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# Adrenal Reset Diet: Lose 9 lbs in 30 Days

Adjusting when you eat carbs can reverse weight gain caused by stress hormones, says a top doctor.

By Vera Tweed

As we live longer, weight seems easier to gain and much harder to lose. All too often, this is considered a normal part of aging — but it isn't, according to Dr. Alan Christianson, author of the new best-selling book *The Adrenal Reset Diet*.

"In many ways, what looks like aging is just decades of something not working right," he tells Health Radar.

More specifically, he says, weight gain in middle age or later is a sign of disrupted rhythms in cortisol, the stress hormone made by the adrenal glands, causing food to be preferentially stored as harmful belly fat instead of being used to generate energy.

Cortisol levels should be at their highest in the morning when we need energy, explains Dr. Christianson, founder of Integrative Health, an internationally renowned naturopathic medical practice in Scottsdale, Ariz.

As the day goes on, levels should gradually decline, allowing our bodies to wind down in the evening so we can get a good night's rest.

But over the years, the cumulative effect of a poor diet, lack of exercise, exposure to pollutants, and life stressors disrupts this daily rhythm, promoting weight gain and preventing weight loss.

What's more, the malfunctioning adrenals lead to a chronic state of feeling both stressed out and fatigued, a condition Dr. Christianson refers to as "wired and tired."

Through years of research and clinical work, he found a simple way to reset such faulty adrenal rhythms, unblock weight loss, and enhance well-being.

## Lose 2 Inches From Waist Fast

In a study at Dr. Christianson's clinic, participants on the Adrenal Reset Diet reduced their cortisol levels by more than 50 percent while losing an average of more than two inches from their waists and nine pounds in 30 days.

Many subjects reported sleeping better, feeling calmer, and having more energy.

The adrenal glands make cortisol and a weaker, dormant form of the hormone, cortisone, which is held in

reserve for use as needed.

When we are faced with a challenging, stressful situation, the brain and liver convert the weaker cortisone to the stronger cortisol to enhance energy and alertness.

In addition, the balance of cortisol and cortisone regulates the natural rhythm of our 24-hour wake-sleep cycle.

In the evening, for example, decreased cortisol levels enable melatonin to be generated for restful sleep.

Visceral belly fat around organs creates an imbalance in this process because it continually converts the weaker cortisone to the stronger cortisol, regardless of the time of day or the degree of stress facing us. And, it automatically increases the conversion of food to fat, rather than energy. Many attempts at weight loss are foiled by this disturbance.

“The more visceral fat someone has, the more the rhythm of their fat is disconnected from the rhythm of their body,” says Dr.

### All You Can Eat

On the Adrenal Reset Diet, you can eat much of these vegetables whenever you want: alfalfa sprouts, artichokes, asparagus, bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, collard greens, cucumbers, eggplant, fennel, garlic, ginger, green beans, green onions, jicama, kohlrabi, leeks, mushrooms, okra, onions, peppers, radishes, rutabaga, greens of any type, snow peas, squash, tomatoes, tomatillos, water chestnuts.

Christianson.

However, he adds, “You can intentionally use food to repair that rhythm.”

His breakthrough was discovering that cycling carbs in the course of the day resets the natural cortisol rhythm and unlocks the body’s ability to lose weight naturally.

### Low-Carbs in Morning

The secret is this: Eat the least

amount of carbs, and a generous amount of protein, at breakfast. Eat a bit more carbs at lunch, and the largest amount at dinner.

Protein is part of every meal: always a palm-size portion or, in the case of protein powder, 24 to 35 grams of protein per serving.

Compared to most American diets, the Adrenal Reset Diet does not include much starch.

Potatoes and other starchy vegetables are out. However, it does allow an unlimited amount of other vegetables.

The idea is to reset your rhythm, and once that’s done, you can be more lenient with what you eat.

The meals below are examples you can use to devise your own menus. The more important tenet of the diet is to eat the lowest amount of carbs in the morning, slightly more at lunch, and the most at dinner.

You can vary protein sources with different types of low-mercury fish or seafood and lean meats or poultry.

Meat and poultry should be



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### 3 Signs of Adrenal Problems

Cortisol disruption manifests itself in three main ways. In addition to the Adrenal Reset Diet, here are steps you can take to remedy specific cortisol problems.

**Stress and insomnia:** Chronically high cortisol levels leave you feeling edgy and mentally scattered, and make it difficult to fall asleep. Drink lemon balm tea in the morning and passionflower tea in the evening. Do strength training exercises.

**Wired and tired:** Erratic swings in cortisol can lead to bursts of energy followed by crashes. Besides daytime tiredness, this can cause you to wake up frequently at night. Dr. Christianson recommends taking 100 to 300 mg of rhodiola extract in the morning, and 500 to 1,000 mg of ashwagandha in the evening. Both supplements are widely available at health-food stores or on the Internet. Do cardiovascular exercise such as walking or jogging, varying low and high intensities.

**Fatigue:** Chronically low cortisol makes you exhausted most of the time, and sleep is not refreshing. Take 30 to 100 mg of American ginseng in the morning and drink chamomile tea in the evening, with ginger or peppermint, if you prefer. Do gentle, relaxing exercise, such as a walk in the morning and evening or a slow-paced form of yoga.

organic and free range, but if that isn't possible, look for meat from animals raised without hormones or antibiotics.

#### Breakfast

Breakfast can be leftover lean meat, poultry, or fish from yesterday's dinner, with non-starchy vegetables.

Or, have a high-protein, low-carb smoothie. Blend these ingredients with ½ cup each of ice cubes and water:

- 1 serving sugar-free protein powder
- 1 handful frozen berries
- 1 cup unsweetened flax milk
- 2 tablespoons flax or chia seeds
- 1 small handful frozen spinach or other frozen greens
- ¼ cup cooked navy beans

If you are not used to eating much fiber, start with a smaller quantity of seeds and gradually work up to the full amount over a month or so.

If you need a sweetener, use stevia or monk fruit, also called lo han, which is commonly available at health food stores.

