



Health
Dimensions®

HealthyLife® Letter

Promoting Health. Enhancing Life. Reducing Costs.

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May 2013

Sore after exercise?

Try a glass of cherry juice to ease your pain. A study in the *Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition* looked at the impact of tart cherry juice on muscle soreness. The vitamin C and antioxidants in cherries may help ease inflammation and decrease the swelling that contributes to soreness.



Our bodies are almost two-thirds water.

The brain, in fact, is 75% water. Water helps nearly every part of the human body function. Even moderate dehydration can cause headaches and dizziness. To calculate how much water you need every day, click on the Hydration Calculator at www.bottledwater.org/public/hydcalf/input1.html.



Can you take a HIT?

Short sprints might boost your fitness by significant levels in just 2 weeks. Really short sprints—like 6 seconds.

Researchers at Abertay University in Scotland have claimed that people can improve their fitness levels with just small amounts of exercise.

Participants were asked to cycle all out for 6 seconds then rest for one minute, repeating the cycle 10 times. They found that after 2 weeks participants recorded a 10% improvement in fitness.

The 6-second bursts are one of the shortest sprint durations ever used in high-intensity training (HIT). HIT involves short bursts of intense exercise and achieves similar results to long-distance endurance training.

However, the method is much less time consuming and comes with a lower risk of injury, making it ideal for athletes wishing to remain injury free.

Self-Care Corner

If you help others, you'll be healthier

The benefits of volunteering or helping other people seem to pay off for the giver and not necessarily the receiver.

Providing tangible help to others protects your health and may lengthen your life, according to a 5-year study by researchers at 3 universities.

The lead researcher Dr. Michael J. Poulin, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Buffalo, says, "Giving assistance to others may offer health benefits to the giver by buffering the negative effects of stress." The study was published in the American Journal of Public Health.

Here's why giving works. The study subjects were people from Detroit. They told researchers they had experienced stressful events during the past year such as serious illness, burglary, job loss, financial troubles, or death of a family member. They also reported the amount of time they had spent in the past year helping friends, neighbors or relatives who did not live with them. They did errands, shopping and housework. They also provided transportation, child care and other tasks.

The researchers concluded that helping others reduced the risk of illness and death by protecting the givers, even though they themselves had significant life stress. The social interaction was an important factor.

Do-it-yourself spring cleaning guide

Germs grow and invade your privacy. Bathrooms are one of their popular spots. They gather in the bathtub, shower, toilet—just about everywhere.

"People these days just don't take time out from their busy schedule to clean," said Donna Duberg, lab science and germ expert at Saint Louis University. Duberg offers some simple ways to do your spring cleaning and make your bathroom germ-free.



Simplify cleaning: Engage in basic cleaning such as disinfecting and removing visible dirt regularly, to make spring cleaning less cumbersome. As spring sets in, brace yourself to clear the scum and lime scale—mostly found on your shower curtains—and mold stuck in and around your bathtub. They hold on to bacteria and can cause fungi to grow.

Don't overkill: If you use too many cleaners and don't dilute them, you risk the chance of inhaling the fumes of the cleaners, which can affect your lungs. Keep the windows open while cleaning or plug in fans to avoid breathing in the chemicals. Read the label carefully to understand how to use a product.

Instead of harsh chemicals, use the magic ingredient: Vinegar, when mixed with water can do wonders for the surfaces. Spray a mixture of one part white distilled vinegar mixed with 9 parts water to see a nice shine on your bathtub or floor. Undiluted white distilled vinegar mixed with baking soda can be used to remove scum. The fewer the cleaning products, the better. Vinegar is inexpensive, is not harmful to kids and pets, and always leaves a shine.



{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.}

Cautions about sinus rinsing

Little teapots with long spouts have become a fixture in many homes for reasons that have nothing to do with tea.

Called neti pots, they are used to rinse the nasal passages with a saline (salt-based) solution and have become a popular treatment for congested sinuses, colds and allergies, and for moistening nasal passages exposed to dry indoor air.

The FDA has concerns about the risk of infection tied to the improper use of neti pots and other nasal rinsing devices. The agency is promoting safe practices for using all nasal rinsing devices, which include bulb syringes, squeeze bottles, and battery-operated pulsed water devices.

These devices are generally safe and useful products, but they must be used and cleaned properly.

Most important is the source of water that is used with nasal rinsing devices. Tap water that is not filtered, treated, or processed in specific ways is not safe for use as a nasal rinse.

Some tap water contains low levels of organisms, such as bacteria and protozoa. These include amoebas, which may be safe to swallow because stomach acid kills them. But these “bugs” can stay alive in nasal passages and cause potentially serious infections, according to the CDC.

