

2014

Health & Fitness

A Special Supplement To
The Daily Home

Start young to maintain good health

By **CHRIS NORWOOD**
Home staff writer

Maintaining good health is a lifelong pursuit and, as the Firesign Theater reminded us all those years ago, “You gotta start young if you’re going to stick it out!”

Good health, in other words, starts with the youngest of us, and it is important to keep in mind that the needs of small children can be very different from those of adults.

Darlene Mathis, a nurse practitioner with a doctorate in Sylacauga, said the keys to health in young children are found in the recommendations of the Academy of Pediatrics represented by the 5-2-1-0 formula.

“Five is the number of fruit and vegetable servings per day,” she explained. “Two is the total hours of screen time, one is an hour of physical activity and zero is for sweetened drinks and juices.

If you want to give them a little bit of juice, we recommend no more than two ounces per day, tops. We also don’t recommend a lot of high-fat snacks, but if you’re worried about protein, you can give them some peanut butter or cheese.”

As for sleep, she recommends eight to 10 hours per night, and points out that sleep can also be a major factor in child obesity.

These guidelines are generally applicable to children between the ages of 2 and 10, she continued. Children up to the first year need either formula or breast milk, not only for the essential nutrients but to boost the child’s immunity. This

especially true with breast milk, which provides the added advantages of not costing any money, providing more balanced nutrition and resulting in children with fewer allergies and better immunity. “Plus the benefits of good old snuggling,” she added.

Annual checkups after the age of 2 are also recommended, and immunizations must be given up to the ages of 11 or 12 to enroll in school. Mathis also strongly recommends an annual flu shot and regular lab work.

The one hour of physical activity per day can be inside or outside, but the temperature should always be taken into account.

Dr. Stewart Hill in Pell City says the key to a healthy life begins with nutrition and sleep in early childhood.

“I spend time every single day discussing obesity,” he said. “We have a major problem in this country and this state, and it’s gradual. If somebody is maybe six pounds overweight when they’re 3 or 4 years old, then 10 pounds overweight by the time they’re 5, and it keeps going until they’re 20 pounds overweight when they’re high school seniors and 40 pounds over as adults. You look at adding on four pounds per year over 20 years and you can see where you end up.”

He also points out that sugary drinks don’t have a place in the diets of youngsters. “You constantly see sugared drinks, fruit juices and sweet teas that can have all of the day’s calories in one or two servings. If you walk a mile, you may think you’re being healthy, but if you drink a Gatorade and eat some chips when you’re



Brian Schoenhals/The Daily Home

Children under the age of 10 should have 45 minutes to 1 hour of physical activity each day, as demonstrated here by Graham Elementary School student Kamarii Embry.

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done, you’re actually going to gain.”

Ideally, he says, small children should eat three full meals per day and one snack that does not come in a bag, such as grapes, an apple or a banana.

“You need to rid the pantry of unhealthy food,” he said. “Parents do the shopping, so they control what food is in the house. Get rid of the junk food and the sweet tea. I’m seeing more and more diabetics that are high school aged, and it’s frustrating.”

Sleep hygiene is also important, and that includes creating a dark, quiet space, preferably without a television or computer. “Your bedroom needs to be a place to go to sleep,” he said.

It’s also important for children to get at least 45 minutes of physical activity each day, “but that’s not as important as proper nutrition. You would have to run three miles just to burn off two Pop Tarts.”

Screen time, including computer and television, should be limited to two hours total.

He also emphasizes the importance of family meals whenever possible. “It’s not only healthier, it improves family relationships,” he said. “Kids want that kind of attention, crave it, and you’re right there to listen. That is really important.”

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Physical therapists work with variety of patients

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

Todd Malone, a physical therapist, athletic trainer and owner of Star Physical Therapy in Sylacauga, knew what he wanted to do early in life.

"I knew I wanted to get into the health care field," he said.

Physical therapist and athletic trainer were ideal choices for someone who played high school sports.

Malone played football and baseball at Childersburg High School.

"If I wasn't 5-8, 5-9, I would have played basketball, too," he said.

Malone began his career as a physical therapist assistant before he became a physical therapist and owner of Star Physical Therapy. He also has a physical therapist assistant who works with him.

"We've been open for two years now," he said.

Malone said like most businesses, the past economic downturn affected his business, but changes in health care have actually increased business.

He said most of his patients are from doctor referrals, but generally people learn of Star Physical Therapy through word of mouth.

Malone is the athletic trainer for B. B. Comer High School. An athletic trainer helps prevent and treats sports-related injuries.

Star Physical Therapy has a wellness and fitness program which focuses on injury prevention for athletes and former patients.

Malone said his job is very gratifying,

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David Atchison/The Daily Home

Jill Harmon is a physical therapist and the director of the St. Vincent's St. Clair Outpatient Rehabilitation Center in the new hospital in Pell City.



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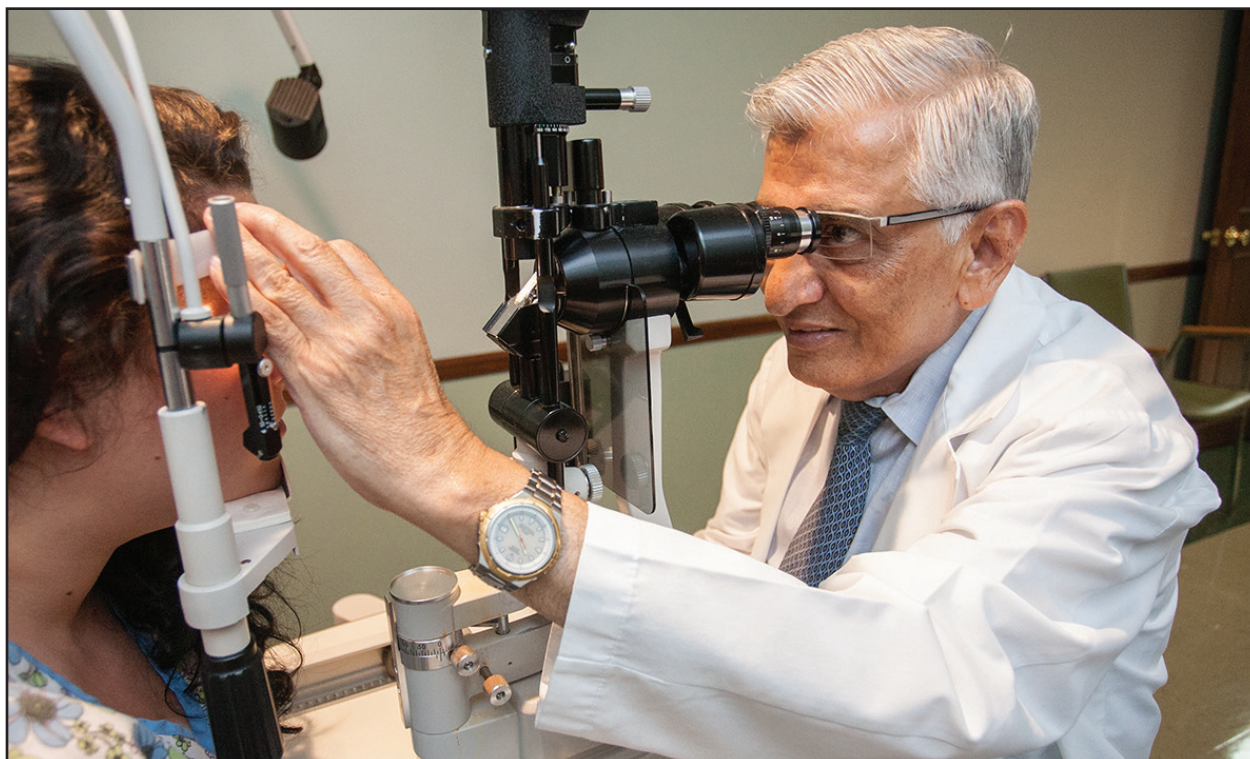
First 5 years of life critical for eyesight development

By LEW GILLILAND
Home staff writer

Dr. Duncan Roy believes members of the dental profession have done a better job educating the public about the need for preventive and maintenance care than their brethren in the eye care community.

Roy, a Childersburg optometrist, has practiced for 33 years and been in his current location for 28. He is a former member of the state board of optometry.

“Dentistry has done a good job of [getting people in] every six months,” he said. “You don’t have many people who are missing teeth because they are protecting [them



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

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Dr. Khalid Khan examines a patient’s eyes at his clinic in Talladega.

Therapy

From Page 3

helping improve their quality of life of people who suffer with pain or who have limited motion.

In Pell City, Jill Harmon, a physical therapist and the director of St. Vincent’s St. Clair Outpatient Rehabilitation Center, said patient demand has more than doubled since SVSCORC moved out of the old hospital and into the new state-of-the-art facility at the hospital complex on Veterans Parkway.

“The patient case load has grown 60 percent since we were at the old hospital,” Harmon said.

The staff at the St. Vincent’s St. Clair Outpatient Rehabilitation Center has also grown, and the center now has a full-time occupational therapist, Jim Rodgers.

An occupational therapist focuses on upper body problems or injuries, and helps patients re-learn basic daily living skills, while a physical therapist focuses on the entire body, head to toe, to help patients improve their motor skills, Harmon said.

SVSCORC also has a part-time speech therapist, full-time physical therapist assistant, three part-time physical therapists and two part-time physical therapist assistants.

Most patients come from doctor referrals, and SVSCORC works with Pell City High School athletes, not only helping young athletes prevent injuries, but also treating athletes who have suffered injuries on the playing field.

“We love what we do,” Harmon said.

She said therapists form strong bonds with their patients, working with individuals each week and watching them recover from injuries.

Harmon said typically, therapists work with patients for four to six weeks, two or three times each week.

She said about 60 percent of their patients are recovering from orthopedic surgeries, although therapists work with a variety of patients, including stroke victims.

SVSCORC also works with veterans at the new Robert L. Howard Veterans Home, which is across the street from the hospital.

Both SVSCORC and Star Physical Therapy have specialized strength training equipment to help speed patient recovery.

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Natural ways to alleviate acid reflux

Acid reflux is one of the more common, not to mention painful, side effects of gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD. The Florida Hospital estimates that more than 60 million adults in the United States suffer from symptoms of acid reflux each month, and almost half experience symptoms every day. Finding relief can be challenging, but there are a variety of treatments available, including some drug-free alternatives.

