

# Daily walks can improve digestion, chronic conditions

Q I used to be a runner, but I can't do that anymore. I am trying to get used to walking but it just isn't the same. Can you encourage me to walk? **AJ Winterville**

A I never enjoyed running and never met the endorphin that runners talk about. But I have been a committed walker for as long as I can remember.

Julia Glass, a first-year Brody medical student is eager to share her experience and thoughts about the importance of walking as part of a healthy lifestyle. Here is what she wants you to know.

Every time I go home to visit, my mom and I walk after dinner. We have for as long as I can remember. She says walking helps her digest.

I wanted to check out her claim, so I did some research. I found many studies showing that walking after a meal actually does aid digestion.

In fact, post-dinner walks have many health benefits.

Physical activity after a meal has been shown to increase gastrointestinal (GI) motility, which is the process of moving food through the stomach and intestines. There are many disorders and conditions associated with altered GI motility, with a common one being constipation.

The main feature of constipation is that food is moving slowly through the intestines and causing a backup. This blockage often causes bloating and discomfort. Walking is a gentle way to increase GI mobility. It is safer than other methods used to relieve constipation, such as laxatives.

The main role of the intestines is to absorb



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nutrients and water from food. Some laxatives cause food to move so quickly through the intestines that the nutrients are not absorbed properly. Walking appears to stimulate natural muscle contractions

in the gut. This stimulation helps move food through the digestive system effectively, but not so fast that the needed nutrients and water are able to be absorbed.

To improve your digestive health, registered dietitian nutritionists recommend eating plenty of fiber-rich fruits and vegetables like pears, bananas and spinach. Also, always remember to drink water during or after your walks. Dehydration is another contributor to constipation. It can cause other unpleasant symptoms

such as headaches, dizziness and fatigue.

Improved digestion isn't the only benefit of a post-meal walk. There is evidence that walking may help lower high blood pressure. A short stroll after meals also carries the benefits of walking in general, including decreased anxiety and improved sleep.

You might wonder if it's better to walk before or after dinner. One study of adults with type 2 diabetes showed that walking after a meal was more effective in lowering their blood sugar than pre-dinner exercise. Taking a walk has positive effects on digestion, managing chronic conditions and mood. It's also a great way to meet neighbors.

If the idea of a long walk after dinner doesn't sound like your ideal way to end the day, there's better news. Many of these benefits start to appear even with small

amounts of physical activity after eating.

The study of individuals with diabetes saw decreases in blood sugar after walks as short as 2-5 minutes. You can begin with small steps and start seeing results. Try not to feel intimidated by how far you think you should be walking. Did you know that the advice to get 10,000 steps a day is a myth with origins in marketing? Advertisers thought it was a catchy slogan and nice round number of steps for promoting sales of the first pedometers.

In reality, there is no set number of steps that a person should take each day. While it's not bad to take those 10,000 steps, research shows that it takes only 4,500 to 7,000 steps or approximately 2-3 miles per day to reduce the risk and severity of chronic diseases.

Better yet, all steps you take count. If you have

purposefully lost weight, there is an abundance of evidence of walking at any time of day or night helps maintain your new weight. If you aren't used to walking, start with a short, 5-minute walk around the neighborhood after dinner if it's a safe place to walk.

You can also walk in-place inside your home or apartment if that is safer or the weather is bad. Once you are comfortable with that distance, slowly add more steps to your walks. Don't forget Pitt County has great parks and trails.

For me, walking with my mom after dinner is a perfect way for two busy people to catch up at the end of the day. Grab a friend and try it out for yourself! Your body and mind will appreciate it.

Professor emeritus **Kathy Kolasa**, a registered dietitian nutritionist and Ph.D., is an affiliate professor in the Brody School of Medicine at ECU.

## ASK THE DOCTORS

# Visit specialists after spinal stenosis diagnosis

Hello, dear readers, and welcome back to our monthly letters column. We're getting closer to autumn, but in much of the country, heat waves continue. Please be sure to take precautions.

Drink enough water throughout the day to fuel your body's natural cooling system, which is sweating. When possible, stay indoors during the hottest hours. And, if needed, take shelter in public places in your area with air conditioning, such as malls, community centers, libraries or local cooling centers. Even a short break in a cooler environment can be helpful. And now, onward to the mail:

Q We recently wrote about spinal stenosis, which is when the spaces and hollows of the spinal column begin to narrow. The resulting pressure on the spinal cord and nerve roots causes symptoms that include pain, burning, numbness and weakness in the back, legs or feet.

That prompted a question from a reader who developed these symptoms. "I had an MRI two years ago, and it showed some spinal stenosis and a mild protrusion on the disc," he wrote. "I developed numbness in my left leg and tingling in both feet, but no buttock or thigh pain. Two chiropractors and a physical therapist have offered

conflicting advice, and none of their suggestions seem to work. What kind of specialist should I see?"

A You would be best served by seeing a spine specialist, either a neurosurgeon or an orthopedic surgeon. A disc protrusion, if mild, can be treated with physical therapy and anti-inflammatories. It can sometimes require an epidural steroid injection.

Some people with spinal



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stenosis are helped by a minimally invasive procedure called Vertiflex, which uses a small implant to lessen

pressure within the spine to ease symptoms.

