



Inside This Issue:

Self-Care Corner ..... 2

Health Tips ..... 3

Healthy Eating..... 4

Medical News ..... 6

Family Life ..... 7

# HealthyLife® Letter

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Promoting Health. Enhancing Life. Reducing Costs.

Want to add steps to your day but find yourself tied to your desk?



No longer. Get a wireless phone headset and walk around (or at least stand up) when you're talking on the phone (at work and at home). If you can add 1,500 steps to an otherwise sedentary day, you may be able to burn up to 500 calories a day.

Smokers who quit before age 40 have a lifespan almost as long as people who never smoked, says a Canadian study team in the New England Journal of Medicine. Smoking cuts at least 10 years off a person's lifespan. Smoking is never safe.



## Ride your bike to work

Think of the money you'll save on gas, train fare, and parking. If you live within 10 miles of your work, find solutions to overcome these popular excuses:

- **Not safe:** Use less congested roads if rush-hour traffic clogs the main streets.
- **Have to dress nicely at work:** Drive to work one day each week and leave a week's worth of clean clothes.
- **No place to shower:** To clean up, use a deodorant soap and washcloth in the restroom.
- **No secure place to park my bike:** Check for a storage closet or furnace room, or stash your bike with a friend who lives nearby or at a bike shop.
- **I'd have to ride in the dark:** Wear light-colored, reflective clothing, attach lights and reflectors and use a route that's lit by streetlights.
- **Hate riding in cold and rainy weather:** If it's pouring or sleeting, leave the bike at home.
- **Too far:** Drive part way and cycle the rest. Look for a park-and-ride commuter lot.



Source: Bicycling magazine's 1,000 All-Time Best Tips



# Self-Care Corner

## New you

Why wait to create a new you? Live your best life now.

This advice comes from researchers at Washington University:

- **Learn something new.** Take a class in a subject you enjoy or are curious about. Check your community colleges for noncredit continuing education classes. Rekindle your love of learning.
- **Volunteer.** It's good for your physical and mental health whether you're building a house for someone, ladling out soup for the homeless, or collecting canned goods. You'll make valuable community connections.
- **Get your social media house in order.** The Internet and social media have opened up exciting new avenues to connect with others and new vistas to share preferences in films, books, and music. Have fun. But be cautious. Check your default privacy settings. Log out and see what your profile looks like to the outside world. Make sure passwords are complex – Use upper and lowercase letters and a special character, such as \$. Don't use the same password for all social media accounts.
- **Rediscover the library.** The digital revolution has changed your local library. You can often download books online. Consider how much your library offers: novels and nonfiction works for all ages, how-to books, music CDs, movies on DVD or videotape, maps and reference works. Read the latest magazines or journals.
- **Step away from your desk.** Physical activity improves health, lowers stress, and increases productivity. And if those weren't reasons enough, research shows that exercise reduces the risk of diseases such as breast cancer, colon cancer, and Alzheimer's.
- **Pay down your credit card debt.** Put extra money toward the loans with the highest interest rates. Consolidate several small debts.
- **Use your smartphone to quit smoking.** You can tap into apps for messages of support and access websites that give step-by-step encouragement.
- **Kick the car habit.** Leave the SUV in the garage and try alternate means of transportation such as the bus or train, bicycling, walking, or park-and-ride commuting.
- **Parents:** Make every day count. Happy, well-adjusted children need happy, well-adjusted parents.
- **Get more sleep.**
- **Consume more culture.** The arts not only educate and entertain, they help us to better understand ourselves and others. Visit your local museums, galleries, theaters, dance companies, and music halls.



{Note: Many topics like the one on this page are contained in a medical self-care guide, such as Healthier at Home®, Health at Home®, and HealthyLife® Self-Care Guide, and/or addressed by a nurse advice line. They serve as excellent resources. If you have a self-care guide and/or access to a nurse advice line, use it whenever you are unsure about what to do for symptoms and health issues you are experiencing. They can help you make better decisions about when to seek professional assistance and when you can treat yourself at home using self-care.}

# Health Tips



## Shake salt

About 75% of the total sodium (salt) you get in your diet comes from sodium already in packaged and restaurant foods, not from the salt shaker, said an FDA deputy commissioner. That makes it very difficult for you to reduce your sodium intake because the foods you have available to you in the marketplace already have high levels in them.

So what can you do? The FDA offers some advice:

- When shopping for food, read food labels and choose foods that are lower in sodium.
- Foods providing 5% (Percent Daily Value or %DV on the label) are considered low. And 20% DV is considered high (avoid these foods).
- The CDC identified 10 surprising foods as the greatest sources of sodium: breads and rolls; luncheon meat, such as deli ham or turkey; pizza; poultry, fresh and processed, much of the raw chicken bought from a store has been injected with a sodium solution; soups; cheeseburgers and other sandwiches; cheese, natural and processed; pasta dishes; meat dishes, such as meat loaf with gravy; and savory snack foods, such as potato chips, pretzels, and popcorn.



