

2010



HEALTHY LIVING

A Special Supplement To
The Crittenden Press
November 11, 2010

Dieting dilemma: Can you still eat sweets?

(StatePoint) There's nothing like your favorite chocolates or sweet treats after a hectic day. Americans love sweets so much that they are less than resolute when it comes to passing them up, despite the potential toll on how they fit into favorite outfits.

One in five Americans call themselves "failures" when it comes to sweet temptations, according to a survey conducted by the Corn Refiners Association (CRA). In fact, 28 percent refuse to choose between looking trim in clothing and enjoying their favorite foods, according to the study. And 40 percent of the women questioned would opt for less revealing outfits rather than give up sweets, while

just 35 percent said they would try to cut back on treats.

Fortunately, there is a simpler, healthier solution: maintain a healthy lifestyle and enjoy sweets in moderation.

"You can enjoy sweets if you consider your total calorie picture for the day. Think about what you're choosing to eat

based on how much physical activity you'll be getting" says Kristine Clark, Ph.D., R.D., and Director of

Sports Nutrition at Penn State University. "Try hard to eat well balanced meals and exercise 30 minutes a day. Then if you feel like a sweet, enjoy it!"

"You can enjoy sweets if you consider your total calorie picture for the day. Think about what you're choosing to eat based on how much physical activity you'll be getting."

Kristine Clark, Ph.D., R.D.

Director of Sports Nutrition at Penn State

Here are some tips from Dr. Clark on how to have your chocolate and still face yourself in the

mirror:

- Calories always count. Don't think a bite here or there doesn't matter. The calories in "itty bitty bites" could add up to 500 or more, depending on their frequency.

- Sugar is sugar.

Since calories count, when you want something sweet, budget for it and enjoy. But remember, no matter where sugar comes from -- corn, cane, beets or bees -- the

calories are the same and the body handles these sugars the same.

- Pretend saving calories is saving

money. If you don't go out for lunch today you might save money and 500-700 calories. By bringing lunch instead, you control calories, can add more fruits and veggies, and save cash.

- Think of calories in exercise equivalents. For example, if you know eating a second serving of pasta is 400 calories and you also know 400 calories can be burned by walking or jogging four miles, then you might decide not to have the extra serving. You might opt for an extra serving of salad for an exercise cost of only 150 calories or 1.5 miles of walking or jogging.

It's all about moderation when it comes to your favorite sweet treats and staying healthy and active.



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Take preventative steps to avoid flu and other illnesses

SUBMITTED BY JAMI PERRY, M.D.

One of the main reasons I chose Family Medicine is due to the focus on preventive care. I believe that it is important to take steps while you are healthy to keep yourself healthy. Taking good care of yourself and your health starts with the basics: get plenty of rest, drink 6-8 glasses of water a day, eat a variety of healthy foods, getting regular exercise, if you smoke do your best to cut back or quit, and drink alcohol only in moderation. Vaccines are another way to keep you healthy by preventing illness, and this time of year, that means getting your influenza vaccine or "flu shot".

Currently, the CDC recommends that everyone age 6 months and older receive a flu vaccine. Every year the flu vaccine protects against the three types of influenza that the

Other recommendations to discuss with your healthcare provider:

Children/Teens

- Wear your seat belt at all times.
- Wear a helmet while on bicycles, skateboards or ATVs.
- Have a yearly check-up and keep up-to-date on vaccines.
- Parents, talk with your teens about avoiding alcohol and tobacco.

Men

- Prostate screening (to begin age 40-50)

Women

- Breast cancer screening – mam-

mogram (to begin age 40)

- Cervical cancer screening – Pap smear
- Osteoporosis screening

All

- Colon cancer screening (to begin at age 50 if no family history)
- Cholesterol screening
- Tetanus vaccine every 10 years
- Pneumonia vaccine, Shingles vaccine if needed

CDC expects will cause the most illness in the U.S. this flu season. The 2010-2011 vaccine protects against the H1N1 vaccine that caused widespread illness in the 2009-2010 flu

season due to the likelihood of recurrence of that illness this year. In addition, two other flu viruses are

included in the immunization.

The flu vaccine cannot cause the flu – it is not a live vaccine. However, the body produces an immune response to the vaccine that can cause low-grade fever and achiness that typically occurs in the first 24-48 hours after vaccination.

Symptoms of the flu illness include: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, fatigue (tiredness), headaches, possible vomiting and diarrhea especially in children. Not all symptoms will be present in every case. The flu is spread person to person by droplets produced from coughing, sneezing, or talking that can be inhaled by others around them. It is also possible for the flu to be spread by touching a surface or

object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own nose or mouth.

For these reasons, it is important to stay home when you are sick, cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, wash your hands often using soap and water and do your best not to touch your mouth or nose. If you develop flu symptoms, visit your healthcare provider, as there are medicines available that may lessen flu symptoms or severity early in illness.

Protect yourself and improve your health by following these suggestions for influenza. In addition, schedule a visit with your healthcare provider to discuss how you can improve your health today.

Breathe easier despite environmental allergies

(StatePoint) Many people battle allergies when the weather first warms. But the summer and fall seasons aren't exactly a symptom-free walk through the park, either!

Characterized by dry conditions and high humidity levels, these months can be just as troubling for allergy sufferers as the difficult spring season.

This year in particular is proving tough for many allergy sufferers. Itchy eyes, stuffed-up noses and profuse sneezing can detract from the fun of the warm-weather months.

By consulting an allergist or isolating the causes of specific symptoms, you can get started by knowing exactly which allergens cause which symptoms. Whether it's hay fever, food allergies, asthma or eczema, the right knowledge can set you on your way towards a relatively allergy-free existence. Only then can you get the proper shots and take the proper measurements to avoid allergy triggers.

Most people don't consider how the foods they eat can contribute to allergy symptoms. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, like fish oil and

walnut oil, fight allergies and are all-natural anti-inflammatories. Fiber also can help with allergies related to your gastrointestinal tract, while apples and other antioxidant-rich foods improve lung health. Foods with zinc, including yogurt, chicken, tofu and ham, also are shown to help with breathing.

A strong air purifier is a quick and easy way to effectively eliminate many of the airborne impurities that in everybody's home.

If you are an allergy sufferer, be sure to use one with multiple filters, such as Amway's Atmosphere Air Purifier, an Energy Star Qualified product which relies on a three-filter system to eliminate 99.99 percent of airborne contaminants that pass through it.

Before going outside, check the news to learn the pollen count and avoid the outdoors if the number is high. Peak pollen time is early in the morning from 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. When you come back, a shower can eliminate many outdoor contaminants.

Avoiding bothersome some allergies and breathing easier is about being vigilant both inside and outside your home and monitoring your own body.



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Dealing with Stress and how to prevent it

(StatePoint) Stress is a part of daily life, even more so during tough times when dealing with a family crisis or struggling to pay the bills. And as stress increases, people are more likely to give up enjoyable activities that help keep stress at bay.

It doesn't have to be this way.

"There are many ways to deal with stress throughout the day," says Paul Huljich, writer and founder of the MWellA Community (Mind Wellness Awareness). Formerly an organic food pioneer worth over \$100 million dollars, he suffered a debilitating breakdown leading to hospitalization and a bipolar disorder diagnosis. He wound up losing his business, family and even dignity.

"My disorder was a direct result of the extreme stress I was under," he says. "But I now practice different stress-reducing techniques that have helped me live symptom-free for 10 years."

