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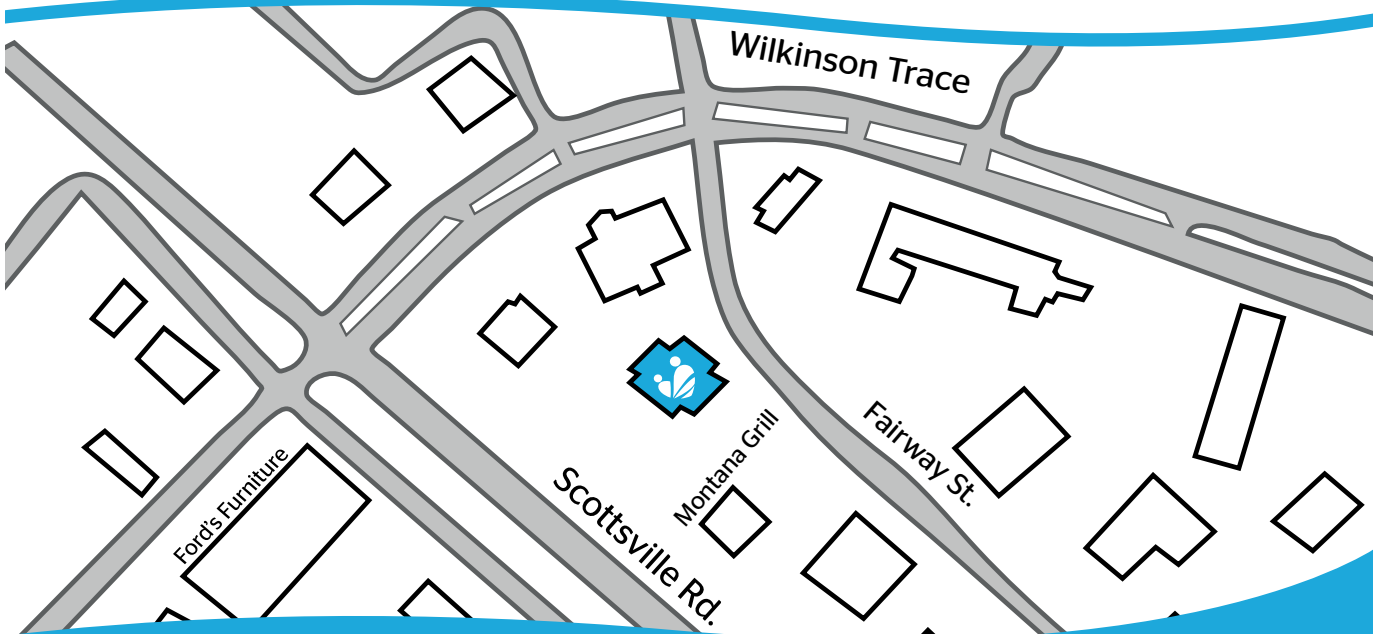
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Better Bets for SCHOOL LUNCH

Food choices the whole family can feel good about



As you gear up for a new school year, it's important to put your kids' nutrition on the school checklist. Countless studies link school performance and healthy eating habits. Treat this season of "academic beginnings" as a chance for the whole family to take a fresh approach to better-for-you eating.

From on-the-go breakfasts and brag-worthy brown bag lunches to after-school snacks and family-friendly dinners, there are plenty of ways to pack nutrition and flavor into every meal. Often, creating healthier meals can be as easy as simply trading-up or swapping one food ingredient for a more nutritious choice.

Selecting menu options that help your family eat better begins at the grocery store with your shopping decisions. If the A-B-Cs and 1-2-3s of food labels make your head spin, you can rely on tools such as the NuVal® Nutritional Scoring System, which provides scores near the price on the shelf tag to identify better-for-you foods. Based on a scale of 1 to 100, the scores rank foods and beverages on their nutritional content with the most nutritious choices scoring highest.

You can take other steps to make shopping easier for healthy eating, says Marisa Paolillo, a nutritionist with NuVal.

First and foremost, she says, don't go when you're hungry. "It really is true. If you shop hungry, you're more likely to toss foods into your cart that will satisfy the hunger pangs at the moment, rather than what you actually need for the week ahead," she adds.

Another smart shopping tip is to plan, plan, plan. Paolillo suggests starting out right by planning a full week's worth of menus, then creating a shopping list. This not only streamlines meal preparation, it saves household budget, aids nutrition choices and reduces the frustration and extra time associated with return trips to the store.

1. Determine what you will serve for breakfasts, lunches, snacks and dinners.
2. Create a grocery list of food ingredients that are needed.
3. Don't forget to check specials and coupons in your store's weekly circular. (Consider swapping listed ingredients for seasonal or on-sale foods.)

"Taking a list to the grocery store will ensure that you stick to your budget and only buy what you need," says Paolillo.

