



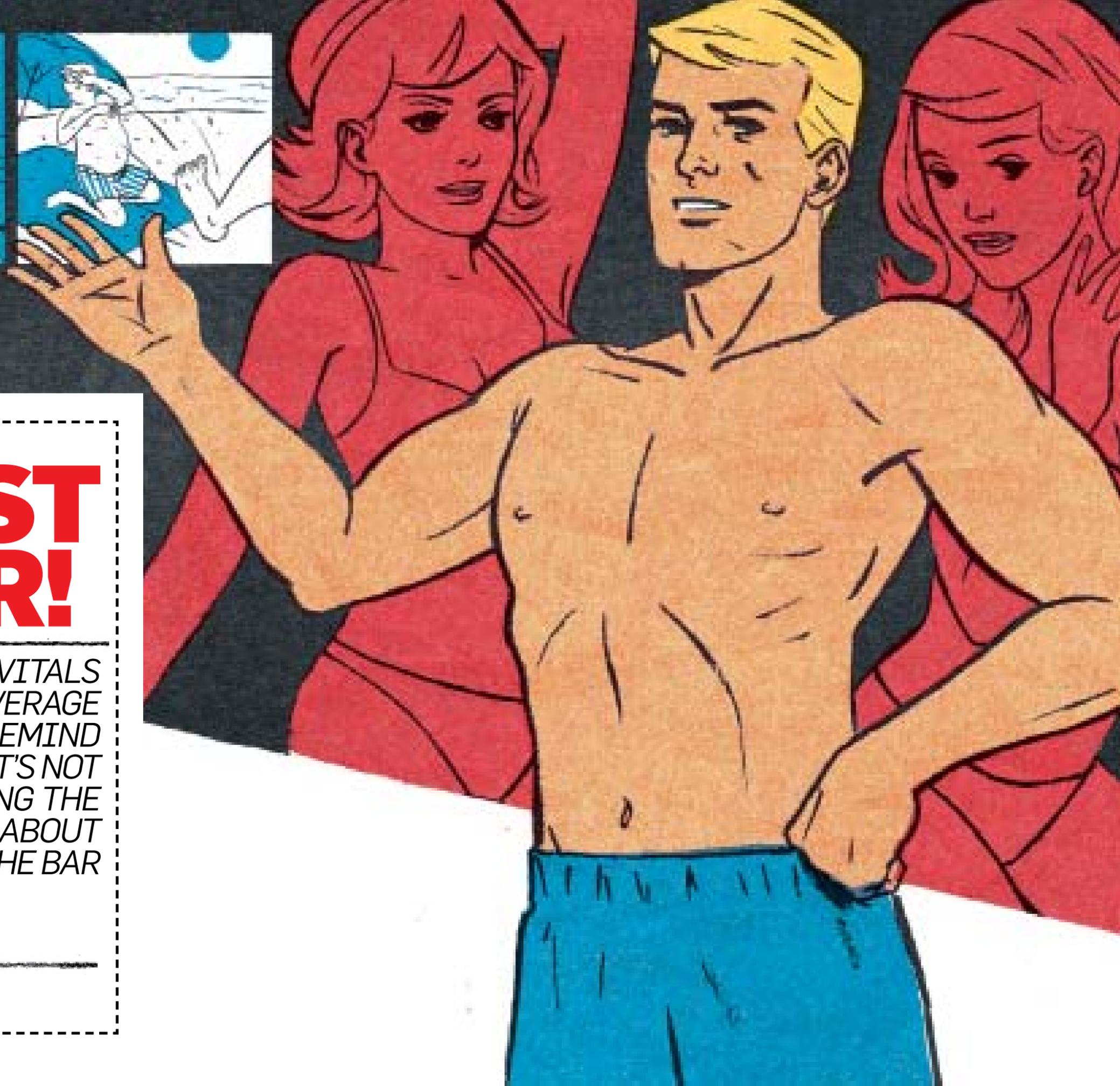
Part four
FEELING BETTER

YOUR HEALTHIEST YEAR EVER!

