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TIMES-GAZETTE

KETO: the worst diet in 2022?

T-G editor weighs in

By **DAWN HANKINS**
dhankins@t-g.com

If we're honest, don't we all wish we could go back to the weight of our youth? Maintaining a stricter health plan is tough, especially as you age. But it's doable.

I've begun researching the science of food in relation to insulin level spikes. I'm not a doctor, so please check with your physician before starting any health program. I'm just sharing what's working for me.

This I've discovered—ketogenic (KETO) eating and intermittent fasting are most effective. In fact, I think to be successful, they must coexist. Doctors also back up that theory.

KETO is a high-fat, adequate-protein, low-carbohydrate diet. In a nutshell, the diet forces the body to burn fats rather

than carbohydrates. Intermittent fasting allows the body to kind of catch up on fat burning.

KETO has been a source of controversy, being ranked the worst diet plan. Perhaps I wouldn't like it as well myself minus intermittent fasting.

But here's my take—each person has to have a personal plan. So my advice to the critics is to stop trying to fit everyone into these health plans endorsed by celebrities.

While KETO means your food choices are geared to a low carb/higher fat intake, it does not mean adding transfat to everything you eat. Listen to your body for cues.

If you are feeling hungry right after a meal, you probably didn't have enough protein or fat. When followed correctly, a keto-based meal should leave you feeling full for hours.

While initially I found an online doctor and author's diet to be sort of extreme (mainly because I didn't want to give up some food habits), I did see the science



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behind KETO/intermittent fasting. Making healthier food choices should always be our top priority.

Lately, I've begun to observe what people eat. My conclusion is that we're doing it all wrong. (No one will eat lunch with me now.)

I heard a preacher say once that food seems to make people happy. But in contrast, a poor diet can create dire unhappiness.

My observance of what people eat is merely from a fascination over learning the science between food and the glycemic index. (OK, that might be an odd hobby.)

One observance during Christmas: A dear friend, a long-time diabetic, wears an insulin monitor. After eating just a few snacks, her monitor beeped, which meant

her insulin spike had already started.

She's not alone. Based on some crude estimates, over 34 million Americans, or over 10 percent of the country's population, have some form of diabetes. It's affected my family.

I obviously can't share everything about KETO/intermittent fasting. But here's the healthy points I've discovered.

Your food choices will most likely be dramatically changed. I admit there are some KETO recipes I've had to learn to love, like kale shakes. (See recipe below.)

Mark Twain once said regarding a healthy lifestyle, "The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not."

KETO

(Continued from Page 2)

I've also learned that it's best not to flip flop or let yourself fall completely off the wagon. But, everyone has to walk before they can run, right?

I enjoy a variety of foods, so I initially found my particular KETO plan a little limiting. Sitting down to a 2-pound bowl of greens everyday (with very little dressing) is a stretch for me. I've always likened a little salad with my dressing.

My personal plan is described as the "Nutritarian" diet by some. Yes, there are a lot of greens involved, which, again, has stretched my tastebuds a bit.

Have I lost weight? Yes, but don't expect lots to fall off immediately.

A body in ketosis can gain muscle, but a body getting there is still adjusting to its new state. During this time, you might see a decrease in workout performance too. Don't worry: your body's just learning to switch from synthesizing glycogen to using the fat it's turning into ketones into energy.

To make this plan really work, purchase seasonal/organic foods when able and be prepared to swear off processed foods. Bye, bye microwave popcorn. (Honestly, I'm still on the fence about French fries. O.K., I'm human!)

All things considered, how can a plan that eliminates artificial foods be all bad? So in 2022, I pray that you will find the willpower and faith to find a healthy eating plan that's suitable for you.

être en bonne santé (Be healthy.)

Kale Shake

Makes about 4-6 servings

8 oz. water (more or less according to taste)

1/2 medium avocado

Large serving of fresh kale

1/2 C. blueberries

1/2 tsp. Chia seeds (high in Omega 3 fats)

If adding sugar, use packet or 1/2 tsp.

Monk Fruit or Stevia to taste (note: Monk Fruit is very sweet, but less glycemic than regular white sugar) Mix ingredients in a blender. Note: purchase a good blender for these types of shakes, otherwise, the kale will come out stringy. Most stores sell Monk Fruit and it can be pricy. Stevia works well too.



Kale Shake

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Lynna Jones places in first bodybuilding event

By **ZOË HAGGARD**
zhaggard@t-g.com

When Lynna Jones decided to compete in her first bodybuilding contest in October of 2020, her first few months of training faced the temptations of Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

“But obviously, it’s never the right timing. You just got to do it,” she recently said.

