

BHS ASSIST. E-NEWS

resolutions for your home

Resolutions You Can Live With

Each year, we all make resolutions—stick to a new diet, kick a bad habit, insist on taking more time for ourselves. But when it comes to simplifying and reviving your own life, it is sometimes most effective to make resolutions for your home. Often times, the promises we make to ourselves can be applied to our living space.

Lighten Up

Over the course of the year, our homes can get weighed down by clutter, disorganization and busy schedules. By piling up items in your home, traffic flow is cut off and your home can begin to feel suffocated. Just like your own body, if you take care of your home, it will take care of you—so remove that excess clutter from your space and vow to treat it as a living area, not simply a storage room.

Divide and Conquer

To defeat your clutter once and for all, a simple place to start: the closet. Sort through clothing and create three piles: keep, donate, trash. If you haven't worn a piece of clothing in over a year, either donate or dispose of the apparel. Clothing that is in wearable condition can be donated to a local charity. Looking to make a profit? Your donations are tax deductible and best of all, go to people who really need the extra help. Access a valuation guide for goods donated to charity at www.salvationarmyusa.org. Also consider hosting a garage sale or selling them online.

Make the Sale

Beyond clothes, you can sell virtually any household item. Make final decisions about old furniture pieces, kitchen appliances and accent décor you've stowed away. Even the funkiest of pieces may be appealing to buyers looking to add a quirky vintage feel to their home. By clearing out and cleaning up, you can empty your house of clutter—and even fill your wallet!

www.homemadesimple.com

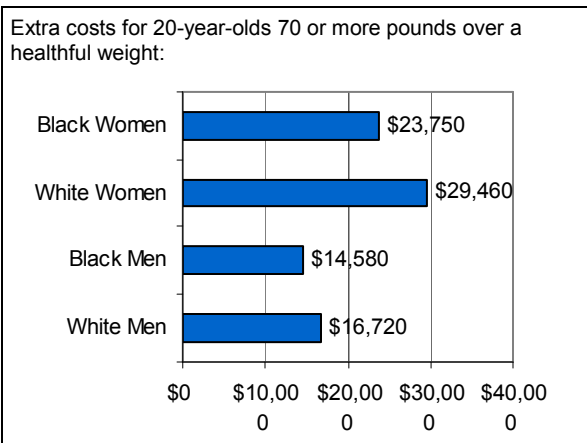
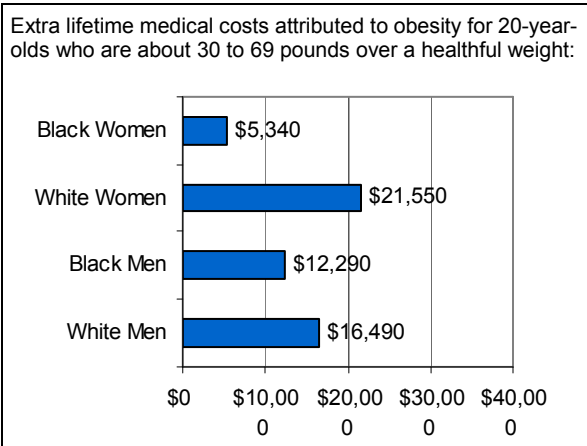


Nutrition and Fitness Challenge

The Nutrition and Fitness Challenge provides expert guidance on nutrition, fitness and meal planning—and it's FREE!

Sign up at www.mealsmatter.com





Source: Eric Finkelstein, economist for RTI international: *Journal of Obesity*

The Impact of Inactivity

According to a study in the journal *Obesity*, obese twentysomethings—those 30 or more pounds overweight— will have a lifetime medical bills that are \$5,000 to \$21,000 higher than their normal-weight peers. Extremely obese young adults—those 70 or more pounds overweight— will incur \$15,000 to \$29,000 more in lifetime medical expenditures than their healthy-weight peers.

About one-third of the people living in the United States are obese, putting them at risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, some types of cancer, and other diseases. Obese people often have shorter life spans, but still have much higher lifetime medical costs.

In *Can't Remember What I Forgot: The Good News From the Front Lines of Memory Research*, author Sue Halpern points out that while changes in the brain do occur as we age, there is evidence that physical activity, such as walking and ballroom dancing, might help keep memory intact.

Prescription Drug Savings Utilized More During 2007

According to the recently released annual report from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Office of the Actuary, generics accounted for 67% of all prescriptions filled in 2007, up from 63% in 2006. With generics costing an average of 30% to 80% less than brand-name drugs, this translates into savings for the consumer and the prescription drug payor (insurance plan).

