

Inspiring women

MIND | BODY | SPIRIT

MOVEMENT VS. EXERCISE

STAY ACTIVE IN EVERY STAGE OF
LIFE | PG. 6

PELVIC FLOOR THERAPY

A CRITICAL PARTNER IN CANCER
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 **Franciscan**
HEALTH

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

TRACY DEGRAAF'S STORY OF
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HIT THE HAY FOR BETTER HEALTH

WHAT IS SLEEP AND WHY IS IT
IMPORTANT? | PG. 30

Letter *from* Franciscan

Hello!

We know there are a lot of conflicting stories out there about what's best for your health. The 6 o'clock news says a new study found that a cup of coffee before breakfast will help you burn belly fat, but the 11 o'clock news says an even newer report found it'll make you put on more weight. What should you believe?

That's why we started Inspiring Women—a source of helpful information from the healthcare name you trust. Our magazine is sprinkled with fun pieces that spark inspiration, and on social media we're creating a community that encourages you.

In this issue, you'll like "Movement vs. Exercise" and "Hit the Hay for Better Health" that put tired health tropes to bed and help you focus on what really makes you feel your best. Need some help feeling motivated to get moving or a way to fall asleep faster? Turn to "Walk the Walk" and "Snacks That Help You Snooze" for practical tips you can start implementing today.

You'll also meet some inspiring women throughout these pages. People like Tracy DeGraaf, a stand-up comedian, mom of five, devoted wife and breast cancer survivor whose story will make you laugh, cry and want to schedule your annual mammogram. You'll also hear from some of Franciscan Health's trusted physicians as they talk about cancer screenings, breast health and more.

We hope this issue of the *Inspiring Women* magazine is the perfect mix of information, inspiration and encouragement you need to prioritize yourself and improve your health during this busy time of year.

We also hope you'll connect with us on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube with the handle @InspiringWomenFH.



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- Inspiring Women magazine
- Devotional emails twice a week
- Curated email content
- Invitations to members-only events



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InspiringWomen.org

A Time for Everything

“There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity
under the heavens.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1, NIV

This one is for the young girls wishing they could catch the eye of their crush, young women struggling through college, working ladies trying to make ends meet, hopeful mothers struggling with fertility, mommas whose kids are moving out and women looking past their careers with anxiety for the future: there is a time for everything.

It isn't an easy promise to sit with. Anger and frustration bubble to the surface. Why isn't that time now?! Why can't God and I sync calendars and get on the same page? I'm ready!

But God has made room for every activity under the heavens. You will experience seasons of love, growth, success and comfort. He simply asks you to trust His timing. If you force the season upon your life, it will not bear the bounty of God's timing. You will toil and struggle for something not yet ripe, and it will be bitter and unsatisfying.

Even as you trust in God and wait for the season to arrive, you will face anger and frustration. In these moments, know that God hears your cries and whispers back with words of kindness and healing. He knows the desires of your heart, and He finds great joy in fulfilling them. Just you wait.

Movement VS. Exercise

Stay active in each phase of life



The importance of physical activity is no secret. People have been trying different forms of exercise for decades. Jump ropes, jazzercise, aerobics, treadmills and group classes have all seen periods of immense popularity, but even with all these options available, the majority of Americans still don't get enough physical activity.

This probably doesn't surprise you considering the number of things we're all trying to squeeze into a day: jobs, classes, commutes, sleep, meal times, family activities, childcare and hopefully some hobbies. Each of these are important, but there are only so many hours in a day—unless one of your hobbies happens to be time travel!

It's easy to fall into the lie that if you can't make it to the gym or dedicate an hour to a strenuous run that you haven't been active enough. It can be disappointing to hear how much faster other

people run a mile because it's easy to forget that it's not always about winning. It's about moving—any kind of moving.

Maybe we should consider adjusting the expectations we put on ourselves and our activity levels. Focusing on formal exercise can be daunting. While some people thrive in a structured setting with built-in accountability, others can find it taxing. It can become a chore that quickly loses its appeal. Maybe we'd be more successful if we didn't think about exercise in the traditional, obligatory way. It becomes more approachable to think only about how you can move more.

Not all phases of life are we expect the same type always fit our lifestyle?

CHILDREN

Kids are usually great at movement. In childhood, physical activity is often tied to the idea of playing. Bike rides, hopscotch and tag don't feel like chores. These playground connoisseurs know what activities they enjoy. They aren't worried about what they should or shouldn't like; they just do what makes them feel good. Encouraging kids in activities they like is a great way to help them embrace exercise and movement in a way that doesn't feel like an obligation as they get older.

STUDENTS

For young students, activity is often built into their daily routine through recess, gym class or extracurricular sports. Not all kids thrive in the same environments, though. Some may like team sports, some may have great hand-eye coordination and others may be part fish. It can take time to find the right fit, so don't give up too soon.

As students get older and enter into college, a primary mode of transportation is often their own two feet. Research has shown that walking can be extremely beneficial to a person's overall health.