If you're pressed for time and on a spur-of-the-moment shopping run, however, keep these better-for-you food basics in mind. Consider these:

Breakfast:

Scrambled eggs are a quick and easy breakfast — but hardboiled eggs are a great option for an on-the-go snack.

Mid-Day Snack:

Get a quick protein and calcium boost during the day with cottage cheese or plain yogurt with fruit or granola.

Lunch and Dinner:

Make sure to include vegetables in all meals.



Smart Swaps for After School

Chips and packaged cookies, move out of the way. Swap them for smart after-school snacks that are homemade, nutritious and fun to make.

Custom-create a smoothie. Have kids choose their favorite fruit and vegetables. Toss them into the blender with ice and fat free yogurt for a snack that's easy, fun and filling.

Make banana sushi rolls. Top a whole grain tortilla with nut butter and a whole banana sprinkled with cinnamon. Roll it up and slice like sushi rolls. (These are great for lunches, too.)

Unbeatable "Brown Bag" Tips

When it comes to packing school lunches, stick to what your kids like. If they aren't crazy about something, it may end up in the garbage or get traded for an unhealthy snack. These simple swaps will make your kids' brown bag lunch unbeatable:

1. For sandwiches, swap white bread for a higher NuVal-scoring brown bread or pita.
2. Replace deli meats with lean roasted beef or poultry or low fat cheese.
3. For a delicious, nutritious sandwich spread, trade mayonnaise for a mashed avocado. Make fruits and vegetables a go-to snack. Chop up carrots, peppers and celery in advance and stash some in lunch bags with hummus; or sprinkle apple and pear slices with lemon and cinnamon to satisfy a sweet tooth.
4. Choose water to hydrate and calcium- and vitamin D-rich milk to strengthen growing bones.

Bring Breakfast-to-Go

Even if breakfast finds you crunched for time, prime the kids with morning nutrients to energize their day. Give them a breakfast boost with make-ahead options that can be enjoyed on-the-go in cars and buses. Try portable Scrambled Egg Cups or Oatmeal Cups, which provide plenty of protein to get them through the day.

Other after-school smart snacks include:

- Apple slices topped with almond butter.
- Air-popped popcorn (Avoid microwave popcorn, which is often high in trans-fat and sodium.)
- Fresh salsa and tortilla chips.

On-the-Go Snack:

Fruit like apples, bananas, tangerines and pears are perfectly portable for on-the-go ease.

Dinner:

Round out your day with lean protein at dinner, such as poultry or fish seasoned with herbs.

Paolillo offers some final healthy eating, back-to-school shopping tips. Take advantage of in-store nutritional scoring systems or services to help guide food choices, and make the majority of food selections from the outer perimeter of the store.

"Think produce, dairy, fish and meat," Paolillo says. "This will ensure that most of your food choices are more nutrient-packed and fresh, versus heavily processed foods that tend to be loaded with additional sugar, salt and fat."

Find nutritious trade-ups and family-friendly meals to kick off the new school year at www.nuval.com/Shop/Recipes. †



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Tips for Taming Mid-Term Stress:

What You Can Do to Help Your Anxious Student

Although school returned weeks ago, do you or your child still have the back-to-school blues? If so, you're not the only ones. Saying goodbye to slower summer days can be difficult. For almost three months, you have felt free from the structure of the classroom and the accompanying homework. When the upcoming school year rolls around, it's common to feel some sadness. For children who suffer from anxiety, this stress may be harder to handle, and it may stem from more than just pop quizzes and earlier bedtimes.

These children need extra attention as the new school year draws near. The best thing you can do to prepare your child is to give the gift of your time and attention. Instead of dwelling on things like tests and homework, talk about how to make the transition into the exciting new school year the best it can be.

Lauren Zimet, director of the Early Insights Healthy Foundations Program, is a mother herself and has pinpointed the top four back-to-school tips and tricks to make the transition easier. These tips will help to reduce the stress and tension felt by you and your child, not only for the first weeks of school (the hardest time to adjust) but throughout the year as well.

1. Connected communication. Engage in a conversation with your child and ask what he or she is excited and concerned about for the upcoming school year. Give your child the freedom to speak openly and avoid asking too many questions at once. You'll know you are connecting when he starts volunteering information. When you listen to your child, and he can see the genuine interest and attention in your eyes and through your body language, he will feel more comfortable discussing the upcoming year.

2. Creative calendars. Planning ahead makes adults feel prepared, which is a huge de-stressor. The same goes for your child. Younger children only need a day or two to look forward to their big day. Older children may benefit from discussing the year weeks before the first day, especially if those conversations include working on things like organization, planning, prioritizing, and sequencing (those important executive functions of the brain).