CHECK YOUR VITALS AGAINST THE AVERAGE GUY'S. THEN REMIND YOURSELF: IT'S NOT ABOUT MAKING THE CUT. IT'S ABOUT SETTING THE BAR

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You

wouldn't ask an average guy to stand beside you at your wedding. After all, you want someone you can call your *best man*. Nor would you brag to your buds about your amazingly average sex life. (Then again, maybe you'd be perfectly happy with seven or eight times a month.) And you probably wouldn't tell your boss that you put "just average" effort into that critical project—unless, of course, you have only an average aversion to unemployment. • Guess what? Settling for average health is an even dumber move. That's because in the past half century, "average" health has come to mean overweight, sedentary, and significantly more vulnerable to illness than men were a generation or two ago. "Our bodies have changed over the years," says John Elefteriades, M.D., chief of cardiothoracic surgery at Yale University's school of medicine. "We've engineered physical exertion out of our lives, and we eat all day. It's time for our bodies to revert to the way they're supposed to function." • Fortunately, this isn't the average men's magazine. We've scoured the latest research and talked to the nation's top docs to bring you two dozen strategies that can help you achieve chart-topping vitals. Follow our advice, and you'll reengineer your body for optimal performance—in the bedroom, at the gym, and most important, on the exam table. • So go ahead, dust off your tux. In a few months, you'll be your own best man.

Protect against Heart disease

ODDS THAT THE AVERAGE 40-YEAR-OLD GUY WILL DEVELOP HEART DISEASE IN HIS LIFETIME: **1 IN 2**

PERCENTAGE OF MALE HEART-DISEASE SUFFERERS WHO NEVER SHOWED ANY SYMPTOMS BEFORE IT KILLED THEM: **50**

Tame that temper

If you frequently find yourself flipping the finger at other drivers or yelling at the TV when your team tanks (um, Cowboys?), repeat this mantra: *Lose my cool, lose my life*. According to a recent study review in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, angry outbursts are more likely to cause heart dis-

ease in men than in women. While the reason for the gender difference isn't clear, the effect on your arteries is: chronic inflammation that can lead to a chest-clutching clog. Can't manage your anger? Maurice Schweitzer, Ph.D., a psychology researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, recommends

eliminating the little everyday irritants in your life—that leaky faucet, your cluttered desk at the office, those unanswered e-mails lingering in your inbox. This way, when the bigger triggers hit—and they will—your short fuse won't already be smoldering.

Lower your heart volume

Listen up: Is your work environment annoyingly noisy? In a 2010 study in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, people who were chronically exposed to loud noises while on the job were twice as likely to have heart disease as those who toiled in blissful silence. "Noise exposure may trigger the release

of stress hormones, which can constrict coronary arteries and reduce blood supply to your heart," says study author Wenqi Gan, M.D., Ph.D. So interrupt the aural assault by taking periodic "quiet" breaks of 10 to 15 minutes: Wear noise-canceling headphones (see this issue's *Special Report* for a recommendation) or

go for a stroll to a less populated part of the building. Also consider turning off the ringer on your phone and muting your computer to eliminate the occasional shrill bursts of noise.



Improve your SEXUAL HEALTH

Flex your sex muscle

While your *bulbocavernosus* isn't the kind of muscle you can work in the gym (unless you want to be thrown out), it's worth training, especially if you suffer from premature ejaculation. "When this muscle contracts, nerves send a signal up your spinal cord to suppress arousal and keep you going longer," says Darius Paduch, M.D., Ph.D., an associate professor of urology at Cornell University. To find the bulbocavernosus, place your fingers behind your scrotum and try to flex the muscle there. (If you feel your stomach contract, you're squeezing the wrong muscle.) Now move your hand to your stomach, and while keeping your abs relaxed, begin masturbating. When you're about to reach orgasm, flex your bulbocavernosus. Once you get the hang of it, flex during sex. "This won't bring you from 2 minutes to 20 minutes, but you can definitely progress up to 5 to 7 minutes," says Dr. Paduch.

