



FIRST-TIME RATED: Automated Driving Systems

JANUARY 2019

CR Consumer Reports®

REVIEWS & RATINGS

- Pasta Sauces
- Treadmills
- Space Heaters
- Tablets
- Laundry Detergents

GROW AND PROTECT
Your Nest Egg

4 Steps to
EXERCISE SUCCESS

HOW TO PAY LESS
for Your Rx Drugs

TOO MANY TESTS?

Excessive screenings cost us—and the healthcare system—time & money. Learn when to say no without risking your health.

Build & Buy solves the car-buying puzzle

Save money, access our prescreened network of dealers, and see CR recommendations along with way! The deal you want is out there—in fact, car buyers save an average of \$3,101* off MSRP when they use the Build & Buy Car Buying Service®.



SEARCH for the car you want and see what others paid



COMPARE real pricing from participating dealers



LOCATE the dealership from our prescreened network of over 15,000



SAVE and drive home your car and your savings!

See how much YOU can save at cr.org/buildandbuy

CR Consumer Reports®

*Between 7/1/17 and 9/30/17, the average savings off MSRP presented by Participating Dealers to users of the Build & Buy Car Buying Service, based on users who configured virtual vehicles and who TrueCar identified as purchasing a new vehicle of the same make and model listed on the certificate from a Participating Dealer as of 10/31/2017, was \$3,101, including applicable vehicle-specific manufacturer discounts. Your actual savings may vary based on multiple factors, including the vehicle you select, region, dealer, and applicable vehicle-specific manufacturer incentives, which are subject to change. The MSRP is determined by the manufacturer, and may not reflect the price at which vehicles are generally sold in the dealer's trade area as not all vehicles are sold at MSRP. Each dealer sets its own pricing. Neither TrueCar nor Consumer Reports brokers, sells, or leases motor vehicles.

COVER STORY

26 Medical Tests You Do—and Don't—Need

Certain health screening tests can save your life, but others can be a waste of your time and money—or can even pose risks. Learn which ones you can skip.



Your doctor may examine any suspicious-looking moles with a dermatoscope.
PAGE 35

Having your blood pressure tested is fast, simple, and safe.
PAGES 28 AND 30

Scanning of the carotid artery using an ultrasound transducer is not an effective way to assess stroke risk.
PAGE 31

**40 Run for Your Life**

Exercise can have major health benefits no matter your age. Our experts put in the legwork to help you bring home a treadmill or an elliptical that fits your budget and space.

RATINGS

46 How to Pay Less for Your Meds

Our investigation into Medicare Part D reveals that you could be overpaying by hundreds of dollars for your prescription drugs. Here's how to choose the best plan for you.

**36 5 Smart Money Moves**

Start the new year right with these easy strategies to grow your nest egg, help protect yourself from fraud, and manage your money well for years to come.

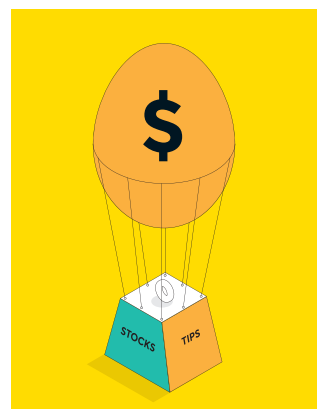


Table of Contents

DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

10 What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

Tablets, smart thermostats, yogurt, and more.

RATINGS

12 Ask Our Experts

Optimizing TV screen brightness, flu shot safety for seniors, and troubleshooting a car key fob.

13 CR Insights

What Alexa can do in your car. Plus how to clean up pet hair, get a better hotel rate, and make a lower-calorie grilled cheese.

RATINGS

PRODUCT UPDATE

20 Must Love Pasta

Find out which jarred sauce is boss—thanks to our hardworking nutrition staff. Plus the best whole-wheat pastas.

RATINGS

IN EVERY ISSUE

6 From the President: On Medical Tests, the Results Are In

We help you make educated decisions about which screening tests you need, and don't need.



Pasta Perfect

Our nutrition experts taste-tested jarred marinara sauces and whole-wheat pastas, and found healthy choices.

P. 20

7 Building a Better World, Together

Lowering drug costs, addressing doctor misconduct, and restoring internet equality.

8 Your Feedback

Readers' comments about our recent content.

19 Recalls

62 Index

63 Selling It

Goofs and gaffes.

ROAD REPORT

51 Ahead of the Curve

Auto ratings, news, and advice.

52 Does Car Buying Make Your Head Spin?

Don't let price haggling and paperwork put the brakes on a good experience. We guide you through a happier path.

RATINGS

59 Road Test

We put the Lexus ES, Ram 1500, and Hyundai Santa Fe and Veloster to the test on our track.

RATINGS

PRODUCTS RATED IN THIS ISSUE



HYUNDAI VELOSTER

P. 61



WASHING MACHINES

P. 11



SPACE HEATERS

P. 10



LAUNDRY DETERGENTS

P. 11



TREADMILLS

P. 45

ABOUT CONSUMER REPORTS

We are the world's largest independent, nonprofit consumer-product-testing organization, based in Yonkers, N.Y. We survey hundreds of thousands of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We pay for all the products we rate. We don't

accept paid advertising. We don't accept free test samples from manufacturers. We do not allow our name or content to be used for any promotional purposes.

HOW TO REACH US

Write to us at Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703, Attn.: Member Services.

TO SEND A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Go to [CR.org/lettertoeditor](https://www.consumerreports.org/lettertoeditor).

NEWS TIPS AND STORY IDEAS

Go to [CR.org/tips](https://www.consumerreports.org/tips).

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS

For Selling It send items to SellingIt@cro.consumer.org or call 800-333-0663.

See page 63 for more details.

ACCOUNT INFORMATION

Go to [CR.org/magazine](https://www.consumerreports.org/magazine) or call 800-333-0663.

See page 5 for more details.

RATINGS Overall Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. We rate products using these symbols:

🔴 POOR 🔴 FAIR 🔴 GOOD
🟢 VERY GOOD 🟢 EXCELLENT



LEAD THE WAY

Build a bright future for generations to come by making a gift in your will to Consumer Reports.

Your legacy gift is an investment in unbiased information and consumer choice for your family and the community.

For more information or to request complimentary materials on planning a charitable legacy, please call 877-275-3425 or email legacy@consumer.org.



CRM91BEQ



Member Services You can call us about your membership at 800-333-0663.

Or write to us: Consumer Reports Member Services
P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298
Please include or copy address label from issue.
(Allow four to six weeks for processing.)

Visit us online: CR.org/magazine

Use our website to • Renew or pay for your current magazine • Give a gift • Change your address
• Report a delivery problem • Cancel your magazine

Price In U.S., \$6.99 per issue, special issues \$7.99. In Canada, \$7.99 CAN per issue, special issues \$8.99 CAN (Goods and Services Tax included, GST #127047702). All other countries add \$10 per year to the U.S. price for shipping and handling.

Back Issues Single copies of previous 24 issues, \$7.95 each; previous two Buying Guides, \$14.49 each (includes shipping and handling). Please send payment to Consumer Reports, Attn.: Member Services, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703. Other ways to get Consumer Reports on the go: Google Play, iPad, Kindle, Nook, Readly, Texture, and Zinio.

Permissions Reproduction of Consumer Reports in whole or in part is forbidden without prior written permission (and is never permitted for advertising purposes). For questions about noncommercial, educational/academic uses of our content, please submit requests at CRreprints.com.

Mailing Lists We exchange or rent our print postal mailing list so that it can be provided to other publications, companies, and nonprofit organizations that offer products or services through direct mail. If you wish to have your name deleted from our list, please send your address label with a request for deletion from outside use to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298. We do not exchange or rent email addresses. You can review our complete privacy policy regarding Consumer Reports information products, services, and programs at CR.org/privacy.

Consumer Reports (ISSN 0010-7174) is published monthly, except twice in December, by Consumer Reports, Inc., 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703. Periodicals postage paid at Yonkers, N.Y., and at other mailing offices; Canadian postage, at Mississauga, Ontario (Canadian publications registration number 2665247, agreement number 40015148). Title Consumer Reports is a federally registered trademark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Contents of this issue copyright © 2019 by Consumer Reports, Inc. All rights reserved under international and Pan-American copyright conventions.

CR's No Commercial Use Policy To view the policy, go to CR.org/nocommercialuse.

Contributions Consumer Reports is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works side by side with consumers to create a fairer, safer, and healthier world. Contributions are tax-deductible in accordance with the law. Donations of commonly traded securities or real estate will be accepted and immediately converted to cash. For additional information, email donorservices@cr.consumer.org. To donate, please send your tax-deductible contribution to Consumer Reports, Attn.: Donor Services, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703 or go to CR.org/donate.

Charitable Gift Annuity Establishing a Consumer Reports Charitable Gift Annuity is an ideal way to accomplish your personal financial goals while supporting the mission of Consumer Reports. For additional information, please contact us at 877-275-3425 or legacy@consumer.org.

Consumer Reports' Staff operates under contract between Consumer Reports and The NewsGuild of New York Local 31003, CWA.

Members Send address changes to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298. If the post office alerts us that your magazines are undeliverable, we have no further obligation to fulfill your magazines unless we have a corrected address within two years.

POSTMASTER Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 507.1.5.2).

NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES Send address corrections to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298.

CANADA POST If copies are undeliverable, return to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 481, STN MAIN, Markham, ON L3P 0C4.



Consumer Reports is a member of Consumers International, a federation of more than 220 consumer organizations from more than 115 countries working to protect and empower consumers throughout the world. For information, go to consumersinternational.org.

Please Remember CR in Your Will For information about how to make a bequest to Consumer Reports, please contact us at 877-275-3425 or legacy@consumer.org.

On Medical Tests, the Results Are In



AS PARENTS, as loved ones, and as patients ourselves, we are never more vulnerable as decision makers in a marketplace as we are when faced with health challenges and the consequences they carry. While modern medicine has brought us a once unimaginable range of scans, screens, and tests designed to preempt problems, sharpen diagnoses, and even save our lives, the volume and

complexity of these options have made it more confusing to figure out the best course of action.

In fact, the ready availability of these options can sometimes make it feel as though forgoing tests is an irresponsible or risky choice—and, indeed, too few Americans are getting the preventive screenings that they should. But given the potential for unnecessary costs, procedural risks, and muddled or misleading results, the reality is that getting these decisions right can be more complicated than it may seem at first blush.

The key to better choices and outcomes in the doctor's office and hospital is having knowledge you can trust. That's why we're equipping you with vital information to know about before you undergo any screening test, so you can make well-informed determinations about whether that CT scan, blood test, or electrocardiogram really is the right call. We also break down the details of 18 common tests, providing insight on when—and for whom—they may be the most and least appropriate.

While we can't offer you complete peace of mind when a health scare hits, we can provide the knowledge you need to navigate the complex world of medical tests, so you can make choices for yourself and your family with confidence.

Marta Tellado

Marta L. Tellado,
President and CEO
Follow me on Twitter
@MLTellado

President and CEO Marta L. Tellado

Senior Vice President, Chief Operating Officer Leonora Wiener

Vice President, Chief Content Officer Gwendolyn Bounds

Editor in Chief Diane Salvatore

Executive Editor Kevin Doyle

Features Editor Natalie van der Meer

Design Director Matthew Lenning **Creative Director, Brand** Young Kim

Associate Design Director Mike Smith

Manager, Art Operations Sheri Geller

Art Directors Tammy Morton Fernandez, Ewelina Mrowiec, Lisa Slater, Michael Solita, Tracy Stora

Photo Editors Emilie Harjes, Karen Shinbaum

Senior Director, Content Development Glenn Derene

Deputy Directors, Content Development Christopher Kirkpatrick, Ellen Kunes

Associate Directors, Content Development Scott Billings, Althea Chang

Senior Director, Content Impact & Corporate Outreach Jen Shecter

Editorial Director, Digital Erle Norton

Special Projects Joel Keehn, Director; Lisa Gill, Rachel Rabkin Peachman, Deputies

Cars

Patrick Olsen, Content Lead

Editors: Keith Barry,

Jeff S. Bartlett, Jonathan Linkov,

Mike Monticello, Jeff Plungis

Auto Test Center: Jake Fisher,

Jennifer Stockburger, Directors

Product Testing: Michael Bloch,

Steve Elek, Kelly Funkhouser, John

Ibbotson, Chris Jones, Anita Lam,

Gene Petersen, Ryan Pszczolkowski,

Mike Quincy, Gabriel Shenhar, Shawn

Sinclair, Emily A. Thomas,

Joe Veselak, Seung Min "Mel" Yu

Electronics

Jerry Beilinson, Content Lead

Editors: Tercius Bufete, Nicholas

De Leon, Bree Fowler, Thomas

Germain, Christopher Raymond,

Allen St. John, James K. Willcox

Product Testing: Maria Rerecich,

Robert Richter, Testing Leads;

Elias Arias, Antonette Asedillo,

Claudio Ciacchi, Charles Davidman,

Cody Feng, Richard Fisco,

Richard Sulin, Maurice Wynn

Policy Lead: Justin Brookman

Health & Food

Editors: Trisha Calvo,

Lauren F. Friedman,

Jesse Hirsch, Catherine Roberts,

Diane Umansky

Home & Appliance

Eric Hagerman, Content Lead

Editors: Mary Farrell, Paul Hope,

Kimberly Janeway, Sara Morrow,

Haniya Rae, Daniel Wroclawski

Product Testing: John Galeotafiore,

Emilio Gonzalez, James Nanni,

Testing Leads; Peter Anzalone,

John Banta, Susan Booth, Tara

Casaregola, Lawrence Ciufo,

Enrique de Paz, Bernard Deitrick,

Cindy Fisher, Misha Kollontai,

Ginny Lui, Joan Muratore,

Joseph Pacella, Christopher

Regan, Frank Spinelli,

Dave Trezza, Michael Visconti

Money

Margot Gilman, Content Lead

Editors: Octavio Blanco,

Nikhil Hutheesing, Donna Rosato,

Tobie Stanger, Penelope Wang

Policy Lead: Anna Laitin

Chief Scientific Officer James H. Dickerson

Food Safety James E. Rogers, Director; Sana Mujahid;

Tunde Akinleye, Amy Keating, Ellen Klosz, Charlotte Vallaeys

Product Safety Don Huber, Director; Doris Sullivan, Associate Director

Content Systems & Operations Strategy Peter Meirs, Director

Content Operations David Fox, Director; William Breglio; Anthony Terzo

Production Eric W. Norlander, Manager; Letitia Hughes, Terri Kazin

Imaging Francisco Collado, Mark Linder

Content Coordination Nancy Crowfoot, Associate Director;

Diane Chesler, Aileen McCluskey

Copy Editing Leslie Monthan, Copy Chief;

Noreen Browne, Alison Francis, Wendy Greenfield

Fact Checking David Schipper, Manager; Kathleen Adams, Tracy Anderman,

Sarah Goralski, Christine Gordon, Karen Jacob

Consumer Engagement Testing Charu Ahuja, Director; Linda Greene

Statistics Michael Saccucci, Director; Andrew Cohen,

Keith Newsom-Stewart, Martin Romm

Survey Research Karen Jaffe, Simon Slater; Dave Gopalan, Kendra Johnson,

Debra Kalensky, Martin Lachter, Jane Manweiler, Olufemi Olu-Lafe, Adam Troy

Administration Decarris Bryant, John McCowen

Consumer Insight Monica Liriano, Associate Director;

Frank Yang; Teneisha Thomas

Member Support Sue Melfi, Director; Donna Murianka

Marketing Dawn Nelson, Senior Director; Patricia McSorley, Newsstand

Procurement Operations Steven Schiavone, Associate Director

Vice President, Chief Communications Officer Matt Anchin; **Vice President,**

Financial Planning & Analysis JoAnne Boyd; **Vice President, Chief Human**

Resources Officer Lisa Cribari; **Vice President, Data & Marketing Operations**

Brent Diamond; **Vice President, Chief Digital Officer** Jason Fox; **Vice President,**

Advocacy David Friedman; **Vice President, General Counsel** Michael Hubner;

Vice President, Social Impact Partnerships Geoffrey MacDougall;

Vice President, Research, Testing & Insights Liam McCormack;

Vice President, Business Strategy & Planning Betsy Parker; **Vice President,**

Chief Marketing Officer Kim Stehle; **Vice President, Chief Social Impact Officer**

Shar Taylor; **Vice President, Chief Financial Officer** Eric Wayne

Lowering Drug Prices

WHAT'S AT STAKE

For years, pharmacists knew that consumers could sometimes pay less for a prescription drug by not using their insurance—but couldn't tip them off because of so-called gag clauses in contracts between pharmacy owners and pharmacy benefit managers. (Technically, pharmacists were allowed to discuss it but only if the consumer knew to ask.)

The good news is that gag clauses will soon be banned, thanks to the Patient Right to Know Drug Prices Act and the Know the Lowest Price Act. Sponsored by Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., respectively, and signed by President Trump in September, the bipartisan laws together apply to both private insurance and Medicare drug coverage.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR supported both laws but also worked to pass stronger measures on the state level. In particular, we pushed for a new California law that doesn't just allow pharmacists to tell patients whether lower prices are available—it requires them to do so.

Equally important, we successfully fought to include a guarantee that the money paid out-of-pocket by Californians to save on covered drugs can now be counted toward their insurance deductibles. This is vital because, without such a provision, money you save by paying cash for drugs could be lost if your insurance takes longer to kick in as a result.

We'll push to bring these protections to the federal level.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Gag clause or not, it's vital to ask your pharmacist whether you're getting the best price. For tips on reducing drug spending, see our May 2018 issue or go to [CR.org/drugcosts](https://www.consumerreports.org/drugcosts).

Protecting Patients

WHAT'S AT STAKE

When doctors are put on probation for misconduct by state medical boards, their patients may have no idea—unless they take the time to research their physician's disciplinary history.

That's set to change in California in July, when a law goes into effect requiring doctors to notify their patients when they have been put on probation for certain offenses involving harm to patient health, including sexual misconduct, drug abuse, criminal convictions, and inappropriate prescribing of medication.

"Patients shouldn't be left in the dark when their doctor has been put on probation for conduct that could put their health at risk," says David Friedman, vice president

of advocacy at Consumer Reports. "California's landmark law protects patients' right to know."

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR first helped bring this issue to public attention in 2015, when we petitioned the Medical Board of California to require patient notification. (Our story ran in the May 2016 issue of the magazine.) When the petition was turned down, CR joined Sen. Jerry Hill and patient safety advocates to urge state lawmakers to support legislation. Three years of lobbying later, state lawmakers approved the measure on the final day of this year's legislative session.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

To see whether your doctor has a disciplinary record, go to [docinfo.org](https://www.docinfo.org), run by the Federation of State Medical Boards. If you find anything there under "Actions," click on the link, which will take you to your state website for more details.

Reopening the Internet

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Net neutrality is the notion that all information should flow freely over the internet on equal terms. California will soon become the latest state to restore net neutrality protections after the Federal Communications Commission repealed them at the federal level in late 2017.

The law, considered the most comprehensive in the nation, will defend consumer choice and competition by preventing internet service providers from blocking, slowing, or giving preferential treatment to any websites or apps.

California joins several states, including Washington and Oregon, that have taken such action. But California's outsized influence means its law has the potential to shape markets across the country.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR advocates met with lawmakers and the governor's office—and our California members sent more than 20,000 emails to their representatives—in support of the bill.

Unfortunately, the federal Department of Justice moved quickly to challenge the California law, arguing that individual states lacked the authority to enact their own rules. We disagree and joined a coalition of groups in backing the law. Then, in October, the parties agreed to delay the case while a separate federal challenge to the FCC's net neutrality repeal is resolved.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

CR also supports a federal bill, introduced by Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., that would reverse the FCC's repeal and reinstate net neutrality. It passed the Senate with bipartisan support in May 2018 but is currently stalled in the House. Go to [CR.org/savenetneutrality](https://www.consumerreports.org/savenetneutrality) to tell your representative to restore net neutrality protections.





Our November 2018 article “What Makes a Tire Tops?” with its comprehensive car and SUV tire ratings, got readers talking. To join the conversation, go to [CR.org/toptires0119](https://www.consumerreports.org/toptires0119).

I READ WITH INTEREST your article but found no mention of whether run-flat tires are a reasonable choice for replacement tires. The consensus of what I've found online about run-flats includes: Pros: no spare tire needed. Cons: harsher ride. Much more expensive to replace. A damaged run-flat may need replacing rather than repairing. —William Quick, North Charleston, SC

MANY DRIVERS HATE run-flats for their roughness, noise, replacement cost, and, in general, poor performance. I myself have recently purchased

an Audi Q5 over a BMW X3 due to my dissatisfaction with the run-flats on my current BMW. —Roland Borchers, Utica, MI

EDITOR'S NOTE Design advances have limited or eliminated many of the drawbacks of run-flats, including harsh ride, noise, and short tread life. At CR, we test replacement tires but exclude many run-flat tire models because they are not sold as replacements; run-flats tend to come as original-equipment tires on specific vehicles. However, we did test one run-flat replacement tire in the performance all-season category: the Bridgestone DriveGuard. It earned an Excellent for noise and received an Overall Score of 56 out of 100.

HERE, IN THE PROVINCE of New Brunswick, I run winter tires five months a year. Tread life is as important as tire cost. Just because you say “winter/snow

tires don't carry a mileage warranty and are intended for limited, seasonal use” is not a satisfactory reason to not assess their tread life. —Richard Harrison, Saint John, New Brunswick

EDITOR'S NOTE Mileage warranties are rare on winter tires. That said, Michelin does carry treadwear warranties, and we have found in our tread-life test that the estimated mileage projection matched or exceeded the warranty. So we take your point, and we will consider how we can best explore the mileage potential of these tires in the future.

THE TIRE COMPARISON ratings have a column for speed rating, but I could not find a key to the alpha rating. For example, the all-season tires are rated either W or V. What's the difference? —Richard Lanari, Murrells Inlet, SC

EDITOR'S NOTE A letter identifies each tire's maximum speed limit. Standard all-seasons are often rated S (up to 112 mph) or T (118 mph). Up the scale are H (130 mph), V (149 mph), W (168 mph), Y (186 mph), and ZR (149-plus mph). Use a tire with the speed rating recommended in your owner's manual. Though the average driver wouldn't drive at these speeds, tires rated for higher speeds generally offer better handling and wet grip than those for lower speeds.

Foggy-Windshield Help

WHEN ASKED, “How can I keep my car windows from fogging up in winter?” (Road Report, November 2018), you missed the easiest and most effective solution: Keep the inside of your car windows clean. Fog loves to stick to the thin film of dirt on windows. A little glass cleaner can go a long way in keeping them fog-free. —Roy Broscole, North Bellmore, NY

EDITOR'S NOTE While it's good to keep the inside of the glass clean, we've found that some haze on the glass is caused by vinyl and adhesive off-gassing (chemicals that slowly release into the air)—something a regular household cleaner might not be formulated for. We believe an auto glass cleaner, such as 3M Car Care Glass Cleaner or Meguiar's Perfect Clarity, is likely to yield better results, though we don't test these products.

Natural Discourse

IN “NATURAL CURES: Your A-Z Guide” (November 2018), you said that apple cider vinegar had no health benefits, due to “little scientific evidence to support” health claims. I am a 61-year-old woman with lactose intolerance and gluten sensitivity. I often wake up with stomachaches from going off my diet and eating past favorites, like pizza. I take



WRITE

Go to [CR.org/lettertoeditor](https://www.consumerreports.org/lettertoeditor) to share your comments for publication.

2 tablespoons of natural apple cider vinegar in 8 ounces of water, and in 15 minutes, my stomach is fine.

—Patricia Bartoszak, Hawley, PA

Hot-Water Wisdom

IN YOUR ANALYSIS of water heaters (“Which Type of Water Heater Is Best,” Insights, November 2018), you missed one advantage of a tank water heater over tankless types. The government tells us to maintain an emergency supply of three days’ water. In an emergency, you can turn off the heater to your water tank and have a 40- or 50-gallon tank of potable water. Use the drain valve as a source and enjoy! Also, when my furnace failed, my battery-powered recirculating pump cycled water from my hot water heater, which prevented the pipes from freezing until I could get the furnace repaired. The neighbors weren’t so lucky.

—James Frahm, Frankenmuth, MI

TANK WATER HEATERS have a long time of recovery compared with tankless types. You start a spa shower, dishwasher, etc., and as soon as you start using hot water, it needs to be replenished and heated up again, which takes time. With a tankless gas heater, I can take hot showers and (practically) never run out of hot water.

—Doug Acker, Richmond, TX

YOUR TOP RECOMMENDATION was electric heat pumps because (in part) the high cost has a short payback time (average annual operating cost: \$240). But for gas tankless heaters, you said the high cost wouldn’t see payback for years even though they’re cheaper to run (\$195 per year). What am I missing?

—Ronald Axler, Massapequa, NY

EDITOR’S NOTE When buying a new water heater, most homeowners don’t change the energy source type—mostly because it would be too costly

and time-consuming to switch from gas to electric or electric to gas. With that in mind, our analysis of the payback period compares the electric heat pump only with other electric types, and the gas tankless heaters with other gas types. At \$240, the electric heat pump had a much lower annual operating cost than other electric heater types—which are closer to \$500 per annum—making its payback time significantly shorter.

SOME OF US have no option other than an electric storage tank water heater. You can easily save on the electricity cost by placing a timer on the water heater. Most people need hot water only in the morning and evening. The timer shuts the unit off when it’s not in use but keeps the tank full of hot water. Thus, I pay about \$12 per month instead of the almost \$50-per-month average.

—Jessica Weingarten, Wayne, PA

EDITOR’S NOTE A timer may save money, but there’s some debate on just how much. Also, know that lowering the temperature too much could cause bacteria growth.

Cooking Tips

CONCERNING ELECTRIC VS. GAS ranges (“Boost Your Cookware Confidence,” November 2018, page 49), given a choice, when there is an electrical power outage, you can always boil water for tea and a baby bottle, make soup, and cook hot dogs if you have a gas cooktop.

—Ronald Weinger, Berkeley Heights, NJ

YOUR ARTICLE on nonstick cookware did not state the coatings on the products, but it would be useful to add that data. My Scanpan Classic frying pans have a diamond ceramic coating that withstands metal utensils. I have cleaned them with just a sponge for years, and they don’t have any scratches.

—Gabe Torok, Andover, NJ

ON TIRE SHOPPING

Tires with higher speed limits—such as those rated H, V, or higher—generally offer better handling and wet grip than lower-rated ones, such as those rated S or T. —The editors

EDITOR’S NOTE We do not identify the type of coating used, but our nonstick durability test assesses the resistance of the coating to scratching and wear. Each pan endures up to 2,000 cycles of scrubbing with steel wool, then we ascertain the condition of the nonstick coating.

Clean-Air Cares

YOUR ARTICLE on cleaning humidifiers (“Your Humidifier,” Insights, November 2018) was very informative. It has always troubled me that humidifiers turn water into readily inhalable droplets containing microbes that will be present in the reservoir. I prefer the old-fashioned humidifiers that boil the water. Yes, it’s no fun to clean the heating element after deposits have built up on it, but the boiling process kills the majority of microbes while humidifying the air.

—Malcolm Hamer, New York City

Winter Storm Prep

IN “HOW TO PREP for Winter Storms” (November 2018), you didn’t mention roof rakes, which pull snow off the roof. Mine is not intended to remove all the snow, just the lowest 3 feet leading to the gutter. This practice has proved to be useful in reducing the potential for ice dams.

—Steve Bense, Wheaton, IL

AS A LIFELONG MEMBER of CR, I have always valued your work and reviews. But you “blew

it” (LOL!) by not rating the presence of heated handgrips on snow blowers.

