

# THE GOOD LIFE

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## Plants: Partners in Health?

*Is there anything more delicious and nutritious than vine-ripened tomatoes, just-harvested peaches and corn, or fresh herbs and spices? Growing your own edible plants—whether in a backyard garden or a few pots on your windowsill—can be fun, rewarding, and healthful. If you share your garden's bounty with friends and neighbors, you might even expand your social connections and spread the health around.*

"Gardening has many health benefits. It allows you to get outside, get active, and sit less, which might help to reduce stress," says Dr. Philip Smith, a life-long gardener who oversees obesity research at NIH. "Gardening can also help to improve your diet if you eat more fruits and vegetables. They're especially delicious,

with a more intense flavor, when ripe and freshly picked."

Fruits and vegetables are packed with fiber and essential vitamins and minerals. Research has shown that eating fruits and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet can reduce your risk for long-

term diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer. The fiber in fruits and vegetables can help relieve constipation and normalize your bowel movements.

Fruits and vegetables may also help reduce your calorie intake—especially if they’re replacing high-calorie, high-fat foods—to help you control your weight. Herbs can add rich and interesting flavors to your meals without adding calories.

Gardening might enhance your mental health as well. Some studies have found that being physically active in natural environments—or even simple exposure to nature—can improve mood, reduce anxiety, and enhance self-esteem. “Growing your own vegetables and digging into the dirt can increase physical activity and give one a feeling of well-being and a sense of connection to the Earth,” Smith says.

Children can also benefit from growing and caring for edible plants. Some studies have found that kids involved with gardening programs tend to make healthier food choices, eat more fruits and vegetables, and have improved social skills.

“Gardening can help little children learn about growing and caring for things. They may find that they enjoy eating the fruits and vegetables they’ve grown themselves. And they may like eating the foods they know are good for them,” Smith says. “Adults, too, often find they appreciate the many delicious tastes of fruits and vegetables that come fresh from the garden.”

Cancer survivors who took up gardening in a small NIH-funded study tended to have increased physical activity and vegetable intake, along with improved strength and endurance. A larger NIH-funded study is now under way to see whether gardening might enhance the health and well-being of older cancer survivors.

Another recently launched NIH-funded study is looking at whether American Indian families who engage in community gardening will boost

their fruit and vegetable intake and reduce their body weight. “The researchers are also looking at whether gardening can lower blood pressure, increase hand strength, and lead to better mental and physical health,” says NIH’s Dr. Charlotte Pratt, who oversees research on nutrition, physical activity, and heart health.

“Americans generally don’t eat enough fruits and vegetables; it’s one of the major drawbacks of our diets today,” Pratt says. The federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans published in 2015 recommends that adults who eat about 2,000 calories daily should eat about 2.5 cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit a day. But only a small percentage of adults and children meet both fruit and vegetable recommendations.

When choosing vegetables, eat an assortment of colors and types every day. Broccoli, spinach, collard greens, kale, and other dark leafy greens are good choices. You might also choose red and orange vegetables, such as tomatoes, carrots, sweet potatoes, or red peppers. Many of these are easy to grow at home.

“These are all good sources of vitamins in general, including vitamins A and C, and they tend to be good sources of fiber as well,” Pratt says. “Some vegetables can also provide minerals, like potassium, iron, and calcium.”

The many nutrients in fruits and vegetables are essential to good health. If you’re taking certain medications, though, you need to be aware that some plant-based products can interfere with how certain medicines work. For instance, grapefruit can interact with certain drugs—including some cholesterol, blood pressure, and allergy drugs—and lead to serious side effects.

“For people who take medications to prevent blood clots, problems might arise from eating dark green vegetables, which are rich in vitamin K, or by taking vitamin K supplements,” Pratt says. Vitamin K helps to promote blood clotting, but blood thinners like warfarin (also called Coumadin) are designed to have the opposite effect. Foods rich in vitamin K include kale, spinach, Brussels sprouts, and some types of lettuce.

Many types of herbs can also interact dangerously with certain medications. But these problems are much more likely when herbs are taken as supplements.

“Herbs and spices have long been used to flavor foods. And they’ve been used since ancient times for medicinal purposes as well,” says Dr. Craig Hopp, an expert in herbal products research at NIH. “When you grow herbs in your garden, you’ve planted the seeds, watched them grow, and you know what they’ll taste like. But when you get these things in supplement form, you’re usually getting a concentrated extract of the plant that’s much more potent than what’s in your garden.”

Hopp adds that some herbs purchased in supplement form are not what they claim to be—“either they’re adulterated with some type of pharmaceutical ingredients, or they don’t contain the ingredients that their labels indicate.”

Hopp stresses that it’s important to talk with your doctor about any supplements you’re taking to ensure they won’t cause harmful interactions with your medications. You can learn more about herbs, potential side effects, and what the science says about their medicinal properties at NIH’s Herbs at a Glance website.