There is no cure for acid reflux, but there are ways to manage the condition and prevent permanent damage to the esophagus. Many people rely on proton-pump inhibitors, or PPIs, to keep acid reflux at bay. PPIs are one of the more commonly prescribed medications for acid reflux, and while they may be beneficial for short-term treatment of acid reflux, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently cautioned against prolonged use of PPIs. Many acid-stopping medications can inhibit nutrient absorption, reduce resistance to infection and may cause vitamin deficiencies. They also have been shown to increase the risk of bone fractures and dementia.

Rather than taking medication, some people might be able to make certain lifestyle changes to relieve acid reflux.

* Pay attention to the foods you eat. Acidic foods, such as tomatoes, citrus fruits and even raisins, can increase the amount of acid in the stomach. Choose foods that are less likely to aggravate symptoms and can alleviate pain and flare-ups. Foods that will absorb acid are safe bets. For example, oatmeal is a filling, hearty food that can combat acid problems. Stick to lean poultry that is baked, broiled or grilled. Remove the fatty skin, as it may cause digestive issues.

* Use natural digestion enhancers. Remember those homespun remedies Mom used to whip up when you had an upset stomach? They can be equally effective for acid reflux. Ginger root has long been used to calm the stomach. Ginger can be made into tea or added to recipes and smoothies. Fennel, a licorice-flavored vegetable, may improve stomach function. Some people like to eat it after a meal to aid digestion. Parsley has been used as a medicinal herb to settle the stomach for thousands of years. Parsley can add flavor to meals and serve as an attractive garnish.

* Stock up on apple cider vinegar. Apple cider vinegar has uses beyond flavoring in favorite recipes. It also can soothe acid reflux symptoms. It's believed the vinegar plays a role in maintaining healthy bacteria in the stomach, and that this bacteria eases digestion. Try mixing one teaspoon of apple cider vinegar into four ounces of water to drink before, during or after a meal. Apple cider vinegar also can be spread on salad.

* Practice portion control at mealtime. Overindulging at mealtime can cause intestinal discomfort, which

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Eye care

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with] their dental hygiene.”

Many adults are told they should have their eyes checked every two years, but Roy said the proper time varies from person to person, and he said those in the eye care profession need to avoid being influenced by the bottom line when determining when that time is.

“They need some kind of primary eye care, and that doctor should be ethical enough [to tell them] to come back when [the doctor] feels they need to return,” Roy said. “The doctor should be ethical enough not to be scheduling them just to collect a fee.”

Dr. Khalid Khan, an ophthalmologist in his 40th year of practicing in Talladega, said the most critical time for eyesight development is the first five years of a person's life.

He said most children have their vision checked before they start kindergarten, but if problems develop before then, they can be checked at any time. Khan said once children get beyond age 5 – or 6 at the most – it can be difficult to correct if they don't develop good vision.

Khan said parents would be wise to get their children's eyes checked again around age 10 or 11 if the child starts complaining about not being able to see the blackboard.

Khan said most adults who are not having problems and have no family history of eye problems should have their vision checked every two years. He said that interval should shrink to 1½ years around age 40, when vision typically begins to change again.

At that age, some people begin to need bifocals for reading, and people need to get their eyes checked for glaucoma, Khan said.

Around age 60, cataracts can become an issue, he

said.

Roy said patients shouldn't stick to a strict schedule if problems develop.

“Patients need to be aware of their own bodies,” he said. “If you have blurred vision, you don't need to wait six months [to be seen].”

“Flashes, floaters, those things can be an indication of having birthdays, but they could also mean you have a separation of the retinal tissue from the wall.”

Roy said pain in or around the eye also needs to be checked.

“I think technology is changing and is allowing us to see things that we did not see before,” Roy said when discussing the future of preventive care. “You had X-rays years ago, then you had CT scanners and now how have MRIs. In eye care ... the ability of scanners to dig deep down into the retinal layers and see more is really changing.”

Both Khan and Roy pointed to several new procedures for helping those with vision problems.

Khan discussed a new cataract procedure. The procedure begins with the cataract being softened up by a laser. An incision is made, and the cataract is sucked out and a lens implanted.

Under another procedure, which Khan can do in the hospital, a small drainage device is put into the channel where fluid leaves the eye. This helps alleviate problems due to glaucoma.

Roy believes more advances will come through stem cell research. He also cited a chip implant procedure that allows people with retina damage to have more form vision. However, he said individuals must meet a threshold to qualify for the procedure, and he believes the threshold needs to be lowered.

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Foods with healthy reputations

Without a degree in biology or nutrition, it can be difficult to determine just which foods are healthy and which are better left at the grocery store. The list of foods you should and should not eat seems forever subject to new research that tends to debunk once conventional wisdom regarding diet and nutrition. Eggs go from unhealthy to healthy, while the reputation of caffeine seemingly changes with

the daily winds. Making sense of old and new data is seldom easy, leaving many people in the dark about which foods are truly healthy.

But eating healthy does not have to be a big mystery. The following widely available foods have long been considered healthy, and that reputation does not figure to change anytime soon.

* Red tomatoes: If you

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Reflux

From Page 6

may contribute to acid reflux. Opt for more frequent and smaller meals instead of larger infrequent ones. Also, remain upright for two to three hours after eating to promote good digestion.

* Elevate your head. If acid reflux symptoms tend to strike at night or while you are lying down, elevating your head in bed can help. Use pillows to prop yourself up or find another way to keep your head elevated until symptoms subside.

* Shed some pounds. Many doctors recommend weight loss to alleviate acid reflux. Losing 10 to 15 pounds can decrease pressure on the stomach and the lower esophageal sphincter, which is the muscle at the band of the stomach and esophagus.

* Quit tobacco products. Smokers have a higher incidence of GERD than nonsmokers, so quitting smoking may help alleviate acid reflux symptoms. Even if stopping smoking has minimal effect on your acid reflux, it will still improve your overall health.

* Drink more water between meals. Water hydrates the body and flushes out toxins that can build up in the digestive tract. Water also may help dilute stomach acid. However, do not drink tons of water with a meal, as this may stimulate the stomach to produce more acid to maintain digestion. Chewing gum when water is not available can stimulate saliva production. Saliva is naturally alkaline and can counteract the overproduction of acid.

Acid reflux can be a nuisance or downright painful. Before reaching for medication, consider a few lifestyle changes to alleviate acid reflux.

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See doctor before starting exercise program



A group of runners tackle the challenge of a 5K run held in Lincoln. Before participating in fitness challenges, Coosa Valley Medical Center physical therapist Emily Henson recommends individuals to start slow and build up to the level needed to complete such events.

By SHANE DUNAWAY
Home staff writer

Many reasons exist for people to pursue a healthier lifestyle through fitness, whether it's slimming down to fit into a favorite item of clothing or working to proactively prevent long-term health issues.

But before a person decides to test their endurance on a treadmill or pound out some reps in the weight room, Coosa Valley Medical Center physical therapist Emily Henson offers up some recommendations.

"See your primary care physician and make sure you're okay to start exercising before starting a workout routine," Henson said. "Make sure there are no health risks present. Get an evaluation from your primary care physician."

Once a person gets the green light to begin an exercise regimen, Henson stressed not to rush the process.

"The most common mistake is, they exercise too hard, too quickly," Henson said. "You don't need to go aggressive

when you're first starting. Start with low weight and low reps and go slow. Do low-impact exercises and do gentle workouts before advancing to heavier weights or doing long-distance running or walking. Stretching also helps."

Henson said every person contains a varied physiological makeup, and starting points may vary from person to person depending on their fitness goals.

For the average person aspiring to be a fitness warrior, she provided a basic starting point where they begin their journey.

"In general, a good walking program is one of the best things you can do," Henson said. "Just get out there and get moving."

Henson said the American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of exercise, three to five days a week, but she emphasized that people shouldn't let it discourage them if they can't complete a full 30-minute workout.

"If you can't do it, doing five to 10 minutes is better than doing nothing," Henson said. "Start from there and work toward your goals."

Foods

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aren't adding tomatoes to everything you eat, perhaps you should. Estimates suggest the average person eats around 80 pounds of tomatoes per year. Tomatoes are more than just a garnish for salads or sandwiches. In fact, red tomatoes are a healthy fuel for the body that earn their superfood status thanks in large part to lycopene. Lycopene is a powerful antioxidant with cancer-fighting properties. Like other antioxidants, lycopene destroys free radicals in the body that may otherwise damage cells. One eight-ounce serving of red, ripe and raw tomatoes is a good source of vitamins A, C and K and a great source of folate and potassium, which can boost the immune system and other functions of the body. Tomatoes also are naturally low in sodium, saturated fat, cholesterol, and calories. Due to their high water content, tomatoes can fill you up, making it less likely that you will overeat.

* **Yogurt:** Yogurt is arguably at the peak of its popularity, with dozens of varieties, from creamy creations to low-fat alternatives to thick and rich Greek yogurts, available at many grocery stores. Yogurt is a great source of protein, calcium and key vitamins that support strong bones and a healthy metabolism. Yogurt also boosts the immune system by providing tons of beneficial bacteria that swarm in the digestive tract and aid with digestion by using nutrients more efficiently.

* **Dark, leafy greens:** Spinach, kale and chard contain iron and carotenoids, an antioxidant that protects cells against damaging free radicals. In addition to fiber, which helps you feel full and cleans cholesterol from the blood, leafy greens also contain abundant amounts of calcium. Calcium is integral in building and maintaining healthy

bones and teeth and reducing the risk of osteoporosis. It also is key in regulating the heart's rhythm, the transmission of nerve impulses and the blood clotting functions in the body. Raw, leafy greens offer more of a nutritive punch than cooked veggies, but both are good to include in a diet.

* **Salmon:** Fish is often naturally low in fat and cholesterol, making it a smart choice for those watching their waistlines. But the benefits do not end there. Oily fish like salmon is particularly nutritious because it is packed with omega-3 fatty acids, a group of essential polyunsaturated fats. These fats are considered essential because the body cannot create them, meaning they can only be obtained through food.

* **Carrots:** The carotenoids found in carrots are fat-soluble compounds that reduce the risk for a wide range of cancers and help ease inflammatory diseases, such as asthma and rheumatoid arthritis. Four ounces of carrots per day makes a low-calorie snack, and this includes all the carotenoids you need. Beta-carotene, also found in sweet potatoes and tomatoes, helps protect skin against sun damage. It may make the skin less sensitive to UV light, helping to protect against premature wrinkling. Carrots also are high in vitamin A.