Self-Care is Mandatory

When the bills aren't paid, the car needs servicing and the groceries haven't been bought but the kids need to be fed, it's easy to put your needs at the bottom of your to-do list. But by making rest and relaxation a priority, you give yourself time to revitalize and teach your kids valuable lessons in self-care and self-esteem.

Self-care can include different activities, from yoga and brisk walking to spiritual pursuits, like journaling, meditation or affirmations. It also includes getting enough sleep nightly, as most adults need a minimum of seven hours. It's also important to find ways to let go of past hurts.

Eat Well

A healthy diet is critical to immune and neurological functions, which in turn, help manage stress. Brain-healthy foods include nuts, fish, bananas and eggs, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables. Complex carbohydrates like brown rice and sweet potatoes are also beneficial.

Reach Out

Everyone needs to connect with other people, and quality time with family and friends can decrease your stress. However, sometimes we feel the need to talk with those who understand the specific nature of our problems. If so, consider looking outside your normal circles for support groups that address your needs.

One such group is the new MWellA online community, located at mwella.ning.com, which provides visitors with a place to reflect on where they are heading in life and share experiences. The site offers tips on reducing stress, along with the ability to participate in an online support group.

"Millions of people suffer from mental disorders. I felt it was my calling to build a community where people can find support and speak about their own struggles," says Huljich. He also has written a fictionalized account of his battles in a new novel titled "Betrayal of Love and Freedom," which is intended to give hope to others seeking to triumph over mind conditions -- and to overcome the stigma of disease.

Most importantly, if you're struggling, be open to change. An open mind is a peaceful mind.

Personalized Care for Women



Pictured from left to right: Dr. Kris Beickman, Dr. Kara Wilson Geoghegan, Jama Arnett PA-C, and Dr. A.D. Sprague.

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Rid home of harmful contaminants, irritants

(StatePoint) Keeping your family healthy is about more than just making sure everybody eats right and get plenty of rest. Your home itself plays an important role in your health and especially that of young children.

Maintaining a visibly-clean home isn't enough, as what you can't see can be harmful. Airborne contaminants and irritants, such as bacteria, mold and pollen can circulate through homes that appear clean. And chemicals in some cleaning products also can be damaging to your family and pets.

"According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the air in an average home has two to five times more pollutants than outdoor air. These include dust, mold, carcinogens and other toxins that can severely affect the health and well-being of your family," says certified green building professional Lisa Beres of GreenNest.com, who provides consultations to help people make their homes healthier.

Here are a few ideas to keep your home, your family and your planet

clean and safe:

Check those Linens

Dust mites and bacteria tend to collect in large numbers in your blanket, pillows and bed sheets. These types of microbes can trigger asthma and allergies.

Washing linens once a week in hot water is a good way to kill bacteria, but there also are products that help. These include mattress barrier covers, which are woven tight enough that allergens can't penetrate them. A variety of bedding materials, including wool and natural rubber, are perfect for repelling dust from the average bed, which can potentially house millions of dust mites.

Clean the Air

Even with all the corners and crannies of your home nicely scrubbed, many microbes, ragweed and pollen could be circulating through the air, contributing to allergy and asthma symptoms. There are several simple ways to air out your living space, like opening the windows, but nothing works as efficiently as a reliable air purifier.

"You definitely want to use an air purifier," stresses Beres, who recommends the Sanyo Air Washer Plus. "It literally uses the power of water to

clean the air and suppress the spread of bacteria and germs. It also uses the HEPA filtration system, which removes 99.97 percent of allergens and neutral-

izes odors."

It's all about cleaning the air, just as you do with your home's surfaces.

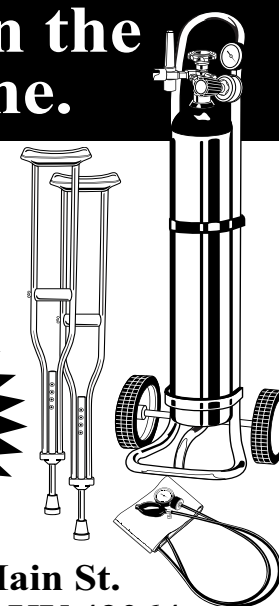
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After suffering a stroke while driving, Gerald Martin is now healthy with no lingering effects.

Western Baptist's stroke center earns national distinction

Gerald Martin barely made it home from McDonald's last spring after experiencing a stroke in the car. By the time he pulled into the driveway, he couldn't move his left side.

A few days later, "I drove myself home from the hospital," said Martin, 66, smiling ear to ear. "I have no lingering effects of the stroke whatsoever. What a miracle drug!"

Martin benefited from intravenous tPA – tissue plasminogen activator – a clot-busting medication that can reverse paralyzing stroke symptoms if received within three hours from the time symptoms start. "They administered the medicine and within 15 minutes I was raising my left arm," he said. "The staff was as pleased as we were."

Western Baptist Hospital has earned The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center.

Western Baptist is the first Kentucky hospital west of Bowling Green to earn this honor. Of more than 4,000 U.S. hospitals accredited by The Joint Commission, just 600 have earned the added distinction for stroke care.

"We're proud to achieve the dis-

tinction because of what it means for our patients," said Larry Barton, Western Baptist president and CEO. "This certification recognizes Western Baptist Hospital's commitment to providing outstanding stroke care to our patients and our community."

Stroke is the nation's third leading killer and the leading cause of serious, long-term disability. On average, someone suffers a stroke every 45 seconds and someone dies of a stroke every 3.1 minutes.

Western Baptist and the University of Louisville Health Care partner in a telemedicine stroke network and, along with the Purchase District Health Department, on a grant to improve community awareness of stroke risk factors, symptoms and treatment.

For anyone with questions on stroke or heart attack symptoms, Western Baptist nurses answer the free 24-hour Chest Pain & Stroke Hotline at 1-800-575-1911.



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Reduce length of illness with beneficial exercise

SUBMITTED BY SERENA DICKERSON

As cold and flu season approaches — or strep throat, which has already arrived at my house — questions come up about exercise and illness. I am asked often if it is okay to exercise when you feel bad or are sick. How soon after an illness can I return to regular activity?

A lot of us are going to get sick this year, so it's good to know what to do if it happens to you. I started researching and asking experts these questions to help us to know what is best. But my first thought is what about preventing illness in the first place? We are eating our fruits and vegetables, but can exercise help protect you from getting a cold? Research says "yes."

According to an expert from the American College of Sports Medicine, "multiple studies have shown a 25 to 50 percent decrease in sick time for active people who complete at least 45 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise (such as walking) most days of the week." The protection that regular exercise offers is far greater than the protection drugs can provide, according to the article. So instead of taking a pill, take a walk or

hit an exercise class to help ward off a cold.

Despite your best efforts, you might still end up getting the sniffles this winter. So what are some guidelines to follow when it comes to exercise?

- If you've got a cold that's above the neck (runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, etc.) then you should be okay to exercise if you're feeling up to it.

- If you have a cold that's below the neck (in your chest), or if you have other symptoms like a fever or swollen glands, it's better to rest.

- Listen to your body. If you're not feeling good and you push it too much, the illness can end up hanging around longer.

- Once you're well again, ease back into exercise. You might find it takes a week or two (or maybe even longer, depending on how sick you were) to get back up to your pre-illness level.

- If you're running a fever, you may want to rest, to not dehydrate. If you are active and exercising regularly, do you notice you get fewer colds now than you did before you became active? Has being fit helped you fight off illness?

