

COMPLETELY WELL

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Insurance Agency

Benefits of Gardening

It may come as a surprise to you, but improving your landscape can also improve your health. Gardening provides many of the benefits of moderate physical activity: it can build upper body strength, improve overall flexibility and may even decrease your risk of Type II diabetes and heart disease.

Consider the activities associated with gardening and you can quickly see how gardening can be a great alternative to traditional exercise. Digging requires upper body strength. Weeding involves bending and stretching. Trimming trees or bushes also requires strength and flexibility. Mowing the lawn provides a great opportunity to walk for 20 or more minutes, depending on the size of your lawn, and can help strengthen and tone your upper body.

Equally important, gardening is a practical and aesthetic activity, offering a psychological lift as well as a physical workout. Interacting with nature and creating a beautiful surrounding for you and your family is great for stress reduction and an overall healthy lifestyle. And if you are growing a vegetable garden, your workout also benefits your diet!



If you are new to gardening, there are a variety of resources to help you, both online and at your local library/bookstore. Be sure to know what areas of your yard get the most sun and which are in the most shade. That will help determine what plants to choose. Depending on the quality of your soil, you may need to add nutrients for your plants to thrive. You can purchase fertile topsoil, look for natural fertilizers, or add natural compost. Start slow and allow room for your plants to grow over time. Gardening is an opportunity to choose the colors and greenery you want around you, adding value, beauty, and comfort to your home.



Understanding Autoimmune Disorders

What is an autoimmune disease?

Autoimmune diseases are defined as any disease or disorder in which the body sees some part of itself as a foreign invader, activating the immune system to attack what are really normal cells. There are over 80 different types of autoimmune diseases, each with its own symptoms, treatments, and prognosis. Many familiar diseases are actually autoimmune diseases, such as type 1 diabetes, lupus, celiac disease, Hashimoto's disease (underactive thyroid), psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis.

Who is affected by autoimmune disease?

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, over 23.5 million Americans are affected by an autoimmune disease. Diagnosing an autoimmune disease usually requires documenting symptoms, a complete family health history, and certain blood tests. Some autoimmune diseases have a genetic component, while others have a link to certain infections, exposure to specific chemicals, as well as predisposition based on gender and ethnic/racial background. Each autoimmune disease varies in regards to its prognosis, so it is important to see a doctor about any ongoing symptoms or concerns you have regarding a possible autoimmune disease.

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Produce of the Month Rhubarb

A sour vegetable, rhubarb is commonly associated with pie and other desserts. Rhubarb looks like red celery and is in season February through June, although it is usually available year-round.

The Basics: Choose rhubarb that does not have obvious blemishes, is wilted, or appears woody. It can be stored in the refrigerator until ready to use. Wash the stalks, and use a vegetable brush to get rid of any remaining soil. Be sure to cut off the leaves and throw away. **Rhubarb leaves contain oxalic acid and are considered poisonous.** The stalks can be prepared according to your favorite recipe. If you choose to freeze rhubarb, blanch first (1 minute in boiling water), then drop into ice water to cool. Remove from ice water after a minute, and place into containers to freeze.

Try This: For a twist on the classic strawberry and rhubarb duo, try this yummy salsa recipe as a snack or as a flavorful topping on baked chicken, fish, or even tacos. Ingredients you'll need: 1 rhubarb stalk, 1 red onion, 5 large strawberries, 5 tablespoons chopped coriander, 2 ½ Tbsp. olive oil, 1 ½ Tbsp. honey, 1 ½ tsp. apple cider vinegar, salt and pepper. Slice the rhubarb in half lengthwise and then finely slice it. Place it in a saucepan with boiling water over medium heat. Let it cook for only 1 minute (if you leave it too long it will become mush). Drain and chop the rhubarb so it's the same size as the onion. In a large bowl, mix the onion, strawberries and rhubarb. In a small container with a lid, mix the olive oil, apple cider vinegar, honey, some salt and pepper. Put the lid on and shake it to emulsify the dressing for the salsa. Add the dressing to the diced vegetable and mix in the chopped coriander. Adjust the salt and pepper to your liking.

The Facts: About 4 ounces of rhubarb contains 25 calories and is a great source of vitamins K and C. It is also a good source of fiber, calcium, and potassium.

Benefits of Biking

Biking is a great way to enjoy the outdoors and get in shape. Appropriate for almost any age, biking can be an aerobic activity that is good for the heart as well as a workout for your legs. Biking is also a low impact exercise making it ideal for individuals with back and joint pain.

