

WELCOA\* | FEBRUARY 2022

# WELL BALANCED<sup>o</sup>

YOUR GUIDE TO A  
*Happy, Healthy  
Heart*

WHAT DOES IT  
TAKE TO BUILD A  
**STRONGER  
HEART?**

IT'S EASIER THAN  
YOU THINK!

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**HOW TO  
STAY ACTIVE**  
NO MATTER WHAT LIFE  
THROWS YOUR WAY

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HAVING A  
**HEART-TO-HEART**  
WITH THOSE YOU LOVE:  
YOUR ROLE IN  
**SUICIDE  
PREVENTION**

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½ cup kalamata olives, drained  
 ½ cup stuffed green olives, drained  
 1 Tablespoon capers, drained  
 1 clove garlic, minced  
 1 teaspoon lemon juice  
 1 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
 Heaping ¼ teaspoon fresh thyme  
 leaves pulled from stems (About 2 sprigs)

**DIRECTIONS:**

Put kalamata olives, stuffed green olives, capers, minced garlic, lemon juice, extra virgin olive oil, and fresh thyme leaves in a food processor. Pulse 5 or 6 times, until broken up but still chunky.

Move to a serving bowl. Garnish with more fresh thyme, if you like.

**SERVINGS:** Makes ¾-1 cup of tapenade.  
 Serves 8 people.

**NUTRITION INFO:**

*Calories 41, Fat 4g, Carbs 1g,  
 Protein 1g, Sodium 290mg*

# OLIVE Tapenade

**This Valentine's Day, say "olive you" with this easy dip! It comes together in just 5 minutes. Add it to a romantic appetizer spread along with crackers or toasted crostini.**

**WHAT IS TAPENADE?**

Tapenade is a spread made from olives and capers. It comes from the Provence region of France. The word itself is derived from tapenas, which means capers.

Low calorie capers are immature flower buds. They contain fiber and antioxidants, as well as vitamins A, C, E, and K.

Look for them in the center aisles of most grocery stores near the jarred artichoke hearts and olives.



*From the Kitchen of* **CADRY NELSON** // Cadry is the writer, photographer, and recipe creator at Cadry's Kitchen, a vegan food & lifestyle blog. She shares plant-based comfort food classics that are ready in about 30 minutes. Cadry has been featured on Today, NBC News, Mashable, Reader's Digest, Shape, and Huffington Post. For more, visit [cadryskitchen.com](http://cadryskitchen.com).

# TREAT Yourself

On Valentine's Day it can feel like you're obligated to have dinner out at a restaurant. But on that night of the year more than any other, restaurants are packed. The staff is stretched thin, prices are higher than usual, and it can feel impolite to linger.

That's why I prefer to make something special at home. It's less expensive. It's healthier. And you can be as comfortable as you like. (Slippers encouraged!)

Here are some at-home Valentine's Day ideas to get the ball rolling.

## Breakfast in Bed

Breakfast feels infinitely more fun when it's served on a platter with a flower and handwritten card.

To drink, make coffee and freshly squeezed orange juice. Enjoy the OJ on its own. Or serve it in a champagne flute with a few glugs of sparkling wine as a mimosa.

Orange juice is packed with vitamin C, folate, and potassium.

For the main event make that perennial favorite, avocado toast. Arrange the avocado in beautifully displayed out slices on toasted whole wheat, and

finish with a sprinkling of Everything But the Bagel seasoning. Top with pickled red onions for a pop of pink.

A serving of avocado delivers 26% of your daily value of Vitamin K, 20% of folate, and 17% of Vitamin C. Plus, avocados contain more potassium than bananas!

More breakfast in bed ideas:

- » Acai or smoothie bowl topped with fresh fruit and granola
- » Pancakes or waffles with maple syrup
- » Polenta or grits
- » Breakfast potatoes with bell peppers and onions

## Sweet Treats That Will Make You Melt

It's just not Valentine's Day without chocolate. You could go to the store and buy chocolate dipped fruit. However, it's easy to make at home with the help of your microwave.

Microwave ½ cup of semi-sweet chocolate chips in a small bowl for about 50 seconds, stopping once halfway through to stir.

At first it may look like the chips aren't melting, but once you start stirring, you'll see how they lose their shape.

Work quickly and dip any of the following into the melted chocolate:

- » Strawberries or raspberries
- » Sliced bananas, apples, or oranges
- » Pineapple chunks
- » Pretzel sticks

(Make sure you've thoroughly dried the fruit before dipping. Chocolate sticks best to fruit that isn't wet.)

Put the chocolate dipped fruit onto a parchment paper covered plate. Then pop it into the refrigerator for 15 minutes to harden.

Chocolate isn't just delicious. It also contains powerful inflammation-fighting antioxidants that protect against cell damage caused by free radicals.

You'll reap the most rewards from dark chocolate, which has been shown to lower blood pressure, balance the immune system, and improve brain function. Look for chocolate that has at least a 70% cacao content.