Practice makes perfect

Ejaculations don't just feel good—they're good for you. "I've seen men lose up to 2 inches off their erections because they didn't masturbate and have enough sex," Dr. Paduch says. "Your penis is basically a big muscle—it will atrophy if you don't use it." His Rx: Masturbate as often as you'd like to be having sex. "What really matters is having an adequate outlet. Your penis doesn't care whether that outlet is sex or masturbation."

PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO SUFFER FROM PREMATURE EJACULATION: **18**

OF THOSE, PERCENTAGE WHO HAVEN'T SOUGHT HELP FROM A DOCTOR: **96**

LENGTH OF TIME A MAN WITH P.E. LASTS: **20 TO 80 SECONDS**
TIME THE AVERAGE GUY LASTS: **7 MINUTES**

YOUR MOST VITAL VITALS

Testosterone

AVERAGE GUY: 511 NANOGRAMS/DECILITER
TARGET: ≥ 650 NG/DL

Helps diagnose: Decreased sex drive, erectile dysfunction, infertility

Improve your number: Exercise is already a natural T booster, but you can raise this hormone even higher by popping a piece of caffeinated gum before you start sweating. In a recent study from New Zealand, athletes who chewed Jolt gum prior to exercising had testosterone increases that were 12 percent greater than those of the gum-free guys.

Achieve optimum FITNESS

PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO ARE SEDENTARY: **37**

PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO EXERCISE TO OFFSET THEIR UNHEALTHY HABITS: **16**

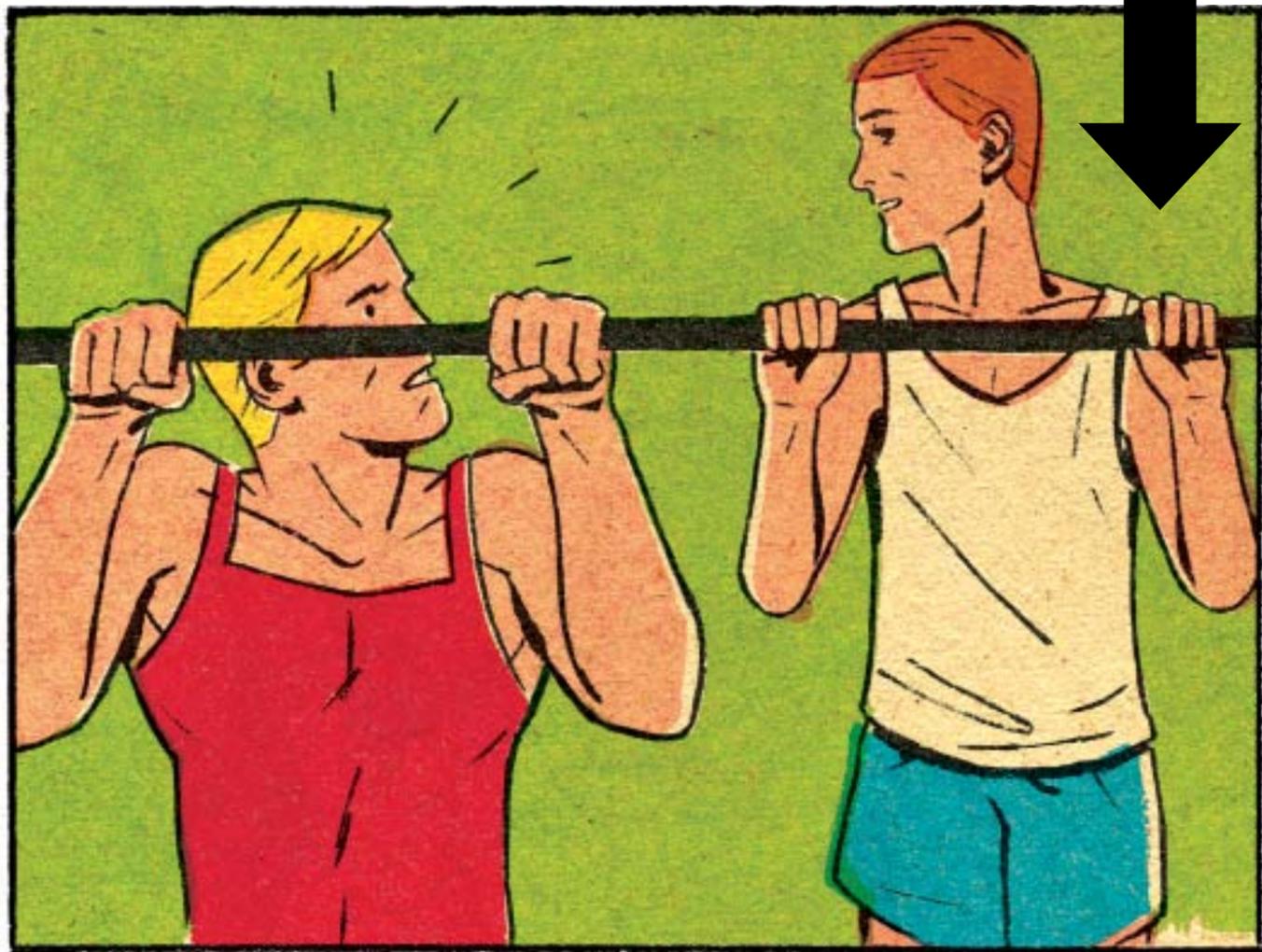
NUMBER ONE CHALLENGE THE AVERAGE GUY FACES WHEN IT COMES TO EXERCISE: **STAYING MOTIVATED**