—Douglas King, Mount Horeb, WI

EDITOR’S NOTE Although they won’t replace a good pair of gloves, heated handgrips are helpful for aiding blood circulation in your hands. Many of our top models have them, such as the Troy-Bilt Arctic Storm 30. We don’t test this feature, but online we note which models have heated handgrips under Features & Specs. (All-Access and Digital members can go to [CR.org/snow0119](https://www.consumerreports.org/snow0119).)

CONNECT WITH US



FACEBOOK
fb.com/consumerreports
fb.com/SomosCR



YOUTUBE
[/consumerreports](https://youtube.com/consumerreports)



INSTAGRAM
[@consumerreports](https://instagram.com/consumerreports)



TWITTER
[@consumerreports](https://twitter.com/consumerreports)
[@SomosCR](https://twitter.com/SomosCR)



PINTEREST
[/consumerreports](https://pinterest.com/consumerreports)



LINKEDIN
[/company/consumer-reports](https://company/consumer-reports)

What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Space Heaters

WE TESTED: 25 small, portable models

WE TEST FOR: Effectiveness to heat an individual, as well as a standard-sized room, in 15 minutes; fire safety; ease of use; noise; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 65

Range: 37-86

Best Overall

Vornado VMH600
\$150

86

OVERALL
SCORE



Quickly Warms a Room

Comfort Zone CZ499R
\$70

83

OVERALL
SCORE



Bargain Buy

Honeywell HCE311V
\$40

71

OVERALL
SCORE



Smart Thermostats

WE TESTED: 14 models

WE TEST FOR: Ease of operation; wireless setup, smart features, and automation of heating and cooling; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:

Median: 59

Range: 42-83

Head of the Class

Nest Learning Thermostat
\$250

83

OVERALL
SCORE



Smart With Sleek Display

Schneider Electric WiserAir
10BLKUS
\$210

69

OVERALL
SCORE



Easy Manual Controls

Honeywell Lyric T5+
RCHT8612WF
\$150

66

OVERALL
SCORE



Ask Our Experts

What are the benefits of smart thermostats vs. the kind that have been around forever?



WIFI-CONNECTED SMART THERMOSTATS can be controlled through an app on your smartphone, which means you can dictate temperatures remotely—either on your way home from work or on your way out to your weekend cabin in the woods. Some can also work with digital assistants, such as Alexa, says Peter Anzalone, who tests thermostats for CR. Others, including the Nest and Honeywell models above, offer geofencing—meaning they know when you're home or not and adjust the temperature accordingly. The Nest and Schneider models above can even learn your temperature preferences and keep adjusting to them. What's more, according to Energy Star, you can save up to \$50 per year on your energy bill, thanks to these efficiencies.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All-Access membership can go to [CR.org](https://www.consumerreports.org).

Greek Yogurt

WE TESTED: 22 products
WE TEST FOR: Flavor and texture. We also evaluate nutrition based on calories per gram, fats, sodium, sugars, iron, calcium, and more per serving.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
 Median: 76
 Range: 55-87

Whole-Milk Winner
 Dannon Oikos Plain Whole Milk Greek Yogurt
 \$5 for 32 oz.

87

OVERALL
SCORE



Tasty 2% Fat
 Fage Total Plain 2% Fat Greek Yogurt
 \$7 for 35.3 oz.

85

OVERALL
SCORE



Nice for Nonfat
 Kirkland Signature (Costco) Plain Nonfat Greek Yogurt
 \$6 for a two-pack of 32-oz. containers

80

OVERALL
SCORE



Tablets

WE TESTED: 32 models (9 inches or larger)
WE TEST FOR: Quality of the screen and performance, including speed of actions and visual smoothness, ease of use, battery life, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
 Median: 73
 Range: 58-82

Largest Screen
 Apple iPad Pro 12.9 (64GB), 12.9" screen
 \$800

81

OVERALL
SCORE



Light and Easy
 Samsung Galaxy Tab S4 (64GB), 10.5" screen
 \$650

81

OVERALL
SCORE



Long Battery Life for Less
 Amazon Fire HD (32 GB), 10" screen
 \$150

68

OVERALL
SCORE



Laundry Detergents for Sensitive Skin

WE TESTED: 10 models that claim no dyes or perfumes
WE TEST FOR: How well a detergent removes body oil, dirt, grass, and other stains, such as blood, wine, and tea.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Liquid
 Median: 58 Range: 45-76
Pods/Packs
 Median: 55 Range: 48-62

Tough on Dirt
 Persil ProClean Power-Liquid Sensitive Skin
 \$0.23

76

OVERALL
SCORE



Great Value, Good Results
 Kirkland Signature (Costco) Ultra Clean Free & Clear
 \$0.11

70

OVERALL
SCORE



Best-Performing Packs
 All Mighty Pacs Oxi Free & Clear*
 \$0.28

62

OVERALL
SCORE



Front-Loader Washing Machines

WE TESTED: 51 front-loader models
WE TEST FOR: How well a model's normal cycle cleans fabrics in a load of mixed cotton items, energy, water efficiency, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
 Median: 79
 Range: 39-86

Reliable at a Great Price
 LG WM3500CW (4.5 cu. ft.)
 \$810

86

OVERALL
SCORE



Compact Cleaner
 Miele WWH860WCS (2.3 cu. ft.)
 \$1,800

85

OVERALL
SCORE



Large Capacity for Less
 Kenmore Elite 41072 (5.2 cu. ft.)
 \$950

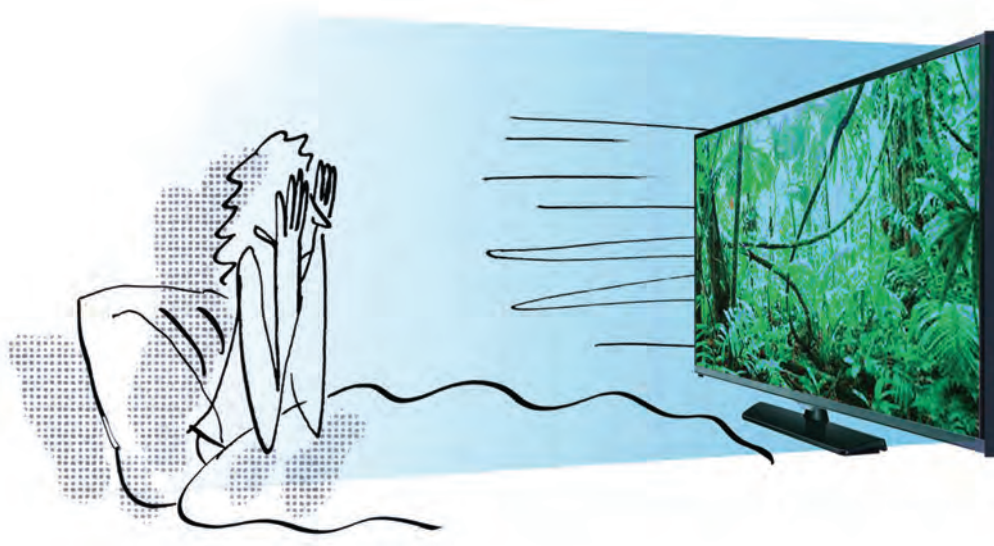
81

OVERALL
SCORE



Note: We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with another. *CR believes that liquid detergent packets should be avoided in homes where children under 6 years old or adults who are cognitively impaired may be present.

COMING NEXT MONTH Wireless Routers & More



I like to watch TV in bed at night, but the screen is so bright it keeps my husband awake.

If your TV is lighting up your bedroom like a football stadium, you might be tempted to fiddle with the brightness setting—but don't. "For LCD or LED TVs, the backlight setting is the one to adjust," says Claudio Ciacci, CR's lead TV tester. Lowering the backlight helps reduce the bright glow at night while still looking acceptable in daytime. On OLED TVs, search for an "OLED light" or a panel brightness setting. Some newer TVs also have an auto sensing brightness control option that, when turned on, adjusts to the room lighting, "but that feature is more about energy savings and can lead to unpredictable and

subpar results," Ciacci says. At [CR.org/tvscreenoptimizer](https://www.consumerreports.org/tv/screenoptimizer), members can sign in to use our TV Screen Optimizer to find our setting recommendations for individual models. Our testers tinker with tons of settings to find out which ones make a specific TV model look its best in a dimmer environment, as well as for daytime viewing.

Is it safe for seniors to get a flu shot?

It's not only safe but also especially important for seniors because that's the age group (along with children under 5) most vulnerable to serious complications if the flu is contracted. In fact, if you're 65 or older, you have two options beyond the standard flu shot that are formulated and approved only for older adults in order to provide additional protection. One, Fluzone High-Dose, contains four times the antigen—the part of the vaccine

that helps your body build up protection against flu viruses—as the standard shot. The other, Fluvax, has the same amount of antigen as the regular flu shot but contains an additional substance, called an adjuvant, that boosts the body's immune response to the vaccine.

Though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention doesn't prefer either option over the standard flu shot, recent studies suggest they may be more effective for older people, whose immune systems need a boost, says William Schaffner, M.D., a professor of preventive medicine and infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville. Both may be available at your local pharmacy or your doctor's office; call ahead to be sure.

Last, if you haven't gotten any shot yet, remember that it's not too late because flu season can run through March or later.

My car's key fob is getting balky on me. What's going on?

There are some simple reasons why your key fob may be uncooperative. When left at the bottom of your purse or buried in your briefcase, the fob's signal can be obstructed

by other objects. Some vehicles have a proximity system that lets the driver unlock the car simply by touching the door handle. But a buildup of winter grime on the handle can also affect how well the key interacts with the sensors—so keep your door handles clean.

If none of that does the trick, the trouble may be with the device's battery. Over time (typically after a year or two), the battery may weaken for a variety of reasons, says John Ibbotson, chief mechanic at CR's Auto Test Center. Some manufacturers caution that keeping your key too close to your mobile phone could potentially drain the fob's battery. And don't leave your key fob in the car (or even hanging within a few feet of it) when parked for long periods of time—say, overnight in your garage. The key will continue to communicate with the car, which may drain the fob's battery and compromise its functionality.

If your battery becomes so weak that the car isn't detecting it at all, there's no need to buy a whole new fob (which can cost hundreds of dollars). You can usually replace the battery inside for just a few dollars. Check your owner's manual for DIY instructions on how to replace it. To tide you over, be aware that many fobs have a key blade tucked inside the device that can manually unlock the doors.



We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at [CR.org/askourexperts](https://www.consumerreports.org/askourexperts) ... and watch for the answers.

CR Insights

Alexa, open the garage door.

Dash Device
The Echo Auto is set to cost \$50 when it goes on sale in 2019.

In the Know

Alexa in Your Car

AMAZON HAS ALREADY installed its popular Alexa digital voice assistant in everything from lightbulbs to microwaves. Now, Alexa can join you behind the wheel. You'll find it in newer models, including ones from BMW, Genesis, Mercedes-Benz, Nissan, and Toyota.

Drivers who have Alexa in their cars and at home can have a two-way conversation—from car to home, or from home to car. For instance, while wolfing down breakfast in your kitchen, you can ask your Alexa smart

speaker how much gas is in your tank or instruct it to remotely start the car. In some cars (the 2019 Lexus ES sedan and many newer Fords), you can also connect to your smart home devices to adjust your home thermostat, turn on lights or music, and open the garage door with voice commands. Plus, you can get directions, make phone calls, and stream media.

If your car doesn't have Alexa built in, you'll soon be able to get the Echo Auto

(above), which plugs into an auxiliary port or uses your phone's Bluetooth connection. Sitting on your dash, the Echo Auto will respond to voice commands just like a built-in Alexa system—though it does lack some features, such as remote start and fuel level reports. Be aware of the trade-offs: Having Alexa in your car uses your phone's data connection, which could drive up your phone bill, and you'll need to grant Amazon permission to know your whereabouts.

TESTED
CARS WITH
ALEXA
BUILT IN

2019 Toyota Avalon

92

OVERALL
SCORE



2019 Lexus ES sedan

85

OVERALL
SCORE



2018 Ford EcoSport

56

OVERALL
SCORE



Food Sleuth

Good-for-You Grilled Cheese

WARM, GOOEY GRILLED CHEESE sandwiches are an American classic—and a popular comfort food during colder months. But thanks to the butter and cheese, grilled cheese is a delivery system for

fat and calories—especially if you order out. Panera's four cheese grilled cheese, for example, has 28 grams of fat and 630 calories. Happily, "at home, there are easy ways to reduce calories and pump up

the nutrition without losing the flavor you're craving," says Claudia Gallo, a CR food tester and professional chef. Try these nutritional tweaks from our test kitchen to create a healthier grilled cheese that still hits the spot.

Go for the Grains

White breads are much less nutritious than their whole-grain or whole-wheat counterparts. Look for breads labeled 100% Whole Wheat and choose USDA Organic to avoid artificial ingredients.

Use a Flavorful Cheese

If you pick a cheese with a strong flavor, you can get by with less. One slice of, say, pepper jack cheese instead of two will save you half the calories and fat. Or, to cut down on sodium, opt for a low-sodium cheese such as Swiss (like we put in our sandwich, right).

Power Up With Produce

Layer in leafy greens such as Swiss chard (shown here), which adds fiber, magnesium, and potassium, as well as vitamins A, C, and K.



Using our healthy tips, this grilled cheese has just **310 calories and 15 grams of fat.**

Toast Instead of Fry

A tablespoon of butter has 100 calories and 11 grams of fat. But you can still get a crunch without it: Top one slice of bread with cheese, then toast both sides of the sandwich in a toaster oven. Our choice:



BREVILLE BOV650XL TOASTER OVEN \$180

76 OVERALL SCORE

Add a Healthy Side

To get a crunch without the calories, fat, and sodium of chips, try a side of raw fruits or veggies, such as slices of bell pepper, cucumber, or apples.

PHOTOS, BOTTOM: CONSUMER REPORTS; JOHN WALSH/CONSUMER REPORTS. FOOD STYLING: MICHELLE GATTON (GRILLED CHEESE)

CR Time Traveler FITNESS



1956 We test 29 brands of children's sneakers for durability by giving them to active boys and girls. After weeks of tree-climbing, hiking, and playground sports, we evaluate the damage to soles and uppers.

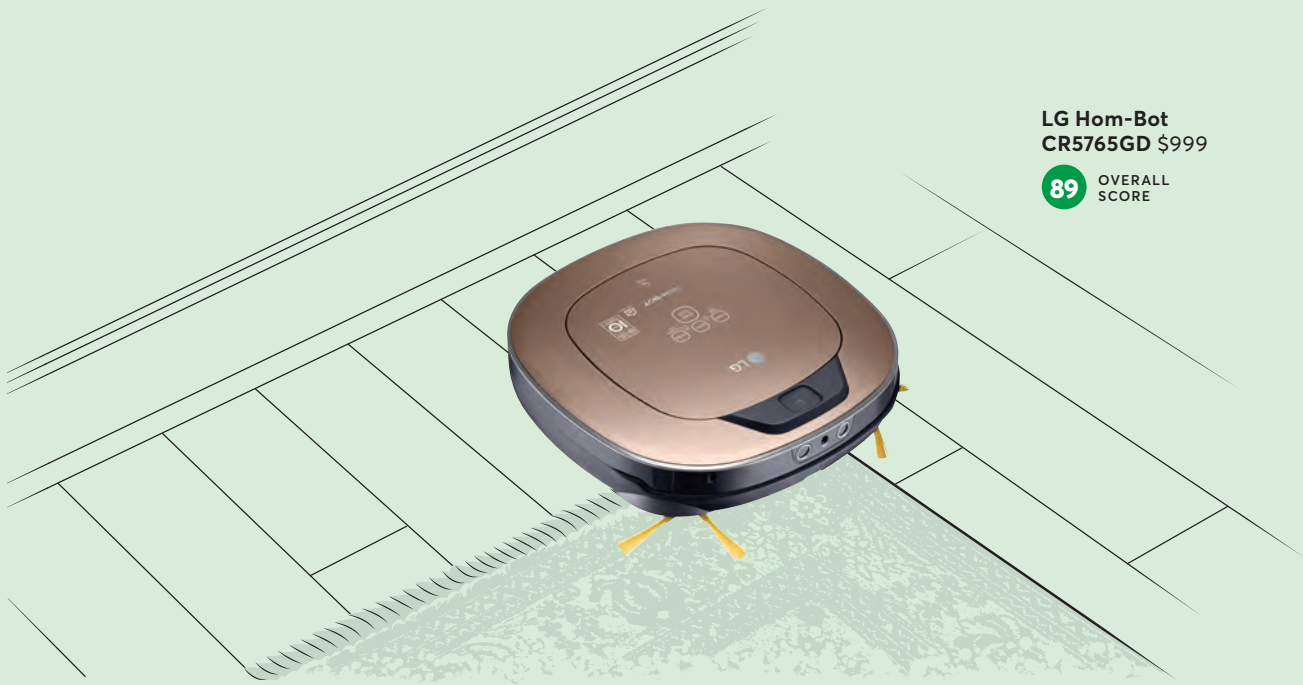
1958 In a special section on diet and weight loss, we discourage readers from using the Relax-A-cisor, a low-voltage electrical apparatus promising to reduce girth with "no-effort."



1975 We test 52 kids' bicycles for safety, handling, and more—two Schwinn models come out on top. Our testers also tell readers how to check for misaligned frames: Hold the bike by the seat and walk briskly forward. If it has a turning bias to one side, don't buy it.

1978 The wooden Davis Imperial, below, is one of the most popular racquets in the U.S., but new graphites do better in our tests, with a Tony Trabert C-6 earning the highest overall score.





LG Hom-Bot
CR5765GD \$999

89 OVERALL
SCORE

Do More With ...

A Robotic Vacuum

IT'S EASY TO SEE the appeal of robotic vacuums: They do the grunge work while you do something more interesting. And they're smarter than ever before. Many can find their way out of tight spots and around extension cords, and a few of the newest models can even be controlled by a smartphone app or with voice commands given to compatible virtual assistants, such as Amazon's Alexa or Google Assistant.

But the LG Hom-Bot vacuum (above) has scooted even further into the future of smart hoovering. In "Home-Guard" mode, it uses a built-in camera with motion sensor technology to automatically detect movement within its view, and capture images and store them in its smartphone app. The app also lets you view a live camera feed (but does not store the footage). Though some may find this feature useful—perhaps to check in on the cat or to see whether a child picked up his or her room—others may find it superfluous, or even a privacy concern. (Users who don't like having a watchful vacuum can deactivate the camera.)

When it comes to just cleaning, "the Hom-Bot aced all of our tests," says Susan Booth, who oversees vacuum testing at CR. It speedily picks up debris

from both carpets and bare floors, adjusting the suction according to the floor type it encounters. Its low profile easily fits under furniture, and an extended run time (about 90 minutes) allows it to cover many areas multiple times. Plus, the app allows you to schedule cleaning, and view the status of the vacuum and its cleaning job. It even maps where it's already gone. LG also claims that the Hom-Bot's learning mode memorizes the locations of obstacles to avoid, though we did not test this feature.

A few caveats: Although it's quiet, it made a few odd noises and bumped into our test furniture with such force that it moved the furniture slightly out of place. And robotic vacuums are not meant for deep cleaning, so it won't replace a full-sized vacuum.



1985 Consumers spent more than \$1 billion in home exercise equipment from 1984 to 1985—and many are now buying rowing machines. In our testing, we say the best are effective but expensive.

1998 Elliptical exercisers are the latest entry on the home exercise scene. The two we test—among the first to hit the market—are a waste of money, we report. They broke!



2010 Treadmills are so popular that they command more than 50 percent of the home workout market. Many we test, like the Sole F63 above, fold and some have new features, such as MP3 docks.



\$ SCHWINN
470 ELLIPTICAL
\$800

73 OVERALL
SCORE



2019 Ellipticals have come a long way since they first appeared in the '90s. Today, there are many great, affordable models, such as the CR Best Buy above.

Still Confused By ...

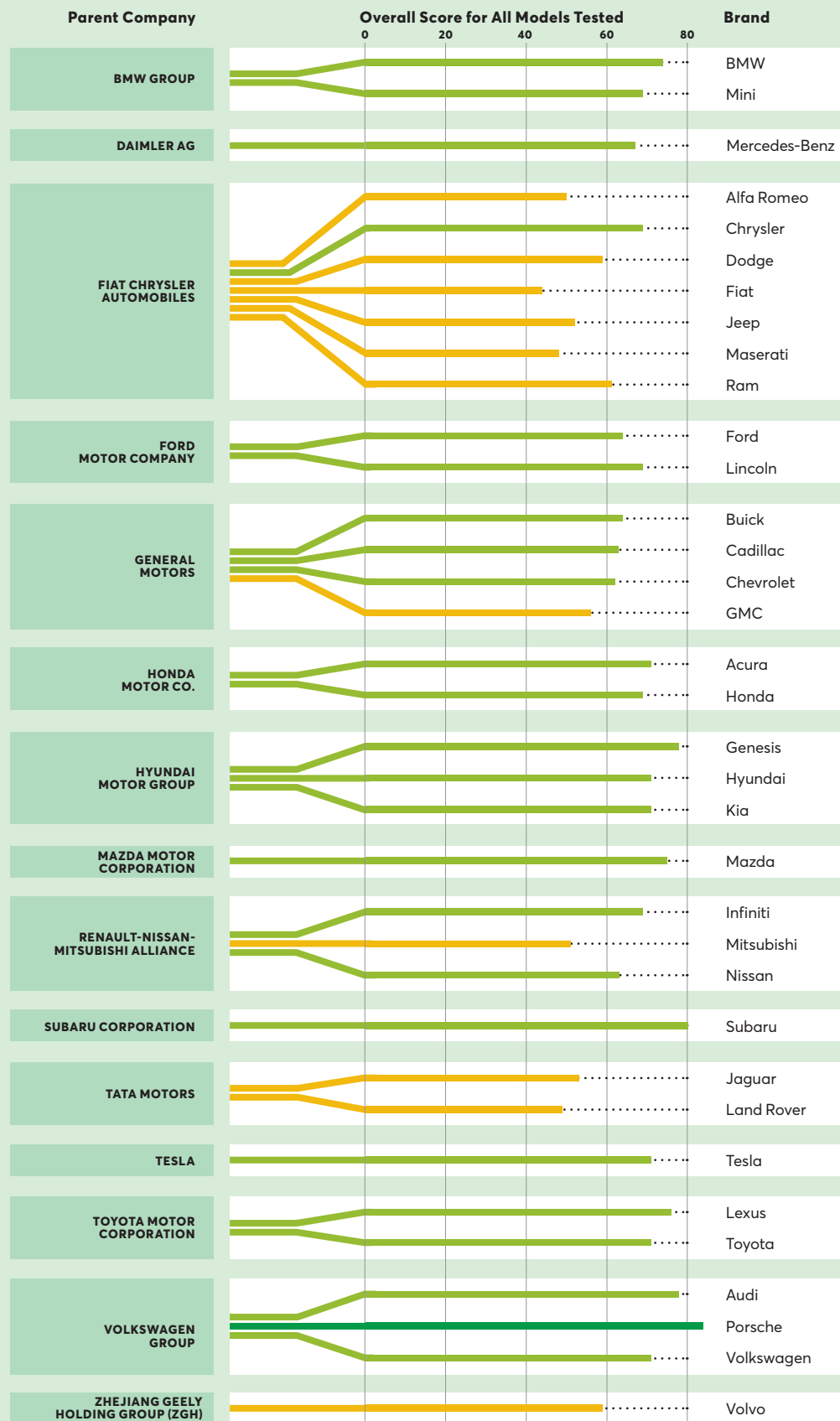
Who Owns Which Car Brands?

THESE DAYS IT can feel like you need a scorecard to keep track of who owns which automobile brands. To help clear up some of the confusion, we created a clear road map for you.

At right, you'll see major parent companies and the car brands they sell in the U.S., along with our exclusive brand Overall Scores, which are based on CR's vehicle testing as well as reliability and owner satisfaction surveys on more than 640,000 cars. In order to receive a rating, a brand must have at least two current models that have been tested by CR.

Not included here: retired brands, such as Scion and Saturn, and small-volume or exotic brands, such as Aston Martin and Ferrari, that don't sell that many cars in the U.S.

An expanded list is available at CR.org/carbrands0119.



PHOTOS: JOHN WALSH/CONSUMER REPORTS (CHAMPAGNE, POT STICKERS, CARROTS, POPCORN); JAMES WORRELL (CHEESE); TOP RIGHT: GETTY IMAGES

WHAT 100 CALORIES LOOKS LIKE

New Year Noshes

Whether you're going to a party or staying on the couch, it's easy to munch mindlessly while waiting for the ball to drop. "If you're going to splurge on a little champagne, it's a smart idea to nibble on healthier fare," says Amy Keating, R.D., a CR registered dietitian.



5 oz.

Perrier-Jouët Grand
Brut Champagne



2 pieces

Whole Foods
Vegetable Potstickers



2 3/4 cups

Angie's Boomchickapop
Sea Salt Popcorn (whole grain)



23 pieces

Baby Carrots



1 oz.

Gorgonzola

How to Clean Practically Anything™

The Dog Bed



Removing pet hair from your home can be a hairy chore—but resist the temptation to throw your dog's bed straight into the washer, advises Richard Handel, who oversees the testing of washers and dryers at CR. Wet pet hair clumps can stick to the washer drum, or clog the drain pump or your home's waste system piping.

HAIR REMOVAL

A vacuum, lint brush, or sticky tape should work well to remove extra fur from your pet's bed before loading it into the washer.

But Handel knows another cost-effective way: "Don a pair of dishwashing gloves, then lightly dampen them with plain water," he says. Wipe your gloved hands across the fabric to pick up hairs.

BED WASHING

Check the label to see whether you can load the entire bed in the washer or just the cover. Use the heavy-soil setting with an extra rinse cycle to loosen stubborn hairs. Hot water helps kill any insects and eggs that may be on the bed.

BED DRYING

Use your dryer, if the bed will fit. A dryer sheet helps reduce static and remove remaining hair. Check the dryer's lint filter midway through the cycle because a full filter can block vent airflow. If you air-dry, put it in a well-ventilated area to prevent mildew and mold.

FINISHING TOUCHES

To remove pet hairs from your washer, wipe a damp paper towel around the drum. Or allow the washer drum to air-dry, then use the brush attachment of your vacuum.

CR Money-Saver HOTEL DISCOUNTS

Planning a New Year's trip? You may have a tough time finding hotel discounts. Two companies, **Expedia** and **Booking Holdings** (formerly Priceline), currently control 95 percent of third-party online hotel booking sites. Consumers' Checkbook recently collected more than 3,500 hotel rates from 18 travel and hotel websites, and found that several sites offered **the exact same rates more than 90 percent of the time**. Many only looked like deals by displaying a crossed-out price next to a much lower "special" offer, even though the "original" crossed-out price was not reflective of prevailing rates. Some sites also issue warnings like "Only 2 rooms left!" or "19 other travelers are looking at this deal!" to create a sense of urgency. But there's no rush. In fact, Consumers' Checkbook found that these deals were still available later on, and in most scenarios, prices actually go down the longer you wait.

