

WELLNESS WORKS!

Fuel for Change...Fuel for Life

Volume 1, Issue 3

May 15, 2005

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FITNESS / WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Top 10 Reasons to Start Walking

www.walking.about.com

Walking for 30 to 60 minutes each day is one of the best things you can do for your body, mind, and spirit. Walkers have less incidence of cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and other killer diseases. They live longer and get mental health and spiritual benefits. Here are 10 reasons to start walking:

Walkers Live Longer - The Honolulu Heart Study of 8000 men found that walking just two miles a day cut the risk of death almost in half. The walkers' risk of death was especially lower from cancer. Other studies have had similar findings - if you keep walking, you improve your chances of a longer and healthier life.

Walking Helps Prevent Weight Gain - If you add just 2000 more steps a day to your regular activities, you may never gain another pound. So says research by Dr. James O. Hill of the Center for Human Nutrition at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. To lose weight, add in more steps.

You Can Walk Off Weight - Exercise such as walking is an important part of any weight loss program. You must still watch how much you eat in order to lose weight. But walking helps you build healthy lean muscle, lose inches of fat, and pump up your metabolism. Of long-term successful weight losers, almost all maintain a program of walking or other exercise.

Walking Reduces Risk of Cancer - Study after study has shown that walking and exercise reduces

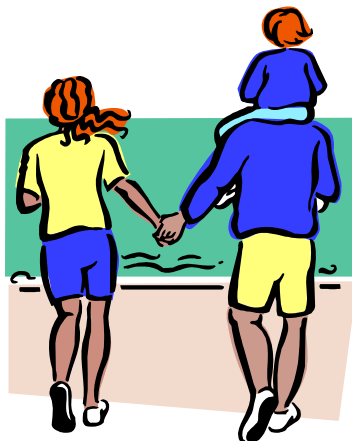
your risk of breast cancer and colon cancer. Walking is also good for those undergoing cancer treatment, improving their chances of recovery and survival.

Walking Reduces Risk of Heart Disease and Stroke - Heart disease and stroke are among the top killers of both men and women. You can cut your risk of both in half by walking for 30-60 minutes a day. Get your blood moving!

Walking Reduces Diabetes Risk - Get out and walk for 30 minutes a day as your minimum daily requirement for health and to prevent Type 2 diabetes. A study by the Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh, discovered that walking for 30 minutes a day cut diabetes risks for overweight as well as non-overweight men and women. Walking also helps maintain blood sugar balance for those with diabetes.

Walking Boosts Your Brain Power - A study of people over 60 funded by the National Council on Aging, published in the July 29, 1999 issue of *Nature*, found that walking 45 minutes a day at 16-minute mile pace increased the thinking skills of those over 60. The participants started at 15 minutes of walking and built up their time and speed. The result was that the same people were mentally sharper after taking up this walking program.

Walking Improves Mood and Relieves Stress - Walking and other exercise leads to the release of the body's natural happy drugs - endorphins.



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May is American Stroke Month

Each year 700,000 people have a new or recurrent stroke. Stroke has many faces. Men, women, young and old are affected. You don't have to be a stroke survivor to be a face of stroke. Spouses, children and other family members of survivors are also affected when a stroke occurs. Could you or a loved one be next face of stroke?

May is American Stroke Month. The American Stroke Association, a division of the American Heart Association, wants you to take this time to learn your stroke risk factors and recognize the warning signs of stroke.

Please visit www.americanheart.org for more information.

Top 10 to Walk...continued

Most people notice an improvement in mood. A Nov. 9, 1999 study published in the Annals of Behavioral Medicine showed that university students who walked and did other easy to moderate exercise regularly had lower stress levels than couch potatoes or those who exercised strenuously.

"if you keep walking, you improve your chances of a longer and healthier life."

Walking Can Prevent Erectile Dysfunction - What better reason for men to take a brisk two mile walk each day - a reduced risk of impotence from mid-life onward.

It's Easy to Get Started Walking - All you need is a pair of comfortable shoes and to get yourself out the door

or onto the treadmill. You can reap the benefits of walking from doing several shorter walks or one longer walk during the day. ❖

Personal Wellness Goal:

Have a Good Laugh!

Laughing relaxes the body and reduces problems associated with high blood pressure, strokes, arthritis, and ulcers. Some research suggests that laughter may also reduce the risk of heart disease. Historically, research has shown that distressing emotions (depression, anger, anxiety, and stress) are all related to heart disease.

Don't Forget: Drink more Water! and Make physical activity a regular part of your day!