Jones competed in her first bodybuilding show last August, competing against hundreds of other women both novice and professional in Nashville where it was hosted at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. She placed third in her novice class and sixth in an open bikini National Physique Committee (NPC) class.

That’s pretty good considering most of the other competitors had placed high in other classes, she recently advised.

Jones joked that her bright red hair helped her stand out. But more than anything, it was a year of hard training to get to that 10 seconds on stage.

Jones’ background

But Jones admits fitness was not her original focus in life.

Growing up in Unionville, Jones was a cheerleader at Community High School. In order to graduate from high school, she needed to take weightlifting, and she admitted, “I actually hated doing the physical aspect at school.”

It was after she was on her own and studying at Columbia State Community College that she said she gained the



Lynna Jones lifting some weights at MG Fitness where she works.

“freshmen 15.”

Feeling lethargic and uncomfortable in her body, she decided to join a gym and began going twice a day! But feeling overweight felt worse than feeling sore day in and day out, for she has maintained her workouts consistently these past six years.

Prep work

It was that consistency and determination in those everyday workouts that paved the way for one of the most challenging yet rewarding years in her fitness career.

Early on, Jones was approached by a friend to do a fitness show. But feeling inexperienced and having no funds to compete, Jones decided against it. Still, “that little seed planted a dream for me to eventually do it,” she said.

So, in October 2020, she began training for the show that was to be in August 2021.

Where do you even begin? Well, for Rocky Balboa, it began with half a dozen raw eggs and a brisk early morning run

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Submitted Photos

Lynna Jones competed in her first bodybuilding show last August, competing against hundreds of other women both novice and professional in Nashville. She placed third in her novice class and sixth in an open bikini National Physique Committee (NPC) class.

Jones

(Continued from Page 4)

through the streets of Philadelphia.

But Jones admits she's neither a morning person nor a runner.

"I've never been a runner. If you catch me running, something's wrong," Jones said with a laugh.

For her, training began at night, after she would work at her job in Murfreesboro from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Then, she would drive to Shelbyville where she started her training process. She mostly did weight lift, cable work, and some cardio within a 20-to-40-minute timeframe.

And the other big part: dieting. As the saying goes, "abs are made in the kitchen." So, when it comes to losing weight, the focus should be 10 percent exercising and 90 percent diet, Jones explained.

Getting through holiday meals meant controlling portions and making time to get workouts in (even on Thanksgiving and Christmas days) even if for just 20 minutes.

Jones said she also cut out sugar, alcohol, and eventually dairy, and stuck to lean proteins, fruits and vegetables which she would wash down with nearly two gallons of water daily.

Figuring it all out was "trial and error," Jones said. She said she never followed a set program; she just altered her workouts and food intake to match how her body was changing.

"When you're in show prep, there's not a lot of off-time," which means drinking only water while with your friends on a night out.

But none of that compared to "peak week."

"Pretty much the week of the show, I did nothing but wrapped cardio," Jones said, meaning she wore sauna suits and sweat enhancers while only doing cardio. "When you're doing a show, your body is physically spent," Jones said, so she had to alternate workouts and be adaptive.

In addition to being fatigued, Jones said she practiced water depletion during peak week. There's a fine science to it, Jones said. Essentially, trainees build up their water intake toward the show then begin to cut it down two gallons a day, to one gallon, to half a gallon, to a quart, to just a cap-full the day of the show.

The seemingly counterintuitive practice of water depletion is said to help with making skin look "dry" and veins, or vascularity, to pop out while flexing during the show.

10 seconds

It's a mad rush from arriving on location to the moment on stage. "I was getting my eyelashes glued on as I was walking on stage," Jones recalled. While in heels from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., Jones said she would prop her feet on a suitcase or table to keep them from swelling to keep every part of her physique intact.

With competitors on stage, judges look for something different for each class. But generally,

like for a swimwear category, they look at the glutes and thighs, lean abdomen, and the nitty-gritty details of swimsuit, makeup, and even the tan.

"You practice for so long, then you're on the stage for 10 seconds," Jones said. "It's long, exhausting, uncomfortable. But in the end, it's so worth it...I would do all over again in a heartbeat."

Post-show recovery

Right after her stage appearance, Jones recalled having a pizza and Dr. Pepper at 11 that night one of the best meals of her life.

As tempting as it is, the key to post-show recovery is to not, as they say in the bodybuilding world, "blow up."

