

Laughter—The Best Medicine?

When we laugh, we are living in the moment, and living in the moment directly reduces our stress by not ruminating about the past or worrying about the future. Laughing involves our entire being - body, mind, and soul. We are able, in that moment, to rise above minor physical and mental stressors and not take life so seriously. Laughter is fun, it's expressive, and it releases tension.



The short-term effects of laughter, aside from lightening our load mentally, include actual physical changes in our bodies.

- It enhances oxygen intake stimulating heart, lungs, muscles. It also increases endorphins.
- Laughter first revs up heart rate and blood pressure, but then decreases it resulting in a relaxed feeling.
- Laughter reduces blood sugar levels and increases glucose tolerance.

Laughing also has several long-term effects that include:

- Improving the immune system with positive thoughts that can release neuropeptides to fight stress and possibly more serious illnesses.
- Pain relief by causing the body to produce natural painkillers.
- Mood enhancement – laughter helps to lessen stress, depression, and anxiety.
- Improved coping mechanism – Laughter, and looking at life in a more positive way, can help make it easier to cope with difficult situations.
- The enhancement of relationships by establishing and restoring a sense of connection between 2 people.
- Improvement of job performance - especially if what you do involves solving complex problems and creativity.

Go ahead and laugh a little - or a lot. Smile and laugh even if it feels a



Kale & Apple Smoothie

Apple slices and nut butter are a favorite after-school snack, and they taste just as satisfying in this smoothie. Pick your favorite nut butter: cashew for a less-prominent nutty flavor, or almond or peanut butter for a stronger taste.

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups baby kale
- 1 large apple, cored and quartered
- 2 tablespoons cashew butter or other nut butter
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 6 ice cubes
- 1 cup unsweetened milk of choice

Directions:

Add kale, apple, cashew butter (or other nut butter), honey, ice cubes and milk of choice to a blender. Blend on medium-low speed, using the tamper as necessary, until well combined. Increase speed to medium-high and blend until very smooth.

Servings 1, Calories 376, Carbs 49g, Protein 9g, Fat 19g

Recipe and photo – Casey Barber, <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/7899528/kale-apple-smoothie/>

(Human Maintenance, continued from page 1)

little foreign. Smile at the mirror. Smile at people you greet. Chuckle to yourself when reading or watching something amusing. Laugh at the dumb joke that you might normally roll your eyes at. Take stock of yourself. After you laugh, do you feel just a little less tense, a little lighter? Laughter really is one of the best medicines.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456>
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/200504/laughter-the-best-medicine>

Spine Conditioning Exercises - Core Strengthening

Spinal instability can contribute to low back pain, so it is important to keep your spine stabilized. A strong core can help accomplish this. Muscles and ligaments often weaken with age and those surrounding your spine are no exception, which can make twisting, stretching, lifting, and bending movements difficult. A stable spine is also more flexible, so it can support a full range of natural movement which lowers the risk of pain and injury.

The following are four Level 1 core strengthening exercises that you can do at home.

Mini Crunch

Begin by lying on your back with your legs bent and feet resting flat on the floor. Lift your head and tighten your abdominals, then slowly curl your upper body off the floor. Lower back to the start and repeat.



Tip: Make sure to keep your low back flat on the floor and maintain a gentle chin tuck throughout the exercise.

Supine Leg Lifts

Begin by lying on your back with your knees bent and feet resting on the floor. Engage your stomach muscles, then lift your feet off the ground, bringing your knees toward your chest. Return to the starting position and repeat.



Tip: Make sure to keep your stomach muscles engaged and do not arch your low back during the exercise.



Spicy Jerk Shrimp Sheet Pan Meal

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pounds fresh or frozen large shrimp in shells
- 4 (1/4 thick) fresh pineapple slices peeled and cored, halved
- 2 cups bite-size strips red sweet pepper
- 2 cups sliced red onions
- 1 fresh jalapeño Chile pepper, halved lengthwise, seeded and sliced (see Tip)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon Jamaican jerk seasoning
- ½ cup coarsely snipped fresh cilantro
- 1 ½ cups hot cooked brown rice
- Lime wedge

Directions:

1. Thaw shrimp, if frozen. Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Line two 15x10-inch baking pans with foil.
2. Peel and devein shrimp, leaving tails intact if desired. Rinse shrimp; pat dry. In an extra-large bowl combine shrimp and the next six ingredients (through jerk seasoning); toss gently to coat. Divide mixture between the prepared pans. Roast 15 minutes or until shrimp are opaque.
3. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve with brown rice and lime wedges.

Tip: Chile peppers contain oils that can irritate your skin and eyes. Wear plastic or rubber gloves when working with them.

Servings: 4, Calories: 351, Fat: 9g, Protein: 34g, Carbs: 37g

Recipe and photo - <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/266710/spicy-jerk-shrimp/>

Knees to Elbows

Begin by laying on your back with your arms crossed over your chest with knees bent. Lift your legs off the floor to a 90-degree angle and cross your ankles. Curl your upper body up off the floor toward your knees, then lower it back down and repeat.



Tip: Make sure to keep your low back flat on the floor and don't let your neck strain forward.

Bicycle

Begin by lying on your back with knees bent, feet resting on the floor, and your hands behind your head. Lift your legs and shoulders off the floor and alternate straightening one leg and then the other while you also turn your upper body toward your knee that is bent.



Tip: Make sure to keep your back flat against the floor during the exercise.