The procedure for nasal rinsing may vary slightly by device, but generally involves these steps:

- Wash and dry hands. Check that the device is clean and completely dry. Wash the device with distilled, sterile, or boiled and cooled tap water. Then dry the inside with a paper towel or let it air dry between uses.
- Use the appropriate water to prepare the saline rinse, either with the prepared mixture supplied with the device, or one you make yourself with distilled or sterile water, which you can buy in stores. The label will state “distilled” or “sterile.” Boiled and cooled tap water—boiled for 3 to 5 minutes, then cooled until it is lukewarm may be used. Previously boiled water can be stored in a clean, closed container for use within 24 hours. Or use water passed through a filter with an absolute pore size of 1 micron or smaller, which traps potentially infectious organisms. CDC has information on selecting these filters, which you can buy online or from some hardware and discount stores.
- Lean over a sink, tilt your head sideways with your forehead and chin roughly level to avoid liquid flowing into your mouth.
- Breathe through your open mouth. Insert the spout of the saline-filled container into your upper nostril so that the liquid drains through the lower nostril.
- Clear your nostrils, and then repeat the procedure, tilting your head sideways, on the other side. Some people like to do this procedure in the shower.

Nasal rinsing can remove dirt, dust, pollen and other debris, as well as help to loosen thick mucus. It can also help relieve nasal symptoms of allergies, colds and flu.



Healthy Eating



Spring clean your diet with green eating

Bright emerald green is symbolic of spring and food bursting with flavor and nutrients. Spring “clean” your diet, suggests Kari Kooi, a registered dietitian at The Methodist Hospital in Houston. She recommends these 5 green powerhouse foods:

- **Asparagus:** These green spears offer a bounty of nutrients. Asparagus is high in an antioxidant that can help reduce skin damage from the sun. Also, asparagus contains the most folate of any vegetable. Folate plays a vital role in heart health and the prevention of birth defects.
- **Avocado:** Add some thin slices of smooth avocado to your sandwich or salad without feeling guilty. The monounsaturated fat in avocado is what’s mostly responsible for avocado’s super-food status. This type of happy fat can help drive down levels of bad cholesterol.
- **Brussels sprouts:** These baby cabbages are loaded with antioxidants and filling fiber. A cruciferous vegetable, Brussels sprouts contain powerful cancer-fighting sulfur compounds that are responsible for their pungent aroma. These green vegetables take on a whole new flavor and crispy texture when roasted in the oven.
- **Kale:** This beautiful ruffled green is being called “the queen of greens.” Kale is brimming with eye-nourishing phytochemicals that have been shown to prevent macular degeneration (vision loss) and cataracts. Kale is a better source of calcium than spinach.
- **Kiwifruit:** Rich in vitamin C, potassium, and fiber, kiwis make a perfect portable snack. Just slice a kiwifruit in half and scoop out the emerald sweet and tart flesh with a spoon.




Spice up your life



If you’re cutting back on salt to control blood pressure, the Spice Islands Test Kitchen has developed 5 tips to boost flavor in food:

- **Increase the amount of herbs when reducing salt.** For a great flavor punch, increase your spice and herbs by 25% when reducing or eliminating salt in a recipe.
- **Crush herbs to release all flavor.** For leafy herbs such as rosemary and leaf oregano, lightly crush the herbs to bring out maximum flavor.
- **For soups and stews, reduce the salt and add spices last.** For long-cooking soups and stews, reduce the salt. Save about a fourth of the spices called for and add them at the end of cooking. This will give a more intense flavor to the dish.
- **Add herbs early in no-cook meals.** For salad dressings, fruit dishes, or other no-cook foods, add herbs and spices several hours before serving so flavors can develop and blend. For salad dressings, add seasonings to the vinegar and let stand before adding the oil.
- **Give dried spices a boost.** If a recipe calls for fresh herbs and you have dried on hand, simply use a third to a half as much dry for fresh.





If you want to lose weight, you may wish to measure your dishes. Research indicates that the larger your glass, bowl, or plate, the more likely you are to eat more.

Featured Recipe:

Peanutty Energy Bars

This prize-winning recipe offers a yummy alternative to commercial energy bars. These homemade bars are perfect for when you are hiking or biking, as well as for a satisfying afternoon snack. They are relatively high in fat, but it's healthful fat from peanuts and sunflower seeds. For variety, you can make this recipe with cashews and cashew butter and add a variety of dried fruits (cranberries, cherries, and dates).

Ingredients:

1/2 cup salted dry-roasted peanuts
1/2 cup roasted sunflower seed kernels, or use more peanuts or other nuts
1/2 cup raisins or other dried fruit
2 cups uncooked oatmeal, old-fashioned or instant
2 cups toasted rice cereal, such as Rice Krispies
1/2 cup peanut butter, crunchy or creamy
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup light corn syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla
Optional: 1/4 cup toasted wheat germ

Directions

In a large bowl, mix together the peanuts, sunflower seeds, raisins, oatmeal, and toasted rice cereal (and wheat germ). Set aside.

In a medium microwavable bowl, combine the peanut butter, brown sugar, and corn syrup. Microwave on high for 2 minutes. Add vanilla and stir until blended. Pour the peanut butter mixture over the dry ingredients; stir until coated.

For squares, spoon the mixture into an 8 x 8-inch pan coated with cooking spray. For bars spoon it into a 9 x 13-inch pan. Press down firmly. (It helps to coat your fingers with margarine, oil, or cooking spray.) Let stand for about an hour, and then cut into squares or bars.

