

Finding comfort *Some foods are special just because*

We all have special comfort foods that make us feel better when we're sad, lonely, or bored; ones we use to reward ourselves, celebrate special occasions, or make us feel all warm inside. Comfort foods are a good thing.

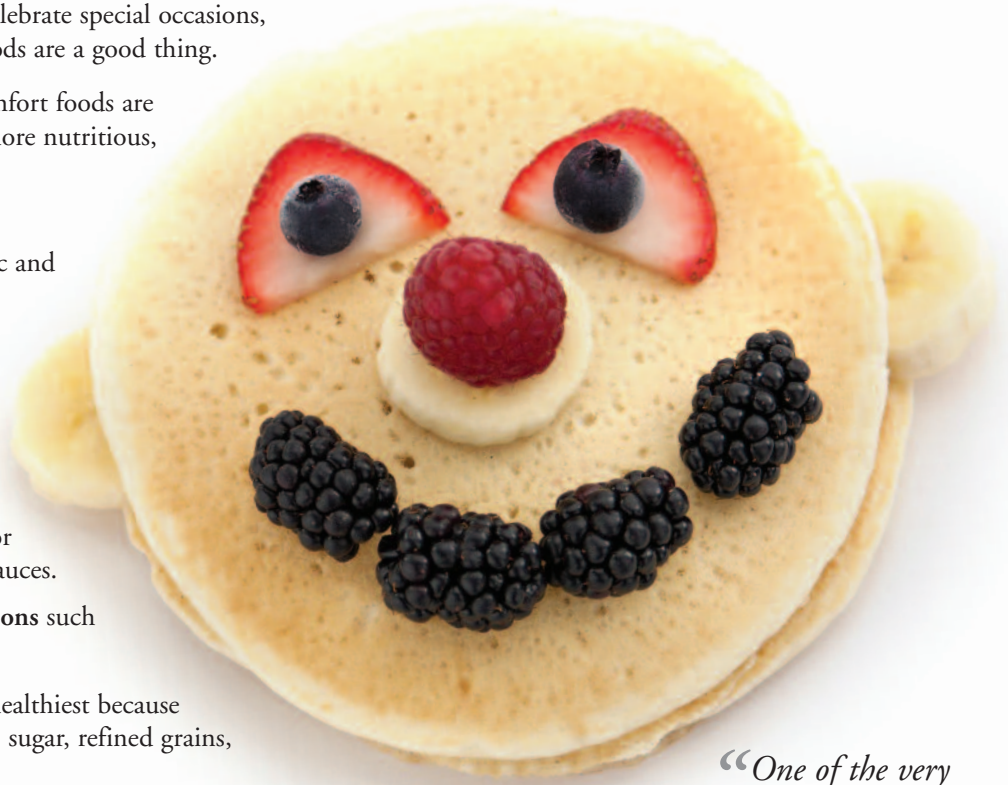
Despite what many people think, not all comfort foods are "unhealthy," and many can be easily made more nutritious, without sacrificing the comforting qualities.

Think add or replace.

- Add veggies to recipes, like broccoli to mac and cheese or shredded carrots to meatloaf.
- Add fruit at breakfast to pancakes or in place of some of your breakfast meat.
- Replace refined grains with whole grains, like whole wheat pizza crust or lasagna noodles.
- Replace full-fat dairy products with low- or non-fat choices such as 1% milk for cream sauces.
- Replace high fat meats with lower fat options such as chicken sausage or turkey bacon.

Even if your comfort foods may not be the healthiest because they are high in saturated and trans fats, salt, sugar, refined grains, and calories, you don't have to give them up.

Eat smaller portions balanced with healthier food complements. Pair a slice or two of pizza (cutting a whole pizza into two halves doesn't count) with a salad that includes various veggies. Be sure to skip the high-fat dressings and toppings such as cheese and oily croutons.



“One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating.”

— Luciano Pavarotti and William Wright, *Pavarotti, My Own Story*

Low-fat Macaroni and Cheese

- 1 cup fat-free milk • 1 1/2 cups shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese
 - 2/3 cup 1% milkfat cottage cheese • Pepper to taste • 2 1/2 cups cooked whole-grain macaroni
- Directions:** In a blender/food processor, combine milk, cheeses, and pepper. Process until creamy. Pour into a bowl; stir in macaroni. Transfer to a 1 1/2-qt. baking dish coated with nonstick cooking spray. Bake, uncovered, at 350° F for one hour or until heated thoroughly.
- Serves 4.** Per serving: 230 calories, 4 g fat (2.2 g saturated fat), 12 mg cholesterol, 445 mg sodium, 28 g carbohydrates, 2.5 g fiber, 23 g protein.