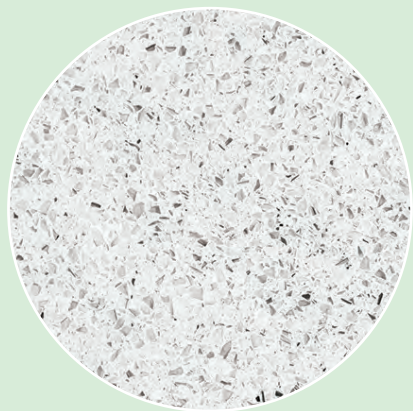
Face-Off

Countertops

STUMPED BY WHICH stone is best for your kitchen? Both quartz (an engineered stone) and natural granite cost about the same per square foot (\$20 to \$60) and perform equally well in many of CR's extensive tests, including cutting, abrasion, and heat resistance. But our experts say that this rocky debate comes down to two main things: stain resistance and aesthetics. "The results of our staining test are heavily weighted in our countertop ratings," says Chris Regan, the project leader on CR's countertop testing—and even though both stones are "very good" at resisting stains, "quartz fared a bit better against tough

ones, such as beet juice and food coloring, putting it just a few points ahead," he says. And you need to periodically seal granite to maintain its stain resistance (which quartz doesn't need).

Because it's manufactured, quartz has a more uniform look than granite's patterned slabs. That makes quartz more predictable for installers to work with, but some homeowners prefer the unique and natural signature of granite. Still, remember that neither stone is indestructible. "If you're not careful—say, you hit the edge too hard by dropping a heavy pot on it—either material can chip," Regan says.



Quartz
(engineered
stone)

84



Granite

81

⬆	Stains	⬆
⬆	Cutting	⬆
⬆	Heat	⬆
⬆	Abrasion	⬆
⬇	Impact	⬇

Curious about other countertop materials?
Check out our countertop ratings at [CR.org/countertops0119](https://www.consumerreports.org/countertops0119).



In our labs, countertop materials undergo attacks from steak knives, scalding hot saucepans, and even sandpaper to see which materials are toughest. First, our testers attach two sharpened steak knives to a specially made slicing rig that hits the countertop at 25 slices a cycle. Then the slabs must bear a weighted 400° F saucepan full of heated shortening—without showing burn marks or surface distortions. In our abrasion test, countertops must face 25 back-and-forth strokes of 100-grit sandpaper. To judge stain resistance, we pipe half-inch splotches of offenders—such as hot vegetable oil, hot coffee, and grape juice—onto each surface and record any effects after 20 hours. In our impact test, we also drop blunt and pointed weights on them.



CR's Chris
Regan

January Is THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...



Ellipticals

Stores offer deep discounts on these and other fitness equipment. Turn to page 45 for our ratings.



Bedding

Keep an eye out for good prices on sheets and pillows during "white sales" this month.



Humidifiers

Used mainly in colder weather, you may start to see discounts on humidifiers toward the end of the month.

For more info, go to
[CR.org/buy0119](https://www.consumerreports.org/buy0119).



RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT CR.ORG/MORE.



FORD AUTOMOBILES

Ford is recalling about 1.3 million 2012 to 2018 Focus vehicles equipped with 2.0-liter GDI and 2.0-liter GTDI engines due to a malfunctioning canister purge valve that could result in the car stalling while driving and then the inability to restart the vehicle.

What to do: Contact your local Ford dealer, who will reprogram the powertrain control module and inspect and replace relevant parts as necessary. Until the work is complete, you should maintain at least a half-tank of fuel in your gas tank at all times. Call Ford at 800-392-3673 or go to corporate.ford.com for details.



FLUSHMATE TOILET SYSTEMS

Flushmate is recalling about 1.4 million Flushmate II 501-B pressure-assisted flushing systems (installed inside of toilet tanks) because they can burst and release stored pressure. The pressure can lift the tank lid and shatter the tank. The systems were sold at stores nationwide and online from September 1996 through December 2015 for about \$108.

What to do: Stop using the system, turn off the water supply to the unit, and flush the toilet to release internal pressure. For recalled model numbers and to

get a free installed replacement unit, go to flushmate.com or call 844-621-7538.



SOLAR-POWERED LIGHTING

Cooper Lighting is recalling about 350,000 All-Pro and Defiant solar-powered outdoor LED light fixtures because the batteries can overheat and cause the housing to melt, posing a fire hazard. The fixtures were sold at Home Depot, Lowe's, and other stores from September 2015 through July 2018 for about \$70 to \$100.

What to do: Stop using the light and call Cooper Lighting at 866-461-7819 or go to cooperlighting.com for more details on how to get a free replacement battery pack.



HAMMER DRILLS

Black+Decker is recalling about 641,000 Black+Decker, Bostitch, and Porter-Cable hammer drills and drill drivers because the side handle sold with them can slip or break, leading to loss of control and posing an injury hazard. The tools were sold at stores nationwide and online from January 2010 through July 2018 for \$50 to \$100.

What to do: Stop using the drill and call 888-284-3070 or go to

each brand website for specific model numbers. You will receive a free replacement side handle.



WIRELESS SPEAKERS

Brookstone is recalling about 164,000 wireless speakers because the lithium-ion batteries inside can overheat and catch fire. The speakers were sold at stores nationwide and online from December 2013 through August 2018 for about \$200.

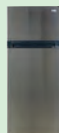
What to do: Stop using the speakers and throw away the lithium-ion battery pack following your trash regulations. Because Brookstone has filed for bankruptcy, a full refund may not be possible and no replacements will be issued. For more information, call 866-576-7337 or go to omnimgt.com/brookstonerecallfaq.



YAMAHA GOLF CARS

Yamaha is recalling about 145,000 golf cars, personal transportation, and specialty vehicles because the accelerator pedal return spring can break, posing a crash hazard. The vehicles were sold at Yamaha dealers from June 2015 through August 2018 for \$5,500 to \$12,300.

What to do: Stop using the vehicle and contact a Yamaha golf car dealer for a free repair. Call Yamaha at 866-747-4027 or go to yamahagolfcar.com for more details.



TOP-FREEZER FRIDGES

Haier is recalling about 137,000 top-freezer refrigerators because an electrical component can

short-circuit and pose a fire hazard. The fridges were sold at Lowe's and other stores nationwide from September 2014 through September 2018 for \$400 to \$500.

What to do: Unplug the fridge and call Haier at 888-364-2989 or go to haierappliances.com for specific models included in the recall, and to schedule a free repair or to get a refund in the form of a \$150 rebate toward the purchase of a qualified new Haier fridge.



ANESTHETIC CREAMS AND SPRAYS

UberScientific is recalling about 76,000 Uber Numb topical anesthetic creams and sprays because the packaging is not child resistant as required by the Poison Prevention Packaging Act. The products contain lidocaine, which poses a risk of poisoning to young children if they put it on their skin or ingest it. The anesthetic was sold online at amazon.com and uberscientific.com from February 2017 through April 2018 for \$20 to \$40.

What to do: Put the product out of reach of children and call UberScientific at 877-289-1368 or go to uberscientific.com to get a free replacement or a full refund.



IKEA LAMPS

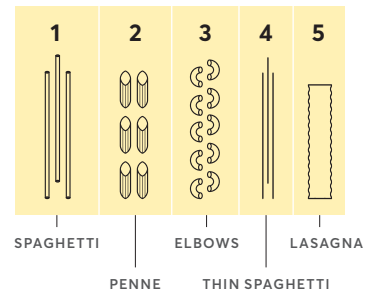
Ikea is recalling about 37,000 Calypso ceiling lamps because the glass shade can detach and fall, posing impact and laceration hazards. The lamps were sold at Ikea stores and website from August 2016 to July 2018 for about \$30.

What to do: For specific model details, call Ikea at 888-966-4532 or go to ikea-usa.com. If you determine that your lamp is included in the recall, stop using it and return it to any Ikea store for a full refund or replacement lamp.

Product Update

The latest ratings from our labs

Top 5 most widely sold pasta types*



Must Love Pasta

In our nutrition labs, we made the delicious discovery that whole-wheat pasta can be just as good as regular and that you can get a flavorful—even healthy—sauce from a jar.

by Sally Wadyka



INSIDE
CR'S LABS

In CR's blind taste tests, we evaluated whole-wheat pastas separately from tomato sauces so as not to mask their individual flavors.

*Source: National Pasta Association custom research definitions based on IRI data.

A PLATE OF PASTA is not only comforting and tasty but also one of the easiest dinners you can make, especially if you're not making the sauce yourself. In fact, 61 percent of consumers say they've used ready-made sauce in the past six months, and Americans spent about \$2.6 billion on them in 2017, according to market research firm Mintel.

If you're one of them and have worried that you're trashing your diet, don't. The jarred-sauce shortcut can be a healthy option. Nutritionally, tomato sauce counts toward the recommended 2 to 3 cups of vegetables you should have per day, and more low-sodium, no-sugar-added sauces are on supermarket shelves than there used to be. "Many jarred sauces aren't that different from what you would make yourself," says Dana Hunnes, Ph.D., R.D., senior clinical dietitian at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles. "Look for ones with simple ingredient lists of things you recognize, such as tomatoes, olive oil, and herbs."

But with dozens of brands and flavors on the market, finding a good one can take a lot of label reading. To help you speed up your shopping trip, CR's team of nutritionists and professional food tasters rated 35 tomato-based sauces—the most widely sold type—for nutrition and taste.

Is Sauce a Superfood?

Almost 70 percent of the sauces in our tests received at least a Very Good score for nutrition. Tomato sauce supplies vitamins A and C, plus lycopene. Tomatoes are one of the few foods high in this antioxidant, which, in addition to giving tomatoes their red color, has been linked to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, prostate cancer, and other diseases. Cooked tomatoes have far more lycopene than raw "because the heat during cooking changes the chemical shape of lycopene, making it much more easily absorbed," says Xiang-Dong Wang,

M.D., Ph.D., director of the Nutrition and Cancer Biology Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston.

And a little fat in your sauce can further enhance lycopene absorption. Most of the sauces we tested had fewer than 5 grams of total fat per serving and no saturated fat. Even among the higher-fat sauces, the source of the fat was almost always olive oil. "The monounsaturated fats that make up the majority of the fat in olive oil help protect against heart disease and stroke when they're part of a healthful diet," says Amy Keating, R.D., a Consumer Reports nutritionist who led the testing.

Sodium and Sugar Shock

Like many packaged foods, jarred sauces can be packed with sodium, and getting too much in your diet can increase your risk of developing high blood pressure and, ultimately, cardiovascular disease. In fact, a high sodium intake is the leading dietary component linked to death from cardiovascular disease (responsible for nearly 10 percent of deaths), according to a 2017 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Half the sauces we tested were salt bombs, containing 400 mg of sodium or more per ½ cup. You should have less than 2,300 mg per day.

Vodka, Pesto, Alfredo & More

Craving something more creamy or complicated than a tomato marinara? It will cost you in calories and fat. A typical tomato sauce has fewer than 100 calories per ½ cup and a healthier nutritional profile than these have.



Bertolli Vodka Sauce

It's tomato-based, but the cream and cheese add sodium and saturated fat.

1/2 CUP*	
CALORIES	140
FAT	10 g
SAT. FAT	5 g
CARBS	10 g
FIBER	1 g
SUGARS	9 g
SODIUM	610 mg



Barilla Classic Basil Pesto

While most of its fat is unsaturated, it's still high in calories and sodium for such a small serving.

1/4 CUP*	
CALORIES	200
FAT	19 g
SAT. FAT	2.5 g
CARBS	5 g
FIBER	1 g
SUGARS	0 g
SODIUM	600 mg



Rao's Homemade Alfredo Sauce

It looks better than the vodka sauce, but that's only because the serving size is smaller.

1/4 CUP*	
CALORIES	100
FAT	9 g
SAT. FAT	6 g
CARBS	2 g
FIBER	0 g
SUGARS	1 g
SODIUM	410 mg



Cucina Antica Tuscany Pumpkin Sauce

It has healthy pumpkin but also cream and butter, which bump up the saturated fat.

1/2 CUP*	
CALORIES	90
FAT	6 g
SAT. FAT	3.5 g
CARBS	9 g
FIBER	2 g
SUGARS	6 g
SODIUM	340 mg

*Recommended serving size.

WANT SOME CHEESE OR MEATBALLS WITH THAT?

Here's how the nutrition profile of a cup of spaghetti and ½ cup of our top-rated sauce (The Silver Palate Low Sodium Marinara) changes depending on which ingredients you add or subtract.

Spaghetti and Sauce

CALORIES	280
FAT	4.5 g
SAT. FAT	0 g
CARBS	49 g
FIBER	4 g
SUGARS	7 g
PROTEIN	9 g
SODIUM	120 mg

Sprinkle With 1 Tbsp. Parmesan

CALORIES	300
FAT	6 g
SAT. FAT	1 g
CARBS	50 g
FIBER	4 g
SUGARS	7 g
PROTEIN	11 g
SODIUM	210 mg

Top With a 2-Ounce Meatball

CALORIES	440
FAT	17 g
SAT. FAT	4.5 g
CARBS	54 g
FIBER	4 g
SUGARS	8 g
PROTEIN	17 g
SODIUM	490 mg

Add 2 Ounces Italian Sausage

CALORIES	480
FAT	20 g
SAT. FAT	5 g
CARBS	52 g
FIBER	4 g
SUGARS	8 g
PROTEIN	20 g
SODIUM	540 mg



REPLACE HALF THE PASTA WITH ZUCCHINI NOODLES

CALORIES: 190; FAT: 4 g; SAT. FAT: 0 g; CARBOHYDRATES: 30 g
FIBER: 4 g; SUGARS: 7 g; PROTEIN: 6 g; SODIUM: 120 mg

Three of the sauces—Mezzetta Napa Valley Homemade Tomato & Sweet Basil, Trader Giotto's (Trader Joe's) Traditional Marinara, and Hunt's Traditional—clocked in at more than 500 mg per serving.

"A manufacturer may hesitate to lower the sodium because they believe that consumers won't accept lower-sodium versions," Keating says. "But in our tests, the two sauces at the top of the ratings were low in sodium." The Silver Palate Low Sodium Marinara

(with 115 mg of sodium per ½ cup) and Victoria Low Sodium Marinara (120 mg) scored an Excellent for nutrition and a Very Good for taste.

"Although some higher-sodium sauces got excellent scores for taste, the differences were so slight that it makes sense to choose lower-sodium," Keating says. "And sprinkled with a little cheese, you probably wouldn't notice any difference in flavor between a lower- and higher-sodium sauce of similar overall quality." If you're

having trouble adjusting to less salt, Keating suggests stirring ¼ teaspoon into an entire jar of low-sodium sauce. That still keeps the sodium count lower than it is in most of the worst offenders. Or try Rao's Homemade Sensitive Marinara. With 290 mg of sodium per serving, it was the lowest-sodium sauce among those that rated an Excellent for taste.

All tomato sauce gets a touch of sweetness from the natural sugars in tomatoes, tomato purée, or tomato

Whole-Wheat Pasta Gets a Taste Makeover

People on low-carb diets may be needlessly taking pasta off the menu. “Our bodies need carbohydrates to function,” says UCLA’s Dana Hunnes, Ph.D., R.D. “Even though traditional pasta is made from refined flour, it’s not devoid of nutrition, and it isn’t digested as quickly as other refined carbohydrates, so it’s less likely to cause blood sugar spikes.” Still, you can make pasta healthier by choosing 100 percent whole-wheat. Whole-wheat pasta’s calories, fat, and protein content are similar to those

of regular. But it packs at least twice as much fiber—a good thing, considering that only about 5 percent of Americans meet their daily fiber needs. Pasta purists argue that the whole-wheat variety tastes grainy and bitter. But when our professional tasters sampled 10 whole-wheat pastas—sans sauce—all of them received Very Good scores for nutrition, and three products earned Very Good taste ratings. To ease the transition, start with a 50-50 mix of regular and whole-wheat, and gradually go all whole-wheat.

	Product	Taste Rating	Nutrition Information (Per 2-Ounce Serving)							Pricing		Flavor & Texture Description
			Calories	Total fat (g)*	Carbs (g)*	Fiber (g)	Protein (g)	Sodium (mg)	Package size (oz.)	Price per package	Cost per serving	
Recommended												
✓	Barilla Whole Grain Penne	⬆️	180	1.5	39	7	8	0	16	\$1.25	\$0.16	Thin penne. Mild whole-grain flavor with sweet and nutty notes. Chewy and springy texture, close to regular pasta.
✓	De Cecco 100% Whole Wheat Penne Rigate	⬆️	190	1.5	39	4	8	0	13.25	\$2.00	\$0.29	Mild, slightly nutty whole-grain flavor. Firm and chewy but a bit crumbly.
✓	Ronzoni Healthy Harvest 100% Whole Grain Penne Rigate	⬆️	180	1.5	39	5	9	0	16	\$1.50	\$0.19	Thin penne with some sweet and nutty whole-grain flavor. A little chewy and springy, similar to regular pasta, with a very slight crumbly texture.
	365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods) Organic Whole Wheat Penne Rigate	⬇️	200	1	42	5	7	0	16	\$1.50	\$0.19	Slightly nutty, sweet whole-grain flavor. Very slight crumbly texture. Somewhat bitter.
	Bionaturae Organic 100% Whole Wheat Penne Rigate	⬇️	180	1.5	35	6	7	0	16	\$3.00	\$0.38	Nutty whole-grain flavor. Slight starchy, crumbly texture. A little bitter.
	DeLallo Biodynamic Organic Whole Wheat Penne Rigate	⬇️	200	1.5	40	6	6	0	16	\$3.50	\$0.44	A hint of sweet whole-grain flavor. Slight starchy, crumbly texture. A touch bitter.
	Garofalo 100% Organic Penne Ziti Rigate	⬇️	200	1	41	4	7	20	16	\$2.50	\$0.31	Mild whole-grain flavor with slight brown-spice notes. Starchy and a little crumbly. Somewhat bitter.
	Rao's Homemade Whole Wheat Penne Rigate	⬇️	200	2	40	5	8	0	17.6	\$4.50	\$0.50	Nutty whole-grain flavor. Firm and crumbly texture. Slightly bitter.
	Trader Giotto's (Trader Joe's) Organic Whole Wheat Penne Rigate	⬇️	190	1.5	41	5	7	0	16	\$1.50	\$0.19	A bit sweet and nutty flavor with brown-spice notes. Slight starchy, crumbly texture. Somewhat bitter.
	Hodgson Mill Whole Wheat Penne	⬇️	210	1.5	41	5	8	0	12	\$2.30	\$0.38	Nutty whole-grain flavor. Moderately crumbly, with slightly grainy texture. Slightly bitter.

*All the pastas have 0 grams saturated fat and 1 to 2 grams sugars.

paste. Certain products have added sweeteners, though, such as sugar, cane sugar, and high-fructose corn syrup. “Keeping added sugars to a minimum in your diet is important for weight control and reducing your risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes,” Keating says. Don’t worry that you’ll be sacrificing flavor if you skip sauces with added sugars. Just two of the 18 sauces that received at least a Very Good taste rating in our tests contained added sugars.


Simplicity Wins


With the exception of added sugars and sodium, the majority of the tested sauces had clean ingredients lists, meaning few of them contained preservatives or added flavors. Still, those at the top of the ratings were more likely to be made with just a few whole-food ingredients, such as tomatoes (whole peeled, rather than diced or puréed), olive oil, fresh onion, garlic, and basil. The lower-scoring sauces were typically made with tomato paste and

dehydrated garlic, onions, and spices.

However, better-quality ingredients will cost you. “While three of the top 10 scoring sauces cost less than \$1 per serving, in general the lower-priced sauces fell to the bottom of the ratings,” Keating says. “But pasta sauce is a staple that regularly goes on sale at the supermarket, with significant savings.” For example, our shoppers paid \$9 for a 24-ounce jar of Rao’s Homemade Marinara, but we’ve seen it on sale for as little as \$5.

Ratings ➤ **The Bosses of Sauces** Tomato sauces can be healthy for you, and we found that you don't need a lot of sodium in your sauce for it to be tasty, too.

	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information (Per ½ Cup)								Price	Flavor & Texture Description
Recommended			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Calories	Total fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Average price per package/serving	
✓	The Silver Palate Low Sodium Marinara	81	↑	↑	70	3.5	0	2	7	2	5	115	\$5.00/\$0.83	Lightly cooked sauce. Big tomato and garlic flavors, with notes of onion, fresh basil, and olive oil.
✓	Victoria Low Sodium Marinara	81	↑	↑	70	4	0	2	6	1	4	120	\$6.80/\$1.13	Lightly cooked sauce. Mildly seasoned with fresh basil, olive oil, onion, and a hint of garlic. Less salty than most.
✓	Organico Bello Organic Marinara	75	↑	↑	45	1	0	1	7	2	5	230	\$6.70/\$1.12	Lightly cooked sauce with slight fresh basil, olive oil, and garlic flavors. Slightly spicy heat from white and black pepper.
✓	Victoria Marinara	75	↑	↑	70	4	0	2	6	1	4	420	\$6.80/\$1.13	Fresh tasting. Lightly seasoned with fresh basil, olive oil, and garlic. Slight black pepper heat.
✓	Victoria White Linen Marinara	75	↑	↑	70	4	0	2	6	1	4	420	\$9.00*/\$0.90	Fresh-tasting. Has flavors of fresh basil, onion, garlic, and lots of olive oil.
✓	Cucina Antica Garlic Marinara	74	↑	↑	40	1.5	0	1	5	1	3	210	\$7.00/\$1.17	Lightly cooked sauce with fresh garlic flavor. Notes of olive oil and basil. Black pepper adds heat.
✓	Classico Riserva Marinara	74	↑	↑	80	4	0.5	2	8	2	5	420	\$4.40/\$0.88	Chunky, garlicky sauce with olive oil, some fresh onion, garlic, basil, and black pepper.
✓	Michael's of Brooklyn Fresh Tomato & Basil	74	↑	↑	45	2	0	1	6	2	4	320	\$8.90/\$1.27	Fresh-tasting, chunky sauce with olive oil, garlic, and big fresh basil and slight heat.
✓	Rao's Homemade Marinara	73	↑	↑	90	8	1	1	4	0	3	380	\$9.00/\$1.80	Fresh-tasting, lightly cooked sauce with richness from the olive oil. Fresh garlic, basil, and slight onion flavors.
✓	Rao's Sensitive Marinara	72	↑	↑	120	11	1.5	1	3	0	3	290	\$9.00/\$1.80	Fresh-tasting, lightly cooked sauce with olive oil richness and fresh basil. Carrots and celery provide nice savory note.
✓	Lidia's Marinara	72	↑	↑	50	3	0.5	2	6	2	4	310	\$6.00/\$1.00	Lightly cooked sauce with big fresh-garlic hit, olive oil, fresh basil, and slight red pepper heat.
✓	Hoboken Farms Basil Marinara	71	↑	↑	80	6	1	1	5	0	3	300	\$8.00/\$1.33	Chunky, lightly cooked sauce with big tomato, fresh basil, and garlic. Olive oil adds fullness.
✓	Monte Bene Tomato Basil	71	↑	↑	50	1.5	0	2	8	2	5	240	\$4.50/\$0.75	Fresh-tasting basil, olive oil, onion, and black pepper flavors.
	Lucini Italia Organic Tuscan Marinara	71	↑	!	25	0	0	1	5	2	3	310	\$8.50/\$1.42	Mild-flavored sauce with carrot and tomato pieces, and slight onion and fresh basil.
	Newman's Own For the Common Good Organic Tomato Basil	70	↑	↑	100	8	1	2	8	2	5	390	\$5.50/\$1.10	Thick sauce with lots of fresh basil, some olive oil, onion, and fresh garlic. Basil lovers' sauce.
	La Famiglia DelGrosso Aunt Mary Ann's Sunday Marinara	69	↑	↑	70	4	0.5	1	8	2	5	420	\$8.20/\$1.37	Chunky, thin sauce with fresh basil and garlic, olive oil, slight onion, and heat from black pepper.
	Classico Tomato & Basil	65	↑	!	60	2	0	2	8	2	5	410	\$3.00/\$0.60	Thick, chunky sauce with big basil flavor, dried herbs, slight garlic, and black pepper heat.
	Bertolli Tomato & Basil	64	!	↑	80	2	0	2	13	1	11	350	\$3.00/\$0.60	Chunky sauce with big fresh-tasting basil, olive oil flavor. Slightly sweet. For basil lovers.
	Prego Farmers' Market Classic Marinara	64	!	↑	90	4.5	1	2	10	1	7	430	\$4.00/\$0.80	Big garlic flavor, with slight olive oil, onion, dried basil, and black pepper.
	Mezzetta Napa Valley Homemade Tomato & Sweet Basil	64	!	↑	100	5	0.5	2	11	3	6	510	\$6.50/\$1.08	Thick and chunky sauce with fresh basil, dried oregano, olive oil, and slight onion and garlic.
	Newman's Own Marinara	64	↑	!	70	1	0	3	12	3	8	460	\$3.00/\$0.60	Thick and smooth sauce with some tomato pieces. Somewhat sweet, with lots of dried spice flavor. Mild garlic. Black pepper adds slight heat.

	Product	Overall Score	Rating		Nutrition Information (Per ½ Cup)								Price	Flavor & Texture Description
Recommended			Nutrition score	Sensory score	Calories	Total fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugars (g)	Sodium (mg)	Average price per package/ serving	
	Muir Glen Organic Tomato Basil	63	⬆️	⬆️	80	4.5	0.5	2	8	2	4	310	\$3.00/\$0.50	Thick sauce. Big dried basil and slight dried oregano, onion, and garlic flavors.
	Bertolli Rustic Cut Marinara With Traditional Vegetables	60	⬇️	⬇️	100	6	0.5	2	9	3	5	490	\$3.80/\$0.76	Thick, chunky sauce with large pieces of carrots, celery, onion, and slight basil, fresh garlic, and olive oil flavor.
	365 Everyday Value (Whole Foods) Organic Marinara	60	⬆️	⬆️	50	2	0	2	7	2	4	450	\$2.80/\$0.47	Big garlic-flavored sauce with dried basil and oregano flavors and black pepper heat. Slightly bitter and harsh.
	Classico Family Favorites Traditional	57	⬆️	⬆️	80	2.5	0	2	12	2	9	420	\$3.00/\$0.60	Thick, smooth sauce that's highly cooked and on the sweet side, with dried basil, onion, oregano, and slight garlic flavors.
	Ragù Old World Style Traditional	57	⬇️	⬇️	80	2	0	2	13	2	8	480	\$2.50/\$0.50	Smooth sauce that is slightly sweet, with mild spice/herb flavor, caramelized onions, and olive oil with a touch of cheese.
	Francesco Rinaldi Original Recipe No Salt Added	57	⬆️	⬇️	50	1	0	2	11	3	6	40	\$1.80/\$0.36	Smooth sauce that tastes of tomato paste, with dried spices, slight onion and garlic flavors. Slightly bitter and sour. Less salty than most.
	Ragù Homestyle Thick & Hearty Traditional	56	⬆️	⬆️	100	2.5	0.5	3	16	3	10	430	\$2.50/\$0.50	Thick, tomato-paste-like sauce with slight onion and dehydrated oregano, basil, and garlic flavors. On the sweet side and slightly bitter.
	Trader Giotto's (Trader Joe's) Traditional Marinara	55	⬇️	⬇️	30	0.5	0	1	6	1	3	580	\$1.40/\$0.31	Thin sauce with chunks of tomato, dried basil, oregano, garlic, and onion. On the salty side.
	Trader Giotto's (Trader Joe's) Organic Marinara No Salt Added	54	⬆️	⬇️	60	0	0	2	12	2	6	35	\$2.30/\$0.38	Smooth, highly cooked sauce with dried spices and slight onion and garlic flavors. On the sweet side and slightly bitter. Black pepper adds heat. Less salty than most.
	Barilla Chunky Traditional	54	⬇️	⬇️	60	1	0	2	13	3	7	400	\$2.70/\$0.54	Thick, sweet, highly cooked sauce with dried herb and slight onion and garlic flavors.
	Prego Lower Sodium Traditional	54	⬇️	⬇️	70	1.5	0	2	12	2	9	360	\$2.40/\$0.48	Smooth, thick, highly cooked sauce with dried basil and oregano, and slight onion and garlic flavors. On the sweet side.
Francesco Rinaldi Original Recipe	53	⬇️	⬇️	60	1	0	2	13	2	8	430	\$2.60/\$0.52	Smooth tomato-paste-like sauce. Dried spices and slight onion and black pepper flavor. Sweetness detracts.	
Prego Traditional	50	⬇️	⬇️	70	1.5	0	2	13	2	9	480	\$2.70/\$0.54	Thin, sweet, highly cooked sauce with dried oregano and other spices.	
Hunt's Traditional	44	⬇️	⬇️	60	1	0	1	11	3	5	560	\$1.40/\$0.28	Smooth, tomato-paste-like sauce. Distinct dried spice flavors. On the sour side, with an off-note that detracts.	