Yield: 16 squares or bars. Per serving: 225 calories, 30 g carbohydrate, 6 g protein, 9 g fat. Recipe courtesy of The Peanut Institute (www.peanut-institute.org/).



Medical News

Understanding psoriasis – a misunderstood skin condition



Psoriasis is a chronic, genetic skin disease that's not contagious. It results when faulty signals in the immune system prompt skin cells to redevelop too quickly, causing red, scaly areas that crack and bleed. It often affects the elbows, knees, scalp, and torso but can appear anywhere on the body.

Psoriasis affects far more than the skin. It can have serious physical and emotional effects. Research shows that psoriasis can cause as much disability as other major diseases. Some people with psoriasis develop a type of arthritis.

Often, people with psoriasis wear long sleeves and clothing that can cover the itchy and painful patches of skin to avoid embarrassment.

There's no cure but treatment with medications from a dermatologist can help.

The National Psoriasis Foundation (www.psoriasis.org) is leading the drive to educate others about this condition that affects more than 7 million Americans.



Is your home safe from radon?

Indoor radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. Breathing it over long periods can present a significant health risk to families all over the country.

Radon is an invisible radioactive gas that seeps into homes undetected through foundation cracks. It can reach harmful levels if trapped indoors. It travels up from underground sources of uranium in the earth's crust.

The radon threat is preventable with some simple steps. In existing homes, families can begin protecting themselves by buying an easy-to-use radon test kit to find out if a high level exists. If so, a high level might be lowered simply with a straightforward radon venting system installed by a contractor.

In new homes, builders can easily and economically include radon-resistant features during construction. Home buyers should ask for these. The EPA also recommends that home buyers ask their builder to test for radon gas before they move in.

According to the EPA, 1 in every 15 homes nationwide has a high radon level. Test your home for radon every 2 years. Retest for it any time you move, make structural changes to your home, or occupy a previously unused level of a house.



Best prep for your kid's doc appointment

When somebody needs to see the doctor, it's best to make the most of your visit, said Dr. Hannah Chow, Loyola University Health System pediatrician, who shares this advice:

- Ask your most important questions first. Bring a list of questions. Keep it short.
- Make good use of the office nurse. Sometimes the nurse can answer your questions by phone right away. A doctor may not be able to call you back until the end of the day.
- Make sure your phone number and address are correct in your chart.
- Never assume no news is good news regarding tests, labs, X-rays and other similar results. Always contact your doctor's office if you do not receive a test result in the expected time frame.
- Fill out papers to the best of your ability. If the doctor needs to sign a release to the school to give your child medication, fill out which drug and which child.
- Don't bring too many other children to the appointments.
- Schedule annual physicals early. Doctors' offices get very busy for back-to-school and sports appointments.

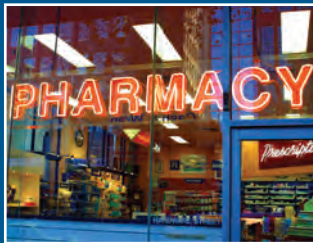
Baby teeth

The ideal time for a child to visit the dentist is 6 months after the child's first teeth appear. During this initial visit, a dentist will be able to examine the development of the child's mouth.

Babies may have dental problems, such as teething irritations, gum disease, and prolonged thumb or pacifier sucking.

The sooner the child visits a dentist, the better, says the Academy of General Dentistry in offering these other tips:

- Clean your infant's gums with a clean, damp cloth twice a day.
- Ask your dentist when you may begin to rub a tiny dab of toothpaste on your child's gums. Doing so will help your child become accustomed to the flavor of toothpaste.
- As soon as the first teeth come in, begin brushing them with a small, soft-bristled toothbrush and a pea-sized dab of fluoride toothpaste.
- Help a young child brush at night. This is the most important time to brush, due to lower salivary flow during sleep and higher risk for cavities and plaque.
- By about age 5, your child can learn to brush his or her teeth with proper help from an adult.



Even the best medicines in the world won't work if you don't take them as prescribed. Not taking medications is a major health issue and can cause people with conditions such as diabetes to get worse. A UCSF study in JAMA Internal Medicine attributed some of the problem to doctors who don't communicate the importance of taking medications to their patients. Patients who had a trusting relationship with their doctors were better about taking their medication as directed.

Work the crowd

Social gatherings, office parties, community events—they all give you an opportunity to enhance your professional image.

But if you're nervous about what to talk about in a crowd of strangers, Toastmasters International offers this advice to turn small talk into smart talk:

- Plan your topics. Think of 2 to 3 topics you can discuss with anyone.
- Keep it lighthearted. Avoid office gossip and controversial topics. Stay clear of topics related to sex, religion, and politics.
- Meet someone new. Take the first step to introduce yourself to the CEO. Or talk to someone new while waiting in the food line.
- Spark a conversation. Ask open-ended questions about the person you're getting to know.
- Listen attentively. Ask follow-up questions about the person or group you're talking with. Listen more than you talk.
- Introduce others. Be sure to introduce a newcomer to those you're talking with.
- Consider cultural differences. Take into account figures of speech, how you present humor, and personal space.
- Limit alcohol. Know your drink limit. If necessary, avoid alcohol altogether to keep your composure.

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