**About CADRY NELSON** // Cadry is the writer, photographer, and recipe creator at Cadry's Kitchen, a vegan food & lifestyle blog. She shares plant-based comfort food classics that are ready in about 30 minutes. Cadry has been featured on Today, NBC News, Mashable, Reader's Digest, Shape, and Huffington Post. For more, visit [cadryskitchen.com](http://cadryskitchen.com).

# SIMPLE STEPS TO A STRONGER HEART



Your heart is a workhorse. It beats about 100,000 times a day, pumping blood to deliver a continuous supply of oxygen and other vital nutrients to your entire body. So, if your heart isn't functioning properly, it can affect your overall health, and can even prove to be fatal.

Fortunately, there's a lot you can do to get your heart healthier and keep it that way. Here are some super simple-to-follow steps you can start taking today to achieve better heart health.

**Walk around your block, your building, in the halls, etc.** The idea here is to simply move, and anything, even if it's for 60 seconds counts! Any type of movement and exercise helps to control or modify many of the risk factors for heart disease. Further, several studies have shown that people who exercise regularly are less likely to suffer a sudden heart attack or other life-threatening cardiac event.

**Make small adjustments to your grocery list.** A recent study published in the journal *European Heart Journal Quality Care Clinical Outcomes*, indicated that more than two-thirds of heart disease-related deaths worldwide can be linked to food choices.

Experts note that small changes seem to work best when it comes to diet because when people try to make drastic changes they usually don't stick with them. Aim to add a few more fruits and vegetables to your grocery list. Whole grains, nuts, and seafood like salmon and tuna are also heart healthy options. Again, aim to gradually eat more of these types of food every week. Eating an apple instead of a bag of chips are small swaps that can make a big difference.

**Have a cup of tea.** According to a study in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* tea appears to slow the natural decrease in

HDL cholesterol, also known as the "good cholesterol". The study monitored more than 80,000 people over a six-year period and found regular tea drinkers had a slower age-related decrease in HDL levels. That decline was linked to an eventual eight percent decrease in cardiovascular risk among those in the study.

**Carry your own groceries, laundry baskets, books, etc.** The American Heart Association and the American College of Sports Medicine both recommend combining aerobic exercise (walking, swimming, biking) with resistance training (moderate weightlifting). Experts say these two categories of exercise produce the greatest benefit for preventing and managing heart disease. You don't have to necessarily hit the free weights to gain benefits. Simply carrying your groceries, laundry, and other everyday items is a great place to start.

**Floss.** Poor oral health hasn't been shown to cause heart disease, but several studies have shown that people who have poor oral health (such as gum disease or tooth loss) have higher rates of cardiovascular problems such as heart attack or stroke. Regular flossing is a great way to remove plaque and bacteria that's missed even with brushing and can help with your overall oral health.

**Wash your hands often.** Infections like the flu and pneumonia can be very hard on the heart. Washing your hands before eating, after using the restroom, and after being in public places is an easy and simple way to protect your heart and health.

**Do something every day to unwind.** Stress takes a toll on your heart health and can negatively affect your blood pressure levels (a key risk factor for heart disease). Carve out time every day to do an activity that helps you relax. This can be deep breathing, walking with a friend, watching your favorite show—anything that helps you unwind.

## ♥ Ask the Expert...

### How do I know if I'm at risk for heart disease?

Several health conditions, your lifestyle, and your age and family history can increase your risk for heart disease. These are called risk factors. Anyone can get heart disease, but you're at higher risk if you:

- » Have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes
- » Smoke
- » Are overweight or have obesity
- » Don't get enough physical activity
- » Don't eat a healthy diet

Some risk factors for heart disease cannot be controlled, such as your age or family history. But you can take steps to lower your risk by changing the factors you can control.

WELL BALANCED™ has an impeccable reputation for providing trustworthy information to improve your well-being and create healthier work cultures. Our network of physicians, dietitians, wellness professionals, and more are here to answer your crucial health questions.

*Have a question?* Ask our experts by going to [welcoa.org/expert](http://welcoa.org/expert). If your question is selected we will contact you directly with your answer and it will be featured in an upcoming issue.

*All questions are handled in confidence and will not, without prior consent, be disclosed or used by WELL BALANCED™ or its contributors.*



# LINE OF Sight

## How to Protect and Maintain Eye Health

When it comes to eye health many adults mistakenly believe that as long as nothing is bothering their eyes, there's no need to get them checked out. However, getting regular eye exams is very important, even if you think your vision is fine. Eye exams allow an eye care professional to monitor your eyes for common vision problems and signs of disease. There aren't early warning signs for the most common eye diseases, so by identifying diseases early, you have the best treatment options and the best chance of preserving good vision.

If you haven't had an eye exam in more than a year or at all, schedule one now. A comprehensive exam will often include eye dilation. After checking your vision sharpness, your doctor will place drops in your eyes to dilate (widen) the dark center of your eyes, called the pupil. This allows more light into your eyes, just like opening a door lets light into a dark room. The doctor can then examine the inside of your eyes. Your eye doctor will talk to you about the results of the exam and may prescribe glasses or other treatments. They'll also let you know when you should come back for another exam.