If you think you don’t have space for a backyard garden, think again. “Some vegetables like carrots, lettuce, kale, and hot peppers don’t require much space,” says Smith. These can be grown in pots or small gardens. “You can also try growing hanger tomatoes, which can be suspended from your deck or porch,” Smith says.

But no matter where you get them—whether from your own back yard, a farmer’s market, or a store—make sure you and your family eat plenty of fruits and vegetables every day.

*This article is reprinted from the National Institutes of Health’s NIH News in Health. For more information, visit: <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov>*

## Safety Tips for Gardeners

- Wear gloves to avoid skin rashes, cuts, and contaminants.
- Keep harmful chemicals, tools, and equipment out of kids’ reach. Read all instructions and labels so you use these items properly.
- Cut your risk for sunburn and skin cancer by wearing wide-brimmed hats, sun shades, and sunscreen with sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher.
- Protect against diseases carried by mosquitoes and ticks. Use insect repellent. Wear long-sleeved shirts. Tuck pants into your socks.
- If you’re outside in hot weather, drink plenty of water.
- Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness. Seek emergency medical care if needed.

# NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting of the Members of Senior Savers Association will be held at 16476 Wild Horse Creek Road, Chesterfield, MO 63017, on Wednesday, March 20, 2019 at 11:00 a.m. (CST) for election of Directors and for the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting and any adjournment thereof.

The above notice is given pursuant to the By-Laws of the Association.

**PROXY**  
**Senior Savers Association**  
**March 20, 2019 Annual Meeting of Members**  
**THIS PROXY IS SOLICITED ON BEHALF OF**  
**SENIOR SAVERS ASSOCIATION**

The undersigned member of Senior Savers Association does hereby constitute and appoint the President of Senior Savers Association, the true and lawful attorney(s) of the undersigned with full power of substitution, to appear and act as the proxy or proxies of the undersigned at the Annual Meeting of the Members of Senior Savers Association and at any and all adjournments thereof, and to vote for and in the name, place and stead of the undersigned, as fully as the undersigned might or could do if personally present, as set forth below:

1. FOR [    ], or to [    ] WITHHOLD AUTHORITY to vote for, the following nominees for Board of Directors: Tim Pabst, Tom Ebner, and Charles Budinger
2. In their discretion, the proxies are authorized to vote upon such other business as may properly come before the Meeting.

This proxy, when properly executed, will be voted in the manner directed by the undersigned member. If no direction is made, this proxy will be voted for the election of directors and officers.

DATED: \_\_\_\_\_, 2019.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Please date and sign and return promptly to 16476 Wild Horse Creek Road, Chesterfield, Missouri 63017 whether or not you expect to attend this meeting. The Proxy is revocable and will not affect your right to vote in person in the event that you attend the meeting.

Chesterfield, Missouri  
February 7, 2019  
Date



## Daily Aspirin May Not Benefit Healthy Older Adults

A new study found that, for healthy older adults, taking a low-dose aspirin each day didn't extend life or prevent a first heart attack or stroke.

Heart diseases and stroke are the leading causes of death and disability in older adults in the U.S. These are often caused by blood clots that form in the blood vessels to the heart or the brain.

For people who've had a heart attack or stroke, aspirin can help prevent a second one. Aspirin helps thin the blood to avoid further blood clots. A low dose of daily aspirin has also been shown to reduce the risk of a first heart attack or stroke for people who are at high risk for these conditions.

To see if aspirin could benefit healthy older adults, too, researchers randomly assigned more than 19,000 healthy older adults to take aspirin or an inactive pill, or placebo. Most participants were 70 and older (65 and older for African-American and Hispanic individuals).

Both groups had similar rates of health problems and deaths. Aspirin didn't reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke, physical disability, or dementia. Those taking aspirin had an increased risk of bleeding, which was already a known risk of regular aspirin use.

"These initial findings will help to clarify the role of aspirin in disease prevention for older adults," says Dr. Evan Hadley, who oversees clinical aging research at NIH's National Institute on Aging. "But much more needs to be learned."

Talk to your health care provider about your health risks and whether daily aspirin use is right for you.

*Article reprinted from [www.newsinhealth.nih.gov](http://www.newsinhealth.nih.gov)*

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## Can You Recognize a Heart Attack or Stroke? What To Do When Every Moment Counts

How would you react to a medical emergency? When it comes to life-threatening conditions like heart attack or stroke, every minute counts. Get to know the signs and symptoms of these health threats. If you think you or someone else might be having a heart attack or stroke, get medical help right away. Acting fast could save your life or someone else's.

Heart disease and stroke are 2 of the top killers among both women and men in the U.S. Nationwide, someone dies from a heart attack about every 90 seconds, and stroke kills someone about every 4 minutes, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Quick medical help could prevent many of these deaths. Fast action can also limit permanent damage to the body.

