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## Ditch the Quick Fix ENERGIZE NATURALLY WITH SIMPLE DAILY HABITS

It's 3 p.m., and you've hit the dreaded midday slump. For many Americans, coffee or an energy drink may fuel their second wind. When tired, we tend to turn to external sources for a boost, but it's a temporary fix; we'll encounter the same issue the next day. Instead, we need to look internally and make changes to improve overall well-being for the long term. A healthier, more consistent way to increase energy is possible!

Do you stay up late every night? Do you use your phone right before you fall asleep? Do you have trouble waking up in the morning? If you answered yes to any of these questions, it's time to give your sleep a facelift. Try to go to bed at the same time every night, ideally around 9 or 10 p.m. Put your phone away at least an hour before bed. If this is difficult, practice meditation whenever you feel tempted to grab your phone.

Your diet may also need adjustments. If you skip meals, eat junk food, or snack right before bed, you'll feel it later. During the day, eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and nutrient-rich foods instead. Make time for every meal, stepping away from your work while you eat. If you do not get enough nutrients, supplement your diet with vitamins.

Consider your daily movement as well. It might sound counterproductive, but exercise can substantially boost our energy. Exercise improves oxygen and nutrient circulation while allowing us to get better sleep.

You don't have to go through life lacking energy. Make adjustments today for a more energized tomorrow.



## STANDING UP FOR PATIENTS

### Our Fight Against Harmful Medical Malpractice Reform

We returned to the statehouse this October to defend South Carolina's most vulnerable patients as the legislature gears up to attempt to modify the laws governing medical malpractice actions for the second year in a row. The proposed changes would strip away crucial protections for patients who suffer from the most egregious medical errors. If successful, this will be the first overhaul of our state's medical malpractice laws since 2005.

The reforms introduced by the 2005 Medical Malpractice Reform Act were designed to prevent frivolous lawsuits against medical providers. One effective reform was to add the requirement that, before a medical malpractice lawsuit can be filed, a less formal Notice of Intent to File a Lawsuit must be filed in the county in which the malpractice occurred. The Notice of Intent must include a sworn statement from a medical professional in the same specialty as the medical professional who allegedly committed the negligence. The sworn statement must verify that the medical records alone confirm that the defendant has breached the required standard of care. This must be done without the benefit of any testimony or interviews from the medical providers, as these can only occur once the affidavit requirement has been met.

These reforms have done a great deal to prevent frivolous medical claims in our state and to foster the stated goal of attracting qualified medical providers to South Carolina. Indeed, our hospital systems are expanding at unprecedented rates, and our state ranks among the top 10 for highest physician salaries in the U.S., despite ranking in the bottom third for total income level across our population.

The legislation proposed for 2026 deals with the opposite end of the spectrum by eliminating protections for the victims of extreme medical negligence. Unlike any other industry, South Carolina has a complex set of damages caps that apply only to medical malpractice actions. There are rigid caps of \$1.2 million on total damages that apply in cases against governmental and charitable medical facilities. This fixed cap can apply even in clear instances of malpractice in which a patient has already incurred over \$10 million in medical bills alone. Separate caps apply to "investor-owned" medical facilities, or those operated by publicly traded corporations. Under these caps, a parent can be limited to collecting \$580,461 in total compensation for the grief and sorrow associated with the wrongful death of a child. Exceptions to these very restrictive caps exist if a jury



determines that a medical provider acted with gross negligence rather than ordinary negligence.

The proposed legislation for 2026 aims to do away with this "safety value" by eliminating the exception to the caps in instances of gross negligence. As we testified in front of the South Carolina House Judiciary Committee, this would be akin to attempting to improve road safety by eliminating the penalties for felony DUI; it rewards the worst offenders while doing nothing to improve overall safety.

While the 2005 legislation was designed to aid in the recruitment

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# Shiny, Sleek, and Addictive

## THE SCIENCE OF GADGET OBSESSION

There's something thrilling about unboxing a new gadget. The shimmer of the screen, the sleekness of the design, the moment you first power it on ... it's a rush. Behind this excitement, many psychological triggers pull us toward the upgrade cycle.

### The Pull of Novelty

We're hardwired to chase newness. Psychologists call it neophilia, an attraction to fresh experiences. Gadgets deliver that hit of novelty: sharper cameras, faster processors, and cutting-edge features that feel like a leap forward. These upgrades don't just make life easier; they signal progress and feed our innate desire for self-improvement. Studies show people are far more likely to upgrade if the new version feels substantially different from the last.

### Marketing and Social Influence

Of course, the tech industry feeds on this craving. Marketing campaigns frame every release as revolutionary. They want us to feel left behind if we don't buy the latest model. Social media piles on the pressure, with influencers and peers flaunting the latest devices. Then there's FOMO (fear of missing out) that makes sticking with last year's model feel worse; we're no longer part of the in-crowd.

### Personality and Identity

Not everyone upgrades for the same reasons. Some of us are natural thrill-seekers who love being first in line, even if it means dealing with buggy operating systems. Others see technology as an extension of identity: Owning the newest gadget becomes a badge of honor for the forward-thinking and tech-savvy. For these buyers, the purchase is less about functionality and more about aligning with innovation.