#### Lunch

Eat a big salad with a palm-size serving of fish, lean meat or poultry. Here's an example:

- ½ cup cooked black beans
- 1 palm-size serving of canned salmon
- Several handfuls of romaine, or red or green leaf lettuce
- 1 large handful cherry tomatoes

Dress the salad with 1 tablespoon olive oil and ½ teaspoon red wine vinegar, and season to taste.

#### Dinner

Carbs at dinner should be 1 cup (cooked) brown rice, quinoa, or beans. Here's a basic stir-fry recipe for one meal:

- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ cup diced onion
- 1 large handful broccoli florets
- 1 small handful sliced button mushrooms
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 1 cooked chicken breast, diced
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce

Heat 1 teaspoon of the oil in a saucepan or wok. Cook the garlic and onion for about 1 minute.

Add vegetables and ginger, and cook until lightly soft, about 5 minutes. Add the rice, chicken, soy sauce, and remaining teaspoon of oil and stir, until all ingredients are warm.

#### Dessert

Use fruit as a dessert or treat. But because fruit is high in sugar, limiting it to two or three servings per week will accelerate weight loss.

#### Lifestyle Changes

Simply walking or doing some other type of daily exercise will help to reset the adrenal glands, says Dr. Christianson. He also recommends one long, but low-intensity, 2½-hour exercise session per week, which can be a leisurely hike or bike ride.

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## Making **YOU** Live Healthier

with Mehmet Oz, M.D. & Michael Roizen, M.D.

# Immune Drugs Bring Cancer Treatment Revolution

Until recently, only 10 to 20 percent of people diagnosed with advanced melanoma — the deadliest of skin cancers — could expect to be alive in five years. Now, cutting-edge cancer drugs are unleashing the power of the human immune system against this and other tough-to-treat cancers. In other words, these new drugs are allowing the immune system to do the job it was designed to do: protect us from harmful disease.

These exciting, lifesaving medicines are called checkpoint inhibitors (CIs). They outsmart cancer cells in a brand-new way. They take the blinders off the immune system so that it can recognize, attack, and destroy cancer cells. One big reason that cancer gains a foothold in the body is that it's really good at hiding from the immune system. Checkpoint inhibitors unmask the cancer cells so they can be KO'd.

Just two CIs, ipilimumab (Yervoy) and pembrolizumab (Keytruda), are FDA approved. In September, Health Canada approved its first CI, Yervoy, for skin cancer. In addition to treating melanoma, these cutting-edge drugs are producing exciting results in clinical trials against cancers of the lung, kidney, blood, colon, stomach, breast, bladder, head, neck, and brain. Based on some early evidence, scientists are even speculating that CIs can help the immune system “remember” cancer cells, so it can fight them off in the future if they reappear.

Cancer docs and researchers, usually cautious when talking about the potential of new treatments, are calling CIs “remarkable” and “a breakthrough.” We're even more thrilled by what cancer survivors themselves have to say: “I did not expect to celebrate another birthday, Christmas or even experience

another summer,” says one melanoma survivor from Canada who received ipilimumab in a clinical trial. “This treatment didn't just save my life, it gave me my life back.”

These drugs don't work for everyone, and they can cause serious (though controllable) side effects, but they are effective for a large percentage of the population and are conveying astounding benefits.

**For skin cancer:** CIs help some people with advanced melanoma, who typically live 6-18 months after diagnosis, live longer. When Dana-Farber Cancer Institute researchers tracked 4,868 people with this cancer who received the CI ipilimumab, they found that 21 percent were still alive after three years, and 17 percent were still alive after seven years. In a study of the CI pembrolizumab, also used for treating melanoma, 69 percent of those receiving it were alive after one year.

**For kidney cancer:** Still an experimental treatment, these drugs helped 65 percent of people with renal cell carcinomas live without any cancer progression for at least 24 weeks in one study. One in five responded to the drug, as did nearly one in two when it was combined with another checkpoint inhibitor.

**For lung cancer:** Still in clinical trials, a number of CIs show promise against this killer cancer. So far, tumors in up to 25 percent of people with lung cancer respond to these drugs, but up to 71 percent get benefits when the CI is combined with conventional chemotherapy.

**Learn more:** Checkpoint inhibitors are currently approved only for melanoma, but in clinical trials they are being tested against several other cancers. To find clinical trials for your cancer type or location, go to [www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/search](http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/search).

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# Science Proves the Curative Powers of Sea Air

By Rick Ansorge

Millions of people worldwide enthusiastically attest that the seashore is a wonderful tonic for body, mind, and soul. But can it actually improve health?

For centuries, people have associated breathing “salt air” with better health — and now there is increasing scientific evidence that proves they were right.

“We have various pieces of evidence suggesting that living near, and visiting, the coast, might be good for health,” says Ben Wheeler, M.D., of the European Centre for Environment & Human Health at the University of Exeter Medical School in England.

## Coasting to Health

In one recent study, Dr. Wheeler and his colleagues analyzed data on more than 48 million English residents.

“Our research suggests that populations living closer to the coast in England are more likely to report good health than those farther inland,” Dr. Wheeler tells Health Radar.

Follow-up work Dr. Wheeler did with a detailed survey that followed people as they moved back and forth from the coast and inland is even more powerful. It suggests that while people live near the coast they report better mental and physical health than when they live inland.

Their analysis showed that the link between good health and

coastal living was strong across all income groups, and actually was strongest in low-income residents.

## Salt Air Rx

As early as the 1700s, doctors were prescribing trips to the shore or stays at “bathing hospitals” for ailments ranging from depression to tuberculosis.

To this day, many European spas — which are covered by insurance and considered mainstream health treatment centers there — offer salt therapy.

## Psoriasis and CF Help

Some of the most important research has come out of Australia. After hearing how surfing seemed to improve symptoms of cystic fibrosis, researchers wanted to see if inhaled hypertonic saline could help people with the disease.

So they randomly assigned 164 cystic fibrosis patients to breathe mist containing 7 percent saline or placebo. After 48 weeks, they found that the treatment group had improved lung function, fewer disease-related flare-ups, and a lower rate of absenteeism from work or school.

Their study was published in a 2006 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Another 2006 study published in the *European Respiratory Journal* showed that inhaled hypertonic saline temporarily improved smoking-related problems such as coughing and excess mucus production. More recent research

shows that bathing in seawater may help patients with skin conditions such as psoriasis and contact dermatitis.