Mac & cheese to the max

Macaroni and cheese is a favorite comfort food for many of all ages.

Here are some add-in ideas to make the dish even more delicious and healthful:

- Vegetables such as peas, carrots, tomatoes, or broccoli
- Beans such as kidney, white, or garbanzo
- Water-packed tuna or lean ground turkey
- Low-fat cottage cheese

Get Moving

Bundle up

Choosing clothes and layering them properly are keys to keeping comfortable while exercising outdoors, especially in cold temperatures. Adding or removing layers as needed will help you to stay warm and dry while staying active.

- **Base Layer:** This layer, closest to your skin, should wick moisture away from your body and into the air or outer layer where it can evaporate. The best base layer materials are synthetics (polypropylene and polyester). These materials are lightweight, too.

Skin chafing can be a concern, so check the base layer design features. Stretchy fabric allows you to move easily. Seamless or flat-seam clothing lies flat and won't rub your skin.

- **Mid-Layer:** This insulating layer helps to take moisture away from the base layer. Wool and synthetics, such as fleece, work well. This layer should be snug but not constricting. Features such as full-length front zippers allow for venting.

- **Outer Layer:** This layer protects you from the elements. When it's dry outside, go for a lightweight soft shell that provides warmth, breathability, and wind resistance. If the conditions are wet, make sure your outer layer is both breathable and waterproof.

Source: *American College of Sports Medicine*

“One kind word can warm three winter months.”

— Japanese Proverb



Housework workout

You do a lot in a day that can turn into activities that will keep your mid-section strong.*

Here is one to try:

- **Shake out a large blanket or area rug:** Stand tall, both feet flat on the ground, abs tightened, and glutes squeezed together. While holding onto the blanket/rug with both hands (about shoulder width apart), vigorously flip it up and down.

The core secret: See how little you can move your torso as you see how fast you can move your arms.

**If you have any physical limitations or problems, be sure to consult with your health-care provider before starting any new physical activities.*

When you can't go outside

Just because you can't go outside doesn't mean quality family time needs to be quiet or sedentary.

Get creative and get active — even if you can't get outdoors.

- **Make an indoor obstacle course** with pillows, couch cushions, and other large objects. Set a timer and race.
- **Have a pillow fight.** Divide people in teams and go at it. Just be sure to move any breakable objects before getting started.
- **Challenge one another during TV commercials.** See who can do the most sit-ups, push-ups, or jumping jacks.

Beyond the hype of hypoglycemia

A racing heart, headache, unclear thinking, and irritability could be signs that you have a low blood sugar level. Hypoglycemia, low blood sugar, is primarily a complication of diabetes.

People with diabetes can experience hypoglycemia when they take too much insulin medication, don't carefully time their eating, or increase exercise without increasing nutrition. Alcohol also contributes to low blood sugar. The hypoglycemic effects of alcohol can last up to 8-12 hours. People with diabetes should eat while consuming alcohol.

Additional symptoms of hypoglycemia include:

- **Fainting and seizures** (*in severe hypoglycemia or insulin shock*)
- **Dizziness** • **Paleness** • **Cold sweats** • **Hunger**

The only way to diagnose hypoglycemia is to check blood sugar levels by using a finger prick test. Levels below 70 mg/dL indicate hypoglycemia, and steps should be taken to raise your blood sugar. However, people with diabetes who experience symptoms and do not have access to a blood sugar check should not wait before treating as follows:

Hypoglycemia generally can be corrected with about 15 grams of carbohydrates. Options can include 1/2 cup (4 ounces) of fruit juice or a sugared soda, or five to six hard candies.

Hypoglycemic episodes can be prevented by:

- **Consuming alcohol very moderately**
- **Checking blood sugar levels during exercise**
- **Eating at regular intervals**

Source: Adapted from PubMed Health

Surprise germ spots

Have you looked in your coffee pot's water reservoir lately? A 2011 study conducted by NSF International found this overlooked spot among the top five germ havens in your home. Clean it monthly by letting four cups of vinegar sit in the reservoir for 30 minutes before running it through the machine. Follow with two to three cycles of water to rinse.

For other neglected germ hotspots, look to the family pet. Pet bowls should be sanitized frequently in the dishwasher or with soap and warm water. Every month, disinfect hard pet toys with a mild bleach solution and run soft toys through a hot laundry cycle.