### Convenience Over Mastery

Sometimes, buying is easier than learning. Mastering the quirks of an older device can feel like a chore, while a newer model promises smoother, more intuitive use. Many people convince themselves that an upgrade isn't an indulgence but a convenience.

### The Hidden Cost

Frequent upgrades carry consequences. Perfectly functional devices often end up in drawers or landfills, adding to the growing mountains of e-waste. Before chasing the next shiny release, it's worth asking: Do we really need it, or are we chasing novelty, status, and validation at a hidden cost?



## A Smarter Start to 2026

### Making Resolutions That Last

As one year ends and another begins, many of us take time to pause and think about what's working, what's not, and what we might want to do differently going forward. The new year ahead can offer us a fresh slate, which can be both exciting and even a little overwhelming. Whether we call them resolutions or simply goals, moving into the new year with a plan to improve certain areas of our lives is always a great idea, but it isn't always easy to follow through.

A 2024 Pew Research Center survey found that one-third of Americans made at least one resolution last year. Younger adults were the most likely to join in, with nearly half of those under 30 committing to improve something in their lives. Across all age groups, the focus of New Year's resolutions was largely the same. Most focused on health, finances, personal relationships, hobbies, or career goals.

While many people stick with their resolutions early in the year, the vast majority eventually give up on them. Motivation often wanes once routines set in, but we can still take a few steps to set ourselves up for success and create goals we can stick to. It's best to start with realistic, specific goals that fit our lives. Doing this takes a bit of planning. Some recommend creating SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound) goals and making ourselves accountable for following them.

Rather than something vague like, "I'm going to lose weight," a SMART goal might be, "I'm going to lose 10 pounds by Memorial Day and keep a journal of my progress." Progress reports are great for keeping us motivated because they help us stay focused. But it's also important to remember that creating new habits takes time, and we shouldn't beat ourselves up if we have a few off-days. Research has shown that setbacks here and there have a minimal effect on our overall success. Just keep working at it, and it will eventually become a habit that feels like second nature.

Setting a goal or two for the new year doesn't have to come with pressure. What matters most is that we keep moving forward.

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of qualified professionals and thereby improve the quality of medical care by eliminating the threat of frivolous lawsuits, this legislation operates to give a pass to those who a jury of our citizens determines to have acted with gross negligence. As we informed the South Carolina Senate Subcommittee on Tort Reform in the spring of 2025 and the South Carolina House of Representatives Judiciary Committee in October, we cannot agree that such changes are in the best interests of South Carolina patients.

We urge all South Carolinians to contact their representatives and demand that they protect patients, not those who harm them through gross negligence.

## BEHIND THE BROCHURE

### TIPS FOR CHOOSING A SAFE NURSING HOME

Choosing a nursing home is never simple. It often follows weeks or months of difficult conversations, and the decision carries significant weight. Every family wants to believe their loved one will be cared for properly and that the facility will treat them with respect and patience. Fortunately, this is the case for many nursing homes throughout South Carolina. Most deliver quality care, but poor staffing, negligence, and oversight issues are still a problem in our state. That's why it's essential to do your homework and understand what to look for when selecting a facility for your loved one.

A good first step is to check for proper licensing and certification. South Carolina nursing homes must be licensed by the Department of Health and Environmental Control and meet both state and federal standards. Families should verify that a facility's license is current and that the

administrator is certified by the South Carolina Board of Long Term Health Care Administrators.

Paperwork alone doesn't tell the whole story, though. You also need to see how a facility operates in real life. During your search, try to visit several homes at different times of day and observe how staff interact with residents, how they handle requests, and whether the environment feels calm or chaotic. Clean common areas and prompt attention to residents say a lot about how a place operates. On the other hand, frequent noise, hurried staff, or unanswered call bells may signal problems with staffing or supervision.

While visiting, ask about inspection results and staffing ratios, and find out who handles medical concerns when a resident's condition changes. You'll also want to know whether families are encouraged to stay involved. The best



facilities welcome visits and provide regular updates.

Asking the right questions and visiting in person can help you see how a facility runs, but even the most involved families can be misled. At Evans Moore, we've worked with families who thought they were choosing the right place, only to learn later that care wasn't what it should have been. If you have concerns about how a nursing home is treating someone close to you, don't ignore them. Our firm has represented many families in situations like this and can help you understand your options.



### Jalapeño Popper Soup

#### Ingredients

Inspired by [TheRecipeCritic.com](https://www.therecipecritic.com)

- 4 bacon slices, chopped into 1/2-inch pieces
- 5-6 large jalapeño peppers, minced with stems and seeds removed
- 1/2 small onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 lb gold potatoes, peeled and cut into bite-size pieces
- 8 oz full-fat cream cheese
- 1 cup shredded fresh cheddar cheese
- 2 tbsp lemon juice

#### Directions

1. Place a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, cook bacon until crispy, then remove to a plate.
2. Add jalapeños and onion to the pot and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Add garlic to the pot and sauté for 1 minute.
4. Stir in chicken broth, cumin, salt, and potatoes, and simmer for 20 minutes.
5. Place cream cheese in a mixing bowl and add 1 ladle of hot broth before mixing.
6. Add cream cheese mixture to the pot and stir.
7. Remove from heat and add cheddar cheese and lemon juice, stirring until the cheese melts.
8. Pour into serving bowls, topping with bacon and more shredded cheese.