



## Unplug and Unwind

**How would you feel about spending 24 hours away from your electronic devices?** The **National Day of Unplugging (NDU)**, observed every first weekend in March, has a message for us: Consider living an entire day, from sundown to sundown on March 3 to 4, without the static of technology.

**Computers, smartphones, smart TVs and video games are integral to our lives.** A typical American family maintains five devices connecting them to people, media, education, work, shopping and more, all at their fingertips. Our kids are growing up quickly in our high-tech world — a survey of 5,000 kids found that in 2021, 37% of 11-year-olds and 91% of 14-year-olds had a smartphone.

**Fortunately, for more than a decade,** NDU and its related resources have inspired schools, businesses and individuals to adopt and promote a positive life-tech balance.

**Hopefully, you are taking regular respites from your smart devices to get up and move about.** On your breaks, head outdoors for some fresh air and exercise. By routinely unplugging, you can find time to do some of your other favorite things.

**To maintain safe, appropriate online use,** teach kids from a young age about technology and positive online behavior. You may find it hard to stay on top of all the apps and sites your children may use. To keep up with the changing tech landscape, visit [saferinternetday.org](http://saferinternetday.org).



Learn more about going device-free at [unplugcollaborative.org](http://unplugcollaborative.org).

## Personalized Nutrition

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**Nutrition advice is often standard for healthy adults — eat more vegetables, choose whole grains and consume less sugar.** But what if you could get advice unique to your health needs?

**Personalized nutrition (also known as precision nutrition or nutrigenomics)** offers nutrition advice tailored to your genetics or microbiome (the bacteria in your digestive tract) — based on the assumption that we all respond differently to what we eat. For example, not everyone with type 2 diabetes reacts the same way to different foods, and there may be a personal reason behind it. One day you may be offered a DNA and microbiome test (measures bacteria in the digestive tract) to help advance your health.

**Some genetic tests can reveal how well you metabolize caffeine, vitamins and minerals.** While it's too soon to use personalized nutrition to treat chronic diseases, ongoing research may identify and help treat metabolic syndrome (a cluster of conditions occurring together that raise risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes), certain cancers and type 2 diabetes.

**Personalized nutrition is in its early stages.** The technology is expensive, not widely accessible and requires a health professional to interpret the results and help implement meaningful changes.

**The good news?** Research suggests these tests will be beneficial. One meta-analysis of 11 studies of personalized nutrition advice revealed that people were more likely to succeed with dietary changes through personalized, rather than general, advice. More to come.



March is Nutrition Month.



## Decompression 101

**Do you often get home from work and feel tense?** Whether it's a long commute, constantly facing deadlines or feeling revved up all day at a job you love, it can sometimes be hard to truly decompress and relax after work.

**Your mind and body need time to cultivate calm.** It can benefit your overall mental and physical health, with lower blood pressure and better sleep.

» Continued on the other side.



# Eating Disorders

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**One side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic was a rise in the number of people diagnosed with eating disorders.** Eating disorders are considered mental health conditions. They include:



- **Anorexia nervosa**, a mental illness that includes an intense fear of gaining weight and often an abnormally low body weight. It involves restriction of food and calories, over-exercising to burn calories, or both.
- **Bulimia nervosa**, a mental illness resulting in food restriction, binge eating (consuming a lot of food), and purging by vomiting or laxative use.
- **Binge eating disorder**, a mental illness characterized by eating large amounts of food and then feeling guilty or distressed afterward, but repeating that behavior on other occasions.

**While not officially a diagnosable eating disorder, orthorexia nervosa is increasingly common as well.** It's an obsession with healthy eating, leading to unhealthy dietary restrictions. Food restriction, such as cutting out all carbs, all fat or all sugar, can become so extreme that it causes obsessive thinking and malnutrition. It can lead to eating disorders, such as anorexia.

**Signs and symptoms** include a preoccupation with food, nutrients, calorie counting, weight loss, continual dieting, a refusal to eat certain foods, fear of food, skipping meals, extreme mood swings and withdrawing from friends or family.

**Causes include** genetics, biological vulnerability, environmental and social factors. Studies suggest eating disorders run in families, and researchers are trying to determine which genes may contribute to eating disorder risk. Illness, trauma or loss can trigger the onset of an eating disorder.

**Eating disorders are one of the deadliest mental illnesses, second only to opioid addiction.** But eating disorders are treatable. Successful treatment must address the symptoms, medical consequences, psychological factors and the social and cultural environments that contribute to or maintain the eating disorder.

**People with eating disorders** tend to have personality traits that include perfectionism, the desire to please others, sensitivity to criticism and self-doubt. As a part of treatment, therapy helps the patient manage the preoccupation with weight and other challenging emotions.

**Talk with your health care provider** if you think you may be at risk for an eating disorder.

## Ways to decompress: » Continued from the other side.

- Take a few minutes to breathe deeply and slowly. Inhale through your nose, and then breathe out, counting to ten. Repeat for at least three minutes and feel the stress leaving your body.
- Research shows soaking in a not-too-hot but relaxingly warm bath improves blood flow and reduces muscle tension. And that can help your mind take a breather, too.
- Exercise is a great way to relieve mental tension, and even if you don't feel like hitting the gym, a walk outdoors in nature alone or with your dog, friend or family member is pleasurable decompression therapy.
- Consciously stop being glued to your phone and computer. Listen to music, read, indulge in hobbies and talents you've ignored for a while. Spend quality time talking and listening to friends and family.
- If you know you need downtime, take a vacation day or two and relax at home.
- Studies show a therapeutic massage lowers the stress hormone cortisol.

**Note:** Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download, **Stretching Works Wonders**, is at [personalbest.com/extras/23V3tools](https://personalbest.com/extras/23V3tools).



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## Q: Concussion symptoms?

**A:** **Violent shaking or a blow to the head can result in a concussion, also known as a traumatic brain injury.** The most common causes are falls and contact sports. The injury can temporarily affect brain function, causing symptoms that may begin slowly and last for days or weeks.

**Headache, memory loss and confusion are the most common symptoms.** An inability to remember the event causing the concussion frequently occurs. Fatigue, drowsiness, foggy thinking, forgetfulness and a temporary loss of consciousness are not unusual. Other signs of a concussion are ringing in the ears, nausea, vomiting, blurry vision and trouble with balance and coordination.

**Seek medical care for an evaluation** within one to two days if you or someone under your care has suffered a head injury. Get emergency care immediately for repeated nausea or vomiting, loss of consciousness lasting more than 30 seconds, behavior changes, progressive headache, pupils of unequal sizes or if other worrisome signs develop.

— Elizabeth Smoots, MD

