



10 (not so deadly?) health sins

Is a trip to the drive-thru or forgetting to floss really so awful? We find out which bad habits need to be fixed ASAP—and which you can relax about

by Norine Dworkin-McDaniel

ADMIT IT—EVEN IF YOU EAT FRUITS and vegetables, exercise and get your checkups on time, you've got one, two, maybe three habits that aren't so healthy. (Even we health writers and editors have them!) But what really does major damage? A diet soda every day? Getting only five hours of sleep a night? "If you're generally a healthy person, some of these may not be such a big deal. But there are a few zingers that are never OK under any circumstances," says Donna Casey, MD, an internist at Presbyterian Hospital of Dallas. We bet you're guilty of at least one of these 10.

YOU EAT A BURGER AND FRIES FOR LUNCH ONCE A WEEK

There's solid evidence that eating a fatty meal will almost immediately affect the functioning of your blood vessels, making it harder for them to dilate for up to four hours after you've eaten. But having fast food once a week is probably OK if you have a small portion and eat smart the rest of the time, says Robert A. Kloner, MD, PhD, director of research at the Heart Institute at Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles and professor of medicine at USC.

MAKE IT HEALTHIER Order the small or child's size burger (sans mayo and cheese), downsize the fries and add a side salad. Though a regular McDonald's hamburger and small fries isn't exactly health food, it clocks in at a considerably lower 480 calories and 20 grams of fat (5 of it saturated) compared with 1,040 calories and 54 grams of fat (14 of it saturated) in a Big Mac and large fries. Try to limit fast food to every other week—or even better, once a month. *(Please turn to 111)*

GETTY

HEALTH SINS

CONTINUED

YOU ONLY SLEEP FIVE HOURS A NIGHT

It may seem harmless, but it's not: Besides the laundry list of negative health effects including an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and hypertension, not sleeping enough on a regular basis can make you fat. One recent study of more than 10,000 adults found that those who frequently slept less than seven hours a night were more likely to be obese. "Lack of sleep may disrupt normal production of hormones that regulate appetite," says Meir Kryger, MD, author of *A Woman's Guide to Sleep Disorders*. And one particularly scary recent finding: Women in the major Nurses' Health Study who snoozed five hours or less on a regular basis were more likely to die during the 14-year study than those who got six to seven hours. **FIX IT ASAP** Go to bed 10 to 15 minutes earlier each night until you're getting at least six hours of sleep. If it takes you longer than 30 minutes to fall asleep or you wake frequently during the night, talk to your doctor. You may need a sleep aid or treatment for a condition (like sleep apnea) that's interfering with your rest.

YOU BRUSH TWICE A DAY BUT HARDLY EVER FLOSS

Dentists have a charming saying: Only floss the ones you want to keep. "Most adults lose their teeth because of gum disease," explains Ted Raybould, DMD, professor of dentistry at the University of Kentucky. And although brushing is crucial, flossing is just as important because it's what keeps the bacteria that cause gum disease

