

HealthyLife[®] Letter

March 2007



WATER WHEN YOU NEED IT

Most exercise experts advise drinking a full 16 ounces of water during an hour's worth of activity. The American College of Sports Medicine says it's also important to drink a couple glasses of water 2 hours before your workout. That way you'll have fluid in your stomach so it can move into the small intestine and be absorbed into the bloodstream. Fluid balance for your workout starts long before you take that first step onto the treadmill.

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Be Fit

What's the best activity you can do?

It's a trick question. The answer is "any activity you will do." But what will keep you coming back for more? That's the real question.

Here is the answer from Rob Sweetgall, walking expert who has walked across the USA 7 times (www.CreativeWalking.com).

- * Fun. Choose an activity you like. If you like it, you will do it.
- * Convenient. Work movement into your day. You don't have to sweat in the gym.
- * Conditioning. Activity benefits you and conditions your body in 5 ways:
 1. Your body (lowers body fat, builds strong bones, boosts your immune system, protects you from disease)
 2. Your emotions (triggers "feel good" brain chemicals)
 3. Your mind (your brain works better)
 4. Your social life (try walking your dog and see how many people talk to you)
 5. Your spirit (connect with a force greater than yourself)
- * Consistent. Over a lifetime, you create powerfully healthy habits when you are active regularly.
- * Safe. An activity must be safe for your body.



Self-Care Corner

Which toothbrush is best?

It's the one you use. No scientific evidence shows that angled heads, raised bristles or handles that change color with use are any better than the toothbrush you already have, say experts at the Academy of General Dentistry.



Tips

- * To reach all areas of the mouth, teeth and gums, choose a small toothbrush head (1 inch by 1/2 inch), with soft nylon bristles.
- * Change your toothbrush or toothbrush head (if you use an electric toothbrush), before the bristles become frayed – about every 3 to 4 months. Old toothbrushes are not effective and they may harbor harmful bacteria that can cause gum disease.
- * Brush your teeth (and tongue) twice a day for at least 2 to 3 minutes at a time. Most people brush for only 45 to 70 seconds at a time.
- * Electric toothbrushes don't work that much better than manual toothbrushes, but they do motivate some reluctant brushers to clean their teeth more often. Follow the instructions given with electric toothbrushes.
- * Daily tooth brushing and flossing are important parts of dental health. You need to have regular dental checkups and cleanings, too.

{Note: Many topics like the ones above are contained in a medical self-care guide, such as Healthier at Home®, Health at Home®, and HealthyLife® Self-Care Guide. They serve as excellent resources. If you have a self-care guide, refer to it whenever you are unsure about what to do for symptoms and health issues you are experiencing. It can help you make better decisions about when to seek professional assistance and when you can treat yourself at home using self-care.}

Restless legs kick your partner out of bed

Falling asleep and staying asleep can often be a challenge. Not only for you, but for your bed partner. If it's not snoring that sends one person to another room for peace and quiet, it might be restless leg syndrome (RLS).

Symptoms of RLS are described as creepy-crawly feelings in the legs, tingling, burning or prickling sensations when lying down, such as at bedtime or when sitting.

A person with RLS may have painful urges to kick and thrash their legs when trying to fall asleep. The next day, the person may be tired, have mood swings and have trouble concentrating. And the bed partner might be annoyed.

About 10% of people have RLS, but many don't see a doctor about the problem for years, if ever. RLS can be a long-term problem or a short-term one. It can be caused by medicine or conditions, such as pregnancy or diabetes.

Walking or flexing the legs can relieve symptoms. Prescribed medicine can help, too. Lifestyle changes and pre-bedtime practices may also help relieve symptoms.

- * Don't smoke. If you smoke, quit.
- * Eat a healthy diet. Do regular exercise.
- * Avoid or cut back on caffeine (coffee, hot tea or cocoa).
- * Avoid or cut back on alcohol.
- * Plan to get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night.
- * Before you go to bed. Take a hot bath or shower. Stretch or massage leg muscles and/or practice relaxation techniques such as meditation or yoga. Use a hot water bottle or cold compresses on painful areas.
- * Wear long socks to bed.

For more information, contact the RLS Foundation, www.rls.org.
Source: University of Michigan Health System



What's Up Doc?