* **Berries:** Blueberries, raspberries and blackberries are among the most nutritionally dense foods you can eat. Each berry contains a substantial amount of antioxidants, fiber, vitamins, and minerals that improve the body's antioxidant capability and contribute to brain health. Blueberries, in particular, pack more antioxidants than any other North American fruit.

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Hospitals expand to meet community needs

By **ELSIE HODNETT**
Home staff writer

Area hospitals continue to expand, with new physicians and services to better meet community needs.

“St. Vincent’s St. Clair Hospital has experienced tremendous volume growth within the last year,” said Evan Ray, FACHE, President of Rural Hospitals for St. Vincent’s Health System. “We have experienced a 30 percent increase in outpatient visits and a 29 percent increase in surgical procedures.”

Ray said the medical staff and associates of St. Vincent’s St. Clair, in Pell City, have accommodated the increase while main-



St. Vincent’s St. Clair Hospital

taining a strict focus on quality of care and patient

satisfaction. “St. Vincent’s St. Clair

is routinely ranked above the 90th percentile for

patient satisfaction as indicated by our Center

for Medicare and Medicaid Services HCAHPS publicly reported patient satisfaction scores.”

Ray said St. Vincent’s St. Clair was also recognized by its parent organization, Ascension Health, for its strong performance in patient satisfaction. During the fiscal year that ended June 30, the hospital exceeded patient satisfaction targets for each quarter for inpatient, emergency department and outpatient services.

St. Vincent’s St. Clair

New services added since the new facility opened are the Advanced Wound Center that includes hyperbaric oxygen

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Hospitals

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therapy, the Vein Center for minimally-invasive treatment of venous disease, and pain management services. Chronic pain management treatments include activity modifications, physical therapy, trigger point injections, multidisciplinary pain treatment and pain medication management.

The new St. Vincent's St. Clair Sleep Disorders Center received accreditation from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Although most sleep patients are adults, the center is also equipped to provide sleep studies for children ages 8 and older. An adjacent room is available for parents to stay through the night.

The physical therapy department now includes occupational and speech therapy specialists. Physical therapy offers sports medicine rehabilitation, spine evaluations, evaluations of various neurological conditions, balance and gait assessments, speech evaluations and swallowing assessments.

Surgical services include a full-time general surgeon on call, Dr. Scott Smith. This coverage benefits both emergency department patients and inpatients. Recently added surgical services include anti-reflux surgery, laparoscopic colectomy for benign and malignant disease, thyroid surgery, ERCP (Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography), vascular surgery for dialysis, wound debridement and orthopedics procedures such as pins, plates, and arthroscopic knee and shoulder scopes. The surgical department performs many laparoscopic procedures, or

minimally-invasive procedures, such as gallbladder, appendectomy, hernia and hysterectomy.

The growing number of specialists to the medical staff includes cardiology, gastroenterology, general surgery, gynecology, nephrology, neurology, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, orthopedics, otolaryngology (ENT), pulmonology, sports medicine, urology and vascular surgery.

"We continue to grow our reach throughout St. Clair County and the surrounding region by supporting our physicians," Ray said. "From a primary care perspective, we've partnered with local primary care groups to support the recruitment of additional physicians to their practices. From a specialist growth standpoint, we continue to work with specialists throughout Central Alabama to identify those whose practice goals align with both St. Vincent's St. Clair and our community."

Citizens BMC

Joel Taylor, president of Citizens Baptist Medical Center in Talladega, said the 122-bed acute care facility offers a comprehensive range of clinical services including obstetrics/gynecology, orthopedics, emergency services, a geriatric psychiatry unit, home health and hospice, and specialized medical and surgical care.

"At Citizens, we pride ourselves on being part of the community committed to providing convenient and easy-to-navigate healthcare," he said. "Add to that our comprehensive list of services — from emergency care to obstetrics, diagnostic imaging, surgical services, home



Citizens Baptist Medical Center

health and hospice — and what we offer is a personalized, caring approach to healthcare. We have a stellar group of primary care physicians and specialists affiliated with our hospital, and our relationship with them means a more seamless approach to care when you're in need of hospital-based services."

Taylor said focus areas include primary care, with Baptist Health Center physicians affiliated with CBMC to provide specialty care services to the Talladega, Munford, Anniston and Lincoln communities.

Dr. Sara Sadiq recently returned to BHC Talladega and the Talladega community and is accepting new patients.

Also at BHC Talladega is Max Thrower, CRNP, a certified nurse practitioner who is accepting new patients.

BHC Munford offers

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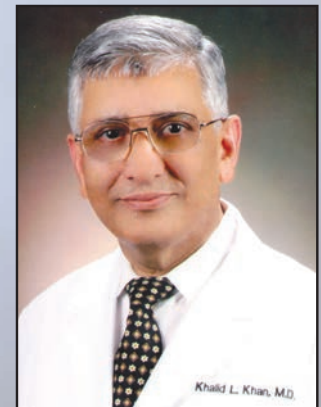


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Hospitals

From Page 1

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BHC Talladega Internal Medicine, BHC Talladega OB/GYN, BHC Talladega Pediatrics and BHC Lincoln also offer services.

CBMC emergency department offers urgent and emergency care 24 hours a day, with wait times to see a physician averaging less than 30 minutes and an average length of stay of 2 hours.

Work force wellness provides for employer partnerships and an employer-directed health-management program. These services provide cost-effective, high-quality healthcare options to employee populations.

The recently expanded home health services work with patients, families and physicians to provide quality care in the comfort of a patient's home. The staff works as a team with the patient's physician to inform them of any changes related to the patient's medical condition, with a goal of keeping the patient out of the hospital or preventing readmission to the hospital.

Services include skilled nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology, home health aides and medical social services.

Patients who may benefit from home care services include patients recovering from surgery or illness, patients with many long-term diseases including CHF, COPD and others who need skilled care to improve their condition, patients/caregivers who need education for medication management and disease processes, patients requiring wound therapy including pressure ulcers, stasis ulcers and surgical wounds, patients requiring rehab therapy to overcome injuries or illness and patients facing the end stage of life in need of medical care and emotional support.

The hospice program, launched in June, provides compassionate post-acute care aimed at maintaining or improving the quality of life for critically and terminally ill patients, including special focus on the spiritual and emotional needs of the individual and their families. Offering the service in a hospital setting helps maintain continuity of care while providing the best healthcare possible for patients.

The FitnessPlus Gym is a low-cost membership option available to the public, located on the ground floor of the hospital. Facility features include cardio-conditioning equipment, toning and strengthening equipment, weight machines, aerobics, yoga and Zumba classes, a convenient and secure parking area with video surveillance and security guard, showers, changing area, lockers, towels and a drink machine.

Coosa Valley Medical Center

Coosa Valley Medical Center in Sylacauga continues to expand, adding physicians and services to better serve the community.

New physicians at CVMC include doctors Kenneth McCollough, Anthony Nix, Dimo Popov, Basil Refai, David Mooney and Karl Schroeder.

New services include vascular procedures added to the cardiac catheterization lab, inpatient dialysis, PET/CT scan, lung screenings and a Friday night sports clinic.



Coosa Valley Medical Center

Quality awards include an ICU Beacon Award, Silver Stroke Award and Top Performer for Joint Commission.

McCollough is board certified in internal medicine and sports medicine, which complements the hospital's orthopedic surgeon and expands the CVMC sports medicine initiative.

Nix is board certified in family medicine and joined the Davis Family Medicine practice in August. CVMC recognized the need for more access to primary care and recruited Nix.

Popov is board certified in internal medicine and nephrology. CVMC identified a need for inpatient dialysis this past year to improve the continuum of care for patients. Popov manages the care of dialysis patients.

See Hospitals, Page 13

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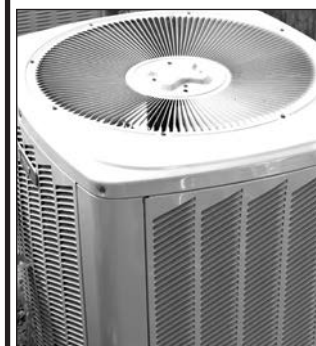


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The myths and benefits of holistic medicine

By **ZAC AL-KHATEEB**
Home staff writer

For anyone interested in taking a more natural approach to improving their health, holistic treatment may be the answer.

Along with herbs and other natural supplements, various types of holistic treatments include chiropractic, acupuncture, electric stimulation and others.

Chiropractors adjust the spinal alignment of patients, which can help with posture and soreness in certain parts of the body.

Acupuncture is the practice of placing needles in various points of the body, which can be used to relieve symptoms or even help overcoming addictive habits.

Electric stimulation is artificially stimulating nerves or muscles after an injury to help in the healing process.

Dr. Cary Camp is someone who trusts in holistic medicine wholeheartedly. Camp, whose chiropractic practice is based out of Talladega, has been practicing for 38 years. Camp estimated that 95 percent of his patients who have come to him have felt relief of their symptoms after being adjusted. He estimated that 70 percent of his acupuncture patients have experienced relief from their symptoms, as well.

“It can be beneficial to musculoskeletal problems and to general health,” Camp said. “It just depends on what the problem is, and where. That’s what I try to see if



Dr. Cary Camp

what the best procedure of care is.”

However, Camp tries to veer away from prescribing herbal medicines. In the past, Camp carried his own herbal medicine in his practice, but he didn’t have enough patients who could use it. The end result: His medicine almost always expired.

Camp also said he would avoid buying off-brand medicines, which could have different levels of purity.

Sylacauga’s Dr. David Head, a practicing chiropractor of 28 years, said chiropractic is best limited to musculoskeletal issues, as opposed to overall health and wellness.

“The philosophy behind chiropractic is that you can develop misalignments and lock out of place, putting pressure on your various nerves throughout the body,” he said. “The philosophy behind it is, if the nervous system is functioning normally, the rest of your body is functioning normally.”

Still, Head said, there have not been enough hard studies to prove



Dr. David Head

that chiropractic helps with anything other than musculoskeletal issues – a large enough issue in and of itself.

Head is also a licensed

acupuncturist, although he does not practice. Head used to employ the technique with his patients, but said the results were hit-and-miss: the procedure would work with some patients, to different degrees, and not at all with others.

So instead of employing the practice, Head instead uses an overall approach to health with his patients, including regular exercise, healthier dietary habits, chiropractic therapy, if needed, and short-term medicinal use.

To Head, holistic medicine is not a quick

See **Holistic**, Page 14

Hospitals

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Refaï is board certified in internal medicine and vascular medicine. CVMC opened its cardiac catheterization lab in 2012, but this year added vascular services to the lab.