DIET / NUTRITION

Munch On! *Eat right to avoid a between-meals slump.*

www.healthandwellnessclub.com

Chris Kehoe towers 6'6", weighs 240 pounds and uses his Popeye-like forearms to climb rocks on weekends. But this well-conditioned athlete knows that "bonking" can happen whether he's clinging to the sandstone face of a canyon or parked in front of his office computer. The symptoms - shakiness, irritability, lightheadedness, fatigue, confusion and voracious live-or-die-type hunger - can occur any time blood glucose (sugar) levels in the human body dip below 60 mg/dl.

Why we slump

Sedentary desk jockeys risk bonking as much as their physically active counterparts because heavy exercise represents only one factor in regulating the body for optimal output. Other factors include hydration, caffeine consumption and the regularity of meals and snacks, as well as the wild card of stress.

The liver only stores about eight to 10 hours' worth of glycogen, the premium fuel that makes your body go. Hence, skipping a meal (or two) because of a report deadline, an unusually long sales call or any number of at-work scramblings will ultimately bring you face-to-face with a vending machine's Plexiglas panel.

"Escargot starts to look good if you're over-hungry," jokes Ginger Patterson, Ph.D., a registered dietician and fitness educator in Fort Myers, Florida.

How to avoid bonking

To avoid low-energy episodes that dilute on-task concentration and heighten the likelihood of junk food binging, begin with eating breakfast. Breakfast? For those who dash out the door at dawn still dripping from the shower, breakfast seems nostalgic, a dreamy

childhood recollection of oatmeal with blueberries eaten over a red-and-white gingham tablecloth. It's not that breakfast food lacks appeal or that no tasty, grease-free varieties exist; time-starved people tap their toes waiting for water to boil.

"But if you go all night without eating food and then skip breakfast before work, it's like asking a horse to plow the field without feeding it first," Dr. Patterson points out. "Plus, does anyone have time to be sick?"

Brain food

Besides keeping your tummy busy and stoking your metabolism, breakfast gives the brain what it needs to call the best shots. Unlike muscles, the brain stores very little energy. It instead depends 100 percent on the carbohydrates it gets from glucose, a direct by-product of food consumed. That explains why, contrary to objections ranging from weight gain to tooth decay, snacking on wholesome foods makes sense: It keeps the brain from running on fumes.

People snack out of boredom, loneliness, emotional distress, social expectations and the comforting pleasure of good food. But, in the case of waning blood sugar levels, the prompt to eat comes from physiological hardwiring. So listen to your body and eat a snack to tide you over to the next meal. And remember this rule of thumb through alliteration - carbohydrates calm the body whereas proteins perk you up. When possible, eat a little of both

Real problems

While bonking can leave the most bushy-tailed worker feeling drained and grumpy, it differs from diabetes and hypoglycemia, two serious conditions with some similar symptoms. The Mayo Clinic estimates that 16 million Americans suffer from diabetes, a condition in which the body either doesn't produce insulin, doesn't make enough insulin or doesn't use insulin properly. Hypoglycemia, on the other hand, is a relatively rare condition caused by pancreatic tumors, liver disease or other metabolic dysfunctions that chronically keep blood sugar levels too low to properly nourish cells.

"I can think of dozens of reasons to feel out of sorts at work," remarks Dr. Christopher Saudek, president of the American Diabetes

Association and professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University. "But if you're overweight or have a family history of diabetes, you might want to check with your doctor." In the absence of diabetes or hypoglycemia, wise workers make the "mood and food" connection to enhance their productivity.

"One doc I know, Dr. Scott Conard, encourages his patients to think about their health like they think about their retirement," shares Pam Neff, a registered and licensed dietician and certified diabetes educator in Dallas. "Instead of an IRA (individual retirement account), he calls it the IHA: individual health account." Not always, but very often, you get out what you put in - and then some. ❖



SMART HEALTH CARE CHOICES

Reviewing Medical Fees and Bills

www.carefirst.healthkonline.com

Wise consumers of goods such as cars or groceries routinely check prices before making decisions. Knowing what to expect in the way of cost is a smart idea when planning for surgery or hospitalization, too. The first step is to find out what your insurance covers and whether there is anything special you need to do to qualify for coverage, such as getting preauthorization from the health plan or getting a second opinion. For care provided by a specialist, many plans also require a referral from a primary care doctor for the highest level of benefits. Most of all, find out what copayments or what percentage of the bill you will have to pay.

The next step is to find out what the total bill -- for you and your health plan -- is likely to be. Medical fees can vary greatly from doctor to doctor and hospital to hospital. If you have a choice of hospitals, call each one to find out what a stay for your type of surgery usually costs or at least what the daily room rate is.

Feel free to also discuss financial questions with your surgeon or the office staff. Find out if the doctor's office will fill out and submit insurance forms or if that's your responsibility. Also ask if the doctor accepts the insur-

ance payment as the full fee (called "accepting assignment") or if you must make up the difference between the doctor's fee and insurance payment.