Take pain medicine with care

An ache here, a pain there. We turn to pain relievers, by some estimates, as many as 48 million times a week.

But, as with all medicines, products that contain acetaminophen, aspirin or ibuprofen should be used with care. Taking more than advised can cause health problems, such as stomach bleeding or kidney damage.

If you take a pain reliever regularly, the American Pharmacists Association wants you to know this:

- * Over-the-counter pain relievers are safe when used as directed on the label. Read the label. Follow the directions. Do not take more than the recommended dose. Do not take the medication for longer than directed. Do not stop taking prescribed pain relievers without first consulting your doctor.
- * Be careful when taking more than one medicine. Know which active ingredients are in the products you use. Many of the most common prescribed and over-the-counter pain relievers and cold treatments have similar ingredients. If you have questions, talk to your pharmacist or doctor.



Take a shot at fear of shots

There's something about getting a shot that bothers millions of people. Is it fear? Not really. It's fear of the pain itself from the needle.

More than 15 million American adults and 5 million children over the age of 5 are fearful about getting shots or blood draws, according to results from a new study.

Doctors and labs are doing more than 900,000 blood draws daily in the U.S. That's a lot of fear and fear of pain.

A word for this fear is blenophobia. It means fear of needles. Some people are so afraid, they may not get needed medical care, such as blood tests or flu shots or routine vaccines.



“Blood tests are one of the most important diagnostic tools modern medicine has at its disposal, but if patients are reluctant, or even actively avoid blood draws, then we need to find ways to alleviate the pain and discomfort or other causes keeping them from getting these procedures,” said Mark Dursztman, MD, of New York Presbyterian Hospital. “The fear of needles and needle stick pain is a real and significant health problem, one that needs to be addressed.”

The survey was sponsored by Vyteris Holdings, a leading developer of drug delivery products.

What are your options, if you fear needles? The survey found the majority of both adults and children used distraction techniques – such as looking away, humming or focusing on an object – to deal with their discomfort. Special creams or patches can numb the skin before a needle stick. Certain drugs can be delivered by a patch, through the skin, so there is no shot.

Talk with your doctor about your fear.

Healthy Eating



The fab four

If you remember the Beatles, you may recall the four basic food groups. Used to be meat, dairy products, cereal grains, and fruits and vegetables. The Food Guide Pyramid reshuffled the American plate, and the recent update with MyPyramid.gov reorganized the groups even further.

The founder and director of the Preventive Medical Center of Marin, Elson Haas, MD, suggests a new basic four:

1. Fruits
2. Vegetables
3. Whole grains and legumes (beans and peas)
4. Proteins and fats/oils (milk, eggs and meats; for vegetarians, nuts and seeds)



To move toward the ideal diet, Dr. Haas, in his book *Staying Healthy with Nutrition* (Ten Speed Press), suggests these dietary changes:

- * Instead of soft drinks, choose fruit juice. Better yet, water.
- * Replace refined sugar with honey or raw sugar and, ideally, small amounts of honey, molasses and date sugar.
- * If you can, eliminate all *trans* fats (shortening and hydrogenated oils). Choose butter, then move to add cold-pressed vegetable oils, such as flaxseed, canola or sunflower into your diet.
- * Instead of refined flour, choose whole-grain flour and whole grains.

He advocates for a decrease in calories, fats, red meats, dairy foods, ice cream, soft drinks, salt and refined flour and sugar. Instead he advises to increase fresh fruits and vegetables, drinking water, fiber, whole grains, legumes, vegetable oils, and adds two more essential ingredients: exercise and love.

Safe on your home plates

The unwanted guests at your dinner table are food bacteria that cause illness. Even if food is properly handled and cooked, leftovers can become harmful to eat if they are not handled and stored properly. NSF International is an independent, not-for-profit organization that helps protect you by certifying products and writing standards for food, water and consumer goods. It advises to:

- * Refrigerate or freeze prepared foods, leftovers and other foods that spoil. Do this within 2 hours of preparation or purchase. Keep freshly prepared hot dishes in the oven at an internal temperature of at least 140°F. If dinner is done early or guests are going to be delayed for a significant period of time, separate the main and side dishes into shallow containers and refrigerate for reheating later.
- * When storing leftover foods, get the temperature of the food down quickly to stop bacteria from growing. Since bacteria grow fastest between 40°F and 140°F, hot foods need to be cooled as quickly as possible. It's okay to place hot food directly in the refrigerator, but divide larger dishes into shallow containers for quicker cooling. Leave hot foods partially uncovered while cooling, and then cover completely once they reach 40°F (use a food thermometer).
- * Properly handled leftovers can usually be kept in the refrigerator for about 4 days. If not eaten within that time, they should be thrown away. Leftovers can also be frozen right away for reheating later. Always reheat leftovers to at least 165°F before serving.