Q We recently discussed a sensitive and accurate blood test known as A1C, which measures someone's average blood sugar levels over the previous eight- or 12-week period. It is used to diagnose Type 2 diabetes. This is a condition in which the body stops

responding properly to insulin, which leads to chronic high blood sugar.

A reader with high A1C results sent us a question. "I need to lower my A1C — can diet and exercise be effective?" they asked. "How much of a reversal can you see?"

A The answer is, yes, A1C can be lowered by lifestyle modifications. This is achieved by minimizing added sugar in the diet, avoiding refined carbohydrates and highly processed foods, getting regular exercise and reaching a healthy weight.

Each of these contribute to improving the body's response to insulin. How much you can lower your

A1C with lifestyle changes depends on each person's general health, metabolism and genetics. If your doctor has outlined a treatment plan that includes medication, it's important to follow through.

Thank you, as always, for taking the time to write. It's wonderful to hear when a column has helped you, or that you simply find the information useful or instructive. We read every letter, and we will continue to try to respond to as many as possible.

**Eve Glazier**, M.D., MBA, is an internist and associate professor of medicine at UCLA Health. **Elizabeth Ko**, M.D., is an internist and assistant professor of medicine at UCLA Health.

*Paid Editorial Content*

## Changing the Faces of Greenville with Next Generation Aesthetic Laser Technologies

BY CINDY KOSOR  
COO — Beauty Bar Medispa

Cosmetic laser technology is advancing at a fast pace, and as a leader in Medical Aesthetics, it's critical to stay abreast of trends so as not to end up with obsolete technology. At Beauty Bar Medispa, we are committed to offering next-generation technology to our patients. As the former Vice President of an international medical aesthetic equipment manufacturer, and as Chief Operating Officer at Beauty Bar Medispa, my experience has been extremely beneficial in discerning which technologies will meet the needs of our patients and to offer the world's leading laser equipment to Greenville.

I have learned that it's not just about the most affordable option anymore. At Beauty Bar Medispa, we always consider the patients' experience when researching new laser technology. I have found that patients are looking for faster treatments, but they don't want to compromise on comfort, and want the least amount of downtime.

Blindly signing up for a laser treatment does not need to be an option for you. The information is at your fingertips, and you can easily do your own research.

For instance, RF Microneedling has become one of the most requested procedures; however, I was reluctant to jump on the trend in the beginning as I knew that there was a need for a more advanced system. When Cartessa launched the Virtue RF Microneedling system, I knew it would be a perfect fit for our practice and our patients.

All RF Microneedling devices are not the same, so when trying to decide which RF Microneedling device is best for you, ask the following questions:

**1. What is the wattage of the system?** This will determine the system's power which has a direct effect on the effectiveness and the quality of the results of your treatment. The Virtue RF Microneedling device is 220 Watts.

**2. What is the needle delivery system?** Solenoid drives more like a staple gun, whereas the Virtue has a Micro-Memory Precision

robot making it a much more comfortable and tolerated treatment.

**3. What are the depths of the system?** This is what makes the treatment customizable. The more depths (low to high) that a system offers, means that it can do a broader range of skin types, as well as making the treatment more customized to the patient. The Virtue has .5mm up to 5mm — most other systems only have 2mm, 3mm and 4mm.

**4. Does the system have LED light to add additional treatment benefits?** The Virtue has both red and blue light.

**5. How many different types of handpieces are offered?** Multiple handpieces will maximize patient efficacy, experience and results.

**The Virtue has 3 handpieces!**

- **Smart** (36-needle handpiece for comfortable treatment of face, hands, and décolleté),
- **Deep** (36-needle handpiece with cooling plate for tightening, smoothing, and advanced body treatments).
- **Exact** (Single-needle handpiece to target around mouth, eyes and jawline with complete precision).

Also, I am very excited to announce that Beauty Bar Medispa has just introduced another new laser technology to our city. After listening to our patients' request for a more ablative laser without all the downtime, I have discovered that this revolutionary and most advanced CO2 laser technology is the only technology that can perform such a treatment.

**The CoolPeel® is unique in that it delivers a fully-ablative treatment like any other CO2 laser, but without causing thermal damage to surrounding tissue.** Without thermal damage, downtime is drastically minimized. At the same time, the system delivers impressive superficial, skin-resurfacing results that will minimize the appearance of fine lines, sun damage, pore size, skin texture, and is the best CO2 laser for acne scars, best sun spot removal laser, best laser for dark spots, and best laser for wrinkles.

Of course, we will be launching this with an incredible introductory special.



**Cindy Kosor**

- Chief Operating Officer, Beauty Bar Medispa
- Forbes Executive Business Council Member
- Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce Ambassador

Other laser technologies offered at Beauty Bar Medispa are the **Halo** laser, the **Microlaserpeel**, **Broad Band Light (BBL)**, **Profractional** laser, and **Painless Laser Hair Removal**, along with combination treatments such as our **Light & Laser Peel!**

Laser treatments offer dramatic, skin-rejuvenating results. There are many laser procedures to choose from, and depending on your skin type, extent of damage you wish to treat, and your available downtime — some laser resurfacing treatments may better suit your needs over another. Beauty Bar Medispa offers complimentary consultations so you can learn about all your options and which technology is best suited to you, your lifestyle, and your budget.

Beauty Bar Medispa is proud to be able to literally change the faces of Greenville! We bring the most advanced technologies to our city as we strive to help people fulfill their aesthetic goals and boost their confidence.



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