Heart attack and stroke are caused by interruptions to the normal flow of blood to the heart or brain—2 organs that are essential to life. Without access to oxygen-rich blood and nutrients, heart or brain cells begin to

malfunction and die. This cell death can set off a series of harmful effects throughout the body. The changes ultimately lead to the familiar symptoms of a heart or brain emergency.

You might know the most common symptoms of heart attack: sustained, crushing chest pain and difficulty breathing. A heart attack might also cause cold sweats, a racing heart, pain down the left arm, jaw stiffness, or shoulder pain.

Many don't know that women often have different heart attack symptoms than men. For instance, instead of having chest pain during a heart attack, women may feel extremely exhausted and fatigued or have indigestion and nausea.

"Many women have a vague sense of gloom and doom, a sense of 'I just don't feel quite right and don't know why,'" says Dr. Patrice Desvigne-Nickens, an NIH expert in heart health.

The symptoms of stroke include sudden difficulty seeing, speaking, or walking, and feelings of

weakness, numbness, dizziness, and confusion. “Some people get a severe headache that’s immediate and strong, different from any kind you’ve ever had,” says Dr. Salina Waddy, an NIH stroke expert.

At the first sign of any of these symptoms, fast action by you, someone you know, or a passerby can make a huge difference. NIH-funded research has helped ensure that more people survive heart attacks and strokes every year. We now have medicines, procedures, and devices that can help limit heart and brain damage following an attack, as long as medical help arrives quickly.

If the heart is starved for blood for too long—generally more than 20 minutes—heart muscle can be irreversibly damaged, Desvigne-Nickens says. “You need to be in the hospital because there’s a risk of cardiac arrest [your heart stopping],” which could be deadly. At the hospital, doctors can administer clot-busting drugs and other emergency procedures.

With stroke, Waddy says, “The longer you wait, the more brain cells are dying,” and the greater the chance for permanent damage or disability.

Emergency treatment for stroke depends on the kind of stroke. The most common type, ischemic stroke, is caused by a clot that clogs a blood vessel in the brain. The clot-dissolving drug tPA works best when given soon after symptoms begin. NIH research shows that patients who received tPA within 3 hours of stroke onset were more likely to recover fully.

Other strokes are caused by a hemorrhage—when a blood vessel breaks and bleeds into the brain. “The patient can have a larger hemorrhage within the first 3 hours,” Waddy says. A hospital medical team can help contain the bleeding, so every moment counts.

Even if you’re unsure, don’t feel embarrassed or hesitate to call 9-1-1 if you suspect a heart attack or stroke. “You should not go get your car keys. Your spouse shouldn’t be driving you



to the hospital,” advises Desvigne-Nickens. “The emergency crew is trained to treat these symptoms, and it could mean the difference between life and death.”

Heart attack or stroke can happen to anyone, but your risk increases with age. A family or personal history of heart attack or stroke also raises your risk. But some risk factors for heart attack and stroke are within your control. Treating them can dramatically reduce your risk.

“If you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes, work with your doctor to get these conditions under control,” Waddy says. “Know your numbers [blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol] and what they mean.”

You can also prepare for a medical emergency, to some degree. A hospital may not have access to your medical records when you arrive. Keep important health information handy, such as the medicines you’re taking, allergies, and emergency contacts. It would be important for the medical team to know, for example, if you’ve been taking anticoagulants to help prevent blood clots; these blood thinners put you at increased risk of bleeding. You might consider carrying an NIH wallet card that lists heart attack symptoms and has room for your personal medical information.

NIH researchers are studying new drugs and procedures to help the heart and brain repair themselves and improve organ function. "But there is absolutely nothing that will save both your time and health as well as prevention," says Dr. Jeremy Brown, director of NIH's Office of Emergency Care Research. Studies show that making healthy lifestyle choices can help prevent these medical emergencies from happening in the first place. Eat a healthy diet rich in protein, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables, and low in saturated fat. Get regular physical activity and don't smoke.

"I think one of the most important things we can do is to take a basic CPR and first aid course," recommends Brown. "We know the majority of cardiac arrests happen outside of hospitals and of that many, many can be saved if we get people with basic training on the scene quickly. An ambulance can never get there as quickly as a citizen passing by."

Whether or not you're trained to offer help, if you see someone having symptoms of a heart attack or stroke, call for help immediately.

"If you're even thinking about calling 9-1-1, you should call," Desvigne-Nickens says. "Yes other conditions can mimic the signs and symptoms of a heart attack or stroke, but let the emergency

physician figure that out in the emergency room."

## Wise Choices

### Know the Symptoms

Don't hesitate to call 9-1-1 if you see these symptoms of heart attack or stroke. Every minute counts.

#### Heart attack:

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Pain, stiffness, or numbness in the neck, back, or one or both arms or shoulders
- Shortness of breath
- Cold sweat, nausea, dizziness

#### Stroke:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden severe headache, dizziness, confusion
- Sudden difficulty with vision, balance, speech

*Reprinted from <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov>*

The Good Life is published by:  
**The Senior Savers Association**

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