

**12-26 Healthy Habits Start at Home** If you want to change your eating habits, start at home. A well-stocked kitchen will increase your chances of sticking to a healthy diet. Start with the basics: whole grain pasta, brown rice, dried legumes (lentils and split peas), canned beans, frozen vegetables and olive oil. Then, shop for staple items each week such as fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats, low-fat dairy and soy products. And don't forget to plan ahead. Never leave the house without a shopping list. Keep your list current by updating it throughout the week as you run out of various foods. Before you leave for the supermarket, do a quick check to see if you need to buy staples such as beans, oils or vegetables. And make sure to eat a small snack before heading out. Research shows that people buy more unhealthy foods when they shop on an empty stomach. *(LifeScript)*

**DID YOU KNOW** that breathing is a crucial part of living, but so simple a mechanism that its often ignored? Breathing gives our body the oxygen it needs. But there are also some fantastic psychological benefits to breathing. Without enough oxygen, you become lethargic, tired and depressed. However, taking full, deep breaths can heighten your energy and focus. When you increase your oxygen levels, you not only increase your energy level, but also dramatically improve your mood. Plain and simple, you just feel better! The secret behind effective breathing is learning how to breathe from your belly. You will love how it makes you feel. The key to belly breathing is to use your diaphragm, the dome-shaped muscle

located under your lungs. When you breathe in, you will notice that your belly wants to expand. Retract your belly as you exhale and move the used oxygen out of your lungs. Do your belly-breathing exercises several times a day, especially when you feel worn out. Try to sneak in belly breaths whenever possible during your morning commute, at your desk at work, or while you're relaxing on the couch. *(LifeScript)*

**TWO MINUTES IN THE MORNING** and two minutes in the evening and your lungs may be breathing fine for a very long time. We're talking about brushing your teeth. As you've no doubt heard, good dental hygiene helps prevent gum disease. But what you might not know? A recent study suggests that gum disease may open the door to some pretty serious lung diseases.

### **The Mouth-Lung Connection**

Smoking remains the leading cause of serious respiratory diseases, such as lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The recent study did not conclusively prove that gum disease is another direct cause of COPD. But people in the study who were hospitalized with COPD and other types of lung disease had significantly higher rates of gingivitis and periodontal disease than the folks in a control group who had healthy lungs. It's not clear what the connection is. But we know that the bacteria from dental plaque, when inhaled into the lungs, not only can cause COPD exacerbations but also might trigger respiratory infections in healthy people.

### **A Double Threat**

For good gum -- and lung -- health, brush your teeth at

least twice a day for two minutes. Even better, brush after every meal if you can. And floss daily. The key is to keep dental plaque -- that sticky, bacteria-filled film that forms on teeth -- from building up and causing gingivitis and periodontal disease. Research shows that spending at least two minutes brushing each cleaning session is ideal for removing plaque. *(Real Age)*