Show her what she's missing

Before working out, flip through photos of a former flame who broke your heart. A 2010 study in the *Journal of Neurophysiology* found that viewing images of a woman who spurned you activates the areas of your brain that control motivation and reward. "Rejection—that sense of loss—stimulates desire," says Christopher Proulx, M.S., C.S.C.S., an assistant professor of movement science at Westfield State University. "And this desire increases your level of adrenaline—the same chemical response that occurs in preparation for physical activity." This may enhance your focus and overall performance.

Lift with the underdog

Believe it or not, seeing your buddy's scrawny biceps may be more motivating than seeing some other guy's anaconda arms coiled around a barbell. A 2010 study in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* found that people work about 30 percent harder when they're competing against those they see as easily beatable. "Men produce higher levels of testosterone when they're winning than when they're losing," says Proulx. Also a factor: The chance that your less fit friend will surpass you. "Which is more embarrassing," Proulx asks, "being beaten by someone who's bigger than you, or someone who's weaker?"



Stave off Prostate cancer

AVERAGE MAN'S RISK OF DEVELOPING PROSTATE CANCER IN HIS LIFETIME: **1 IN 6**

PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN YOUR RISK OF DEVELOPING THE DISEASE IF YOU ALSO HAVE HYPERTENSION: **50**

Eat your chicken naked

Take hypertension out of the prostate-cancer equation by following our blood-pressure tips on this page, and then further manage your risk by skinning your favorite protein: chicken. In a 2010 study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, prostate-cancer patients who ate the most skin-on chicken were more than twice as likely to face progression of their disease as those who consumed the least. By contrast, scarfing down *any* quantity of skinless chicken appears to be prostate-safe. Blame the fact that grilling or broiling poultry skin results in formation of heterocyclic amines, compounds shown to damage DNA in human prostate cells.



Prevent SKIN CANCER

NUMBER OF SUNSCREEN BOTTLES THE AVERAGE GUY USES IN A YEAR: **1.5**

NUMBER OF 8-OUNCE BOTTLES HE'D GO THROUGH IF HE APPLIED THE RECOMMENDED AMOUNT OF SUNBLOCK EVERY DAY OF THE SUMMER: **11**

Respect your enemy

A false sense of confidence can be fatal: People who use high-SPF sunscreens tend to go out in the sun when it's stronger and stay there longer, putting themselves at a greater risk of melanoma than those who slather on a low-SPF formula, according to recent French research. "People mistakenly assume that if they put on high-SPF sunscreen, they're good to go the whole day," says David Leffell, M.D., a professor of dermatology at Yale school of medicine. His advice: Stick with a photo-stabilized SPF 30 sunscreen, such as Neutrogena's Fresh Cooling Body Mist Sunblock (\$10, neutrogena.com), and set your watch or smartphone to remind you to reapply every 2 hours. Also, wash your beach clothes with SunGuard to increase the UV rating to 30 (\$2, sunguardsunprotection.com), and throw them in the dryer before you head out—the laundering will tighten the weave of the fabric, providing extra protection, say Henry Ford Hospital researchers.