3. Visualize the goal. Get specific and help your child visualize the first day of school. Have your child tell you or draw out the sequence of the day, from waking up in the morning, to dressing in an outfit chosen the night before, to

what she'll be enjoying as her brain-boosting energy breakfast. The more your child can visualize her routine(s), the more she will be at ease when the big day finally arrives.

4. Load up on brain food. Breakfast is coined "the most important meal of the day," and rightly so! Food is the fuel for the brain and body, and the quality of the fuel matters. Whatever you choose to give your body and brain each morning will enable you to do a certain level of thinking. American breakfasts are often unbalanced, heavily favoring carbs, which are only a tiny part of the good-breakfast equation. Encourage your child to pick a protein each morning, as well as fruit, veggie, and healthy fat and carb options. From there, complement his or her diet with an omega-3 fatty acid supplement from a reputable fish oil company like Nordic Naturals. Omega-3 fatty acids have been found to help soothe anxious brains as well as support the entire nervous system, so don't miss out on this simple improvement opportunity. Research on omega-3 fatty acids can be found at www.omega-research.com.



The new school year is under way and while this time of year may cause some children to feel anxious, there are things you can do to help. Employ any of the suggestions above to help your child start feeling more excited about the new school year with each passing day. +



For children who suffer from anxiety, this stress may be harder to handle, and it may stem from more than just pop quizzes and earlier bedtimes.

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A Child's Success Starts With a Good Night's Sleep



It's hard to believe another school year is already here. After a fun summer of outdoor activities, vacations and plenty of late nights, it's time to get your family back into a routine - specifically a regular bedtime routine. While sleep is important for adults, it's even more important for growing children and affects their performance in school, sports and family life.

Sleep is at the center of a healthy lifestyle. Although diet and exercise are generally what come to mind first when thinking about health, proper sleep is essential to realizing the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise routine.

"Living a healthy lifestyle has become a topic of particular importance to me and my family," says actress and author Alison Sweeney. "As an ambassador for a brand of mattresses for the past two years, I've learned just how important sleep is to our overall health, well-



One hour before it's time to go to bed, put all electronics away to help their bodies wind down. Use that time to spend together as a family, possibly reading before bed.

being and performance.”

Children who followed bedtime rules averaged an hour more of sleep a night, helping them concentrate and perform better in school, according to a 2014 study by the National Sleep Foundation. Many parents know the difficulties that come with trying to get children to go to sleep. You've probably heard the common excuses such as, "I have a stuffy nose" or "there are monsters under my bed" as a way to stay up just a little longer. Here are a few ways you can help stop the stall at bedtime:

- Keep a bedtime routine for your kids, even on the weekends.
- One hour before it's time to go to bed, put all electronics away to help their bodies wind down. Use that time to spend together as a family, possibly reading before bed.
- Try tracking your kids' sleep and help them monitor their daily activities to see how these affect their rest.
- Most importantly, try to keep bedtime a fun experience! Avoid using "Go to your room" and an early bedtime as punishments, as this equates bedtime to a negative.

Kids need much more sleep than most people realize, and the quality of sleep is equally as important as the quantity.

Most Americans think kids need only nine hours of sleep each night, according to a recent survey by Wakefield Research. While eight or more hours are ideal for an adult, the

recommended amount for children 5 to 11 years old is actually 10-11 hours per night.

Back to school is the perfect time to start practicing healthy sleep habits for the whole family. A successful day starts with a good night's sleep, so help your little ones get to sleep tonight so they can take on the world tomorrow. +



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Intermittent Fasting

as Part of a Healthy Lifestyle

BY MARY NESTOR



↑ At her heaviest, Janie Pitcock, didn't generally jump to the front of photographs but when "Elvis" wanted to dance, she had to say yes. A co-worker snapped this picture of them on her iPhone and Pitcock forgot all about it until many pounds later when she came across the image. "I didn't even recognize myself," she swears. "I wasn't sure who it was."

Janie Pitcock's quest for better health is a success story even though it took the better part of half a century to tell.

Her weight gain started in puberty. She spent most of her adult life on a diet but despite her best efforts, inevitably the pounds she lost would find their way back. At five feet, five inches tall, she was 251 pounds at her heaviest.

But Janie didn't give up. In fact, she doubled down. She joined a gym and would grind thru tedious workouts. She kept returning to her tried and true Weight Watchers classes because she had grown accustomed to its point structure and group accountability to help her keep food choices in check. But the older she got, the harder it was to get back on track when vacations, or family commitments threw her off.

Then six years ago, her mother got sick and Janie found herself caught in the emotional distress and the uncomfortable position of having to make adjustments to forces beyond her control. Long drives to Evansville, eating out, and limited time to hit the gym took its toll. Once again, the pounds came creeping back.

