

Top 10 Tips for a Great (and Safe!) Summer

A vacation that includes fun, physical activities and delicious, healthy foods is one that is sure to refresh your body and renew your spirit. So whether you're planning a week at the shore, a hiking adventure in a national park or a staycation, here are ten tips to keep your summer fun, healthy and safe.

1 Stay Hydrated



During hot weather you will need to increase your fluid intake, regardless of your activity level. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. During heavy exercise in a hot environment, drink two to four glasses or 16-32 ounces of cool fluids each hour.

3 Play Safely

Always wear the appropriate protective equipment for the sport or activity you're involved in. Insist that everyone in your group (including yourself) wear a helmet when biking, horseback riding, rock climbing, skateboarding or riding scooters.



5 Be Safe in or Around Water



Adults should not be involved in any other distracting activity such as reading, talking or texting on a cell phone while supervising children in the water. Do not use air-filled or foam toys, such as water wings, pool noodles or inner tubes in place of life jackets.

7 Drive Safely

You don't want to remember your trip for spending it in the emergency room. Start with safe driving by always wearing a seat belt and not driving when you're drowsy. Challenge yourself to stay off the cell phone when you're behind the wheel!



9 Plan Activities Everyone Can Enjoy



State-sponsored tourism websites are a great resource to plan a vacation. Activities might include bike riding, hiking, sightseeing tours and kayaking—they are activities nearly everyone can participate in.

2 Protect Your Eyes

UV radiation from the sun can damage the skin on your eyelids as well as the cornea, lens and other parts of the eye. It also contributes to the development of cataracts. Choose sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of both UVA and UVB rays.



4 Save Your Skin



Wear waterproof sunscreen that blocks UVA and UVB rays. Limit exposure to very reflective surfaces such as sand, water and buildings. Apply it regularly, even on cloudy days. Limit your time in the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

6 Eat for Optimal Fitness

Don't let vacation be an excuse for daily splurges. Maintaining a healthy diet will give you more energy to enjoy your time off. Learn about local foods and food production. Go berry picking. Tour a working farm or stroll through a farmers market.



8 Pack a Vacation First Aid Kit



Occasionally, health problems arise when you're away from home. In addition to a basic first aid kit, pack a plastic bag with your medications and health-related supplies. Include medications your family regularly uses.

10 Relax!

Don't try to cram so much into your vacation that you aren't able to sit back and enjoy it. Plan nap times during the hours when the sun is high. Use downtime to keep a journal of your trip.



Can You Change Your Brain?

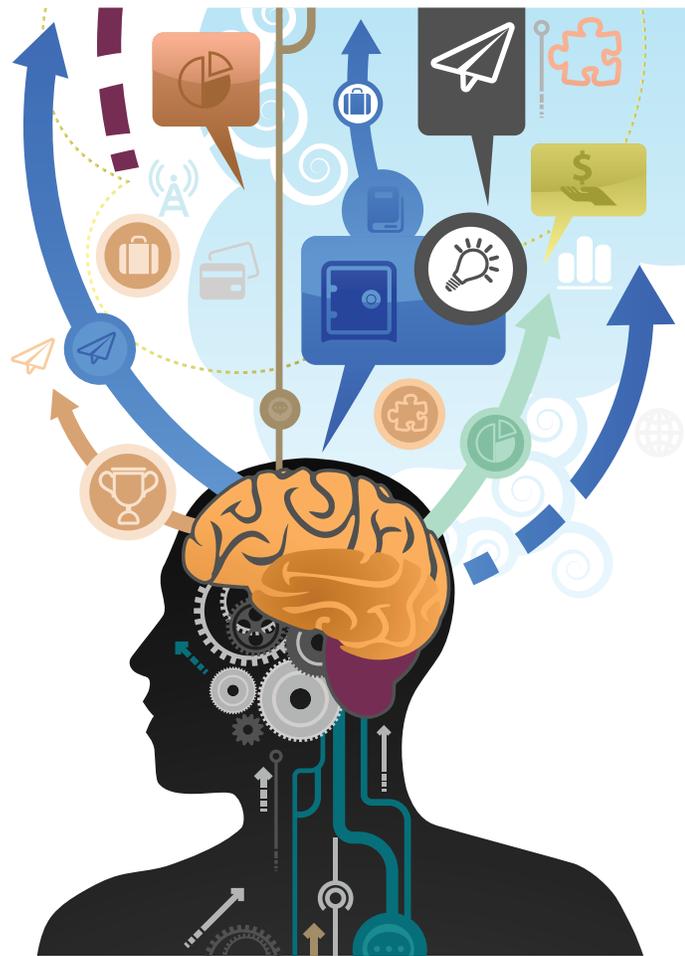
A few hours of meditation training may change your brain for the better, a new study suggests. Researchers using imaging technology have found that people develop measurable changes in the white matter of the brain after learning "mindfulness meditation." Also called "integrative body-mind training," it involves periods of intense focus and concentration.

"The notable physical changes suggest that short-term meditation can improve self-control, mood, stress response and immunity response," said Michael Posner, a co-author of the study and a professor emeritus at the University of Oregon.

Key areas of the brain were measured before and after the meditation training, which involved 30 minutes of either integrative body-mind training or relaxation training over a two-week period. The training totaled five hours for each group. The researchers found evidence of measurable changes in white matter associated with a part of the brain network related to self-regulation—the anterior cingulate cortex—after practicing focused meditation. The same changes did not occur after relaxation-oriented meditation, which emphasizes sequential relaxation of different muscle groups.

"What's so impressive to me is that, in this study, they actually quantify that there's evidence for changes in the structure of the brain and a dynamic process at work," Schiff said. "It's very important to characterize how the adult brain modifies in response to the environment."

The Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine has more information on the mind-body connection at <http://www.massgeneral.org/bhi/basics/>



Recipe: Banana-Berry Smoothie

You can make this smoothie year-'round because it contains frozen fruit. The ripeness of the banana is important here: if the banana is more starchy than sweet, your smoothie will taste dull. Blueberries and strawberries are packed with anthocyanadins, the antioxidant compounds that give them their blue and red colors, and they're a very good source of vitamin C, manganese and fiber, both soluble and insoluble. Bananas are also a very good source of vitamin C and manganese, as well as potassium, fiber and vitamin B6. Add the protein and calcium in the milk, and you've got a meal.

Ingredients

1 medium-size or large, ripe banana

Note: You can substitute frozen banana for the fresh. When your bananas begin to ripen and soften too much, peel, cut in chunks, and freeze in small resealable bags. Use in smoothies, and you won't need ice.

1/2 cup frozen blueberries

4 fresh or frozen strawberries, hulled

1 cup milk

1 teaspoon honey

2 or 3 ice cubes if desired

Preparation

Place all of the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth. Serve right away.

Variation: almond milk may be substituted for the milk.

Yield: One 16-ounce or two 8-ounce servings.

Advance preparation: Smoothies should be made and drunk right away. This will thicken and lose flavor if it sits.

Nutrition Information (per 1 8 oz. serving)

Calories: 250

Sodium: 0 mg

Total Fat: 3 g

Total Carbs: 35 g

Dietary Fiber: 5 g

Sugars: 17 g

Protein: 8 g

Calcium: 15 g

Potassium: 442 mg

Vitamin B6: .433 mg

Vitamin C: 50 % of daily value