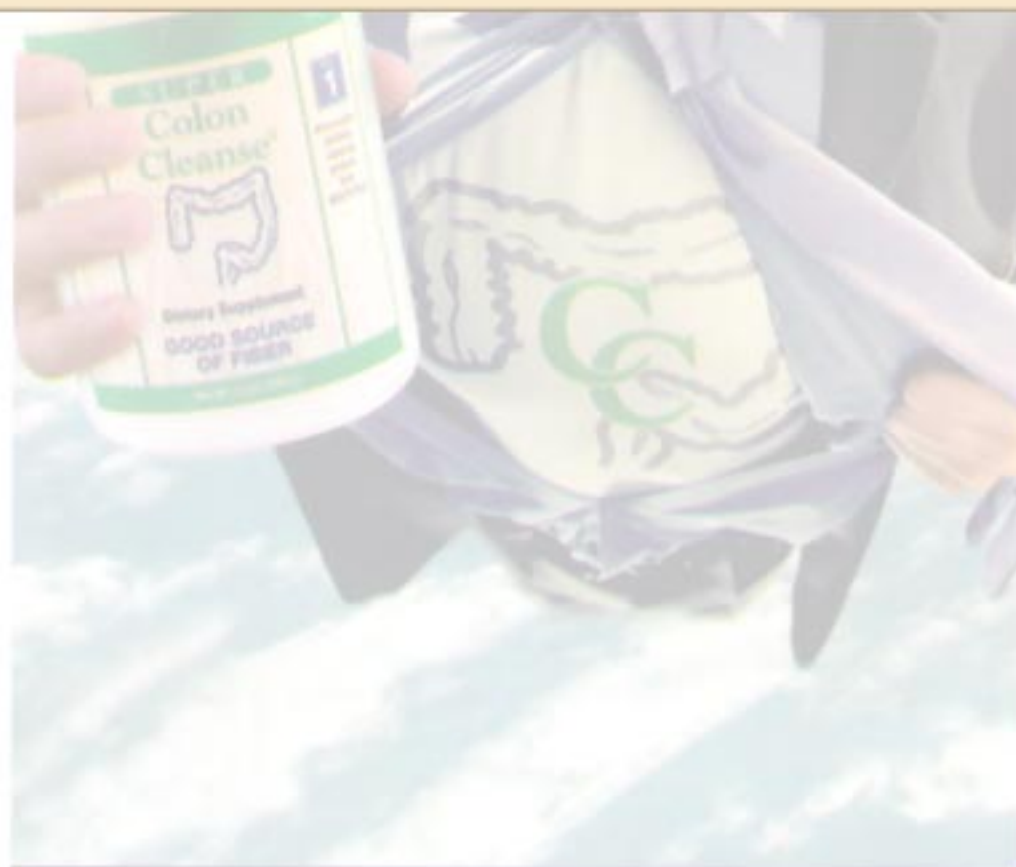


from building up between your teeth. Research has also linked gum disease to an increased risk of heart disease.

FIX IT ASAP Keep your floss next to your toothbrush as a reminder to do it every day, says Dr. Raybould. Having trouble reaching the back of your mouth? Ask your dentist to recommend a flossing aid, such as floss picks or floss handles.

YOU EAT ONLY TWO TO THREE SERVINGS OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES A DAY

Believe it or not, you're doing better than most Americans, says Martin Binks, PhD, director of behavioral health at the Duke Diet & Fitness Center in Durham, North Carolina. What's more, three daily servings of produce may be enough to lower the risk for premature death from heart disease and stroke, according to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey Epidemiologic Follow-Up Study. Brightly colored fruits and vegetables contain phytochemicals that guard against (Please turn to 112)



FEEL SUPER WITH SUPER COLON CLEANSE

In today's stressful environment, you need **Super Colon Cleanse** for all the cleansing and detoxifying power you can get!

Super Colon Cleanse

is scientifically formulated to internally cleanse your body and help it cope with whatever your environment – and a poor diet – can throw at it. We give Nature a hand to ease bloating and constipation while promoting regularity and safely detoxifying your digestive system, safely and with NO side effects.



Available at **GNC LiveWell**



Albertson's, Basha's, Brooks, Drugstore.com, Giant, Giant Eagle, K-Mart, Kerr Drug, Kinney Drugs, Kroger, Longs, Meijer, Ralph's, Rite Aid, Sprouts, Shop & Stop, Trader Joe's, Vitamin World NBTY, Walgreens, Wegmans, and Whole Foods.

health**PLUS**
HEALTHY LIVING... NATURALLY inc

800-822-6225
www.healthplusinc.com

GET YOUR
FIRST FULL
PRESCRIPTION
OF ADVAIR®
FREE.*

VISIT advairCOPD.com
OR CALL 800-504-2218.

ADVAIR DISKUS[®] 250/50
(fluticasone propionate 250 mcg and salmeterol 50 mcg inhalation powder)

See your healthcare
provider and find out if
ADVAIR is right for you.

See our adjacent ad for more
information about ADVAIR.

*Subject to eligibility. Restrictions apply.
See advairCOPD.com for complete
eligibility rules.



HEALTH SINS

CONTINUED scores of diseases and may even prevent cells from turning cancerous.

MAKE IT HEALTHIER Sneak in more fruits and veggies so you can inch your way up to the five to nine servings the USDA recommends. Start a meal with vegetable soup or salad; add extra veggies to casseroles, omelets or pasta sauces; or skip the pasta altogether and ladle tomato sauce over spaghetti squash.

ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH, YOU SMOKE A FEW CIGARETTES

This one's pretty awful. "There is no safe lower threshold for tobacco use," says Michael Fiore, MD, director of the University of Wisconsin's Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention in Madison. Not to mention that the line between smoking a few a month and smoking a few a week or even a day can be thin. And we won't go into the dangers involved, except for this tidbit: Women who smoke just one cigarette a day have triple the risk of heart disease and five times the risk of lung cancer, according to a recent Norwegian study.