Over the years, she had been exercising, and claims she hated every minute of it. She would slog through her 30-minute workout routines without enjoying them. So when a longtime friend posted a Facebook announcement encouraging her virtual friends to attend a very real Zumba class that she was teaching, Pitcock replied only half joking, "can an overweight middle-aged woman actually keep up?" It was something of

← Today, Pitcock is happy to share the spotlight. She lost 100 plus pounds in 2 years with Weight Watchers, exercise classes, and intermittent fasting. She also made some new friends from among her fellow gym rats.

The more weight she lost, the better she felt and the more classes she was able to attend.

a sarcastic inquiry, but her Facebook friend encouraged her to come.

And then, as if by the magic of persistence, a series of very fortunate events unfolded and a story that could have ended in Type II diabetes or heart disease has become instead a testament to the power of a healthy diet, a workable exercise routine, and the satisfaction of intentional living.

Because as it turns out, it wasn't the workouts themselves Pitcock dreaded, it was the isolation of exercising alone that brought her down. With the support of her instructors at Total Fitness Connection and her fellow Zumba dancers, Pitcock experienced the joy of a shared mission. Since those first few classes where she hid in the back of the room, she has become a self-confessed "gym rat" who feels cheated if she can't find time to join her friends for an energetic workout.

Those years of counting Weight Watchers "points" paid dividends when Pitcock combined it with exercise she actually enjoyed and a new approach to healthful living called Intermittent Fasting.

Charting her progress toward her goal, Pitcock estimates that Weight Watchers alone could account for about a 25-pound reduction. Once she took her workouts to the next level, she saw steady progress and during the second six months she lost another 45 pounds.

Pitcock was thrilled. The more weight she lost, the better she felt and the more classes she was able to attend. On a "dare" she agreed to an early morning weight-lifting class and now two days a week, she sets the alarm for 4:30 and is at the gym by 5 am. "I can't believe it," she says. "I can't believe I am at the gym that early and I love it."

Unfortunately, Pitcock would hit a difficult period. The closer the goal the harder it is to shed the weight. She had plateaued but still had another 35 or 40



Lifting weights builds muscle. After her morning workout, Pitcock makes a small adjustment to her intermittent fast and eats a protein bar to help her body recover.



pounds to lose.

One evening, during the course of her journey, she and her husband were having dinner with friends. The conversation turned to weight and how difficult it can be to keep it off. Her friend's husband asked her if she had ever heard of a book called "The 8-Hour Diet."

She had not.

He explained that authors David Zinczenko and Peter Moore based their research on the proposition that people are not "what they eat," but "when they eat." According to the authors, digestion behaves like a clock. They argue that the human body has a natural mechanism to keep the metabolism steady and the digestive process alert. But when we disrupt that natural rhythm by eating during the times when it wants to "fast" the entire clock goes haywire and our bodies compensate by storing weight.

The book suggests by reducing the calorie intake to almost zero during 16 hours a day, the remaining 8 hours can

be spent indulging in a wide variety of foods, not all of which have to be healthy.

Pitcock was intrigued. She bought the book and began to apply its principles.

As it turns out, adopting the tenants of intermittent fasting completed the puzzle, and Pitcock's weight loss journey took a different path, like a mountain climber who kept circling until she found her way to the summit.

She uses her workout schedule as the framework for meal planning and she uses the point system from Weight Watchers to accommodate family dinners. Most days, she breaks her "fast" around 11 a.m. with a protein smoothie. On the days that she is up at the crack of dawn for weight lifting class, she makes an exception and eats a protein bar on her way to work because as Pitcock points out, our bodies benefit from eating protein within an hour after heavy anaerobic exercise.

Weight Watchers allows her 26 points a day and their method of assigning

points is specific to the program. But generally, Pitcock splits the points in half, saving 13 points for a shared dinner with her husband and her children. "After supper, you're done," she says. "But I make sure supper is big enough so afterward hunger isn't really an issue."

Pitcock says she is fortunate to never have been a late-night "snacker." Her biggest challenge is waiting until several hours after awakening to eat her first meal. She jokes that a cup of morning Joe has been known to save her life because the program still works even with caffeine and a little cream and sugar.

But, according to the book's authors, interrupting the body's need for a 16-hour fast will cause it to start burning food as fuel and put aside fat burning for later. It is critical to the program to sustain those 16-hour periods where very few calories are consumed.

You want to respect the way the body burns fat, explains Pitcock. It moves in this order: Food, fuel, fat. She

← Rise and shine. Early morning exercise combines stretching and weight lifting into an aerobic routine.

↘ Flexibility, strength and endurance are the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Now that she is slimmer, Pitcock finds that she has more energy for exercise.

summarizes the book's message as a strategy of going without food just long enough to trick the body and maximize the fat burning periods—but not so long that the body begins to suspect lean times ahead and begins slowing the metabolism and storing fat.