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Follow your gut: Tips for better digestive health

(StatePoint) You can follow your heart or do what your brain tells you to do – but how often do you pay attention to your gut? Good digestive health is a key foundation for good overall health, yet we often ignore or misunderstand the importance of that "gut instinct" from inside.

Approximately one in four people experience occasional digestive upsets, according to a recent GfK Roper "Gut Check" digestive health survey of online Americans. The survey also revealed that many have some common misconceptions about the digestive system.

"I see the frustration occasional digestive upsets cause my patients," said Dr. Roshini Rajapaksa, a gastroenterologist at NYU Langone Medical Center and spokesperson for Align. "The first step to building a stronger inside is to better understand how your digestive system works and what you can do to keep it healthy."

Dr. Rajapaksa offers the following tips for maintaining good digestive health:

•Do Your Homework: Be proactive! Develop an understanding of your digestive system and how to keep it healthy. Take action: speak to a doctor about digestive health and how you feel, research credible Web sites and books, or keep a log of food and activity triggers to identify the source of your occasional digestive upsets. Do you know about probiotics? Read up on these little bugs and find out if they are right for you.

•Trust Your Gut Instinct: You are the best judge of how you feel, as everyone is unique. The recent Gut Check Survey found that one in five survey participants who experience occasional digestive upsets say others have told them their attitude or emotions are causing their digestive upsets.

Listen to your body and determine what remedies work best for you. Changes in your routine, diet, stress and travel can cause an imbalance, which can lead to occasional digestive upsets. Take time to de-stress, exercise, or keep a food diary.

•Do a Gut Check on Your Prior-

"I see the frustration occasional digestive upsets cause my patients. The first step to building a stronger inside is to better understand how your digestive system works and what you can do to keep it healthy."

Dr. Roshini Rajapaksa
Gastroenterologist

ties: If occasional digestive upsets impact your life, pay attention to them! Your body is telling you something, and ignoring upsets won't make you feel better. Make digestive health a priority – it's key to your overall health. Challenge yourself to learn more about your digestive system and the science behind it.

•Feel Good Inside and Out: More than half of those surveyed in the Gut Check Survey who experience occasional digestive upsets feel their upsets have some impact on their self confidence. Restore your natural digestive balance with healthy bacteria, or probiotics, like Align probiotic supplement. Align helps to build and maintain a healthy digestive system and protect against occasional digestive upsets, when used daily as directed. The Food and Drug Administration hasn't evaluated such statements regarding this product, and it is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.


Interestingly, probiotics are strain specific, and therefore different probiotics may have unique benefits. Different strains may differ in a number of ways but what matters most

to you is how well the bacteria strain works for you.

According to a 2009 Wolters Kluwer survey of gastroenterologists who recommend probiotic supplements, Align is the number one recommended probiotic supplement. It's also the only one containing Bifantis (Bifidobacterium infantis 35624). Bifantis is a unique patented

probiotic that you take just once a day, every day, to help restore natural balance to your digestive system. The Food and Drug Administration hasn't evaluated such statements regarding this product, and it is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

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Brain energy crisis may spark Parkinson's disease

New discovery may lead to preventive measures

WASHINGTON (AP) – Parkinson's disease may stem from an energy crisis in the brain, years before symptoms appear.

If the research pans out, it points to a possible new approach for Parkinson's: Giving a boost to a key power switch inside brain cells in hopes of slowing the disease's inevitable march instead of just treating symptoms.

"This is an extremely important and interesting observation that opens up new therapeutic targets," says Dr. Flint Beal of New York's Weill Cornell Medical College, who wasn't involved with the new study.

Beal said scientists already are planning first-stage tests to see if a drug now used for diabetes might help Parkinson's, too, by targeting one of the implicated energy genes.

At issue are little power factories inside cells, called mitochondria. Increasingly, scientists suspect that malfunctioning mitochondria play some role in a list of degenerative brain diseases. After all, brain cells are energy hogs, making up about 2 percent of body weight yet consuming about 20 percent of the body's energy. So a power drain could trigger some serious long-term consequences.

"It could be a root cause" of Parkinson's, says Dr. Clemens Scherzer of Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard University.

About 5 million people worldwide, and 1.5 million in the U.S., have Parkinson's, characterized by increasingly severe tremors and periodically stiff or frozen limbs. Patients gradually lose brain cells that produce dopamine, a chemical key to the circuitry that controls muscle movement. There is no cure, although dopamine-boosting medication and an implanted device called deep brain stimulation can



Parkinson's Disease may be present even before symptoms occur but with the discovery of energy crisis in the brain that can trigger the disease, doctors are working on a way to possibly slow down the affects.

help some symptoms.

No one knows what causes Parkinson's. To find genetic clues, Scherzer gathered an international team of researchers to comb studies of more than 300 samples of brain tissue – from diagnosed Parkinson's patients, from symptom-free people whose brains showed early Parkinson's damage was brewing, and from people whose brains appeared normal. They even used a laser beam to cut out individual dopamine-producing neurons in the most ravaged brain region, the substantia nigra, and examine gene activity.

The team found 10 sets of genes that work at abnormally low levels in Parkinson's patients, genes that turned out to play various roles in the mitochondria's energy production, Scherzer recently reported in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*. Especially compelling, the genes also were sluggish in people with presymptomatic, simmering Parkinson's.

And all the gene sets are controlled by what Scherzer calls a master regulator gene named PGC-1alpha – responsible for activating many other genes that maintain and repair those mito-

chondrial power factories.

So might revving up PGC-

1alpha in turn boost underperforming mitochondrial genes and protect the brain? To see, the researchers tested dopamine-producing neurons from rats that were treated in ways known to cause Parkinson's-like damage. Sure enough, boosting the power switch prevented that damage. This genetic evidence supports years of tantalizing hints that mitochondria are culprits in Parkinson's, says Dr. Timothy Greenamyre of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

He ticks off the clues: A rare, inherited form of Parkinson's is caused by a mutated gene involved with mitochondrial function. A pesticide named rotenone that can kill dopamine cells and trigger Parkinson's symptoms in animals also is toxic to mitochondria. So is another Parkinson's-triggering chemical named MPTP.

Now with Scherzer's study, "it's going to be harder and harder for people to think that mitochondria are just a late player or an in-

cidental player in Parkinson's disease," Greenamyre says.

The crux of all that complicated neurogenetics: A diabetes drug named Actos is among the compounds known to activate part of that PGC-1alpha pathway, and Weill Cornell's Beal says it's poised for an initial small trial in Parkinson's.

Separately, a nutrient named Coenzyme Q10 is believed important in mitochondrial energy production, and Beal is leading a study to see if high doses might help Parkinson's. Results are due in 2012.

But Scherzer issues a caution: The average Parkinson's patient has lost about 70 percent of his or her dopamine-producing neurons by the time of diagnosis. So if blocking a brain energy drain is going to do any good, scientists may have to find ways to spot brewing Parkinson's much earlier.

"I don't think you can turn back the clock," he says.

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Ten everyday super foods to boost immune system

If only there were some kind of potion or pill that had everything you needed for weight loss and good health. Unfortunately, no such pill exists, but there is a solution – something that not only promotes wellness and weight control but tastes good, too. These multitasking "super foods" provide multiple disease-fighting nutrients, fill you up so you can enjoy plenty of food without excess calories, and are easy to include in everyday meals. After all, what good is a super food that is hard to find, difficult to prepare and the kids won't eat?

Eaten regularly, these foods will help you satisfy the recommendations of the U.S. government's 2005 Dietary Guideline, giving you nutrients that are typically missing from American diets. According to the Guidelines, Americans need to eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products.