Find out more food safety tips from www.FoodSafety.gov.

Healthy Eating



Featured Recipe

Chili with Turkey

Chili is one comfort food that warms you up while it fills you up. With a few tweaks, its distinctive blend of spices and beans can also help protect your health. Cumin, the traditional chili spice, has anti-cancer properties. Chile peppers (and the chili powder made from them) contain capsaicin, a powerful antioxidant that fights inflammation. Beans, which are full of folate, fiber and minerals, also have in protein, so you can use more of them (and a bit less meat) to make this hearty, healthy chili.

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 2 to 4 garlic cloves as desired, chopped fine
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped coarsely
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or as desired
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon (optional)
- 3 cans (16 oz. each) of 3 different types of beans (kidney, black, garbanzo, for example) rinsed and drained
- 1 cup frozen corn (or canned corn, drained)
- 1 can (28 oz.) crushed tomatoes, with juice
- 1 cup low-sodium vegetable tomato juice (spiced version, if desired)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 cups diced, cooked turkey
- Hot sauce, to taste
- Reduced-fat sour cream and shredded cheese (optional garnish)

Heat the oil in a large, deep pot over medium-high heat until hot. Stir in the onion, garlic and bell pepper. Lightly sauté this mix until the onion is translucent, the garlic is golden and the bell pepper is softened. Stir in the chili powder, cayenne, cumin, oregano and cinnamon and cook, stirring for 30 seconds. Stir in the beans, corn, tomatoes and juice.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer the ingredients gently for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir in the turkey and simmer for an additional 15 minutes. Adjust the seasonings, as desired, adding more salt, pepper and hot sauce. Serve the dish with reduced-fat sour cream and cheese as toppings, to taste.

Makes 10 servings. Per serving: 270 calories, 6 g fat (1 g saturated fat), 33 g carbohydrate, 22 g protein, 9 g dietary fiber, 426 mg sodium

With permission from the American Institute for Cancer Research (www.aicr.org)



Health Tips

The dangers of driving and doing other stuff at the same time

Drivers on cell phones pose a real road hazard, but talking and driving doesn't explain all the crashes on American roads.



Distracted drivers are thought to cause 1.2 million crashes – that's 25% of all crashes. Cell phones contribute to about 60,000 of those.

The rest are caused when drivers do other stuff – such as eating, looking at a map, reaching for something and watching something outside your car, such as an accident scene, according to the Mayo Clinic Health Letter.

What's the worst distraction? Reaching for a moving object inside the car, according to one study. An example would be trying to tame an unleashed pet. Researchers determined that reaching for a moving object inside the car increased the crash or near crash risk 8 times.

Getting rid of every distraction may not be easy, but you can lessen the risk with these safe-driving tips:

- * Cage, leash or harness a pet before you travel.
- * If you must eat or drink, have a passenger hand you items or arrange them within easy reach.
- * Before you drive, take time to adjust the seat, mirrors, seat belt and radio.
- * Pull over when you talk on the cell phone.

Is your purse a pain in the neck?

Over-sized purses may leave you with back, neck and shoulder pain, headaches and possibly even arthritis. Try this at home: Put your purse on the scale and weigh it. You could be asking for trouble if your purse weighs over 7 pounds.

Women are carrying more “stuff” in their jumbo bags these days. Fashion trend or fad, it may not be so healthful. That kind of weight can leave a lasting impression, says Jane Sadler, MD, a family practice doctor at Baylor Medical Center.

“If you think about how you carry a bag, it's usually on one side and you kind of pull your neck to one side and lift your shoulder. It's a very unnatural position,” says Dr. Sadler. “It creates strain along the neck and into the nerves that exit the neck and down the shoulder so it can be very painful later on for many women,” adds Dr. Sadler.

