

# HMB

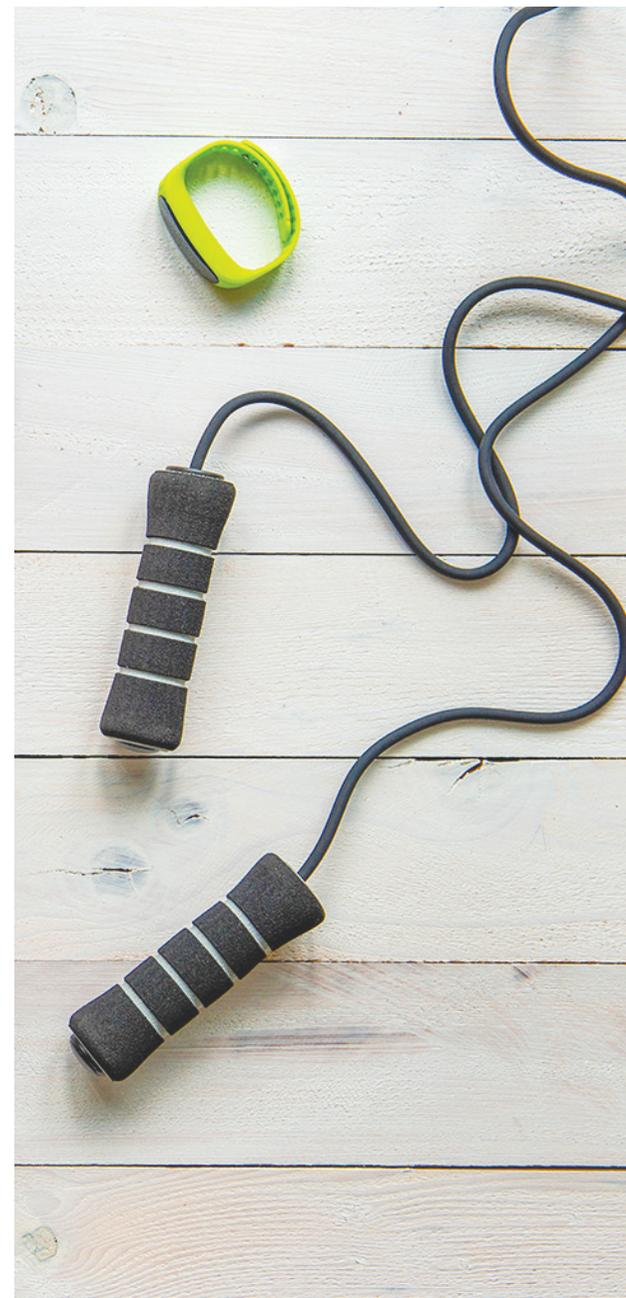
health, mind & body

## The Rise of Telehealth Services

## How to Incorporate More Heart-Healthy Foods Into Your Diet

## What is Body Mass Index?

January 2020  
Advertising Supplement to  
THE ROBESONIAN





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## Did you know??

New Year's resolutions may not have much staying power, but the tradition of making them is an enduring one that dates back thousands of years. According to History.com, ancient Babylonians are credited with being the first people to make New Year's resolutions. During Akitu, a 12-day religious festival, the Babylonians would make promises to their gods, and these promises typically focused on being a better person in the coming year.

Celebrants of the festival, which was held when crops were planted, a time that marked the beginning of a new year to individuals in certain ancient societies, would promise the gods that they would repay their debts and return any items they had borrowed in the previous year. While these promises might have been the forerunners to modern New Year's resolutions, there is one distinct difference that separates ancient Babylonians from people in modern times. Babylonians believed keeping their word to the gods would curry favor for them in the coming year, while failure to keep their promises would do the opposite.

People who make resolutions today typically do so to better themselves and do not fear reprisal from their creator if they fail to live up to their pledges. That's likely a good thing, as various reports suggest that as much as 80 percent of New Year's resolutions are abandoned by the second week of February.

# It's okay if walkers miss the 10,000-step standard

Over the last several years, many people have embraced the notion that 10,000 daily steps are the way to being physically fit. Health experts espouse that notion and trainers endorse it, but is there scientific proof behind the recommendation?