HOW WE TEST: The **Overall Score** combines the **Nutrition** score and **Sensory** score (taste and texture). We calculate our nutrition scores using a rating system that includes **Total fat**, **Saturated fat**, **Fiber**,

Sugars, **Sodium**, energy density (nutrients per calorie), and iron. Organic ingredients typically enhance the nutrition score, while added sugars and high levels of sodium lower it. Our trained sensory

panel conducted blind tastings of the sauces, evaluating them for freshness of ingredients, balance of flavors, and degree of processing. The latter ranged from fresh or barely cooked (retains many

aspects of fresh, raw tomatoes) to highly cooked (a sauce that has been reduced through cooking to a thick, semicaramelized state reminiscent of canned tomato paste).



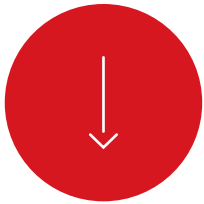
Skin Cancer Screening

The light and magnification of a dermatoscope help doctors inspect moles that look suspicious.

MEDICAL TESTS YOU DO (**AND DON'T**) NEED

MRIs. EKGs. CT scans. Some health screenings may save your life, but others can be a waste of time and money—and pose risks of their own. How to know which tests to get and which ones you can safely skip.

by Teresa Carr



Just before her father died of colon cancer, Lynne Milliron, then age 40, made him a solemn promise: She would get herself screened for the disease. Two months later, Milliron had that colonoscopy—and is profoundly grateful she did. “The doctor removed a large, precancerous polyp,” she says. “That test probably saved my life.”

Milliron, of Lancaster, Pa., benefited from an idea that took hold as early as the mid-1940s. In the town of Oxford, Mass., U.S. Public Health Service workers decided to look for signs of diabetes in people. To do that, they tested the urine and blood glucose of almost three-quarters of the town's 4,983 residents. One goal was to show that early detection of diabetes through mass screening could prevent such life-altering complications as heart disease and nerve damage. Within a few years, diabetes screening was being done across the U.S., and similar tests for other diseases quickly followed.

Today, as we've learned more about how to detect disease early, there are scores of blood tests, ultrasounds, and CT scans to screen for conditions like cancer and low bone density. And an increasing number are now offered direct-to-consumer (DTC), leaving you to pick—and pay for—screenings.

The surge of interest in testing is propelled by “a trend toward people being proactive about taking better care of themselves,” says Alex Krist, M.D., a professor of family medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University and vice chairperson of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), an independent expert panel that makes recommendations to the government and medical organizations about preventive care. Generally, he notes, that's a good thing. “Screening tests that have been shown to help people live longer or better are an enormous boon to public health.”

As with Milliron's colonoscopy, a screening test could spare you the physical, emotional, and financial pain of dealing with a serious illness—and maybe even save your life. As just one example, screenings done at the right age and frequency can cut the risk of colorectal cancer death by as much as half, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS). That blood pressure check you get during a routine physical? If it reveals hypertension and you get it treated, you might reduce your heart attack and stroke risk by more than 20 percent.

The trouble is, too few people are getting the right tests. Overall, Americans get only half the preventive care—including screenings—that they should, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports. Many other people are screened too frequently, at the wrong age, or with tests that aren't very accurate. “We have a problem in this country where we both underscreen and overscreen,” says Susie Dade, M.P.A., deputy director of the nonprofit Washington Health Alliance (WHA).

For example, evidence-based guidelines from the USPSTF call for a one-time osteoporosis screening for most women ages 65 and older, and no screening for younger women at low risk for the bone-thinning disease. A 2015 study, however, found that almost half of low-risk women in their 50s had the screening, while 4 of 10 women between ages 65 and 74 and 6 in 10 women 75 and older had not.

Medical screenings aren't an exact science, and therein lies the rub. All screenings, though some more than others,

may still miss problems. The ACS notes, for example, that mammograms fail to find 1 in 5 breast cancers.

Screenings can also pick up harmless abnormalities or produce false positive results, which incorrectly indicate the presence of a disease. That can lead to unnecessary and invasive tests and surgery, which have their own risks. “The challenge is making sure that people get the right care,” Krist says. “There are a lot of tests that seem like they would help you but aren’t backed by any data and can actually open up a whole set of harms.”

A Cautionary Tale

Ron Braithwaite of Portland, Ore., knows that all too well. Last spring, at age 66, he had a slightly elevated PSA blood test result. A higher than normal PSA can indicate prostate cancer, but most often it signifies a noncancerous condition such as a prostate infection or an enlarged prostate, which he had lived with for a while.

On his urologist’s advice, Braithwaite had an outpatient biopsy; a sample of prostate tissue was removed. He knew there were risks. In one study, 5.6 percent of men who had a similar biopsy experienced a complication, such as infection, bleeding, or urinary problems.

Braithwaite’s results were negative for cancer, as they are for 60 percent of men who have such a biopsy, according to a 2018 analysis by the USPSTF. Soon after, Braithwaite says, he developed a high fever. He was hospitalized for six days for a severe *E. coli* bloodstream infection, during which the life-threatening illness damaged his kidneys and heart.

Braithwaite says his kidneys are functioning again, but he faces a long recovery. His first PSA test was likely his last; the USPSTF doesn’t recommend it for men ages 70 and older because the risks, such as infection, outweigh the potential benefits. “It’s a safe bet I won’t get tested again,” he says.

A Surfeit of Screenings—and Costs

Screening has become a big business—worth tens of billions of dollars—with most of the spending in the mainstream healthcare system. For example, in 2010 consumers and health insurance companies spent an estimated \$7.8 billion on mammograms alone, according to a 2014 analysis published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Little information is available on how many dollars are spent nationwide for screening that’s not beneficial. But in a recent study of health insurance claims from 2.4 million people in Washington state, the Washington Health Alliance found that from July 2015 to June 2016, about 26 percent had at least one test or treatment identified by experts as unnecessary. That cost consumers and their insurers an estimated \$282 million for the year. Most of the overuse was due to 11 services, eight of them screening tests. About \$40 million alone went for annual electrocardiograms

(EKGs) and other heart screenings for people at low risk for cardiovascular disease and without symptoms.

But when screenings are done in accordance with recommendations from major medical organizations, they can reduce harm and healthcare costs, says Dade, by decreasing the need for expensive treatment for advanced disease. Early detection and treatment of cancer, heart disease, and diabetes—which account for 7 of 10 deaths and 75 percent of healthcare spending in the U.S.—could help more people survive and pare costs, according to the CDC.

Outside the mainstream healthcare system, however, the value and cost of screenings gets murkier. And consumers are increasingly opting to circumvent their doctors for DTC screenings from for-profit companies. Consumers desire “a sense of autonomy; they want to take charge of their own health,” says Ana María López, M.D., M.P.H., M.A.C.P., president of the American College of Physicians (ACP). “But more importantly, it’s become hard to access healthcare in many places. People may not have a regular physician they can talk to about their concerns.”

Right now, direct-to-consumer screenings represent a small but rapidly expanding part of the market. Consumers in the U.S. spent \$15 million on DTC lab and genetic tests in 2010, a figure projected to climb to \$350 million by 2020, according to the market research firm Kalorama. And these are almost entirely out-of-pocket dollars: DTC tests usually aren’t covered by insurance. Here, a sampling:

- **Mobile screenings.** Using portable equipment, companies such as AngioScreen, Life Line Screening, and Matrix Medical Network offer screenings like EKGs or carotid artery scans at community centers, churches, hospitals, and workplaces. Life Line, the dominant player, markets bundles of tests through ads, flyers, and email, and says it screens almost 1 million people per year at 16,000 events.
- **Online and walk-in labs.** Companies such as Walk-In Lab, Private MD Labs, and Direct Labs perform blood, urine, and other lab tests of your choice without your doctor’s input. (In some states, a doctor’s authorization is required.) Walk-In Lab invites you to “take charge of your health and your wallet” by ordering anything from a \$28 blood-type test to an \$800 “Anti-Aging panel” online.
- **High-end screening clinics.** Companies such as the Princeton Longevity Center—which bills itself as “the Future of Preventive Medicine”—market comprehensive screening options. The executive health exam from Elitra Health in New York City costs \$4,900 and includes a CT coronary scan and cardiac stress test. Additional services: carotid and abdominal ultrasounds and full-body CT scans.
- **At-home or in-store health tests.** For these genetic tests, such as the \$199 ancestry and health screening from 23andMe, you submit a vial of saliva and receive a report outlining your risks of illnesses like late-onset Alzheimer’s and certain cancers.

Simpler tests, such as cholesterol and blood sugar checks at drugstore clinics and health fairs, may make it easier to track key health markers, but other DTC offerings may lead to overscreening. For example, the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) advises against the carotid artery scans on many mobile screening menus. For healthy people, they can yield misleading results that can lead to riskier follow-up tests. The American College of Preventive Medicine cautions against full-body CT scans because they're costly, expose people to a lot of radiation, and often result in false positives.

"It's often cheaper to buy packages of many tests, which incentivizes people to get more tests than they need," says Erik Wallace, M.D., associate dean of the Colorado Springs branch of the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

Those who represent DTC testing companies say their services are valuable. Ari Cukier, the chief operating officer of Elitra Health, says the firm offers efficiency—multiple screenings in one day—and the chance for consumers to have more tests than they would through their own doctors. "People are not getting the comprehensive testing they want," he says.

He says Elitra's staff discusses overscreening and false positives with clients. "They are capable of weighing risks and possible benefits for them," he notes. "We have had cases of false positives, absolutely. And cases of real positives. That winds up for us proving the benefit of a test."

Life Line Screening did not respond to our requests for comment.

How to Test Wisely

When recommending screenings, your doctor should generally rely on scientific evidence and guidelines from the government and expert organizations. But studies have found that many doctors aren't up-to-date on guidelines, says López of the ACP. For instance, a recent review of 25 studies in the journal *Preventive Medicine* found that up to 45 percent of cervical cancer screenings failed to follow the USPSTF guidelines that were updated in 2012. And López notes that it can be simpler for a harried doctor to agree to a patient's request for a test than to discuss the pros and cons.

But guidelines aren't everything. "Maybe a patient is at higher risk and should be screened sooner," says López. That's why, after talking to her doctor about her family history, Lynne Milliron opted to be screened for colon cancer at a younger age than is typically recommended. In addition to her father, an aunt had died of the disease at age 52.

Choose a doctor who will discuss all of the factors with you: guidelines, your medical and family history, the pros and cons of various screenings, and where the results might lead. You'll be able to make smart decisions if you go into those talks informed about the options. Our guide to 18 common screenings, at right, is a good place to start.

What to Know About These 18 Screenings

WE COMBED THROUGH the research and talked with medical experts from leading academic centers, government agencies, and national organizations such as the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) to assess the evidence on the benefits and risks of these tests. (We skipped a few, such as blood pressure, but it's wise to have this measured every time you see a healthcare provider or more often if you're at higher risk for hypertension.)

Check with your health insurer to make sure that the screenings your doctor advises are covered; many are, notably those recommended by the USPSTF. But also be aware that you might be charged extra fees at some testing facilities.

And note that if the screening finds something suspicious, any subsequent procedure or diagnostic test may result in extra costs for you. So ask about that, too.



The List

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening

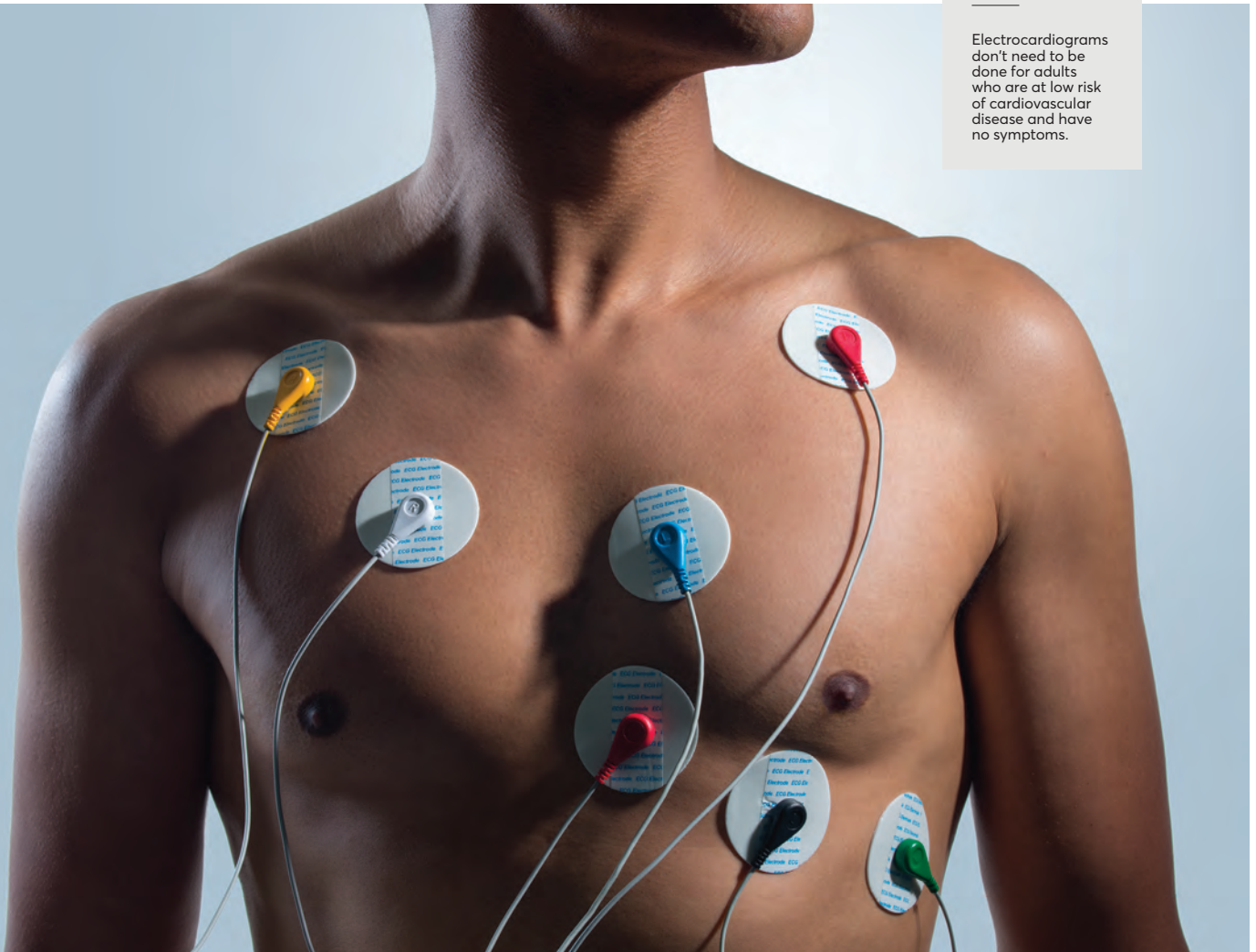
This one-time ultrasound looks for a bulge in the aorta, the body's largest artery.

WHY IT'S DONE: AAAs have the potential to burst, which can cause life-threatening bleeding.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Men 65 to 75 who are current or former smokers. Nonsmoking men and women ages 65 to 75 who have ever smoked might consider it if they have risk factors such as a close family member who had an AAA. The USPSTF recommends against screening nonsmoking women ages 65 to 75, whose risk is very low.

EKGs

Electrocardiograms don't need to be done for adults who are at low risk of cardiovascular disease and have no symptoms.



POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: If a small AAA is found (less than 2 inches in diameter), your doctor will monitor it closely. AAAs that are larger or growing quickly may need surgical repair.

Blood Chemistry Screening

A complete blood count (CBC) measures components of your blood, such as red and white blood cells; a metabolic panel checks levels of substances such as enzymes, electrolytes, proteins, and blood sugar.

WHY IT'S DONE: To make sure

levels are normal. A CBC checks for infection or conditions such as anemia. A metabolic panel checks the functioning of organs such as kidneys and liver.

RECOMMENDED FOR: The USPSTF recommends neither for nor against the routine use of these for healthy people. They may be used for people with blood-clotting conditions; for those with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, kidney, or liver disease; to check for drug side effects; or before major surgery.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: If levels are off, your doctor may suggest changes in the management of a chronic illness or medication,

or further testing to find the cause of unexplained symptoms. Screening without a clear cause—often done during routine physicals—may pick up harmless fluctuations that lead to unneeded follow-up testing.

Bone Density Screening

This low-dose X-ray (called a DEXA scan) measures bone density in your hips and spine.

WHY IT'S DONE: To screen for osteopenia (low bone density) and osteoporosis (weak, brittle bones).

RECOMMENDED FOR: Most women at age 65, but

earlier—around menopause—for women with osteoporosis risk factors such as a family history or smoking, the USPSTF says. For men, consider screening at about 80, or sooner if at higher risk for fractures (due to factors such as smoking and long-term steroid use).

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: For osteopenia, exercise and a diet rich in vitamin D and calcium is generally advised. Rescreen in three to five years. If the scan detects osteoporosis, you may need medication to prevent fractures, and rescreening in two years. If results are normal, repeat the test in 10 years.

Full-Body CT Scans

These expose people to 500 to 1,000 times more radiation than a typical chest X-ray.



Carotid Artery Screening

This is an ultrasound of the artery on each side of your neck.

WHY IT'S DONE: Artery narrowing can lead to a higher stroke risk.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Anyone with symptoms of a stroke or ministroke. People without symptoms can skip this.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: If a scan suggests a blocked carotid artery, you could get follow-up tests such as an MRI to confirm. Treatment can entail medication or surgery to clear out the artery. Severely narrowed carotid arteries are found in only about 1 percent of adults and even then rarely lead to a stroke unless there are other risk factors, such as high blood pressure. For people without symptoms, screening can lead to false positives, and "studies show it actually winds up hurting more people than it helps," says Alex Krist, M.D., vice chairperson of the USPSTF.

Cholesterol Screening

This blood test measures total cholesterol levels, including LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, and triglycerides (artery-clogging fatty acids).

WHY IT'S DONE: Unhealthy levels—particularly total cholesterol above 240 mg/dL and LDL above 190 mg/dL—increase heart disease and stroke risks.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Adults ages 40 to 75 with one or more cardiovascular disease risk factors, such as smoking, high blood pressure, and diabetes, should be tested every five years, and more often if results are outside the healthy range, according to the USPSTF. "It's a good idea for people younger than 40 with heart-disease risk factors or a family history of very high cholesterol to get screened at least once," says Pamela

Douglas, M.D., a professor of research in cardiovascular disease at Duke University. Those older than 75 should talk with a doctor about whether screening makes sense based on their overall health.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: Test results, along with other heart risk factors, may help your doctor determine whether you may benefit from medication.

Colorectal Cancer Screening

Your healthcare provider may prescribe a take-home kit; you send a stool smear to be checked for hidden blood or DNA markers for cancer. But the gold standard is a colonoscopy, an outpatient procedure that typically involves a sedative. A gastroenterologist uses a tube with a small camera attached to examine the inside of your colon. Sigmoidoscopy, which examines only the lower third of the colon, and CT colonoscopy, which uses multiple X-rays to image the colon, are used less often.

WHY IT'S DONE: To detect colon polyps, which can become cancerous.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Generally starting at age 50, although the American Cancer Society (ACS), citing an increase in colorectal cancer in younger people, recently recommended a first screening at age 45. "If you are worried about colorectal cancer or you're at higher risk because you have family members diagnosed in their 40s and 50s, that may tip your decision in favor of screening before 50," says Otis Brawley, M.D., the former chief medical and scientific officer of the ACS. That group's recommendations include screening every 10 years with colonoscopy, every five years with sigmoidoscopy, or every one to three years with stool tests (depending on the type). People ages 76 to 85 should talk with their doctor about whether screening



Hepatitis C Screening

A blood test that checks for this viral infection.

WHY IT'S DONE

Hepatitis C can linger in the body, symptomless, for years. Half of the people with it are unaware. Early detection and treatment prevent complications such as liver damage, cancer, and even death.

RECOMMENDED FOR

Anyone who was born between 1945 and 1965, had a blood transfusion before 1992, or used IV recreational drugs.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

If you test positive, another blood test (hepatitis C virus RNA) is needed to confirm the diagnosis. The virus clears up on its own in about 15 to 25 percent of cases. For those who need it, antiviral medication cures the disease more than 90 percent of the time.

makes sense. At 80, colonoscopy risks such as colon tears and anesthesia complications rise.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: Suspicious findings on any of the less invasive screenings, including sigmoidoscopy, will usually mean you'll be advised to have a colonoscopy.

Electrocardiogram (EKG) and Exercise Stress Tests

With an EKG, electrodes attached to your chest measure your heart's electrical activity. In an exercise stress test, you have an EKG while on a treadmill or stationary bike, or after taking medication to make your heart beat harder and faster.

WHY IT'S DONE: To check for signs of heart disease or arrhythmias.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Those at high risk of heart disease or those with suspected heart disease or symptoms such as chest pain or shortness of breath, as a diagnostic tool. For others, major medical groups don't recommend the tests, which doctors sometimes do during routine physicals.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME: For people with heart disease or symptoms, these tests may help determine the risk of a cardiac event. In low-risk people with no symptoms, they can lead to inaccurate results and unnecessary procedures, such as angiography (a heart X-ray) or angioplasty (treatment to open an artery).

Full-Body CT Scans

These use multiple X-rays to image the body and internal organs.

WHY IT'S DONE: They're typically marketed as a way to detect early signs of cancer, heart disease, and other conditions.

RECOMMENDED FOR: The American Medical Association, among others, advises against these except in rare instances,

and not for healthy people. Those rare cases may include people with cancer that may have spread or, in an emergency, those with a significant injury.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: If the scan finds growths or abnormalities, you might need other tests and treatment. These scans often find abnormalities (an average of three per person) that almost always turn out to be harmless, according to a 2013 analysis by Air Force researchers. One-third of people have unnecessary follow-ups that expose them to additional radiation.

Heart Scans

Coronary CT angiography (CCTA) and coronary artery calcium (CAC) scans use multiple X-rays to image your arteries.

WHY IT'S DONE: Both check for plaque in arteries; a CCTA scan also looks for structural abnormalities.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Those with symptoms such as shortness of breath and chest pain (the CCTA), and those at risk of heart disease (the CAC). The Society of Cardiovascular Computed Tomography advises against both for most other people.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: A CAC scan may help people at risk decide, with their doctor, how aggressively to treat their condition. For those with symptoms, either screening may be used with other tests to diagnose heart disease. For those at low risk, the tests expose them to radiation unnecessarily and could lead to unneeded procedures.

Mammograms and Other Breast Cancer Screenings

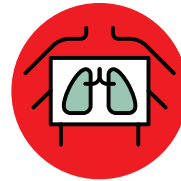
With a mammogram, your breast is compressed between

two plates and an X-ray is taken. An increasing number of facilities use multiple X-rays to create a 3D image (called digital breast tomosynthesis). Also available are magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which uses strong magnets and radio waves to create a detailed image of the breast, and ultrasound imaging.

WHY IT'S DONE: To detect breast cancer early, when it may be more treatable.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Major medical organizations agree that women should be offered the option to have a screening mammogram at age 40. The ACS advises women to start at age 45, the USPSTF recommends age 50, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists says no later than 50. Recommendations on frequency vary from one to two years. Studies suggest that 3D tests may detect slightly more cancers than standard mammograms but haven't shown yet that they save more lives. Ultrasound imaging and an MRI can find cancers that a mammogram can miss but also pick up harmless abnormalities. These tests aren't thought to be beneficial on their own but are useful in conjunction with mammograms for women at high risk.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: These screenings may detect invasive breast cancers before they spread, sparing women more extensive treatment and possibly saving lives. But all can result in false positives, leading to unwarranted follow-up imaging and biopsies. The tests can also miss some cancers, so it's important to talk with your doctor about your health history and risk factors, and what type of screening is best for you. There's insufficient evidence about the effectiveness of screening after age 75.



Lung Cancer Scan

This low-dose CT scan images the lungs.

WHY IT'S DONE

It has been found to detect lung cancer early and prevent death among those at highest risk.

RECOMMENDED FOR

Adults 55 to 80 with a "30 pack-year" history (smoking a pack of cigarettes daily for 30 years or two packs for 15 years) who currently smoke or quit within the past 15 years should be screened yearly, says the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. But fewer than 2 percent of them are tested, the American Society of Clinical Oncology notes.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

If anything suspicious is found, additional screening or a lung biopsy may be necessary. Note: This screening has a very high rate of false positives. According to a 2013 USPSTF analysis, for every lung cancer death the scan prevents, 302 people without the disease test positive.

Mouth and Neck Cancer Screening

Healthcare providers perform a physical and visual examination that may include the face, neck, nose, mouth, and throat as part of a routine exam.

WHY IT'S DONE: To check for cancers and precancers.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Hospitals and clinics routinely host free public screening, but major medical organizations such as the USPSTF, ACS, and the American Dental Association (ADA) don't recommend the screening for healthy people. "There's no clinical study showing that the exam saves lives," says Otis Brawley, M.D. The ADA does advise dentists to be alert for abnormalities during dental exams, especially in people who smoke or drink, because those habits hike cancer risks.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: If anything suspicious is found, a doctor will do a biopsy and remove the lesion if it's cancerous. Most growths found are harmless, so the exam could lead to a false positive and unnecessary biopsies and treatment.

Pap and HPV (Cervical Cancer) Tests

In a Pap test (or Pap smear) and an HPV test, your doctor removes cells from your cervix and examines them.

WHY IT'S DONE: The Pap looks for precancerous changes in cervical cells; the HPV looks for the types of human papillomavirus that cause cell changes. Both may indicate a cervical cancer risk.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Women ages 21 to 29 should have a Pap every three years, according to the USPSTF, ACS, and other organizations. Those 30 to 65 can follow that schedule or lengthen the time to five years if they get an HPV test at the same time. After several normal results, you can stop screening at age 65. Women who've had

Blood Chemistry Screening

These blood tests cost Medicare more than \$1 billion in 2014.



a hysterectomy that included removal of their cervix and have never had cervical cancer or high-grade precancerous lesions don't need screening.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: Your doctor may biopsy abnormal cells and, if necessary, destroy them with a laser or extreme cold, or remove them surgically. These tests may lead to unnecessary treatment for women with false positives, notably when screenings don't follow the recommendations. Testing for women younger than 21 is more likely to pick up harmless and temporary cell changes than potentially harmful ones.

Prostate Cancer (PSA) Test

This blood test checks for elevated levels of the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) protein produced in the prostate.

WHY IT'S DONE: High levels may be caused by prostate cancer.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Those

who've already been diagnosed with prostate cancer, to help doctors monitor them. Men in their 50s and 60s might consider the test after discussing the risks and benefits with their doctor, according to guidelines from the ACS, ACP, and USPSTF. Exactly when differs from organization to organization. The ACS also recommends that men at higher risk—such as African-Americans—consider earlier screening. Men 70 and older shouldn't be screened, according to the USPSTF, because the risks outweigh the potential benefits.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: Radiation or prostate-removal surgery for those who require treatment. The test, however, often flags noncancerous conditions such as an enlarged prostate or nonaggressive cancers. "Men should understand before they have the test that there's a chance they may be diagnosed with a cancer that should just be watched, rather than treated," says Brawley.