Of course, experts are quick to point out, this list of top 10 super foods by no means includes all the nutritious foods that should be part of a healthy diet.

"What is ultimately the most important to good health is a dietary pattern that includes all these foods, along with a wide variety of other nutritious foods and regular physical activity," says Tufts University researcher Alice Lichtenstein, DSc.

And don't forget that portion size matters, even when it comes to healthy foods. You can take more liberties when eating simply prepared vegetables, but you should take care to eat other super foods in sensible portions.

"Foods like nuts are nutrient rich, but if you overeat them you can pack on the pounds, and that defeats the purpose," says Elisa Zied, MS, RD, author of *Feed Your Family Right!*

Top 10 Multitasking Super Foods

Low fat or fat-free plain yogurt is higher in calcium than some other dairy products and contains a great package of other nutrients, including protein and potassium. It can also be enhanced with other good-for-you substances. "Yogurt is a vehicle food that can be enriched with probiotics for a healthy balance of bacteria in your gut, and beneficial, heart-healthy plant stanols," says Zied.

"And lactose sensitive people may tolerate yogurt better than milk."

Look for plain yogurt fortified with vitamin D, and add your own fruit to control sweetness and calories. Versatile yogurt can also be used in entree and bakery recipes, in dips for veggies, etc. Don't like yogurt? Skim milk is another super dairy food that has only 83 calories per cup and is easy to slip into coffee to help you get one of the recommended three servings of dairy each day. "Dairy foods contain practically every nutrient you need for total nutrition – and in just the right balance," says bone health expert, Robert Heaney, MD.

"No other food group in the diet is as complete or as economical."

Eggs make the list because they are nutritious, versatile, economical and a great way to fill up on quality protein. "Studies show if you eat eggs at breakfast, you may eat fewer calories during the day and lose weight without significantly affecting cholesterol levels," says Elizabeth Ward, MS, RD, author of *The Pocket Idiot's Guide to the New Food Pyramids*. Eggs also contain 12 vitamins and minerals, including choline, which is good for brain development and memory. Enjoy them at any meal or hard-cooked as a portable snack.

Nuts have gotten a bad rap because of their high fat content. But their protein, heart-healthy fats, high fiber, and antioxidant content earn them a place on the top 10 list. The key to enjoying nuts, experts say, is portion control. "All nuts are healthful in small doses, and studies show they can help lower cholesterol levels and promote weight loss," says Today Show nutritionist Joy Bauer, MS, RD. "I like pistachio nuts because they also contain plant sterols and it takes longer to crack the shell and eat them, making it easier to control the portion." Whether you prefer pistachios, almonds, peanuts, walnuts or pecans, an ounce a day of nuts help fill you up. Nuts add texture and flavor to salads, side dishes, baked goods, cereals, and entrees. They taste great alone, too. Zied recommends putting together your own "100-calorie packs" of nuts for easy and portable snacks.

Kiwis are among the most nutritionally dense fruits, full of antioxi-

dants, says Ward. "One large kiwi supplies your daily requirement for vitamin C," says Ward. "It is also a good source of potassium, fiber, and a decent source of vitamin A and vitamin E, which is one of the missing nutrients, and kiwi is one of the only fruits that provides it." The sweet taste and colorful appearance of kiwis makes it easy to slice in half, scoop out with a spoon and enjoy alone, or slice it into desserts, salads, or side dishes. Kiwifruit can also have a mild laxative effect due to their high fiber content.

Quinoa is now readily available in many supermarkets and is one of the best whole grains you can eat, according to Zied. "It is an ancient grain, easy to make, interesting, high in protein (8 grams in 1 cup cooked), fiber (5 grams per cup) and a naturally good source of iron," she says. Quinoa (pronounced keen-wa) also has plenty of zinc, vitamin E, and selenium to help control your weight and lower your risk for heart disease and diabetes, she says. Quinoa is as easy to prepare as rice and can be eaten alone or mixed with vegetables, nuts, or lean protein for a whole-grain medley. Try to make at least half your daily grain servings whole grains. In addition to quinoa, try barley, oats, buckwheat, whole wheat, wild rice, and millet.

Beans, beans, good for your heart – really! Beans are loaded with insoluble fiber, which helps lower cholesterol, as well as soluble fiber, which fills you up and helps rid your body of waste. They're also a good, low-fat source of protein, carbohydrates, magnesium, and potassium. Bauer favors edamame (whole soybeans) because they also contain heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Beans can easily substitute for meat or poultry as the centerpiece of a meal, says Bauer, but they also work as a side dish, or tossed into soups, stews, or egg dishes. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend 3 cups weekly.

Salmon is a super food because of its omega-3 fatty acid content. Studies show that omega-3 fatty acids help protect heart health. That's why the American Heart Association recommends eating fatty fish like salmon twice weekly. Salmon is

low in calories (200 for 3 ounces) has lots of protein, is a good source of iron, and is very low in saturated fat. You can simply grill or bake it, top it with salsas or other low-fat sauces, or serve it on top of salad greens. If you don't like salmon, Lichtenstein recommends eating other kinds of fish, like canned tuna. And what about the mercury content? (Mercury is known to accumulate in fish.) "The benefits of eating salmon or other fatty fish twice weekly far outweigh any risks, but if you are concerned, check with your doctor," says Zied.

Broccoli is one of America's favorite vegetables because it tastes good and is available all year long. It's a rich source of vitamin A, vitamin C, and bone-building vitamin K, and has plenty of fiber to fill you up and help control your weight. "Some people think beta-carotene (vitamin A) is only found in orange and yellow vegetables, but broccoli is an excellent source," says Ward. You can eat broccoli raw, lightly steamed, stir-fried, roasted, or grilled. Eat it as a side dish, or toss into grains, egg dishes, soups, and salads.

Sweet potatoes are a delicious member of the dark orange vegetable family, which lead the pack in vitamin A content. Substitute a baked

sweet potato (also loaded with vitamin C, calcium, and potassium) for a baked white potato. And before you add butter or sugar, taste the sweetness that develops when a sweet potato is cooked -- and think of all the calories you can save over that loaded baked potato. "If we eat more foods like sweet potatoes that are rich sources of potassium, and fewer high-sodium foods, we can blunt the effect of sodium on blood pressure and reduce bone loss," says Zied. Other dark orange vegetable standouts include pumpkin, carrots, butternut squash, and orange bell peppers.

Berries pack an incredible amount of nutritional goodness into a small package. They're loaded with antioxidants, phytonutrients, low in calories, and high in water and fiber to help control blood sugar and keep you full longer. And their flavors satisfy sweets cravings for a fraction of the calories in baked goods. Blueberries lead the pack because they are among the best source of antioxidants and are widely available. Cranberries are also widely available fresh, frozen, or dried. All can add flavor and nutrition to numerous dishes, from salads and cereals to baked goods and yogurt.

Source: WebMD

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Exercise excuses busted; stop coming up with reasons

SUBMITTED BY SERENA DICKERSON
Full Body Fitness Studio

Everyone begins a new fitness routine with the best of intentions, telling ourselves that we'll hit the gym three times a week. But actually accomplishing what we set out to do can be harder than expected. Combining a busy work week with other obligations and a list of errands can be a recipe for fitness failure. Exercise has to be pushed to the bottom of the list since there are only so many hours in the day, right?

Wrong.