For example, a study published in the journal *Skin Research and Technology* showed that ordinary seawater was more effective at healing contact dermatitis rashes than standard treatment with cortisone cream.

The researchers concluded that two components in seawater — salt and potassium chloride — sealed damaged skin so it could mend.

## “FIT AFTER 50” FACT

Here’s more evidence that low-fat diets are a bust: New federally funded research suggests eating a high-fat diet may delay age-related declines in brain function. The study — headed by the National Institutes of Health, the Center for Healthy Aging, and the University of Copenhagen — found brain aging was postponed in mice placed on a high-fat diet. The findings, published in the journal *Cell Metabolism*, open the door to new treatments for those suffering from premature aging, Alzheimer’s, and Parkinson’s disease. “Our study suggests that a high-fat diet can postpone aging processes,” said lead researcher Vilhelm Bohr.

# Should an Osteopath Be Your Family Doctor?

By Rick Ansoorge

If you're shopping for a family doctor, you don't have to choose someone with a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) degree.

You can get the same level of quality care — and possibly *better* care — from someone holding the title Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.).

Like an M.D., a D.O. must complete training in a four-year medical school before starting a residency program in a specialty.

"That could be anything from family medicine to neurosurgery to gastroenterology to the whole range of specialties," says Dr. Stephen C. Shannon, president of American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine.

In the United States, M.D.s and D.O.s have equivalent rights, privileges, and responsibilities, and are licensed to practice the full scope of medicine and surgery. They often practice side-by-side.

## Booming Business

Osteopathic physicians account for about 7 percent of the doctors in the U.S. and their numbers are rapidly increasing. Osteopathic schools now turn out nearly a third of all med school graduates.

In 1980, there were 14 osteopathic med schools in the U.S. with 4,940 students. Today there are 30 such schools with some 24,600 students.

Dr. Shannon attributes the boom to increasing demand for

family doctors. By 2020, the U.S. is expected to face a shortage of 45,000 primary care doctors as the Affordable Care Act results in 32 million more people getting health insurance and as baby boomers age.

"The selection process for osteopathic medical schools tends to focus on students who are interested in pursuing a primary care type of clinical practice," says Dr. Shannon.

"(Osteopathic medicine) is focused on more of a holistic approach to patient care. In other words, we're not just looking at the problems that might happen with a particular organ system with disease but with the health of the entire individual."

The curriculum at osteopathic medical schools and traditional medical schools is similar. Both types of schools train students in the full range of diagnostic and treatment modalities. An important difference is that osteopathic medical school students are required to spend an additional 300-400 hours learning osteopathic manipulative medicine, which involves hands-on manipulation of the human musculoskeletal system to diagnose and treat conditions ranging from strains and sprains to chronic conditions such as asthma and congestive heart failure.

Dr. Shannon explains that this hands-on approach can accurately diagnose conditions while sparing patients the expense and hazards

of radiation-based diagnostic tests such as CT scans.

Osteopathic medicine appeals to many students because of its holistic approach and commitment to preventive care.

## Going Mainstream

Despite the boom in osteopathic medicine and increasing visibility of D.O.s, some Americans still are unaware how mainstream the discipline has become. Some 29 percent of adults don't know that D.O.s are licensed to practice medicine and 33 percent don't know they can perform surgery, according to a survey conducted last year by the American Osteopathic Association.

Osteopathic medicine started in the late 19th century as a reaction to conventional medicine's reliance on dubious remedies of the time such as arsenic and opium. Its founder, frontier physician Andrew Taylor Still, opened the first osteopathic medical school in 1892 in Kirksville, Mo. One of the things patients like best about osteopathic treatment is that the physicians often spend more time with them than an M.D. does. "I don't have a study to quote you saying what happens with the average D.O.," says Dr. Shannon. "But I can tell you that a visit with a D.O. usually takes, 20, 30, or 40 minutes minimum as opposed to a typical 10 to 15 minute visit that you might see in a lot of other types of settings."

# Americans Are Eating Dinner Later, Spawning Acid Reflux Epidemic

By Lynn Allison

Years ago, dinner time for most Americans was 5 to 5:30 p.m. Today, it is 6 to 7 p.m. and, it's not uncommon for many of us who work late to eat our biggest meal of the day at 8:30 p.m. or even later.

The late-night dining trend has spawned a national epidemic of acid reflux, says a top expert on the condition.

"Acid reflux now affects some 40 percent of Americans," says Jamie Koufman, M.D., author of *The Chronic Cough Enigma*.

Acid reflux is not just a matter of a little discomfort from heartburn. It can be deadly, causing esophageal cancer, which has increased by 500 percent in the U.S. since 1970, Dr. Koufman told Health Radar.

The single greatest risk factor for acid reflux is night eating, says Dr. Koufman, a pioneering laryngologist and director of the Voice Institute of New York.

One patient, a restaurateur, came to see Dr. Koufman with symptoms of postnasal drip, sinus disease, heartburn, and chronic cough.

The patient reported that it was his routine to leave his restaurant at 11 p.m.

After arriving home he would make a large dinner for himself, eat it quickly, and then go to bed afterward.

"There was no medical treatment for this patient," Dr. Koufman recalls.

"I could offer no pills or surgery to fix his condition. His reflux was a lifestyle problem. I told him he had to eat dinner before 7 p.m. and not eat after work at all. Within six weeks, his reflux was gone."

Even though Europeans have a tendency to eat late dinners, they have about half the incidence of reflux as Americans.

What's their anti-heartburn secret?

They generally go to bed later than Americans, allowing more digestion time between meal time and bedtime.

Europeans also tend to walk or at least stand after dinner, not recline in front of a television until it is time to sleep.

"After eating it's important to stay upright because gravity helps keep the contents in the stomach. Reflux is the result of acid spilling out of the stomach, and lying down with a full stomach makes reflux much more likely to occur," says Dr. Koufman.

Europeans also tend to eat less for dinner than Americans, who make the evening meal the largest meal of the day. And Europeans generally have much smaller dessert portions.

