

Summertime brings warm weather and the enjoyment of outdoor activities. Connecting with nature and enjoying its beauty and spirituality is important for overall well-being. Use the information in this *Balanced Living* to make the most out of the summer months: see how to address seasonal ailments, get tips on protecting your vision, check out foods to add to your summer shopping list, and more.



Yours in health,

Andrew Weil, M.D.

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Simple Ways To Promote Healthy Vision

The eye is a highly complex and sensitive organ that requires a careful combination of nutrients, protection, exercise and rest for optimal function. In addition to following an [anti-inflammatory diet](#) rich in antioxidants, protective measures and supplementation may help. Consider the following lifestyle suggestions:

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5 Herbal Remedies For Summer Ailments

When enjoying the outdoors this season, be prepared to protect yourself against common summer ailments. Dr. Weil has found the following to be effective in preventing and treating a variety of summer culprits:

- 1 **Ginger** (*Zingiber officinale*): If you are traveling, this [natural anti-inflammatory](#) readily addresses symptoms of nausea. Use products with 100 percent pure ginger and take with food 20 minutes before travel to prevent a burning sensation.
- 2 **Arnica** (*Arnica montana*): This plant relieves pain and tenderness of sprains and sore muscles. Keep a tincture

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Seasonal Wellness Challenge



Utilize The 4-7-8 Breath

Is your mental state calm and centered or easily agitated? If you feel agitated, start practicing the 4-7-8 Breath. This focused breathing exercise can help calm the mind and body naturally, and be done anywhere. Learn how to practice the [4-7-8 Breath](#), and try it several times a week for the next few months and see how you feel.

Summer Herbal Remedies

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of [arnica](#) on hand to rub on your skin (stop usage if you develop a mild rash, as you may be sensitive to the compound helenalin found in arnica). Be aware that arnica is toxic if it gets inside the body - never apply arnica in any form on broken skin or on an open wound.

3 Aloe (*Aloe vera*): For sunburn, mosquito bites, and rashes from poison ivy, oak or sumac, fresh [aloe gel](#) from the plant's leaves offer relief. Simply cut off a lower leaf near the central stalk, cut off any spines along the edge, split the leaf lengthwise, score the gel with the point of your knife, and apply it directly to the burn. It will soon soak into the skin and provide immediate, soothing relief.

4 Lavender (*Lavendula officinalis*): Similar to aloe, 100 percent pure [lavender](#) essential oil helps to reduce inflammation due to insect bites, rashes from poison ivy, oak, and sumac, and sunburns.

5 Tea tree oil (*Melaleuca alternifolia*): Warm, moist weather and outdoor activity can lead to an increased risk of insect stings as well as athlete's foot and other fungal infections of the skin. [Tea tree oil](#) is a germicidal and antifungal agent extracted from the Australian tea tree. The oil comes as essential extract and in many other formulations; for skin irritations, and to prevent minor wounds from becoming infected, use 1.5 tablespoons of tea tree oil to one cup of water to rinse and clean the affected area. Apply a light coating of full strength tea tree oil to insect stings and fungal infections. Look for pure, 100 percent tea tree oil, and discontinue use if irritation occurs.

Promote Healthy Vision

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- Don't smoke** – it can decrease blood supply to the eyes by causing blood vessels to narrow and blood to thicken.
- Protect the eyes from sunlight**, which can damage the cells of the macula. Wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses that protect against at least 99 percent of ultraviolet (UV) rays.
- Use safety eyewear** when working around potential hazards to help protect against eye injuries.
- Stay active.** [Regular exercise](#) promotes eye health by improving circulation and lowering the risk of diabetes.
- Keep blood pressure in check.** High blood pressure increases the risk of glaucoma. Consider medication if lifestyle changes can't bring blood pressure into the normal range.
- Keep blood sugars in normal ranges.** High blood sugar can damage blood vessels in the retina. Doing daily relaxation and eating a [low-glycemic diet](#) can help keep blood sugars normal.