Reviewing Your Hospital Bill



After your surgery or hospital stay is over, review your hospital bills carefully. Hospitals try hard to provide accurate bills, but errors do occur.

Ask the hospital billing office to explain unclear charges, terms, or tests. You can also ask for a copy of your bedside

log or other medical records to use when checking your bill. If you need further help, your benefits coordinator or health insurance representative might be able to help.

Just like reading the labels on the foods you buy or checking the sticker to see what options come with a car you may buy, checking your hospital bills requires some time and attention on your part to be sure you are getting value for your dollar. Look at the fine print, and ask for more information about the bill if you think things are not adding up the way you thought they would. The following questions should help you identify any special problems with a hospital bill:

- Ask for an itemized bill instead of the summary most hospitals send.
- Were you billed for a semiprivate or a private room? Which did you have?
- Does the room rate multiplied by the number of days you stayed come to the same total as on the bill? (Most hospitals do not charge for the day of discharge.)
- Did you have each of the tests and procedures listed? You may be charged for something you didn't have simply because of a clerical error or because your doctor cancelled the orders but the billing records weren't changed.
- Do any charges seem unusually high to you, such as \$3 for a dose of acetaminophen (Tylenol)?

If you find an error, call the hospital's billing department and ask that it be corrected. If necessary, ask to speak with the department supervisor. Keep a written record of all your conversations, including the names of people you speak with and what you spoke about. Once the hospital agrees to correct the mistake, ask for a revised bill and then send a copy to your health plan. If you run into problems, call your health plan for help.

Before paying your portion of the bill, make sure your questions have been answered, errors are corrected, and your health plan has already paid its portion of the bill. ❖

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress-Management Techniques

www.intelihealth.com

You're at your wit's end. All day your boss was on the warpath, and all night your kids screamed and fought with one another. Now it's 10 p.m., and there are piles of bills on the counter and dishes in the sink, but all you want to do is relax. You plop yourself in your favorite chair, reach for the remote and start surfing.

Sound familiar? Playing couch potato is one of the most common responses to stress. But it's not necessarily an effective one. In fact, most stress-management experts say real stress reduction requires more skill — and discipline — than flipping on the television. For example, it requires participat-



ing in a daily exercise regimen, expressing your emotions, socializing, performing relaxation exercises and eating a healthy diet.

None of these methods may entirely eliminate your stress, but what stress reduction can help you do is balance your stress with more positive experiences to help you maintain a healthy mind and body.

Research shows that practicing stress management is not merely about helping you live a more pleasant life. It also can help you live a longer one.

As obvious as it sounds, stopping to think about what stresses you can help you cope — for several reasons:

- First, uncovering the roots of your stress gives you the information you need to avoid the stressful situation, if that is what you want to (and can) do.

You Make The Call:

With stroke, time lost is brain lost. If you or someone you love experience any of the following signs, call 9-1-1 immediately.

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body;
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding;
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes;
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination; or
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

- Second, knowing the sources of your feelings makes you feel more in control, and feeling more in control generally helps lessen stress.

- Finally, recognizing that the cause of your behavior is stress, not something else, can reduce your anxiety about the behavior itself.

Relaxation techniques are one of the most common approaches to stress reduction. These include meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, visualization and breathing exercises. Most are easy to learn. Often you need longer periods of practice when learning new approaches to stress reduction, and eventually it becomes a conditioned response. ❖



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Fuel for Change...Fuel for Life

Spotlight On:

Maryland's Great Outdoors

Maryland is a great place to enjoy the great outdoors. From its rolling mountains to its sandy shores, Maryland offers areas to hike, bike, fish, canoe, and camp. Maryland's public lands offer accessible amenities and outdoor recreational opportunities, from campsites, playgrounds and visitor centers, to fishing piers, hunting areas and park trails.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources State Forest and Park Service provides exciting recreation activities for residents and visitors to Maryland. State parks and forests offer youths and adults of all skill levels a chance to experience first-hand Maryland's vast resources while hiking and cycling scenic Western Maryland trails, paddling canoes and kayaks along historic waterways on Maryland's Eastern Shore, or rock climbing in some of the state's most breathtaking public lands. The department offers organized, as well as self-guided outdoor recreation programs at many of our state forests and parks. Please respect the natural resources at the facilities you visit and remember to *Play Safe!* while enjoying Maryland's public lands.

For more information about Maryland's Great Outdoors please go to <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/outdoors/>

**Are you Interested in the Carroll
Wellness Council?**

**Do you have some interesting
Wellness ideas for 2005?**

We Want Your Suggestions!

Please submit your ideas to:

wellness@carrollfuel.net

Or visit our website at

<http://wellness.carrollfuel.com>

Or in person to:

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