As patents on brand-name drugs expire, less expensive, and often as effective, generic versions become available. Chain-stores marketing of \$4 generic prescriptions and tough economic times are encouraging consumers to speak with their health care provider about the possibility of generic equivalents. Recent expirations of patents on commonly used and pricey brand-name drugs has also increased use of generic drugs.

If a generic equivalent is not currently available, speak with your health care provider regarding the expiration date for the patent and re-visit the issue at that time. If a generic equivalent is available and your doctor agrees, consider purchasing through a \$4 program. With many plans having a co-pay of more than \$4, the consumer saves and additional savings are realized because there is no cost to the plan.





When asked about the recent financial crisis, almost half of Americans say that they are increasingly stressed about their ability to provide for their family's basic needs. Eight out of 10 say that the economy is a significant cause of stress, up from 66 percent in April. Women are most likely to report stress related to the economic climate. Compared with men, more women say they are stressed about:

- Money (83 percent vs. 78 percent)
- The economy (84 percent vs. 75 percent)
- Job stability (57 percent vs. 55 percent)
- Housing costs (66 percent vs. 58 percent)
- Health problems affecting their families (70 percent vs. 63 percent)

Stress Affects Health and Coping Behaviors

In June 2008, more people reported physical and emotional symptoms due to stress than they did in 2007, and nearly half (47 percent) of adults reported that their stress has increased in the past year. As a result of stress, more people report:

- Fatigue (53 percent compared to 51 percent in 2007)
- Feelings of irritability or anger (60 percent compared to 50 percent in 2007)
- Lying awake at night (52 percent compared to 48 percent in 2007)

in addition to other symptoms including lack of interest or motivation, feeling depressed or sad, headaches and muscular tension.

Almost half of Americans (48 percent) reported overeating or eating unhealthy foods to manage stress and one in four (39 percent) skipped a meal in the last month because of stress. Other unhealthy behaviors to manage stress include:

- Eating poorly
- Shopping
- Napping
- Drinking alcohol
- Smoking

“With the deteriorating economy dominating the headlines, it’s easy to worry more about your finances than your health, but, stress over money and the economy is taking an emotional and physical toll on America, especially among women,” says psychologist Katherine Nordal, PhD, APA’s executive director for professional practice. “Many say they are handling their stress well. Yet, people report more physical and emotional symptoms. If Americans continue to experience these high levels of stress for prolonged periods of time, they are at risk for developing serious illnesses.”

What Can Americans Do?

According to APA, the health consequences of extreme stress are most severe when people ignore symptoms and fail to manage their stress well. Dr. Nordal advises people to be more mindful of their stress levels as well as the emotional and physical symptoms of stress.

- Pay attention to what's happening around you, but refrain from getting caught up in doom-and-gloom hype.
- Take stock of your particular situation and what causes you stress.
- Reach out to family, friends and trusted advisors. Research shows that receiving support from others is effective in managing stress.
- If you continue to feel overwhelmed by stress, consider seeking professional help.

Alcohol, Other Drugs, and Pregnancy

You may be surprised to learn that about 50 percent of all pregnancies in the United States are not planned. It may also be news that many birth defects and other newborn health problems occur in the first few weeks after conception—when you may not even know you're pregnant.

A baby's health is strongly linked to the mother's health before pregnancy. Whether or not you're planning to get pregnant, it is important to follow these guidelines:

- Take a multi-vitamin with 400 micrograms of folic acid every day.
- Ask your doctor about your risk of diabetes.
- If you smoke, stop. Free information is available at www.smokefree.gov via real-time instant messaging and phone. Have a GYN exam annually.
- Eat a variety of whole grains, fruits and vegetables every day and lower your intake of fat.
- If you are being hurt by a partner or someone else, call the national domestic abuse crisis hot line at 1-800-799-SAFE.

Drinking alcohol or taking any type of legal or street drugs during the early weeks of pregnancy can badly hurt your unborn baby. That's when the brain and other organs are forming.

If you drink alcohol, so does your unborn baby. Alcohol abuse during pregnancy is a leading known cause of mental retardation. If you are considering a pregnancy, it's best to stop drinking alcohol before you conceive.

Cocaine, crack, heroin, amphetamines and other street drugs can badly hurt your baby if you use them while you are pregnant. Your baby could suffer lifelong health problems. Get help to stop using drugs before you become pregnant and stay clean.



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For further information on topics covered in this newsletter or to schedule an appointment for an initial assessment, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150. Your company's EAP is administered by a mental health professional that understands your benefit plan. Your BHS Care Coordinator is available to discuss the benefits available to you through your company, determine the appropriate referral resource, and schedule your initial appointment or send further information.