

# Healthy Living News

A Publication of the Nutrition Services Division

## Stretching for Better Health

Have you noticed your muscles seem to be stiff more often? Or that it is harder to look over your shoulder? Do you have trouble putting on your coat?

If you answered yes to all or some of these questions, then you may have a decreased flexibility. As we age, we lose flexibility for several reasons:



1. Our muscles tend to become less elastic.
2. Chronic conditions like arthritis can cause stiffness, pain and swelling.
3. We stop moving!

Although we cannot avoid getting older, we can keep moving! Studies show that regular stretching helps to increase and maintain joint flexibility. Some benefits associated with stretching are:

- Prevent stiffness
- Decrease risk for injury
- Prevent joint deformity

Increased flexibility helps us with activities of daily living, such as reaching over, bending to pick-up



something from the floor, and getting dressed.

The ability to perform these activities is important for maintaining independence. Furthermore flexibility helps to prevent falls. A greater range of motion makes it easier to balance and also easier to recover when we do stumble. Finally, stretching and flexibility exercises can relieve pain, reduce tension and stress, and improve circulation.



So remember, when it comes to flexibility, it's best to use it ...or else you will lose it!

### Hamstring and Ankle Stretch:

- Sit with one leg extended and heel on floor with hands on opposite thigh
- Pull back, pointing toes toward ceiling
- Lean forward gently from hips, leaning your chest, until you feel a stretch in the back on the thigh
- Hold 10-20 seconds
- Repeat with other leg
- Repeat on each leg 3 times

Precaution: Joint surgery & back pain



Are you one of those people who look longingly at that grapefruit that comes with your VOA meal each month before you push it to the back of your tray? Grapefruit is low in calories, high in fiber, potassium, and vitamin C, and is on the American Heart Association Shopping List; however, it can also be dangerous to those taking calcium channel blockers, statins, and other heart medications. That is because grapefruit contains chemicals called furanocoumarins that interfere with the enzyme that breaks down these medications in your digestive system. This means that your body isn't able to use the drug properly, if at all, and it can build up to unsafe levels in your bloodstream. Since the effect can last up to 72 hours, it won't help to take your pill at a different time of day than your grapefruit juice. This same chemical is present in pomelos and Seville oranges, so these, too, may be "forbidden fruit" for people with heart disease.

If you're not a grapefruit lover, this won't be a problem for you. But if it takes all your will power to keep from devouring those succulent pink wedges and squeezing the last drop of juice into your spoon, you may want to talk to your doctor about trying an alternative drug. Not all heart medications interact this way with grapefruit. Your physician will know whether yours does and if there is something else they can prescribe that is equally effective.



Medication for other conditions may also be compromised by grapefruit. Get a complete list at [www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org) or ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Those folks taking warfarin or Coumadin may also be avoiding eating green vegetables and other foods containing vitamin K, which can neutralize the effect of this blood thinner. However, studies have shown that it isn't necessary to exclude these nutritious foods from your diet. The most important thing is to keep your intake of foods high in vitamin K consistent from week to week. You don't want to eat one serving of spinach one week and five the next. A serving of spinach or other leafy greens is considered to be ½ cup of cooked vegetables or 1 cup raw.

Cranberry juice and alcohol may also interfere with the way warfarin works in your body. Again, consult with your physician. It may be difficult turning down grapefruit or collard greens if these are your favorite foods, but no forbidden fruit or vegetable is worth damaging your health.



# SUPER BOWL, SUPER SNACKS!

This year, Super Bowl Sunday falls on February 7<sup>th</sup>. Interestingly, it's only the fourth time in the history of the Super Bowl that it has taken place in February. Of course, we all know that along with the Super Bowl come Super Bowl parties and with Super Bowl parties come Super Bowl snacks. Though snacking sometimes has a bad reputation, it is actually a healthy thing to do. It keeps your metabolism running consistently throughout the day, helps you feel satisfied between meals, and prevents overeating during meals. However, it is important to watch *what* you are snacking on and *how much* you are eating. Here are some tips to help you choose the healthier snacks, whether it's during a party or on a regular day!



- Avoid snack foods that are breaded and fried. These foods contain fats that can negatively affect cholesterol levels.
- Choose fresh vegetables or snacks that are vegetable-based.
- Guacamole, bean dip, and salsa are all healthy dips for veggies or baked tortilla chips. Guacamole provides your body with healthy fats, bean dip provides fiber and other important nutrients, and salsa is a tomato in a different form!
- Put your snacks on a plate; don't eat directly from the package or bowl. This way, you won't eat more than you need without knowing it.

When at a party, it is okay to try all the different foods. Just pay attention to how much you put on your plate!



## Oven-Fried Zucchini Sticks

- Canola oil cooking spray
- 2 large egg whites, beaten
- 1 1/2 pounds zucchini (about 3 medium) cut into 1/2-by-3-inch sticks
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp cornmeal Salt/pepper to taste
- Preheat oven to 475<sup>o</sup> F. Coat baking sheet with cooking spray
- Combine flours, cornmeal and seasonings in Ziploc bag. Dip zucchini in egg white, then dry mixture. Place on baking sheet. Coat with canola spray
- Bake for 7 minutes; turn and bake until golden, about 5 minutes

## Creamy Spinach Dip



- 1/2 cup low-fat cottage cheese
- 1/4 cup nonfat plain yogurt
- 1 shallot, peeled 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 6 oz baby spinach 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp chopped chives
- 1 5-ounce can water chestnuts, rinsed
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- Pulse shallot and water chestnuts in food processor 'til coarsely chopped
- Add cream cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, lemon juice, and seasonings and pulse until combined.
- Add spinach and chives and pulse until incorporated
- Serve with baked pita chips

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The Volunteers of America is a national non-profit, spiritually-based human service organization. Since 1896 Volunteers of America Colorado Branch has been seeking to identify and serve the basic needs of the most vulnerable individuals and families in our community. If you would like information on how you can get involved, please call us at: 303-297-0408

*The Nutrition Services Division is funded in part by the Denver Regional Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging*

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*Hear your heart.  your health.*  
~Faith Seehill