"To stop reflux disease we have to stop eating at least three hours before bedtime," Dr. Koufman says. "Even my patients who eat healthfully, find that they need to change the timing of their meals to get relief."

It's not only the timing and amount of food that is important. What you eat or drink also is a factor.

Soft drinks, alcohol, and high-sugar, high-fat, processed foods are the most likely to cause reflux. Eaten shortly before bedtime they are a prescription for heartburn, says Dr. Koufman.

If you are hungry and absolutely must have something to eat right before bedtime, Dr. Koufman recommends two foods that are less likely to cause reflux: oatmeal or a banana.

## 6 Before-Bed Foods That Trigger Acid Reflux

Here are six foods most likely to bring on acid reflux.

- ▶ **Alcohol:** A nightcap is the "kiss of death" for reflux sufferers. Alcohol relaxes the esophageal valve, making it easier for stomach acid to move upward.
- ▶ **Soda:** Soft drinks and fruit juices are highly acidified, which can lead to reflux.
- ▶ **Chocolate:** It's a notorious reflux trigger.
- ▶ **Ice Cream:** Ice cream is a popular late-night treat, but the high-fat content often leads to heartburn.
- ▶ **Nuts:** Cashews, macadamia nuts, peanuts, and walnuts are common reflux trigger foods.
- ▶ **Cheese:** Cheese brings on heartburn for many sufferers.

# Gluten-Free Craze: What You Need to Know

**Q: There's a pervasive idea gluten is bad. Is this true?**

**A:** It's not true that everyone needs to eliminate gluten. But going gluten-free has taken America by storm.

Millions of people who don't need to are avoiding gluten when all they may need to do is cut back. That said, even small amounts of gluten are dangerous for people with celiac disease.

**Q: What exactly is gluten?**

**A:** Gluten is the major protein found in some grains. This includes all forms of wheat (bulgur, durum, semolina, spelt), as well as barley, rye, and triticale, a wheat-rye cross.

Gluten can turn up in unexpected places. It can be found in certain brands of chocolate, imitation crab, deli meats, potato chips, soy sauce, and even toothpaste.

**Q: What is celiac disease?**

**A:** Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder. When people who have celiac disease eat foods with gluten, their immune system attacks the undigested gluten protein, causing an inflammatory reaction that eventually destroys the fine architecture of the villi lining the inner wall of the small intestine. The resulting poor absorption of nutrients leads to a host of ailments, including anemia, hormone imbalance, neurological issues, osteoporosis, and even several forms of cancer.

**Q: How common is celiac disease?**

**A:** Years ago, celiac disease was thought to be extremely rare, but it is now estimated to affect 1 percent of the population.

Its incidence is believed to have increased substantially in recent decades. But gluten doesn't only affect celiac sufferers.

It was only recently recognized that there is a broad spectrum of gluten sensitivity and that upward of 50 percent of Americans may have it to some degree.

**Q: What is gluten sensitivity?**

**A:** The symptoms of gluten sensitivity often are similar to those of celiac disease — stomach pain, diarrhea, heartburn, body aches, headache, depression, migraine, brain fog, skin rashes — but people with gluten sensitivity don't have extensive damage to the villi of the small intestine.

Unlike those with celiac disease, these people do not necessarily need to eliminate all gluten from their diet. Instead, they need to be "gluten aware," monitoring their own reactions to gluten foods.

**Q: What happens when gluten-sensitive individuals cut back on gluten?**

**A:** They start to feel much better, often within a few days. They have better digestion, fewer headaches, sharper mental focus, more energy, better skin, and they're happier. Also, conditions like irritable bowel syndrome and heartburn often are eliminated, and disorders like rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, and fibromyalgia may go into remission.

**Q: Won't just choosing "gluten-free" products solve the problem?**

**A:** Gluten-free foods were originally created for celiac patients who often are malnourished because of their condition.

So the only thing that mattered was that the foods were gluten-free and tasted good. But many gluten-free products are high in fats, sugar, and refined white rice flour and/or potato starch. That's why it's important to read labels. Junk food is junk food, gluten-free or not.

**Dr. Arthur Agatston** is a renowned preventive cardiologist and author of the #1 *New York Times* best-selling book *The South Beach Diet*. His latest book is *The South Beach Diet Gluten Solution*. Dr. Agatston is medical director of Wellness and Prevention for Baptist Health South Florida and a clinical professor of medicine at Florida International University.





# 6 Ways to Shape Up Before Surgery

By Lynn Allison

The average American will have nine operations during a lifetime.

The success of those procedures depends on the skill of the surgeon, the condition of the patient, the follow-up care, and another factor that patients rarely consider: patient preparation.

“Consider surgery like a sporting event,” board-certified surgeon Jamal M. Bullocks, M.D., of Kelsey-Seybold Clinic in Houston tells Health Radar.

“If you are an athlete, you wouldn’t want walk onto the field without first conditioning your body — training, eating well, getting enough sleep, and engaging in healthy habits. It’s the same for a surgical procedure.

“Surgery puts a lot of stress on the body and you do need to prepare.”

Of course, for some procedures, patients are given little notice. This means they don’t have time to prepare.

But for scheduled operations, here are six things you can do ahead of time to maximize your chances for a successful outcome:

**1. Quit smoking:** Experts say smoking doubles the risk of suffering a stroke or heart attack during or after surgery because it blocks oxygen flow to the heart. Smoking also leads to complications in wound healing.

**2. Review your medications:** Bring a list of your medications, both prescription and supplements, to your doctor prior

## 5 Questions to Ask Before Surgery

Dr. Lyle Back, a board-certified Philadelphia-area plastic surgeon, says every patient should ask their surgeon these 5 questions prior to a procedure.