Skin Cancer Screening

A healthcare provider inspects your skin visually.

WHY IT'S DONE: For indications of skin cancer. Rates of melanoma, the most deadly skin cancer, have been rising for 30 years.

RECOMMENDED FOR: People at increased risk—men older than 50 and people who have more than 50 moles; those with large, unusual moles, fair skin, or reduced immunity; or those with a personal or strong family history of skin cancer—should be screened, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. If you're among them, talk with a dermatologist about the frequency. Everyone should familiarize themselves with their blemishes, moles, and freckles, says the ACS, and see a dermatologist if they note unusual spots, including those that are changing, itching, or bleeding.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: Your doctor may biopsy a suspicious spot. For diagnosed skin cancer, treatment depends on the type and extent.

Thyroid Cancer Screening

An ultrasound is used to image the butterfly-shaped gland in the front of your neck.

WHY IT'S DONE: To check for possible cancer of the thyroid.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Those who have risk factors such as a close family history of thyroid cancer, or radiation exposure (such as radiation therapy), or if you or your doctor notice a lump in your neck. Others can skip it, according to the USPSTF, ACS, and other organizations.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: A scan can help locate a lump that might be cancerous, or, for high-risk patients, find cancers before they become large enough to be felt. Most of the time, it detects harmless nodules or nonaggressive cancers. A vast majority of thyroid cancers grow very slowly. If the scan suggests

cancer and follow-up tests confirm it, talk with your doctor about whether treatment is really needed or whether watchful waiting is a good option.

Type 2 Diabetes (Blood Sugar) Screening

Two blood tests are commonly used. A fasting glucose test measures blood sugar levels after you've gone without calories for at least 8 hours, and an A1C test determines your average blood sugar levels over the past three months.

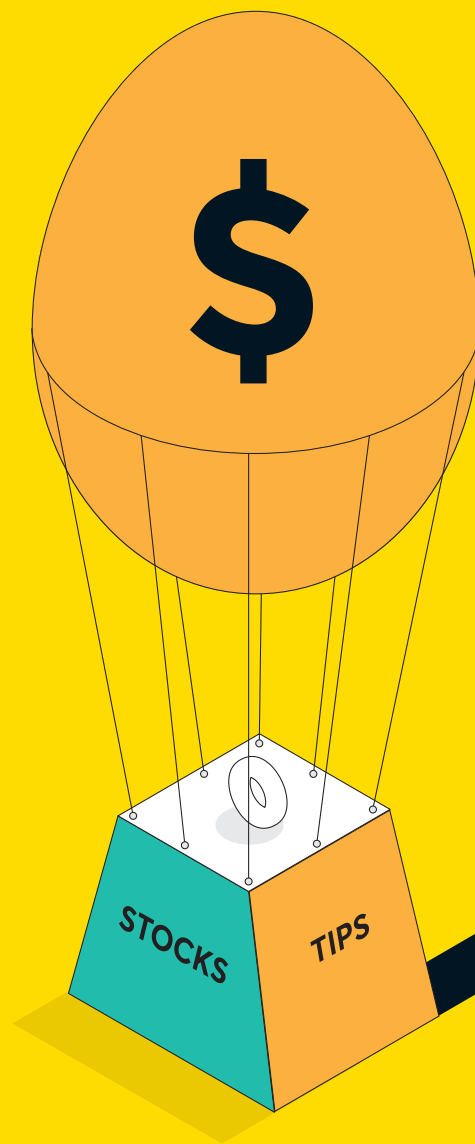
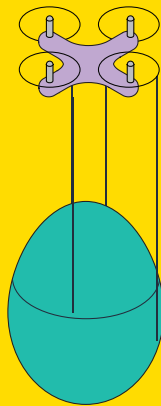
WHY IT'S DONE: High levels can signify diabetes. Slightly elevated levels indicate prediabetes, increasing your risk of the full-blown disease.

RECOMMENDED FOR: People younger than 45 who are overweight and have at least one other risk factor—such as high blood pressure or cholesterol, a family history of diabetes, or a sedentary lifestyle—should be screened, according to the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and other medical organizations. If results are normal, retest every three years; for borderline high (prediabetes), every one to two years. One point of disagreement: For people 45 and older without risk factors, the ADA recommends screening but the USPSTF says it's unnecessary. David Nathan, M.D., a professor of medicine at the Harvard Medical School and director of the Diabetes Center at Massachusetts General Hospital, suggests following the ADA's recommendation. "Screening for diabetes is simple, safe, and inexpensive," he notes.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES: If results suggest diabetes, you'll need to retest to confirm, because many factors, including medication and stress, can affect your blood sugar. If diabetes or prediabetes is diagnosed, you'll need to make dietary and exercise changes. For diabetes, you'll probably need medication, too.

5 SMART MONEY MOVES

Start off the new year with a few simple financial steps that can increase your savings, protect you from fraud, and help you prosper in the months ahead—and for years to come.



1

PROTECT YOUR NEST EGG FROM INFLATION

After barely budging for years, inflation is beginning to heat up. For anyone who's already retired, or nearing retirement, even a 1 or 2 percentage point rise in inflation can pose a risk to financial security.

The best strategy is to design a broadly diversified, low-cost retirement portfolio that can hold up under a wide range of economic conditions, including a surge in inflation. In addition to

getting higher yields on savings (see tip No. 5, "Get Maximum Returns on Your Savings"), here are some other timely moves.

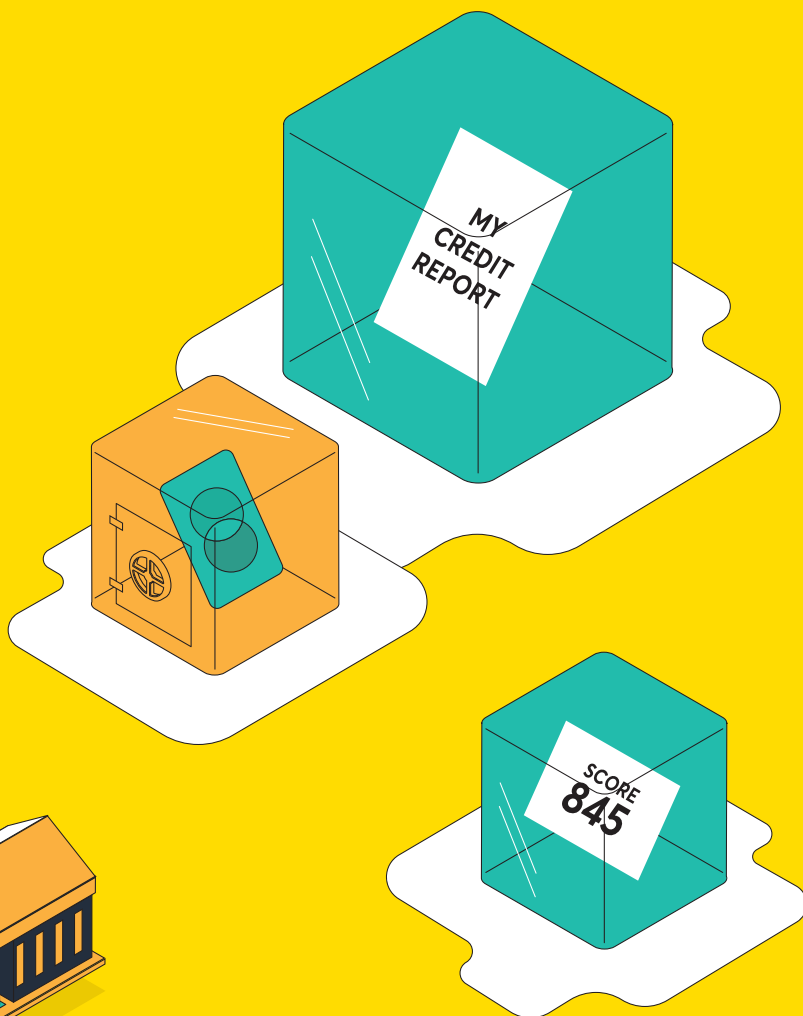
Keep Stocks in Your Asset Mix

It's essential to hold a portion of your portfolio in stocks for growth; you also need bonds to provide an income cushion during market downturns. Holding a balanced portfolio of stocks and bonds is the

best way to navigate changing economic cycles. "A 50-50 stock and bond mix, which gives you growth and income, is a good starting point for retirees," says David Blanchett, head of retirement research at Morningstar Investment Management.

Add Some TIPS Bonds

There's no perfect hedge against rising prices, but Treasury



Inflation-Protected Securities (TIPS) come pretty close.

With TIPS, principal value is adjusted to keep up with inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index. You can invest in TIPS through mutual funds or exchange-traded funds (ETFs). You can also buy individual bonds at treasurydirect.gov.

Fran Kinniry, principal in the investment strategy group at

Vanguard, recommends that people in or near retirement consider investing a portion of their fixed-income stake in a short-term TIPS fund. "With their shorter maturities, these funds are very quick to react to inflation," Kinniry says.

Short-term TIPS funds are also less volatile than their longer-maturity peers when interest rates are moving up and down.

2

FREEZE YOUR CREDIT REPORT

Freezing your credit report is one of the most effective ways to prevent someone from fraudulently opening an account in your name. Since September, federal law has required that the big three credit reporting agencies—Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion—allow consumers to freeze their credit reports free of charge, thanks in part to CR advocacy efforts. So if you've been procrastinating, put freezing your credit reports at the top of your resolution list. Just go each agency's website, search for "security freeze" or "credit freeze," and fill out an electronic form. (You'll have to temporarily lift credit freezes to apply for credit.) Some security experts recommend also freezing your report with Innovis, another credit reporting agency.

Credit reporting agencies also sell credit "locks." Christina Tetreault, a senior staff attorney on the financial services team at Consumers Union, the advocacy division of Consumer Reports, says freezing your report is the safer option. A freeze offers stiffer protections that are guaranteed by law; a credit lock is a contractual agreement.

3

SAFEGUARD AGAINST CELL-PHONE ACCOUNT FRAUD

WHAT IT IS: A rapidly emerging scam in which a crook uses someone's stolen personal data to open up a fraudulent cell-phone account in that person's name. The fraudster can then use the account to access—and empty out—the person's bank account or to open up credit cards in his or her name. Unlike many other types of scams, there are fewer consumer protections for cell-phone fraud. In 2017 the number of victims jumped 63 percent from a year earlier, to about 340,000, according to the consulting firm Javelin.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF:

Freeze Your Credit Report

The best way to protect yourself from cell-phone account fraud is to freeze your credit reports. See tip No. 2, "Freeze Your Credit Report," to learn how.

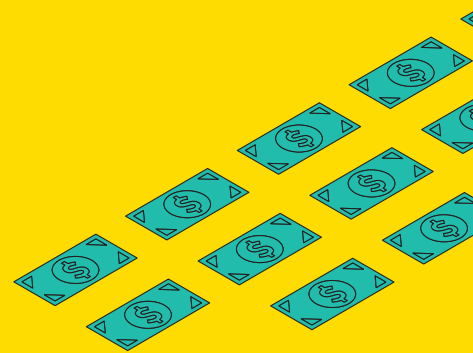
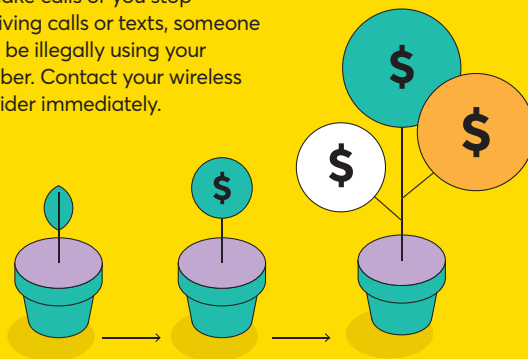
For even greater security, you should also freeze your credit report at the National Consumer Telecom & Utilities Exchange, which most

cell-phone service providers use to determine new customers' credit risk. Go to nctue.com or call 866-349-5355.

Get a PIN for Your Cell-Phone Account

Most cell-phone service providers allow—but do not require—customers to set up a personal identification number. Taking this step can greatly reduce the chances of an unauthorized person accessing your account. Call your cell service provider or check its website for information on how to set up a PIN.

And if you're suddenly unable to make calls or you stop receiving calls or texts, someone may be illegally using your number. Contact your wireless provider immediately.



5

GET MAXIMUM RETURNS ON YOUR SAVINGS

Recent interest rate hikes mean you can now get the highest returns on savings in years. Here are six ways to get the most for your money.

Online Savings Accounts

YIELD: Currently around 1.8 percent or more.

RISK LEVEL: Extremely low for FDIC-insured accounts, which are federally insured up to \$250,000 per holder.

WHERE TO FIND THEM: Compare current rates, minimum

deposits, fees, and features on websites such as Bankrate and DepositAccounts.

REMEMBER: If the bank has offered this account type for several years, the current annual percentage yield is less likely to be a teaser that will later drop.

Money Market Deposit Accounts (MMDAs)

YIELD: Currently as high as 2.25 percent.

RISK LEVEL: Extremely low. Like savings accounts,

they're federally insured.

WHERE TO FIND THEM: You can compare MMDAs on websites such as Bankrate and DepositAccounts.

REMEMBER: MMDAs may offer more rate stability for high balances (for instance, more than \$10,000) than online savings accounts offer.

Money Market Funds

YIELD: Currently about 2.25 percent.

RISK LEVEL: Very low, though they are not federally insured.

RETHINK HOW YOU PAY FOR DOCTOR VISITS



The new year is when many of us start thinking about what we'll have to spend on medical care in the coming months.

Joining a direct primary care (DPC) medical practice will give you around-the-clock access to your doctor and could save you money on primary care.

Also referred to as retainer or concierge medicine, DPC practices typically offer almost unfettered access to one of their primary care physicians, and general services such as prevention screenings and diagnostic tests. Minor urgent care services, such as stitches, are also available. Clients pay a flat fee of usually less than \$100 per month.

DPC services can be cost-effective and convenient for people with chronic health problems that need close monitoring, such as diabetes, high cholesterol, and hypertension. Some practices dispense prescriptions and offer lab tests such as electrocardiograms on site, and will make house calls if you're not feeling well enough to get to the doctor's office.

According to industry estimates, there are more than 900 DPC practices across 48 states and Washington, D.C.

That's up from 273 locations in 39 states in 2015. An estimated 500,000 patients are receiving care from DPC practices.

It's important to understand that DPC is not insurance or a replacement for it and will not cover more extensive care, such as surgery or emergency services. It works best as an add-on to an existing health plan. In fact, DPC practices generally encourage you to pair your membership with an insurance plan—usually a low-premium, high-deductible policy—to cover things such as inpatient hospital care and emergency services.

DPC services are also considered outside the scope of insurance regulation in at least 24 states, meaning their members might not be entitled to all the consumer protections mandated by the Affordable Care Act, including coverage of pre-existing conditions.

But for people who make frequent appointments with their primary care doctor, joining a DPC could cost less than using the coverage provided by a traditional insurance plan. Just be sure you're also covered by a comprehensive plan for more extensive care, should you need it.

WHERE TO FIND THEM: They're offered by mutual fund and investment companies and are easy to set up and use within your brokerage account.

REMEMBER: While they typically require a minimum deposit of \$500, there's no limit to how much or how often you can invest or withdraw after the initial investment.

High-Yield Reward Checking Accounts

YIELD: Currently as much as 5 percent.

RISK LEVEL: Extremely low.

They are federally insured.

WHERE TO FIND THEM: You can find and compare high-yield reward checking accounts on websites such as DepositAccounts.

REMEMBER: Account holders typically must make 12 to 15 debit card transactions and at least one direct deposit per month. You'll get the top rate only up to a certain balance (usually \$10,000); above that amount, the interest rate drops sharply.

Treasury Bills and Notes

YIELD: U.S. treasury bills that mature in one year have been at auction for about 2.5 percent of late; higher rates are available for treasury notes with longer maturities.

RISK LEVEL: Extremely low.

They're backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government.

WHERE TO FIND THEM: Buy them directly at treasurydirect.gov.

REMEMBER: Interest on treasury bills and notes is exempt from state and local tax.

Certificates of Deposit (CDs)

YIELD: One-year CDs are currently offering APYs as high as 2.75 percent.

RISK LEVEL: Extremely low. CDs are federally insured.

WHERE TO FIND THEM: CDs are offered by banks and credit unions. You can research rates and terms at websites such as Bankrate and DepositAccounts.

REMEMBER: With rates rising, you may want to stick to CDs that mature in a year or less to avoid missing out on future rate hikes.

RUN FOR YOU

Only **46% OF WOMEN** (vs. 54% of men) meet the recommended guidelines for aerobic activity: 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week.

Being active **DELAYS COGNITIVE DECLINE** and extends the number of years of independent life.



R LIFE

Even modest exercise delivers major health benefits, no matter your age. Our advice will help you get—and stay—more active. And our treadmill and elliptical ratings will guide you to the best exercise equipment for your budget, needs, and space. **BY JANET LEE**

Exercising consistently can help prevent **HEART DISEASE**, improve sleep, boost mood, increase bone and muscle strength, and enhance overall quality of life.

To make the most of your workout, track your heart rate using a **SMARTWATCH** or **FITNESS TRACKER**, or use a treadmill or elliptical machine that works with a chest-strap heart-rate monitor.

Always use the **TREADMILL SAFETY KEY**. It clips to your clothes and stops the machine if you fall, helping to prevent additional injury.



EVERYONE KNOWS EXERCISE is good for you. But not everyone knows just how good. When you see the health benefits of physical activity in a list, they can seem almost too good to be true.

Exercising consistently can help prevent heart disease and muscle weakness; control and treat chronic conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, and hypertension; increase bone and muscle strength; improve brain function and sleep; and boost mood and enhance your overall quality of life, says Dori E. Rosenberg, Ph.D., an associate investigator with the Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute. And it does all of that without causing the side effects of some of the prescription drugs used to treat those conditions.

While the share of Americans who exercise regularly is climbing, many are still lagging behind. Only about half of adults get the 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (such as brisk walking) or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity (such as jogging) recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). More than a quarter of Americans are almost completely inactive, reporting virtually no exercise at all in a year, according

to the latest survey by the Physical Activity Council. That means millions of Americans are missing out on potential health benefits.

Becoming—and remaining—consistently active can be a challenge, even when you understand all of the benefits. So follow our advice to find easy ways to get moving, whether that means taking walks around the neighborhood, hitting the gym, or investing in home fitness equipment. Before you know it, aerobic exercise will be a regular part of your routine.

Tailor Your Routine to Your Lifestyle

“Some people prefer exercising by themselves at home; others prefer a social environment,” says Lyndon Joseph, Ph.D., an exercise physiologist in the division of geriatrics and clinical gerontology at the National Institute on Aging. “Whatever gets you moving and active is what you should do.”

Exercising at home on a treadmill or an elliptical can make being active easier because it removes many of the barriers people can face. For example, you don’t have to worry about the weather, finding a safe place to walk, hitting traffic on the way to the gym, or

jostling for equipment. Our treadmills and ellipticals ratings on page 45 will help you determine which machine best meets your needs and budget.

Strength training (such as weight lifting) can benefit your bones and your muscles, but aerobic exercise in particular strengthens the heart, Joseph says. And you don’t need to run marathons to see the benefits. In fact, brisk walking can be just as good for you as more vigorous exercise.

“The most recent physical activity guidelines reviewed all the evidence on aerobic physical activity and health, and found that walking can offer many of the same benefits as other types of physical activity,” Rosenberg says. “But you may need to increase the speed to make it a moderate-intensity activity.” (Depending on your fitness level, a moderate-intensity walk will usually be 3 to 4.5 mph, which results in 20- to 13-minute miles.)

Running or jogging can burn calories more quickly than walking



For a CR video showing ways to add variety to your treadmill and elliptical routines so that exercise doesn't become a bore, go to [CR.org/keepmoving](https://www.crediblemagazine.org/keepmoving).

**CAN TECH
MAKE IT
MORE FUN
TO BREAK
A SWEAT?**



Technology is changing the way some Americans exercise. Smartwatches, apps, and even virtual classes and competitions are among the ways people are using it today to accomplish their fitness goals.

“Technology can help engage people in exercise more,” says Dori E. Rosenberg, Ph.D., a clinical health psychologist and an associate investigator with the Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute. For example, a virtual class that lets treadmill users compare

their pace with everyone else may challenge those who are bored by regular treadmill running.

The latest treadmills and ellipticals offer plenty of high-tech options to help motivate people, says Peter Anzalone, senior test project leader for fitness equipment at CR. Exercise equipment has long provided programmed workouts (such as “hills” or intervals), but internet connectivity has expanded the choices considerably.

“There’s a big trend toward providing ever different varieties of workouts and

and can potentially offer more bone-strengthening benefits. But not everyone can tolerate the pounding, especially on a hard surface.

If you're worried about stress on your joints, exercising on an elliptical might be a good way to get an aerobic workout without the impact, especially if you're looking for a higher-intensity activity. (See "How to Choose the Right Machine," on page 44.)

For variety, try swimming, biking, group exercise classes, dancing, hiking, or sports such as tennis.

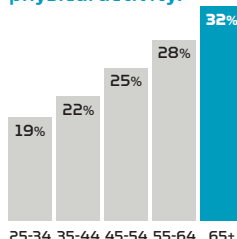
Make Every Minute Count

You can shorten your exercise routine by upping its intensity. You need only a minimum of 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week. Even walking can be vigorous if you pick up the pace, walk uphill, or increase the speed and/or incline if you're using a treadmill.

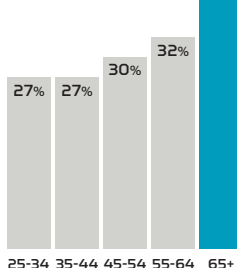
Remember that some activity is better than no activity. Studies have shown that even 20 to 60 minutes of moderate exercise once or twice per week will provide at least some health benefits. And a small study found that even 10 minutes of easy exercise seems to have a positive effect on brain function immediately afterward.

WHO'S ON THE MOVE

Percentage of adults who don't engage in any leisure-time physical activity.



Percentage of adults who are aerobically active at least 5 hours per week, twice the minimum recommended.



Source: CDC.

Build Exercise Into Your Daily Life

Picking a cue that turns exercise into a habit can help you build a routine that you actually stick with. That could mean always jumping on the treadmill after you brush your teeth, or stopping at the gym on your way home from work.

Making a detailed, concrete plan rather than setting an overarching goal can also help you follow through, says Katherine L. Milkman, Ph.D., a professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and co-director of the Behavior Change for Good Initiative. "Block out in your calendar the dates and times you intend to work out this week," she says. One study found that people who joined a gym and went four times per week could develop a habit that stuck with them in as little as six weeks.

So try getting consistent exercise you enjoy. "When you find ways to make exercise fun, you're more likely to do it than when you only focus on how it will be effective," Milkman says. Soon you'll see your health improve, and before long you'll be asking yourself why you didn't start sooner.

being connected through a phone app or the internet so you can track your workout history," Anzalone says. "Physicians can even 'prescribe' exercise and then monitor their patients to see how they're doing."

Some treadmills and ellipticals now offer program options via a monthly subscription, and many let you track your distance, speed, and even heart rate over time using an app.

The ability to join remote classes while at home is one of the more recent innovations. Peloton

popularized this trend with its stationary bike. And with its pricey new treadmill, The Peloton Tread, you can exercise live (or on demand) with an instructor who will take you through walking, running, and even strength-based workouts. (The treadmill comes with hand weights.)

Fitness-tracking options are also becoming more common on exercise machines. Of our recommended treadmills, the NordicTrack Commercial 2450, Xterra TRX4500, and Bowflex BXT216 can connect

to fitness apps or internet-based programs to help you track your progress.

Wearable activity trackers, such as the Fitbit or Apple Watch, track steps, heart rate, calories burned, and other workout stats, and even inexpensive apps that you can download to your smartphone offer basic activity-tracking capabilities.

While simple fitness trackers might encourage increased activity and weight loss, experts caution that just wearing one or downloading a tracking app

to your smartphone isn't a magic bullet.

"On their own, these devices generally aren't enough to change behaviors," says Matthew Buman, Ph.D., an associate professor in the College of Health Solutions at Arizona State University. "You need education and support to really make it work."

Studies have found that having a support network, such as an online group of people with similar goals, can make it easier to stick with healthy lifestyle changes.

Guide to Treadmills and Ellipticals



HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT MACHINE

You can get an equally good cardio workout on treadmills, ellipticals, and alternative motion exercise machines. Here's what to consider.

TREADMILLS

Treadmills, which start at about \$500, allow you to walk, jog, or run, usually at a variety of speeds and inclines. A short, budget treadmill can be a fine space-saving choice, though people with longer strides should opt for a longer deck. Test any model you're thinking of buying to get a sense of the size, cushioning, and console configuration.

ELLIPTICALS

Ellipticals, which start at about \$600, are lower-impact than treadmills and also allow for an upper-body workout. They're usually quieter than treadmills.

ALTERNATIVE MOTION EXERCISE MACHINES

These specialty cardio machines, which we don't currently test, combine aspects of treadmills and ellipticals. Some let you mimic a running motion without the impact on your joints.

WHERE TO PUT IT

Exercise equipment—particularly treadmills—needs plenty of clearance on all sides (see “Treadmill Safety,” at right). A folding treadmill can save space when not in use. But test the folding function before buying because a heavy deck can be difficult to raise.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Some machines come with features like internet or mobile-app connectivity and interactive programs; simpler machines can save you money. Everyone should use heart-rate monitoring to get a sense of his or her level of exertion, says Peter Anzalone, a CR technician, but it doesn't have to be built into the machine.

TIPS FOR BUYING A USED TREADMILL

A used treadmill can be a smart, low-cost option, but only if you buy one that will last. Peter Anzalone, Consumer Reports' senior test project leader for fitness equipment, offers these tips to help you find one for the long run.

1. Don't buy from fitness centers.

Commercial gyms may sell heavy-duty equipment, but it has probably been used up to 24 hours a day for years. Buying a treadmill from someone's home is

a smarter option. Chances are good that the machine hasn't seen as much action.

2. Inspect the belt.

Examine the entire length for fraying, loose seams, or other signs of wear. Any

irregularity could mean that the belt needs to be replaced.

3. Test the motors.

Without standing on the treadmill, run it through the full range of speeds, listening for any whining, straining, or other unusual sounds that could suggest a problem with the main motor. Then stand on the treadmill and put it through the full range of inclines, noting any rough transitions or

clunking as it goes up and down. They can be signs of a weak incline motor or broken gearing, respectively.

4. Review the warranty. Most frames are welded steel and have a lifetime warranty, Anzalone says. But warranties on parts and electronics can range from one to 10 years. The longer the warranty, the more likely that the equipment is built to last.

TREADMILL SAFETY

Between 1997 and 2014, almost 5,000 people ended up in an emergency room with a head injury from a treadmill accident. Here are six tips from CR experts to help you stay safe.

Give it plenty of space.

Leave at least 2 feet of clearance on either side of a treadmill and 6 feet behind it to avoid falling into a wall or being wedged between the machine and a wall or a piece of furniture if you lose your balance.

Always use the safety key.

It clips onto your clothing and stops the belt if you fall to prevent additional injury, such as friction burns.

Straddle the belt when you turn on the treadmill. This will keep you from getting knocked off your feet.

Never step off a moving treadmill. Let the belt come to a complete stop before dismounting.

Keep your head up. You're more likely to lose your balance when you're looking at your feet.


























Maintain the machine.