### Pro Tips to Protect Your Peepers

Healthy habits that protect your overall health can also go a long way to protect your eye health. These include not smoking, eating a healthy diet (especially dark leafy greens like spinach or kale), and maintaining a healthy weight. Also, know your family's history with eye health problems. Certain diseases can run in families. Additionally, there are simple steps you can take every day to keep your eyes healthy. Use these tips to protect your eyes from things that can harm them.

**Wear sunglasses, even on cloudy days.** Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can damage your eyes. Wear sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of both UVA and UVB radiation every time you go outside.

**Wear protective eye wear.** Safety glasses and goggles can protect your eyes during certain activities, like playing sports, doing construction work, or doing home repairs. You can buy them from most eye care providers and some sporting goods stores.

**Take eye breaks.** People of all ages are spending more time focused on digital screens, giving their eyes a marathon of a workout every day. Rest your eyes by taking a break every 20 minutes to look at something about 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

**Practice good hygiene.** Always wash your hands before you put your contact lenses in or take them out. Be sure to disinfect your contact lenses and replace them regularly.



According to the CDC, an estimated 93 million adults in the United States are at high risk for serious vision loss, but only half visited an eye doctor in the past 12 months.



# STAY FIT Forever!

At the start of the year many people make ambitious resolutions around fitness. Unfortunately, by the time February rolls around many of these resolutions have fizzled because they're not realistic. Indeed, when it comes to exercise, we often think about how to get fit, but so many of us fail because we don't put time or effort into how to stay fit.

Staying fit isn't always easy, especially when you factor in busy schedules, nasty weather, and/or waning motivation. This isn't to say it's impossible though! Heed these tips to get and stay moving for the long haul.

**Focus on feelings.** Yes, a great benefit of regular exercise can come in the form of a strong, sleek physique. But if outward appearances are your only motivation, you're likely setting yourself up for failure. As we age it becomes more challenging to attain our ideal physique. You can certainly continue to work towards it, but you may be disappointed and give up if you're not meeting these superficial goals. Instead, focus on how exercising makes you feel. For many, physical activity is a way to relieve stress, it makes them feel good, strong,

and confident. Think about the immediate benefits and feelings you'll experience after exercising—those are items that should keep you motivated to move forever.

**Identify what works for you.** If previous exercise routines haven't worked, don't beat yourself up. Instead, think about what you enjoy and what could work for you. Maybe that means working out over your lunch hour because you never have time after work. Or perhaps it's a walk in the morning before your day begins. Think about what you like to do and when you're most likely to actually do it.

**Think small.** Remember that exercise doesn't have to be a solid hour at the gym. Any type of movement for any period of time counts. A few 10-minute walks over the course of the day can do the trick. Taking the stairs, having a walking meeting, getting up to stretch and get a few steps in every hour that you're sitting can all add to your daily physical activity goals.

**Grab a buddy.** Having someone else to exercise with is a great way to make physical activity more fun, and it's also an excellent way

to keep you accountable. Think of someone who may want to join you on a walk, bike ride, etc.

**Plan for the day ahead.** Planning is a critical element to staying active. Whether it's bringing a pair of walking shoes to work, getting your workout clothes ready for the next day, or blocking out time on your calendar—prepare for the day ahead to help ensure you get your exercise.

## Why Exercise Matters as We Age

Physical activity is particularly important as we age. Regular exercise has been shown to:

- » Keep your bones, muscles, and joints healthy
- » Make you less likely to have things like diabetes, colon cancer, and osteoporosis
- » Manage stress and improve your mood
- » Lower your chances of heart disease
- » Help with your balance, so you're less likely to fall and break bones





# THE PART YOU CAN PLAY IN Suicide Prevention

A recent survey from the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention revealed that 95 percent of the respondents would do something if they knew someone who was contemplating suicide. However, 70 percent of those respondents identified barriers preventing them from discussing suicide with others, including not knowing what to say.

One of the key factors for preventing suicide is social connectedness. We can make sure our friends, family members, and neighbors who may be struggling know they are not alone.

## Your Role in Prevention

One of the most important things you can do to help prevent a suicide is to know what to look out for when a loved one is struggling. Warning signs for suicide include:

- » Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself
- » Seeking a means to kill oneself, like searching for options to harm oneself or trying to buy a gun online

- » Reckless behavior accompanied with no fear of consequence
- » Talking about feeling trapped, being in unbearable pain, or being a burden to others

Being able to recognize these warning signs and being able to take action can save lives. If you recognize any of these warning signs, ask the person directly whether they have considered suicide. People are sometimes concerned that if they bring up suicide, they might put the idea in someone's head. However, research shows that is not the case. It's best to be honest and direct. You could say something like, "I've heard you say you feel like your worthless and no one cares about you. Are you thinking about hurting yourself?" Show them that you've noticed their behavior, are concerned, and are there to help and support them.

If you think someone is contemplating suicide, it's always best to err on the side of caution

and seek professional help. Waiting to seek help can truly be the difference between life and death. You can visit the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>. The organization provides 24/7 free confidential support, and you can call or chat with one of their counselors for guidance. Their counselors can walk through any concerns, either with you or the individual you are concerned about, and help you connect to needed support.



According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the rate of suicide is highest in middle-aged white men.