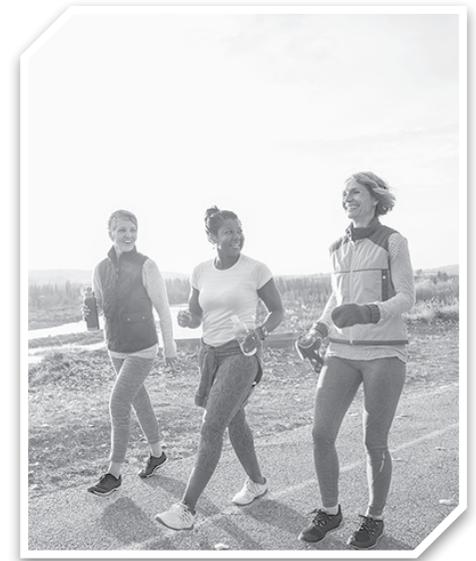
The 10,000-step standard — which equates to roughly five miles, depending on a person's stride length and speed — has some surprising origins that are not necessarily rooted in medical science. I-Min Lee, a professor of epidemiology at the Harvard University T. H. Chan School of Public Health and the lead author of a new study published in May 2019 in The Journal of the American Medical Association wanted to explore the origins of the 10,000-step recommendation. She discovered the guideline evolved from a marketing strategy devised by a Japanese company called Yamasa Toki. That firm introduced its new step-counter in 1965, naming it Manpo-Kei, which translated into "10,000 steps meter." They marketed the meter using the Japanese character for "10,000," which resembles a man walking. The character and round number proved memorable and the slogan, "Let's walk 10,000 steps a day" was catchy. As a result, many people adopted the 10,000-step approach, even though its medical benefits might not have been proven.

But this isn't to suggest that taking 10,000 steps per day cannot be part of a healthy living plan. In fact, such a goal promotes physical activity, which is a key component of a healthy lifestyle. However, simply taking 10,000 steps per day might not be enough to achieve long-term health.

Lee conducted her own research to test if the Japanese were on to something by

inadvertently setting the 10,000-step standard. She found that an increase in walking correlated to lower mortality rates among more than 16,000 elderly American women. However, when these women reached about 7,500 steps the mortality rates leveled out, suggesting that those extra 2,500 steps might not be necessary.

Even the manufacturer of one of the most popular fitness trackers, Fitbit, says that users' step goals can vary depending on need, and that goals may even shift over time. People who are looking to lose weight and maintain their existing health will need to modify their step count accordingly. Working with a qualified trainer or using a medically sanctioned



training program can help people exercise safely and effectively.

Taking 10,000 steps per day may help people achieve their health-related goals. But 10,000 steps alone likely won't be enough to achieve optimal health.



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L to R: Dr. Katie Lowry // Victoria Locklear, PA-C // Benjamin McMillan, CPNP

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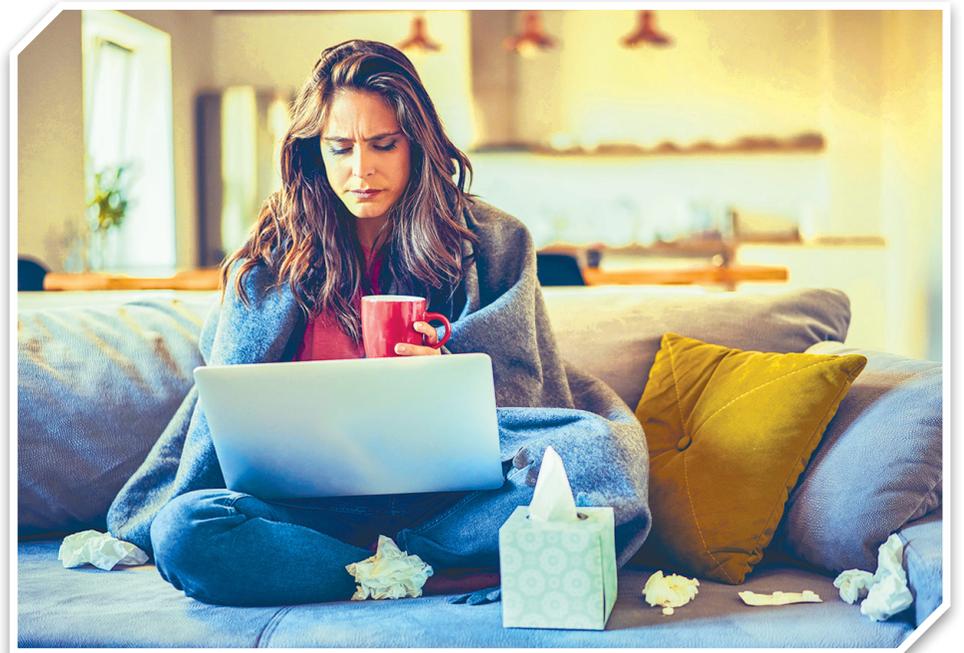
# The rise of telehealth services