Everyone has the same 24 hours to work with every day. It's how you decide to spend and prioritize your time that's the real issue. It's easy to make excuses and kid yourself about why you're not reaching your fitness goals, but until you take responsibility for your actions (or lack thereof) you will remain in front of the television for one more evening, and still be complaining that you can't fit into your favorite clothes any longer.

"But I'm tired," you tell yourself. "I've had a long day and I deserve to sit back and relax. I'll just take it easy tonight and I will start working out tomorrow." Then tomorrow you work late or someone wants you to

eat dinner with them... another day has passed and still no exercise. Why is it that you can help everyone else get their things done and put everyone else's needs ahead of your own, while you disappoint yourself by missing your own appointment at the gym?

Of course there are legitimate reasons to not exercise. But unless you've just given birth or had surgery, most of these reasons aren't reasons at all – they're excuses. If you've been allowing these excuses to keep you from the gym, it's time to refocus.

Exercise Excuse #1: I'm too tired. It takes energy to produce energy, so while you may be tired now, even a short 10 to 20 minute exercise routine will get your blood pumping and will boost your energy levels for up to two hours after. And regular exercise helps improve the quality of your sleep, meaning more energy throughout the day. I find that exercise helps one fall asleep easier, sleep more soundly and wake up more rested. A morning workout, could be just the ticket you need to feel more awake and energized all day long!

Exercise Excuse #2: I don't have

time. Eliminate 30 minutes of television viewing each night and exercise for half an hour instead. Unlike watching TV, exercise will strengthen muscles, burn fat, lower your cholesterol and reduce your risk of diabetes and heart disease. Suggestion: Record your favorite shows and watch them later. For those multi-taskers, watch your TV show while exercising or running on the treadmill. Get up an hour earlier in the morning and go workout before you start your day or bring along your walking shoes and go for a walk during your lunch break. If you take a minute to look at how you spend your time, you will notice little things that steal your time, from the Internet to watching reruns to accepting calls from people you don't really want to talk to. Getting rid of these distractions can add hours of free time each day – time that can be spent improving your health.

Exercise Excuse #3: I can't afford a gym membership or equipment. Check around, you may be surprised. The benefits you receive may outweigh the expense. However

you can always do push-ups, lunges, crunches and cardio in the privacy of your own home and spend no money at all. You can always remove the clothes hanging on your treadmill and start to use it again.

Exercise Excuse #4: I'm embarrassed by my appearance. It's tough to go to the gym if you don't feel good about your appearance. Oversized shirts and track pants may be comfortable, but they make you look bigger, so find some fitness clothes shaped for your body. If you are afraid of being the biggest person in the exercise class, sign up for a class specifically designed for overweight individuals or a beginner's class where there will be others just starting out, too. And remember: Everyone at the gym has the same goal in mind and everyone had to start somewhere. You may feel self-conscious, but chances are that no one is really paying attention to you and if they are, they're not at the gym for the right reason. You may find you are silently being cheered on for working toward your

goals. This is what we find most often.

Exercise Excuse #5: I'm too depressed. Twenty minutes of interval exercise boosts the levels of your brain's feel-good chemicals, making you happier and more invigorated. Exercising will actually improve your mood. Most of the time bad moods are the result of stress, and exercise is a proven way to relax and lower the amount of cortisol (which is produced in response to stress) in your system. High cortisol levels have been linked to the accumulation of harmful abdominal fat.

We are all busy and have lives outside of the gym, but we all need regular exercise to help us stay healthy, lose weight and cope with the stresses of everyday life. By making excuses to avoid exercise, all we're really doing is telling ourselves that our physical and mental health is not important and doing the dishes, Googling the internet or watching TV is a more important than our well being. And nothing could be further from the truth.

Studies show alcohol is more lethal than heroin, cocaine

LONDON (AP) – Alcohol is more dangerous than illegal drugs like heroin and crack cocaine, according to a new study.

Researchers analyzed how addictive a drug is and how it harms the human body, in addition to other criteria like environmental damage caused by the drug, its role in breaking up families and its economic costs, such as health care, social services, and prison.

Heroin, crack cocaine and methamphetamine, or crystal meth, were the most lethal to individuals. But overall, alcohol outranked all other substances, followed by heroin and crack cocaine. Marijuana, ecstasy and LSD scored far lower.

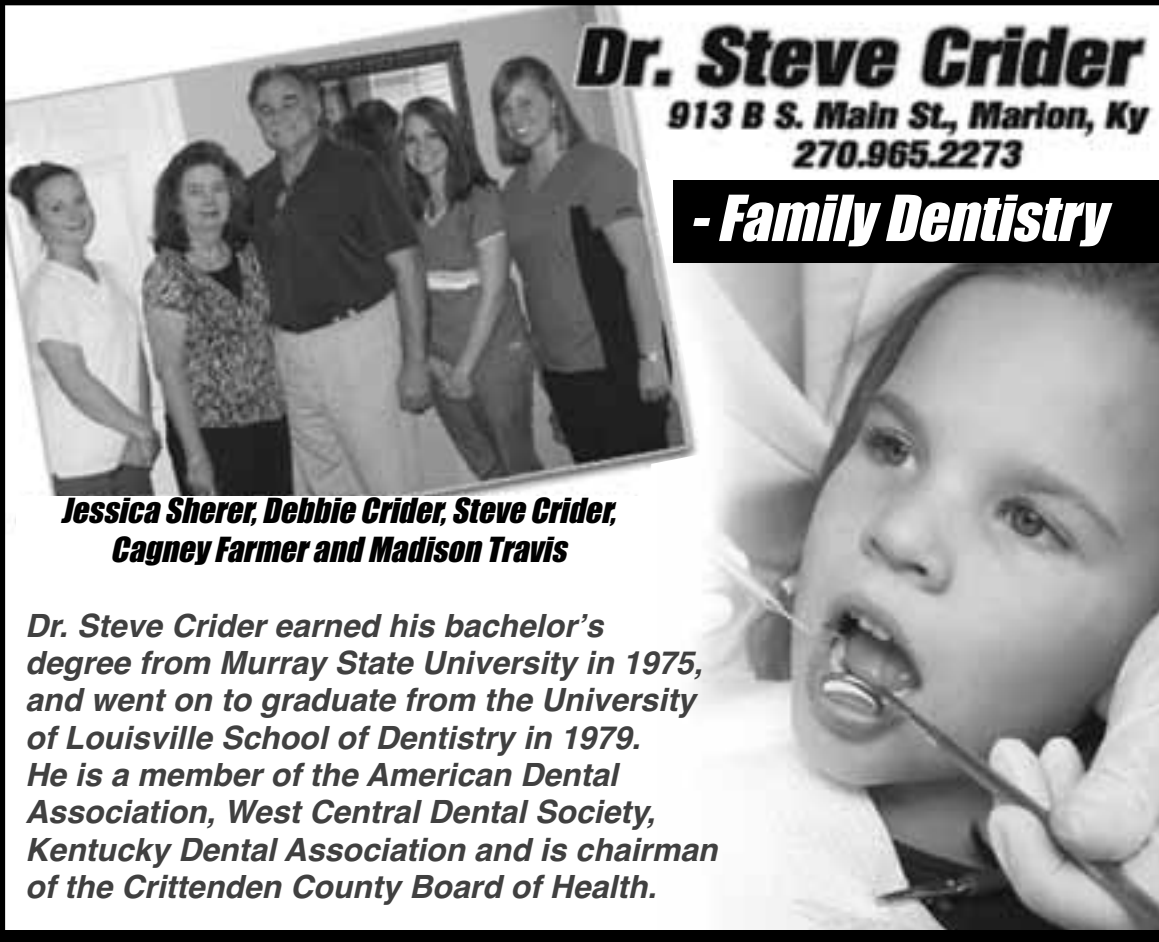
Experts said alcohol scored so

high because it is so widely used and has devastating consequences not only for drinkers but for those around them.