If your schedule allows, take advantage of the campus recreational center a few days a week to add more movement into your day.

the same. Why should of physical activity to

Continue Reading →



YOUNG ADULTS

After graduation, you land your first real job. Maybe it's an office job that keeps you on your feet for a good portion of the day—tracking people down, hiking up and down flights of steps, running errands typically delegated to the entry level positions. Then at the end of the day, you return to your quiet, sometimes oppressively small apartment. Carving out time for an evening stroll or bike ride is a good way to escape a case of apartment-induced claustrophobia. As an added bonus, it can also be a great way to get familiar with your new neighborhood. If you're struggling to meet people, find a group activity and introduce yourself to a new crowd.

PROFESSIONALS & PARENTS

Fast forward a few years and maybe you're still working an office job or maybe you have kids at home. Either way, it's easy to feel like you spend your days catering to other people. It can become harder to find dedicated time to exercise. If you are struggling to find an activity outlet, think back to what you liked to do as a kid. Maybe take up swimming again (some gyms offer childcare as part of their membership fees), or if time and funds are both a little tight, try out a free yoga app after the kids go to bed.

RETIREES & EMPTY NESTERS

With a quieter house and more flexible routine, it may be easier to get regular exercise. However, sometimes a change in routine also means the removal of built-in movement. If your job is what kept you active, it's important to think of ways to keep moving at home. Since you are no longer tied to your employer's schedule or running your kids to various activities, you may have more time to try new pursuits. Reach out to friends and start an informal golf league or tennis club. It doesn't matter if you've never played before. You'll get in the swing of things before too long!

ALL MOVEMENT COUNTS

In some phases of life, working in a game of badminton or hitting your favorite hiking trail may be easier said than done. When free time rolls around, take advantage of it.

If you feel like you're struggling to get everything done in a day, slow down and remember that you're doing your best.



INSPIRED BY YOUR FUTURE

WHAT'S YOUR SCORE?



In just minutes, Franciscan Health can help you assess risk factors for common, sometimes preventable conditions. Your confidential analysis includes a **FREE REPORT** you can print and discuss with your primary care physician.*



TEXT ANSWERS to 26464 OR VISIT FranciscanHealth.org/Answers

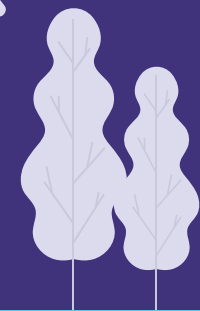
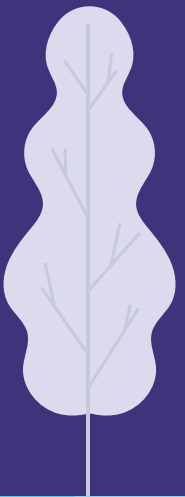


*Your information will not be shared with third parties. Assessments are not diagnostic and not meant to replace regular doctor visits.

WALK THE WALK

Health Benefits of Walking

Whether it's long walks on the beach, power walks through the neighborhood or daily treadmill struts, walking is one of the most common and effective exercises for all ages and abilities.



Research shows that people who walk about 30-45 minutes a day use **43% less sick days** than those who do not.

Thirty-minute walks **benefit mental health** significantly by reducing anxiety and depression as well as feelings of social withdrawal.

Women who take daily walks **reduce their risk of stroke** by 20%.

Walking 30 minutes a day can **lower your risk of heart disease** by about 19%.

Women who walk 7+ hours a week **lower their risk of breast cancer** by 14%.

Walking strengthens muscles, which can **reduce arthritic pain**.

Sources: health.harvard.edu, healthline.com



BREAST HEALTH

TEXT A DOC



Kourtney Morris, MD
OB/GYN

Wish your doctor was on speed dial? We texted some experts at Franciscan Health to answer your most pressing questions. This is what they had to say!

FIND A FRANCISCAN DOC



Who gets breast cancer?

Anyone can get breast cancer. In fact, one in eight women will be diagnosed with it in their lifetime.

Those with the highest risk include:

- Women over the age of 50
- Those with a family history of breast cancer
- Women who experienced early menstruation (before age 12) or late menopause (after age 55)

How can I reduce my risk of breast cancer?

A healthy lifestyle is the best defense against any type of cancer. Make sure to eat right, exercise regularly and limit things like alcohol.

When should I have my first mammogram?

Every woman should start getting an annual mammogram at age 40. If you're younger, you can still stay on top of your breast health with monthly self-examinations. Your OB/GYN can also help catch any changes during your annual exam, so don't miss it!

The Show Must

GO ON

TRACY DEGRAAF'S STORY OF
HOPE AND HEALING



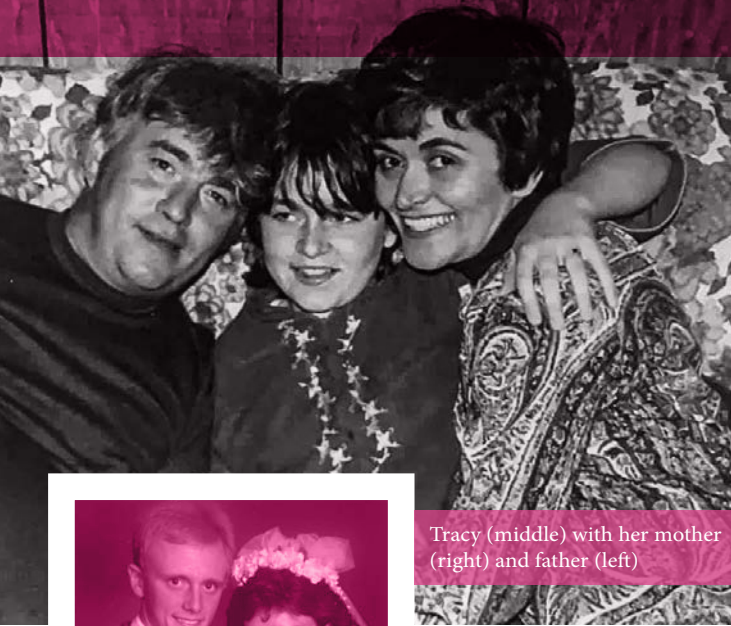
Have you ever laughed so hard that your worries seemed to melt away? Maybe it was a funny video on a tough day or a girls' night out during a difficult season of life. Those moments are the ones I live for because it's impossible to think about your problems while you're laughing.