Lubricate it according to the manufacturer's directions, tighten loose hardware (only using manual tools), and wipe up any sweat—especially on the hand grips and controls—after each use.



CR technician
Peter Anzalone

Ratings > **Home Runs** Find the right machine for your needs, whether you want all the bells and whistles or something compact and simple.

	Brand & Model		Overall Score	Price	Test Results				
Recommended Rank					Ergonomics	Construction	Ease of use	Exercise range	User safety
RECOMMENDED NONFOLDING TREADMILLS									
	1	Sole TT8	<div>84</div>	\$2,500					
	2	Precor TRM 243	<div>84</div>	\$3,200					
	3	SportsArt T615	<div>81</div>	\$3,200					
	4	True M30	<div>81</div>	\$1,700					
	5	Landice L7 Pro Trainer	<div>81</div>	\$3,600					
RECOMMENDED FOLDING TREADMILLS									
	1	NordicTrack Commercial 2450	<div>84</div>	\$1,800					
	2	Bowflex BXT216	<div>84</div>	\$1,800					
	3	NordicTrack C1650	<div>83</div>	\$1,350					
	4	Spirit Fitness XT485	<div>82</div>	\$2,000					
	5	NordicTrack C990	<div>77</div>	\$1,050					
	6	Horizon Elite T9-02	<div>77</div>	\$2,000					
	7	3G Cardio 80i	<div>77</div>	\$1,800					
RECOMMENDED BUDGET FOLDING TREADMILLS									
	1	Nautilus T616	<div>84</div>	\$1,000					
	2	Sole F63	<div>81</div>	\$1,000					
	3	Xterra TRX4500	<div>77</div>	\$1,000					
	4	LifeSpan TR2000e	<div>76</div>	\$1,000					
	5	LifeSpan TR1200i	<div>73</div>	\$900					
RECOMMENDED ELLIPTICALS									
	1	Diamondback 1260 Ef	<div>80</div>	\$2,300					
	2	Sole E95S	<div>75</div>	\$2,200					
	3	Precor EFX 225	<div>74</div>	\$3,000					
	4	LifeFitness E3 Track+	<div>73</div>	\$3,400					
	5	Schwinn 470	<div>73</div>	\$800					
	6	Bodyguard E-40	<div>73</div>	\$2,100					
	7	AFG 4.1AE	<div>72</div>	\$1,200					
	8	Landice E7 Pro Sport	<div>69</div>	\$3,600					
	9	Octane Fitness Q35X	<div>68</div>	\$2,200					
	All-Access or Digital members can find the latest ratings at CR.org/treadmills and CR.org/ellipticals .								

HOW WE TEST: **Ergonomics** is how well the machine accommodates the needs of different users.

Construction considers design

choices and our perception of quality based on noise and feel.

Ease of use indicates how easy it is to read the display and use the

programs and controls. **Exercise range** is how well each machine provides an effective workout for users of various fitness levels.

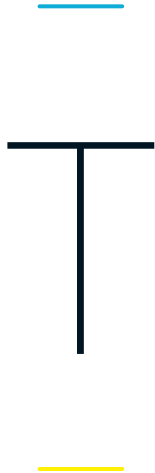
User safety assesses safety features such as stability, and for treadmills, emergency stop buttons and safety-key operation.



HOW TO PAY LESS FOR YOUR MEDS

You might overpay by hundreds of dollars for your prescription drugs, depending on the **MEDICARE PART D** plan you choose, a Consumer Reports special investigation has found. Follow our expert advice to protect your pocketbook—and your health.

by Lisa L. Gill



TWO PEOPLE WALK into the same Walgreens in Denver to fill their prescriptions, both armed with their Medicare Part D insurance cards. One pays \$27, but the other shells out \$153—for the exact same drugs.

That might seem unlikely, but it happens all too often, a Consumer Reports analysis suggests.

We investigated what Medicare beneficiaries might pay in 2019 for their prescription drugs in six U.S. cities by comparing three Part D plans identified by Medicare's Plan Finder tool as having the least expensive retail drug costs.

In each city we looked at two pharmacies and checked prices for generic versions of five common drugs: the cholesterol drug Lipitor, the painkiller Celebrex, the antidepressant Cymbalta, the diabetes drug Actos, and the blood thinner Plavix.

We found that what you pay for your drugs can vary by hundreds of dollars. Worse, even small mistakes during the sign-up process—which runs until Dec. 7—can cost you big-time.

Take the Denver example above. Someone filling prescriptions for the five drugs we looked at, plus paying a \$16 monthly premium, could pay as little as \$524 for a full year. But another person—at the same store with the same prescriptions but a

different plan—would pay \$1,686.

We found sizable price variations in each of the cities we looked at: Dallas; Denver; Des Moines, Iowa; Pittsburgh; Raleigh, N.C.; and Seattle.

How can that be?

“Plans can basically charge consumers any price they want,” says Stephen Buck, an industry consultant, a former executive of drug wholesaler McKesson, and a cofounder of GoodRx, a website that allows consumers to download drug coupons to use in local pharmacies. Plans do this, Buck says, by deciding how well, if at all, they want to cover a drug.

And earlier this year the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services gave insurers more flexibility when designing plans as a way to give consumers more options, says CMS spokesperson Ray Thorn.

But, Buck says, the various plan options wind up being so complex that they are hard to compare, especially if you take multiple medications—and even if you use Medicare's tool.

Thorn acknowledges as much. “There still is overwhelming confusion among Medicare beneficiaries about their coverage choices,” he says, adding that the agency is trying to make its digital tools easier to use.

Difficulty with the sign-up process may tempt you to not enter all the details in the requested fields. Or, if you already have a plan, to not bother checking to see whether last year's plan is still the best for you.

Both are mistakes, says Stephen W. Schondelmeyer, R.Ph., professor of pharmaceutical economics at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. He says to review plans every year. “What's the best deal for you might be different this year than it was last year,” he says.

Complicated though it may be, using the Medicare.gov tool is still the only way for you—or someone helping you—to compare Medicare plans, says Frederic Riccardi, vice president

of client services for the nonprofit Medicare Rights Center, which helps people sign up for plans.

Our analysis also found that in some cases you may be better off not using your insurance and paying cash instead. CR member Fred Hayes of Homer City, Pa., for example, told us that he used a drugstore discount card to get 30 tablets of the muscle relaxant cyclobenzaprine for \$13. His Part D plan would have charged him \$29.

“We pay entirely too much for medications in this country,” says Hayes, sharing a concern echoed by millions of Americans.

Signing Up for Drug Coverage

Here's our guide to what to consider as you move through the Medicare Part D sign-up process.

Note that while our analysis focused on regular Medicare Part D plans, the same advice applies if you enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan, a form of Medicare that provides coverage through a private plan, usually an HMO or a PPO. (To see which form of Medicare is better for you, go to [CR.org/medicare/signup2019](https://www.consumerreports.org/medicare/signup2019).)

Enter all your drugs. That includes all your prescriptions, plus the dosages and the amounts you need every 30 or 90 days. Skipping just one can dramatically change which plan is best.

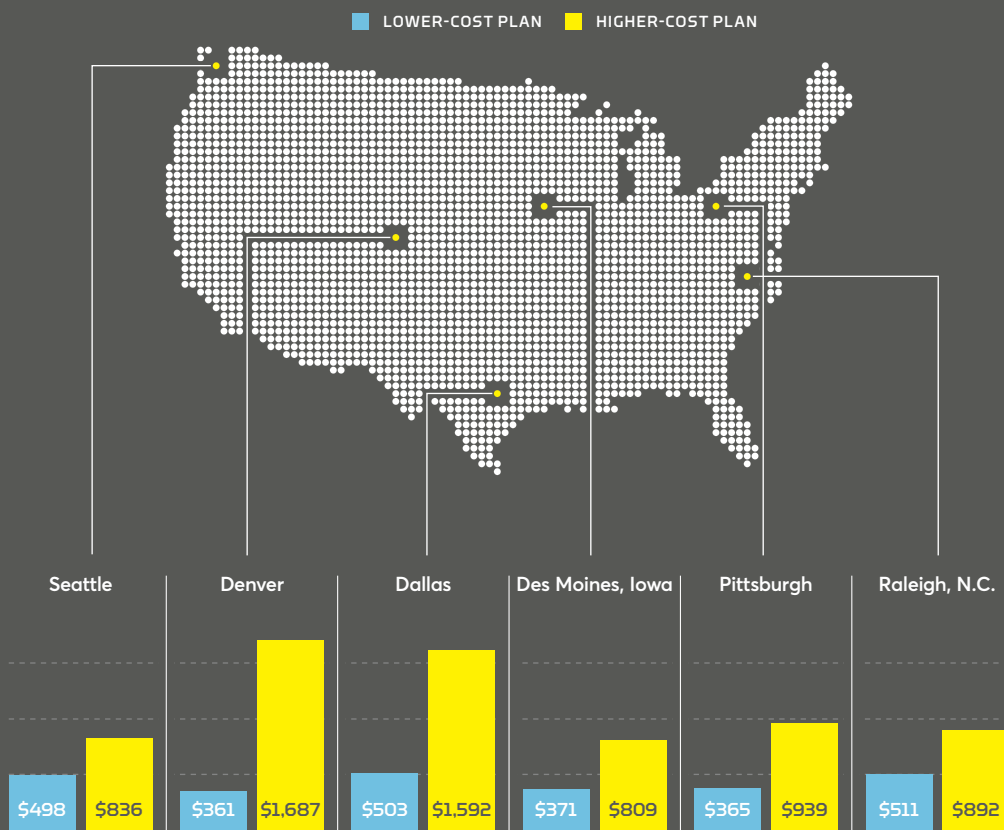
In Des Moines, when we put in four of our five drugs, the annual drug cost came to \$407 through a plan called Cigna-HealthSpring Rx Secure-Essential. When a fifth drug was added, the cost jumped to \$2,948—seven times as much—with the same plan.

The problem? The drug we left off, generic Celebrex (celecoxib), is not on the formulary of covered drugs for that plan, so the plan would charge a person \$212 each month for the medication.

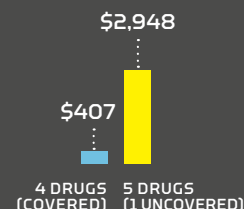
Look beyond your nearest pharmacy. Once you submit your drug list, you'll be asked to select up to two pharmacies

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A (PART D) PLAN MAKES

How much you pay for prescription drugs—including deductibles, premiums, and copays—can vary dramatically depending on which Medicare plan you choose. Below, we show differences in annual costs among plans we found on the Medicare.gov website in six U.S. cities, for someone taking generic versions of five common drugs: the cholesterol drug Lipitor (atorvastatin), the antidepressant Cymbalta (duloxetine), the blood thinner Plavix (clopidogrel), the diabetes drug Actos (pioglitazone), and the pain drug Celebrex (celecoxib).

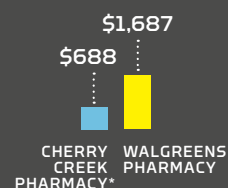


Don't neglect to put in all your drugs.



Annual drug cost in Des Moines, Iowa, with the same plan and at the same pharmacy, but omitting one drug that is not covered by the plan.

Don't consider just the closest pharmacy.



Annual drug cost in Denver, with the same plan and prescriptions but at different pharmacies.

*INDEPENDENT.

to compare what the plans charge at each. The tendency, Buck says, is to select those that are most convenient. But beware: Prices can differ dramatically among drugstores, even within the same ZIP code.

In Denver, the total cost of our five drugs at independent Cherry Creek Pharmacy is \$688 through a SilverScript plan. At a Walgreens about 4 miles away, the same drugs with the same plan cost \$1,687, or \$999 more.

Why? Because Part D plans typically negotiate special arrangements with certain pharmacies—called “preferred pharmacies”—that let them offer better

deals in those stores, according to Adam J. Fein, CEO of Drug Channels Institute, an industry research firm.

Identifying which pharmacies are preferred isn't always easy. To know for certain, you have to scroll to the bottom of the Plan Finder comparison page. But the lowest-cost option in your area will usually be with a preferred pharmacy.

Consider the total drug costs, not just the premium and deductible. All the plans we looked at had monthly premiums ranging from about \$15 to \$35 and annual deductibles from

\$100 to \$415. Deductibles can be daunting because you must first pay that amount before insurance kicks in. But focusing just on the deductible may cause you to overlook plans that would cost you less over the long haul because they might have lower copays, or what you pay out of pocket when you pick up your drug.

In Dallas, for example, one plan with a low \$100 deductible had the highest total annual costs of the plans we analyzed, at \$1,592. By contrast, another plan in the area had a total annual cost of \$574, even though it had a \$415 deductible.

In each city, there were big ranges among the plans we looked at, after we factored in premiums and copays.

Even in Seattle and Raleigh, which had the smallest differences between the least and most expensive plans that we looked at, consumers could save more than \$300 by considering their total annual drug costs (see map, on page 49).

Consider what goes toward the ‘doughnut hole.’ In Medicare Part D, when your annual drug costs (not including premiums) reach \$3,820, you enter the so-called doughnut hole.

That’s a gap in coverage when you have to pay a larger share of your drug costs for the rest of the year: 25 percent for brand-name meds and 37 percent for generics. (Once total drug costs reach \$5,100, you are out of the doughnut hole and your costs drop to 5 percent or \$3.40 for a generic drug or \$8.50 for a branded one, whichever is greater.)

To find out exactly how much of your drug costs go toward the doughnut hole, look at the section of the Plan Finder tool that says “Estimated Full Cost the Plan Charges Medicare for Your Drugs.”

Note that because of the complicated ways that plans are designed, the amount shown there can be either more or, in some cases, less than what you pay out of pocket.

For example, in Raleigh, the Humana Walmart Rx plan charges \$835 for the year when the prescriptions are filled at Hayes Barton pharmacy, but only \$471 is charged to Medicare and counts toward the doughnut hole.

If you want to stay out of the doughnut hole, look for plans in which the total amount spent on drugs stays below \$3,820, when the coverage gap kicks in.

In our analysis, which focused on low-cost generics, total costs were never high enough to put someone into the doughnut hole. Reaching the doughnut hole is more likely to happen, Riccardi says, when people

DO I REALLY NEED DRUG COVERAGE?

Nearly 13 percent of people who are eligible for Medicare Part D drug coverage—about 7 million Americans—have not signed up.

Some may think the process is too confusing, expensive, or time-consuming. Or they think they simply don’t need drug coverage, assuming they will be able to pay for any drugs they need in cash.

That’s a mistake for several reasons, says Frederic Riccardi at the nonprofit Medicare Rights Center.

First, while it is possible to buy certain generic drugs for just a few dollars through a variety of discount programs, it’s also true that many essential drugs—especially for serious conditions—can be catastrophically expensive. For example, the cash price for a month’s supply of Humira, a drug used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, is about \$5,000.

In addition, though you might not need an expensive drug when you first sign up for Medicare, you could develop a serious health problem later and need it then.

Finally, if you don’t sign up for Part D when you first enroll in Medicare, you can sign up later—but you will pay a steep penalty for doing so.

Medicare charges an additional 1 percent on your monthly premium for each month that goes by when you don’t have insurance. So if you go 12 months past your initial enrollment period, you will pay an extra 12 percent on your premium every month for life.

take several brand-name drugs or need expensive medication.

For individual drugs, see whether you can save by paying cash. In our analysis, we found our sample drugs were sometimes less expensive using a GoodRx coupon than with insurance.

Take Dallas. Depending on the plan and pharmacy, some people there will pay \$47 per month for celecoxib after they meet their \$100 deductible. But they can buy it for \$16 at a local Tom Thumb pharmacy using a coupon from GoodRx.

In Denver, someone could pay \$38.50 for generic Cymbalta (duloxetine) at Walgreens with insurance but only \$13.50 with a GoodRx coupon at a Safeway pharmacy.

Paying cash can be especially useful if you add a drug midyear and it’s not well-covered by your plan. Ask your pharmacist whether the drugstore offers any discount programs, or check Blink Health or GoodRx.

One downside of paying with cash: The money you spend probably won’t be credited toward your deductible.

Also, some people think that because they can buy low-cost drugs through discount programs, they don’t need Medicare Part D at all. That’s not a good idea; for why, see “Do I Really Need Drug Coverage?” at left.

Get free help. Choosing a plan is complicated, Riccardi says, so don’t hesitate to seek help. Several resources are available.

➤ Call Medicare at 800-633-4227.

➤ All states offer free help through the State Health Insurance Assistance Program. Go to shiptacenter.org or call 877-839-2675.

➤ Contact Medicare Rights at 800-333-4114 or medicarerights.org.

Note that if your annual income is below a certain amount—\$18,210 for an individual or \$24,690 for a married couple in 2018 (2019 numbers aren’t yet available)—you may qualify for extra help with drug costs.

ROAD REPORT



STAY
AHEAD
OF THE
CURVE
WITH
CR AUTO
RATINGS,
NEWS
& ADVICE

THE VITAL STATISTIC

35%

Percentage value a new large sedan will lose during its first year of ownership. SUVs lose just 18 percent.

Source: AAA.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

BLIND SPOT WARNING SUCCESS



In a Consumer Reports

survey of vehicle owners, 66 percent reported that a blind spot warning (BSW) safety system had helped them avoid a crash. (BSW alerts a driver when another vehicle is traveling along either side of the car.)

Available on about 81 percent of new models, BSW is standard on only about 17 percent of them, which means shoppers often have to buy pricier trim levels to get this valuable feature.

CR thinks BSW should come standard on all new vehicles, along with automatic emergency braking and forward collision warning safety systems.

In October, CR began adding points to the Overall Score of vehicles that come standard with BSW to give automakers an incentive to make this investment in the safety of their customers.

ASK OUR EXPERTS

What's the Safest Way to Use Waze in My Car?

The Waze navigation app allows drivers to notify other Waze users about police, traffic, and road hazards by tapping onscreen buttons. While this could be distracting on a phone, viewing directions and interacting with the app on the car's infotainment screen is less so. Waze has been available on Android Auto for more than a year but was only recently added to Apple CarPlay. Now iPhone users with iOS 12 or newer can also use Waze on the infotainment screens in many newer autos.



RECALLS

HONDA ACCORD & INSIGHT

Honda is recalling 232,140 of its 2018 Accord sedans and 2019 Insight hybrid sedans because faulty software may cause the backup cameras to fail. (CR was an early supporter of requiring backup cameras on all cars. Vehicles sold in the U.S. and built after May 1, 2018, are required to have a camera built in.)

What to do: Dealers will reprogram the software at no charge. Owners may contact Honda customer service at 888-234-2138. Honda's numbers for this recall are K2G and V2F.

Does Car Buying Make Your Head Spin?

Sick of the haggling and endless paperwork at dealerships? Consumer-friendly changes are coming to the car-buying process, making it faster, more transparent, and less painful. Here, what you need to know.

by Keith Barry

WHEN VINEETH VAZHAYIL decided to purchase a Honda Clarity plug-in hybrid, the Chicago man emailed several local dealerships to ask about pricing and test drives. The dealer he chose responded with a price he liked and had the car ready and waiting for his test drive. “We were in and out of there in under an hour,” he said. “It was a totally honest and upfront conversation overall.”

In an era of online shopping and instant gratification, the traditional way of buying a car can seem like a painful throwback. Some dealers are still doing business the old-school way: insisting buyers haggle over the price, hiding fees and charges until the last minute, and making customers wait hours to sign form after form. These methods are out of place in today’s world of digital convenience and consumer demand for transparency.

Analysts and consultants who track and advise the auto industry tell CR that car dealers are at a turning point. By embracing new technology and transparency as they adapt to changing consumer demands, a new generation of car dealers is trying to make

experiences like Vazhayil’s the rule rather than the exception.

Empowered Car Consumers

Like Vazhayil, today’s car buyers often do the majority of their shopping online, searching for the right car and emailing dealers to get price quotes. “For the most part, they know what they want to buy before they walk in the door,” says Andrea Baker, a trainer and consultant at NCM Associates, a firm that works with car dealers.

Even as today’s buyers are growing more comfortable taking other parts of the purchasing process online, many buyers still want a physical interaction with the car, such as dealers taking them on test drives, guiding them through paperwork, and explaining complex in-car technology, says Guillaume Saint, global automotive lead at consulting firm Kantar. A fair share of buyers also appreciate the “ceremonial” aspect of making a major purchase in person.

Still, a Deloitte study found that 60 percent of car buyers want to cut out the dealership entirely and purchase a vehicle online, directly from a manufacturer. That’s

the model used by electric carmaker Tesla, which relies on online ordering and company-owned showrooms.

Traditional manufacturers are bound by franchise agreements with existing dealers, and some states don’t allow direct sales and require the dealership model. Owning and controlling a dealer network can get expensive, says Saint. He also says Tesla’s system is “a source of inspiration” for traditional manufacturers, who are starting to follow suit—especially for premium or niche cars that may be slow to sell sitting on dealer lots. For those cars, “dealerships will be more showrooms than actual points of sale,” he says.

Audi’s new E-Tron electric SUV, for example, won’t be stocked on dealer lots. “Dealers will have demonstration units so that all customers can see, touch, and feel” the new car, says Audi spokesman Mark Dahncke.

Even the all-important test drive doesn’t always require a trip to a dealership. Hyundai lets prospective buyers schedule an at-home test drive from its Hyundai Drive app. The car is delivered to your home, and you can go for a test

drive with a salesperson. Many individual dealer groups are offering similar services.

Consumer Reports contacted multiple dealerships and dealer groups to ask about changing buyer preferences and greater online purchase options, and they either did not respond or declined to comment.

A Less Painful Process

Once consumers decide on a car to buy, many are still put off by the purchase process. The Deloitte study found that 57 percent of car buyers disliked how much paperwork they had to fill out, 42 percent said the whole process took too long, and 40 percent hated haggling over price.

That’s why dealers are trying to streamline the buying process. “Very forward-thinking dealerships right now are trying to come up with a way to do a complete transaction online without [the buyer] ever even walking into the store,” Baker says. That’s much the same way real estate agents and mortgage companies use online signatures during the homebuying process.

Some dealers are also taking negotiating out of the equation—40 percent of the

Fast Track

You can buy a new car (shown here, the Mazda CX-5, our top-rated compact SUV) without ever stepping foot in a dealership.



dealers surveyed by consulting firm MAXDigital say they want to adopt a low- or no-haggle pricing policy. Certain automakers, including Lexus, are testing more transparent pricing models.

“Consumers today don’t want to deal with salespeople,” says Patrick McMullen, MAXDigital’s senior vice president of strategy and innovation. “They just want to know they’re getting a fair deal, and if they have any questions about the car, that the salesperson is knowledgeable enough to answer those questions.”

Gender and Culture Clash

Ultimately, car dealers are changing because their customers are changing.

For example, more than 80 percent of car-buying decisions are influenced by women, according to Kathy Gilbert, director of sales and business development at dealer consulting firm CDK Global. As a result, “there’s a focus on getting more female talent in the dealership,” she says. “Women consumers are coming in with a different expectation of what the industry should look like, as well as what the industry should deliver as an experience.”

CDK Global’s research also shows that younger buyers are less tolerant of being handed off from salesperson to salesperson, long negotiations, and fuzzy pricing—and a new generation of dealers understands those needs. “We’re seeing a lot of next-generation dealers that are coming in, and they’re looking at how the industry is changing,” Gilbert says.



Know When to Walk Away

These are four signs that a car dealership isn’t treating you fairly. The worst dealers use bluster and pressure, so it’s important to remember that you—not the dealer—set the pace for buying a car. Be aware: 90 percent of car dealers pay their salespeople on commission, according to a MAXDigital survey, so it’s in the salesperson’s interest to sell you a car. Do your research ahead of time, and remember that you can walk away at any time. After all, it’s better to take a break from negotiating than to get stuck with a car you paid too much for.

They Won’t Quote You a Price by Email

If a dealer won’t offer a price quote via email, or if he responds only to say you should come into the dealership for a quote, it’s time to find one who will commit to a price in advance.

They Pull Out the ‘Four Square’

This old-school sales technique uses a worksheet divided into four boxes—your trade-in value, the purchase price, your down payment, and the monthly payment. Focusing on that monthly payment is meant to distract the buyer from negotiating down the vehicle’s overall price or to hide the length of a loan or interest rate (or the money factor, in the case of a lease).

They Pressure You to Buy

A dealer may ask, “What will it take to get you into this car today?” or pressure you to sign paperwork during the negotiation process. Some of these documents are legally binding, and others aren’t. Take as much time as you need to read every document carefully, and don’t sign anything until you feel comfortable with the numbers you’ve been offered.

The Final Hard Sell

Often, the car-buying experience sours when you go to the finance and insurance office. This is where you’ll be pressured to buy extras like extended warranties, VIN etching, upholstery protection, and GAP insurance. Most of these are unnecessary or can be negotiated down in price. Do your research beforehand, and don’t agree to any charges until you’ve had time to think them over.



CAR
BUYING

Go to [CR.org/crbuying](https://www.cars.com/crbuying) for CR’s Build & Buy Car Buying Service to save money and time on your next new car.

Don't Want to Own? Try 'Subscribing'

Is owning a car quaint and unnecessary? For a growing slice of American drivers, it may be.

"Car companies are worrying that younger generations aren't as concerned about owning—or even driving—new cars, especially with the rise of car- and ride-sharing services, such as Zipcar, Uber, and Lyft," says Mel Yu, CR's automotive analyst. "Through focus groups, automakers came to the realization that millennials are very open to using and paying for things only when they need them."

Many consumers of all ages have tried ride-sharing, and other short-term rental choices are emerging. Another interesting industry shift is the subscription services automakers have been rolling out—many of which let the customer swap vehicles on demand.

How Subscribing Works

According to Ed Kim, vice president of industry analysis at AutoPacific, "consumers in general are becoming more open to not owning things. That's why leasing has grown this decade, and really, subscriptions are just another form of leasing, but with added perks and services."

For car owners, these plans aim to make things simple

by bundling the monthly fee, insurance, and maintenance into one lump sum each month, without a long-term commitment.

Amenities vary depending on a carmaker's subscription plan, so shoppers need to closely examine the fine print. In most cases, the ability to swap for a different car is one of the big draws. For example, Audi Select allows 24 vehicle swaps per year, and Access by BMW

and Porsche Passport allow unlimited vehicle swaps.

But that perk comes with a hefty price tag. These swap-a-lot plans run from as little as \$1,099 a month for BMW's starting tier to \$3,000 a month for a Porsche plan that allows consumers to pick from 22 models.

The Care by Volvo program allows only one vehicle upgrade after the first 12 months, but its cost is much lower: It starts at \$650 a month for an XC40 small SUV, and that includes maintenance and insurance. Care by Volvo is currently the only nationally available program of its kind. Most other automaker subscription plans are pilot programs limited to a handful of cities, or fewer. Porsche Passport, for example, is available only in metro Atlanta, where Porsche Cars North America is headquartered.

Most have fewer mileage restrictions—even unlimited in some cases—compared with traditional leases. But there are exceptions: Access by BMW has a limit of 2,000 miles per month, and Care by Volvo has a 15,000-mile-per-year ceiling.

As these pilot plans are currently constructed, they're more likely to attract older, wealthier customers, no matter who the automakers are targeting. "There's no question the manufacturer subscription plans are targeted at younger consumers who are already accustomed to subscribing to products and services," says Kim of AutoPacific. "The challenge is that younger consumers also tend to be less affluent and more price-sensitive, which means they might find a traditional lease to be much more affordable than the car manufacturer subscription plans."

WHAT CR'S PROS KNOW ABOUT ONLINE BUYING

Consumer Reports buys about 50 vehicles each year to test at our track. We often start the purchase process online, which can be a lower-stress option open to any car shopper. Here's how you can do it.