- ▶ **Is surgery necessary?** This may seem like an obvious question, but many patients go along with the first suggestion that they have surgery. Ask about alternatives and get a second opinion if there is any doubt about whether you should go under the knife.
- ▶ **Is your board certification up-to-date?** To check on a doctor’s certification status, contact the American Board of Medical Specialties by calling 866-ASK-ABMS or going to [abms.org](http://abms.org).
- ▶ **What’s your experience?** Ask how many similar operations the surgeon has performed in the past year. Think twice if the doctor rarely does your type of surgery. “It’s not that you have to find the busiest, most experienced surgeon in North America,” says Andrew Auerbach, an associate professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco and an expert in surgical outcomes. “It’s more about avoiding the guy who does very few of the procedures, especially in a hospital that does very few.”
- ▶ **What are your success, failure, and complication rates?** Not all surgeons will be able or willing to tell you, but the good ones should have an answer.
- ▶ **What’s the hospital’s infection rate?** Seventeen states now make that information public, and many hospitals report their rates voluntarily.

to surgery. Some steroids and anti-inflammatory medicines inhibit the production of collagen, which is essential for wound healing, says Dr. Bullocks.

Some drugs can dangerously interact with anesthesia. Anticoagulants such as blood thinners like Coumadin (warfarin) or Plavix can cause excessive bleeding during surgery.

You also may need to stop taking some antidepressant drugs, which can cause serious side effects during surgery.

**3. Check your vitamin levels:** Vitamin D deficiency is rampant. Confirm with your doctor that you have adequate levels of this important vitamin, along with vitamins A, E, and C — all of which promote acute wound

healing.

**4. Control chronic conditions:** These can increase the chances of complications during and after surgery.

Work with your doctor to get your diabetes, blood pressure, kidney disease, or other chronic condition under control before going under the knife.

**5. Control drinking:** Alcohol withdrawal during or after surgery can cause seizures, irregular heartbeat, or respiratory failure. Be truthful with your doctor about your drinking.

**6. Walk a mile a day:** University of Michigan thoracic surgeon Dr. Mark Orringer says he won’t operate on anyone unable to meet the modest fitness goal of being able to walk a mile.

# Is It OK to Take Expired Medications?

By Michele Bender

Your head's pounding, so you reach into your medicine cabinet for a pain reliever. You take a look at the label and see that the expiration date has come and gone.

Now, you've got a choice: pop the expired pill or toss away what may be perfectly good medication.

This dilemma can happen with any medication, but especially for those used on an as-needed basis.

So what does the expiration date really mean? Do medications become unsafe with age or just ineffective?

"The FDA requires a lot number and expiration date on over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription brand-name drugs," explains pharmacologist Joe Graedon, author of the best-selling *People's Pharmacy* books. After the expiration date, the manufacturer no longer guarantees that medication is 100 percent effective. But that doesn't mean it won't work. And almost never do medications become unsafe with age, although ineffectiveness itself can become a safety issue.

"Unfortunately, it's a much more complicated question than you would think," says Graedon.

OTC drugs generally are effective long after the expiration date. "With OTC medications there's usually a fudge factor," explains Graedon.

"Drug companies usually build in several months if not years. In other words, the medication doesn't instantly go bad the day

after its expiration date."

However, when it does go bad depends on the chemical structure of the medication and how it's stored, among other things. For example, if you keep a bottle of Advil in your car's glove compartment it's going to deteriorate faster than if you stored it in a kitchen drawer.

## Expiration vs. Discard Date

Prescriptions are another story. "If you get a brand-name prescription drug in its original bottle made by the manufacturer, it will have an expiration date that's around six to 18 months from the day you pick it up in the pharmacy," says Graedon. But if you get a generic version of your medication in a standard issue bottle from the pharmacy, it has a discard date.

"This is generally one year from the day it was dispensed," explains Graedon. "And it may bear no resemblance to the actual expiration date. It may be shorter or it may be longer."

For medications you take daily, this usually isn't a problem. But for taken-as-needed prescriptions, it's a good idea to ask the pharmacist for the original expiration date and write it on the bottle.

## Liquids Spoil Faster

Liquid medications — like a nasal spray or cough medicine — or creams tend to be more worrisome than pills or tablets. Liquids and creams are made with preservatives, which are necessary to maintain the medications

stability and keep it from spoiling. "Here, it's important to pay attention to the expiration date because it's probably a more significant and reliable measure," adds Graedon.

The bottom line? No medications go bad on the expiration date. "There have been a number of studies showing that many drugs will often last past the expiration date," says Graedon.

Unfortunately, there's no magic number of days after the expiration date where a medicine is still good. "Three weeks after the expiration date is probably fine. Three months or three years? I'm not so sure," says Graedon. "There's no rule of thumb, but to be super cautious, stop using any medication within a few weeks after the expiration date."

Storing your medication properly will help extend its shelf life. Though it's called the "medicine cabinet," this actually isn't the best place for these items. "The bathroom gets hot and humid, so medicine can break down," explains Graedon. Instead, store them in a cool, dry area away from sunlight or children.

And the cotton ball that comes with some pills? Throw it away. It absorbs moisture, which can increase the product's deterioration. If possible, keep drugs in their original bottles and put these in an airtight container.

To be safe, never use a medication that smells funny, appears crumbly or crystallized, has changed color or has anything about it that doesn't look right.

# Noninvasive, At-Home Colon Cancer Test

Compiled exclusively by Health Radar, here are the most significant new drugs and medical devices approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

## Colon Cancer

A screening test for colorectal cancer that can detect red blood cells and abnormal DNA in a person's stool has been approved. The noninvasive **Cologuard** test can be performed at home and has shown more than 90 percent accuracy in clinical trials.

Colorectal cancer, the second-leading cause of cancer death in the United States behind lung cancer, mostly affects people 50 and older. About 60 percent of colorectal cancer deaths could be prevented if everyone 50 and older were screened, the FDA said.

From a stool sample, Cologuard detects the blood protein hemoglobin. It also identifies certain genetic DNA mutations in cells shed by advanced adenomas — large colon polyps that develop along the walls of the large intestine and are more likely than smaller polyps to progress to colorectal cancer.

People who receive positive results should have a colonoscopy, the FDA advised.

## Hepatitis C

A daily pill called **Harvoni** can cure the most common form of hepatitis C without the grueling pill-and-injection cocktail long used to treat the virus. But the drug's \$1,125-per-pill price is sure to cause sticker shock. Harvoni is a combination pill for patients with genotype 1 of hepatitis C, a form of the liver-destroying virus that accounts for 70 percent of the estimated 3.2 million cases in the U.S. The new pill combines biotech company Gilead's blockbuster drug Sovaldi with a new antiviral drug called ledipasvir, which attacks the virus using a different mechanism.