As a stand-up comedian, mom of five, devoted wife and breast cancer survivor, I have made it my life's mission to bring laughter to the world so others can find hope and healing, even in their darkest times. Whether it's a punchline about messy kids, a tease about a forgetful husband or a story about getting older, my message is always this: life happens, laugh anyway.

Well, my message really has two parts. Those words of wisdom and these: Get your mammogram! I'm still around today because of a mammogram. I've met so many brave cancer survivors who are with us because of this vital screening. I want you to have plenty of moments to laugh until you leak (mommas and my menopause pals, you know what I'm talking about), so please schedule yours today.

I'll keep bothering you about the importance of mammograms, but as the title of this piece says, the show must go on! So, here's a little more about me, my life and my hope for the Inspiring Women community.





Tracy (middle) with her mother (right) and father (left)

THE PRELUDE

My story starts in DePue, Illinois where I was raised in a loving family. My mother, Joan, was my earliest comedic inspiration with her quick wit and infectious laugh. My father, “Butch,” was a natural-born storyteller who weaved together tales so great, I couldn’t help but learn how to do the same.

Down the street lived my mom’s parents. Growing up during the Great Depression, Grandma Rose was as frugal as they come, always pinching her pennies and reusing whatever she could—including tin foil and gift wrapping paper. Grandpa Joe was a simple man with an eighth grade education but the wisdom of a king. It was a village approach to raising my siblings and me. We were often reminded to value faith, family and hard work.

As I grew up and started thinking about what was next, I knew I wanted to be a writer. I went to college and earned my degree in journalism. I remember crossing the stage to get my diploma and thinking, “Finally, I’m going to be a writer!” But shortly after graduation, I started dating Ron—known lovingly to me as “Muffin”—and he became my husband just a year after our first date. Our five sons—the Mini Muffins—arrived in rapid order after that. In the first 11 years of our marriage, we had become a family of seven. I couldn’t write. I could barely think. My dream was pushed to the back burner for 20 years. But I loved being a wife and mom, and even more, I loved bonding with my mom over this new chapter in my life.

Unfortunately, the chance to share the journey of motherhood with my mom didn’t last as long as we both hoped. At just 47 years old, my mom was diagnosed with bone cancer. For over four years, she fought with everything she had, but eventually, the cancer won. She had lost the fight, and at just 27, I had lost my rock.



Tracy with her husband Ron

My dream was pushed to the back burner for 20 years. But I loved being a wife and mom, and even more, I loved bonding with my mom over this new chapter in my life.



Tracy with her husband and five sons

LIFE HAPPENS LAUGH ANYWAY WITH TRACY DEGRAAF!

THIS STORY’S VILLAIN

Cancer. It’s a word no one ever wants to hear, especially out of their doctor’s mouth. When I lost my mom, it felt like this heavy weight I couldn’t shake. When I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016, it felt like a punch to the gut. Why was it coming for me?

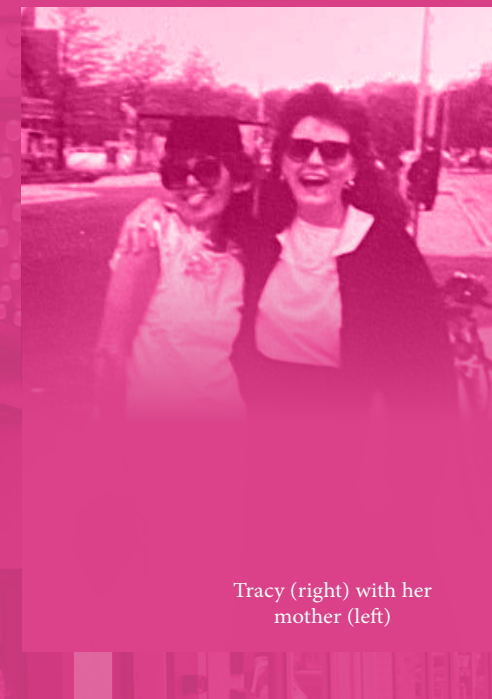
But instead of feeling sorry for myself, I turned to the constants in my life—my faith, my family and laughter.

So many people ask me how I made it through treatment with a smile on my face. The truth is, I didn’t do it on my own. I drew a lot of strength from God. I was blessed with an unshakeable support system. Between my family, my church and my friends, I was surrounded by people ready to uplift me and my family. But most importantly, I thought a lot about my mother and the last time I played cards with her.