## Grab on



You don't have to be a senior to risk falling in a steamy, slippery bathroom. Grab bars provide extra support through unique anchoring systems that can support up to 500 pounds of pressure, depending on the manufacturer, according to Lifetime Products.

When installing safety grab bars, look for places where you are most likely to lose your balance:

- **Tub/Shower.** Install grab bars at a lower level to help bathers with raising and lowering. A grab bar at waist level or slightly higher is ideal to help with stepping in and out of the tub, as well as to hold for extra balance while washing and shampooing when showering.
- **Toilet.** Install a grab bar on the wall near the toilet for support when sitting down and standing up. Some toilet-paper holders are specifically designed to double as safety bars.
- **Towel racks.** Regular towel racks aren't designed to support the weight of someone leaning on them and will loosen over time and eventually detach from the wall, which could lead to serious injury. Install safety towel bars and/or towel shelves that are designed to provide support.

# Healthy Eating

## Seeds 101

Edible seeds can play an important part in the human diet, not only because they're nutritious, but they can also add appearance, texture, and taste to a variety of foods. Experts at the Institute of Food Technologists provide a short lesson in popular seeds:

### Seed: Chia

Origin: Mexico, Central America

Taste: Mild, slightly nutty

Uses: Cookies, salads, oatmeal, soups, yogurt, baked goods

Nutritional Value: Contains the highest levels of total omega-3 fatty acids of any plant source, rich in fiber, protein, antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals

Health Benefits: Helps control blood sugar levels, promotes satiety (feeling of fullness after eating), and slows the breakdown of carbohydrates

Fun Fact: When added to water, chia seeds can swell to 12 times their weight in liquid and create a gel that could be used as an alternative to eggs and some oils in recipes.



### Seed: Flax

Origin: Eastern Mediterranean to India

Taste: Mild, nutty

Uses: Soups, salads, stews, hamburgers, hot and cold cereals, chilies, sauces and dips, fruit smoothies, cookies, muffins and bread dough, dairy-free milk product for people with lactose-allergies

Nutritional Value: Source of polyunsaturated fat, omega-3 fatty acids, essential amino acids, antioxidants, folate, vitamin B-6, magnesium potassium, and iron

Health Benefit: Easily digestible

Fun Fact: The seed was valued as both a food and a medicine in ancient Mesopotamia 10,000 years ago.



### Seed: Quinoa

Origin: South America

Taste: Mild, slightly nutty

Uses: Breakfast cereals, artisan-style breads, muffins, pizza crusts, bakery products, salads, meat-free burgers, vegan and vegetarian products

Nutritional Value: Contains the highest protein levels of all the cereal grains, good source of magnesium, vitamin E, potassium and fiber

Health Benefit: Provides all of the essential amino acids for optimal health

Fun Fact: The United Nations has declared 2013 the "International Year of Quinoa." Pronounced KEEN-wa.



### Seed: Sunflower

Origin: North America

Taste: Mild

Uses: Baked goods such as bagels, muffins, multigrain breads, and in trail mixes, hot breakfast cereals, coated in chocolate for confectionary applications, sprinkled in yogurt or on salads, and much more

Nutritional Value: Contains polyunsaturated oil

Health Benefit: Weight management

Fun Fact: Used by Native Americans as a high-energy food source



# What's America's favorite vegetable?

The potato (sadly in the form of French fries) is number one. But when you look at non-starchy veggies, the tomato comes out on top.

Eating canned tomatoes provides the greatest source of antioxidants to Americans' diets—more than any other non-starchy vegetable. People who eat diets rich in fruits and vegetables tend to have a decreased risk of cancer and heart disease, report researchers from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Experts have not identified exactly what it is about fruits and vegetables that confer the health benefits, but it is known that fruits and vegetables contribute antioxidants to the diet. Tomatoes are a good option for those who want to increase their intake of antioxidants.

Canned tomatoes (used in spaghetti sauce and chili, for example) are available year round providing a convenient and cost-effective way to increase antioxidant intake during any season.



## Featured Recipe: Vegetarian Spaghetti Sauce

### Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 small onions, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 1/4 cups zucchini, sliced
- 1 Tbsp oregano, dried
- 1 Tbsp basil, dried
- 1 8 oz can tomato sauce
- 1 6 oz can tomato paste\*
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup water

### Directions

1. In a medium skillet, heat oil. Sauté onions, garlic, and zucchini in oil for 5 minutes on medium heat.
2. Add remaining ingredients and simmer covered for 45 minutes. Serve over spaghetti.

*Makes 6 servings; 3/4 cup each. Per Serving: 105 calories, 5 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 479 mg sodium\*, 15 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 3 g protein. \*To reduce sodium, use a 6-oz can of low-sodium tomato paste. New sodium content for each serving is 253 mg.*

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute,  
YOUR GUIDE TO Lowering Your Blood Pressure With DASH — Recipes for Heart Health





## Run for your life

Vigorous exercise is good for your health, but too much can do more harm than good to your heart.

