for developing certain cancers. Studies have shown that even modest weight loss can reduce those risks significantly.

Drink alcohol in moderation
Moderate alcohol consumption is defined as up to 1 drink (12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1½ ounces of 80-proof liquor) per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men.

Get regular cancer screenings
Check with your healthcare provider to determine which cancer screenings you need and how often.

Chocolate Green Smoothie

INGREDIENTS
• 1 1/2 cups kale
• 1 banana
• 1 1/2 cups hemp milk
• 1 tablespoon cacao powder
• 3 tablespoons hemp hearts
• 3-4 ice cubes

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Add all ingredients into a high speed blender.
2. Blend on high for 30 seconds to 1 minute, until smooth and creamy.
3. Pour into a glass, top with more hemp hearts, and enjoy!

Total Time (Cook and Prep):
5 minutes
Servings: 1

NUTRITION INFO (per serving)
- Calories 362
- Fat 33.5g
- Carbohydrates 15.3g
- Fiber 7.7g
- Sugar 4.4g
- Protein 7.5g

Source:
Navigate Wellbeing Solutions Recipe Library courtesy of Megan Roosevelt, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, Host, Video Producer as well as the founder and CEO of Healthy Grocery Girl.

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