

Monthly Health Challenge™



# Laugh More

**CHALLENGE**  
Laugh more to cultivate humor and happiness.

## Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Laugh More."
2. To complete the challenge, laugh more on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

In the 1960s, doctors told journalist and educator Norman Cousins that he didn't have long to live after being diagnosed with heart disease and a painful form of arthritis at age 35. Instead of giving up hope, Cousins developed his own form of therapy, which included lots of genuine belly laughing.

Watching just 10 minutes of slapstick comedy by the Marx Brothers and laughing helped him be pain-free for at least two hours at a time. He made laughter and humor a regular part of his life. And he lived 36 years longer than doctors predicted.

Laugh-out-loud movies. A good joke. Funny videos on YouTube. And all those priceless moments with family and friends when you laugh until you cry. They all have something in common. Laughing is good for your health. Your doctor may not write out a prescription for laughter, but it's still good medicine.

## Why laugh more?

Norman Cousins made it his lifetime pursuit to laugh more and live longer. And it worked for him. He lived to be 75 years old, despite a doctor's prediction that he would be dead before age 40. In his book, *Anatomy of an Illness*,

### Take the Gelotology Quiz

How much do you know about the health benefits of laughing? Take this quiz to find out.

**Gelotology** is the scientific study of laughter.



**T F**

1.   Laughing 100 times has the same effect as riding a stationary bicycle for 15 minutes.
2.   Stress hormones that weaken your immune system decrease after a good laugh.
3.   A good laugh strengthens the heart and lungs and increases your body's ability to use oxygen.
4.   Laughter has little to no effect on blood pressure, stress, muscle tension, or pain.
5.   When you laugh, endorphins are released in the brain that help improve your mood.

If you answered any of these statements incorrectly, you may benefit from learning more about the health benefits of laughter. Laugh-out-loud humor makes you feel better, and research shows it might keep you healthier, too. Studies have found that laughter can help lower blood pressure, reduce stress and tension, strengthen your immune system, and improve your mood.

Source: *University of Maryland School of Medicine.*

1. True. 2. True. 3. True. 4. False. 5. True.

Cousins provides a detailed look at how he used laughter to reduce pain, maintain a positive outlook, and live a long and happy life. Personal experiences like his prompted researchers to begin taking a closer look at the health benefits of laughter. Today, gelotology researchers have found that laughing can:

- **Reduce heart disease.** It's the leading cause of death in the United States and claims the lives of nearly 600,000 people a year. But laughing can reduce your risk, according to a University of Maryland study. Researchers compared healthy people and people who had already had a heart attack. They found that the healthy people laughed more and felt angry or hostile less often than the heart attack group.
- **Lower stress.** An estimated 47 percent of all Americans are stressed out, according to a survey by the American Psychological Association. Too much stress has been linked to high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, obesity, and a weakened immune system. But a Loma Linda University study found that laughing, and even anticipating a good laugh, helped reduce levels of some stress hormones by up to 70 percent.

More →

- **Improve cholesterol.** In the United States, about 35.7 million people have high cholesterol, according to the American Heart Association. High LDL (bad) cholesterol can block blood vessels and lead to a heart attack or stroke. Increasing HDL (good) cholesterol helps carry away artery-clogging plaque. In the Loma Linda study, researchers also found that laughing helped increase HDL (good) cholesterol levels by 26 percent when they compared patients who only took cholesterol medication and patients who took the same medication and laughed regularly.

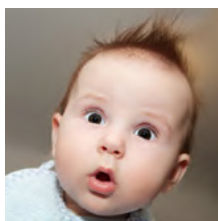
- **Lower blood pressure.** One in every three adults in the U.S. has high blood pressure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There are typically no symptoms, but it's a major risk factor for heart attack, stroke, and kidney disease. However, in a *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology* study, researchers found that watching funny movies and laughing helped expand blood vessels and lower blood pressure. And the opposite occurred when people watched movies with stressful or dramatic scenes.

## Tips for Laughing More

If you're not in the habit of enjoying some gut-busting laughter, or you don't laugh enough, what's holding you back? Laughing is good for your health, helps relax tense muscles, reduces stress, and makes you feel better. Here are some ways to help you smile, be happier, and laugh more:



### A Few Minutes of Media Entertainment



There are 6.43 million "funny baby" videos [tinyurl.com/pkv4sny](http://tinyurl.com/pkv4sny)

After just 10 minutes of watching comedy on TV and laughing, Norman Cousins felt better for hours. If you're in need of a good laugh, enjoy a funny movie, TV

show, or video on the Internet. Then walk away with a smile on your face.

- ✓ Watch a funny TV show or movie.
- ✓ Even if you've seen it before, watch your favorite funny movie again.
- ✓ Watch funny videos on the Internet.
- ✓ Instead of hitting fast-forward, watch the commercials and look for clever and funny ads.
- ✓ Even if you're not a *Star Wars* fan, watch the 1977 George Lucas movie, and try to find the mistakes, like when a Stormtrooper bangs his head on a door.

30 Mistakes in *Star Wars* [tinyurl.com/nm73ssl](http://tinyurl.com/nm73ssl)

### Family, Friends, and Co-Workers

Some of the best laugh-out-loud moments occur when you're with family, friends, or co-workers. Here are some ways to enjoy a few laughs when you're with others:

- ✓ Tell a funny story or embarrassing moment about yourself.
- ✓ If your kids say something funny at home, share it with others.
- ✓ Play silly practical jokes on each other.
- ✓ Plan an ugly sweater day at the office.
- ✓ Post funny comics on your office door.
- ✓ Look at old photos of yourself, family, and friends.
- ✓ Make funny faces at each other, or have a staring contest.
- ✓ Organize a funny movie night, and dress as your favorite character.

Clean Jokes to Make You Laugh [prairiehome.publicradio.org/jokes](http://prairiehome.publicradio.org/jokes)



- ✓ Call each other by funny nicknames for a day.
- ✓ Laugh at other people's jokes.

### Out-and-About

You never know when something funny might happen that turns an ordinary day into a can't-stop-laughing day to remember. Here's how to be prepared for a good laugh:

- ✓ Try not to take yourself too seriously.
- ✓ Go to a comedy club, show, or funny movie.
- ✓ Look for things that are interesting, funny, or out-of-the-ordinary.
- ✓ Smile more.
- ✓ Skip instead of walk.
- ✓ Order a diet water with a serious face.
- ✓ Share a funny joke with employees where you do business.
- ✓ Learn to laugh at your own mistakes.
- ✓ Look for ways to enjoy a good laugh every day. You'll smile more, feel better, and live longer.



Laughter is the Best Medicine [tinyurl.com/rcgj7](http://tinyurl.com/rcgj7)

Sources: American Heart Association.; American Psychological Association.; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.; *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*.; Loma Linda University.; University of Maryland School of Medicine.



# Laugh More

## Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you enjoy a good laugh.
3. Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you make to help laughing become a regular part of your life.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you enjoyed a good laugh. You must do this on at least 22 days this month to complete this challenge. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of best health.

**CHALLENGE**  
Laugh more to cultivate humor and happiness.

MONTH: _____							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	
HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	
HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	
HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	
HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	HC ☐ ex. min. _____	

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I created humor and happiness by laughing more

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking or biking

**Other wellness projects completed this month:**

---



---

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



[www.BlueHealthAdvantageNE.com](http://www.BlueHealthAdvantageNE.com)