The last conscious moment I shared with my mom taught me a lot about life. She was in a hospice bed set up in the corner where we used to put the Christmas tree growing up. She was nearly paralyzed, her bones eaten up by the cancer. When I walked into her room, I was terrified. The pit in my stomach was sinking deeper and deeper because I knew I was losing her and that our family would never be the same. But my mom didn’t sulk or let me cry over her. She grabbed a deck of cards and started dealing them out for a game of rummy.

We laughed as she beat me and laughed harder once I realized she was cheating. We both forgot about the cancer and what was to come. For a moment, she used the last blessings she had—her hands and her wit—to make one last memory with her daughter. Talk about an inspiring moment with an inspiring woman!

I learned that when you face a villain like cancer, don’t sit there counting your disadvantages. Regardless of the cards you’ve been dealt, you are not destined to lose. You can face that monster with the blessings you’ve been given—no matter how small they may seem—and you can begin writing the next chapter of your story.



Tracy (right) with her mother (left)

For a moment, she used the last blessings she had—her hands and her wit—to make one last memory with her daughter.



MY SECOND ACT

The next chapter of my story was actually seven chapters long as I combined my childhood dream of being a journalist and all the lessons I learned being a mom into a book titled *Laugh Anyway Mom*. At last, I actually became a writer! In the words of the late comedy legend, actress and fellow mom of five Phyllis Diller, this was “a funny book that will make you laugh, cry and take life as it should be—with a grain of salt!”

As I went through the process of bringing *Laugh Anyway Mom* to fruition, my publishing coach told me I had a real gift for comedy and encouraged me to try stand-up. In true Tracy fashion, the next week I was enrolled in classes at The Second City in downtown Chicago, home to comedy greats like Tina Fey, Steve Carell, John Belushi, Bill Murray, Gilda Radner... the list goes on (and on). My first class was one Sunday right after church, and I walked into a room full of boys my sons' age. Compared to them, I looked like a middle-aged mom straight out of church, not a woman about to take on four years of open mic nights perfecting her comedy show. But that's what I did. Forty-eight months of learning what made people laugh and what made me feel authentically funny.

Then came that cancer diagnosis. Before, my comedy shows were all about my day-to-day life. Now, daily life included cancer and radiation, so my show did too. Today, I tour around the country making women laugh and reminding them how important it is to get their mammograms so they too can enjoy their next act.



Tracy poses with two Lights of Hope dedicated to her mother and step-sister who passed from cancer

OUR CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Inspiring Women community is a diverse cast of strong and resilient women. Knowing so many of you share moments of faith through the email devotionals and that each of you have picked up this magazine to learn and draw inspiration is—well—inspiring.

I hope you feel the same connection with other women who turn to this community for hope and healing. I urge you to dive in deep, attending events and taking every opportunity to grow friendships and find fellowship. This is such a unique opportunity we've been given to encourage and uplift one another, and I hope we all take advantage of it.

Finally, I hope you'll take advantage of this moment to schedule your mammogram. Every woman over the age of 40 should go in for a mammogram once a year. No, you're not too busy. No, you're not the exception. As I said before, a regular mammogram is the reason I'm here today, and yours could be the reason you get to stick around with us longer.

And always remember: life happens, laugh anyway.

For more information about Tracy DeGraaf, visit TracyDeGraaf.com. You can also catch her weekly podcast “Life Happens Laugh Anyway” wherever you get your podcasts. New episodes are released every Wednesday at 12 p.m. CT.



Scan the QR code to schedule your mammogram appointment today!

GET BACK TO FEELING AMAZING

Get In, Get Out, Get Better.

When minor illnesses or injuries suddenly arise, it can feel like an inconvenience. But it's going to be okay –

The sooner you get in, get treatment and get answers, the sooner you can go from feeling yucky to feeling some relief.

In-person and virtual visits!



FranciscanExpressCare.org

Caring for Indoor GREENERY

Leafy vines, hanging plants and vibrant succulents can all be beautiful additions to your home's interior design, and they can also offer a number of health benefits. Indoor plants purify the air in your home and help you breathe better. Caring for them often elicits a therapeutic effect that boosts mental well-being. Plus, plants like aloe vera provide physical healing benefits like soothing skin irritations. If you're weary of adding greenery to your home decor for fear they'll wither, here are a few tips to make sure your houseplants thrive.

Provide consistent water

Most plants like having their roots consistently moist while some plants prefer to dry out a bit between waterings. Be sure to check the care label or consult a good indoor plant book to help you determine the right watering routine.

Keep temperature constant

Avoid placing plants in troublesome spots where temperatures fluctuate. Instead, locate them away from heating and air conditioning ducts, radiators and chilly windows. Also remember that heating systems can dry out the air in winter, so provide your plants a little extra humidity with a pebble tray and some misting.

Offer adequate light

Take note of the type of light your space offers to determine the types of plants to invite in. Plants that prefer bright light will thrive in south-facing windows while north-, east- and west-facing windows have moderate sun perfect for plants that like less light.

Use the right soil

Your potting soil should be tailored to the particular type of plant you are growing. Cacti, succulents and rosemary, for example, prefer coarse, well-drained soil. But the most critical consideration when you're purchasing or blending your own potting soil is to ensure that the mix is light enough to provide adequate pore space for air, water and healthy root growth.



