Welcome to HEALTHYROADS!
In this monthly newsletter, you’ll find a collection of articles on popular health and wellness topics. If you’d like additional guidance and support in your quest to lose weight, improve nutrition, develop an exercise plan, reduce stress, or quit smoking and haven’t discovered our Weight Management, Tobacco Cessation, and Wellness programs, we encourage you to call us today. Some or all of these programs may have been purchased for you by your employer. To take advantage of all that Healthyroads has to offer, visit us online at www.Healthyroads.com or call us toll-free at 877.330.2746.

Wellness and Healthy Living
Keep a Food Log to Stay on Track

Can keeping track of what you eat really help with weight loss and healthy eating? The answer is yes. Writing down what you eat each day—as well as when, where, and why you eat—can help you see patterns that may be getting in your way. It can also help you see how well you’re doing—and motivate you to keep going.

To get started, choose a tool that will work for you. You can use a notebook or calendar. Or you can check out food logs that are available online or as software. The idea is to make your log easy to use—so you will use it every day. If you don’t like carrying something extra around with you, an online food log can be a great fit. If you don’t turn on your computer each day, then an application on your cell phone or a small notepad that fits into your purse or pocket may be a better choice.

No matter what tool you use, ask yourself questions like these each day and record the answers in your log:

- How hungry was I when I ate? (on a scale of 1–5)
- What did I eat and drink? (Be specific and include portion sizes.)
- What was my mood like before and after I ate?
- When and where did I eat? (home, office, car, etc.)
- Who was with me when I ate?
- What and how much physical activity did I do? (At least 60 minutes a day is best for weight loss.)

Try to update your food log right after you eat or drink. If you wait until the end of the day, you may forget about snacks, drinks, and portion sizes. Be honest about what you eat and how much. Your log won’t be helpful otherwise. After a few weeks, review your log and eating patterns. Be sure to:

- **Check your hunger levels:** Eating when your level is low may mean that you’re eating to deal with stress or emotions, not because you’re hungry.
- **Review your mood swings:** If certain foods seem to cause mood swings, avoid them for a week or 2 to see if you feel better. Sugary foods are a common culprit.
- **Assess cravings:** Do your cravings hit at the same time each day? Outsmart them by eating a healthy snack at craving time.
- **Look at location:** Eating in front of the TV or in the car isn’t mindful—you may eat more than you need.
- **Take notice of who eats with you:** You may eat more with some people out of habit (like family members, coworkers, or friends).

If you see eating patterns that may be getting in your way, ask yourself what you can do to change them. Sometimes, even a small change—such as cutting out one sugary drink or snack a day—can make a big difference. If you need help to see where you need to make a change, you can share your food log with a registered dietitian. Either way, your food log is a simple tool that can help stay on track and reach your healthy goals.
Diet and Exercise
Host a Healthy Holiday Gathering

Ah, the holiday season—6 weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day, filled with eating temptations. Can you see the overstuffed buffet tables now? How about your overstuffed belly? One way to fight a creeping waistline this time of year is to host a healthy holiday gathering.

 Believe it or not, you may not be the only person who is dreading all of the holiday feasting. Your friends and family might enjoy some healthy options, too. So spread the holiday cheer. Start with these healthy basics at your party:

★ **Appetizers:** Offer finger foods to keep portion sizes down. Limit fried and fatty foods. Include healthy options like raw vegetables with low-fat dips.

★ **Plates and serving spoons:** Put out small plates and serving spoons. This can help your guests avoid eating too much.

★ **Healthy dishes:** Offer a variety of healthy dishes. Think lean meats like fish and turkey, whole grains, and side dishes focused on vegetables. You can offer 1 or 2 rich dishes, but don’t make them the focus.

★ **Traditional recipes:** Cut back on the sugar and salt in holiday recipes. Use substitutes like applesauce or low-fat yogurt to replace some of the fat.

★ **Drinks:** Help your guests avoid alcohol and drinks with too much sugar. You could offer sparkling water, juices, spiced tea, hot apple cider, or a healthy punch.

★ **Desserts:** Choose desserts that can be served in small portion sizes. This is especially important for rich desserts. Offer fruit as an option.

★ **Sit-down meal:** Consider hosting a sit-down meal rather than a buffet-style dinner. This can help with grazing and second helpings.

Another option is to shift the focus of the party away from food. Why not make an activity the center of the fun? Try one of these ideas:

★ **Singing or caroling:** Gather the group to sing holiday songs.

★ **Dancing:** Jive to your holiday playlist, or hire a DJ or band.

★ **Winter fun:** Throw an ice-skating or snowman-building party.

★ **Gift exchange:** Try the white elephant game—cheap gifts and big laughs.