Gilead executives say Harvoni's price is actually slightly lower than the current standard treatment: Sovaldi, plus a cocktail of two other drugs, which the company estimates comes to \$95,000 for 12 weeks, on average. Most insurance companies are expected to

cover the cost of the drug.

Hepatitis C causes at least 15,000 U.S. deaths per year, according to government figures. Prior to Sovaldi, the standard treatments involved a one-year regimen of multiple pills and injections that cured only 65 to 75 percent of patients.

Hepatitis C grows slowly over decades and many people don't realize they are infected until liver damage already has occurred.

People born between 1945 and 1965 are five times more likely to have the virus than people of other age groups, and federal health authorities are urging all baby boomers to get tested.

## Type 2 Diabetes

**Trulicity** (dulaglutide) has been approved to treat Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for 90 percent of diabetes cases in the United States. The drug contains a hormone that helps stabilize blood sugar at normal levels. Trulicity's safety and effectiveness were evaluated in clinical trials involving 3,342 people with Type 2 diabetes. The drug has been studied as a standalone treatment and in combination with other therapies, the agency said.

Trulicity's label has a boxed warning that some lab rodents given the drug developed a certain type of thyroid tumor called medullary thyroid carcinoma. It's not known if the drug could cause the same problem in people.

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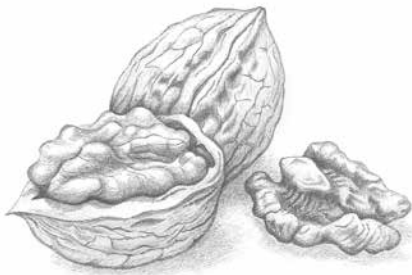
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**WALNUTS COMBAT ALZHEIMER'S**

Eating a dozen walnuts every day may reduce the risk, delay the onset, and slow the progression of Alzheimer's, according to a study published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*.

Researchers fed mice the human equivalent of 1.5 ounces (about 11 shelled nuts) of walnuts daily, and found significant improvements in learning skills, memory, anxiety reduction, and motor development. They theorize that the high amounts of antioxidants in walnuts protect brains against oxidative damage caused by amyloid beta protein, the major component of the plaques that form in the brains of Alzheimer's patients.



**5 RULES FOR LONG, HEALTHY LIFE**

A British study which monitored the health habits of 2,235 men over 35 years has found that five simple rules are the key to a long and healthy life: regular exercise, healthy weight, a healthy diet, little alcohol, and not smoking.

"Following a healthy lifestyle confers surprisingly large benefits to health. Healthy behaviors have a far more beneficial effect than any medical treatment or preventive procedure," said the study's leader, Peter Elwood from Cardiff University's School of Medicine.

**UNDERWEAR BLOCKS CELLPHONE RADIATION**

RadiaShield boxer briefs may ease the fears of men who are

concerned their cellphones may be harming their fertility.

Last year, a meta-analysis of 10 studies found that sperm quality dropped in men who were exposed to the radio-frequency electromagnetic radiation from cellphones when the phones were carried in pants pockets. The new briefs claim to reduce radiation exposure to reproductive organs by 99.9 percent by incorporating a layer of protection that, according to the company, is a "highly conductive silver textile with similar shielding properties as a 1.4-inch thick sheet of aluminum."

**COLD SORES RAISE DEMENTIA RISK**

The herpes simplex virus that causes cold sores raises the risk of Alzheimer's disease, according to two studies published in the journal *Alzheimer's & Dementia*. The virus infects up to 90 percent of adults, but Swedish researchers theorize it causes problems when it reactivates in seniors because of a weakened immune system due to aging. Reactivation, which occurs in about 25 percent of people who carry the virus, allows it to spread to the brain. Seniors who experience cold sores have double the risk of Alzheimer's, the most common form of dementia.

**COCOA REVERSES MEMORY DECLINE**

A special cocoa drink rich in flavanols, a type of antioxidant found in plants, dramatically improved the memories of middle-age people and seniors, giving them the recall of people decades younger.

Age-related memory loss — which is different from the devastating memory impairment caused by diseases such as Alzheimer's — is normal, but researchers at Columbia University Medical Center wanted to find if

**"FIT AFTER 50" FACT**

Many seniors have debilitating foot pain, but switching to shoes with extra depth can alleviate pain, according to an Australian study. Age causes changes in the foot, and shoes usually are built too shallow and narrow for older feet afflicted with soft tissue stiffness, arthritic joints, and reduced range of motion. But a study that fitted older adults with extra-depth shoes, the type often recommended for diabetics, found that their pain decreased and walking ability increased within four months. They also had fewer corns and calluses. Extra-depth shoes are available from Dr. Comfort, Orthofeet, and Apis brands.

flavanols had an effect. A special cocoa drink of concentrated flavanols (900 mgs) was given to healthy people 50 to 69 years of age every day for three months. Another group was given a drink containing 10 mgs of flavanols.

MRIs showed more brain activity in people on the high-flavanol diet, and their memories were significantly better. "If a participant had the memory of a typical 60-year-old at the beginning of the study, after three months that person on average had the memory of a typical 30- or 40-year old," said senior author Dr. Scott Small.

Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to get the high levels of flavanols used in the study from a regular diet or cocoa. However, health food companies already are working on commercial versions of the concentrated cocoa drink.

## COMMON PAIN RELIEVERS FIGHT DEPRESSION

Common over-the-counter painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen and naproxen ease depression, according to a review of 14 studies by researchers at Denmark's Aarhus University.

The new review found that depressed patients improved when they were given anti-inflammatory medication combined with antidepressants. It was the first research "to demonstrate that anti-inflammatory medication in combination with antidepressants can have an effect on the treatment of depression," said scientist Ole Köhler.

The research shows that depression may want to make ibuprofen and naproxen their first choices as pain relievers.

## OLIVE OIL HEALTHIEST FOR FRYING

Olive oil withstands the heat of frying better than other oils and produces fewer toxins, according to a study reported in the American Chemical Society's *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

Researchers fried sliced potatoes in four different types of cooking oils — olive, corn, soybean, and sunflower. After reusing the oil 10 times, they found that olive oil was the most stable for deep-frying, and sunflower degraded the quickest.