Recruit from the farm team

Almost everything in nature has a natural enemy, and for prostate cancer, it's cruciferous vegetables. A recent study in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* found that men who ate more than one weekly serving of broccoli or cauliflower had a 25 percent lower risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer. Credit a storehouse of antioxidants and glucosinolates, bitter-tasting compounds that shield your DNA from damage.

YOUR MOST VITAL VITALS

Blood pressure

AVERAGE GUY: 121/71
MILLIMETERS OF MERCURY
TARGET: 120/80 MMHG

Helps diagnose: Heart-disease risk, stroke risk

Improve your number: Don't let revenge leave you cold. People who focus on blaming others when conflict arises face an increase in systolic blood pressure, according to a 2010 study in the *British Journal of Psychology*. Anytime you feel you've been seriously slighted, reappraise the situation. "Try to understand the aggressor and what circumstances may have triggered the behavior—stress, for instance," says Maurice Schweitzer, Ph.D., a psychology researcher at the University of Pennsylvania. "This gives you a richer context and better insight, and can help moderate your reaction to the outburst."

YOUR MOST VITAL VITALS

Sperm count

AVERAGE GUY: 89 MILLION/MILLILITER
TARGET: > 40 MILLION/ML

Helps diagnose: Infertility, celiac disease, infection, tumors

Improve your number: Kick your Coke habit. Danish scientists recently found that men who guzzled more than a liter of cola a day had 40 percent less sperm than nondrinkers. Focus instead on finishing your salad: A 2009 Spanish study found that men with the highest sperm quality also ate the most lettuce and tomatoes.

Tame your Blood pressure

ODDS THAT THE AVERAGE GUY WILL HAVE HIGH BP WHEN HE'S 35 TO 44 YEARS OLD: **1 IN 5**

AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS A 50-YEAR-OLD MAN WITH NORMAL BLOOD PRESSURE WILL OUTLIVE ONE WITH HYPERTENSION: **5**

Scale back your BP

Not only can regular trips to the fish market help your waistline, but a seafood diet is also low in sodium and rich in magnesium and taurine, two compounds that can slash your risk of hypertension, according to Japanese researchers. Seek out seaweed, a natural source of magnesium that can be added to soups (it's also commonly found in sushi), and freshly harvested, taurine-rich shellfish, such as oysters and scallops. Going fresh helps you avoid an unwanted shot of sodium-laden preservatives.



Fight DIABETES

ODDS THAT THE AVERAGE GUY WILL DEVELOP DIABETES EVEN IF HE'S DISEASE-FREE AT AGE 40: **1 IN 3**

INCREASE IN A MAN'S RISK OF DIABETES IF HE BOOSTS HIS DAILY TV-WATCHING TIME FROM LESS THAN AN HOUR TO 4 OR MORE HOURS: **TWOFOLD**

Go a little nuts

Eating almonds can help ward off insulin resistance (a red flag for diabetes), according to a 2010 study in the *Journal of American College of Nutrition*. When people with prediabetes ate 2 ounces of almonds (about two handfuls) each day for 16 weeks, they experienced a 23 percent drop in fasting insulin levels, while those who said no to nuts saw a 19 percent increase. The credit goes to oleic acid, a fat that triggers the release of GLP-1, a peptide that can improve insulin sensitivity.

Look forward to commercials

Some health threats can be beaten using brute strength: A recent UCLA study found that lean people with low muscle mass are 67 percent more likely to be insulin resistant than their more buff counterparts. Having a sculpted physique may help your body use insulin to regulate blood sugar, the researchers say. Our advice: Cut your TV time to an hour a day, and during commercials, crank out a few sets of body-weight squats, lunges, or pushups.