In the two years since she has embraced the idea of intermittent fasting, Pitcock has lost another 35 pounds and kept it off. She has reached her target weight of just under 150 pounds and says she is off her cholesterol medicine for good.

She has made new friends not just with her Zumba instructors and fellow gym rats, but with herself as well.

She might have felt this way when she was a kid. She doesn't really remember. But she knows this: "I'm 54 years old," she says "and I feel great. I'm in better physical shape than I've ever been."+

She has made new friends not just with her Zumba instructors and fellow gym rats, but with herself as well.



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Manage AFib Risk for Better Health



Approximately 1.5 million American women live with atrial fibrillation, a heart disorder commonly known as “AFib” that can lead to deadly or life-impairing stroke. For an undiagnosed woman living with AFib, knowing symptoms and risk factors can help mitigate this serious health threat. Women living with AFib can also take steps to manage this condition and their risk for stroke.

AFib is a heart rhythm disorder in which the atria – the two upper chambers of the heart – beat rapidly and irregularly. Women with AFib are more likely than men with AFib to have a stroke. And, after the age of 75, an overwhelming majority of people with AFib – 60 percent – are women.

Diagnosing the condition

Up to a third of women with AFib don't feel symptoms. Others feel tired and experience

heart palpitations, which may feel like a fluttering or flopping sensation in the chest or the feeling that the heart is beating too quickly. A woman experiencing AFib may also feel dizzy or short of breath. Some feel chest pain or feel faint.

Certain health and lifestyle risk factors make women more susceptible to AFib. Along with age and an existing heart condition, high blood pressure and obesity are major risk factors. Women who drink more than 10 ounces of alcohol a day are also at risk. Other risk factors include diabetes, overactive thyroid, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, lung disease, smoking, caffeine and stress.

With or without elevated risk factors, a woman experiencing symptoms should schedule a consultation with a doctor to determine if these symptoms are caused by AFib.

Living with AFib

Women living with AFib can manage their condition and associated risk for stroke by adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors. Increasing physical activity, adopting a diet that is low in fat, sodium and cholesterol, avoiding alcohol, and moderating stress and blood pressure levels are all necessary to manage AFib and avoid more serious health problems. AFib patients should choose caffeine-free coffee and herbal tea over caffeinated drinks. Moderate exercise such as walking, biking, swimming, yoga and strength training, combined with good hydration, can significantly improve AFib symptoms and reduce stroke risk.

Isolation is a common feeling for women living with AFib. Resources such as WomenHeart's new Virtual Support Network can help address the need for education and emotional and psychosocial support for women living with AFib. The Network is free and open to all women living with AFib and their caregivers.

Learn more about WomenHeart's free patient support services for women living with heart disease, including AFib, and register to receive free online heart health information at www.womenheart.org. +



