

5 MINUTES TO A  
HAPPIER YOU

# Woman's Day

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that aren't

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# w d contents



**34**  
A tip of our hat to glowing skin

## on our cover

- 18 **5 Minutes to a Happier You**
- 94 Save \$110 or More a Month
- 70 Watch Out! Healthy Foods That Aren't
- 62 Skip the Diet and Still Lose Weight
- 46 New Anti-Cancer Report
- 103 15-Minute Meals: 15 Simple Recipes
- 110 Sorbets & Other Icy Treats

## live well

- 11 **TAKE TIME TO** Brighten Up Flower Arrangements
- 12 **HOW TO...** make summery potpourri, keep your brain sharp, store your stuff, and more.
- 16 **WOMANSDAY.COM** Sassy summer dresses, grilling favorites, win a beachfront resort getaway, enter our "Daddy & Me" photo contest.
- 18 **5 MINUTES TO HAPPY** Feeling a little down? Say bye-bye to the blues with these mood boosters by *Jennifer Matlack*
- 22 **MOMFIDENCE** Banish Body Issues by *Paula Spencer*

## style

- 31 **TAKE TIME TO** Choose Bold Earrings
- 32 **BEAUTY CLOSET** Just in time for Father's Day, nine just-for-him products to treat your guy to by *Melissa Matthews*
- 34 **DIVE IN!** Don't hide beneath your coverup. These beauty tips will have you looking beach- and boardwalk-worthy from head to toe all summer.

## health

- 41 **TAKE TIME TO** Use Enough Sunscreen
- 42 **YOUR HEALTH** Flip-flops and foot pain, when to stay out of the water, overcoming shyness, and more.
- 46 **THE NEW CANCER FIGHTERS** Large-scale strategies for prevention, the most risky habits revealed, plus recipe revamps to increase your defenses by *Hallie Levine Sklar*
- 62 **LOSE WEIGHT—NO DIETING!** Ditch your list of food restrictions. Here's what you *should* be eating to drop those pounds by *Katherine Brooking, RD*
- 68 **YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH** Are multivitamins a must?, the best non-DEET bug repellents, and more by *Madonna Behen*
- 70 **HEALTHY FOODS THAT AREN'T** How to tell what's actually good for you—and what just claims to be by *Marissa Lippert, RD* ▶

KEITH LATHROP

# 5 minutes to happy

Go from blah to bliss in an instant by Jennifer Matlack

**Y**OU'RE IN A LOUSY MOOD AND want to feel better fast. What you need is a happiness fix—right now! Try one of these spirit-boosting tips to jump-start joy in 5 minutes or less.

**start a blog** Like journaling, it gives you an outlet for your feelings. “But it may be even better for triggering happiness because people can leave you positive comments,” says Caroline Adams Miller, coauthor of *Creating Your Best Life*. Begin one at [blogger.com](http://blogger.com)

**make up a ridiculous story** If someone is fueling your sour mood, create a goofy character in your head based on that person. “Imagine an outrageous comic calamity befalling him,” says Amy Riley, a life balance consultant for Tiara Coaching in Chicago. You’ll get a good chuckle out of it.

**put yourself in the movies** Think of your favorite film scene, one that makes you feel great every time



you see it—like Bridget Jones kissing Mark Darcy in the snow. Now picture yourself as the main character. “Embracing that moment triggers optimism,” says John Ryder, PhD, author of *Positive Directions*.

**soak up the sun** Go outside or stand beside a bright window and bask in the warming rays for a few minutes. Sunlight ups the level of vitamin D in your body, which in turn keeps serotonin (a feel-good hormone) high, explains Mehmet Oz, MD, coauthor of *You: Being Beautiful*. (Please turn to 20)

## live well

**touch your toes** “It opens up your hip joints, which is where most people store tension,” says Dr. Oz. Hold the position for a minute, then slowly roll up. As you lift, so will your mood.

**take it all in** “Little things in life that inspire joy are often subtle and don’t always grab your attention,” says Barbara Fredrickson, PhD, author of *Positivity*. So be on the lookout for small wonders: butterflies in your garden, an amazingly bright full moon.

**turn on the tunes** Listen to your favorite upbeat song and you’ll be happier in seconds. “Music has a powerful influence over state of mind,” says Alice Domar, PhD, director of the Domar Center for Mind/Body Health in Waltham, Massachusetts. That’s because music—



especially songs that make you boogie—activates the part of our brain that’s hardwired for pleasure.

**show off your moves** Speaking of boogying, that’s another quick way to break into a smile. Got two left feet? It doesn’t matter. “Any form of movement will release endorphins and elevate your mood,” explains Dr. Domar. So while you’re listening to that favorite song, get up and dance.

**put photos on the fridge** We look at our refrigerator about 27 times a day, so make the most of it. “Research shows that the happiest people have many joyful family photos displayed in their homes,” says Adams Miller.

**get plant-happy** Deadhead the spent flowers on your gardenia or buy a bunch of tulips at the market. Studies show that being around foliage or colorful blooms relieves stress, soothes sadness and increases calmness.

**create a new code** Change one of your passwords (e-mail, voice mail, ATM) to a word that primes you to think in an optimistic way—the name of your much-loved pet, the funny nickname you call your husband, or even the word *love*.

**break out of the box** Do one small thing that’s new and unexpected. Put a temporary tattoo on your ankle. Top off your morning coffee with some whipped cream. “Novelty makes people feel good,” says Adams Miller.

**mark your calendar** Make a note of an upcoming event that you’re looking forward to—a weekend getaway with your best friend, an outdoor concert with your husband. The sheer anticipation you feel every time you see it penciled in is almost as good as the special event itself.

**be generous** A recent study found that when people spent as little as \$5 on others, they reported greater feelings of joy. Shopping at the grocery store? Pick up a few staples for your neighbor. Just bought a cup of coffee? Give the barista an extra \$5 to pay for the customer behind you.

**turn the negative positive** List five to 10 things that went wrong today, then read them out loud, says Riley. It may sound counterintuitive but it works: When you hear all of it together—you dropped your morning bagel on the floor, noticed a new gray hair, discovered that your teen used the last of the shampoo—you’ll see how minor it all is. And a little perspective goes a long way.

**send out good vibes** “Text three friends and tell each of them one thing you like about her,” says Sonja Lyubomirsky, PhD, author of *The How of Happiness*. Your kind words will make them (and you) feel terrific.

**lend a hand** Call a local nursing home, shelter, church or charitable organization and ask how you can help. Those few minutes on the phone are all it takes to kick your spirits into high gear. Knowing that you’ll soon be helping others—and then following through—makes you feel good about yourself, says Susan Ouellette, a health care educator in Baltimore, Maryland.

**think of the good stuff** Spend a couple of minutes reflecting on your accomplishments over the past five, 10, 15 years, recommends Dan Baker, PhD, author of *What Happy Women Know*. Maybe you’re a more skilled cook now than you were then, or perhaps you have developed a lifelong hobby into a successful part-time business. Recognizing and acknowledging your growth will provide an immediate sense of gratification. You’ll be cheered instantly. wd

*Psst... Whenever you need a pick-me-up, think about the most sunny person you know.*