If shopping for a bike, choose one that is comfortable: the right size and height for your build. Also, make sure that the seat is the right style for your comfort. The most important purchase after your bike is the helmet. Your helmet should sit level on your head and fit securely. Beginning in 1999, all bike helmets were required to meet federal safety standards. The helmet you buy should have a label stating it meets the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standard for safety.

While biking, follow the rules of the road, riding with traffic and obeying all traffic signs and lights. And be sure to carry personal identification with you. Do not bike while using headphones: you need to be able to hear any cars, dogs, or people who may approach. Stay visible at all times, wearing reflective clothing if riding at night. If taking a long ride, have water with you to stay hydrated.

Get out and enjoy the spring and summer months on your bike. Many cities and towns have designated bike paths for you to enjoy and explore. Take a quiet ride by yourself or head out with family or friends. It's a great, green way to get around and get fit.



Understanding Autoimmune Disorders

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How is autoimmune disease treated?

Treatment depends on the disease, but most doctors will also recommend lifestyle changes to accompany any medical treatment. In addition, many autoimmune diseases have flare-ups and remissions, time when the symptoms are worse and better. Inflammation is a common symptom of autoimmune diseases and can often be controlled with healthy eating, meditation, yoga, stress-reduction, and medication. If you are diagnosed with an autoimmune disease, keeping track of flare-ups can help you eliminate or reduce them, and be sure to work closely with your doctor to control your symptoms.

Being diagnosed with an autoimmune disease can be stressful and even emotional. Psychological and emotional factors contribute greatly to the onset and successful management of autoimmune disease, so it is important to seek professional guidance to help you work through trauma associated with your diagnosis and current or past life events. There are also support groups for those suffering from an autoimmune disease. You can find groups in your area by checking with local hospitals, community centers, national societies and foundations, or searching for online forums. Having a strong support team can help you stay on track with your treatment, learn from others experiences, and know that you are not alone.

How to Eat More Veggies

We all know that eating more vegetables is good for us. Here are some ways to get to the recommended 5 servings a day:

Make one meal a week a meatless meal.

By eliminating meat one night a week and replacing it with a vegetable based recipe, you will add more vitamins, minerals, and fiber to your diet. Portobello burgers, marinated eggplant, and grilled vegetable kabobs are just a few tasty options to try.

Try different methods of cooking.

Many vegetables can be cooked in a variety of ways, each impacting the flavor and texture of the vegetable. Try steaming, sautéing, roasting, and even grilling your vegetables. A grill basket is a good investment, as is a steamer basket. Fresh and dried herbs and spices, coconut oil, olive oil, and grass-fed butter can also add flavor to your vegetable dishes.

Add vegetables to each meal.

When making your plate, make sure to include at least one vegetable. Then work up to making half your plate vegetables.

Make it easy.

Most grocery stores have pre-cut vegetables in the produce section. If time is the problem, choose one of these. Frozen vegetables are another great option

Mix it in.

You can add vegetables to ground meat and many sauces. Make your own pasta sauce with shredded carrots, chopped spinach, and zucchini or add some to your favorite store brand. Finely chopped or grated vegetables can be added to hamburgers, meatloaf, taco meat, even tuna or chicken salad. Try adding chopped vegetables to an omelet or add a handful of kale or swiss chard to your favorite fruit smoothie.

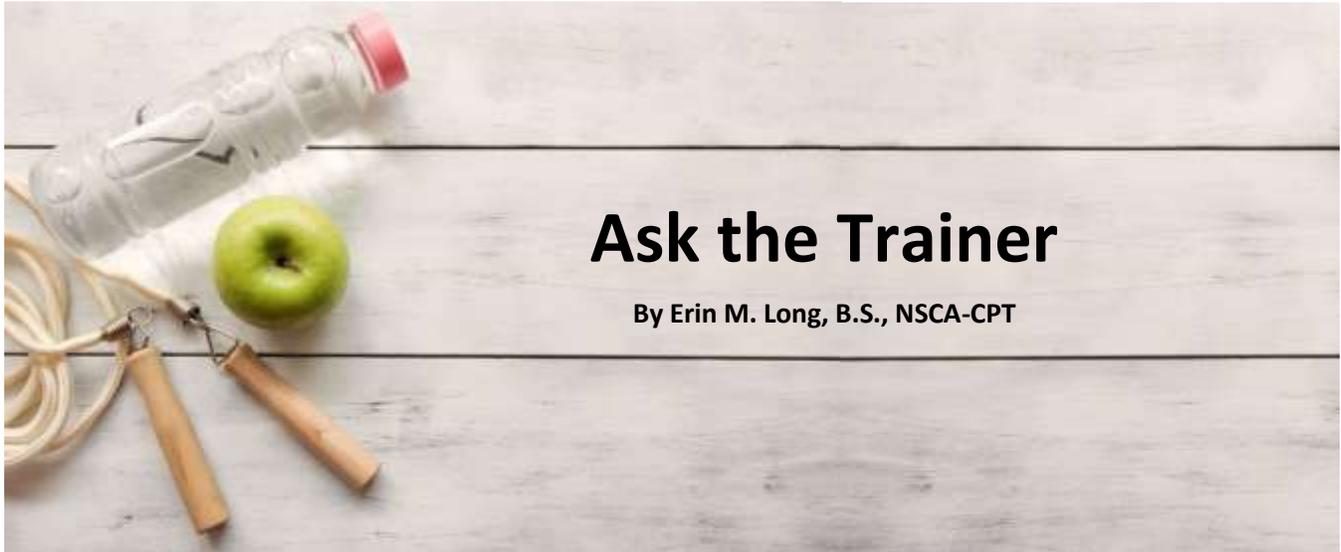
One a Week.