"The biggest thing after the show, and it's probably the most daunting, is the reverse dieting," Jones said. After months of shrinking portions and depleting your water, your body reacts to certain foods or to portion sizes differently. So, Jones focused on eating "clean" foods (fruits and veggies) but with bigger portions.

The struggle with body image comes in, too. In post-competition months, gaining two pounds feels very different.

"A week after the show, you're not going to look like that. You shouldn't look like that," Jones said. But your mind says otherwise.

"That's why I tell people who ask me about competing, you mentally have to be in a place where you're prepared to battle with yourself because it's hard."

Mentally fit

Despite the strenuous physicality of training, Jones said, "Honestly the hardest part of the entire process was the mental part of it."

Again, there's the struggle with body image.

"That's what they tell you when you compete: do not compare yourself to others. But as women, that's all we do." Jones said she quit social media for that week so she would stop comparing herself to the other competitors and stay focused on her own training.

And then there are the negative comments. "A lot of people don't agree with the concept of bodybuilding, or they think negatively about it. People say it's unhealthy or they don't like the image of it," said Jones, who was told to be prepared for the negative comments while in training.

"But I always encourage people to compete because I feel like I would've missed out on something so life-altering because it changed my outlook on so many things as far as competing goes."

Best advice

Jones said one of her biggest tips whether for a competition or for everyday life is have a support system or an accountability partner who will work out with you. She's learned also to be brave and self-assured.

"I had to make myself proud before I made other people proud."

Shifting wellness attitudes shape 2022 fitness trends

(Family Features)

In adjusting to the constraints of the pandemic, many Americans had to improvise where and how they work out. After months of adapting to a “gym anywhere” mentality and learning to accommodate more flexible workout schedules, this new fitness mindset is inspiring some larger trends for healthier living.

“We’ve learned that wellness is not one-size fits all, and that it’s achieved by small habits like regular hydration that can really impact how you feel throughout the day,” said celebrity fitness trainer Harley Pasternak, MSc. “Collectively, nourishing both body and mind together as one makes holistic health a sustainable lifestyle.”

Pasternak and the experts at Propel Fitness Water are forecasting five fitness and wellness trends to watch for in 2022:

Accountability Buddies

When gym closures ran rampant, folks leaned on others for inspiration to get moving, so it’s no surprise working out



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

in pairs (or more) is a continued way to focus on fitness. Feelings of burnout may be common heading into 2022, so having a partner who gives you a healthy sense of camaraderie and competition can help push you to show up on days when you’d rather rest and stay committed to your goals. It also provides a sounding board when you need suggestions for nutritious recipes or fresh at-home cardio ideas.

Versatility in Gym Spaces and Schedules

When a large segment of the workforce started working from home, the rituals of before- and after-work gym visits fell by the wayside. People grew more accustomed to improvising where they work out, whether it was their neighbor’s garage, their living room or a running path in the

city. As exercisers are less beholden to studio or gym schedules, the “gym anywhere” mentality is a level of flexibility many are holding on to, even as they ease back into more normal work routines.

Health in Small, Achievable Doses

This trend is all about recognizing health transformations don’t happen overnight, and even modest steps can make a big difference in how you feel throughout the day. One example is paying more attention to your hydration. If you aren’t properly hydrated, few other things tend to go right either. Small habits like throwing Propel Powder Packs into your gym, work or school bag can make a difference. Filled

with enough electrolytes to replace what is lost in sweat, they are handy for on-the-go hydration and are easy to add to a water bottle.

Wellness Goals vs. Fitness

Committing to overall wellness is more about lifestyle changes than numbers like weight loss or muscle mass. People embracing this trend are forgoing numeric goals based on performance in the gym or on the scale and instead emphasizing outcomes that affect life, nourishing both body and mind together as one. Fitness goals are an essential component, but so is supporting your mental health as well as being cognizant of what you’re putting into your body. When each piece is well taken care of, your body is better able to work like a well-oiled machine.

Low-Impact Workouts

This year, walking treadmill challenges gained virality on social media, marking the increasing popularity of workouts that are low impact yet effective. Getting moving is the key, even if it means taking your tempo down. You don’t need to do hours of HIIT every day to see results. In fact, less time- and energy-intensive workouts are easier to sustain and can often yield the same, or better, results.

Find more hydration options and wellness tips at propelwater.com.



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Cooking swaps to help manage cholesterol

(Family Features)

When cooking, keep in mind small changes that can make a big impact on heart health.

High cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for heart disease and stroke, with about 38% of American adults diagnosed with high cholesterol, according to the American Heart Association. It can be managed by getting levels regularly tested and making lifestyle changes like eating a heart-healthy diet.

- Reduce saturated fat - Select lean cuts of meat or opt for plant protein, limit processed meats, broil or bake rather than pan-fry meats and remove skin from poultry before cooking.

- Eat more fish - Fish can be fatty or lean, but it's still low in saturated fat.

Choose oily fish like salmon or trout, which are high in omega-3 fatty acids.

- Use liquid oils in place of solid fats

- For roasting, sauteing and more, use non-tropical liquid vegetable oils like canola, safflower, soybean or olive instead of butter, lard or shortening.

- Lower dairy fats - Low-fat, fat-free or non-dairy milk can be used in many recipes instead of whole milk or half-and-half.

- Increase fiber and whole grains - Add high-fiber vegetables to meals, serve fruit instead of juice and try brown rice instead of white.

These simple tips and better-for-you recipes like Chicken Tortilla Soup and Air Fryer Crispy (Un) Fried Chicken can help you eat healthy without sacrificing taste.

Find tips for managing cholesterol and other risk factors at heart.org/cholesterol.

Chicken Tortilla Soup

This recipe is reprinted with permission from "Healthy Slow Cooker Cookbook, 2nd Edition." Copyright 2018 by the American Heart Association. Published by Harmony Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House, LLC.

Servings: 4

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, visible fat discarded, cut into 1/2-inch cubes

2 cups frozen whole-kernel corn, thawed

2 cups fat-free, no-salt-added chicken broth

1 can (14 1/2 ounces) no-salt-added, diced tomatoes, undrained

1/4 cup finely chopped onion

1 teaspoon sugar

1 teaspoon ancho powder

2 medium garlic cloves, minced

1/4 teaspoon salt

2 corn tortillas (6 inches each), cut into 1/4-inch-wide strips

1 corn tortilla (6 inches), torn into pieces

2-4 tablespoons snipped fresh cilantro

1/4 cup finely chopped avocado

1/4 medium red bell pepper, cut into matchstick-size strips

In slow cooker, stir chicken, corn, broth, tomatoes, onion, sugar, ancho powder, garlic and salt. Cook, covered, on low, 6-8 hours, or on high, 3-4 hours.

Preheat oven to 350 F.

On baking sheet, arrange tortilla strips in single layer. Bake 8-10 minutes, or until crisp. Transfer baking sheet to cooling rack. Let strips stand 15 minutes, or until cool. Transfer to airtight container and set aside.

When soup is ready, transfer 1 cup to food processor or blender. Stir in tortilla pieces. Let mixture stand 1 minute. Process until smooth. Stir mixture into soup. Stir in cilantro.

Ladle soup into bowls. Sprinkle with avocado, bell pepper and reserved tortilla strips.

Air Fryer Crispy (Un) Fried Chicken

Recipe courtesy of the American Heart Association

Servings: 4

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

1/2 teaspoon ground oregano

1/4 teaspoon pepper

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)

1/2-1 cup low-fat buttermilk

1/2 tablespoon hot pepper sauce (optional)

1/3 cup whole-wheat panko bread-crumbs

1/3 cup shredded or grated Parmesan cheese

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 4 ounces each), visible fat discarded, flattened to 1/4-inch thickness, patted dry with paper towels

nonstick cooking spray

Preheat air fryer to 390 F.

In shallow dish or pie pan, whisk flour, parsley, oregano, pepper and cayenne.

In separate shallow dish or pie pan, whisk buttermilk and hot sauce.

In third shallow dish or pie pan, stir



panko and Parmesan.

Place dishes and large plate in row. Dip chicken in flour mixture then buttermilk mixture then panko mixture, turning to coat at each step and gently shaking off excess. Using fingertips, gently press panko mixture so it adheres. Place chicken on plate. Cover and refrigerate 30 minutes.

Lightly spray chicken with nonstick cooking spray. Arrange chicken in single layer in air fryer basket, working in batches if needed. Cook 10-15 minutes, or until chicken is no longer pink in center and coating is golden brown, turning once halfway through and lightly spraying with nonstick cooking spray.

I just felt like running

By **ZOË HAGGARD**
zhaggard@t-g.com

In high school, to stay fit, I tried going to those (almost humiliating) Zumba classes or following those perky YouTube exercise videos (Blogilates, anyone?). And I kept a well-rounded diet: oatmeal in the morning, salads for lunch, and Mama’s Mississippi pot roast and potatoes for dinner.