Your HOME BUYING Checklist



If you're thinking about buying a home, it's important to do your homework before making the big purchase. This list will get you started on the right foot and help you find the home of your dreams.



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Can you live with most imperfections in a home if you love where you're living? Consider the house's proximity to your workplace, the charm of the neighborhood, access to parks, shopping opportunities and other things that matter to you.



THE SITE

Scale down your view to just where the house sits. What's the surrounding scenery like? Do neighbors' windows look into your bedroom? Does it have the right size yard? Is it accessible for your needs?



CURB APPEAL

The home's view from the street is the first thing you and your guests will see, so make sure it reflects who you are and what you're looking for.



THE COMMUNITY

The perfect house can be made into a nightmare by an overbearing homeowners' association. Read the bylaws carefully to assure their rules align with your lifestyle. Also, be aware of your neighbors. If you're single and moving into a community full of young families, it may be harder to find your people.



THE FLOOR PLAN

How many rooms do you realistically need? If you're living alone, you probably don't need four bedrooms, but if the whole family is moving in, you'll want to make sure there's enough bathroom space.



THE KITCHEN

Your kitchen space is the heart of your home. If you love to cook Thanksgiving meals, make sure you have enough counter space and updated appliances. If you're happy just making meals for one, opt for a smaller kitchen with appliances that aren't the latest but still get the job done.



CLOSETS AND STORAGE

If you're a shoe enthusiast, or need to store all the kids' sports equipment, pay attention to the capacity of closets and other storage space. You don't want to be stuck without a place for your favorite things in your new home.



FINISHING TOUCHES

Installed moldings, hardware and fireplaces can make the simplest homes look spectacular. If these elements matter to you, look for homes that include them or have the potential to add on.

Your home should be perfect for you and your budget. If a small kitchen is worth a pool in the backyard, you can make that decision for yourself. The most important quality to look for is a place that will make you happy.

stir up some CONVERSATION

Whether you're new in town, new at work or just want to branch out and network, finding the right words and ways to start a conversation can be challenging. Where do you go? What do you do? What do you say? You can go out by yourself and try to meet your best friend, sign up for an online dating service or even go to the gym and make friends in the weight room. It may seem a bit uncomfortable, but it's time to step out of your comfort zone and give it a try. Here are a few tips to consider when trying to meet new people:



1

JOIN A GROUP.

Find a group that shares your same interests and become a regular. Strike up conversations with other members and suggest activities you may enjoy together outside of the club.

2

STRIKE UP CONVERSATIONS.

In line at the bank, at the grocery store or at a concert, start conversations with the people around you. The more people you talk to, the bigger your social network will become. Have conversation starters handy, and you'll always be ready to kick off a conversation.

3

VOLUNTEER.

There are many opportunities to volunteer in meaningful and interesting ways. Meeting other people who share ambitions about making the world a better place is a great way to find common ground for conversation.

4

FIND SPACES ONLINE WHERE YOU CAN MEET NEW PEOPLE.

Meetup.com is a good place to start. Search through the various events in your city and find something that piques your interest.

5

FIND A CHURCH OR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY.

If you're a spiritual person, churches or other religious communities are the perfect places to meet supportive, like-minded friends.

It can be a stressful and uncomfortable situation when you don't know where to go or what to do.

Be open-minded about new opportunities. Try coming out of your shell and introducing yourself to new people and see how you feel.



FROZEN FRUIT is a close second in nutrient value to fresh fruit. When selecting **CANNED FRUIT**, choose brands with no added sugar.



YOGURT is an excellent source of protein, vitamins, calcium and probiotics. Choose servings with less than 12g of sugar.



GRANOLA is a top-notch source of fiber and protein. Look for brands with fewer calories and low amounts of sodium and sugar.

NOW PROCESSING

Are Processed Foods Beneficial?

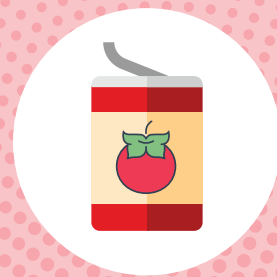
Well, yes and no. The term “processed” immediately brings to mind chemicals, saturated fats, fillers and artificial flavorings. Processed foods can have a bad rep, but believe it or not, some foods benefit from being processed and even get a thumbs-up from nutritionists.

Enjoy adding these guilt-free, processed items to your grocery list!

PICKLE connoisseurs rejoice! Low-calorie pickles are processed through fermentation, which improves food preservation and creates natural probiotics for gut health.



TOMATO SAUCE contains more cancer-fighting lycopene than tomatoes ripe from the vine due to the canning process.



DARK CHOCOLATE improves cholesterol levels and can lower blood pressure. Choose 70%+ cacao varieties for the best health benefits.



Good Eats From the Garden

Fresh summer season recipes from Katie Irk

Whether you have a green thumb or love to pick up local farmer’s market fare, summer produce season is here! Gardens are bursting with ripe tomatoes, fresh greens and fruit, so now is the time to enjoy the tastes of summer. Here are a few of my favorite summertime recipes.