When drunk in excess, alcohol damages nearly all organ systems. It is also connected to higher death rates and is involved in a greater percentage of crime than most other drugs, including heroin.

But experts said it would be impractical and incorrect to outlaw alcohol.

"We cannot return to the days of prohibition," said Leslie King, an adviser to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and one of the study's authors. "Alcohol is too embedded in our culture and it won't go away."



Dr. Steve Crider
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- Family Dentistry

Jessica Sherer, Debbie Crider, Steve Crider, Cagney Farmer and Madison Travis

Dr. Steve Crider earned his bachelor's degree from Murray State University in 1975, and went on to graduate from the University of Louisville School of Dentistry in 1979. He is a member of the American Dental Association, West Central Dental Society, Kentucky Dental Association and is chairman of the Crittenden County Board of Health.

Da Vinci robot help surgeons in less invasive way

Methodist Hospital gets new robot to help assist with surgeries

SUBMITTED BY JASHLEY SIDES JOHNSON

Manager of Marketing and Public Relations

Being told you need major surgery is overwhelming. Add to the initial shock the need to quickly decide on a course of treatment, and many patients find themselves scared and confused.

In the past, surgical options for women needing a hysterectomy or men needing prostate removal brought unpleasant and very painful side effects such as heavy bleeding, 8-10 inch scars on the abdomen, loss of urinary continence and sexual function, and months of recovery.

However, with the advancement of robotic technology, surgeons can now perform the same procedures as before but in a more precise and less invasive way.

In January 2010, Methodist Hospital purchased the Da Vinci Surgical System, a sophisticated robotic platform designed to enable complex surgery using a minimally invasive approach.

This system allows our surgeons to elevate the level of care provided to our patients by giving them the most advanced tools available.

But before you envision a robot independently performing surgery on a vulnerable patient, let us reassure you that the da Vinci Surgical System is operated by a highly-trained surgeon and monitored by a skilled staff of operating room personnel.

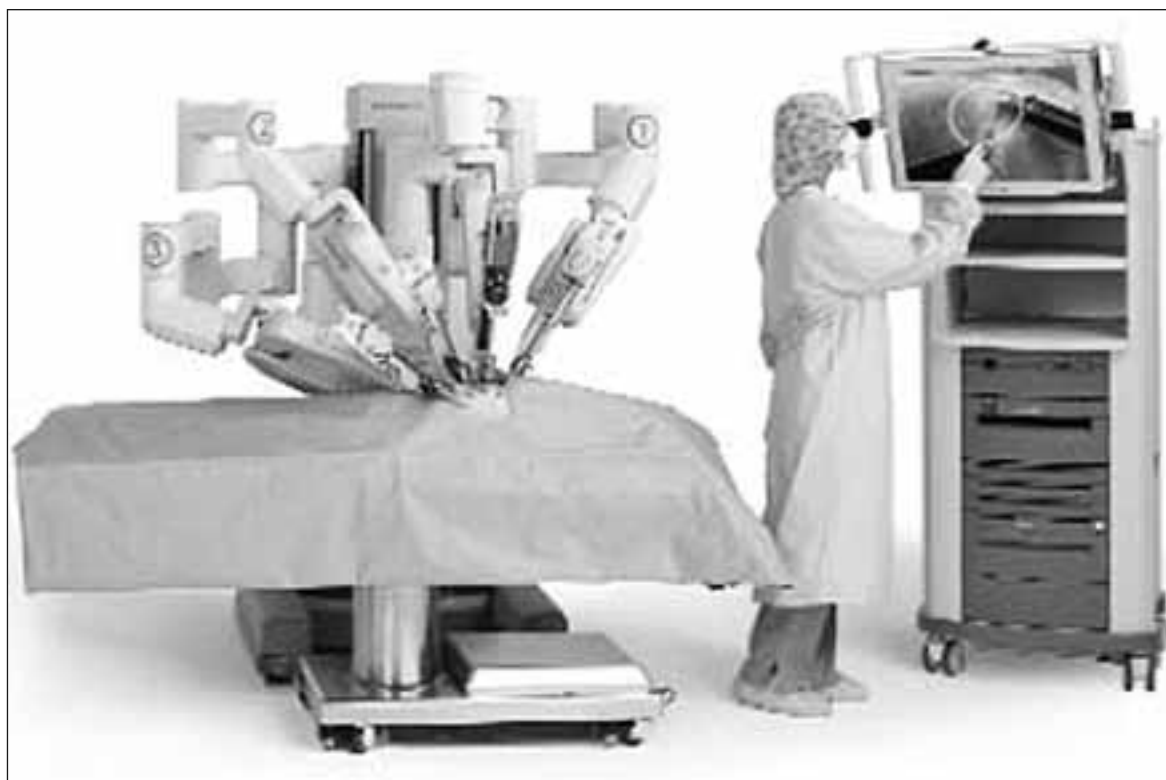
This surgical team arranges the three components of the da Vinci – an ergonomic surgeon's console, a patient-side cart with four interactive robotic arms, and a high-performance 3D/HD vision system – according to the specific needs of

each patient, just as they would for traditional open surgery.

But unlike traditional surgery, patients utilizing this new technology experience less pain, decreased blood loss and need for transfusions, a shorter hospital stay, and a quicker return to normal activities. For men having a prostatectomy, side effects such as urinary incontinence and sexual dysfunction are significantly reduced with robotic surgery as compared to traditional "open" surgery.

Chief of Surgery at Methodist Hospital and da Vinci trained surgeon Dr. James Fellows says, "Robotics is the future of surgery. It is the gold standard for care in my field of Urology and applications to other fields, such as Gynecology and General Surgery, are being developed at a rapid pace. Providing patients with the best outcome is our goal, and the da Vinci system is helping us do that."

Patients interested in learning more about da Vinci robotic surgery can visit the hospital's webpage at www.methodisthospital.net.



Using a 3D/HD vision system, doctors are able to assist the Da Vinci robot during the surgical process. The types of surgery that the robot is used for are hysterectomies and prostatectomies, both of which are done in a non-invasive way.

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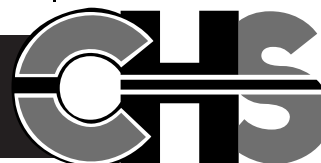
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Shingles Q&A

SUBMITTED BY LEE ANN KELLER, ARNP
Clinic Pharmacy

Q. What is shingles (herpes zoster)?

A. Shingles, also called herpes zoster, is a painful skin rash caused by the varicella zoster virus. It is the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays in the body. Usually the virus does not cause any problems; however, the virus can reappear years later, causing shingles. Herpes zoster is not caused by the same virus that causes genital herpes, a sexual transmitted disease.

Q. How common is shingles in the U.S.?

A. In the U.S., there are an estimated 1 million cases of shingles each year.

Q. Who gets shingles?

A. Anyone who has recovered from chickenpox may develop shingles, including children. However, shingles most commonly occurs in people 50 years old and older. The risk of getting shingles increases as a person ages. People who have medical conditions that keep the immune system from working properly, like cancer, leukemia, lymphoma and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or people who receive immunosuppressive drugs, such as steroids and drugs given after organ transplantation, are also at greater risk to get shingles.

