

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Steven L. Smith, DC & Stuart deWitt, DC

15 Healthy Gifts for Mother's Day

Are you searching for the perfect gift for mom this Mother's Day? Why not give the gift of health?

Your doctor at Hickory Chiropractic Clinic has created a list of 15 healthy gift ideas that are guaranteed to bring a smile to mom's face. Whether mom is difficult to buy for or slightly easier to please, your doctor at Hickory Chiropractic Clinic hopes these gift suggestions will inspire you to put her health at the top of the list.



1. Chiropractic Checkup

Whether or not mom's already a patient, consider the gift of a chiropractic checkup. At her appointment, your doctor at Hickory Chiropractic Clinic will search mom's spine and neck for **vertebral subluxations**, a common condition in which spinal bones have limited mobility. Vertebral subluxations are linked to a variety of health concerns, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, neck and back pain, vertigo and immune system problems.

Using precise maneuvers, called **chiropractic adjustments**, your doctor at Hickory Chiropractic Clinic corrects vertebral subluxations and accompanying limited range of motion. Our office emphasizes preventive care to ward off pain and disability — helping

mom stay well before symptoms emerge.

2. Nutritional Supplements

Could mom benefit from a nutritional supplement? Ask your doctor at Hickory Chiropractic Clinic which supplements may be best for her!

3. Organic Box

A growing number of farms offer weekly or monthly organic box memberships, which include the best selection of local produce currently available — often at a more affordable price than purchasing these foods at retail.

4. Gym Membership

Daily exercise promotes tremendous mind and body benefits. Is there a gym near mom's house or workplace where she might enjoy going? Regular workouts, particularly weight-bearing exercise, help keep the bones strong. Mom will also benefit from a lower heart rate and stronger muscles.

Daily workouts will also make mom's skin glow, help her psyche and boost production of endorphins. Keeping fit



will help mom remain calm; exercise amplifies the brain's level of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that plays a key role in keeping your cool.

5. Yoga, Tai Chi or Dance Classes

If traditional gym workouts aren't mom's style, consider a gift certificate for yoga, Tai Chi or a dance class. You'll be giving her a gift for the mind, body and soul!

6. Workout Attire

Why not buy mom a new pair of shoes for her favorite workout? Or how about exercise clothes or a new gym bag?



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7. Pet

Research shows that comforting pets slash blood pressure and stress hormones. Adopting a pet from a local animal shelter may touch mom's heart and boost her health. (Of course, you'll first want to check with her that she's not allergic and has time for all of Fluffy or Fido's needs!)

8. Creative Cooking

Is your mom a gourmet chef? Or a novice foodie? A gift certificate for a local culinary class, specializing in healthy fare, may just be the winning gift. Ask us for a list of local options. Or, give mom a wellness-oriented cookbook or a recipe box she can fill with her favorite healthy recipes.

9. Stress Salvation

What does your mom find most stressful? For a lot of moms, it's keeping up the house along with all her other responsibilities. How about giving mom a gift certificate for a household cleaning service that uses green, nontoxic cleaning products? Or hiring a handyman service for a day for those projects mom's been putting off? Reducing mom's stress levels is paramount to health. Stress triggers back pain, headaches, sleeplessness and mood swings — and over the long term, it affects the immune, cardiovascular and nervous systems.

Other stress-busting gifts include CDs or DVDs on guided meditation or visualization.

10. Dark Chocolate

Dark chocolate contains a large number of polyphenols, antioxidant chemicals that protect the body from destructive free radicals. A small amount of dark chocolate also helps lower blood pressure and reduce LDL cholesterol ("bad" cholesterol). Look for organic dark chocolate with a 65 percent or higher cocoa content. And skip chocolate with any fillings or coatings.

11. Music

Music has the power to inspire, alter mood and boost cognitive function. Relaxing music is also a proven stress buster. Research shows that music has lasting benefits to one's state of mind, even after you stop listening. It can alter brainwave activity and help regulate breathing, slow heart rate and lower blood pressure. There is some research that classical music may trigger relaxation more readily than other music genres. Consider giving mom a CD or two — or a gift certificate for a music lesson.

12. Green Tea

A basket filled with green tea and a pretty tea pot or a special tea cup is another wellness-oriented gift. Just like dark chocolate, green tea is a rich source of polyphenols. One particular green tea polyphenol, called epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), is an especially powerful antioxidant. It helps lower LDL cholesterol and inhibits the growth of cancer cells and formation of blood clots.

13. Laughter

The benefits of laughter are endless. A good hearty laugh can reduce stress, lower blood pressure, elevate mood, boost the immune system and improve brain functioning. Laughter also fosters instant relaxation and amplifies positive feelings. Studies show that watching a funny movie also lowers pain intensity. A funny book, comedy DVD or tickets to a local comedy show are great gift options.

14. Mattress or Pillow

Mom's sagging mattress that she purchased years ago reinforces poor sleeping posture, strains her muscles and causes misalignments in her spine. A new mattress will help her feel more rested and rejuvenated and slash risks for back pain. Be sure to take mom along when shopping for her new mattress, as her personal preference will determine what's best. A good mattress should support the natural curves and alignment of the spine. Medium-

firm mattresses are usually more helpful for low-back pain than super firm ones.

A new therapeutic pillow is another spine-friendly option. Ask the doctor for specific brand recommendations for both mattresses and pillows.

15. Meditation Moment

How often do busy moms set aside time to relax and just breathe deeply? Meditation and prayer are proven to decrease stress, depression and anxiety. Neuroscientists have found meditation immediately increases calm. How?

In short, meditation shifts brain activity. Brain waves move from the right cortex, which is an area associated with stress, to the calmer left cortex. Meditation also decreases activity in the amygdala, where the brain processes fear. Try a beginner's meditation CD to help mom unwind. It's a gift that will keep on giving!



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