Tomato Zucchini Parmesan Bake

PREP: 20 minutes

COOK: 40 minutes

SERVES: 8

DIRECTIONS

- 1 | Preheat the oven to 375°F.
- 2 | Coat an 8x10” baking dish with non-stick cooking spray. Arrange alternating slices of tomato, zucchini and yellow squash standing upright.
- 3 | Sprinkle minced garlic, onion and parmesan cheese on top.
- 4 | In a small bowl, combine Italian seasoning, pepper and salt. Sprinkle over parmesan.
- 5 | Cover with foil and bake for 25-30 minutes.
- 6 | Remove foil and return the dish to the oven for 10-15 minutes or until the cheese browns. Serve immediately.

INGREDIENTS

- 5 medium tomatoes, sliced
- 2 medium zucchinis, sliced
- 2 medium yellow squash, sliced
- 1½ cups yellow onion, chopped
- 2 fresh garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup shredded parmesan cheese
- ½ tsp. Italian blend seasoning
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. salt

Watermelon Sorbet

PREP: 15 minutes

COOK: 3-4 hours

SERVES: 4

DIRECTIONS

- 1 | Blend ingredients together in a blender or food processor until mixed well.
- 2 | Pour into an airtight container.
- 3 | For best results, freeze overnight.
- 4 | Before serving, top the sorbet with chopped walnuts, blueberries and a drizzle of honey.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 heaping cups seedless watermelon, cubed
- 2 bananas, freckled and ripe
- ¼ tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 Tb. honey

Pelvic Floor Therapy

A critical partner in cancer care

When someone is diagnosed with cancer, a team comes together from differing areas of medicine to create a care plan. Professionals, including oncologists, surgeons, chemotherapy nurses, nutritionists or counselors, may be with you at various times and durations during treatment and recovery. For those battling bladder, cervical, colorectal, ovarian, prostate or uterine cancers, physical therapists specializing in pelvic floor health help patients navigate issues related to post-cancer care and aid in healing and recovery.

What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor is a crucial part of controlling bladder and bowel function for both men and women. It comprises the nerves, muscles, tendons and ligaments that extend from the center of the pubic bone along the groin to the tailbone. There are three hammock-shaped layers of muscles inside the pelvis that support the bladder and rectum. For men, their pelvic floor also supports the prostate. In women, the uterus, cervix and vagina. A disruption to the pelvic floor function can lead to bladder or bowel leakage, incontinence, constipation, difficulty emptying your bladder, frequent bathroom trips, lower back or hip pain, difficulty sitting or moving or intimacy issues. Pelvic floor therapists are well versed in improving function and providing cancer patients with relief.

How does cancer treatment affect the pelvic floor?

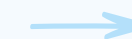
Changes in the muscles and tissues surrounding the pelvic floor—whether through surgery, chemotherapy or radiation—can lead to pain, dysfunction and weakness. Although these are potentially necessary procedures, the aftereffects of treatment can negatively impact the area, organ function, posture and stability. Vulnerability in the hips, bottom, belly and pelvis affects daily activity. Some cancer treatments leave behind soft tissue tightness in the abdominal core and pelvic floor, painful scarring and shifts in sensation or feeling. Without intervention, overall mental health and wellness may decline, making it challenging to overcome how the body has changed.



How does pelvic floor therapy aid in healing?

Treatment is multifaceted and specifically tailored for each patient. Sandra Scherschel, DPT, is part of Franciscan Health's Specialty Therapy department and manages the pelvic health therapy team. This rehabilitation area is dedicated to helping clients gain back mobility, flexibility and function by utilizing several techniques, including patient education, pelvic floor exercises, biofeedback and manual therapy. "When it comes to cancer, surgical and radiation treatments leave scarring. That means control issues arise because the pelvic floor tissues have been disrupted. Cancerous tumors can be removed but procedures can leave behind nerve damage. That's what we work to repair," she shares.

The therapist's role depends on where the patient is recovery-wise. One of the most critical factors in recovery, Scherschel states, is working with someone well versed in this type of therapy as soon as possible. "The earlier we are involved in the care team, the less intensive therapy may be required down the road. Early intervention can also prevent years of scar tissue buildup and aids the healing process. We recommend patients see us as soon as their doctor allows so we can help them relearn to control, relax and contract their muscles just as they did before."



What can I expect during my appointment?

When attending an appointment for the first time, patients get to know their therapist just like they would a physician. While meeting privately, they'll gather as much information as possible and formulate a treatment plan. Topics for discussion include medical history, current health, sleep patterns, exercise habits, nutrition, hydration and life stressors. Therapists will also listen, answer questions and relieve any concerns about the process.

Next, measurements will be taken to gather a baseline of function and mobility. Externally, information is collected concerning posture and alignment, joint mobility, muscle strength and flexibility. Depending on the diagnosis, an internal examination may be necessary to assess the muscles within the pelvic floor for sources of pain, tightness and weakness.

Last, a unique treatment plan comes together outlining goals and how progress is measured. Clients also find out what to expect during therapy appointments and have an opportunity to ask questions. Most importantly, therapists are there to listen to patients' concerns about the process.

Is pelvic floor therapy just for cancer patients?

Pelvic floor therapists see a wide range of patients beyond those battling cancer. People seek therapy for incontinence, pelvic floor prolapse, overactive bladder, constipation, painful intimate relations, tailbone pain, general pelvic pain, pediatric incontinence, postpartum issues, post-pelvic surgery and those who have suffered sexual trauma.

While some conditions may require surgery to correct, physical therapy can be the perfect solution for others from the very beginning. Patients who are surgical candidates may not feel ready to take that step. The conservative approach of working with a therapist may provide relief to those who are not quite ready for something more invasive.