Mooney is board certified in hematology and oncology and is the newest physician to join the Hematology Oncology Associates of Alabama practice.

Schroeder is board certified in internal medicine and pulmonary disease.

The PET/CT scan combines positron emission tomography, which produces images of how the body functions and measures metabolic activity with computed tomography, which provides cross-sectional images of the body into one exam. This gives patients a reduced scan time and increases accuracy and comfort while providing physicians with exceptional views of the whole body and its functions.

While the Friday night sports clinic is not new, CVMC continues to offer it year after year to support area athletes. The clinic has a board certified sports medicine physician along with an orthopedic physician.

CVMC received the ICU Beacon Award for excellence from the American Association of Critical Care Nurses in recognition of the exceptional care of their patients.

CVMC was also recognized as one of the top 7 percent performers for the Joint Commission Accreditation Survey.

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Foods to supplement men's workouts

Diet and exercise go hand-in-hand for adults looking to reduce their risk for heart disease and cancer. A great workout routine is made even better by a healthy diet, and a healthy diet is even more effective when paired with an active lifestyle. While that's certainly not revelatory, men and women might be surprised to learn they have different nutritional needs, so a diet that might satisfy women's needs will not necessarily do the same for men.

When tailoring their diets, men should be sure to include nutrients that prevent prostate cancer and help them maintain muscle mass. The right nutrients also can help men boost their immune systems, prevent bone loss and strengthen their cardiovascular systems. While many foods provide nutritional benefits to both men and women, the following are some foods that can be especially beneficial to men.

* Bananas: Rich in potassium, bananas can aid in protein metabolism, boost the immune system, help with the formation of red blood cells and help the nervous system operate at optimal capacity. Bananas are a great source of vitamin B-6, and because they're so easily portable, banan-



Studies have shown that broccoli can help men reduce their risk for heart disease and cancer.

as make a great midday snack or preworkout bite to eat on your way to the gym. In addition to providing ample potassium, bananas also are rich in magnesium, and diets rich in both potassium and magnesium can reduce

a person's risk of stroke. Though women suffer more strokes each year than men, the National Stroke Association notes that is likely because women live longer than men and stroke typically occurs at older ages. Stroke

incidence is higher in men than women at younger ages, so men, especially those with a family history of stroke, should include bananas in their diet.

* Broccoli: Broccoli can help men reduce their risk of heart disease and cancer, the No. 1 and No. 2 killers, respectively, of men 35 and older. Broccoli is a great source of a phytochemical known as sulforaphane, which can help men reduce their risk for both prostate and colon cancer. Broccoli also may help men lower their levels of homocysteine, an amino acid linked to an increased risk of stroke.

* Soybeans: Soybeans can be an integral part of a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and such diets can help men reduce their risk of heart disease. In addition, soybeans contain a substantial amount of isoflavones, which promote a healthy prostate and lower men's risk of prostate cancer. Men should consider soy products such as soy nuts, soy milk and soy cheese to increase the nutritional value of their diets.

* Oysters: Oysters are widely considered a delicacy, but few may know that oysters also make for a healthy addition to a nutritious diet. That's because just a few oysters per day can deliver the recommend-

ed daily intake of zinc, a powerful antioxidant that research has shown can protect men against the kind of cell damage that leads to prostate cancer. Men may also experience improved sexual function by including more zinc in their diets, as research has shown that zinc can help improve sperm counts.

* Whole grains: Whole grains are rich in fiber, vitamins and minerals, which can help men improve heart health, build muscle and maintain a healthy weight. Whole grains that are rich in solu-

ble fiber, such as oatmeal, are strong sources of B vitamins that help men lower their low-density lipoprotein, often referred to as "bad" cholesterol. Whole grain products that contain at least three to five grams of fiber per serving can pack a powerful punch for men looking to improve the nutritional value of their diets.

Men and women benefit differently from various nutrients, vitamins and minerals, and men might be surprised to learn just how healthy certain easily prepared foods can be.

Holistic

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fix, but rather a long-term process that can get at the root of a problem. This method, Head said, can sometimes take months and even years to complete. Sometimes, Head said, it's hard to motivate someone to improve their health holistically over long periods of time.

"Human behavior is hard to change," Head said. "Sometimes it takes a big event like a heart attack or cancer before people start making changes."

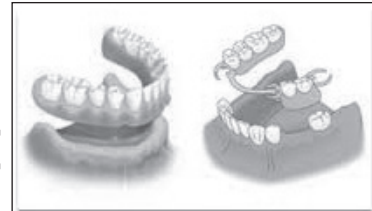
Still, both Head and Camp said they believe holistic treatment can be both advantageous and beneficial to patients.

"It never hurts to try the holistic approach," Camp said. "If it works, great. If not, then you may need to go to the doctor or some sort of specialist. But there's no harm in trying."

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The power of a positive attitude

A balanced diet, exercise, genetics, and even certain medications can work in concert to make a person healthy. But a person's demeanor also can factor into personal health.

The Mayo Clinic says that whether or not a person is an optimist or a pessimist can affect many areas of his or her health and well-being, and those who see the glass as half-full may ultimately be healthier than those who see it as half-empty.

Positive thinking can make it easier to manage stress. The body responds differently based on an individual's mood, and it may produce stress hormones if a person's outlook is negative. Such stress hormones can compromise the immune system, increase blood pressure and even reduce the body's ability to burn fat effectively. Thinking negatively and being on edge also can increase a person's risk for developing cardiovascular disease and aging prematurely.

Conversely, maintaining a positive attitude can be good for your health. Studies have shown that thinking positively can lower rates of depression and anxiety, increase life expectancy and provide greater resistance to certain illnesses, such as the common cold. A 2012 preliminary study from researchers at Stanford University found that daughters of mothers suffering from depression were able to witness their own stress levels go down on a real-time brain scan as they switched from

Laughter is good medicine

Laughter combined with positive thinking is a prescription for good health. Research shows laughter relaxes the entire body, relieving physical tension and stress for up to 45 minutes. Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases infection-fighting antibodies. Endorphins that promote an overall sense of well-being and relieve pain can be released from a hearty bout of laughter. Furthermore, laughter can increase blood flow throughout the body, which protects against hypertension and heart attack.

negative thoughts to happy ones.

Researchers are unsure why positive thinking has such profound effects. But in addition to limiting stress-releasing hormones, positive thinking may inspire people to live healthier lifestyles that make them more likely to get routine physical activity and eat a healthy diet. Happy people also may be less likely to use tobacco products or alcohol as a coping mechanism when dealing with elevated stress levels, and such people will not have to deal with the side effects that can come with these unhealthy behaviors.

Becoming a more positive thinker can take a little effort for those without a natural inclination for optimism. But because positive thinking boasts such significant health benefits, men and women might want to try the following methods to embrace their optimistic side.

* Exercise. Start an exercise regimen, as physical

activity naturally reduces stress and can improve mood.

* Embrace humor. Surround yourself with others who bring a smile to your face. Look for ways to laugh as much as possible. Rather than go out to dinner or a bar with friends, head to a comedy club. Choose comedies at the movie theater and find humor in everyday happenings.

* Identify areas that need change. Think about moments in life that may bring you down or inspire negative reactions. If work is problematic, figure out ways to make it better and work toward improving the situation.

* Be supportive of yourself. Consider what you would say to others and then treat yourself the same way. Would you be overly negative or derogatory toward a complete stranger? Probably not, and there is no reason to be harsh with yourself, either. Push negative

See Attitude, Page 16



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Understanding cholesterol

Cholesterol is in many ways considered a dirty word. While cholesterol is too complex to categorize so easily, the widely known complications of high cholesterol make it easy to generalize cholesterol as something detrimental to human health.

But there's more to cholesterol than meets the eye, and understanding this waxy substance can help men and women get a better idea of their overall health and what they need to do to be even healthier.

Where does cholesterol come from?

Cholesterol is produced by the body, but also comes from the food you eat. The human body makes all the cholesterol it needs and circulates that cholesterol through the blood. But foods, including meat, certain dairy products and poultry, also contain cholesterol, and the liver actually produces more cholesterol if you eat a diet that's high in saturated and trans fats.

Why is cholesterol potentially dangerous?

According to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, high blood cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart

disease. If your body has too much cholesterol in its blood, that excess cholesterol can form plaque in the walls of your arteries, gradually causing a hardening and narrowing of the arteries. Narrow arteries slow blood flow to the heart, which needs both the blood and the oxygen that blood carries in order to function at full strength. If plaque build-up in the arterial walls slows or blocks off that blood flow, a heart attack may result.

Bad vs. Good?

Many people are now aware that cholesterol is widely categorized as "bad" or "good," but many of those same people may not know why that distinction is so important. Cholesterol does not dissolve in the blood, so it must be transported through the bloodstream by carriers known as lipoproteins. There are two types of lipoproteins that perform this function: low-density lipoproteins, or LDL, and high-density lipoproteins, or HDL. LDL is what's commonly referred to as "bad" cholesterol because it contributes to the build-up of plaque, the thick and hard deposits that can line the arterial walls and

impede blood flow. HDL is the "good" cholesterol, as it helps remove LDL from the arteries. According to the American Heart Association, experts believe HDL gathers LDL before carrying it away from the arteries and back to the liver, where it is ultimately broken and down and passed from the body. Healthy levels of HDL can protect against heart disease and stroke, while low levels of HDL are considered a major risk for heart disease.

What affects cholesterol levels?

Cholesterol levels are affected by lifestyle choices you can control and additional factors you cannot.

*** Diet:** Diet is entirely within your control, so bad cholesterol levels that increase because of your diet are entirely preventable. A diet that's high in saturated fat is unhealthy, and the AHA recommends a diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish, and nuts. Avoid red meat as much as possible and steer clear of sugary foods and beverages.

*** Weight:** Weight is another controllable risk factor for high cholesterol.

Being overweight is a risk factor for a host of ailments, including high cholesterol and heart disease. Losing weight can lower LDL while increasing HDL, providing the best of both worlds.

*** Exercise:** Regular physical activity can lower LDL and raise HDL levels. The AHA notes that 40 minutes of aerobic exercise performed at moderate to vigorous intensity three to four times per week is enough to lower LDL and high blood pressure. Inactivity, on the other hand, is a major risk factor for heart disease.

*** Age:** Cholesterol levels rise as men and women age, which only highlights the emphasis men and women must place on healthy lifestyle choices as they get older. You won't be able to cease aging, but you can still make healthy lifestyle choices to combat the impact that aging has on your cholesterol levels.