Limit your exercise to a maximum daily dose of between 30 and 50 minutes, say researchers in an editorial published in *Heart*.

The idea that more and more high-intensity exercise, such as marathons, can only do you good is a myth, say the cardiologists from St. Luke's Mid America Heart Institute in Kansas City.

Routine moderate physical activity will add years to your life and life to your years, but running too far, too fast, for too many years may speed your race to the finish line of life, they said.

If you must train for a marathon, do just one or a few and then cut back to a safer, healthier exercise pattern.

## 3 important questions about ovarian cancer



A study by researchers at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center found that a simple 3-question paper-and-pencil survey can effectively identify women who are having symptoms that may indicate ovarian cancer. The survey takes less than 2 minutes to complete in a doctor's office.

The study represents the first evaluation of an ovarian cancer symptom-screening tool in a primary care setting among normal-risk women as part of their routine medical-history check-up. The results are published in the *Open Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

Early detection of ovarian cancer is key to survival. Cure rates for those diagnosed when the disease is confined to the ovary are as high as 90%. But more than 70% of women with ovarian cancer are diagnosed with advanced-stage disease, when the survival rate is lower.

### The survey's 3 questions ask if a woman currently has one or more of the following:

1. Abdominal and/or pelvic pain
2. Feeling full quickly and/or unable to eat normally
3. Abdominal bloating and/or increased abdomen size

The survey also asked about the frequency and duration of these symptoms, how many days a month they occur, and for how long.

**Talk with your doctor about any of these symptoms.**

## Bounce house dangers

If your kids like to moonwalk and jump in those ever-present birthday-party experiences called bounce houses, know about these dangers. A child goes to the ER every 45 seconds because of bouncing injuries.

Researchers at Nationwide Children’s Hospital say inflatable bouncers are the cause of a 15-fold increase in injuries to kids—mostly broken bones, strains and sprains but also head and neck injuries. The findings were published in *Pediatrics*.

Injury patterns for inflatable bouncers are similar to those the docs see on trampolines, which have national safety guidelines. Bounce houses have no guidelines. So set your own rules.



**The researchers suggest parents should consider the risks before allowing their children to use an inflatable bouncer.** If you allow your child to use an inflatable bouncer, limit use to children 6 years of age and older. Make sure an adult is there to supervise while the bouncer is in use and allow only one child on the bouncer at a time. If more than one child will be on the bouncer at the same time, the children should be about the same age and size.

## We never used to do it that way...

Grandparent caregivers and other older adults may have experience in caring for young children, but many are unaware of more recent safety and other guidelines about car seats, cribs, and safe sleeping positions, says the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) reporting on a study of grandparents.

The 2011 American Community Survey estimates that 2.87 million grandparents are the primary caregivers to their grandchildren—a nearly 20% increase since 2000.

The group’s study asked grandparents about these caregiving issues:

- “What is the best position for a baby to sleep in?” Half of caregivers still said “on the stomach” or “on the side.” The AAP recommends that infants be placed to sleep on their backs to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- “What is the best position for the car safety seat?” A quarter of the adults surveyed still thought a 9-month-old should be in a forward-facing car seat. The AAP recommends that children remain in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat until age 2.
- “Should bumpers, stuffed animals, and blankets be removed from infant cribs?” Yes, the AAP has recommended that these items could pose a suffocation hazard.
- “Can toddlers learn to walk using a walker?” Most adults thought so, but the AAP does not recommend walker use, and in fact urges caregivers to dispose of them because of serious safety concerns.





### Taxed?

Most Americans say that doing their income taxes is easier than knowing what they should and shouldn't eat to be healthier, according to the International Food Information Council's 2012 Food & Health Survey. Although survey respondents think about eating a healthy diet and want to make improvements, they say the ever-changing nutritional guidelines make it hard to know what to do.

## Go red to manage pain

Tart cherries may help reduce chronic inflammation, especially for the millions of Americans suffering from joint pain and arthritis, according to research from Oregon Health & Science University. The researchers suggest tart cherries have the "highest anti-inflammatory content of any food" and can help people with osteoarthritis manage their disease.

In a study of women ages 40 to 70 with inflammatory osteoarthritis, the researchers found that drinking tart cherry juice twice daily for three weeks led to significant reductions in important inflammation markers—especially for women who had the highest inflammation levels at the start of the study.

Often thought of as "wear-and-tear" arthritis, osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis. Athletes are often at a greater risk for developing the condition, given their excessive joint use that can cause a breakdown in cartilage and lead to pain and injury, according to the Arthritis Foundation.

Along with providing the fruit's bright red color, the antioxidant compounds in tart cherries—called anthocyanins—have been specifically linked to high antioxidant capacity and reduced inflammation, at levels comparable to some well-known pain medications.

Available every day of the year in dried, frozen, and juice forms, tart cherries are a versatile ingredient to include in any training or inflammation-fighting diet.