Getting sick once meant traveling to a physician's office only to sit in a waiting room with fellow under-the-weather individuals. Few if any people like leaving home when they're feeling ill, and thanks to technology, many no longer need to do so.

Telehealth services, which the Massachusetts Medical Society defines as the delivery and facilitation of health and health-related services including medical care, provider and patient education, health information services, and self-care via telecommunications and digital communication technologies, are revolutionizing the healthcare industry. In many instances, patients need not leave the comfort of their beds or sofas to be diagnosed and treated. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology says telehealth, which is a broader scope of remote healthcare services than telemedicine, can utilize everything from videoconferencing, the internet, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless phone communications.

Many providers and insurance companies now offer some method of telehealth services. Consider some of these statistics.

- The American Telemedicine Association says more than one-half of all hospitals in the United States have a telehealth program.
- Forty-eight states require payers to cover telehealth, says the Center for Connected Health Policy.
- BBC Research indicates that telehealth makes up roughly one-quarter of the healthcare-related technology market.
- The American Medical Association says nearly 75 percent of all doctor, urgent care and emergency room visits could be handled safely and effectively over the phone or via video.
- Beckers Hospital Review says 82 percent of millennial patients surveyed would rather have a telemedicine visit than an in-person consultation.
- Around seven million people use telehealth services across the globe, according to eVisit.



Telehealth can connect rural providers and their patients to services at other sites and promote patient-centered health care. With a shortage of some medical specialties in rural areas, telehealth can play an important role in ensuring all patients get access to care they need. But the benefits do not only extend to rural patients. Individuals who are elderly and/or those who have mobility issues and cannot travel easily can benefit from telehealth services. Furthermore, any patient with a rare condition may no longer have to travel long distances to consult with specialists in that field.

Telehealth applications and programs on smartphones, tablets or laptops can make it easy for people to monitor their health. These apps can enable patients to do things like track health measurements, share information with clinicians, manage chronic illnesses, and set medication or appointment reminders. Patients also can communicate with providers to get health information through patient portals or to refill prescriptions effortlessly.



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## How to incorporate more heart-healthy foods into your diet

**D**iet and heart health go hand in hand. The American Heart Association notes that a healthy diet and lifestyle are the best weapons to fight cardiovascular diseases, which the World Health Organization says kill more people across the globe each year than any other disease.

Men and women do not need degrees in nutrition science to create heart-healthy diets for themselves and their families. In fact, the familiar calls to “eat your fruits and vegetables” many adults recall from childhood lessons or nights around the family dinner table still bear weight today. A diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables is a hallmark of a healthy lifestyle. And supplementing such a diet with other heart-healthy foods is a great way to reduce one’s risk for cardiovascular disease.



fat-free or low-fat plain yogurt or cottage cheese. You can even add fruit or vegetables to such snacks to make snack time even more heart-healthy.

### Proteins

Healthy proteins are another way people can promote heart health with their daily diets. When choosing proteins at the grocery store, the AHA recommends choosing chicken and fish over red meats. That’s because red meats, which include beef and lamb, have more saturated fat than chicken and fish. Saturated fats increase blood cholesterol levels and can worsen heart disease, while the unsaturated fats in fish like salmon can actually reduce the risk for cardiovascular issues like heart failure and ischemic stroke. When preparing poultry, remove the skin, as most of the saturated fat in poultry is found just beneath the skin.

### Grains

When buying grains, the DHHS recommends reading the ingredients list on the package before purchasing. Make sure whole wheat or another whole grain is the first item listed in the ingredients list, and choose only those products that say 100 percent whole grain. Instead of preparing white rice as a side dish, serve brown or wild rice, quinoa or oats.

