

TOPHEALTH®

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

We Care About Your Health

JULY 2011

Summer Spoiler Self-Defense

Ready for beach trips and barbecues? Make sure you know how to prevent common problems that could ruin your fun in the sun.

FOOD POISONING. Warmer weather promotes bacterial growth. To minimize your risk:

- 1 Clean your hands often with sanitizer or soap and water, and rinse all produce thoroughly before cutting or eating.
 - 2 Marinate meats in the refrigerator.
 - 3 Keep perishable food below 40 degrees.
- **Edible edibles:** Don't leave edibles out for more than 2 hours (1 hour if outside temperature is over 90).

BUG BITES. Mosquitoes and ticks can transmit serious diseases, and bee stings can sometimes trigger severe reactions. To foil these fliers:

- 1 Put away sugary drinks that attract bees.
 - 2 Wear light-colored clothing and avoid perfume or cologne.
 - 3 Apply DEET to skin (anyone over 2 months old) at the lowest concentration needed — 10 percent DEET lasts about 2 hours and 30 percent for 5. Picaridin, an alternative, can be sprayed on clothes.
- **Perilous Plants:** Learn to recognize poison oak and ivy. Remember, "leaflets of three, beware of me."

HEAT ILLNESS. It's easy to overheat, especially during vigorous exercise. To stay safe:

- 1 Acclimate to higher temperatures by gradually increasing intensity or duration of exercise over a two-week period.
 - 2 Drink water before, during and after exercise.
 - 3 Take breaks during activity, preferably in a cooler spot, and reduce exertion at the first signs of illness (cramps, headache, nausea).
- **Breathe Free:** Summer time smog can inflame airways and worsen asthma. Check air quality and stay indoors on "orange" days.



Garden Fresh

Summer produces a bumper crop of delicious produce that can be mixed in a number of fresh ways. So instead of the standard salad, you can ...

Alternate avocado and melon slices on a plate and top with shredded basil.

Add cubed pineapple or peaches to vegetable kabobs before grilling.

Combine orange sections and kalamata olives with thinly sliced fennel and onion. Dress with olive oil and fresh lemon juice.

Fold cooked asparagus and sauteed chanterelle mushrooms into a cheese omelet; add cooked crab or lobster pieces, if desired.

Top a tomato pizza with sliced fig, prosciutto and Gorgonzola cheese.

Dice cantaloupe and some red pepper to make a unique salsa. Add chopped cilantro, scallions and lime juice. Sprinkle on salt and red pepper flakes.

Toss in diced sweet potato when cooking black bean chili.

Prepare Asian pear slaw by mixing sliced pear and celery, rice vinegar, lime juice, ginger and scallions.

Try a green bean and red potato salad mixed with red pepper and tossed with a Dijon mustard vinaigrette.

For more interesting combinations, go to www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/?vm=r.



LONGEVITY CORNER

Weighty Concerns About Surgery. A recent study raised new questions about gastric banding for obesity. More than 75 patients followed for at least 12 years after the procedure showed a high rate of complications: While many lost weight, nearly 40 percent experienced major complications, nearly 50 percent needed to have their bands removed and 60 percent needed additional operations. If you're considering this surgery, get the facts and discuss any concerns with your doctor or health care provider.

— Zorba Paster, MD

Depression Strikes Dads, Too

Depression following childbirth isn't just for mothers — at least one in 12 fathers develops this condition, too. Untreated depression can hurt the whole family: Depressed dads are three times more likely to spank their babies, which can injure them and increase aggressiveness in the child. If your mood plummets during the postpartum period, seek treatment.



Smart moves for your personal wellness program are at www.personalbest.com/extras/july11tools.

Top 10 Weight Tips

The standard weight-loss advice — “eat less, exercise more” — is effective, but other tricks may help as well:

1 Write down what you eat. Doing so could increase your weight loss.

2 Turn off the TV. Television and other screens encourage us to be sedentary. Study participants who cut their TV time in half burned an extra 120 calories a day.

3 Eat more fiber. Americans only eat about half the recommended daily amount. Get more fiber from whole grains, fruits and vegetables.

4 Drink more water. Two cups of water before each meal may help you shed more pounds.

5 Step on the scale. Individuals who weigh themselves more frequently (at least weekly) are more successful at weight management.

6 Find a buddy. Team up with a household member or join a support group for better results.

7 Toss the junk. Discard any food or drink in your pantry or fridge that would interfere with your weight-reduction plan.

8 Sleep well. Women who sleep under 5 hours a night are 32 percent more likely to have major weight gain than those who sleep over 7.

9 Check your meds. Many medications can lead to weight gain — check with your doctor or health care provider if you are concerned.

10 Simmer down. Stress can increase your risk of weight gain. Fortunately, exercise helps manage stress and promote weight loss.



“A happy life consists not in the absence, but in the mastery of hardships.” ~Helen Keller

Traveling Well

Wherever you go on vacation, careful health planning can help you stay well.

In the USA ...

- ✓ Pack health insurance cards as well as medical contact information.
- ✓ At high altitudes, rest a day or two to adjust to less oxygen. If you have a heart or lung disorder, check with your doctor or health care provider before going above 3,000 feet.
- ✓ During long trips, take walking breaks to avoid circulation problems.
- ✓ Bring water and nutritious snacks and skip the fast-food restaurants.
- ✓ If seated next to an unwell individual on a plane or bus, move to another seat if possible.

In developing countries ...

- ✓ Keep your vaccinations current. Check wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel to see if any additional precautions are needed.
- ✓ Bring ample supplies of prescription medications, a first aid kit, bug repellent and remedies for stomach upset, allergies and constipation. Pack antibiotics for areas where diarrheal diseases are common.
- ✓ Don't drink tap water or rinse foods in it. Choose sealed beverages or tea/coffee prepared with boiled water, thoroughly cooked produce and meat and fruit that you can peel.
- ✓ To avoid parasites, don't swim in freshwater pools in South America, Africa and Asia.
- ✓ Before traveling, learn how to access reliable health care at your destination. Learn the local “911” number.



Vitamin D-bate

You may have read conflicting reports on vitamin D in the news. Some researchers say that most people are getting enough D, while others believe that taking a supplement may reduce your risk of chronic diseases. **Whom should you believe?**

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recently announced its recommendation for a new daily intake of 600 IU through age 70 (800 IU after that), also noting that it is safe to take up to 4,000 IU a day. While those who live in sunny climates or who eat plenty of D-fortified foods may not require a supplement, those who have darker skin, are elderly, or live in northern latitudes are at higher risk for deficiency — and possibly osteoporosis.

Scientists continue to debate whether we need even higher doses of vitamin D. The IOM's recommendation targets optimal bone health. Other researchers claim higher doses can help prevent heart disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension and other conditions, while the IOM focused on a few studies suggesting excessive D intake may be harmful.

Hard D-cision? Supplements of 600-1,000 IU are probably fine if you think you're not getting enough. Always check with your health care provider before taking any supplements.



Is Your Computer Disrupting Your Sleep?

Exposure to light at bedtime can disrupt the body's biological clock and alter the sleep/wake cycle. Research now suggests that the amounts of light produced by computer screens may be problematic. Using electronic devices can also increase alertness — another sleep deterrent. **Lights out:** To improve your sleep, turn off the screens (or at least dim the brightness of the display) a few hours before bed.

NEXT MONTH: LESS GUILT DINING OUT