

# 60-

## SECOND

# HEALTH

# BOOSTERS

Got a minute? We've got some good news. While a lot of what we're supposed to do to keep ourselves healthy is, frankly, time-consuming (we're looking at you, homemade meals, a good night's rest, and aerobic exercise!), plenty of super-quick things will boost your health as well. The ones here can be done right at home—they take just a minute (or less!) and yield big results.

BY HOLLY PEVZNER



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## 1 PAUSE MID-MEAL

When you sit down to eat, take a moment to physically divide your food in half before you begin eating. "Consider the divide a 'speed bump,'" says Michelle May, M.D., author of *Eat What You Love, Love What You Eat*. "When you hit the bump, it reminds you to pause and slow down to reassess your hunger and fullness level—and stop before you're too full. It's very helpful."

## 2

**BUILD STRONGER BONES**

Running for at least one minute a day is associated with 4% better bone health (compared with running for less than a minute), according to research in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*. "This is important, especially because after menopause the rate of bone mineral density loss is approximately 1% a year," says study coauthor Victoria Stiles, Ph.D. "So doing 60 seconds of daily jogging essentially reverses about four years of this decline." (It's thought that the bone-building kicks in after six to 12 months of daily running.)

4 **CHANGE YOUR THERMOSTAT**

Lower the temperature two to three degrees after dinner and two to three more at bedtime, with a target of around 65°F, says W. Christopher Winter, M.D., author of *The Sleep Solution*. "In cooler temperatures, we tend to sleep more deeply and have fewer arousals."

5 **DIM THE LIGHTS**

Once the sun sets, mirror that darkness inside your home by dimming the lights. "This simple task helps promote production of the hormone melatonin, which has a sedating effect," says Dr. Winter. That means you'll fall asleep faster.



## 3

**FLOSS SMARTER**

"With practice, you can floss in under a minute. The sides of the teeth are where food and bacteria collect and cause problems," says Sargon Lazarof, D.D.S., a dentist in Los Angeles. If regular flossing is hard, try a water flosser that sends high-pressure H<sub>2</sub>O between teeth. "While not as efficient as floss, it's much better than not using anything," he says.



SNEAKERS: TREVOR RAAB; FLOSS: ALAMY.

6 **GAUGE YOUR FITNESS**

Sit down in a sturdy armless chair, back straight and feet on the floor. Then stand up. Then sit down. Repeat this up-and-down as fast as you can 10 times. In one study, middle-aged folks who took longer than 26 seconds to do this, or who could not finish, had increased risk of dying early. Can't do it? It may be time to move more.

8 **DRY YOUR HANDS**

You know to wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. But you're not done. "You need to take another 20 seconds to properly dry your hands," says Jeffrey D. Klausner, M.D., professor of medicine and public health at UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine and Fielding School of Public Health. Damp hands are more susceptible to germs.