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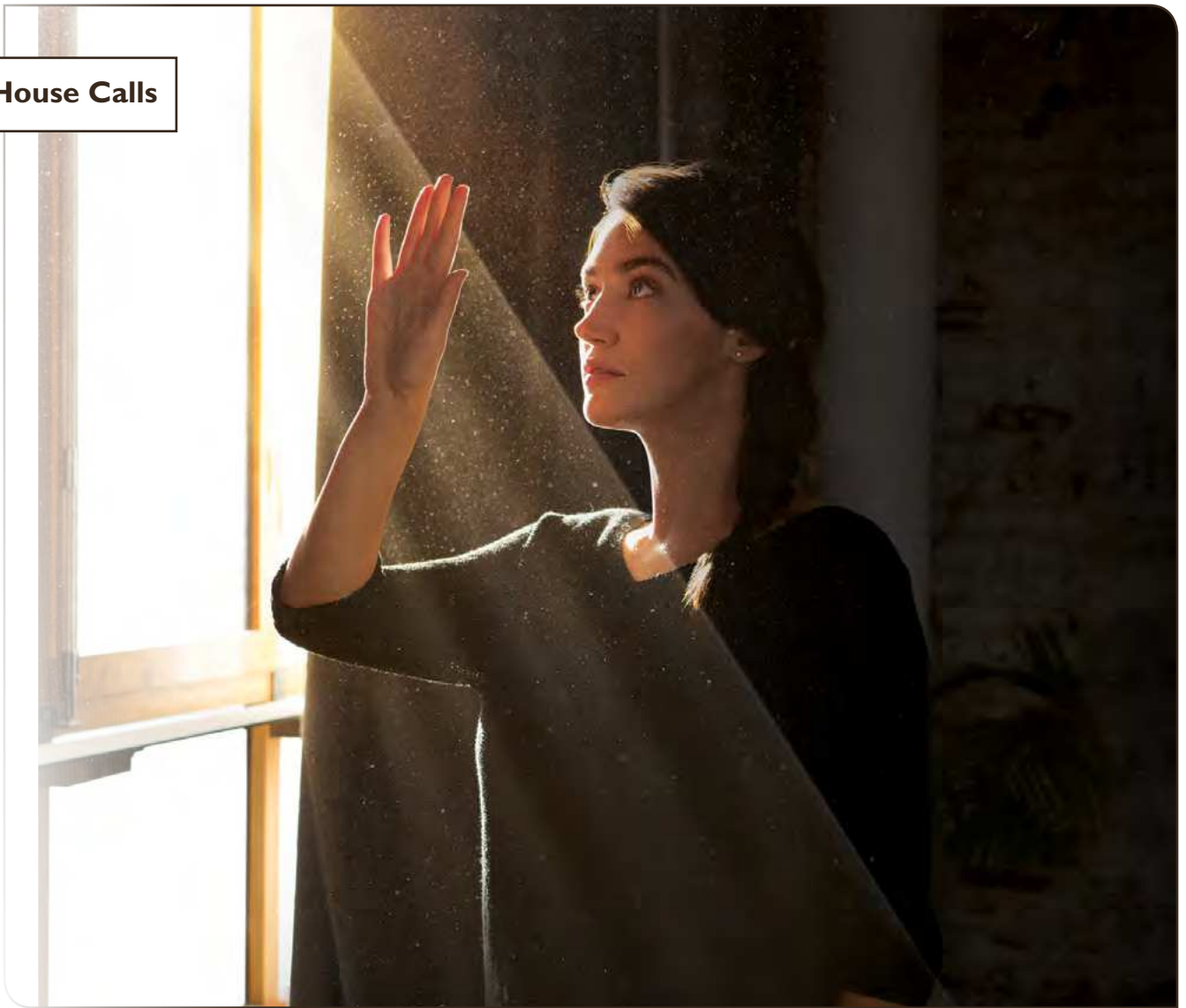
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Dirt. Grime. Bacteria. Airborne allergens. As hard as you try to keep your home clean, these types of yucky things are an everyday reality. Taking the necessary steps to create a healthy home can not only give you peace of mind, but also help keep your family healthier.

“People think that if your home looks clean and smells clean, then it must be clean and therefore healthy for their family. However, when you look closely, you may be shocked by all the ‘yuck’ you find,” said Dr. Roshini Raj, attending physician and a clinical associate professor of medicine at the NYU School of Medicine. “Taking control of your home can make a big difference when it comes to living a healthier life.”

Raj suggests these changes for a healthier home:

- **Learn the tooth truth.** Most people know to brush their teeth at least twice daily for good oral hygiene, but what they don't often think about is what is lurking on their toothbrush between uses. Viruses and bacteria can live for weeks on a toothbrush's surface. Make sure you're storing your toothbrush properly in an upright, dry place and use an antibacterial toothbrush cover to kill germs. Most only last 60 to 90 days, so make sure to swap out your toothbrush, as well as your cover, regularly.



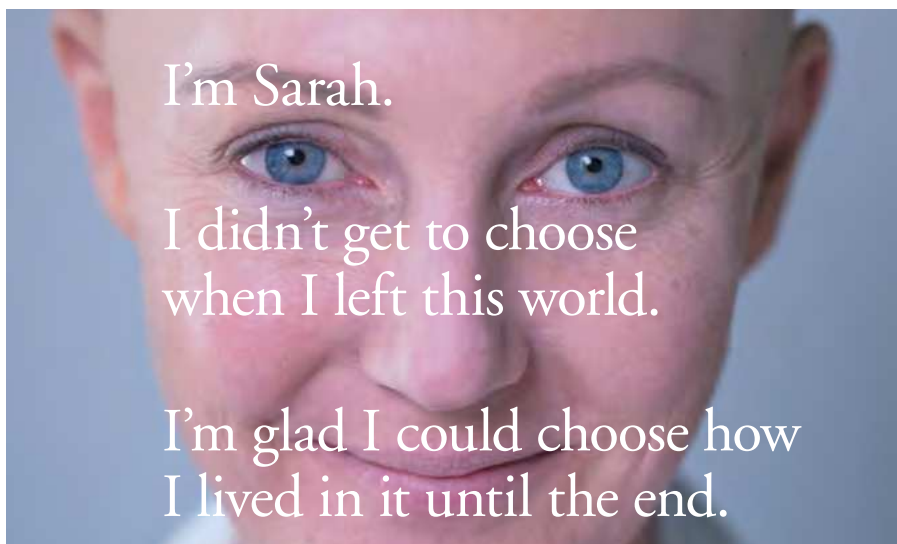
- **Be air aware.** According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, indoor levels of air pollutants may be two to five times higher than outdoor levels. Make every breath count and really pay attention to indoor air quality. Use quality air filters in your heating and cooling systems to pull in and trap unwanted air particles such as dust, pollen, bacteria and viruses, while letting cleaner air flow through. Also check filters monthly and change them at least every three months. If you burn scented candles regularly, use a fireplace or have construction in progress, change your filter more often, as these contribute to poor indoor air quality.
- **Don't be a track star.** Every day, we walk through items like car oil, allergens, pesticides and other toxins. Remove your shoes before you enter the home to

avoid dragging them throughout your home. If you have carpeting, take extra care as pollen and other allergens can be brought into the home on your shoes and then harbored in the fibers of rugs and carpets.