### Fruits and vegetables

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services notes that fruits and vegetables are healthy whether they’re fresh, frozen, canned, and/or dried. The AHA advises eating fruits and vegetables with every meal and snack, and that may require a little creativity as you sneak them into favorite dishes. For example, the AHA suggests replacing half the ground meat in recipes for burgers, meatloaf or meatballs with cooked chopped mushrooms. The mushrooms can be finely chopped with a knife or food processor, and then sautéed in some olive oil until they’re soft. They can then be mixed in with the lean meat, and the meal can be cooked as it normally would. At the breakfast table, add fruit to a bowl of cereal to make for a more flavorful morning meal.

### Dairy products

When purchasing dairy products, the DHHS recommends sticking to fat-free or low-fat options. Replace whole milk with fat-free or 1 percent milk and buy only fat-free or low-fat cheese. When snacking, reach for

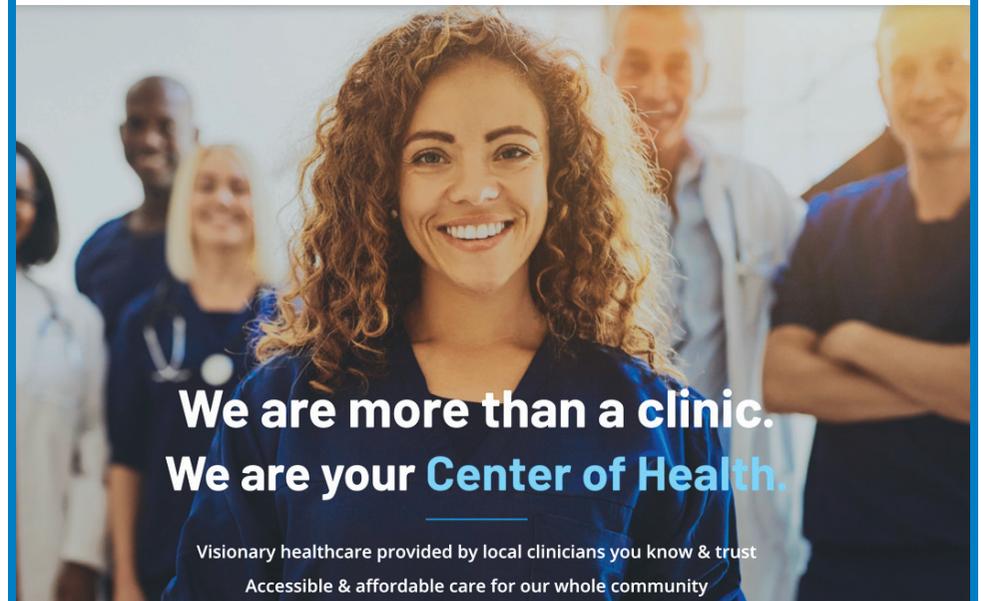


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# 3 simple ways to eat healthier every day

**D**iets can be difficult to navigate. Since no two people are the same, a healthy diet that satisfies one person won't necessarily satisfy another. Vegetarians might be perfectly happy without chicken or steak, while some people might shudder at the notion of never indulging in the occasional filet mignon.

While the most effective diets tend to be those that emphasize nutrition while still allowing individuals to indulge in some of their favorite dishes in moderation, the following are three ways that everyone, regardless of their personal preference, can eat healthy every day.

## Eat lots of whole-grain carbohydrates

Fad diets tend to paint carbs as the enemy, but various studies have shown just how integral carbohydrates, particularly whole-grain varieties, are to a healthy diet. One such study published in 2018 in the



medical journal *The Lancet Public Health* found that diets that got between 50 and 55 percent of their calories from plant-based carbohydrates like whole grains were associated with a lower risk of mortality than low-carb diets that favored animal-derived protein sources. When buying carbs at the grocery store, shoppers can opt for whole-grain varieties, including whole-grain pastas, brown rice and cereals. That won't require sacrificing flavor and makes for a

simple way to eat healthier every day.

## Make a concerted effort to eat more fruits and vegetables

The United Kingdom-based National Health Service, which is the largest single-payer healthcare system in the world, recommends eating at least five portions of fruits and vegetables every day. That may sound like a lot, but it's pretty easy to incorporate all those healthy fruits and veggies into a diet. For example, add a serving of antioxidant-rich blueberries to your cereal bowl each morning. At dinner time, allow vegetables to take up the most real estate on your plate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that diets rich in fruits and veggies can help people control their weight and may even reduce their risk for certain diseases, including cancer.