Find body-weight exercises at MensHealth.com/fitness/body-weight-exercises-1.

Watch your Body weight

PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO ARE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE: **70**

AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS A MAN LOSES FROM HIS LIFE SPAN IF HE WAS OBESE AT AGE 20: **13**

SIZE OF THE AVERAGE GUY'S WAIST: **40 INCHES**

MAXIMUM WAIST SIZE THAT COULD FIT INTO THE ESCAPE POD USED BY THE TRAPPED CHILEAN MINERS: **35 INCHES**

Never assume "healthy" is healthy

Beware the Subway diet: Diners grossly underestimate the calorie counts in "healthy" fast food, according to a recent study from Cornell University's Food and Brand Lab. When people ate a Subway meal with as many calories as a McDonald's meal, they misjudged the Subway meal's load by 21 percent (159 calories). "Not only do you underestimate the amount you eat, but you end up indulging later because you thought you were so good at lunch," says study author Brian Wansink, Ph.D. His advice: Estimate the number of calories in your healthy fast-food meal, and double it. "You'll be a lot more accurate," he says. And, of course, use our own 2011 edition of *Eat This, Not That* as a guide: Go to MensHealth.com/eatthis2011.

Calculate your grains

Exercise won't offset the waist-inflating effect of white bread, according to a new study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Among exercisers, those who ate refined grains daily had 12 percent more visceral fat—the most dangerous kind—than those who consumed the least amount of the processed stuff. The researchers also found that people who ate the most whole grains had 17 percent less belly flab than those who consumed the least. The catch: Continuing to consume refined grains offsets the fat-blasting effect of whole grains. Pasta, English muffins, white bread, and pizza are your primary offenders. Cut these carbs, and replace them with at least three servings of whole grains a day.

YOUR MOST VITAL VITALS

Resting heart rate

AVERAGE GUY: 75 BEATS PER MINUTE
TARGET: ≤ 60 BPM

Helps assess: Cardiovascular fitness, heart disease, stroke

Improve your number: Speed it up to slow it down. During pickup games, volunteer to play guard rather than center—you'll raise your heart rate (and improve your cardiovascular fitness) more, according to a 2009 *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* study.

Lower your Cholesterol

PERCENTAGE OF MEN CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR HEART HEALTH WHO LIMIT THEIR DIETARY CHOLESTEROL INTAKE: **25**

PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN HDL (GOOD) CHOLESTEROL IN MEN WHO STARTED EATING THREE EGGS A DAY: **20**

Pop a pistachio

Eggs aren't the only shells you should be cracking. In a new Penn State study, people who ate two servings of pistachios a day slashed their LDL (bad) cholesterol by an average of 13 percent. "Phytosterols in nuts act almost like a drug—they bind cholesterol in the GI tract and block its absorption," says Paul Ziajka, M.D., Ph.D., a clinical lipidologist with the Southeast Lipid Association. Why pistachios? They pack a higher concentration of phytosterols than any other nut, according to a 2005 study from Virginia Tech.

YOUR MOST VITAL VITALS

Blood sugar

AVERAGE GUY: 104 MILLIGRAMS/DECILITER
TARGET: 70 TO 99 MG/DL

Helps diagnose: Hyperglycemia, hypoglycemia, diabetes, prediabetes

Improve your number: In a 2010 University of Massachusetts study, researchers analyzed people's blood-sugar responses to seven snacks: half a glazed doughnut, skim milk, an apple, oatmeal, wrinkled peas, smooth peas, and walnuts. The least jarring bites? Wrinkled peas and walnut halves. Sprinkle the nuts with cinnamon (a blood-sugar tamer) and try the shriveled legumes instead of chickpeas in homemade hummus.