*** Gender:** Gender is another uncontrollable factor that affects cholesterol levels. Before reaching the age of menopause, women have lower total cholesterol levels than men of the same age. But after they reach the age of menopause, women's LDL levels typically rise.

Attitude

From Page 15

thoughts away.

*** Volunteer.** One way to see the world in a more positive light is to help others who may be less fortunate than you. Volunteering not only helps others, but it also can help you put your own problems in perspective. Volunteering also helps you feel good about your efforts, which can translate into positive thinking.

*** Think like a child.** Take a cue from youngsters and find joy in the little things. Let children be the leaders in activities and mimic what they do. You just may find yourself laughing more and enjoying yourself. Being silly for a little while is one way to recapture the feelings of youth.

Positive thinking is more than the subject matter of self-help books. It's a viable way to improve personal health and live longer.

Did you know?

Fibromyalgia is a disorder characterized by persistent pain in muscles, ligaments, tendons, and joints. Additional symptoms of fibromyalgia, or FM, include fatigue, disturbed sleep and headaches, and these symptoms may be worsened or triggered by a host of factors, such as anxiety, depression, hormonal changes, cold or drafty environments, and/or stress.

Physical overexertion is another possible trigger of FM, which the American Medical Association notes is the second most common disorder diagnosed by rheumatologists. The National Center on Health, Phys-

ical Activity & Disability notes that a healthy lifestyle that includes routine exercise, and aerobic exercise in particular, helps many people with FM more effectively manage their symptoms while preventing a decline in muscle strength, endurance and cardiovascular function. Exercise also improves oxygen delivery to muscles and reduces muscle tightness, each of which can eventually relieve some of the pain associated with FM. The rise in muscle temperatures during aerobic exercise may also alleviate symptoms of FM, as such a rise often makes it easier for muscles to relax.

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Does nature have best weight-loss supplement?

Interest in weight loss supplements has been strong for decades. The search is continually on for foods and capsules that contain magical ingredients that help men and women lose weight. Although many products don't deliver on their promises, the demand for weight-loss supplements continues to grow.

Garcinia cambogia is a tropical fruit native to Indonesia and other areas of Asia. The fruit looks like a small pumpkin and is greenish-yellow in color. Garcinia cambogia is a type of tamarind and is usually used in the preparation of curries. The fruit and rind are used in many traditional recipes as souring agents.

Aside from its use as a food, garcinia cambogia received worldwide attention when it was touted as an effective and natural weight-loss supplement. According to popular doctor and television personality Dr. Mehmet Oz and other researchers, the natural extract from garcinia cambogia, called hydroxycitric acid, or HCA, can double or triple one's weight loss when used in conjunction with diet and exercise.

How it works

Garcinia's efficacy is two-fold. It works by helping to block the formation of fat and also works as an appetite suppressant. In fact, garcinia cambogia was traditionally used in meals to make them more filling.

HCA blocks fat by inhibiting an enzyme in the body

called citrate lyase, which is needed to make fat from carbohydrates. Sugars or carbohydrates that are not burned immediately for energy are typically stored as fat. However HCA halts this process.

Furthermore, HCA can increase serotonin levels in the body. Low serotonin contributes to anxiety, depression and emotional eating. An increase in serotonin can improve mood and reduce a person's tendency to overeat.

Results of garcinia cambogia

Clinical trials have been conducted on the supplement to test its efficacy with regard to weight loss. As reported by Dr. Oz, one randomized placebo-controlled study followed 60 obese people for 8 weeks. With a calorie-restricted diet of 1200 kcal/day and an HCA dose of 1320 mg/day, the experimental group lost an average of 14 pounds, compared to 6.1 pounds in the placebo group. The participants who took the dose of HCA also reported having a reduced appetite.

Other studies into garcinia cambogia have produced similar evidence but on a smaller scale. Many studies in humans have been conducted on small samples and mainly in the short term. None of them have shown if weight loss effects persist beyond 12 weeks of supplementation. Therefore, experts advise there is still little evidence to support the potential long-term benefits of garcinia cambogia extracts.

Side effects

HCA extract is likely safe in normal amounts, and studies conducted in experimental animals have not reported increased mortality or significant toxicity. No adverse events in humans studied have been detected at normally administered doses of the supplement. Mild nausea or abdominal pain may occur if taken in high amounts.

Pregnant or breastfeeding women should avoid garcinia cambogia because its potential impact on a fetus or developing infant is unknown. Those taking insulin for diabetes or a cholesterol-lowering drug also should exercise caution and speak to a doctor before starting HCA supplementation.

Dosage

Choose a garcinia product that is free of fillers and contains at least 50 percent HCA. Between 500 to 1000 mg before meals can be taken, with no more than 3,000 mg total for the day. When supplementing, it is always advisable to talk with a family practitioner so that he or she is aware of all medications and supplements being taken.

Although there is no magic fix for weight loss, using garcinia cambogia in conjunction with a regular exercise regimen and healthy eating may promote weight loss.

How to manage back pain

Back pain can have a debilitating impact on those suffering from it. But even those who have endured back pain might be unaware of just how far-reaching and expensive it can be.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, lower back pain is the foremost cause of job disability around the world. The NINDS study, in which researchers examined data from 117 studies conducted in 47 different countries, found that one in 10 people suffer from lower back pain, a discovery that no doubt startles many people, especially when considering the global scope of the study. A condition that affects 10 percent of the world may

seem impossible to prevent, but there are steps men and women suffering from back pain can take to make their condition more manageable.

* Contact your physician. A bruised back or mild stiffness may not require the help of a physician. Such issues will likely disappear shortly enough to make medical attention unnecessary. But Emblem-Health recommends that people suffering with back pain visit a doctor if they experience numbness or tingling in their back, legs or arms; suffer pain after a fall; and/or are feeling pain with additional symptoms, including fever, trouble passing urine or unexplained weight

See Pain, Page 18



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Health benefits of dark chocolate

Many people associate healthy eating with foods that may not be so tasty. While desserts are not often considered the healthiest course of a meal, dark chocolate, when enjoyed in moderation, can be healthy.

Dark chocolate can benefit the brain, heart and even teeth. Researchers at a meeting of the American Chemical Society in Dallas have discovered just why dark chocolate packs such a healthy punch. Otherwise indigestible portions of the chocolate are converted by microbes in the digestive system. In turn, the chocolate is transformed into anti-inflammatory compounds.

Researchers found that digestion in the stomach produces long molecules called polyphenolic polymers. These molecules are too large to cross the walls of the stomach to be used nutritionally. However, when the polyphenolic polymers meet lactic acid and microbes that inhabit the human colon, the polymers ferment

See **Chocolate**, Page 19



Cocoa powder-derived pills may be used in the future to treat various health ailments.

Pain

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loss. Such symptoms indicate that the back pain is more than just a temporary nuisance, and something that may need to be treated by a professional.

When a physician visit is necessary, the doctor will attempt to understand what's causing the pain. Identifying the cause can help develop an appropriate and effective course of treatment. The most common causes of back pain include bulging discs, pinched nerves, arthritis, muscle spasms or strains, and sciatica, a nerve condition that goes from the lower back through the hips.

* Exercise regularly. When speaking with a physician, men and women who suffer from back pain should discuss exercise as a treatment method. Regular exercises such as riding a bicycle or

swimming can improve strength and flexibility in the back. More complex exercises, such as yoga, also have been recommended to sufferers of back pain. Yoga improves flexibility and builds strength while also promoting strong bones which can reduce a person's risk of injury. Injuries that limit movement can increase a person's risk of developing back pain, so an exercise routine that builds flexibility and strong bones can be an effective way to manage or even prevent back pain.

* Sit up straight at work. Many people can trace their back pain to their offices, where uncomfortable chairs and poorly positioned desks don't provide the necessary support men and women need to reduce or prevent back pain. Chairs should provide adequate lower

back support, and desks should be at a comfortable height that does not force the body to hunch or place itself in another awkward position just to get work done. When sitting, make sure you are sitting upright with your shoulders relaxed and your body against the back of your chair.

* Don't resort to too much rest. Long-time sufferers of back pain no doubt recall a time when physicians would prescribe rest to treat back pain. But too much sitting around has now been shown to worsen back pain. If you must rest, do so for only a day or two before gradually becoming more active. Swimming or walking can be great and less physically taxing ways to acclimate your body to physical activity after resting for a day or two due to back pain.



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How to prevent muscle soreness

Daily exercise is an integral part of a healthy lifestyle. When paired with a nutritious diet, daily exercise can help men and women maintain their personal health and put them in a better position to battle many of the physical quirks that come with aging.

But even the most ardent exercise enthusiast is periodically confronted with muscle soreness, which can interrupt an exercise routine and have a very negative impact on an individual's quality of life. Muscle soreness often appears the morning after a workout and can make something as simple as getting out of bed feel as difficult as climbing Mount Everest. The frequency and severity of muscle soreness depends on a host of factors, including how old someone is, how often a person exercises and how well that person performs certain exercises. While muscle soreness may seem like another unfortunate side effect of the aging process, there are ways to prevent such soreness.

* Stay hydrated. Many people forget to drink water when working out, and such forgetfulness can lead to muscle soreness. Roughly 50 to 60 percent of a person's total body mass is water, but the body loses a lot of water during exercise, especially when that exercise is vigorous and causes lots of sweating. Losing a substantial amount of water can be debilitating and lead to muscle sore-

ness, as muscle cells need water to recover fully from a workout. So it's important that men and women stay hydrated both during a workout and throughout the rest of the day. Carry a bottle of water with you when working out. You will be more inclined to drink water and stay hydrated during a workout if you have water with you as opposed to relying on repeated trips to the water fountain. One way to determine if you're drinking enough water during a workout is to make note of the color of your urine in the hours following the workout. If your urine is

light yellow or clear, then you're probably drinking enough water to stay hydrated during and after the workout. If your urine is dark yellow or has an orange tint, then you need to make a stronger effort to stay hydrated during and after your workout.

* Get some sleep. Sleep is another way to prevent or reduce the likelihood of developing muscle soreness. The body needs time to recover from exercise, and sleep is an integral part of that recovery process. Adults typically need between seven and eight

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Chocolate

From Page 18

and can be broken down further. These smaller molecules are then used by the body. The resulting material is anti-inflammatory and can prevent certain conditions, including cardiovascular disease, from developing.