Be Aware! Grapefruit Does NOT Mix with Certain Medications!

Grapefruit is healthy and delicious, but it should be avoided when taking certain medications. Chemicals in these fruits can interfere with certain enzymes that break down the medications, which can lead to much higher blood levels of these drugs and can cause serious side effects. You may need to eliminate grapefruit products from your diet. (Note - simply taking your medication and grapefruit at different times of day doesn't stop the interaction. If you are a grapefruit lover, check with your health provider or pharmacist before consuming this fruit when taking meds.)



The following are a list of 11 types of medications that should not be consumed with grapefruit. For a reliable online source, www.drugs.com has detailed information of most all drugs including any interactions.



Grilled Eggplant with Yogurt and Mint

Ingredients:

- 1 large 1 1/2-pound eggplant
- Kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup 2-percent Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon dried mint
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- Pinch cayenne pepper

Directions:

Stripe the eggplant with a vegetable peeler and cut into 1/2 inch-thick slices. Sprinkle the eggplant slices generously with salt, place in a colander and let sit 30 minutes. Rinse the eggplant under cold water and pat thoroughly dry. Meanwhile, combine the olive oil and garlic in a small glass cup, and microwave just until the oil is hot and bubbling, about 20 seconds.

Whisk together the yogurt, mint, cumin, cayenne, 2 tablespoons water and salt to taste in a small bowl. Heat a grill pan over medium-high heat or prepare an outdoor grill for medium-heat cooking. Brush the eggplant slices on both sides with the oil and garlic mixture. Grill until the eggplant is browned and tender, moving and turning the slices frequently, about 15 minutes. Drizzle the mint sauce onto the eggplant slices.

Per Serving (4 servings): Calories 110; Fat 7g; Protein 3g; Carbohydrate 11g

Recipe and photo - <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/grilled-eggplant-with-yogurt-and-mint-recipe-2107066>

- Some statins (cholesterol lowering drugs)
- Calcium channel blockers (blood pressure drugs)
- Amiodarone (a medication that treats arrhythmias)
- Estrogen products (birth control pills and menopause treatments)
- Clopidogrel (Plavix, an antiplatelet medication to prevent blood clots)
- Buspirone (an anti-anxiety medication)
- Opioids (narcotic pain killers)
- Allegra (allergy medication)
- Steroids (some steroids such as methylprednisolone)
- Immunosuppressants (used to treat Chron's, rheumatoid arthritis, and other autoimmune conditions)

<https://www.goodrx.com/healthcare-access/medication-education/medications-that-interact-with-grapefruit-juice>
<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/cmaj/suppl/2012/11/26/cmaj.120951.DC1/grape-bailey-1-at.pdf>
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/expert-answers/food-and-nutrition/faq-20057918>

It's Allergy Season!

With the mild winter that many have experienced this year, allergy sufferers may be in for a bit of misery this spring! Whether you suffer from indoor allergies, outdoor allergies, or both, it is important to combat allergens where you spend a large portion of your life... in your home.



Tips:

- Wash bedding with HOT water often.
- Clean dusty areas (windowsills, blinds, and all surfaces).
- Keep hardwood floors and carpet especially clean at this time of year.
- Don't wear your shoes in the house.
- Avoid clutter because it attracts dust.
- Use ventilation/exhaust fans in the bathroom and kitchen where moisture can accumulate, and mold loves to take up residence.
- Look into buying an air purifier, which traps allergens.
- Keep your doors and windows closed.
- Keep your bedroom cool while sleeping.
- Wash hair and clothes more often as they collect pollen and outdoor allergens.
- If your allergies are miserable, consider getting tested to figure out exactly what you're allergic to as you may benefit from medical treatment.

At the Gameplan for Living, we know that the future of healthcare is in the prevention of illness and injuries.

It is our mission to provide preventative care utilizing sports medicine principles and lifestyle modification training to create an atmosphere of health, safety, and performance to allow employees to enjoy an enhanced quality of life and reach their retirement—and beyond—SUCCESSFULLY!

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Roasted Cauliflower Soup (Vegan-Friendly)



Ingredients:

- 1 cauliflower, cut into florets
- 3 tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 cups homemade vegetable broth
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- Pinch of red pepper flakes
- Fresh parsley, finely chopped, for garnish

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place the cauliflower florets on the baking sheet and drizzle with 1 ½ tablespoons of olive oil. Toss well until evenly coated. Roast for 25-30 minutes, flipping halfway through baking.
3. When the cauliflower is almost done baking, heat the remaining tablespoon and a half of olive oil in a large pot set over medium heat. Add the chopped onions and cook until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds or until fragrant. Pour the broth into the pot.
4. When the cauliflower is done roasting, add it to the pot. Increase the heat to medium high and bring to a boil, then let it simmer on low for 20 minutes.
5. Save some cauliflower florets for garnish, then transfer the rest of the soup to a high-speed blender or immersion blender and blend until smooth. Add the lemon juice, black pepper, nutmeg and red pepper flakes and blend again.
6. Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with the reserved cauliflower florets, freshly chopped parsley, and a drizzle of olive oil if you prefer. Enjoy!

Tips:

- For more protein, you can add shredded chicken to the soup. Just add it to the soup after blending and warm it over low heat if you're using leftover chicken from the fridge.
- You can garnish the soup with chopped green onions or chives instead of parsley.

Serves 4

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Recipe and photo by <https://thepaleodiet.com/roasted-cauliflower-soup-vegan-friendly>