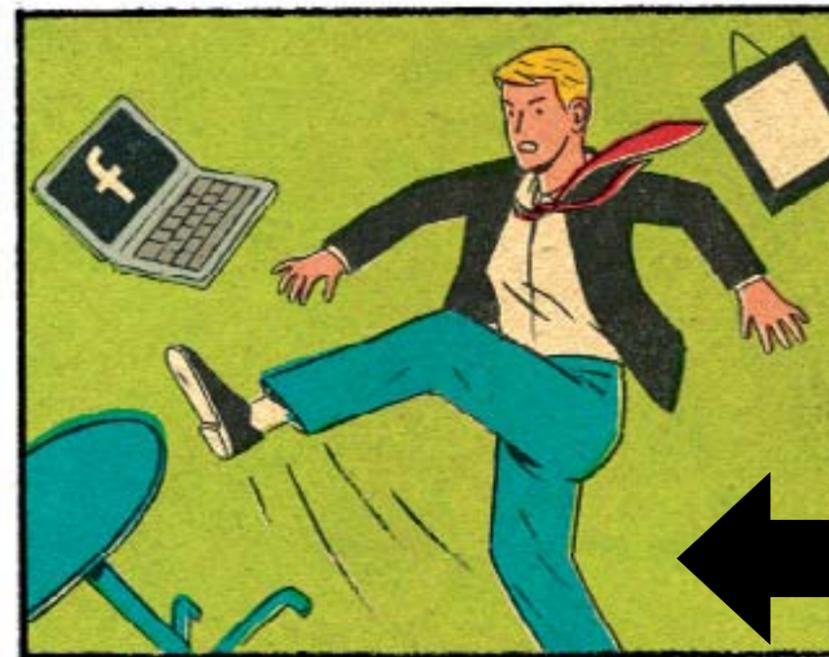
YOUR MOST VITAL VITALS

LDL cholesterol

AVERAGE GUY: 126 MILLIGRAMS PER DECILITER
TARGET: < 100 MG/DL

Helps assess: Heart-disease risk

Improve your number: Here's one more reason to skip fast food. In a new study in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, teens with high blood concentrations of perfluoroalkyl acids—chemicals found in such grease-resistant packaging as Chinese food containers, pizza boxes, and burger wrappers—also had high LDL. Researchers aren't sure why the link exists, but they're confident the problem isn't limited to teens. "The control of cholesterol is uniform throughout our lives," says Yale cardiologist John Eleftheriades, M.D. "So this would likely translate to adults."



Beat DEPRESSION

PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO SUFFER FROM DEPRESSION: **4.4**

PERCENTAGE OF MEN WHO TAKE ANTIDEPRESSANTS: **6.7**

Watch your diagnosis

Why are so many more men being medicated for depression than actually suffer from it? Part of the disparity is due to the fact that SSRIs (the most commonly prescribed antidepressants) help treat other problems, including premature ejaculation and migraines. But that still doesn't account for all the scrips being written, says Michael Addis, Ph.D., director of the Men's Coping Project at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. "There's a lack of knowledge about what these drugs are appropriate for—and many illnesses have symptoms that mimic depression, including thyroid disorders and celiac disease," he says. Compounding the problem is the fact that a third of primary-care docs say they won't ask about mental health at all, and half say assessing psychological issues causes them to lose time and money, reports a new study by University of Cincinnati researchers. That disinterest may prompt a lot of knee-jerk prescription writing. "Don't let them jump to a quick diagnosis," Addis says. And if you have any doubts about whether your blues are truly depression-related or instead a symptom of something else, seek a second opinion—from a psychiatrist or psychologist.

Un-friend depression

Facebook may actually be the antisocial network. British scientists recently found that Internet addiction is linked to a greater risk of depression and is often characterized by overuse of social media sites. "People make positive, sound-byte-caliber posts on Facebook—'the changing leaves are beautiful,' 'I just heard an awesome song,' and so on," says Addis. "The discrepancy between what you're feeling and what you think everyone else is feeling can make depression worse. You can develop a pretty stilted view of the world." Consider "hiding" your most Pollyannaish pals, and then strive for perspective by bumping up your real-time interactions. "Facebook needs to be supplemented by face time and phone conversations, so the unscripted truth can unfold more completely," Addis says.