Dr. Sadler says that if your purse is uncomfortable when you put it on, if you can feel it pulling on your shoulder, or if it weighs more than just a few pounds, it may be time to downsize your bag.

Lighten the load: Try downsizing your wallet. Carry only the credit cards and cash you need. Leave the stuffed makeup bags at home. Carry your cell phone with a clip on your body.

Copy this

Fearful of identity theft or just plain theft of your wallet or purse? Do this: Remove all your credit cards and driver's license from your billfold or purse and place them on a photocopy machine. Turn them over, copy the other sides. Keep the photocopies in a safe place at home. If you're ever the victim of a theft or loss, you'll know where to start to cancel the cards and replace essential ID cards.



Family Life

Kids ask the darnedest questions



Kids want to know about their health. They deserve to ask questions they have. To calm their fears, doctors and nurses taking care of children should answer their questions in words they can understand.

Your son may be getting a cast put on a broken arm and wonder how he'll take a shower. Your teen might be scheduled to have all 4 wisdom teeth pulled and want to know about swelling.

A good way to find out what questions kids have is to ask them to make a list. One 12-year-old who was having her tonsils out wrote a list of her questions and asked her doctor well before the surgery. These point to fears and concerns parents may never have thought about. Here are some of her questions:

- * Will I have to have an IV?
- * Will I spend the night at the surgery center?
- * Can I wear my own pajamas?
- * How long will the surgery take? Explain what you will do.
- * Can you draw me a picture of what my tonsils look like?
- * Will having my tonsils out change my voice?

Kidney stones in kids

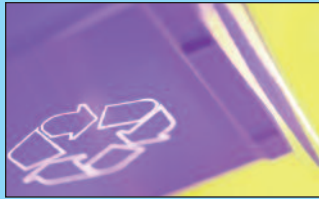
Not so rare anymore, say doctors at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center. Too much salt in salty snacks and too little drinking water in children's diets are probably the main culprits. Kidney stones can cause sharp lower-back pain and urinary tract infections. Other signs are cloudy or bloody urine and frequent and painful urination.

Here are some ways to help prevent kidney stones:

- * Limit salty snacks and processed foods, such as smoked and cured meats.
- * Rinse canned foods to get rid of some sodium.
- * Limit soft drinks and sugary juices.
- * Make sure your child drinks 8 glasses of water a day.

One sign that your child is getting enough fluids is if he or she urinates at least every 3 hours.





PAPER OR PLASTIC?

The correct answer to help the planet is neither.

Well over a billion single-use plastic bags are given out for free each day. But as the old adage goes, nothing comes for free. The planet pays the price, according to reusablebags.com.

Billions of bags end up as litter each year, in landfills, blowing in the wind, stuck in trees, washing up on beaches.

Plastic bags never leave us. They don't biodegrade. They photodegrade and take up to 1,000 years to break down – in other words, they break into tiny bits that harm soil and water. Animals may eat them. Paper bags are no better than plastic in landfills.

Best solution: BYOB, bring your own cloth bags to the grocery store and reuse them.

Success Over Stress

Speak in public with confidence – it's possible

Do you hate to speak in public? Does the thought of standing at a podium make your heart race? Are you afraid to speak up in the boardroom? Would you rather be anywhere else instead of speaking in front of people?

Anxiety about public speaking is not only common, it's one of the greatest fears many people face.

In her book, *Anxious 9 to 5: How to Beat Worry, Stop Second-Guessing Yourself & Work with Confidence*, business psychologist Larina Kase offers 3 keys to overcoming speaking anxiety:

1. Speak in public in the types of spontaneous or planned speaking situations that make you nervous as much as possible. Seek out opportunities both at work and outside of work to confront your fear – and do it over and over again.
2. When you do speak, focus externally on the conversation or the audience. Use your senses to take in information and objectively and accurately look at the situation.
3. Drop any safety behaviors that may be maintaining your anxiety, making you perform worse than you would otherwise, or making your anxiety symptoms more obvious. Safety behaviors might be trying to sound smart, hiding behind the podium, or trying to conceal a large midsection by crossing your arms.



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