Q. Can shingles be spread to others?

A. Shingles cannot be passed from one person to another. However, the virus that causes shingles

can spread from a person with active shingles to a person who has never had chickenpox through direct contact with the rash.

Q. What can be done to prevent the spread of shingles?

A. The risk of spreading shingles is low if the rash is covered. People with shingles should keep the rash covered, not touch or scratch the rash, and wash their hands often to prevent the spread of the virus.

Q. Is there a vaccine to prevent shingles?

A. Yes, the Center for Disease Control recommends Zostavax for use in people 60 years old and older to prevent shingles. This is a one-time vaccination. A recent study by Merck recommends the shingles vaccine be given four weeks before or after the pneumococcal vaccine.

Q. How effective is the shingles vaccine?

A. In a clinical trial involving thousands of adults 60 years or older, Zostavax reduced the risk of shingles by about half (51 percent) and the risk of post-herpetic neuralgia by 67 percent.

Q. Who should not get the shingles vaccine?

- People who have had life-threatening allergic reaction to gelatin on the antibiotic neomycin.
- People with a weakened immune system.
- People with HIV/AIDS who have T-cell counts below 200.
- People being treated with drugs that affect the immune system.
- Women who might be pregnant.

Playtime improves health

(StatePoint) Go play outside! That's the message more parents and doctors need to tell kids, according to a new report indicating children are spending too much time indoors to the detriment of their physical and mental health.

For American parents who want their children to be fit, focused and feeling good, the first step is to walk out the front door. Here are some ideas:

- Be a role model. Unplug from

media and plug-in to nature. Join your kids for fun in the backyard, garden, park or on a nature trail.

- Enlist friends and neighbors to create outdoor playgroups.

- Get creative. Playing outside inspires active imaginations.

- Where safe, encourage kids to walk or bike to school.

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Brain doctors raise concussion alarm for kids' sports

NEW YORK (AP) — The risk of concussions from football and some other sports is so serious that a qualified athletic trainer should always be on the field — at adult and children's games, and even at practice, a major doctors group said Monday.

Following that advice from the American Academy of Neurology would be a dramatic change for youth sports programs, most of which don't have certified trainers.

The doctors group recognizes it isn't necessarily feasible. One official called it a gold standard to strive for.

"We understand completely that is undoable in today's environment, but we think that is a correct way to organize our priorities," said Dr. Jeffrey Kutcher, chair of the academy's sports neurology section. He said that if a certified athletic trainer is not available to a school, perhaps contact sports should be avoided.

The recommendation was part of broader guidance from the academy on sports concussions. The group also said no athlete with concussion symptoms should be allowed to take part in sports, and that athletes of all ages who are suspected of suffering concussions should be evaluated by a specialist before returning to sports.

The new position statement follows rules already adopted in college sports and pro football aimed at preventing and better treating blows to the head. Research involving NFL players suggests repeated concussions may have long-term consequences such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Medical groups want to get the message "to the athletes, their parents and their coaches that a concussion is not just a ding, or getting your bell rung, but it is an injury to the brain," said Dr. Mark Halstead of Washington University, who co-authored an earlier concussion report for the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Concussions "need to be treated as if they are a big deal. The brain is pretty important."

Signs of a concussion include unconsciousness, unsteadiness, problems with memory or concen-

tration, dizziness or headache.

The neurology academy is the most authoritative medical group when it comes to concussions. And its new advice sweeps across all ages and types of athletes.

Certified athletic trainers now work at about 40 percent of the nation's high schools but are rarely provided for athletes in younger grades, said Kevin Guskiewicz of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, the lead author of the National Athletic Trainers' Association statement on managing concussions. Guskiewicz said it would be a struggle to find enough athletic trainers to meet the neurologists' recommendation.

Jim Louro, a league safety officer for the Jersey Shore Pop Warner Football League, said his league already pays emergency medical tech-

nicians to attend games and an ambulance is often on site. Coaches must have specialized training to handle injuries, he said. His league has about 8,000 football players ages 5 to 15.

Nationwide, millions of children and teens play football, he said, and "to have a certified athletic trainer at every single event around the country is very difficult, although they would be more than welcome if they're available."

Rick Bowden, assistant executive director of the Kansas State High School Activities Association, said the neurologists recommendation is "a laudable goal (but) there is no way that could happen in our state."

"There are not enough certified athletic trainers out there, and then there's the expense.... Our member schools have to balance what is de-



Concussions are possible in any activity and need to be taken seriously as it's more than just a "ding" — it's an actual brain injury that can cause serious harm if not taken seriously.

sirable with what is possible."

Recently, a 17-year-old Kansas linebacker collapsed on the sidelines and later died after suffering a concussion earlier in the season. A cause of death has not been released. Bowden said he understood that a doctor had approved the boy's return to competition.

Certified trainers take a minimum of four years of training and pass a national certification exam, a much more rigorous procedure than faced by an EMT or a youth sports coach, Guskiewicz said.

Major U.S. sports leagues have already taken steps to reduce head



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Oncology patients benefit from alternative therapy

Massages offer pain management and help restore energy to cancer patients

SUBMITTED BY TOMMI PAULSON
Journey Massage Therapy & Body-work

Massage therapy used to be contraindicated for cancer patients; however, as the field of massage matures and the knowledge base expands, this notion has changed. The American Cancer Society has identified massage therapy as an important complementary therapy for cancer patients. The use of human touch can provide a noninvasive, inexpensive adjunct to the management of pain and other symptoms experienced by patients

with cancer.

Pain associated with advanced cancer can cause physical and emotional stress, leading to decreased functional ability and quality of life. People with cancer may show signs and symptoms of loneliness, depression and isolation. This form of therapy can help them to feel nurtured, loved and reconnected with themselves and loved ones. Massage promotes the relaxation response and reduces stress, muscle tension and psychological distress. It reduces insomnia, fatigue and anxiety as well as nausea and pain. Massage boosts the immune system, helps with circulation, soothes depression and restores energy.

People with cancer have had their bodies poked, prodded, in-

jected, filled with toxic chemicals and burnt by radiation. This feeling can bring about a sense of disconnection from their body, mind and spirit. For people with cancer and cancer histories, massage therapy is often a powerful healing intervention. Skilled, structured touch has the potential to relieve symptoms and help people feel whole and empowered. A well-prepared massage therapist offers caring touch at an important time in someone's life. It can be a wonderful alternative form of therapy on a journey that may be, by turns, deepening, strengthening, and healing.



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Keep children well while preventing childhood obesity

(StatePoint) With nearly one-third of children overweight or obese, childhood obesity has become an epidemic. Fortunately, it's also treatable and preventable.

"Parents want their children to be healthy, but given the mixed messages about food and weight in our culture, they're unsure how to address the problem. However, there is a great deal families can do to support each other in eating well and staying fit," says Dr. Sandra Hassink, chair of the Obesity Leadership Work Group at the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Be a Role Model

Children do as they see, not as you say. It's important to evaluate your own healthy living before trying to instill the right habits in your kids. Assess your own diet by looking at what's in the fridge and what snacks you keep on hand. While serving size and calorie count may vary, both children and adults should be eating five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

Also, take the time to exercise. Doing so will give your kids a roadmap for adulthood as they begin to see exercise as a fun part of daily family life. If a child is already overweight, involve the whole family in a fitness routine rather than singling out one child. After all, everyone needs an hour of physical ac-

tivity a day, regardless of size or weight.

Tune Out

How much screen time do you and your children get? Sedentary lifestyles, driven by increasing amounts of time in front of TV sets or computers, are a major contributor to obesity.

