

# These NUMBERS could save your life

You might know the digits of your cholesterol and blood pressure and the date of your last Pap smear, but that's only part of the bigger picture. These are the less familiar numbers you need to know to stay healthy. Bone up on them *now*.

BY DANA HUDEPOHL

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## Times you have to switch out your toothbrush in a year

After three months, the bristles become too worn down or frayed to effectively remove plaque, says Kyle Stanley, a faculty member at the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry at the University of Southern California. Plus, they're crawling with bacteria. The next time you buy a new toothbrush, write an expiration date on the handle, and always pitch it after you've been sick: Germs can spread to nearby brushes. Fascinating, no? And *gross*.

## 25 IN DECIBELS, THE VOLUME AT WHICH YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO HEAR

That's the equivalent of leaves rustling; if you can't hear them, you may be suffering from hearing loss. (Yes, even now.) A simpler test: Stick a square of masking tape on the back of your TV remote and write down the volume you find most comfortable when you're alone. Then check every six months or so to see if that number is creeping up, suggests Leigh Kjeldsen, an audiologist in private practice in the San Francisco Bay Area.

## 600 The minimum number of IUs of vitamin D you need daily

You'll be doing your future old-lady self a disservice—setting her up for fragile bones that are prone to fractures—if you don't supplement with at least the recommended daily allowance of vitamin D, and preferably as much as 2,000 IUs. Vitamin D strengthens bones in a number of ways, including helping your body better absorb and use calcium, says Robert Eastlack, M.D., codirector of the San Diego Spine Fellowship at Scripps Clinic. Add weight-bearing exercise two to three times a week for an even bigger benefit. "You're 'training' your bones to adapt and strengthen no differently than when you train your heart with cardio," Eastlack says.

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## Servings of fruits and veggies you should get a day

If you don't count potatoes, the average American gets a mere three servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Women who eat a daily intake of 2,000 calories should get *nine*. If that's too daunting, aim for at least five, says JoAnn Manson, M.D., chief of preventive medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. "When you fill up on healthier foods first, you'll naturally eat less red meat, unhealthy fats, refined carbs, and added sugars," she says, cutting your odds of heart disease, stroke, certain cancers, and vision loss, to name a few. Here's how to measure them out:

**Vegetable serving** =  
1 cup raw leafy veggies;  
½ cup other vegetables  
**Fruit serving** = 1 medium  
fruit; ½ cup chopped,  
cooked, or canned fruit

7,500

**STEPS TO AIM FOR OVER THE COURSE OF THE DAY**

We know: You've always heard 10,000, and 10,000 is *awesome*. But research shows that 7,500 steps a day will do, says Catrine Tudor-Locke, Ph.D., who

studies walking behaviors at Louisiana State University's Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge. The perks include lowering your risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, and possibly even keeping your weight in check. If you're not using a fitness tracker, simply aim for at least two and a half hours of walking each week—it's fine to do more some days than others, Tudor-Locke says. And, sorry, but it'll take more than a few trips to the vending machine.

**7 The maximum number of drinks you should have in an average week**

We don't have to remind you that a glass of red with dinner can be a good thing. But make sure you're cutting yourself off at seven drinks a week. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, eight or more is considered risky drinking and increases your chances of sleep disturbances, depression, liver problems, alcoholism, and some cancers.

And don't even try to rationalize that weekend buzz as "catching up" when you've skipped drinking all week—it doesn't work that way. "For a woman, more than three drinks is bingeing," says Kevin Hill, M.D., director of the Substance Abuse Consultation Service at McLean Hospital in Belmont, MA. As for those health risks we just mentioned, bingeing regularly only makes them worse.

**0 SORES IT'S OKAY TO HAVE INSIDE YOUR CHEEKS**

Little cuts or tags in your mouth may be a sign that stress is getting to you, since many of us chew on our cheeks when we're anxious, says David Lewis, fellow of the International Stress Management Association. If you're having a bad day, "take a walk," he says. "Ditch your phone and tune in to what's around you." *Ahhh.*

**2 Months it should take a pimple, scar, or scaly spot to heal**

If it's longer than that, book it to your dermatologist to make sure it's not basal or squamous cell carcinoma, the most common forms of skin cancer. "Patients often say, 'It looked like a pimple' or, 'I thought it was eczema,'" says Chrysalyné D. Schmults, M.D., assistant professor of dermatology at Harvard Medical School. That's the problem: New cancers don't look like much. If a spot doesn't heal on its own in six to eight weeks, your doc needs to take a look—don't just wait until your annual skin check.

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**In inches, the upper limit for a healthy waist**

Anything above that places you in a danger zone. "Belly fat isn't just a storage depot," Manson says. It actually produces hormones and inflammatory messengers that circulate through your body, upping your risk for a bevy of chronic conditions. To find out where you stand, wrap a tape measure around your waist at your belly button (*don't* suck it in). Not happy with what you see? The good news is that losing even an inch will improve your health by lowering your cholesterol and blood pressure.

60-80

**The number of times your heart should beat per minute when you're at rest**

Once a month, before you get out of bed, find your pulse and count the beats for 15 seconds, then multiply by four—that's your resting heart rate, and it can reveal a lot. "If your heart rate is chronically higher than the normal range, that's going to put more stress on your heart," says Manson, exposing you to a greater risk of heart disease. Fortunately, you can do something about it. (Unfortunately, that thing is *not* watching more Netflix.) Try amping up your cardio—the more effective your workout, the lower that number will become. In fact, well-trained athletes average 40 to 60 beats per minute, according to the American Heart Association.