One of the pitfalls of dark chocolate is the sugar and fat content of a candy bar, which can overshadow the health benefits. But those who consume the majority of their dark chocolate in the form of unsweetened cocoa powder can avoid such consequences. Roughly two tablespoons of cocoa powder per day can produce the desired anti-inflammatory benefits, and cocoa powder can be mixed into drinks, sprinkled over oatmeal and consumed in many other ways. Full-sugar, full-fat dark chocolate bars and pieces should be enjoyed sparingly, although they are better for your health than milk or white chocolate.

Interest in dark chocolate for its medical benefits has led researchers to

study the efficacy of its anti-inflammatory compounds. A big study is already underway to see if pills containing the nutrients in dark chocolate can replicate the many health benefits, including helping to prevent heart attack and stroke. The pills are so concentrated they would be the equivalent of eating numerous dark chocolate bars, but without the negative side effects. The goal of the study is to see if chocolate can provide significant medical benefits without forcing consumers to eat so much sugar and fat. The study will be sponsored by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute and Mars Inc., maker of M&M's and Snickers bars. The candy company has patented a way to extract flavonols from cocoa in high concentration and put them in capsules. Mars and some other companies sell cocoa extract capsules, but with less active ingredients than those that will be tested in the study. Some participants will get flavorless, coated pills that contain the cocoa flavonols, while others will be given a placebo. Eighteen thousand men and women nationwide are expected to participate.



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Natural sleep remedies that are worth exploring

Sleep is a natural process designed to recharge the body and mind. Although some people find no difficulty in settling down for the night, many others profess to have periodic or chronic sleep problems. But before asking doctors to reach for their prescription pads, men and women struggling to fall asleep at night may want to consider some all-natural remedies to help them get a good night's rest.

Delta Sleep Labs says between 20 and 40 percent of all adults have insomnia in the course of any year, and more than 70 million Americans suffer from sleep disorders and wakefulness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognize insufficient sleep as a public health epidemic that can result in difficulty performing daily tasks, hypertension, depression, and even obesity.

While sleeping pills can be effective, they pose the risk of dependence and also may carry with them dangerous side effects. Some individuals have driven or engaged in other potentially dangerous activities while under the influence of sleeping pills. No such side effects have been associated with natural remedies.

When lifestyle changes, such as limiting caffeine intake or creating a sleep hygiene program, fail to produce the desired results, the following natural remedies, when used as directed, may help men and women get a better night's rest.

* **Meditation:** Focusing on breathing and employing visualization may help relax the body into a state where it can drift off to sleep. In addition to calming the mind, meditation can reduce stress and hormone levels. Picturing a relaxing scene and focusing on all the senses involved in that scene may put you in a peaceful state of mind that makes it easier to fall asleep.

* **Distraction:** Although there are conflicting reports as to whether reading or watching television before going to bed can be a help or a hindrance, some people with insomnia do find these actions can help induce sleep. Choose a book or a program that isn't stimulating to distract yourself from anything that is causing distress. Doing so can create a state of relaxation that makes it easier to fall asleep. Use the sleep timer on the television to automatically turn off the TV after a set number of minutes, so you are not woken from sleep by a loud show after drifting off.

* **Aromatherapy:** Calming scents can relax the body. Preliminary research suggests that lavender essential oil may lengthen total sleep time, increase deep sleep and help people feel refreshed in the morning, particularly for women who have a more acute sense of smell than men. Put a few drops of lavender on a pillow before retiring to bed, or take a relaxing bath with the oil mixed into the bath water.

* **Magnesium:** Magnesium is a natural sedative. Foods rich in magnesium include dark green, leafy vegetables, almonds, whole grains, and legumes. Magnesium supplements also are available, and these are usually taken in a specific ratio with calcium to be the most effective.

* **Valerian:** Valerian is a natural herbal remedy that

grows in the form of a tall, flowering grassland plant. The roots are ground to produce the supplement that could assist with sleep. The Mayo Clinic notes that several small studies indicate that valerian may reduce the amount of time it takes to fall asleep and help you sleep better. Other studies have shown valerian to be no more effective than a placebo. However, with relatively few side effects, valerian may be worth a try.

* **Lemon balm:** This herbal supplement and tea works in a similar method to valerian. It is said to relieve anxiety and calm nerves, which could be infringing on your ability to fall asleep.

* **Acupuncture:** A study from researchers at the University of Pittsburgh concluded that acupuncture may be an effective treatment for insomnia. The study found that five weeks of acupuncture increased melatonin secretion in the evening and improved total sleep time.

* **Melatonin supplements:** A naturally occurring hormone that regulates your sleep-wake cycle in the brain, melatonin is produced when darkness falls. According to a Journal of Sleep Research study, time-release melatonin supplementation was effective in reducing sleep latency and improving sleep quality. Lower doses of melatonin have been shown to be as effective as higher doses, so less is often more with melatonin.

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Muscles

From Page 19

hours of sleep per night, so be sure to get enough rest so your muscles can recover before your next workout. Muscle soreness may be your body telling you it was not given enough time to fully recover from a previous workout.

* **Cool down after a workout.** If weight training is part of your workout routine, then it helps to cool down with some easy cardiovascular activity and light stretching after the weight training portion of your regimen is over. This can improve blood flow throughout your body, and improved blood flow can speed your recovery time and reduce post-workout muscle soreness by bringing fresh oxygen and healing nutrients to the parts of your body that may feel sore after a workout.

* **Don't fight fire with exercise.** Some people are tempted to fight muscle soreness by putting their muscles back to work. But such an approach can lead to injury. When muscles are sore, they also experience a loss of strength, which makes them more susceptible to damage and injury. Rather than fighting muscle soreness by challenging the muscles, give them a rest as they recover from soreness and fatigue. Work muscle groups that are not experiencing soreness or avoid weight training in favor of cardiovascular exercise and stretching.

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The relationship between vitamin D and cancer

Vitamin D has long been a friend to men, women and children. Obtained primarily through exposure of the skin to sunlight but also procured in certain foods and dietary supplements, vitamin D helps the body use calcium and phosphorus to improve bone health and build healthy teeth.

But as valuable as vitamin D can be to your bones and teeth, it also may play a role in reducing your risk for certain cancers. The National Cancer Institute notes that many studies have suggested that higher intake of vitamin D or higher levels of vitamin D in the blood are associated with a reduced risk of colorectal cancer. To understand this relationship, it helps to first understand vitamin D.

What is vitamin D?

A group of fat-soluble prohormones, vitamin D comes in two forms that are important to humans. Vitamin D₂, also known as ergocalciferol, is made naturally by plants, while vitamin D₃ is produced naturally by the body when it is exposed to ultraviolet radiation in sunlight.

How are vitamin D levels in the body measured?

When vitamins D₂ and D₃ enter the body, they are converted to 25-hydroxyvitamin D in the liver before traveling through the blood to the kidneys, where the 25-hydroxyvitamin D is modified to calcitriol,

which is the active form of vitamin D in the body. When a person has their vitamin D levels measured, the most accurate method of doing so is to determine the amount of 25-hydroxyvitamin D in their blood.

How do I get enough vitamin D?

The NCI notes that most people already get at least some of the vitamin D they need through sunlight exposure. In addition to sunlight exposure, many people get plenty of vitamin D from their diets, including foods such as fatty fish, fish liver oil and eggs that naturally contain vitamin D. But foods fortified with vitamin D, such as milk, juices and breakfast cereals, also ensure many people get adequate amounts of vitamin D. For many people, the combination of exposure to sunlight and diet is enough to produce strong bones and healthy teeth and reduce risk for colorectal cancer.

But people who are diagnosed with low levels of vitamin D can look to supplements to ensure they're getting enough. Recommended daily intake guidelines vary depending on age, but those interested in learning these guidelines can find them on the Institute of Medicine website at www.iom.edu.

Why study the connection between vitamin D and cancer?

While studies have previously linked higher levels of vitamin D with reduced risk of colorectal

cancer, research is ongoing to determine if vitamin D plays a role in lowering a person's risk of developing other types of cancers as well. Driving this research are early studies that discovered incidence and death rates for certain cancers were lower among people living in southern latitudes than those living in northern latitudes.

That's a significant distinction, as levels of sunlight exposure, which is a chief source of vitamin D, are relatively high in southern latitudes and considerably higher in such areas than in northern latitudes. Studies are ongoing into this particular link and if vitamin D is, in fact, behind the lower cancer incidence and death rates.

Another reason to study the connection is that experimental studies conducted on cancer cells and tumors in mice found that vitamin D may play a role in slowing or preventing the development of cancer.

Does vitamin D definitively lower risk for certain cancers?

Though evidence has suggested a link between high vitamin D intake and lower risk of specific cancers, the NCI notes that, thus far, studies have been inconsistent. While numerous studies have concluded that vitamin D reduces a person's risk for colorectal cancer, even that widely acknowledged link remains open to debate. For example, a 2006 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that healthy women who took vitamin D and calcium supplements for an average of seven years did not have a reduced incidence of colorectal cancer, though some scientists questioned if that study was extensive enough to support its ultimate conclusion.

More information about the relationship between vitamin D and cancer is available at www.cancer.gov.

Did you know?

Certain lifestyle choices can affect your levels of low-density lipoprotein, or LDL, greatly increasing your risk for heart disease and heart attack.

Commonly referred to as "bad" cholesterol, LDL is one of two types of lipoproteins that carry cholesterol to and from your body's cells. LDL is considered "bad" because it contributes to plaque, a thick and hard deposit that can build up on arterial walls, clogging arteries and making them less flexible.

Clogged, inflexible arteries can obstruct blood flow to the heart, increasing a person's risk of heart disease and heart attack.

Smoking cigarettes, maintaining a poor diet that's high in saturated and trans fats, weight gain that results from eating too many calories, excessive alcohol consumption and a sedentary lifestyle are all unhealthy lifestyle choices that contribute to high LDL levels and put people at significant risk for heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

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Foods on the barbie need not be unhealthy

Barbecue season is in full swing, and that means many evenings spent dining outdoors with a feast of grilled foods at your beck and call. Such foods may be delicious, but some barbecue standards may not be ideal for those trying to maintain a beach-ready body. But even if a trim waistline is your ultimate goal, you can still enjoy your grilled foods by making a few smart choices and substitute high-fat foods for healthier fare at your next barbecue.

BAD: BBQ ribs may be savory, but they have a high fat-to-meat ratio. Whether your ribs are pork or beef, each bite delivers much more fat than meat. These cuts of meat are among the fattiest parts of the animal to eat and contain a high amount of saturated fat, according to the American Dietetic Association. Saturated fat can contribute to cardiovascular disease and increase risk of type 2 diabetes.