For frying, many experts recommend less expensive olive oil labeled "extra light." Save pricey "extra virgin" olive oil for salads and drizzling over foods.

## COQ10 EASES GULF WAR ILLNESS

The symptoms of fatigue, muscle pain, weakness, and other chronic health problems suffered by about one-third of the 700,000 U.S. troops who fought in the Gulf War can be eased by the dietary supplement

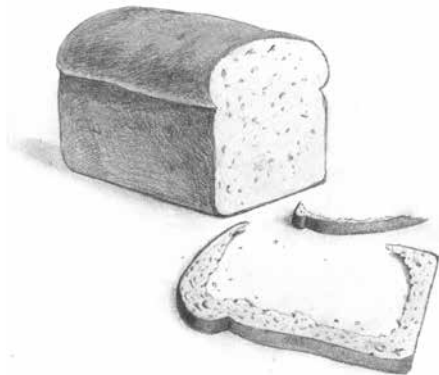
coenzyme Q10.

Gulf War illness — different from post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury — is the result of exposure to pesticides or pills given to soldiers to protect them from nerve agents, said researcher Dr. Beatrice Golomb of the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine.

A randomized, double-blind placebo-controlled study of veterans diagnosed with Gulf War illness found that physical function improved in 80 percent of those who received 100 mg of CoQ10 a day.

## MOM WAS RIGHT: BREAD CRUSTS ARE NUTRITIOUS

Mom said bread crusts were good for you — and science shows she was right. In fact, eating bread crust may even save you from colon cancer.



A German study analyzed the antioxidant content of bread flour, bread crumbs, and bread crust, and bread crusts proved to be the most nutritious part of a slice of bread.

The baking process creates a substance called pronyl-lysine, an antioxidant present in higher amounts in crusts — eight times higher than in the inside of bread — and it's more abundant in small loaves, and in darker breads, such as whole wheat, rye, and pumpernickel. Pronyl-lysine has been shown to help prevent cancer, especially colon cancer.

## FISH OIL REDUCES EPILEPSY SEIZURES

Most epileptics can control their seizures through medication, but drugs don't work for about a third of patients. For those, fish oil might help, according to new research.

A study at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA found that 1,080 mg a day of omega-3 fatty acids, the main component in fish oil capsules, reduces the number of seizures in patients with drug-resistant epilepsy by 34 percent.

## GASTRIC BYPASS BEATS BANDING FOR WEIGHT LOSS

Bypass surgery may be the best choice for weight-loss surgery, a new study finds.

Gastric bypass reduces the size of the stomach and reroutes the small intestine so calories pass through the gastrointestinal tract unabsorbed. Gastric banding uses an adjustable band around the top of the stomach to create a small pouch that can hold only a small amount of food.

For weight loss, bypass surgery is the hands-down winner, according to a new study published in *JAMA*. Patients who underwent gastric bypass lost almost twice as much weight as those who had gastric banding.

## AIR QUALITY IN GYMS UNHEALTHY

A study in the journal *Building and Environment* found that air quality in gyms is often poor. Scientists monitored gyms for pollutants during late afternoons or evenings when the buildings were most crowded.

They measured levels of pollutants, including carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, dust, and chemicals released by cleaning products and carpeting, such as formaldehyde. They found high levels of carbon dioxide, dust, and formaldehyde.

# How Much Exercise Is Enough?

By Dieter Hogen

Getting more exercise is one of the most popular New Year's resolutions.

But after the resolution comes the hard part. Those who are serious about getting in shape often ask two basic questions: "What is the best kind of exercise for me?" And also, "How much exercise do I need to be healthy?"

For starters, whatever you do is good. Walking, strength work, yoga — really any type of physical activity — will benefit body and mind. If you are injured or have joint issues, low-impact exercises like biking or swimming is best.

But how much? Most health authorities are in general agreement that five 30-minute exercise sessions per week (2½ hours total) is about right and comes with great benefits.

Even more than that — up to five hours per week is better. However, one has to start first.

## Even a Little Bit Helps

While flying back to the States from a trip to Africa and Europe recently, I watched an interesting documentary about an experiment from one of Germany's top research centers. It was about the health benefits of short exercise breaks for office workers. The scientists found that by simply getting up from their chair a few times a day and walking up and down the stairs for just a few minutes, workers could improve their blood sugar levels dramatically. They also had improved mental performance, less fatigue, and lower body fat.

A lot of people shy away from exercise because they believe they don't have the time. But the exciting

thing about the German research is that it shows that even a little bit of exercise is beneficial. Finding even just 10-15 minutes a day to do some kind of activity is a good start. Later you can add another 10-15 minutes, and you're on your way to dramatically improving your health.

## Don't 'Play It By Ear'

All my experience and observation shows that the most important thing to get into an exercise program (once you made the decision to do it) is to find the right time to do it. Get into a routine, something that works for you, and don't question it. People who "play it by ear" inevitably fail because in real life there always is something else, right?

Some words of caution: It's better to exercise often and for short periods than less often for longer periods. In other words, do not become a "weekend warrior" and try to do those 2½ - 5 hours of weekly exercise in a single session every Saturday morning. You might end up doing yourself more harm than good.

## Finding the Fun

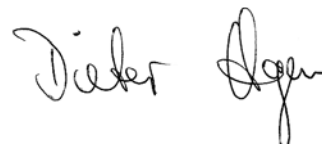
I am one of the lucky people who loves to exercise. Maybe it's because I grew up with it, or because it feels so good afterward, or perhaps for most of my life I just saw the fun in it.

The key may be having fun.

Long before I began working in the field of fitness and nutrition, exercise for me was just plain fun. And it still is today.

A couple weeks ago I had a comprehensive health check and it couldn't have been better. I had zero measurable inflammation, a resting heart rate of 38 (yes, this is extremely low, but not unusual for athletes), blood pressure of 115/75, ideal blood sugar, etc.

This can be you. Your body can change for the better at any age or fitness level. It might take a while, but if you do not try, you will never know. Just get out there and have fun.