- **Here comes the sun.** Have you ever felt sluggish after sitting under the artificial lights in your home? Research shows that people who spend more time in natural lighting than artificial have increased productivity and alertness. So open up those blinds and drapes to let natural light shine in.
- **Start a technology detox.** In today's binge-watching culture, it's all too easy to let that next episode of the hottest show auto play. Remove TVs and computers from the bedroom for more and better quality sleep. You'll be glad you did when you feel energized and have a more productive day after a solid seven to eight hours of slumber. +



Check filters monthly and change them at least every three months.



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The Pros and Cons of Pet Insurance

BY MARY NESTOR

Sunny and Bo Obama, the first family's four-legged members, may be the luckiest pups on the planet. They have an engaging agenda, and a beautiful place to call home.

The first family chose Portuguese water dogs especially for their obedience, their bravery and their intelligence.

Even with their luxury lifestyle however, like any purebreds, the Obama's dogs are prone to specific health problems. A genetic predisposition can cause something akin to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. And as they age, their curly coats of thick black hair can develop pattern baldness. Addison's Disease can affect their adrenal glands and if not treated can cause depression and death. Clearly, life is not all a walk in the rose garden even for Sunny and Bo.

But there is good news—the FDOUS

are eligible for health insurance. It's not a mandate. There is no federal extension, and the Obama's will have to shop around for the best plan, but blindness, hip dysplasia, and a potentially fatal genetic disorder called GM-1 Storage are expensive propositions that can be offset by the investment.

According to the American Pet Products website, Americans spent 15 billion dollars on veterinary care in 2014, so insurance can be a respite from unexpected emergency care.

The American Humane Society, which advocates for unwanted animals, specifically recommends Petplan health insurance. And AARP has a discount program for those older pet owners who may have to make decisions based on fixed incomes and fluctuating expenses.

According to their website, Petplan covers the animal "from nose to tail."



Pet owners can take out health policies on unexpected fees from things like surgery, x-rays, prescriptions and even alternative therapy.

If an animal does face a major procedure, the bills can be costly. Pet insurance advocates point out that an unexpected vet bill can put the owner out thousands of dollars.

But some consumer groups argue against getting insurance for the pets and recommend instead, that pet owners start a fund for emergencies and at the same time they should be prepared for the routine costs of owning a pet.

Either way, pet ownership, while good for the soul can be bad for the bankroll. So before getting a pet, it's important to calculate the costs both with and without insurance.

Connect Kentucky

A local opinion on pet insurance

Warren County veterinarian Stan Snodgrass says he can understand why people would opt for pet insurance, but there are some important distinctions.

"It's not really health insurance. It's more similar to car insurance, or property insurance," explains Snodgrass. He says the vet's responsibility is to diagnose and treat. Then the staff provides clients with a statement of the treatment protocol so that pet owners can get reimbursed.

"Don't expect the vet to recoup the money," he warns. "You pay the vet bill and you send the receipt and you get reimbursed."

From his perspective, Snodgrass is focused on healing. He is concerned about what he sees as a dramatic increase in the number of animals being treated for various types of cancer. Snodgrass estimates a 75-percent increase in cases at his clinic.

And while responsible pet owners eschew table scraps in favor of high-priced dog foods, Snodgrass, who has practiced in Warren County for almost two decades, can't help wondering whether or not those old barn dogs were healthier than their modern day couch pups who subsist on dog chow.

He says dogs are like people and to



stay healthy they have to eat healthfully. The wrong table scraps can "tear their stomachs up," but at the same time, he points out, "the dogs on the farms back on our days were healthy and ate 'people food' and got along fine."

See page 22 for a list of table scraps to avoid completely. +

Pet insurance advocates point out that an unexpected vet bill can put the owner out thousands of dollars.

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You Gonna Eat That?