## Kick added sugars to the curb

Avoiding added sugars is another way anyone, regardless of their food preferences, can eat healthier every day. Healthy foods such as fruit contain natural sugars, and these don't pose a threat to overall health. However, added sugars, which the Harvard Medical School notes are found in many foods and can include honey, molasses and corn syrup, can increase a person's risk for various conditions and diseases, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Fruit contains fiber that slows the absorption of natural sugars, but the body digests added sugars much more quickly, leading to an uptick in blood sugar levels that can ultimately contribute to diabetes. Added sugars can be found in a host of foods and beverages, including some that aren't generally considered unhealthy, like bread, certain breakfast cereals and pasta sauces. When shopping, consumers should read nutrition labels and avoid products with excessive amounts of sugar.

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TRACY BULLARD, M.D.

BRITTANY LINDSAY, FNP

# Why you might be better off exercising at a gym than at home

**R**outine exercise benefits minds and bodies in various ways. Studies have shown that physical activity can improve mood and lower people's risk for various diseases, including heart disease and diabetes.

As beneficial as exercise can be, many people simply don't make physical activity part of their regular routines. Recent studies and reports from the United States' National Center for Health Statistics and Statistics Canada, conducted separately from each other, found that roughly 80 percent of adults in both the U.S. and Canada are not meeting the minimum physical activity requirements recommended by their respective governments. While a host of factors can influence a person's decisions on physical activity, where to exercise is one factor that could go a long way toward determining just how much adults exercise.

Basements, attics, spare bedrooms, or two-car garages may seem like the perfect places to create home gyms. However, the benefits of working out at a gym may outweigh the convenience of working out at home.

- Workout partners and/or other gym members may improve your chances of losing weight. People who exercise at home tend to work out alone. In so doing, they may be removing a potentially strong motivator that could keep them exercising. A 2016 study published in the research journal *Obesity* found that increasing contacts and interactions with thinner individuals, and declining contacts and interactions with heavier individuals, were linked to actual weight loss. In other words, working out with a fit friend or simply interacting with fellow gym members who maintain healthy weights can benefit people who are trying to lose weight through exercise.
- Gym memberships have a way of paying for themselves. The cost of a gym membership is one factor many people cite as a reason for not exercising more. However, many health insurance plans now offer sweat equity rebates that reward policy holders for working out. Such rebates can greatly reduce the cost of a gym membership, if not remove it entirely. For example, a sweat equity program that offers a \$200 rebate every six months for policy holders who exercise 50 times during that period can make a \$30 monthly gym membership free. In that



example, gym members would pay \$180 for six months but get all of that money back if they work out 50 times in a six-month period.

- Gyms can make it easier to diversify your workouts. Exercise boredom is something even the most ardent fitness enthusiast can relate to. Exercise boredom refers to the disinterest that can develop over time as people do the same workouts for weeks, months or years at a time. A home gym may not be spacious enough to include too many machines, whereas gyms typically include enough machines and classes to allow people to diversify their workouts as often as they'd like.

Working out at home may be convenient, but people looking to make exercise part of their daily routines may get better results by exercising at a nearby gym.

## What is body mass index?

**P**eople who are attempting to improve their physical fitness may hear a lot about body mass index, or BMI, and wonder just how important a good BMI is to their overall health. That can be hard to determine, especially for people who are unsure just what BMI measures. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, BMI is a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of his or her height in meters. For those unfamiliar with the metric system, that explanation of BMI might not be too helpful. So how is BMI used and what purpose does it serve?

BMI might be most useful in a screening capacity, as the CDC notes it is an inexpensive and easily performed method of screening for weight category. For example, by calculating a patient's BMI, doctors can quickly determine if the patient is underweight, has a normal or healthy weight, or is overweight or obese. Conditions associated with being overweight include heart disease and diabetes, so an easily calculated index determining if a person is overweight (or underweight or obese) can be an effective tool in combatting some potentially dangerous conditions. But physicians won't base their opinions on patients' overall health based on BMI alone.

In fact, if physicians determine a BMI is a health risk, they will likely perform further assessments, including skinfold thickness measurements and evaluations of things like eating habits, physical activity and family history. So while BMI might be somewhat confusing, it can still be a valuable tool for people looking to determine just how healthy or unhealthy they are.



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