Source: NSF International

PACE yourself

You want to make the most out of doctor appointments. After all, your health is important. Because doctor appointments tend to be short, consider taking the PACE method developed at Ohio State University and recommended by the American Heart Association.

P: Provide information. Write down symptoms, concerns, and noted changes. Keep a record of what treatments you have tried and the outcomes. Make note of how you would like the doctor to help you. Take a list of your current prescriptions and supplements.

A: Ask questions. Make a list of questions about your condition, tests, procedures, medicines, and treatments. Get ALL questions answered.

C: Clarify what you're told. Medical lingo can be confusing, so consider asking your doctor if you can tape record his instructions or bring a friend to listen and take notes for you. Use your own words to repeat directions back to your health-care provider. At the end of the visit, complete this statement: "I heard you tell me these things..."

E: Express concerns. Your office visit is your chance to express concerns about treatment plans and medications. Be honest if you feel you can't follow a treatment plan.

Source: American Heart Association



It's cold and flu season. Change your towels often. Using a common towel can pass germs from one person to another.

Midlife crisis or wake-up call?

Just because a middle-aged individual decides to buy a red sports car, doesn't mean he or she is going through a midlife crisis.

In fact, a fair amount of research challenges the stereotype that when people hit a certain age they will go through a period of self-doubt and a need to feel younger.

With that said, though, many middle-agers may have unsettling feelings and want greater satisfaction and pleasure. If you're asking yourself questions such as: "Is this all there is?" or doubting yourself or feeling frustrated by the direction of your life:

- **Accept who you are** and share your feelings with others. With acceptance, you can let go of things you may no longer be able to do or goals you once had, and learn to find new joys in life. Sharing your feelings can relieve fears and frustrations.
- **Set new goals** that are both realistic and exciting. Create a bucket list for yourself and your family.
- **Try new sports, hobbies, or enrichment classes.**
 - **Eat nutritious foods** and be as active as possible. Quit bad habits such as smoking.

Sources: *Memorial Hospital (Towanda, PA); American Psychological Association*

Before you reach the boiling point

If you struggle with anger management, learn to deal with your feelings before they turn to rage. Consider relaxation.

- **Breathe deeply**, from your diaphragm, not your chest. Picture your breath coming up from your "gut."
- **Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase**, such as "relax" or "take it easy." Repeat it to yourself while breathing deeply.
- **Visualize a relaxing experience**, from either your memory or your imagination.
- **Stretching your muscles** in a yoga-like movement may make you feel much calmer.

Practice these techniques daily, and learn how to use them automatically when you're in a tense situation.

Source: *American Psychological Association*

Time out from trash talk

The election year is upon us. Although being a well-informed voter is important, sometimes the non-stop negative political rhetoric can become a real downer. If the name calling and gloom-and-doom forecasts get to be too much, take a time out.

- **Think for yourself instead of simply believing everything you see and hear.** Look up facts, study both sides of an issue, and make your own opinion.
- **Alternate between watching and reading news.** Limit the time you're exposed to media.
- **Get physical.** Get away from all the chatter and do something fun. Head outside for a walk. If you can't go outside, head to a community recreation center or gym.
- **Don't suffer negative people.** If certain personalities get you down, get away from them. If you can't get away, change the subject to something more positive.

Fiscal Fitness

5 tips to avoid money squabbles with your partner

May I have the envelope please?

Budgets can help to get finances under control. Some people use the “envelope budgeting” method.

- 1 Figure out what's important.** Make a list of short- (less than three years), medium- (three to 10 years), and long-term (10-plus years) financial goals. Rank the goals. Create a plan to achieve them, and get started.
- 2 Communicate openly and honestly.** Learn about each other's “money life” so you can understand and work together better. Regularly talk about your values and goals; financial hopes and fears; and what you're bringing in financially and what you're spending as well as credit reports and scores.
- 3 Join and separate.** Have a joint checking account for household expenses with each of you contributing. Once needs are covered, each partner may want to have a separate bank account, credit card, or extra funds for “nag-free” spending.
- 4 Pay expenses proportionately.** Each partner could fund the joint account for household bills based on what he or she makes. For example, if one partner earns \$40,000 and the other \$20,000, the money set aside for expenses could be divided 2/3 and 1/3, respectively.
- 5 Create a cash cushion.** Set aside at least three months expenses to handle life's inevitable surprises. A six-month cushion is even better.

