

# PUBLICATION

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## Health Tip – An Apple a Day Keeps the Doctor Away

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An apple a day keeps the doctor away, or so the saying goes, and there appears to be some data to suggest eating apples may help with overall health. "In fresh fruit and vegetables, you get a complete package of healthy nutrients," says nutritionist Kathy McManus, director of the Department of Nutrition at Harvard-affiliated Brigham and Women's Hospital. "There is good data to show that the soluble fiber in apples can help prevent cholesterol from building up on artery walls. Apples contain a good amount of potassium, which can be beneficial for those who are watching their blood pressure."

We all wish avoiding doctor's visits was as simple as eating our favorite type of apple. Research does suggest, however, that there are steps we can all take to "keep the doctor away." Some of those lifestyle choices include the following: getting better (and more) sleep, incorporating exercise into our daily routines, eating a diet rich in fiber and whole fruits and grains, and taking steps to reduce stress.

For many people, stress reduction is a buzz phrase that is seemingly impractical given the demands of daily life. However, stress relief is critical. Stress has been linked to every major illness in the U. S., including heart disease, cancer and depression. Science has proven that Mother Nature may be the ultimate antidepressant and stress reliever. Exposure to natural light can increase levels of the mood-lifting chemical serotonin, says NYU psychologist Robert Reiner, Ph. D. A few minutes outside a day, eating on a patio during the summer or walking the dog (or baby) before or after work, are linked to stress reduction and preventing depression.

Doing something as simple as carving out a half-hour each day just to relax or "zone out" can also have a profound effect on stress levels. Try using that 30 minutes of uninterrupted time to:

- read (a study from England's University of Sussex found that reading can slash stress by 68 percent);
- listen to music (61 percent); or
- sip a cup of tea (54 percent).

Studies suggest that even though watching TV seems like the perfect "veg" activity, watching television actually stimulates the nervous system instead of providing a calming effect.

Summertime is also the perfect time to engage in a hobby. "Summertime activities that require repetitive motion, such as barbecuing (place burger on grill, flip, serve, repeat) or gardening (dig, plant, water, repeat), can lower blood pressure and heart rate." Research has shown that short periods (20 minutes or less) of repetitive motion shuts down the body's fight or flight response and actually allows for relaxation.

Eat an apple a day and treat yourself to a longer life by engaging in positive lifestyle choices instead of waiting in line at the doctor's office.