BETTER: Rather than fatty ribs, opt for a lean pork loin that can be slathered in barbecue sauce and spices. The loin also can be smoked and shredded to make tasty pulled-pork.

BAD: What would a barbecue be without a helping of rich and creamy potato salad? Potato salad is typically the go-to side dish accompanying burgers, hot dogs and chicken. While potatoes can be healthy, they also are loaded with calories. Plus, potato salad is often made by mixing boiled potatoes with calorie-rich mayonnaise, adding even more calories and fat to this beloved side dish.

BETTER: A vegetable slaw, made from thin

strips of carrots, broccoli, cabbage, and other firm vegetables is a healthier option. Mix the slaw with a light vinaigrette instead of mayonnaise. The slaw will be refreshing and provide a bounty of vitamins and minerals. Plus, the slaw will be less likely to spoil under the hot sun.

BAD: Frankfurters have been a staple of backyard barbecues for decades. But the average beef hot dog contains 140 calories and 15 grams of fat. And that's before it's even placed on a bun and embellished with your favorite toppings. Hot dogs also are high in sodium and some have a bevy of preservatives.

BETTER: Turkey and chicken hot dogs are leaner than pork and beef varieties, with containing half the amount of calories as their more traditional counterparts. Concerns about "mystery meat" in hot dogs has long plagued the food industry. If you are worried about what is in your hot dogs, try making your own. Ground meat yourself and stuff

into sausage casings. Fresh hot dogs thrown on the grill afford the ultimate control over what's going into your body.

BAD: Though nothing may be more American than apple pie, pie is not as healthy as you think. Buttery crusts and sugar-laden fillings can make one slice of pie fattening. Double-crust pies with a bottom and top crust will have more calories.

BETTER: Fresh fruit is a better option than pie. A bowl of berries served with fresh whipped cream on the side will offer far fewer calories and just as much flavor as a slice of pie.

BAD: Sugary beverages and mixed alcoholic drinks may be commonplace at barbecues. People often do not realize how quickly the calories can add up when consuming a tall glass of lemonade or a few poolside margaritas. There can be as many as 100 calories in a single shot of liquor, while soft drinks have increasingly drawn the ire of medical professionals on account of their high sugar content.



Certain foods found at barbecues are better than others for health-conscious men and women.

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Natural ways to alleviate anxiety

No one is immune to anxiety, which can be triggered by a number of factors. Many people who deal with anxiety can trace their episodes to family, finances or work, but other circumstances, including personal health or even fear of traveling, can lead to anxiety that's difficult to manage.

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States, affecting roughly 40 million adults age 18 and older. Anxiety also is a significant issue in Canada, where the Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada reports that such disorders are the most prevalent mental illness affecting Canadian adults. While many rely on prescription medication to treat their anxiety, those suffering from anxiety disorders may want to discuss natural alternatives to such medications with their physicians. The following are some natural ways to treat anxiety that may help anxiety sufferers deal with their disorder without the need for medication.

* **Chamomile:** An ancient medicinal herb, chamomile is experiencing a resurgence of sorts. The dried flowers of chamomile contain many terpenoids and flavonoids that increase its medicinal properties. In fact, a study at the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center that examined the efficacy of chamomile at treating generalized anxiety disorder found that patients who took chamomile supplements for eight weeks experienced a significant decrease in their symptoms compared to those given a placebo. Chamomile tea has grown increasingly popular in recent years, but those suffering from anxiety may want to discuss with their doctors chamomile supplements as a means to treating their anxiety.

* **Valerian:** Used to treat insomnia, valerian is a sedative herb that is best taken at night. Some people drink valerian tea to reduce their anxiety, but the aroma of valerian tea can be unpleasant. If that aroma is simply too pungent, valerian can be taken as a capsule or tincture. But valerian should really only be taken at night thanks to its sedative compounds.

* **Exercise:** Treating anxiety does not necessarily have to involve putting something into your body. Exercise can be an effective antidote to anxiety, especially for those people whose anxiety can be traced to their concerns about their long-term health. Regular exercise improves mood and supports long-term health, and for some anxiety sufferers that's enough to alleviate their condition. Even a relatively short 30-minute daily workout can be very effective at treating anxiety.

* **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Omega-3 fatty acids can benefit the body in a variety of ways. Though most widely

See Anxiety, Page 24

The dangers of belly fat

Doctors use many different methods to assess their patients' health. Measuring the fat in a person's midsection is one indicator physicians may rely on more heavily in the future as they look to pinpoint potential health risks before they become something more serious.

Belly fat is much more than an eyesore, as it poses a serious health risk doctors are only just beginning to understand. A recent study on belly fat presented at the European Society of Cardiology Congress confirmed that belly fat is far more dangerous than many people think.

That's because a large stomach may not only be comprised of subcutaneous fat, or the fat contained under the skin. Very often visceral fat, or the type of fat that surrounds internal organs, is a contributing factor to girth around the mid-

section. Visceral fat, also known as intra-abdominal fat, is linked to a variety of health problems, including high triglycerides, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and high blood sugar.

Every person has some amount of belly fat, even those with relatively flat abdominals. Visceral fat provides cushioning around the organs and is actually beneficial in small amounts. It's when visceral fat becomes too plentiful that it can pose a problem. According to Kristen Hairston, MD, an assistant professor of endocrinology and metabolism at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine, visceral fat doesn't just sit dormant; it plays an active role in the body's production of a number of potentially harmful substances. Researchers are studying if visceral fat secretes inflammato-

ry molecules in higher amounts than other types of fat. These molecules can contribute to various health ailments.

A person's ideal weight is not necessarily based on pounds on the scale. Rather, individuals should use other measurements to determine propensity for belly fat. Having a "pear shape" where the hips and thighs are larger than the waist can actually be safer than an "apple shape," where the waistline is larger.

People concerned about belly fat should use a measuring tape to measure girth and determine if there is a potential problem. Place the measuring tape around the waist at the navel. The measuring

tape should be level and stretch around the midsection. Women want a waist measurement of less than 35 inches. Men should measure in at less than 40 inches. Measurements that exceed those figures may indicate excessive amounts of visceral fat. A hip-to-waist ratio measurement also can be used. This ratio should be below .85 for women and below .90 for men. Anything higher is considered "at risk," and a person should consider losing belly fat.

The only precise way to measure visceral belly fat is to get a CT scan or an MRI. However, this is expensive and may not be covered by health insurance.

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How to make school lunch healthier

The benefits of a healthy diet are clear and well documented. In addition to providing the nutrients a growing body needs, consuming a balanced diet helps children maintain a healthy weight. Obesity continues to be a growing problem among school-aged children and can contribute to the onset of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, and many other adverse medical conditions.

Children attending school will eat at least one meal away from home each day. A healthy lunch provides sound nutrition to give students energy to do well in school and for the rest of the day.

Children who do not eat well at lunch may have difficulty concentrating, while others may feel sluggish or tired.

As part of the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, the United States National School Lunch Program was revised to guarantee healthy, nutritionally sound choices, as established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, for lunch. America's school menus were altered to be health-



This school lunch can be made more healthy by swapping the white bread with whole grain bread and choosing low-fat milk over a sugary juice pouch.

ier than ever, including more fruits and vegetables while limiting calories. Despite some controversy through the years, including some students saying the smaller portions and food choices aren't always satisfying, states suffering from high child obesity rates have seen marked improvements.

Canada is one of the

few leading industrialized countries that does not have a national nutrition strategy to implement healthy school lunches. It's estimated that only 10 to 15 percent of Canadian children have access to school meals. These meals are not provided by a well-funded national program, but by a patchwork of individual volunteer efforts, some provincial government funding and corporate donations.

Whether students purchase lunch from school or bring lunch from home, there are ways to guarantee a more diverse offering and better nutrition. Here are some guidelines to follow.

* Offer nutrient-dense foods. Foods should contribute to the daily

recommended amounts of protein, iron, calcium, vitamin A, and vitamin C. Provide a selection of foods, such as lean protein, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, that will give children the nutrients they need. Nutrient-dense foods also help kids feel fuller, longer.

* Limit fat intake.

Avoid foods that do not get their fat from polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. Saturated fats can lead to obesity and clogged arteries. The American Heart Association recommends kids get no more than 25 to 35 percent of their calories from fat. Fish, nuts and olives are healthy fat sources.

See Lunches, Page 26

Anxiety

From Page 23

associated with promoting cardiovascular health, omega-3 fatty acids also have been linked to alleviating anxiety. In a 2011 study published in the journal *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, students who received omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids before an exam experienced a 20 percent reduction in anxiety symptoms over those who received a placebo. Sources of omega-3 fatty acids include salmon and other oily, coldwater fishes. Omega-3 fatty acid supplements also are available, but men and women should discuss such supplements and any potential side effects with their physicians before taking anything.

Anxiety is a significant concern for millions of people across the globe. But those suffering from anxiety may be able to treat their conditions naturally.



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How to sneak fruits and vegetables into any recipe

Fruits and vegetables are the building blocks of a healthy diet. But many people do not eat the recommended number of servings of produce. That's especially true among growing children, who can benefit greatly from the vitamins and nutrients fruits and vegetables provide.

According to the latest data from the NPD Group, a market research firm, Americans eat a little more than half a cup of fruit and a cup of vegetables per day. This is less than half of what the government recommends. The data is similar in Canada, where researchers at Concordia University found that Canadian adults ages 30 to 60, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, aren't consuming the daily recommended levels of fruits and vegetables.

Anyone who eats roughly 2,000 calories per day should strive to consume between two to three cups of vegetables and two cups of fruit per day. Produce helps to fight disease because it contains healthy antioxidants, fiber, minerals and

vitamins. Eating four cups per day may seem difficult, but there are many ways to incorporate fruits and vegetables into everyday recipes.

- * Substitute pureed fruit, like figs, pears and apples, for oil in recipes for cakes and cookies. This will ensure the baked goods are moist but with a lot less fat.

- * Add fresh berries or raisins to breakfast cereals and oatmeal.

- * Add cauliflower or squash to boiled potatoes before mashing them to increase the nutritional punch and flavor of mashed potatoes.

- * Blend fruits and vegetables to create smoothies for breakfast or lunch on the go.

- * Bake hearty muffins or breads with sweet potato or carrots in the batter.

- * Mix stewed tomatoes in with your broth soup base to make a vegetable or chicken soup even more nutritious.

- * Opt for vegetables piled high atop a slice of pizza in lieu of meats or extra

cheese.