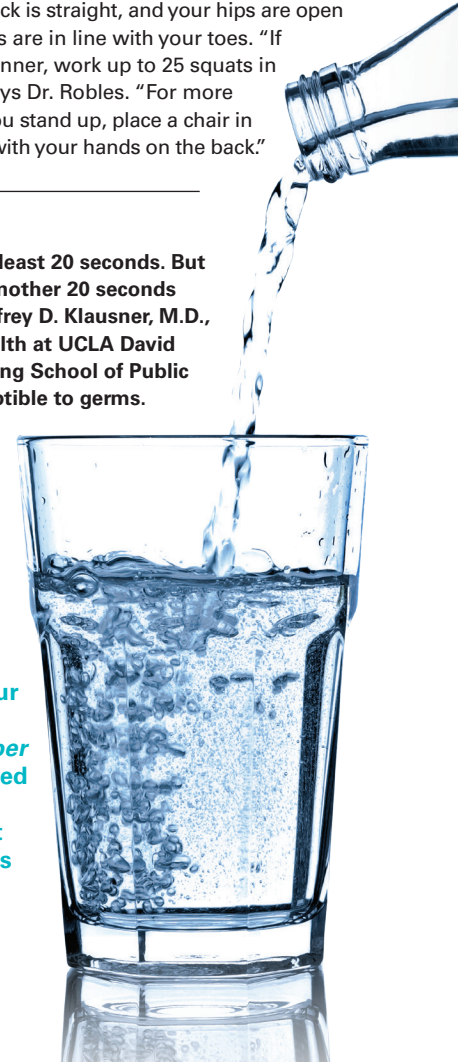
9 **LOAD UP ON A.M. H<sub>2</sub>O**

"Drink a large glass of water when you wake up in the morning, before your coffee," says Will Bulsiewicz, M.D., a gastroenterologist and the author of *Fiber Fueled*. "Not only are you super dehydrated from sleeping all night and perhaps getting up for the loo once or twice, but also, opting for water before coffee turns on your brain, kidneys, and gut faster—and you'll find that you are sharper and can wake up more quickly this way."

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7 **USE YOUR BODY WEIGHT**

No time for a full workout? "Do one minute of body-weight squats," says Alex Robles, M.D., a physician and certified personal trainer and founder of The White Coat Trainer. "Squats strengthen your legs; improve hip, ankle, and spine mobility; and increase blood flow throughout your body." They also target your core. Make sure your heels are flat on the floor, your back is straight, and your hips are open so your knees are in line with your toes. "If you're a beginner, work up to 25 squats in a minute," says Dr. Robles. "For more support as you stand up, place a chair in front of you with your hands on the back."



## 10

**RINSE YOUR BEANS**

That liquid your canned beans and veggies are swimming in is mostly salt and starch. A strain followed by a quick 10-second rinse will remove about 40% of the sodium. Then you can “add ½ cup to pretty much anything you’re eating for lunch or dinner every day,” says Tamara Duker Freuman, R.D., author of *The Bloating Belly Whisperer*. Fold into sauces and salads, add to veggie side dishes, mix with ground meat, and more. “Eating beans/legumes every day is the single common dietary factor among people who live the longest, most disease-free lives,” says Duker Freuman.

## 13

**HEALTHY UP YOUR CARBS**

“When enjoying a carbohydrate-rich food, like bread, pasta, or potatoes, drizzle it with some olive oil or vinegar first,” says Kelly Toups, R.D., director of nutrition at Oldways, a nonprofit food and nutrition education organization. “The fat and acid can considerably lessen the carbs’ glycemic impact.” In other words, this helps keep your blood sugar on an even keel, which can keep your energy even too.

11 **SAVE YOUR FACE**

You should be able to properly apply sunscreen to your face each morning in a minute or less, says Maritza I. Perez, M.D., senior vice president of the Skin Cancer Foundation. “Use a nickel-size dollop for full coverage, including the areas around the eyelids and nose.”

12 **PROTECT FORGOTTEN SKIN**

Take a few more seconds each morning to apply SPF to the backs of your hands, your neck, and your ears. “These are common spots for several kinds of skin cancer, so it’s vital not to miss them,” says Dr. Perez.

14 **TRY DEEP BREATHING**

“Take two to three deep breaths and, while focusing on your breath, think of three things that are going well for you—or things you’re looking forward to in the near future. Then write them down,” says Glenn R. Fox, Ph.D., head of design, strategy, and outreach at the USC Performance Science Institute in Los Angeles. An exercise like this can lower your heart rate and blood pressure and boost your mood.

15 **TRY THIS MINDFULNESS TRICK**

“Find a clock with a second hand and focus all your attention on the hand moving around for one minute,” says Clinton Moore, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Sydney, Australia. “The more you practice, the more you’ll build up your ‘attentional muscle,’ or mindfulness.” Doing this can benefit both your physical health and your emotional health.

## 16

**BREW A CUP OF TEA**

For many varieties of green tea, just one minute of brewing is all that’s needed for a beverage that packs a big health punch. In fact, drinking green tea at least three times a week has been linked with an approximately 25% lower risk of heart disease and stroke, according to a new study in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*.

17 **GO ON A STAIR RUN**

Vigorously climbing 60 steps in 20 seconds three times a day, three days a week for six weeks boosts cardio fitness by about 5%, says a 2019 study. That might seem modest, but “even a small increase in cardiorespiratory fitness improves overall health and reduces your chance of developing cardiovascular disease,” says study author Martin Gibala, Ph.D. That’s a big win!