1 Visit dealerships to test-drive the models on your short list. Make it clear to the salespeople that you are just trying out the car and don't intend to buy that day. Take notes on each car you drive. Later on, go over the positives and negatives of each model and narrow down your list.

2 Once you've identified the model you want, contact nearby dealers. We find it best to do this

by email to avoid a barrage of phone calls. Identify the model, trim level, features, and color you want. Let them know that you're shopping around but are ready to buy. If they ask you to drop in, say no. Make sure the salesperson clearly knows that only the best price will win your business. You might be surprised how often buyers can end up with thousands of dollars off the original sticker price. Bonus: You can take

a good offer and use it to negotiate with other dealers.

3 You may find that it's better to pay a little more to buy locally, instead of getting a lower price from a dealer that's far away. Either dealership can perform service and warranty repairs, but the local shop may offer perks—including guaranteed loaner cars and service discounts—that offset the price if you buy a car from its salesperson.

4 If you're financing the car, arrange a loan in advance so that you know how much you can spend. This keeps you from getting stuck with a high interest rate from the dealer. Once you've agreed on a price, have the bank or credit union make out a check for the final amount. Then simply go to the dealership with your check already made, and drive off. This is how CR's pros do it, quickly and (usually) without stress.

2019 Models We Have Our Eyes On—and You Should, Too

2019 Ford Ranger



⚡ FULLY ELECTRIC

AUDI E-TRON

The German automaker's first fully electric production model is an SUV sized to fit between the Q5 and Q7. The E-Tron is powered by two electric motors, one at each axle, giving it all-wheel drive. A large 95-kilowatt-hour lithium-ion battery pack enables about a 250-mile range.

Pricing starts at \$74,800

On sale: Spring 2019



CHEVROLET BLAZER

The Blazer name has been resurrected as an all-new, five-passenger SUV that sits between the Equinox and Traverse. Two engines are offered: a 193-hp four-cylinder and a 305-hp V6, each linked to a nine-speed automatic transmission. Key advanced safety features are offered only on top trims.

Pricing starts at \$29,995

On sale: January 2019



FORD RANGER

The Ranger returns as a modern, midsize pickup that packs a truckload of convenience features, safety technology, and capabilities. It will be offered in extended cab and crew-cab configurations, with a choice of two- or four-wheel drive. A turbocharged 270-hp, 2.3-liter four-cylinder engine with a 10-speed automatic transmission is the only powertrain.

Pricing starts at \$24,300

On sale: Early 2019



GENESIS G70

The all-new G70 sedan is a credible challenger to German sports sedans such as the BMW 3 Series and Mercedes-Benz C-Class, based on our initial experience. The most affordable Genesis model is offered with a choice of a turbocharged four-cylinder or a twin-turbo V6 engine, and it's available in rear- and all-wheel drive.

Pricing starts at \$34,900

On sale: Now



⚡ FULLY ELECTRIC

JAGUAR I-PACE

Jaguar enters the electric car arena with the I-Pace. This performance-oriented, all-wheel-drive SUV has a 90-kWh battery that the automaker says has a 240-mile range on a single charge. The I-Pace is said to race from 0-60 mph in a scant 4.5 seconds.

Pricing starts at \$69,500

On sale: Now



⚡ FULLY ELECTRIC

PORSCHE TAYCAN

The all-electric Taycan sedan promises power, performance, and range to rival Tesla's vaunted Model S. Porsche says that the car will have more than 600 hp and be able to accelerate from 0-60 mph in less than 3.5 seconds. It also says its range is more than 300 miles.

On sale: 2020



SUBARU FORESTER

The redesigned Forester stays true to its established formula, and it delivers a unique combination of roomy packaging, excellent visibility, and great fuel economy, with simple controls. There are improvements to passenger space, ride, and noise. It gets a slightly more powerful four-cylinder engine, but there's no turbo option anymore. The EyeSight advanced safety system is now standard.

Pricing starts at \$24,295

On sale: Now



TOYOTA RAV4

The RAV4 looks dramatically different for 2019, though its dimensions remain similar. The optional all-wheel-drive system comes with a terrain mode selector, allowing the driver to dial in settings to tackle snow, mud, and sand. And Toyota has packed lots of advanced safety features into it. A hybrid will follow in March.

On sale: Late 2018

CR Rates Automated Driving Systems

IN CONSUMER REPORTS' first-ever ratings of partially automated driving systems, Cadillac's Super Cruise was top-rated because our testing shows that it does the best job of balancing high-tech capabilities with ensuring the car is operated safely and the driver is paying attention.

These partially automated systems are currently available only on a few vehicles but offer driving convenience features that will be available on future models. When turned on, they use cameras, radar, and other sensors—and sometimes even mapping data—to try to keep a car centered in a lane and maintaining speed so that the vehicle remains a set distance in traffic from vehicles in front.

CR's experts stress that these systems do not make the vehicles self-driving and are not designed to be safety systems. However, in the right circumstances, such as on long highway drives or in stop-and-go traffic, they can mitigate driver fatigue and stress.

The risks come if automakers design systems that make it easy for drivers to feel like they don't need to pay attention to the road. CR believes it's a critical distinction because research shows that when these systems are engaged, drivers can become over-reliant on the automated steering and speed control.

"We've been evaluating these systems on a case-by-case basis for years, but we're at a tipping point where they are now going mainstream," says Jake Fisher, director of auto testing at Consumer Reports. "Without proper safeguards, over-reliance on the system is too easy, which puts drivers at risk." Here's what CR's testers evaluated:

► **How capable is the automation?** The systems were tested on their ability

to automate speed control and steering. In our testing, Tesla's Autopilot was the most capable, followed closely by Super Cruise. Nissan/Infiniti's ProPilot Assist and Volvo's Pilot Assist were far less capable and generally struggled to keep the car in its lane. Nissan and Volvo say the systems were limited intentionally so that drivers don't overtrust them and instead remain engaged.

► **How easy is it to use?**

Testers evaluated how easy it was for drivers to engage and use the systems. Autopilot was simple to use with its unique display. Volvo was particularly cumbersome with small displays and cryptically marked buttons.

► **Is it clear to drivers when to use it?** We evaluated systems for how clearly they communicate when drivers should—and should not—use the technology. Super Cruise is the clear winner: It allows use only on predetermined roads that have clear lane markings and limited access. Other systems are less restrictive. Though not recommended, it is possible to use Autopilot almost everywhere, but it can operate erratically on roads that have poor lane markings.

► **Does it help make sure the driver is paying attention?**

When steering and speed control are automated, the driver is more likely to become distracted, research shows. That's why it's critical for systems to have an effective way to check that the driver is still engaged with driving. Some systems can sense when the driver is not holding the steering wheel, but that doesn't ensure the driver is watching the road. Only Super Cruise requires the driver to actually look forward.

► **What happens if drivers don't or can't respond?** We

examined how the systems respond if the driver ignores repeated warnings. Each system, except for Volvo's, ultimately responded by slowing to a stop and staying in its lane.

CR tested these four systems because they're among the most capable and well-known. Other automakers, such as Honda and Toyota, offer similar features, but they're not marketed in the same way.

"Consumers stand to gain a lot of convenience from these systems, but only if automakers put safety first," says David Friedman, vice president of advocacy at Consumer Reports. "We want to see automakers put the same emphasis on safety as they do on marketing these systems."

See detailed results from CR's testing, and what each automaker had to say, at [CR.org/carsafety](https://www.consumerreports.org/carsafety).



SUPER CRUISE

Tested on Cadillac CT6

▲ AUTOMATION SYSTEM RATING

Super Cruise uses a camera to watch where the driver's eyes are looking.

- 1 CAPABILITY & PERFORMANCE
- ▼ EASE OF USE
- ▲ CLEAR WHEN SAFE TO USE
- ▲ KEEPING DRIVER ENGAGED
- ▲ UNRESPONSIVE DRIVER

PROPILOT ASSIST

Tested on Infiniti QX50/
Nissan Leaf

▼ AUTOMATION SYSTEM RATING

Drivers may find it difficult to turn on the system, testers found.

- ▼ CAPABILITY & PERFORMANCE
- ▼ EASE OF USE
- ▼ CLEAR WHEN SAFE TO USE
- 1 KEEPING DRIVER ENGAGED
- 1 UNRESPONSIVE DRIVER

AUTOPILOT

Tested on Tesla Model X/S/3

1 AUTOMATION SYSTEM RATING

Autopilot performed well and is the easiest to use in stop-and-go traffic.

- ▲ CAPABILITY & PERFORMANCE
- 1 EASE OF USE
- ▼ CLEAR WHEN SAFE TO USE
- ▼ KEEPING DRIVER ENGAGED
- 1 UNRESPONSIVE DRIVER

PILOT ASSIST

Tested on
Volvo XC40/XC60

▼ AUTOMATION SYSTEM RATING

The Pilot Assist system displays are small and hard to decipher.

- ▼ CAPABILITY & PERFORMANCE
- ▼ EASE OF USE
- ▼ CLEAR WHEN SAFE TO USE
- 1 KEEPING DRIVER ENGAGED
- ▼ UNRESPONSIVE DRIVER

What's in a (Safety System) Name?

AS MORE CARS come with advanced safety and driver-assistance features, consumers may become confused about exactly what they do and how they work.

“That’s not surprising, given that in some cases there’s a dozen or more brand names for safety features,” says David Friedman, vice president of advocacy at Consumer Reports.

That’s why CR is working with safety groups, a federal agency, and auto industry representatives to come up with common, generic names for key safety and driver-assistance features. And we want to encourage all automakers to use these generic descriptions, Friedman says.

A group of 10 organizations, including AAA, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), J.D. Power, the National Safety Council, and several others, has agreed to use these six common terms: forward collision warning (FCW), automatic emergency braking (AEB), adaptive cruise control (ACC), blind spot warning (BSW), lane departure warning (LDW), and lane keeping assist (LKA).

“Automakers often give their own similar-sounding names to systems that

are very different,” says Kelly Funkhouser, CR’s program manager for vehicle usability and automation. “Drivers may end up assuming that their car has a safety feature that it does not.”

CR isn’t asking manufacturers to give up their branded names for safety systems, but rather to supplement them to increase the clarity for consumers.

Common names and definitions would help drivers, regulators, and safety advocates evaluate these new technologies on an apples-to-apples basis, says Bryan Reimer, associate director of the New England University Transportation Center at MIT. There are a lot of nuanced differences in how automakers implement their advanced safety or driver-assistance systems, he says. For instance, some automatic emergency braking systems work only at low speeds, and others work at higher speeds.

The various system names could leave consumers confused and at risk. “Today, consumers can buy a car and walk away not knowing exactly what safety features they have,” Friedman says. CR believes that all vehicles should come with FCW, AEB, and BSW as standard features.

HOW TO USE CAR-BUYING SERVICES

Buying a car can be a stressful experience that can drain your emotions—and your wallet. Car-buying services can help.

Services from AAA, Consumer Reports, Sam’s Club, USAA, and others go beyond connecting buyers with a local car dealer. Members get tools to configure the car they want and send that specific request to local dealerships.

CR’s online Build & Buy Car Buying Service is offered free through a partnership with TrueCar. Shoppers can build their car online at [CR.org/carbuying](https://www.CR.org/carbuying) and get competitive pricing from more than 12,000 dealerships nationwide. You can see what others are paying in your area.

The competitive prices usually reflect all available incentives. (It’s important to check your eligibility, because many have restrictions.) The dealerships meet CR’s stringent customer-satisfaction and conduct standards. CR members get special pricing and last year saved an average \$3,101 off MSRP. When you’ve identified the car you want online, print the Guaranteed Savings Certificate assigned to a specific vehicle and visit the dealership to complete the transaction. Shoppers are under no obligation to buy. The fees that CR earns go to support the work of the nonprofit organization.

FCW

Forward Collision Warning

What it does: Gives visual, tactile, and/or audible warnings that alert the driver to the possibility of a collision with an obstacle in front.

What automakers call it: Front Assist (Volkswagen)

AEB

Automatic Emergency Braking

What it does: Automatically applies brakes to prevent or reduce impact force in a collision with an obstacle in front.

What automakers call it: Forward Emergency Braking (Nissan)

ACC

Adaptive Cruise Control

What it does: Keeps a constant distance between you and the car ahead, automatically maintaining a preset following distance.

What automakers call it: Distronic (Mercedes-Benz)

BSW

Blind Spot Warning

What it does: Provides a warning that something is in the vehicle’s blind spot.

What automakers call it: Lane Change Alert (Buick, Chevrolet, Cadillac, GMC)

LDW

Lane Departure Warning

What it does: Gives warnings intended to alert the driver that the vehicle is crossing lane lines.

What automakers call it: LaneSense (Chrysler)

LKA

Lane Keeping Assist

What it does: Provides automatic corrective steering or braking to try and keep the vehicle in its lane of travel.

What automakers call it: Road Departure Mitigation (Honda)



ROAD TEST

WE CONDUCT MORE THAN 50 TESTS ON EACH VEHICLE AT OUR 327-ACRE AUTO TEST CENTER. THESE SELECTIONS ARE AMONG THE MOST RECENT MODELS WE'VE RATED. FOR HUNDREDS MORE ROAD TESTS, GO TO [CR.ORG/CARS](https://www.cars.com/cr.org/cars).



MIDSIZE SUVs

Hyundai Santa Fe

The Right Size at the Right Price

78

OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 80

HIGHS Handling, controls, rear-seat room and access, standard safety features

LOWS Uneven power delivery, ride is a touch firm

POWERTRAIN 235-hp, 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 21 mpg on regular fuel

PRICE AS TESTED \$37,200

THE NEW SANTA FE is a compelling midsize SUV. Its price is close to that of some top-trim compact SUVs, which can make it a bargain. We like its size, safety features, and handling, but buyers should skip the more expensive turbo engine because of its uneven acceleration.

The Santa Fe's composed handling, with its responsive steering, gave our drivers confidence in rounding corners.

The controls are clear and easy to master, particularly the quick-to-respond infotainment system, though they're a reach for taller drivers who sit farther back from the steering wheel. The Limited trim we tested had rich cabin materials; well-padded surfaces where hands, elbows, and forearms

might fall; and plenty of storage space.

It's easy to enter and exit this SUV. Once inside, the driver and passengers, particularly those in the back, find plenty of head- and legroom, and comfortable, supportive seats.

There are some blemishes. Our Santa Fe came with the optional turbo engine that delivers plenty of power, but it comes in bursts, unexpectedly hesitating or launching the SUV forward. We tried the smoother but less powerful 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine, and we think it's the better choice.

By skipping the turbo, buyers also avoid the 19-inch wheels and tires that make the ride overly firm.

Forward collision warning and automatic emergency braking are standard.



LUXURY CARS

Lexus ES

Perfect for the Long Haul

85

OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 84

HIGHS Ride, quietness, interior

LOWS Confusing controls, cramped rear seat

POWERTRAIN 302-hp, 3.5-liter six-cylinder engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL 25 mpg on regular fuel

PRICE AS TESTED \$48,855

THE REDESIGNED ES is a rewarding choice for a road trip thanks to its absorbent ride and indulgent interior. But fussy controls keep this luxury sedan just short of ideal.

Lexus gave the six-cylinder engine in the ES more power for 2019, although fuel economy stays the same. Its acceleration is smooth and predictable, and the transmission shifts are hardly noticeable. A hybrid is also available.

Shoppers who are drawn to the ES because of its reputation as a cushy cruiser won't be disappointed. The cabin remains hushed and the suspension steadily smooths out rough roads. At the same time, the new car handles better than its predecessor, with responsive steering and restrained body lean.

The more aggressive exterior styling of the ES may be polarizing, but there's no debate over how the new look affects its livability. The car's lowered stance and sloping roof reduce headroom for taller drivers and make it harder to get in or out.

The high-quality interior has plenty of soft-touch leather surfaces, and its attractive interior-design touches add warmth. Apple CarPlay (but not Android Auto) comes standard. We found the infotainment system's touchpad controller distracting to use.

The impressive list of standard safety equipment includes automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection, lane keeping assist, and lane departure warning. But blind spot warning is optional.



SPORTS/SPORTY CARS

Hyundai Veloster

Affordable, Lively, and Fun

79

OVERALL SCORE

HYUNDAI'S REDESIGNED VELOSTER hatchback is a great choice for buyers who want a less expensive car that's quick and fun to drive. This speedster also comes with a dose of practicality, including a unique three-door configuration, which helps getting into the rear seat.

The turbo engine in the sporty R-Spec trim responds almost instantly when the driver presses on the gas pedal, delivering hearty levels of power. The manual transmission is a joy to use with its precise action.

We were wowed by the R-Spec's lively handling. The high-performance summer tires helped it achieve the fastest speed we've recorded through CR's avoidance-maneuver test, which simulates a swerve around an obstacle. But the stiff

ROAD-TEST SCORE 83

HIGHS Handling, braking, acceleration, manual shifter, controls

LOWS Ride, noise, visibility

POWERTRAIN 201-hp, 1.6-liter four-cylinder turbo engine; 6-speed manual transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL 29 mpg on regular fuel

PRICE AS TESTED \$23,785

suspension made for a hard and choppy ride. And boy, is it loud in the cabin.

The interior has some cheap, hard plastic, but we like the metal shift knob, leather-wrapped steering wheel, and well-bolstered seats. Finding a comfortable driving position is difficult because of the limited steering-wheel adjustment range and the intrusive center console.

Controls are easy to use, and Android Auto and Apple CarPlay come standard. Rear visibility is limited because of the sloping roof and small side and back windows.

Blind spot warning and rear cross traffic warning are standard on some trims but aren't available on the R-Spec. Forward collision warning and automatic emergency braking are standard.



PICKUP TRUCKS

Ram 1500

Capable and Civilized

66

OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 83

HIGHS Ride, quietness, cabin room, controls

LOWS High step-in

POWERTRAIN 395-hp, 5.7-liter V8 engine with mild hybrid; 8-speed automatic transmission; four-wheel drive

FUEL 17 mpg on regular fuel

PRICE AS TESTED \$53,120

TODAY'S FULL-SIZED trucks have impressive capabilities, but none is as distinguished for its tranquil ride and attractive interior as the redesigned Ram 1500. It should satisfy the requirements of even the most demanding jobs while providing plenty of comfort.

The redesign dropped weight and added an available mild-hybrid battery assist. These changes increased fuel economy to 17 mpg overall in CR tests from 15 mpg for the previous generation. The V8 engine provides effortless acceleration even as it maintains a hushed cabin.

The Ram's suspension delivers a ride that is more like a good SUV than a traditional pickup. Its handling is also quite responsive, taking turns with limited leaning.

Inside, the Ram's cabin


looks better dressed and more upscale than comparably priced trucks from Chevrolet, Ford, and Toyota. But the cloth seats in our truck are overly soft and look low-rent.

The controls are easy to use and large enough for glove-friendly operation, although some can be a stretch for drivers to reach.

There's tons of space inside the crew cab. The rear seat has generous legroom, and its seatback can be reclined or folded up to create a large cargo space that's protected from the elements.

The Ram offers forward collision warning, automatic emergency braking, lane departure warning, lane keeping assist, blind spot warning, and adaptive cruise control as options. We're disappointed that FCW, AEB, and BSW aren't standard.

Ratings ➤ **We Drive the Full Range** This month's contenders offer a wide spectrum of size and price options, from a sporty compact to a luxurious riding car, and all the way up to a top-notch, full-sized pickup truck.

	Make & Model	Overall Score	Price	Survey Results		Safety	Road-Test Results													
Rec.			As tested	Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Front-crash prevention	Road-test score	Overall mpg	Acceleration 0-60 mph, sec.	Acceleration quarter-mile, sec.	Dry braking 60-0 mph, ft.	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Routine handling	Ride	Noise	Seat comfort front/rear	Controls	Driving position	Luggage, suitcases+duffels/cargo volume, cu. ft.	
FULL-SIZED PICKUP TRUCKS																				
✓	Ford F-150 XLT (2.7 V6 EcoBoost)	<div>68</div>	\$52,535	⬇	⬆	Std./⬆	74	19	6.8	15.3	145	47.0	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬆	-	
	Ram 1500 Big Horn (5.7L V8)	<div>66</div>	\$53,120	⬇	⬆	Opt.	83	17	7.1	15.4	137	47.5	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬆	-	
	Toyota Tundra SR5 (5.7L V8)	<div>65</div>	\$38,715	⬆	⬆	Std./⬆	59	15	6.7	15.3	153	44.5	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆/⬇	⬆	⬇	-	
	Nissan Titan SV (V8)	<div>55</div>	\$44,370	⬇	⬇	NA	70	16	6.7	15.3	131	49.5	⬇	⬇	⬆	⬆/⬇	⬆	⬇	-	
MIDSIZE SUVs																				
✓	Toyota Highlander XLE (V6)	<div>85</div>	\$41,169	⬆	⬆	Std./⬆	82	22	7.4	15.8	134	48.5	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬆	40.5	
✓	Mazda CX-9 Touring	<div>81</div>	\$40,470	⬆	⬆	Std./⬆	80	22	7.9	16.3	139	50.0	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬇	⬇	34.0	
✓	Hyundai Santa Fe Limited (2.0T)	<div>78</div>	\$37,200	⬇	⬆	Std./⬆	80	21	8.7	16.7	136	52.0	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬆	35.5	
✓	Kia Sorento EX (V6)	<div>78</div>	\$41,925	⬆	⬆	Opt.	78	22	8.1	16.2	137	49.0	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬆	37.5	
✓	Nissan Murano SL	<div>77</div>	\$42,065	⬆	⬇	Std./⬆	77	21	7.7	16.0	131	50.5	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬇	33.5	
✓	Ford Edge SEL (2.0 EcoBoost)	<div>74</div>	\$39,755	⬇	⬆	Std./⬆	84	21	8.8	16.8	132	51.5	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬇	39.0	
✓	Honda Pilot EX-L	<div>73</div>	\$40,655	⬇	⬇	Std./⬆	80	20	7.5	15.9	136	49.5	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬇	⬆	48.0	
	Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited (V6)	<div>65</div>	\$41,375	⬇	⬆	Opt.	80	18	8.0	16.2	134	50.0	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬆	36.5	
LUXURY MIDSIZE CARS																				
✓	Lexus ES 350	<div>85</div>	\$48,855	⬆	⬆	Std./⬆	84	25	6.9	15.4	132	53.0	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬇	⬇	⬆	3+1	
✓	Audi A4 Premium Plus	<div>80</div>	\$48,890	⬇	⬆	Std./⬆	88	27	6.3	14.9	135	53.5	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬇	⬇	⬆	2+2	
	Infiniti Q50 3.0t Luxe (AWD)	<div>73</div>	\$48,775	⬇	⬇	Std./⬆	85	22	5.7	14.2	126	56.0	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬇	⬇	⬆	2+1	
	Mercedes-Benz C300 (4MATIC)	<div>72</div>	\$47,560	⬇	⬇	Std./⬆	85	26	6.8	15.2	136	55.5	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬇	⬇	⬆	2+1	
	Buick LaCrosse Essence (V6)	<div>70</div>	\$43,225	⬇	⬇	Opt.	85	24	6.3	14.8	127	54.0	⬇	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬇	3+2	
	Acura TLX SH-AWD	<div>69</div>	\$42,345	⬇	⬇	Std./⬆	75	25	6.5	14.9	129	55.0	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬇	⬇	⬆	2+2	
	Lincoln MKZ 2.0 EcoBoost	<div>66</div>	\$41,990	⬇	⬆	Std./⬆	88	23	7.4	15.8	124	53.0	⬆	⬆	⬆	⬆/⬇	⬆	⬇	3+2	
SPORTS/SPORTY CARS																				
✓	Subaru BRZ Premium	<div>80</div>	\$27,117	⬆	⬆	NA	79	30	7.2	15.6	126	56.0	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆/⬇	⬆	⬆	1+2	
✓	Toyota 86	<div>79</div>	\$25,025	⬆	⬆	NA	78	30	7.2	15.5	126	56.5	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆/⬇	⬆	⬆	1+2	
✓	Hyundai Veloster Turbo R-Spec	<div>79</div>	\$23,785	⬇	⬆	Std./⬆	83	29	7.0	15.2	119	60.0	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆/⬇	⬆	⬇	1+2	
✓	Mini Cooper S	<div>72</div>	\$29,945	⬇	⬆	Opt.	80	30	7.2	15.5	130	56.0	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆/⬇	⬆	⬆	1+1	
✓	Honda Civic Si	<div>71</div>	\$24,775	⬆	⬇	Opt.	74	34	7.3	15.4	131	55.5	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬆/⬇	⬇	⬆	3+1	
	Volkswagen GTI Autobahn	<div>66</div>	\$31,730	⬇	⬆	Opt.	82	29	6.6	15.2	132	55.0	⬆	⬇	⬆	⬆/⬆	⬆	⬆	2+1	
	Ford Fiesta ST	<div>55</div>	\$24,985	⬇	⬇	NA	74	29	7.3	15.6	118	57.0	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇/⬇	⬇	⬇	1+2	
	Subaru WRX Premium	<div>54</div>	\$29,742	⬇	⬇	Opt.	75	26	6.0	14.5	120	59.0	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇/⬆	⬆	⬆	2+2	
	Fiat 500 Abarth	<div>45</div>	\$26,050	⬇	⬇	NA	66	28	8.0	16.1	125	55.5	⬆	⬇	⬇	⬇/⬇	⬇	⬇	0+3	

HOW WE TEST: Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score**, which factors in **Road-Test Results**, **Predicted reliability**, **Owner satisfaction**, and **Safety**, which includes crash-test results and the

availability of front-crash prevention features, such as forward collision warning and automatic emergency braking at city or highway speeds. For these systems, NA means no such system is offered; Opt. means

it's available on some versions but not necessarily on the one we tested; and models with standard systems are rated from ↓ to ↑ based on how many of these features are standard equipment. We also

deduct points if a vehicle's gear selector lacks fail-safes or is difficult to operate. Readers with a Digital or All-Access membership can go to [CR.org/cars](https://www.cars.com) for complete, up-to-date ratings.