Pros

- **Simple:** You write a spending category on each envelope and place the budgeted amount inside as you get paid (e.g., \$400 monthly for groceries).
- **Flexible:** If you underestimate how much you are spending in one category, you can transfer cash from another envelope to cover the shortfall. Write the transfer on the envelope so you can keep track of how much you're actually spending on what.
- **Holds you accountable:** Seeing the cash available (or not) in envelopes may help to keep you within your budget.

Cons

- **Security:** Money stashed in envelopes can be lost, stolen, or destroyed (e.g., fires and floods).
- **Confusion:** Continuous “borrowing” among envelopes can get messy with lots of hand-written notes on envelopes.
- **Availability:** With cash so close at hand, it may be easy to over-spend on non-budgeted items.
- **No growth:** Envelopes don't pay interest like bank accounts.

Making allowances work

- **Start early.** Begin allowances when you notice regular requests for money to buy things, usually age 6 to 8.
 - **Pay regularly.** Provide money on a regular basis (e.g., weekly). Consider periodic increases as children's expenses grow over time.
 - **Lend cautiously.** When kids ask for advances, deduct the borrowed money from future allowance. Be sure to add interest to the “repayment.”
- **Explain expectations.** Figure out what expenses (e.g., school lunch) are included and whether an allowance is linked to chores.
 - **Set guidelines.** An example with a \$10 weekly allowance is 40% (\$4) for saving, 50% (\$5) for immediate spending, and 10% (\$1) for charitable gifting.

Start saving now for year-end holiday spending. Just \$10/week will be \$500 by next Christmas.



Issue Insight

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Here's what you'll find at Jan.HopeHealth.com:

- A one-minute video on understanding your thyroid gland
- A one-minute video on bundling up for the cold weather
- A one-minute video on comfort food makeovers

Scan with your smartphone



Wired or weary? Could it be your thyroid?

January is Thyroid Awareness Month.

The thyroid is a gland located low in the base of your neck. Although it's relatively small, it influences every cell, tissue, and organ in your body.

Think of the thyroid as an engine or processor.

When all is working well, you run smoothly.

However, that's not always the case. An estimated 20 million Americans have thyroid disease; yet, six in 10 of these people are unaware they have a problem. Women are five to eight times more likely than men to have thyroid problems.

When your thyroid is overactive (*hyperthyroidism*):

- You feel jittery and anxious.
 - You can't sleep.
- Your heart races and skips.
 - You get headaches.
- You lose weight without trying.

When your thyroid is underactive (*hypothyroidism*):

- Your skin and hair feel coarse and dry.
 - You are tired and sluggish.
 - You might feel depressed.
- You want to sleep all the time.
- You gain weight without trying.
 - You get constipated.

Learn more about the thyroid at www.thyroidawarenessmonth.com or at www.thyroid.org

Roll up your sleeve

Every two seconds, someone in the United States needs blood. There is a good chance that someone you know will need a blood donation in the coming year. January is National Blood Donor Month. What better time to consider rolling up your sleeve for a good cause.

Last year, more than 8 million people donated blood. One of those people is Mike Metzler II, who has been donating blood for the last 11 years. During that time, he has given more than 2 gallons and tries to give as often as time and his schedule allow.

Why do you donate blood?

"I donate blood because of the fact that I'm helping other people. It's a way to save lives with minimal effort."

What advice do you have for others who might be thinking about donating blood?

"It does not take much time. The pain incurred is less painful than a paper cut. Donating blood is a way to feel good about doing your part to help others and save lives."

For more on donating blood, go to www.redcrossblood.org/donating-blood



HOPEHealthLetter

3 tricks to cut calories without really trying

Trimming calories here and there doesn't seem like much. Over time, though, cutting calories can add up. If you can cut 100 calories a day, you could lose a pound a month. Losing weight slowly may help to keep extra pounds from coming back.

1 Try using mustard on your sandwich instead of mayonnaise. A tablespoon of mayo can have 100 calories or more. Mustard has only a few.

2 Slash supersize from your diet. If you downsize from the extra-large serving of fries to the medium portion, you may save upwards of 200 calories. Take time to savor each fry instead of inhaling two or three at a time. You'll be just as satisfied with fewer fries.

3 Thin is in. Instead of two slices of thick pan pizza, opt for two slices of thin pizza. You can easily save more than 150 calories.

“Winter is the season in which people try to keep the house as warm as it was in the summer, when they complained about the heat.”

— Author Unknown

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The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your health-care providers, not to replace it.

Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

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