A world-renowned nutrition expert and Olympic athletic coach, **Dieter Hogen** created a nutrition and training regimen in the 1990s that changed the elite athletes' training paradigm forever. Schooled at Potsdam University in Germany, Dieter brings his nutritional knowledge to Health Radar with one goal in mind: "To simply make you healthier and more energetic, no matter your age or current physical condition."



# Houseplants Boost Health: Researchers

By Chris Pritchard

The Chinese were the first to keep indoor plants, pioneering the custom more than 3,000 years ago.

Over the centuries that followed, a passion for keeping indoor plants spread far and wide across the globe.

Arguably its most extreme manifestation is in Japan where bonsai, the indoor cultivation of miniature trees, is a national art form.

Bonsai aficionados say that fussing over their tiny indoor landscapes promotes tranquil and contemplative escape from life's pressures and worries.

## Green Is Good

Now green thumbs can claim to have science on their side. Indoor plants, a new, exhaustive study confirms, are good for you.

Researchers have found that houseplants boost energy, improve air quality, increase the ability to concentrate, make people more productive and heighten feelings of overall well-being.

"Any type of houseplant will do," said Dr. S. Alexander Haslam, professor of psychology at Australia's Brisbane-based University of Queensland.

"They all seem to work equally well and, as far as I know, no research has yet been done to discover whether one variety of plant is any better than another."

Dr. Haslam, one of four researchers responsible for the study, told Health Radar: "We can

confirm, quite definitely, that plants are extremely beneficial to health."

The research was conducted by a multinational team from four prestigious universities and published recently in the American Psychological Association's *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*.

"Whether at work or at home, having plants around is good for you," he says, highlighting his research team's conclusion.

"Plants improve feelings of satisfaction with the world. They enhance your quality of life."

## Better Air Quality, Mental Focus

For their project, the researchers used two large commercial offices — a business consultancy in central London, England, and a big Dutch office where employees were mostly involved in giving clients insurance advice over the telephone.

A total of 307 men and women took part (no gender-related

differences were identified) at the two locations.

At each address, office space was divided into two sections.

One of these was plant-free, but at the other, researchers installed an array of large-leafed green plants — an average of three potted plants for every five desks with at least two plants visible from each desk.

Most volunteers in areas with plants reported increased ability to concentrate after the introduction of potted foliage. They perceived air quality to be better than it was previously (though this wasn't scientifically measured).

Researchers checked on workers' output, finding productivity increased by as much as 15 percent when plants were present. No significant differences in results existed between the British or Dutch locations.

As Dr. Haslam puts it, plants create "more enjoyable, comfortable, and profitable places to be."

## "FIT AFTER 50" FACT

The number of older Americans who fall and suffer serious, even fatal, injuries is soaring. Falls are now the leading cause of injury-related death among seniors, causing more fatalities than car accidents. The number of Americans over 65 who died after a fall reached nearly 24,000 in 2012 — almost double the number 10 years earlier, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Researchers say there also has been a rise in diseases linked to falls: diabetes, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, and Parkinson's disease. In some cases, the medication to treat these diseases can increase the risk of falling. More than 2.4 million people over 65 were treated in emergency departments for injuries from falls in 2012, an increase of 50 percent over a decade earlier.

## Winning the Fight Against Superbugs

Dutch scientists have developed the first alternative to antibiotics, a breakthrough that may allow doctors to win the fight against deadly antibiotic-resistant bacteria such as MRSA.

A drug called Staphefekt works differently from antibiotics, attacking an enzyme unique to the Staphylococcus bacteria which causes MRSA. Staphefekt fastens to the surface of MRSA cells and kills them, unlike conventional antibiotics which penetrate cells and destroy them from the inside.

Some strains of bacteria such as MRSA have tough membranes that are impenetrable to antibiotics, but the new drug targets the cell wall, which is less susceptible to mutation, so it's unlikely infections could develop resistance to it.

The new drug already is available as a cream, and researchers say it will be sold in pill form within five years.

“With the introduction of Staphefekt, we enter a new era in the fight against antibiotic-resistant bacteria,” said Mark Offerhaus, CEO of Microcos, the company that developed Staphefekt.

## Hope for Triple-Negative Breast Cancer Patients

Triple-negative breast cancer is notoriously difficult to treat because it is aggressive and doesn't respond to many standard cancer drugs. A new cancer drug called eribulin, derived from sea sponges, improves survival for women suffering from triple-negative cancer, the form that strikes about 15 percent of breast cancer patients. Eribulin is a type of drug called a microtubule inhibitor and works by stopping cancer cells from dividing and spreading.

“Although eribulin isn't a cure, it's an extra treatment option for patients with advanced breast

cancer, which can be priceless to them and their families,” said Martin Ledwick of Cancer Research UK.

## Accurate Hay Fever Diagnosis

Relief is on the horizon for millions of people who suffer annual hay fever allergies. Australian researchers have developed a blood test that detects a molecule in Bahia pollen, one of the most common causes of hay fever. It's the first test to isolate and identify the specific hay fever-causing substance — the Pas n 1 molecule — and it paves the way for new treatments.

“The test is about 97 percent accurate — which is exceptional for any lab test and makes it a highly valuable diagnostic tool,” said researcher Dr. Daman Langguth.

“What is tremendously exciting is that the test not only allows for a more accurate diagnosis but it opens up the way for more successful treatments for people with severe hay fever for whom standard medication and pollen avoidance don't work.”

## Natural HPV Cure

An extract from a Japanese mushroom eliminates HPV infection in women, say researchers. Scientists treated women with an extract called active hexose correlated compound (AHCC) from the medicinal mushroom mycelia, which previous studies show strengthens the body's immune system. After three to six months of treatment, half of the HPV-positive women tested negative.

Some 70 percent of adults carry the HPV virus, which is associated with almost all cervical cancers as well as anal and esophageal cancers.

“Patients who learn that they have HPV, and their doctors, are understandably frustrated because all we can do is monitor them for the abnormal changes associated with cancer,” said Dr. Judith Smith of the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

“What we need is a safe, effective treatment for HPV before the cancer occurs. With this study, for the first time, we've shown it's possible to eradicate HPV in women using AHCC for only three months or up to six months.”

AHCC supplements are widely available from health food stores and for sale over the Internet.

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