What are signs someone may need pelvic floor therapy?

Girlfriend to girlfriend, Scherschel wants women to know there is nothing to be embarrassed about or anything too personal to mention that she and her team have not heard from those seeking therapy before. That's why she speaks plainly about signs women experience that make them perfect candidates for treatment. "If you experience urine leaks when you sneeze or cough, wear a pad 'just in case,' you know where every bathroom is at the mall or experience pelvic pain, please know you do not have to live with those struggles. The old wives' tales that dictate these issues are just a part of aging are not true: it does not have to be that way, and we can help."

What should potential patients know?

Recovery from anything in life is always a process, including pelvic floor therapy. No two people heal or bounce back at the same speed or with identical outcomes. Yet even the slightest improvement can help people return to doing what they love most and alleviate the pain or issues that kept them on the sidelines.

Scherschel wants her therapy team's potential patients to know that their compassion and understanding run deep. Some can feel timid when asking questions or contacting their department about therapy. Yet she encourages:

"We know this is a very intimate relationship that at first can feel embarrassing, yet please do not let fear hold you back from allowing us to help you find relief and live your best life possible."

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CANCER SCREENINGS

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Meghana Raghavendra, MD

Medical Oncologist & Hematologist with Franciscan Physician Network

Wish your doctor was on speed dial? We texted some experts at Franciscan Health to answer your most pressing questions. This is what they had to say!

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What cancer screenings do I need, and when should I start getting them?

Cancer screenings are usually recommended for cancers that can be either prevented or detected early. In women, the three recommended screenings are:

- An annual mammogram once you turn 40 to screen for breast cancer
- PAP smears every three years beginning when you're 21 to screen for cervical cancer
- A colonoscopy or DNA FIT test at age 45 to screen for colon cancer

Does a family history of cancer mean I should start screenings sooner?

In some instances, a family history of cancer may warrant an earlier age for screening. Talk to your physician if you have concerns.

What happens if I delay screenings?

Talk to your doctor about scheduling screenings as soon as possible. These are the best tools we have to diagnose cancer early, prevent it from developing and improve chances of remission.

Glazed Lemon Zucchini Bread

PREP: 20 minutes • COOK: 1 hour & 45 min • SERVES: 8

Ingredients

- 1½ cup flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup oil
- 2 eggs
- 4 oz. cream cheese, softened and divided
- 1 cup zucchini
- 1 Tb. lemon zest
- ¼ cup lemon juice, divided
- ½ cup powdered sugar

Directions

- 1 | **PREHEAT** the oven to 350°F.
- 2 | **GREASE** and flour a 9x5" loaf pan.
- 3 | **GRATE** zucchini until you have 1 cup and set aside.
- 4 | **IN A MEDIUM BOWL**, gently stir together the first three ingredients.
- 5 | **IN A SEPARATE BOWL**, beat together granulated sugar, oil, eggs and 2 ounces (half) of the cream cheese until blended.
- 6 | **GRADUALLY** add dry ingredients, blending into the wet ingredients. Mix well after each addition.
- 7 | **STIR** in zucchini, lemon zest and 3 tablespoons of lemon juice.
- 8 | **POUR** into the prepared pan and bake for 40-45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center of the bread comes out clean.
- 9 | **COOL** for 15 minutes then remove from the pan and cool completely.
- 10 | **COMBINE** powdered sugar, remaining cream cheese and remaining lemon juice until well blended. Drizzle over bread. Once the glaze hardens, slice, serve and enjoy!



Hit the Hay for Better Health



The first categories that come to mind when considering what impacts overall health and wellness are almost always diet and exercise.

There is a good reason for this—they are key contributors. But people often overlook the importance of sleep. What may surprise you is that some sleep researchers believe disordered sleep, an all-encompassing term that involves a wide variety of sleep conditions, may be more responsible for illness and death in American men and women than cardiovascular disease and pulmonary conditions combined. Maybe it's time we start paying better attention.

What are the effects of bad sleep?

Sleep is a critical time for overall body healing, regulation and restoration. Disrupting this process can affect blood pressure, heart rate, mental status, hormones and a host of other critical bodily functions.

Attentiveness, reaction times, learning abilities, alertness, hand-eye coordination and short-term memory can all decline as a result of drowsiness. Sleep deprivation has been identified as a leading cause of on-the-job accidents and automobile crashes, but it's more than just grogginess that causes mishaps. Disordered sleep can impact your physical performance. Research shows that getting under six hours of sleep is associated with faster physical fatigue, a reduction in aerobic output, metabolic impairment and an increased risk of sustaining injury. However, optimizing sleep, sometimes by forcing a minimum number of sleep hours per night, can significantly improve physical and cognitive performance functions.

As a neurological phenomenon, sleep affects more than just physical functions. Recent research focused on impaired sleep has uncovered the ways sleep affects the body's glymphatic system, which acts as a pathway for waste clearance in the central nervous system and is responsible for disposing toxins from the brain. A 2013 study funded by the National Institutes of Health suggested that sleep is essential to clearing the brain of damaging molecules associated with neurodegenerative conditions like Alzheimer's disease.

How can you tell if you're getting bad sleep?