- * Divide your dinner plate into quadrants, filling half of the plate with vegetables, one quarter with meat and the remainder with a whole grain.

- * Replace lettuce on a sandwich or burger with a fresh leaf of spinach. While you're dressing your sandwich, add a slice

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Lunches

From Page 24

* Let kids choose some of their food. Allow kids to pick some of the healthy foods they will be eating. Giving kids a say in their diets will make them more likely to enjoy their lunches and cut back on snack foods. Eating meals regularly will keep energy levels up during school and make kids less likely to reach for unhealthy snacks to fill hunger gaps.

* Make small changes that add up. Switching from white bread to whole grain breads, and opting for low-fat dairy products instead of full-fat dairy products can make a world of difference. Kids may not notice a change in texture or flavor, and many of

kids' favorite foods, such as chicken nuggets, pizza and macaroni and cheese, can be made with healthier ingredients.

* Remember, beverages count, too. Giving children a healthy lunch and then packing a sugar-filled, high-calorie drink negates your efforts. Calories from beverages can quickly add up. Water is always the best option for a healthy drink. Low-fat milk and real fruit juice consumed in moderation also make healthy alternatives to sugary beverages.

Offering healthy school lunches is an important step to raising healthy kids. New guidelines and offerings make it easier for kids to get the nutrition they need for their growing bodies.

Recipes

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of tomato, too.

* Substitute fresh vegetables and fruit slices for chips when serving dips and salsas. Kale chips are growing in popularity.

* Give children a cup of sliced grapes with their lunches as a refreshing and healthy snack.

* Shred vegetables into a hearty "slaw" and top it with a vinaigrette or a typical mayonnaise-based dressing.

* Blend other vegetables into your pasta sauce.

* Use vegetables instead of pasta in traditional dishes. Layer eggplant slices to make a lasagna. Or use a spiral slicer to slice zucchini or carrots when making homemade

noodles.

* Fruit salad is often a refreshing snack or dessert. Having fruit already diced in a large bowl makes it more convenient to eat and possibly more enticing to children.

* Make a vegetable roll-up, filling pizza dough with broccoli or spinach and shredded cheese.

* Mix together an avocado, 1/4 cup of cocoa powder and 1/4 cup honey to create a healthy alternative to chocolate pudding.

* Use pureed vegetables to thicken cheese sauce for macaroni and cheese recipes.

* Shred vegetables and add them to beaten eggs for omelets or scrambles.

GMOs and cancer potential cause worry

The use of genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, in foods remains a controversial subject. The concerns about modifying genetic material in foods surrounds the uncertainty about the medical implications of consuming foods that have had their DNA changed in a laboratory. One such concern is whether or not there is a link between GMOs and cancer. To understand such a potential connection, it first helps to understand GMOs and why they spark such controversy.

What are GMOs and why are they used?

GMOs are plants or animals that have been genetically changed, but many people associate GMOs with foods, namely corn and other grain products. Genes from one species are inserted into another to create a desired trait. This is known as gene splicing. Plants may be modified to be more resistant to drought or harsh conditions. Other genes may be altered to make plants more resilient and resistant to pesticides or certain diseases.

Most commonly altered foods

Certain foods are subject to genetic modification more so than others. Soybeans, corn, cotton, canola, papaya, zucchini, and other squashes are some of the more commonly modified crops. The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications also lists alfalfa, chicory, eggplant, flax, potato, rice, sugar beet, and tobacco on its list of GM crops.

Concerns about GMOs

The risks associated with consuming GMOs are largely unknown. According to the MD Anderson Cancer Center, researchers have not conclusively confirmed if GMOs increase a person's risk of developing cancer or other diseases. Some experts say the benefits of eating whole grains and vegetables -- even GMO varieties -- outweigh the concerns about GMOs, while others are not so sure.

According to a study published in the peer-reviewed journal, Food and Chemical Toxicology, French researchers discovered that rats fed genetically engineered corn or those exposed to the active ingredient in the weed killer Roundup over a long period suffered premature death and developed mammary tumors while also suffering from kidney and liver damage. Researchers fed rats GM corn or gave them water laced with Roundup at levels allowed in the United States. The research found that even limited exposure to these products produced mammary tumors and led to severe liver and kidney damage, which occurred in as little as four months in males and seven months in females.

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Some studies point to a link between GMOs and cancer, while others are inconclusive.



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Avoid pitfalls that can derail your diet

Diet and exercise go hand-in-hand for men and women looking to improve their overall health. While it can be tempting to skip a workout in favor of relaxing on the couch at home, the temptation to cheat on your diet is far more pervasive, as dieters know that a high-calorie treat or second helping is lurking around seemingly every corner.

As difficult as it can seem to remain loyal to a diet, successful dieters know that anticipation plays a big role in staying true to a diet. Certain pitfalls can be expected when dieting, and knowing what those pitfalls might be and how to avoid them can make the difference between a successful diet and one that does not produce the desired results.

* Establish realistic and periodic goals. You should have a specific goal in mind when beginning a diet. But that goal should be realistic, and you also should set various smaller goals you can meet as you build up toward achieving your larger goal. Your ultimate goal as well as your periodic goals should be realistic and attainable, as nothing can derail a diet more quickly than failing to meet your initial goals. If necessary, speak to your physician about healthy weight loss and how much time it should take to meet your goals without compromising your overall health.

* Schedule your snacks. While snacking has

derailed many a diet, grabbing a bite to eat between meals is not necessarily a dieter's enemy. It's what you eat between meals that can derail your diet. If you grab for the nearest snack without regard to nutrition, then you're likely to find that your snacks are unhealthy foods that are compromising your diet. Scheduling your snacks in advance allows you to bring a healthy snack along to the office instead of forcing you to eat whatever happens to be available.

* Make the cupboard commitment. Once you decide to go on a diet, clear your cupboards of all the unhealthy foods that contributed to your need to go on a diet in the first place. Remove fatty foods, salty snacks and sugary cereals from your cupboard, replacing them with healthier fare that won't put your dietary goals in jeopardy.

* Reward your efforts. As you get deeper and deeper into dieting and meet your goals, reward your efforts. However, avoid the temptation to splurge on unhealthy food, as you don't want to do anything to compromise your diet going forward and make all of your hard work up to that point all for naught. Rewards can include a shopping trip, tickets to a show or ballgame or any other special treat that won't jeopardize your efforts. Knowing there is a reward on the



Scheduling snacks, and replacing unhealthy fare with foods like fruits and vegetables, is one way to avoid compromising your diet.

way can motivate you to stay the course, especially on those days when doing so is particularly difficult.

* Rest up. Studies have shown that inadequate sleep inspires people to crave calorie-dense foods. In addition, lack of sleep compromises energy levels and makes it difficult to focus, which can affect your decision-making ability with regard to which foods you should eat. Adults typically need between seven and eight hours of sleep per night, so be sure to get adequate rest.

Avoiding potential pitfalls that can derail a diet is an integral part of meeting your goals and adopting a healthier lifestyle.

Science, researchers found that grass-fed cows produced milk containing 500 percent more conjugated linoleic acid, or CLA, than cows that were fed grain. That's a significant distinction for men and women looking to trim down, as CLA can help them burn more fat and gain muscle.

Did you know?

Though organic foods tend to be more costly, men and women looking to shed a few extra pounds might find it's worth a few extra dollars to buy organic dairy rather than more traditional and less expensive alternatives. In a study published in the Journal of Dairy

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Fifty percent of the male rats and 70 percent of the females died earlier than the rats in the control group. The corn studied was Monsanto's NK603 seed, a variety developed to live through heavy dosings of pesticide. Roundup is a pesticide that plants can consume at levels many toxicologists say could cause harm to humans.

Conclusions

More research is necessary to confirm or debunk any suspected link between GMOs and cancer, and even then it may be difficult to weed out risks between brands, foods and types of modification. People concerned about GMOs can eat organic foods or GMO-free foods.

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Separating flu facts from fiction

Cold and flu season seems to arrive earlier and earlier each year. As more people begin to snuffle and sneeze and feel lousy, they may look for ways to shorten the time they spend battling the flu.

Myths about the flu are nearly as plentiful as the myriad home remedies to banish it. Separating flu facts from fiction can help people more effectively deal with their next bout of influenza. The following are a few of the more widely spread myths with regard to the flu.

* Cold weather causes the flu. Going out in the cold weather with your hair wet is probably not a good idea if you want to keep your immune system healthy. However, the weather is not a direct cause of cold or flu. Rather, contact with the virus through contaminated surfaces or by saliva or mucous transmission is how many people catch the flu.

* The flu shot injects the body with the flu virus. Some people vehemently oppose getting the flu shot because they believe the immunization itself will cause them to get sick. Actually, the virus in the flu shot is inactive and cannot make a person ill. The virus used in the vaccine is grown in chicken eggs and killed off before it would cause illness. Minor reactions, such as muscle soreness, can occur at the injection site. Nasal flu immunizations do contain the live virus, but even with nasal applications, it is rare to get sick from the immunization.

* You can starve a fever. Chills, fever and nausea are potential flu symptoms. The notion that you should "feed a cold and starve a fever" has prevailed through the years, but this treatment method really isn't beneficial. Although a person with the flu may not feel like eating much, he or she should try to remain hydrated and eat as healthy as possible. Salt and potassium are important electrolytes, so consuming crackers, bananas, vegetable soup, and fruit juices can help the body fight the illness.


* Zinc and vitamin C can kick the flu to the curb. Evidence that taking zinc and high doses of vitamin C will help make the cold or flu go away faster is somewhat mixed. Some indications point to throat lozenges with zinc as helping the body fight the flu. Although some people stand by mega-dosing with vitamin C, the body most likely won't absorb that much of the extra vitamin C for it to have any benefit. Getting vitamin C through fresh fruits and vegetables can help boost the immune system, however.

* If you received the flu shot last year, then you should be fine this year. Some people believe if they received the flu vaccine last year that they do not need to get vaccinated this year. But experts warn there are hundreds of different strains of flu viruses and vaccines

are made from three of the most common types currently circulating. Therefore, a vaccine from last year may not protect a person this year. Even if a person had the flu in December, he or she may catch another strain in January. Vaccinations help individuals be safe rather than sorry.

* Antibiotics banish the flu. Running to the doctor for an antibiotic prescription will not make the flu go away more rapidly. Antibiotics cannot treat viral infections, even though they may be used to treat certain side effects or bacterial infections that result from the flu, such as an ear infection.

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