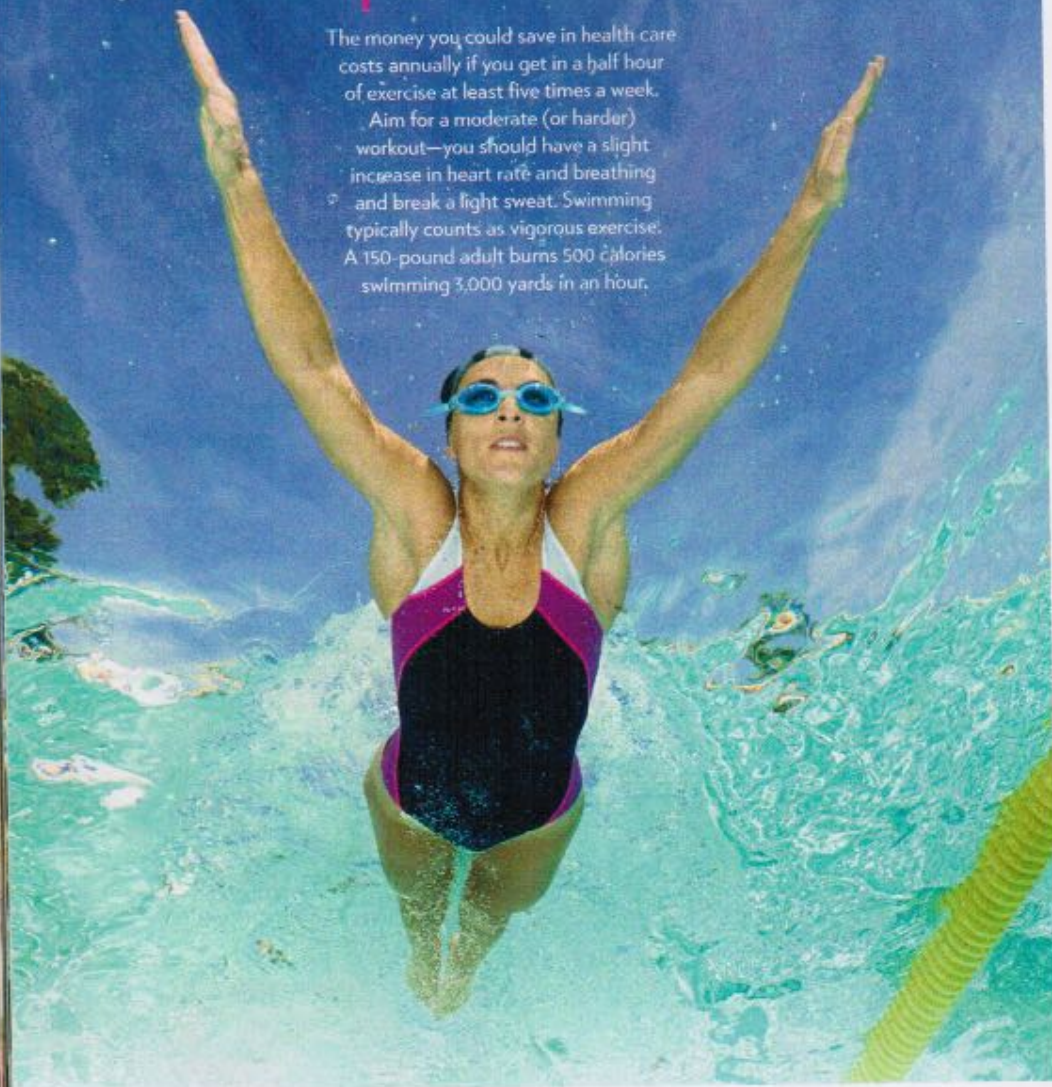


\$494

The money you could save in health care costs annually if you get in a half hour of exercise at least five times a week.

Aim for a moderate (or harder) workout—you should have a slight increase in heart rate and breathing and break a light sweat. Swimming typically counts as vigorous exercise. A 150-pound adult burns 500 calories swimming 3,000 yards in an hour.



**THE TRUTH METER** By Micaela Young, M.S., C.P.T.

**FOOD HELPS KEEP YOU HYDRATED**

TRUE

Having a hard time upping your H<sub>2</sub>O to beat the summer heat? While water is still your biggest hydration ally, high-water foods like cucumbers, cabbage, lettuce and celery can help stave off dehydration too.

**TART CHERRY JUICE FIGHTS PAIN**

Yes, tart cherries contain ibuprofen-like compounds called anthocyanins. But research on how this sour sip performs in humans is still mixed, and there aren't enough consistent findings to recommend a pain-relieving dose.

**TARGET STUBBORN FAT WITH SPOT TRAINING**

Crunches won't whittle your middle. If your workout burns more calories than you eat, sure, you'll lose weight, but fat isn't lost from just one spot—and where you shed it first is largely genetic.

**CUT SUGAR TO CURE A YEAST INFECTION**

FALSE

This myth stems from the fact that women with poorly controlled diabetes are at greater risk for yeast infections. But no science—in healthy or diabetic women—shows that eliminating sugar combats *Candida* yeast growth.

**YOU ASKED** Why in the world are people eating charcoal?

Not to be confused with a briquette you throw on the barbecue—that you should never eat—activated charcoal is popping up in foods like juices, ciders and ice cream and also in supplement form. There are claims about its benefits for detoxing and easing gas. But do they have merit?

Let's start with detoxing. In an emergency, activated charcoal treats acute poisoning and drug overdoses. The charcoal binds to the poison so it doesn't get absorbed, explains Mark Olaf, D.O., emergency medicine physician in Danville, Pennsylvania. (Consult with a medical professional before using it to treat poisoning.) Some take this to mean that it helps your body eliminate everyday toxins, like pollution and processed food additives. Yet there isn't evidence to support this.

For easing gas, the theory goes that activated charcoal will bind to gas-causing compounds in food, says Kristin Kirkpatrick, M.S., R.D.N., manager of the Cleveland Clinic's Wellness Nutrition Services. Several health blogs cite one study that found that taking activated charcoal before and after ingesting a laxative decreased gas. But it's from over 30 years ago, and there's no larger body of research to back it up. "One study is not going to convince me," Kirkpatrick says. Meanwhile, a small handful of studies show the opposite—activated charcoal failed to decrease gas.

**Bottom Line:** Neither claim has enough scientific backing. Plus, there are risks, including constipation and diarrhea, and it can make some prescriptions less effective. —Karen Asp