Growing up my mother described me as “healthy,” while my doctor said I was on the “upper end” of my age and height’s weight.

It seemed my well-rounded diet and workouts were keeping me well-rounded too. I was about 15 pounds heavier than I needed to be.

Why?

Well, for me, it came down to two things: inconsistency in exercise and portion-size.

Alas, I graduated high school and moved on to Middle Tennessee State University where I fell in love with going to the rec center.

To get the jitters out before class or to take a break from studying, I’d head over to the rec center. Feeling completely intimidated by the 20-something-year-old guys in muscle tanks huffing and puffing at their 50 pounders in the weight room, and by the girls in their bright pink leggings spinning away in the aerobics room, I found my exercise haven in one room and one room only: the indoor track.

Oh, it was perfect! It was just me and a bunch of old MTSU alums in their matching sweatsuits and hand weights walking in quarter-mile circles around the basketball courts. I could lap those 80-year-olds like you wouldn’t believe.

But beside being in a comfortable atmosphere, I fell in love with running.

My inspiration?

Some of my favorite movies have the best running scenes.

Of course, there’s the first Rocky (1976) movie, when he gets up at 4:15 a.m., drinks his half a dozen raw eggs, burps, stretches, then jogs through the cold, muted streets of Philadelphia.

Then there’s the Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) when Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli (“Dwarves are natural sprinters!”) run through Middle Earth in search of Pippin and Merry.

And, yes, there’s the famous scene from Forrest Gump (1994) where he “just felt like running.”

Like a kid, remembering these movie scenes helps me through running even when my heart says to me, two minutes into my run, “If you don’t stop, I will.”

But more importantly, I found an environment I was comfortable in and found an exercise that challenged my body without making me feel inadequate.

With running, once you get your stride, you don’t have to think; you just go. You don’t have to follow some pro-



ZOE HAGGARD

fessional trainer with a waxed six-pack and veneers. It’s the old adage of “keep it simple, stupid” (no offense, Mr. Gump). And if I felt like just walking, I would just walk.

(I am in no way a personal trainer, but a tip I learned to help protect your knees while running is to focus on pushing away from the ground using the back of your knees and thighs instead of landing heavily on your heels. Relax your shoulders, and engage your core and back muscles, too. Running is a full-body exercise, not just one for the legs).

Running, or walking, those miles every day increased my appetite, so I ate when I was hungry. This was before COVID, so the dining halls at MTSU stayed open at weird

hours and had (in my opinion) a wider selection of food with actual self-serving salad-bars (not just crappy to-go meals which they became my last semester).

But that was the key—eat when you’re hungry and stop when you’re full. I began to enjoy feeling full and not stuffed after every meal.

So, instead of gaining the freshmen 15, I lost my 15. And more importantly, I formed habits that carry on today. While I’ve added weightlifting, I still go running or walking at the rec center track or around my neighborhood (but never in the morning; I’m not one of those people). And I make sure to say no to seconds... Well, at least most of the time.

New playground helps kids stay active

H.V. Griffin Park's playground is open and ready for play. The facility was completely rebuilt from scratch last fall through the efforts of the 2021 class of Leadership Bedford and a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee. Many climbs, slides, swings and activities are packed into the area, designed for use by children through age 12.

The newly-constructed playground at H.V. Griffin Park makes a great lunch break spot for **Tori Smith**, left, and **Sam Pettinata**. Many slides, swings, activities and places to climb are included. It's just across from the skate park aimed at an older crowd.



T-G Photos by David Melson



The muscles!



Healthy and natural muscle building

Reshaping one's body takes time and commitments, though shortcuts can be tempting when trying to get fit.

The desire to see instant results can lead some people to make potentially dangerous mistakes in the name of looking good.

There are various ways to safely build natural muscle. Novices should always consult their physicians before beginning a fitness regimen. Patience must be part of the equation, as expecting overnight results but not seeing them may derail your fitness efforts or lead you down an unsafe path. The following are some safe ways to build muscle.

• **Boost training volume.** According to Ava Fitzgerald, C.S.C.S., C.P.T., a sports

performance coach with the Professional Athletic Performance Center in New York, one may need to increase the number of reps and sets, but at an intensity at between 50 and 75 percent of the person's 1RM (the maximum weight he or she can lift for one rep). For good muscle volume, she recommends three to six sets of 10 to 20 reps.

• **Increase caloric intake.** Find the balance between eating enough to gain muscle and gaining too much and body fat percentage creeping up. This can take some trial and error. Try to eat more calories on training days, focusing on plenty of lean protein, whole grain carbohydrates and vegetables.