A

Ad blockers	Oct 18, 14
Air conditioners	Jul 18, 17
lowering cooling costs	Jul 18, 19
Air fryers	Jun 18, 15
Airline travel	Dec 18, 30
economy class	Dec 18, 33
seating families together	Dec 18, 7
Alexa digital assistant	Oct 18, 24
automotive	Jan 19, 13
Alternative medicine	Nov 18, 34
Amazon Prime	Jul 18, 14
Arsenic in rice	Mar 18, 5

AUTOMOBILE RATINGS

Acura RDX	Nov 18, 63
BMW X2	Aug 18, 63
BMW X3	Mar 18, 58
Buick Enclave	Mar 18, 58
Buick Regal	May 18, 59
Chevrolet Equinox Diesel	Jul 18, 62
Chevrolet Traverse	Feb 18, 59
Ford EcoSport	Jun 18, 59
Ford Expedition	May 18, 58
GMC Terrain	Mar 18, 59
Honda Accord	Feb 18, 58
Hybrid	Nov 18, 64
Honda Clarity	Jul 18, 62
Honda Insight	Dec 18, 64
Hyundai Accent	Jul 18, 63
Hyundai Elantra GT	Jun 18, 59
Hyundai Kona	Sep 18, 63
Hyundai Santa Fe	Jan 19, 59
Hyundai Sonata	Feb 18, 58
Hyundai Veloster	Jan 19, 60
Infiniti QX50	Aug 18, 64
Jaguar E-Pace	Aug 18, 63
Jeep Cherokee	Oct 18, 63
Jeep Wrangler	Jun 18, 58
Kia Rio	Jul 18, 63
Kia Sorento	Oct 18, 64
Kia Stinger	May 18, 59
Land Rover Range Rover Velar	Mar 18, 59
Lexus ES	Jan 19, 59
Lexus LS 500	Sep 18, 63
Lexus RX L	Jun 18, 58
Lincoln Navigator	May 18, 58
Mazda6	Oct 18, 64
Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross	Oct 18, 63
Nissan Kicks	Nov 18, 63
Nissan Leaf	Sep 18, 64
Ram 1500	Jan 19, 60
Subaru Ascent	Dec 18, 63
Tesla Model 3	Sep 18, 64
Toyota Avalon Hybrid	Nov 18, 64
Toyota Camry Hybrid	Feb 18, 59
Toyota Corolla Hatchback	Dec 18, 64
Volkswagen Jetta	Dec 18, 63
Volvo XC40	Aug 18, 64

AUTOMOBILES & AUTO EQUIPMENT

2019 models	Jan 19, 56
Auto insurance discrimination	Mar 18, 5
Automated driving systems	Jan 19, 57
Backup cameras	Aug 18, 5
Best & worst lists	Apr 18, 28
Best vehicles for road trips	Jul 18, 39
Brand Report Card	Apr 18, 26
Buying new vs. used	Feb 18, 50
Buying process	Jan 19, 52
Car subscription services	Jan 19, 55
Coming in 2018	Apr 18, 35
Driver data privacy	Jun 18, 44
Emergency-kit preparation	Jul 18, 30
Fuel economy	Apr 18, 10
standards	Jul 18, 5; Nov 18, 7
technological advances	Apr 18, 13
time line	Apr 18, 14
Gas, finding cheapest	Jul 18, 38
High-tech vehicles	Jun 18, 44
Owner satisfaction	Feb 18, 48
Profiles, 2018	Apr 18, 47
Ratings, 2018	Apr 18, 37
Reliability	Apr 18, 85
new cars	Dec 18, 54
Roadside assistance	Jul 18, 34
Safety systems	May 18, 12
naming standardization	Jan 19, 58
Self-driving cars	Jun 18, 5
Sunroofs, exploding	Feb 18, 5
Tires	Nov 18, 56
safety checks	Nov 18, 58
shopping for	Nov 18, 59
Top Picks for 2018	Apr 18, 19
Trim levels	Oct 18, 56
price difference	Oct 18, 59

Trucks	Apr 18, 24
safety	Aug 18, 58
Used cars	Apr 18, 81
best 3-year-old models	Sep 18, 54
flood damage	Feb 18, 52
Vehicle-to-vehicle communication	Jun 18, 44

B-D

Baby food safety	Dec 18, 7
Banks	
customer satisfaction	May 18, 14
Beds-in-a-box	Mar 18, 30
Bicycle helmets	Jun 18, 11
Bitcoin	May 18, 15
Breakfast	
fast-food	Aug 18, 42
Cable TV	Aug 18, 30
savings	Aug 18, 36
Cameras	Jun 18, 23
time line	Nov 18, 14
Cannabidiol	Oct 18, 44
Carpet cleaners	Jun 18, 18
Carry-on luggage	Dec 18, 39
how to pack	Dec 18, 36
Cell phones	
how to buy	Jun 18, 14
insurance	Jun 18, 50
iPhone X vs. iPhone 8	Feb 18, 13
refurbished	Jun 18, 56
repairing cracked screens	Jun 18, 54
service providers	Jun 18, 50
time line	Oct 18, 14
Children and technology	Nov 18, 7
Cleaning equipment	
carpet cleaners	Jun 18, 18
vacuums	
belts	Sep 18, 18
Cleaning tips	
carpet stains	Jun 18, 21
curtains	Jul 18, 12
dog beds	Jan 19, 17
humidifiers	Nov 18, 16
laptops	Sep 18, 15
microwaves	Dec 18, 15
pillows	Jun 18, 12
Coffee add-ins	Mar 18, 13
Computers	
laptops	Dec 18, 46
time line	Dec 18, 14
Consumer data privacy	Oct 18, 7
Consumer Financial	
Protection Bureau	May 18, 5; Oct 18, 7
Cookware	Nov 18, 44
materials	Nov 18, 47
Countertop materials	Jan 19, 18
Credit cards	
using while traveling	Jul 18, 38
Credit data privacy	May 18, 5
Credit freezes	Sep 18, 7; Jan 19, 37
Data, financial	
protection	Jun 18, 16
Data breach; Equifax	Feb 18, 5
Digital assistants	Oct 18, 24
Dishwashers	Sep 18, 36
time line	Sep 18, 16
Doctors	
degrees	Mar 18, 48
misconduct notification	Jan 19, 7
primary care physicians	Mar 18, 53
specialists	Mar 18, 55
Door locks	Mar 18, 14
Driving	
safety around trucks	Aug 18, 60
Drones	Mar 18, 18
Drugs	
prices	May 18, 5, 40; Jun 18, 5; Jan 19, 46
lowering	May 18, 44; Jan 19, 7
shopping around	May 18, 49
Dryers	Aug 18, 48

E-G

Earphones, wireless	May 18, 24
Egg labeling	Feb 18, 12
Ellipticals	Jan 19, 40
Energy bars	Oct 18, 19
Equifax hack restitution	Feb 18, 5
Facebook privacy control	Oct 18, 40
Farmers markets	Sep 18, 35
Fast-food breakfasts	Aug 18, 42
Fees	
"What the Fee?!" campaign	Sep 18, 7
Financial data protection	Jun 18, 16

Financial tips	Jan 19, 36
Fire extinguisher use	Feb 18, 11
Fitness time line	Jan 19, 14
Flexi-fridges	Feb 18, 14
Food	
banned drugs in	Oct 18, 30
expiration dates	Nov 18, 14
heavy metals in	Oct 18, 38
baby food	Dec 18, 7
labeling	Jul 18, 5
Food processors	Dec 18, 13
Foodborne illness tracking	Sep 18, 7
Frozen pizza	Feb 18, 34
Frozen vegetables	May 18, 52
cooking tips	May 18, 55
Furniture tipping hazards	May 18, 21
Google Assistant	Oct 18, 24
Green juices	Aug 18, 13
Grilled cheese sandwiches	Jan 19, 14
Grills	Mar 18, 11; May 18, 28; Jul 18, 22
accessories	Jul 18, 24
buying at Home Depot & Lowe's	May 18, 34
care and cleaning	Jul 18, 26
food safety	Jul 18, 23
lump charcoal vs. briquettes	Jul 18, 27
replaceable parts	May 18, 32

H-I

Headphones, wireless	May 18, 24
Healthy eating	Sep 18, 26
drinks	Sep 18, 34
fish	Sep 18, 32
fruits & veggies	Sep 18, 31
leafy greens	Sep 18, 28
salt alternatives	Sep 18, 16
Heart surgery	Jul 18, 50
common procedures	Jul 18, 52
hospital ratings	Jul 18, 56
questions to ask	Jul 18, 54
Helmets, bicycle	Oct 18, 11
Home insurance	Oct 18, 50
Home remodeling for curb appeal	Jun 18, 34
Ice melts	Nov 18, 22
Insect repellents	Aug 18, 28
Instant Pot tips	Mar 18, 16
Insurance	
car	
price disparities	Mar 18, 5
home	Oct 18, 50
smartphone	Jun 18, 50
iPhone X vs. iPhone 8	Feb 18, 13

L-P

Laptops	Dec 18, 46
Laundry	
machines	Aug 18, 51
room renovation	Aug 18, 48
time line	Aug 18, 14
Lawn mowers	Jun 18, 38
time line	Jun 18, 12
Lightbulbs	Feb 18, 16
Massage	Nov 18, 41
Mattresses	Mar 18, 22; Jun 18, 13
beds-in-a-box	Mar 18, 30
for side sleepers	Oct 18, 17
types	Mar 18, 28
warmth retention	Aug 18, 15
Media mergers	Mar 18, 5
Medical billing	Sep 18, 44
surprise bills	Oct 18, 7
Medical tests	Jan 19, 26
Medicare Part D	Jan 19, 46
Microwaves	Dec 18, 20
Money tips	Jan 19, 36
Mowers	Jun 18, 38
time line	Jun 18, 12
Multi-cookers	
Instant Pot tips	Mar 18, 16
Music streaming services	Sep 18, 14
Naturopathic medicine	Mar 18, 56
Net neutrality	Jun 18, 5; Jan 19, 7
Pain medication	Oct 18, 48
Paints, exterior	Jun 18, 34
Passwords	Sep 18, 17
Pasta sauces	Jan 19, 20
Patient safety	May 18, 5
Peer-to-peer payments	Nov 18, 18
Phablets	Dec 18, 17
Phone bills	Aug 18, 4
Photo digitization	Jul 18, 58
Pillows, cleaning	Jun 18, 12
Pink tax	Jul 18, 5

Pizza	
frozen	Feb 18, 34
unhealthy chain options	Feb 18, 37

R-S

Ranges	Nov 18, 48
Recall notification reform	Dec 18, 7
Refrigerators	Aug 18, 18
capacity	Aug 18, 14
flexi-fridges	Feb 18, 14
ideal food arrangement	May 18, 13
reliability	Oct 18, 13
where to buy	Aug 18, 20
Retail sales gimmicks	Dec 18, 40
Retirement	Mar 18, 42
healthcare expenses	Mar 18, 47
unexpected	Mar 18, 45
Road trips	Jul 18, 28
pet care	Jul 18, 35
snacks	Jul 18, 37
tech tips	Jul 18, 32
Robocalls	Aug 18, 5
Robovacs	Jan 19, 15
Scams	Jun 18, 26
classic scams	Jun 18, 30
combating	Jun 18, 32
who gets scammed	Jun 18, 29
Shopping	
for appliances	Jul 18, 15
farmers markets	Sep 18, 35
haggling online	Feb 18, 27
paying less	Feb 18, 24
Siri digital assistant	Oct 18, 24
Smart homes	Oct 18, 24
Smart speakers	Oct 18, 24
Smart TV privacy	May 18, 22; Nov 18, 30
Smartphones	
how to buy	Jun 18, 14
insurance	Jun 18, 50
iPhone X vs. iPhone 8	Feb 18, 13
refurbished	Jun 18, 56
repairing cracked screens	Jun 18, 54
service providers	Jun 18, 50
Smartwatches	
Apple Watch 3 vs. Fitbit Versa	Aug 18, 16
Smoke detectors	Dec 18, 16
Snow blowing	Nov 18, 22
Snow preparedness	Nov 18, 20
Snow shovels	Nov 18, 23
Stain removal, carpet	Jun 18, 21
Stains	Jun 18, 34
Stem cell treatments	Mar 18, 36
Strollers	Feb 18, 15
Student debt	Feb 18, 5; Nov 18, 7
Sunscreens	Jul 18, 42
bargains	Jul 18, 46
time line	Jul 18, 12
Supplements	Nov 18, 38; Nov 18, 42

T-U

Televisions	Dec 18, 26
audio setup for easier hearing	Jul 18, 11
best deals	Feb 18, 40; Nov 18, 26
smart TVs	
privacy	May 18, 22; Nov 18, 30
sound bars	Nov 18, 31
Tick protection	Jul 18, 13
Toilets	Feb 18, 18
wall-mounted	Feb 18, 21
Treadmills	Jan 19, 40
Turkey, cooking safely	Nov 18, 13
TV antennas	Aug 18, 35
TV streaming	Aug 18, 40
cable replacement services	Aug 18, 38
devices	Aug 18, 41
Vacuums	
belts	Sep 18, 18
robotic	Jan 19, 15
Veggie burgers	Sep 18, 13
Video	
digitization	Jul 18, 58
streaming devices	Feb 18, 43
Vitamin supplements	Nov 18, 38; Nov 18, 42

W-Y

Washing machines	Aug 18, 48
Water heaters	Nov 18, 15
Whole-wheat pasta	Jan 19, 20
WiFi signal strengthening	May 18, 11
Yoga	Nov 18, 43

Foodie Confusion

These mixed-up labels and promotions left us hungry for better explanations

Counter-Intuitive

You might need a bigger kitchen if you choose this microwave.

Submitted by Ian Holborn, via email



7.0 Cu. Ft.

Cotton Mouth

Who would want a wine that tastes like sheet?

Submitted by Darren Long, via email



Hollandaised and Confused

This sauce must be an unacquired taste.

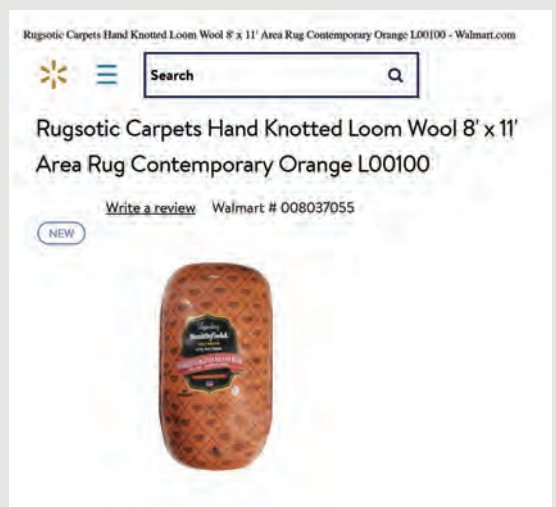
Submitted by Denese Cosper, Raleigh, NC



Ham-Handed Ad

If you lost the thread on this rug ad, you're not alone.

Submitted by Pat Lowe, Smithfield, VA



SHARE

Be on the lookout for goofs and glitches like these. Share them with us—by email at SellingIt@cro.consumer.org or by mail to Selling It, Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703—and we might publish yours. Please include key information, such as the publication's name and date.

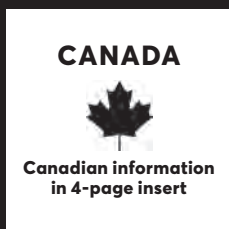
Not all gifts are created equal

No matter what gift you're giving this holiday season,
rely on trusted reviews to bring home the best.



CR Consumer
Reports® 

[cr.org/wrapped](https://www.consumerreports.org/wrapped)



Canada Extra

Treadmills and
Ellipticals **32a**

Recalls **32b**

Autos **32d**

Contact Info **32d**

How to Use the Canada Extra Section

EVERY MONTH, Canada Extra provides Canadian pricing and availability information about products tested for that issue. The ratings in this section are based on this month's reports, but they narrow your choices to the products that are sold in Canada.

You can use this section in either of two ways: Start with the main report, read about the products that interest you, and turn to this section to find whether they're sold—and for what price—in Canada.

Or start here, find products sold in Canada whose price and overall score appear promising, and read more about them in the main report and full ratings chart; page numbers appear with each Canadian report. (For some products, the Canadian model designation differs slightly from the one used in the U.S.)

In most cases, the prices we list here are the approximate retail in Canadian dollars; manufacturers' list prices are indicated by an asterisk (*). The symbols shown at right

identify CR Best Buys or recommended products in the U.S. ratings. "NA" in a chart means that information wasn't available from the manufacturer. We include, in the Contact Info list on page 32d, the manufacturer's web address in Canada so that you can go online to get information on a model you can't find in the stores. (Many products that aren't available in Canadian stores can be bought online.)

We appreciate your support, but we don't take it

for granted. Please write to CanadaExtra@cu.consumer.org and tell us what you think. We can't reply to every email or implement every suggestion, but with your help we'll try to keep growing to serve your needs.

CR Best Buy











Recommended models that offer the best combination of performance and price.









Recommended

Models that perform well and stand out for reasons we note.

Treadmills and Ellipticals

Eighteen of the tested treadmills and ellipticals are available. All are recommended. **Report and ratings, pages 40-45**

		Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price
Rec.	Rank			
NONFOLDING TREADMILLS				
	1	Sole TT8	84	\$3,500
	4	True M30	81	\$2,400
FOLDING TREADMILLS				
	1	NordicTrack Commercial 24501	84	\$2,250
	3	NordicTrack C1650	83	\$3,100
	4	Spirit Fitness XT485	82	\$2,300
	5	NordicTrack C990	77	\$1,400
	6	Horizon Elite T9-02	77	\$2,000
BUDGET FOLDING TREADMILLS				
	2	Sole F63	81	\$1,550
	4	LifeSpan TR2000e	76	\$1,700
	5	LifeSpan TR1200i	73	\$1,350

		Brand & Model	Overall Score	Price
Rec.	Rank			
ELLIPTICALS				
	1	Diamondback 1260 Ef	80	\$3,133
	2	Sole E95S	75	\$2,700
	4	LifeFitness E3 Track+	73	\$3,250
	5	Schwinn 470	73	\$1,000
	6	Bodyguard E-40	73	\$3,250
	7	AFG 4.1AE	72	\$1,110
	8	Landice E7 Pro Sport	69	\$5,600
	9	Octane Fitness Q35X	68	\$2,500
> All-Access or Digital members can find the latest ratings at CR.org/treadmills and CR.org/ellipticals .				



RECALLS

2004-2006 MAZDA B SERIES

On certain vehicles, increased pressure could rupture the driver frontal airbag inflator and propel fragments toward vehicle occupants. This could also damage the airbag module and prevent proper deployment.

Affected: 6,494 vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will replace the front driver airbag inflator. Note: This recall supersedes recall 2016-050 (Mazda Recall 9116A). Vehicles repaired under the previous recall require a final repair under this one, because the previous recall remedy was an interim repair. Interim repair parts must be replaced with final repair parts.

2007-2015 MINI MODELS

On certain vehicles, the foot well module (FRM3) may become contaminated by a mixture of salt and moisture, causing a short circuit, overheating of the module, and, potentially, a fire. Note: Owners are advised to park the vehicle outdoors until the recall repairs have been completed.

Affected: 18,468 2007-2013 Hatch, 2009-2014 Clubman, 2010-2015 Convertible, and 2012-2015 Coupe and Roadster vehicles.

What to do: To be determined.

2009-2010 MAZDA6

On certain vehicles registered and operated in areas of heavy road salt usage during winter months (Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland & Labrador), the front cross member may rust, affecting vehicle handling.

Affected: 15,306 vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will install a drain hose and inspect the cross member and, depending on its condition, replace it or install a reinforcement and apply a wax coating.

2010-2014 SUBARU MODELS

On certain vehicles equipped with manual transmissions, components within the control unit for the electronic parking brake (EPB) may crack over time. The brake warning lamp would illuminate and the EPB may not apply as intended, resulting in the unintended movement of a parked vehicle.

Affected: 3,486 Legacy and Outback vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will replace the parking brake actuator with a more durable one.

2010-2014 TOYOTA MODELS

On certain vehicles, the intelligent power module (IPM), which is part of the hybrid drive system, could become damaged and cause various warning lights to illuminate, as well as a reduction or loss of motive power.

Affected: 23,125 2010-2014 Prius and 2012-2014 Prius V vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will update motor/generator and hybrid control ECU software and make repairs as necessary.

2010-2015 ACURA AND HONDA MODELS

On certain vehicles, long-term exposure to high absolute humidity and temperature, combined with high temperature cycling, could eventually degrade the propellant contained in the front-passenger airbag and

cause the airbag to deploy with more force than normal. Fragments could be propelled toward vehicle occupants, and the airbag assembly could be damaged.

Affected: 263,289 2010-2011 Acura CSX, 2010-2012 RL, and 2010-2013 TSX and ZDX; and 2010 Honda Element, 2010-2011 Civic and CR-V, 2010 and 2012 Insight, 2010-2012 Accord, 2010-2014 Crosstour, Fit, and Ridgeline, and 2010-2015 Pilot vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will replace the passenger front airbag inflator.

2014-2016 CADILLAC CTS

On certain vehicles equipped with heated front seats, the seat heating element may become damaged, causing localized overheating. If the vehicle is started remotely and the heated seats are turned on, the seat could overheat and melt.

Affected: 2,488 vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will reprogram the body control module to deactivate the heated seat function when the vehicle is started remotely.

2015-2018 INFINITI AND NISSAN MODELS

On certain vehicles, the antilock brake system (ABS) actuator pump may leak brake fluid onto an electronic circuit board. This would cause the illumination of the ABS warning lamp on the instrument panel. If the vehicle continues to be operated, damage to the ABS module could lead to a fire.

Affected: 19,761 2017 Infiniti QX50; and 2015-2017 Nissan Murano, 2016-2017 Maxima, and 2017-2018 Pathfinder vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will inspect and replace the ABS actuator as necessary. Note: This replaces recall 2016-424. Vehicles repaired under that campaign require a second repair under this campaign.

2015-2018 FORD F150

On certain vehicles, the activation of the front seat-belt pretensioners in a crash may result in ignition of pretensioner exhaust gases and lead to a fire in materials in the B-pillar area.

Affected: 339,884 vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will inspect the B-pillar area, modify the floor covering and sound insulation, and apply heat-resistant tape.

2016-2018 CHEVROLET AND GMC MODELS

On certain vehicles equipped with a single manual rear climate control module (CCM), the CCM could overheat when the temperature is set to maximum heat or the knob is set to maximum floor vent. The insulation material used on the CCM terminal connectors could catch fire.

Affected: 1,077 Chevrolet Express and GMC Savana vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will remove the insulation from the CCM terminal connectors.

2016-2018 TOYOTA PRIUS

On certain vehicles, the hybrid vehicle power control unit connector cover could wear through the wiring harness insulation, resulting in bare wires. An electrical short circuit could occur, increasing the risk of fire.

Affected: 7,200 vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will

inspect the wiring for damage and, as necessary, install protective tape or replace the wire harness assembly with a new one, which includes a protective sleeve.

2017-2018 ALFA ROMEO MODELS

On certain vehicles equipped with a 2.0 L engine, the catalytic converter could overheat and damage the surrounding wiring or components. This could result in a loss of motive power and/or increase the risk of a fire.

Affected: 2,619 2017-2018 Giulia and 2018 Stelvio vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will update the engine control module software to prevent the catalytic converter from overheating.

2017-2018 KIA NIRO

On certain vehicles, the main relay contacts in the power relay assembly located underneath the rear seat may have an inadequate connection. This could generate heat, increasing the risk of fire.

Affected: 1,039 vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will inspect the power relay assembly for signs of thermal damage. If no thermal damage is found, the main relay will be replaced. If signs of thermal damage exist, the power relay assembly will be replaced. Note: This problem may cause the illumination of the HEV warning light while driving and/or an inability to start the vehicle.

2017-2018 MITSUBISHI MODELS

On certain vehicles, an issue in the software that manages the brake system hydraulic unit may allow it to reset without

warning and cause some vehicle features to malfunction. If this were to occur while driving, the following features may be affected: automatic braking (if automatic cruise control (ACC) and/or forward collision mitigation (FCM) is in operation), antilock braking system (ABS), active stability control (ASC), and brake auto hold (BAH).

Affected: 18,281 2017-2018 Outlander, 2018 Eclipse Cross, Outlander PHEV, and RVR vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will update the hydraulic unit control software.

2017-2019 MITSUBISHI MODELS

On certain vehicles, an issue in the software used by the electronic control unit responsible for managing the forward collision mitigation (FCM) feature may cause it to not operate as intended, by alerting the driver to brake unnecessarily in certain situations. If the driver attempts to brake while FCM is also activating, the vehicle may decelerate rapidly, creating the risk of a rear-end collision.

Affected: 8,089 2017-2018 Outlander, 2018 Outlander PHEV and RVR, and 2018-2019 Eclipse Cross vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will update the software for the forward collision mitigation system.

2018 JEEP WRANGLER

Certain vehicles may have been built with an improperly welded front track bar bracket, which could allow the bracket to separate from the frame, causing reduced steering response.

Affected: 1,415 vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will inspect and repair the front track bar bracket welds as necessary.

Note: Prior to complete separation of the bracket from the frame, a driver may notice a front-end noise, an off-center steering wheel position, a "service electronic stability control" message, and/or an electronic stability control light illuminated in the instrument cluster.

2018-2019 BMW AND MINI MODELS

On certain vehicles, a crankshaft sensor error may cause the engine to stall, resulting in a loss of motive power.

Affected: 1,313 2018 BMW 2 Series, 3 Series, 5 Series, 6 Series, X1, and X2, and 2019 4 Series, X3, and X4; and 2019 Mini 3 Door, 5 Door, Clubman, Convertible, and Countryman vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will replace the crankshaft sensor.

Note: This condition would result in the illumination of the check engine warning lamp and an "engine malfunction" message appearing in the instrument cluster. Note: This is an expansion of recall 2018-373.

2018-2019 BUICK, CADILLAC, CHEVROLET, AND GMC MODELS

On certain vehicles, a problem with the rear brake system may cause gas bubbles to form in the brake fluid, resulting in a soft brake pedal feel and a reduction in brake performance.

Affected: 19,385 2018 Chevrolet Bolt EV and Volt, 2018-2019 Cruze, Equinox, Impala, and Malibu; and 2018-2019 Buick LaCrosse, Cadillac XTS,

and GMC Terrain vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will bleed the rear brakes.

2018-2019 HONDA MODELS

Certain vehicles do not comply with the requirements of Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (CMVSS) 111 - Mirrors and Rear Visibility Systems. Due to a software programming error, the rearview image may not display on the center display screen while the vehicle is in the Reverse gear.

Affected: 14,521 2018 Accord and 2019 Insight vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will reprogram the center display assembly software.

2018-2019 TOYOTA MODELS

Certain vehicles may not comply with the requirements of Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (CMVSS) 208 - Occupant Protection in Frontal Impacts and CMVSS 214 - Side Impact Protection. The airbag (SRS) control unit may incorrectly detect a fault in one or more of the airbag impact sensors during vehicle startup, and the airbags may not deploy as designed. Upon detection of a fault in the airbag system, there will be multiple warning lights, a warning buzzer, and a message on the instrument panel display.

Affected: 15,774 2018-2019 Sequoia and Tundra, and 2019 Avalon vehicles.

What to do: Dealers will update the airbag control unit software. Note: This recall supersedes recall 2018-100. Vehicles repaired as part of the previous recall will require re-inspection and repair.

Autos

All of the tested vehicles are available in Canada. **Report and ratings, pages 59-61**

		Acceleration (sec.)				Fuel Economy (liters per 100 km)		
Make & Model	Price Range	0-50 km/h	0-100 km/h	80-100 km/h	500 Meters	City Driving	Highway Driving	Overall
FULL-SIZED PICKUP TRUCK								
Ram 1500	\$42,495–\$72,595	2.8	7.5	3.5	17.7	20.5	9.9	13.8
MIDSIZE SUV								
Hyundai Santa Fe	\$28,999–\$44,999	3.4	9.2	3.9	19.1	16.9	7.5	11.0
LUXURY CAR								
Lexus ES	\$45,000–\$61,500	3.1	7.3	3.2	17.5	14.9	6.2	9.5
SPORTS/SPORTY CAR								
Hyundai Veloster	\$20,999–\$30,399	2.8	7.4	3.2	17.4	11.2	6.1	8.0

RAM 1500
PRICE AS TESTED
\$53,120 (U.S.)

66
OVERALL
SCORE



✓ **LEXUS ES**
PRICE AS TESTED
\$48,855 (U.S.)

85
OVERALL
SCORE



✓ **HYUNDAI SANTA FE**
PRICE AS TESTED
\$37,200 (U.S.)

78
OVERALL
SCORE



✓ **HYUNDAI VELOSTER**
PRICE AS TESTED
\$23,785 (U.S.)

79
OVERALL
SCORE



Contact Info

How to reach
manufacturers
in Canada.

AFG
afgfitness.com

Bodyguard
bodyguardfitness.com

Diamondback
diamondbackfitness.com

Horizon
horizonfitness.com

Landice
landice.com

LifeFitness
lifefitness.com

LifeSpan
lifespanfitness.com

NordicTrack
nordictrack.ca

Octane Fitness
octanefitness.com

Schwinn
schwinnfitness.com

Sole
solefitness.ca

Spirit Fitness
spiritfitness.com

True
truefitness.com