"Children should get no more than one to two hours of screen time a day, not counting what they need to complete schoolwork," says Dr. Hassink.

Don't place a television in your child's room. If television serves as background noise in your home, instead try turning on the radio when you come home. Music may lead to dancing, and talk radio fills the quiet as you and the kids do chores.

Think Big Picture

You are not alone in trying to curb the obesity epidemic, and using the professionals and resources at your disposal can help. Talk to your pediatrician about your child's nutrition and activity level. Pediatricians can also measure the Body Mass Index of your child to help you gain a better understanding of your child's health.

"Being healthy is about consistently making decisions that are in your family's best interest," says Dr. Hassink. "Be positive and proactive. Keep your eye on the end goal of creating a healthier lifestyle for your family."



To help children eat healthier, let them help prepare snacks and meals.

Avoiding common mistakes with Rheumatoid Arthritis

WebMD Medical Reference

Most people with rheumatoid arthritis can live full, active lives despite their disease. But living a good life with RA often means you need to work at managing your disease and get the help you need. Take care to avoid these six common mistakes.

RA Mistake 1: Not Seeing a Rheumatologist. If you're like most people with RA, the first doctor you saw for your joint symptoms was a primary care physician. But a specialist has more training

in treating RA.

Mistake 2: Becoming a Couch Potato. Regular exercise is one of the best things that you can do for your health. While rest is also important for managing your disease, too much inactivity can make pain, fatigue, and stiffness worse.

Mistake 3: Skipping Doctor Appointments. While you may not feel the need to see your rheumatologist when your RA is less active, keeping your appointments is still important.



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Eating healthy snacks benefit children's nutrition

(StatePoint) Snack-times are as important as mealtimes to children's overall nutrition. You don't want your kids trading away healthy snacks for cupcakes every day of the week.

One out of every three children in America is overweight or at risk of becoming overweight, according to the Centers for Disease Control. That's almost 25 million kids with a risk of developing such ailments as heart disease, diabetes, stroke and more. It's time for parents to take charge and make changes.

"Unfortunately many snack foods that are marketed to kids are high in saturated fats, sugar, salt and preservatives," says Edmond Sanctis, co-founder of Sahale Snacks, a producer of healthy, all-natural snack foods. "It's all about making healthy snacks fun and

available," says Sanctis.

Set a Good Example

What you, as role models, eat really matters. If kids see you enjoying fruit, nuts, veggies and other healthful treats, they are more apt to follow your lead.

The night before you go to work, let your kids see you packing a smart snack, such as dried fruit or nuts. Fill your water bottle, and then fill theirs in front of them before leaving in the morning for work or school.

Clean out the Cupboards

Keep your pantries and cupboards clear of sticky snacks loaded with bad saturated fats, processed sugars, preservatives and high sodium counts. Remember, if you don't buy something it can't make its way into your chil-

dren's stomachs as an after-school snack! Take charge!

Load-Up on Good Stuff

Keep a bowl of fresh fruits and nuts on the counter at home. Refrigerate cut fruits and vegetables in small bags for easy snacks or opt for pre-packaged healthful snacks. But take heed: healthful shouldn't mean boring.

Go beyond simple trail mixes by trying the more interesting fruit-and-nut blends available today. Sahale Snacks, for example, offers appealing all-natural combinations, such as cashews with pomegranate and vanilla, or a tasty blend of almonds with a dash of honey and sea salt. These healthful snacks are available in Wal-Mart, as well as many supermarkets and club stores.

Read Labels

Always read labels carefully before purchasing. How much is a serving and how many are in each package? Is it high in calories or sugar? How much fat is in each serving? Ingredients like organic evaporated cane juice make great alternatives to highly-processed sweeteners and chemicals.

Keep Trying

It may take several attempts before children will sample or develop a taste for some foods, especially healthful ones they may have heard other kids denigrating. Don't give up. And encourage family and friends to make fruits, nuts and vegeta-

bles available to your kids as snacks.

"Remember to mix things up by packing different fun, healthy snacks for your kids each day," says Sanctis.



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Doctor's visits aren't just for when you're sick

Plan for a healthy life with your family

(StatePoint) Getting good medical attention for you and your family is about more than simply going to the doctor when you aren't feeling well. It's about planning for a healthy life and learning how to be an informed medical consumer.

Your decisions affect more than just you, because the right choices can protect your family for genera-

tions to come, according to experts.

"A recent study found that families are more likely to slip into poverty after the death of a primary breadwinner to cancer," says Virgil Simons, president and CEO of The Prostate Net. "So being a good healthcare consumer isn't just about taking care of yourself; it's about caring for your family as well."

Come Prepared

Whether we like it or not, healthcare has become more bureaucratic in recent years, but the smart

healthcare consumer knows to come prepared to manage the system, with an understanding of the problems and concerns they have and questions they want to have answered. They should bring a family member or a friend to help "hear" the doctor's responses and required actions, if any.

Do Your Homework

Familiarizing yourself with your symptoms and possible conditions can help you understand a doctor's diagnosis and suggestions for care.

However, make sure you get your information from reliable sources, whether online or in print, such as ProstateNet.org, which links patients to providers for information about prevention, treatment and successful survival.

Doctors Aren't Psychics

Your doctor will likely ask a multitude of questions during your visit, but that doesn't mean he or she can read your mind. Take an active role in your care by asking questions, taking notes, knowing your family's

history, and detailing any medications, vitamins or supplements that you take.

"Good consumers get better care because they've done their homework," says Simons. "They've come prepared, make the doctor aware of their health needs or goals and encourage a partnership between the doctor, themselves and their families for the best standard of care. It's the best path to receiving good medical care and making good decisions to protect your family."

Taking care of your family's eye health

Healthy vision is as important as eating healthy and exercising

(StatePoint) We know we're supposed to eat healthy and floss to keep the doctor and dentist away, but how many Americans know how take care of their eyes?

"More than 30 million Americans have a visual impairment that affects their quality of life," says Dr. Tamara M. Kuhlmann of Eyecare Professionals of Powell in Ohio. "But basic eye care can help detect signs of and prevent a number of diseases, such as diabetes, cataracts and age-related macular degeneration."

There are many things you can do to maintain good eye health:
Eat Right

While there doesn't seem to be any food that's especially bad for eyes, eating right goes a long way in preventing illnesses and minimizing symptoms. Since inflammation is the basis of many eye problems, optometrists recommend avoiding inflammatory foods, such as red meat, and suggest eating lots of leafy greens and Omega-3 protein.
Get Yearly Exams

Annual eye exams are a proven and cost-effective measure in managing the impact of chronic diseases, such as diabetes and macular degeneration, which is the progressive lost of central vision, usually due to age. Be sure to enroll for stand alone vision coverage through your work or indi-

vidually to save money not only on eye exams, but on designer frames and contact lenses. In fact, vision coverage can save an average of \$200 per family member.

You should be aware of your employer's dates for open enrollment for benefits. A growing number are offering vision benefits on a cost shared or voluntary basis to employees. These

plans usually open for enrollment in the fall and can be coupled with flexible spending accounts to save you even more money.

If you're unemployed, retired or self-employed, you can purchase your own individual or family vision coverage.

Sun Protection

The sun's UV rays can increase

your risk of developing cataracts, so be sure to wear sunglasses, preferably ones with polarized lenses, even in winter. And always wear goggles when swimming.

"Most people get 80 percent of their information through use of their eyes," says Kuhlmann, "It's important to take care of your most valuable asset."

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