• **Zero in on the eccentric phase of movement.** Research published in the European Journal of Applied Physiology found that eccentric workouts are better at triggering hypertrophy, or the increased

size of muscles. For example, when doing a squat, lowering into the squat would be the eccentric phase of the exercise. Increase weight resistance to make this eccentric phase even more effective.

• **Hit muscle groups more frequently.** In the 2016 study, "Effects of Resistance Training Frequency on Measures of Muscle Hypertrophy," published in Sports Medicine, targeting various muscle groups twice a week, rather than once, helped maximize muscle growth.

• **Consider a full-body routine.** Working the entire body several times a week also may help one make gains in muscle growth. University of Alabama researchers followed a group of men who had been lifting weights for several years. Those who performed a full-body routine three days a week for three months gained almost 10 pounds of muscle over that time.

• **Fatigue the muscles.** Decrease rest periods between sets to encourage quick release in muscle-building hormones.

• **Have casein protein before bed.** Data published in Science Daily in March 2019 found that pre-sleep protein intake increases muscle protein synthesis during overnight sleep in young adults. Lead author Dr. Tim Snijders of Maastricht University gave 44 healthy young men a 12-week lifting program. Half were also given a nightly, pre-sleep protein shake with about 30 grams of casein, while the others weren't. The protein-before-bed group gained significantly more muscle strength and size than those who had no protein before bed.

To muscle up, incorporate into your lifestyle frequent strength training, increase caloric consumption, tax those muscles and most of all, be consistent and patient within one's goals.

The pros and cons of running

Few physical activities inspire the devotion that avid runners have for running. Millions of individuals across the globe lace up their sneakers and run for miles on end each day, and the fitness experts at Fitbit note that running is the most popular activity in the world.

The global popularity of running suggests it's an activity that's all gravy and no grief. However, running can take a toll on a body, and individuals who can't wait to lace up their sneakers and hit the road should consider the pros and cons of running before doing so.

Pros

• **Running and heart health:** Running generally has a positive effect on heart health. The heart is a muscle, and much like weight training can help strengthen muscles like biceps and triceps, running can strengthen the heart and make it more efficient. Cardiologists with the Copenhagen City Heart Study noted that jogging increases oxygen uptake, which makes it easier for the heart to pump a larger amount of blood and do its job more easily. In addition, various studies have found that running can reduce individuals' risk for heart disease by a significant percentage.

• **Running and mental health:** "Runner's high" is a well-documented yet not entirely understood phenomenon. Though it's often associated with the release of mood-enhancing hormones known as endorphins and characterized as a routine and euphoric byproduct of running, experts at Johns Hopkins Medicine note that research indicates very few runners actually experience runner's high. Instead, runners may feel good after running because physical activity increases levels of endocannabinoids in the bloodstream. Higher levels of endocannabinoids may promote short-term responses like reduced anxiety and a greater feeling of calm. This is an important distinction, as runners who don't feel runner's high after a long run should know that they're likely

still gaining some mental benefit from running, even if a long run makes them feel more nauseous than euphoric.

• **Running and brain power:** Running also has been found to benefit brain power. Researchers at the University of Ulm in Germany found that individuals who jogged for 30 minutes per day three times a week benefitted from a substantial improvement in concentration and visual memory.

Cons

• **Running and joint health:** Though many medical professionals now dispute that there's a link between running and osteoarthritis, running can lead to wear and tear on the joints over time. It's important to note that such degeneration can occur even in non-runners, especially those who live sedentary lifestyles. Being physically active is an important part of maintaining long-term joint health, but individuals who like to run should be sure to devise a balanced workout regimen that includes strength training to make the muscles and tissues around joints stronger. Running without strength training could contribute to unhealthy joints.

• **Running and injury risk:** All physical activities involve some measure of injury risk, but it's still worth noting that runners are not immune to such risks. The Cleveland Clinic notes as many as 60 percent of runners will experience injuries that sideline them for several weeks or months. Plantar fasciitis, runner's knee, shin splits, and Achilles tendinitis are some injuries commonly suffered by runners. Common running injuries can make it hard to perform any cardiovascular exercise, which can have a significant and adverse effect on runners' overall health.

Though medical experts generally suggest the rewards of running outweigh the risks for healthy individuals, it's still important that men and women weigh the pros and cons before lacing up their running shoes.



MARVIN KOONCE, D.D.S., P.C.
BRAD BEARD, D.D.S.

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