So how can you know if your sleep patterns are healthy, and what can you do if they're not? Healthy sleeping habits are typically indicated by the following:

- Ability to fall asleep within 15-20 minutes of lying down
- Regularly sleeping for a total of 7-9 hours during any given 24-hour time period
- Experiencing continuous sleep (not characterized by periods of waking)
- Waking up feeling well-rested
- Feeling alert and productive throughout most of the day



If any of these situations feel like a faraway dream, you're not alone. In our modern world, the lines between work and home have blurred and technology is tugging at us more than ever before. Our collective ability to sleep has suffered big time. From insomnia to sleep walking, sleep disorders are becoming more prevalent. By some estimates, more than 50 million Americans suffer from sleep disorders. About 70 percent of adults report that they obtain insufficient sleep at least one night a month while 11 percent report insufficient sleep every night.

Disordered sleep affects both men and women, but women are more likely to have difficulty falling and staying asleep while also experiencing higher instances of daytime sleepiness. Women who report these unhealthy sleep patterns are at a greater risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes and depression when compared to men. Biological factors unique to women such as premenstrual syndrome, pregnancy and perimenopause can undoubtedly have an impact on sleep quality as a result of fluctuating hormone levels, though it is unclear how the hormones themselves work to protect men while leaving women vulnerable.

Hormones are one of the many determinants that can impact an individual's sleep efficiency, but there are some other physiological factors at play such as sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome and circadian rhythm disorders. There are also work and school-related factors, such as early morning and overnight shifts, professional travel and all-nighter study sessions. Environmental and lifestyle factors also have an impact. While some factors are largely out of an individual's control, the good news about environmental and lifestyle factors, or sleep hygiene, is that they can be adjusted to improve sleep efficiency.

How to correct sleep habits

Plenty can be done to improve sleep hygiene if your shut-eye is suffering. Start by setting limits for yourself and going to sleep at roughly the same time every night (including weekends) to help regulate your body's internal clock. Ridding the bedroom of distractions such as smartphones, tablets, televisions and other bright light sources can also bring about massive improvements to your overall quality of sleep. Finding ways to help your brain unwind before bed is crucial.

Mindfulness meditation, light yoga or taking a warm bath can all be beneficial.

While the moments leading up to bedtime are undoubtedly important, they aren't the only elements that matter. One great way to promote better sleep is using light to help manage your circadian rhythm. Avoid bright light in the evening and expose yourself to sunlight in the morning to signal to your brain when sleep and wake times should occur. Additionally, engaging in 10 or more minutes of aerobic exercise each day can drastically improve sleep quality.

These ideas all sound easy to implement, but sleep problems may require more than a sleep-friendly environment. If you still aren't getting the quality Z's you need, talk to your doctor. There may be an underlying sleep disorder, so it is important to take your sleep habits seriously and speak up if you feel that something is abnormal.

SNACKS THAT CAN HELP YOU SNOOZE

Some of the best remedies for a good night's sleep are the ones you may not think about. Limiting screen time before bed and avoiding naps during the day are beneficial, but choosing strategic snacks before you go to bed can largely improve your quality of sleep. Certain foods eaten two or so hours before bed may just have you snoozing soundly.

While simple changes to your diet can benefit you at night, there are also foods that may hinder a good night's sleep. Spicy foods, caffeine and sugary snacks can all cause digestive issues and disrupt sleep cycles if consumed too close to bedtime. Finding the right foods that fulfill both the roles of late-night snack and deep sleep supplement may be the key to your sweetest dreams. Here are some suggestions for what to eat before you hit the hay:



1. Almonds

Several types of nuts, including almonds, contain high doses of melatonin, a sleep-regulating hormone. Melatonin plays a fundamental role in regulating the body's biological clock. In addition to influencing the sleep/wake cycle, almonds are also a great source of magnesium, which may improve sleep quality, especially for those who have insomnia.



4. Lettuce

While a salad before bed may not seem ideal, lettuce has some surprising sleep-positive properties. It is believed this is due to the plant's n-butanol fraction. N-butanol fraction increases sleep duration, decreases the time it takes to fall asleep and protects cells against inflammation. Some people even claim lettuce has a mild sedative-hypnotic effect.



2. Fatty fish

Tuna, salmon and other fatty fish are filled with nutrients that help regulate serotonin. Serotonin influences many aspects of well-being, from mood to triggering sleep and rapid eye movement (REM) cycles. The body also uses serotonin to synthesize melatonin, improving sleep quality through multiple avenues.



5. Sleepy time teas

While not a food, decaffeinated teas can become part of a relaxing nightly ritual. Chamomile, ginger and peppermint teas are among the many options to choose from. Chamomile tea, for example, contains antioxidants that promote sleepiness, allowing you to fall asleep faster and wake up less throughout the night.



3. Certain fruits

Kiwis and tart cherries aren't just rich in antioxidants and vitamin C. They also contain healthy levels of serotonin. It's thought that eating two kiwis before bed significantly increases your sleep duration over the course of a month.



6. Warm milk

Your parents may have given you some sound advice if they would heat up milk when you had trouble sleeping as a child. Milk contains four sleep-promoting compounds: tryptophan, calcium, vitamin D and melatonin. But the nostalgic aspect may play a role as well. The association of a warm cup of milk and bedtime developed during your childhood could be just enough to send you into dreamland.

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