Commit to trying a new vegetable once a week. Run out of new ones to try? Try each again, choosing a different cooking method!

Add then eliminate.

To prevent feeling deprived, try adding vegetables to your diet before you eliminate the less healthy foods. Focus on filling up on vegetables, and you may be less hungry and even lose your taste for refined grains, sugary treats, and junk food. Don't believe it? You won't know until you try!





Ask the Trainer

By Erin M. Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT

Q: Hi Erin! My question for you is how important is drinking water for weight loss? Does flavored water count? I've heard yes and no so I'm curious. There is so much information out there saying drink this much or this much. It's very confusing. Any input would be appreciated.

-Candace M. (55)

A: Hello Candace! Thanks for the great question. Water is one of my favorite topics to talk about. You are completely right. There are so many different opinions out there on how much water to drink so I understand it can be confusing. I will be more than happy to give you my stance on the topic. Let me start by saying more than 75% of Americans are dehydrated and many of us don't even know or realize it. There are many signs or symptoms related to dehydration. One of the things I let people know is hunger can be a sign of dehydration. Next time you get a craving or get hungry, before reaching for food, ask yourself when was the last time you drank water? Then go drink at least 8 ounces of water, wait 10-15 minutes and see if you are still hungry. People should also pay attention to the color of their urine. Urine should be a transparent light yellow with no real scent so if it's a dark yellowish color that can be a sign of dehydration. Other signs of dehydration can be headaches, tired or trouble sleeping, dry skin, etc.

So, to avoid getting dehydrated, how much water should you drink? Some people recommend drinking 8 glasses a day, others recommend drinking half your body weight in ounces, and some say to drink a gallon each day. My first recommendation is to track how much you actually drink now on a regular basis. Most people are very inconsistent with drinking water so I would start by becoming more consistent and build from there. I encourage people to drink at least 64 ounces of water daily but if you only drink 16 ounces currently don't jump to 64 ounces. Start by adding another 16 ounces and gradually build to 64 ounces. Once you get there you can see how you feel.

If you drink caffeinated drinks or alcoholic beverages, be aware that they both act as a diuretic. So, if you drink 16 ounces of coffee or alcohol a day, make sure to drink at least that much more water daily to counter the diuretic consumed. Certain medications and supplements may require you to increase your water intake. Be sure to read the label and discuss with your healthcare provider if you have any concerns.

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Ask the Trainer

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Let's talk about flavored water, as this is another great topic. Flavored water like Crystal Light, Mio, Vitamin Water, etc. **DO NOT COUNT AS WATER.** It is not **NATURAL!!!!** These things contain food coloring, sugars, artificial sweeteners and other ingredients that can change the chemical formation of water. You want H₂O! Now to spice water up and add a little flavor you can add natural ingredients such as lemon, lime, cucumber, mint, or any fruit, vegetable or herb you like. It's amazing how refreshing infused water can be (and how it boosts your detox efforts).

Finally, how much water should you drink for weight loss? When working with clients looking to lose weight I encourage them to drink more than the 64oz of water. We are trying to flush fat and toxins out of the body and the way to do that is through excretion (going to the bathroom) and drinking water is what flushes these things out. Now you don't want to go overboard and drink too much to the point where you feel sick but spread out through the day you should be ok. The best way to do this is to drink a glass of water first thing in the morning and grab a reusable glass or stainless steel bottle to keep with you and drink it throughout the day. I have some clients who set an alarm on their phone to remind them to drink water as it is easy to get busy and forget.

If you have any further questions on this please let me know and I'd be happy to help!

-Erin Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT

Want to Know More? Contact TCU Insurance Agency for more information on wellness programs and how they can help you reduce healthcare costs and improve employee wellness.



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