In addition to those suggestions, certain supplements can help maintain the health of your eyes. Try these three:

- 1 Vitamin C.** This [potent antioxidant](#) helps prevent damage to the eye from free radical formation, may delay the progression of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), can help lower pressure in the eye that's associated with glaucoma, and reduces the likelihood of developing cataracts.
- 2 Vitamin E.** Along with vitamin C, zinc, and beta-carotene, [vitamin E](#) has been shown to prevent the development of [macular degeneration](#). Be certain to look for a supplement containing mixed tocopherols.
- 3 Zinc.** In supplement form, this mineral may help slow the development of AMD, probably by combating free radicals that can damage cells in the eye.



Yoga Pose: Full Boat Pose

Looking to develop a stronger, more muscular core? Try the [Full Boat Pose](#), a popular pose that strengthens the abdominals and muscles of the pelvis and lower back by engaging the core muscles. While difficult, the benefits of this pose are long lasting.

According to a 2013 systematic review published in *Sports Medicine*, seniors who engaged in core exercises (including several that were similar to the Full Boat Pose) had higher levels of balance and strength, thus reducing the risk of falling.

The health benefits of this pose include:

- **Strengthened and stretched core muscles (abdominals, hip flexors and lower back)**
- **Improved balance**
- **Stretched hamstring muscles of the legs**
- **Aligned and stretched spine**
- **Stimulated thyroid, intestines, kidneys, and prostate gland**

Get [step-by-step instruction](#) for practicing the Full Boat Pose. If straightening your legs in this pose is difficult, modify with either your knees bent (Half Boat Pose) and raised or your feet flat along the floor.

Vitamins A to Zinc, courtesy of the Weil Vitamin Advisor

Fish Oil

Fish oil is a rich source of the two essential omega-3 fatty acids known as EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). Omega-3 fatty acids may help to protect mental and physical health. Unfortunately, omega-3s tend to be lacking in the typical American diet. Learn more about fish oil, including [good food sources](#).



Seasonal Foods: Squash, Tomatoes and Bell Peppers

These foods are in season during the summer months – add each to your menus to incorporate the flavor and nutrition they provide!

SUMMER SQUASH

This entirely edible vegetable - you can enjoy the skin, flesh and seeds - is a good source of manganese, vitamins A and C, [magnesium](#), fiber and [folate](#). It also comes in many varieties, including the popular green zucchini; a crookneck variety that is yellow-skinned with a curved neck; and the flat, round pattypan squash, a sweeter variety of summer squash.

When choosing, opt for average-sized, blemish-free squash that are heavy for their size: this size tends to be less fibrous than large squash, and often have better flavor than squash that is small. Try them in the [Green Squash Soup](#) and [Toasted Grain Pilaf](#) recipes!

TOMATOES

Tomatoes are a low-calorie summer staple that provide plenty of nutritional value. They are an excellent source of vitamin C, and provide vitamins A and K, potassium, manganese and fiber. They are also a source of [lycopene](#), a carotenoid that gives tomatoes their red color. Lycopene has been associated with a lowered risk of heart disease and cancers, and is helpful in lowering high cholesterol.

When choosing, opt for smaller-sized tomatoes with the darkest red color to get the most lycopene content. To get the full health benefit of tomatoes, including their anti-cancer potential, remember that carotenoids are fat-soluble and are better absorbed when eaten lightly cooked and paired with healthy, monounsaturated fats such as extra-virgin olive oil. Try them in the [Watermelon & Heirloom Tomato Salad](#) and [Tomato, Corn and Basil Soup](#) recipes.

BELL PEPPERS

Available in appetizing colors, bell peppers are a refreshing way to add nutrients to your meals. This low-calorie vegetable is an excellent source of vitamins A and C, and a good source of dietary fiber, folic acid and [vitamin B6](#). (Like tomatoes, red bell peppers are a source of lycopene as well.)

When buying, choose bell peppers that are free of blemishes, and always seek out organically grown varieties. Try them in the [Polenta Triangles with Roasted Bell Peppers](#) and [Red Pepper Vinaigrette](#) recipes!

