

# HealthyLife®

## LETTER

MARCH  
2023



## Prevent back pain

Back pain is one of the most common medical complaints in the U.S. And a lack of fitness may increase your risk.

Try these four exercises to keep your back healthy. Hold each one for several breaths and repeat 3-4 times to build strong core muscles.

- **Superman:** Lie on your belly with your arms at your sides. Firm your abdominal muscles and slowly lift your legs, arms, and chest off the floor.
- **Bird dog:** Begin on hands and knees, lift and extend one arm forward and the opposite leg behind. Firm the abdominal muscles, so your belly doesn't sag. Switch sides.
- **Bridge:** Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor, and arms alongside your body. Lift your hips into a bridge position.
- **Toe taps:** Lie on your back with your knees aligned over your hips and shins parallel to the floor. Alternate tapping one foot and then the other on the floor for 10-15 repetitions.

# Put herbs on the menu

Herbs add flavor and interest to food. But they are also plants with potential health benefits. Some herbs have been used in cooking or as medicine for hundreds of years.

Using herbs to season your meals provides a delicious boost of plant nutrients.

## TYPES OF HERBS

- **Basil:** often used to flavor sauce and pesto
- **Oregano:** goes well with meat, vegetables, and tomato-based dishes
- **Rosemary:** strong flavor that complements potatoes, meat, soups, vegetables, and dressings
- **Sage:** goes well with pork, beef, stuffing, and sausage
- **Parsley:** adds a bright taste to savory dishes
- **Cilantro:** goes well with spicy food such as salsa, stir-fries, and curry

## HEALTH BENEFITS

Though commonly used in small amounts, herbs are a rich source of nutrients called polyphenols. These compounds may provide anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, and anti-cancer benefits. More research is needed to clarify their potential, but when consumed regularly, benefits may include:

- Lower blood pressure
- Boosted immune system
- Lower risk of diabetes
- Improved mood
- Lower cholesterol
- Protected brain health

## TIPS ON USING HERBS

- Use fresh or dried herbs. One tablespoon of fresh herbs is equal to 1 teaspoon dried or ¼ teaspoon powdered.
- When using fresh herbs, use a knife to cut the leaves and help release their flavor.
- When herbs are used in cold dishes, allow time for the flavors to blend.
- When using fresh herbs in hot dishes, add them closer to the end of cooking to preserve their flavor.
- Dried herbs can be added to hot dishes early in cooking for better flavor.
- Whole spices and dried herbs lose potency over time. Purchase them in small quantities, so they don't sit in your spice cabinet for years.



# What to do when thoughts intrude

If you've ever had a strange or disturbing thought pop into your head seemingly out of nowhere, you may have had what's known as an intrusive thought.

Knowing how to handle these thoughts can make them less disruptive. Instead of being alarmed, you can put it in its proper place and carry on with life.



## WHAT ARE INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS?

An intrusive thought most often meets these criteria:

- **It isn't something you would typically think about:** For example, you stand near a height and suddenly think, "what if I jumped?" That's a very common intrusive thought and not something you would think normally.
- **The thought bothers you:** If you feel alarmed or disturbed by the thought, it's likely intrusive.
- **The thought is hard to control:** Often, the more you try to get it to go away, the more it seems to stick in your mind.



## WHERE DO INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS COME FROM?

Because intrusive thoughts can be strange or disturbing, it's common for people to worry it's a sign they want to actually do what pops up in their mind. But these thoughts occur to most people, though it's rarely discussed. It doesn't mean anything more than that the brain is a creative, imaginative organ that sometimes sends mixed messages.

For most people, these thoughts are not harmful, though they can feel upsetting at the time. A few things may increase intrusive thoughts:

- Stress and anxiety
- Hormone shifts, such as after childbirth
- Trauma or PTSD

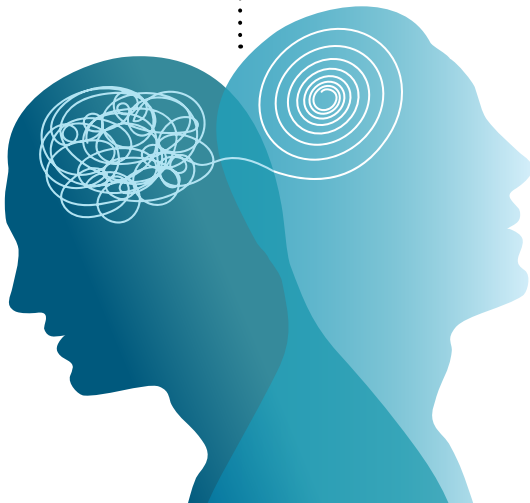


## WHAT TO DO

When an intrusive thought pops into your head, try these steps:

- Acknowledge that it is an intrusive thought.
- Don't try to make it go away. Just let it be, and don't fixate on it.
- Be kind to yourself. Don't judge the thought or give it meaning.

If intrusive thoughts happen frequently or begin to affect daily life, a mental health professional can help. There are effective therapies that teach you to manage your thoughts and not be disturbed by them.



# Suicide prevention at work



BECAUSE COWORKERS SPEND A LARGE PORTION OF THEIR TIME TOGETHER, THEY MAY BE THE FIRST TO NOTICE WHEN SOMEONE IS IN CRISIS. EARLY SUPPORT & INTERVENTION CAN SAVE A LIFE.



#### **Risk factors**

Substance abuse, depression, social isolation, serious illness, and high-conflict relationships are among the common risk factors for suicide.

#### **Protective factors**

A person may be less likely to turn to suicide if they feel connected to their friends, loved ones, and community, have access to quality mental health care and learn effective coping skills.

#### **Warning signs**

Watch for additional warning signs such as expressing hopelessness, mood swings, neglecting responsibilities, talking about being a burden, and being isolated. If someone talks about or has a plan to end their life, act immediately.

#### **Ask questions**

Find a private place to ask your coworker questions. Express why you're concerned about them and offer support.

#### **Call or text 988**

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is staffed by trained professionals who provide guidance in a crisis. Anyone can call 988, whether they are in crisis, or are worried about a coworker, loved one, or friend.

#### **Additional support**

Connect your coworker with resources for further support. The National Alliance on Mental Illness at [nami.org](http://nami.org) offers many resources and access to local help.