Don’t forget to take care of yourself as host. Be sure to eat a healthy snack or meal so you don’t graze while you cook or bake. And take time to sit down and enjoy your guests’ company. You’ll help spread cheer, not waistlines.
Have you ever proudly stated that you never buy cigarettes? Does just bumming a few now and then make smoking OK? Maybe you only smoke with friends or at social events. Or maybe you only smoke when you’re stressed or in a great mood. You might not even call yourself a smoker. And you may not think your smoking does any harm. You can quit anytime, right? Don’t be so sure.

Social and occasional smokers make up about one-third of all adult smokers. Social smokers tend to light up only with other people. It might be at a bar, party, concert, or nightclub. They may binge on cigarettes one weekend, then go days or even weeks without smoking. Occasional smokers may light up with other people, but they may also smoke alone. They don’t smoke every day.

Research shows social and occasional smokers share some traits. They tend to:
- Smoke fewer cigarettes and less often
- Believe they’re not addicted to nicotine
- Be less inclined to quit and make fewer quit attempts
- Believe that their smoking won’t harm their health
- Call themselves nonsmokers

While it’s true that social and occasional smokers may be less dependent on nicotine than daily smokers, that doesn’t mean they can’t get hooked. In fact, these smokers are a big target for tobacco industry marketing. Why? Because the industry sees occasional smoking as a stage in the process of becoming a regular smoker. You can become hooked on nicotine at any point. You may be hooked right now.

Getting hooked is not the only downside of occasional smoking. Though you may not realize it, the cigarettes you smoke are harming your health. Light and occasional smoking has been shown to cause:
- Lung cancer (along with other cancers)
- Heart disease (caused by high blood pressure and clogged arteries)
- Respiratory tract infections
- Slower healing from injuries
- Problems with fertility

If you’re a social smoker and you hang out in smoky places, then you have even more to worry about. Secondhand smoke comes with its own long list of health problems. Consider this, too: When you light up, you are creating secondhand smoke. This means that your occasional habit may be harming others.

If you’d like to drop the smoking habit, you couldn’t pick a better time than now. At first, this may take a few lifestyle changes. You may need to avoid the things that make you want to smoke. You may need to:
- Do other activities with friends (like go to the movies instead of a bar)
- Avoid alcohol for a while (or at least switch drinks or drink less)
- Find a new way to relieve stress (like walking)
- Choose a healthier way to reward yourself

If you find it’s not easy to quit, you may be addicted to nicotine or the habit of smoking. Talk to your doctor for help. Take steps to quit now—and truly call yourself a nonsmoker.
Low-Stress Living

Try Mindful Dancing With Nia

Mindful exercise has taken off in recent years, partly because it can make you feel great. Yoga and tai chi are good examples of it. They ask you to focus on your breathing and the sensations in your body as you move. This focus can help ease stress, calm your mind, and bring greater peace and awareness—all while you strengthen your body. But if you’d like a mindful workout that is more aerobic, you might want to try Nia.

Nia is a type of dance created in the eighties. The term stands for neuromuscular integrative action, also known as non-impact aerobics. Its creators, 2 fitness professionals, were looking for an alternative to regular aerobic exercise. They wanted something less hard on the body, with moves that would feel more natural. This was the start of Nia.

Nia blends ethnic and modern dance with elements of martial arts, yoga, and the healing arts. It is done barefoot to music. The moves can be adjusted based on your fitness level. And students are asked to listen to their bodies and to do the moves in ways that feel good. Free dance is a part of Nia classes.

To date, there’s been little research on the health benefits of Nia. But the benefits of dance have been studied. Making dance a regular part of your workout can help improve your:

- Aerobic capacity (the strength of your heart and lungs)
- Lower body strength and endurance
- Flexibility
- Balance and coordination

Dancing may also help strengthen your bones and protect your heart. Add to this the perks of mindfulness, and Nia may help enhance your health on many levels.

Nia is taught in classrooms across the country. In a class, you are likely to start with a gentle warm-up, followed by more vigorous moves. Classes should end with a cooldown. As you dance, your focus will be on sensation, feelings, and the moves that feel good to you. The goal is to allow your body to respond in natural ways to the music and your feelings. Nia movements target:

- The base (your hands and feet): to help you build balance, precision, and control
- The core (your head, chest, and pelvis): to help you move from your body’s center
- The extenders (your arms and hands): to allow creative expression through gesture

To get started with Nia, you’ll need to find a trained instructor. They are certified through the Nia international headquarters. To find a teacher in your area, you can search their website at http://Nianow.com/. You may find that Nia is just what you need to get fit while you connect more deeply with your mind and body.