FIX IT ASAP Quit. "Because occasional smoking is usually tied to drinking, we often recommend that people give up alcohol for about a month to break that linkage," says Dr. Fiore. For help, call 800-QUIT-NOW to talk to a counselor who can help you map out a personal stop-smoking plan.

YOU WALK AT LEAST 20 MINUTES A DAY BUT NEVER ACTUALLY BREAK A SWEAT

You're doing better than you think. "Walking 20 minutes a day not only burns calories, but also gets your heart rate up somewhat," says Ralph Felder, MD, PhD, section

chief for cardiovascular nutrition in the cardiology fellowship program at Banner Good Samaritan Medical Center in Phoenix. "If all Americans walked 20 minutes a day, our risk for cardiovascular disease would drop significantly."

MAKE IT HEALTHIER Alternate fast and slow walking in your 20 minutes. This improves your cardiovascular fitness and helps you burn more calories, says Connie Tyne, executive director of the Cooper Wellness Program in Dallas. Start out at your regular pace, pick it up till you're a little winded (maybe a minute or so), and then slow down till you catch your breath again.

YOU USUALLY HAVE THREE TO FOUR DRINKS ON A SATURDAY NIGHT

That much alcohol in one sitting skates awfully close to the definition of "binge drinking," which can leave you more vulnerable to accidents and assault, as well as increase your risk for developing several types of cancer. For example, research from the National Cancer Institute found that postmenopausal women who had one to two drinks a day were 32% more likely than nondrinkers to develop the most common type of breast cancer. And while a "standard" serving of alcohol is 5 ounces of wine or 1½ ounces of hard liquor, many places pour considerably more than that, says Karen Collins, MS, RD, nutrition advisor for the American Institute for Cancer Research in Washington, DC. "What you think is three to four drinks may actually be more like seven."

FIX IT ASAP Spread the drinks out throughout the week (no more than one a day). If you have a family history of breast cancer, talk to your doctor—you may want to swear off alcohol altogether. *(Please turn to 115)*

HEALTH SINS

CONTINUED Taking a multivitamin that contains folate (also found in whole grains and dark green vegetables) may also help counter some of alcohol's negative effects.

YOU DRINK A LOT OF DIET SODA

"It's not so bad if it keeps you away from regular soda," says Karen Miller-Kovach, RD, chief scientific officer for Weight Watchers International. The downside: Drinking too much of any kind of soda—diet or regular—may increase your risk of osteoporosis. Women in the Framingham Osteoporosis Study who had more than three cans of cola a week had significantly lower bone density in their hips than those who drank it less than once a month. Researchers suspect that soda lovers drink less milk and calcium-fortified juices. Cola also has a lot of phosphorus, which, if not balanced by calcium, can contribute to bone loss.

MAKE IT HEALTHIER Limit diet soda to one cup (or can) a day.

TWO LARGE CUPS OF COFFEE ARE AN EVERYDAY MUST

Unless it gives you insomnia or the jitters, your java habit may actually be improving your health. Research suggests that having a cup or two daily may protect against liver cancer and colon cancer, and reduce the risk for Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, type 2 diabetes and even premature death from heart disease. (If you're pregnant or trying to conceive, however, most experts say to limit coffee to one cup a day or go decaf.)

MAKE IT HEALTHIER Stick with plain coffee or a skim latte. A 20-ounce black coffee from Starbucks has only 5 calories and a small skim latte has about 100 calories



(plus 35% of the daily recommended amount of calcium). That White Chocolate Mocha, however, can pack as much as 620 calories and 27 grams of fat.

YOU KEEP LOSING AND REGAINING THE SAME 10 POUNDS

Although you may have heard that this messes up your metabolism, experts say this isn't the case. Rather, the damage is psychological because weight cycling chips away at your confidence. "If you've repeatedly lost and regained weight, you start a diet thinking, *I'm not going to be able to do this,*" says Miller-Kovach. "You set yourself up to fail."

MAKE IT HEALTHIER Choose a weight-loss plan you believe in and pick a start date in the next few weeks. As you count down to the big kickoff, take the time to gather healthy recipes, clear the junk food from your kitchen and stock up on healthy low-calorie foods. "When your start day comes, you'll be ready—mentally, physically and environmentally," says Miller-Kovach. **wd**

Crest Pro-Health kills 99% of germs* without the burn.



It kills 99% of germs* that can cause plaque, gingivitis, and bad breath, without the burn of alcohol. You've only got one smile. Insure it with Crest Pro-Health.



Healthy, Beautiful Smiles for Life.

* In laboratory tests.

GETTY