18 **BE NICER TO YOURSELF**

When you’re about to tell yourself something harsh or demeaning, pause for a moment and ask, “Would I say this to my best friend?” This simple question allows you the space to think about the compassion we often have for others, but don’t always show ourselves,” says Jessica Zucker, Ph.D., a psychologist in Los Angeles who specializes in women’s health.



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ISTOCKPHOTO.

**19 SWISH FOR 30**

Slashing mouthwash for at least 30 seconds allows enough time for all your teeth to be exposed to the antibacterial properties of the rinse. "While you can do it any time, doing it before bed is best," says Lazarof. "When you sleep, your mouth is drier, which allows bacteria to do most of the damage, so mouthwash can help blunt the effects." (Look for a mouthwash that carries the American Dental Association Seal of Acceptance.)

**20 AMP UP YOUR BREAKFAST**

Add 3 Tbsp of hemp hearts (a.k.a. seeds) to your yogurt, smoothie, or oats to shoehorn in 10 extra grams of plant-based protein. "Eating protein in the a.m. helps keep blood sugar and energy levels stable all morning, which means your hunger and mood are more stable too," says Desiree Nielsen, R.D., the author of *Eat More Plants*.

**21 SOOTHE BACK PAIN**

Sit up straight in a chair, hands on thighs and shoulders down. Pull your shoulders back, squeeze the blades together, and hold for five seconds. "Repeat this three to four times daily to strengthen your back muscles and mitigate back pain," says Neel Anand, M.D., a professor of orthopedic surgery and the director of spine trauma at Cedars-Sinai Spine Center in Los Angeles. When you slouch, the muscles and ligaments in your back strain and work double-time to keep you balanced.

**22****DO SOME PRODUCE PREP**

Take a quick minute each morning—or the previous night—to cut up at least one fruit and/or vegetable to snack on during the day. "It's such an easy way to increase your intake of fiber, vitamins, minerals, and anti-inflammatory phytochemicals, which do things like improve digestion, support healthy skin, and help keep blood sugar stable and make your body more resilient against everyday damage," says Nielsen. And research suggests that adding fresh fruits and veggies to your routine may improve your mood and motivation.

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**23 STAND UP!**

"It's thought that when we sit for prolonged periods, toxins also sit, which promotes damage to our blood vessels, increasing our risk for heart disease and related diseases," says Monique Tello, M.D., a clinical instructor at Harvard Medical School in Boston. To combat the effect, Dr. Tello recommends standing up once an hour to help reduce the damaging effect on blood vessels.

**24 STRENGTHEN YOUR PELVIC FLOOR**

"Each time you're stuck at a stoplight, do five Kegel exercises, squeezing for about five to 10 seconds each," says Heather Bartos, M.D., an ob/gyn in Cross Roads, TX. To do them, squeeze (and release) the muscles you'd use to stop urine flow *without* engaging your upper abs, thighs, or butt muscles. "Doing these regularly strengthens the pelvic floor, which can prevent problems such as incontinence," says Dr. Bartos.

**26****EXAMINE YOUR BREASTS**

Spend one minute once a month on this task. "Always do it during the first week of your period, when the hormonal effects on breast tissue have subsided," says Sherry Ross, M.D., author of *She-ology*. **STEP 1** Stand in front of a mirror with your hands on your hips.

**STEP 2** Raise your arms over your head while looking for changes in the mirror.

**STEP 3** Gently squeeze your nipples to look for any discharge or fluid coming from them.

**STEP 4** Lie on your back and extend one hand overhead (the breast on that side is the one

you'll examine first). Using the opposite hand, run your fingers firmly over the breast tissue in a circular motion, over an area about the size of a quarter. (Think of the breast as a plus sign, feeling each quarter in a purposeful way.) Do the other breast, then check your underarms.

**25****SEND A MEANINGFUL TEXT**

Take a few seconds to text a sincere compliment to someone you love. "It's a quick way to do a random act of kindness that can boost the mood of the compliment receiver—and yours too!" says Laurie Santos, Ph.D., a professor of psychology and head of Silliman College at Yale University in New Haven, CT. Research shows that a random-acts habit can also increase life satisfaction.