Helping Beggars Choose Better

BY MARY NESTOR

Heading into the holiday season offers an opportunity to review the list of human foods that can be harmful to pets. Some of these are more dangerous than others, but according to the ASPCA website, animals should be closely monitored and possibly treated if they ingest any of the following holiday dishes:

Begin with breakfast. Because in addition to possible exposure to **salt** and—even worse—**garlic** salt, contamination can lurk in the most unassuming places. That means, the longer Aunt Ida's sausage casserole hangs around in the fridge waiting its turn as a **leftover**, the more likely that things can go wrong. Even with no obvious sign of **mold**, the meat, cheese and eggs can cause a toxic reaction. So with "table" scraps, apply this basic rule—**If you won't eat it, don't feed it to your pet.**

Dogs can tolerate certain fruits—but **grapes** are very high on the list of human foods that are dangerous to animals. Even in small amounts, they can cause some dogs to die quickly. The effect is similar to an allergic reaction in humans. Vomiting, diarrhea, and lethargy precede kidney failure so prompt veterinary treatment is essential if the dog develops symptoms after eating them. And remember, grapes and **raisins** are the same fruit, so beware Aunt Betty's fruit salad as well as Grandma's oatmeal raisin cookies and fruitcake.

Just like their owners, dogs like to be included in the fun. So when the liquor flows, they sometimes take interest in the folly. They can be like curious children drinking what's left in the cup when nobody's looking. White Russians offer the deliciousness of fresh **cream** and spiked **eggnog** may also entice them. But not only do dogs lack the enzyme to digest **dairy** products they have extreme difficulty converting the ethanol into silly antics and lampshade dances. Unlike Uncle Billy who seems to have developed a tolerance, dogs can get

really sick on even small amounts of **alcohol**. And **hops**—the primary ingredient of most **beer**—are a poison for dogs. Their body temperatures may rise dramatically and seizures can follow.

Their inability to tolerate ethanol also means that they don't tolerate **xylitol**—the low-calorie sweetener used in everything from **chewing gum** to **toothpaste** to **diabetic candy**. That's because xylitol is made of fermented birch wood and the same inability to process ethanol means dogs should not be exposed to anything that could contain xylitol. So if Fido mounts a sideways ambush of the candy dish or takes the opportunity to sneak into the guest room and eat an entire tube of Uncle George's toothpaste, the next call is to the vet.

Candy doesn't have to have low-calorie sweetener to be dangerous to pets. **Caffeine** in **chocolate** contains "methylxanthines" that can cause abnormal heart rhythms. The darker the chocolate: the higher the risk. And while Aunt Betty's macadamia nut roll may be a delicious treat from the islands, beware that particular ingredient that makes it exotic. Macadamia nuts are specifically listed by the ASPCA as being highly toxic to dogs. According to their website, as few as six **Macadamia nuts** can be fatal.

So even in the hustle of the season, it's important to pay attention to unusual behaviors like lethargy or confusion. Dogs may pant, or tremble. Certain foods cause diarrhea and vomiting and the situation can escalate quickly.

Pet owners have a responsibility to keep the animal out of harms way and that means knowing the risks. Keep an eye out for the treats that spell trouble and if you suspect Fido has helped himself to a potential poison, alert your vet and monitor your pet. +

Walk Your Talk

An Old Flame, Rekindled

BY DAVE KIRGAN

When living a lifestyle of health and fitness and that lifestyle has gone on for many years, in my case over four decades, there are going to be times that the flame must be rekindled. We hit periods where we don't really feel like training any more at all. It often feels like we are just going through the motions. To continue seems pointless because we imagine that our best days are passed. It takes longer and longer to recover from an injury and injuries are getting more frequent as age has its way. That flame that was once so strong has begun to fade.

These are the times when we have to dig down to the very core of our being to find the spark and relight that flame of desire.

I have had to rekindle my own flame many times over the years.

Eventually, something would happen to bring back the desire. Because once it's experienced, a lifestyle of fitness is something that is not easily forgotten. For myself; seeing a runner along the road can bring back a surge of memories from the times when that was me out there. It's the sensation of recognizing an old flame. It is like seeing something once loved, but that is now just out of reach. Not to mention, those cold times fill the athlete in us with anxiety because we want to be training again but can't find the start button.

Feeling the flame fading?

Then this is a good time to remember what it felt like to be strong. Training and racing embody those moments when we were masters of our own bodies; when we were literally high on living and feeling free. It's probably also a good time to reassess--to make some fresh goals. Forge a new reason that matters; one that validates the effort. Do it for yourself. Do it for your kids. Do it for your grandkids.

Rekindling the flame will feel like coming home after a long absence. We already know there is no stronger potion for happiness than regular vigorous forward motion. Sweat and effort from that motion remind us we are alive.

Fitness can only be acquired one way: By earning it. Few things are more satisfying than overcoming a cold spell. Find a spark, fan it into flame and enjoy the warmth, again.

It's not just a step, it's a start. +

Dave

Retired Air Force First Sergeant and competitive race walker Dave Kirgan reaches for the stars, but keeps one foot on the ground. His inspirational column, Walk Your Talk, seeks to inspire athletes of all ages to live a healthier lifestyle.



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