

Personal Best

Healthlines®

The Path to a Healthier You

JUNE 2010

Fitness Fun in the Sun

Summer's long, sunny days inspire the athlete in all of us. Now's the time to enjoy some fresh air and exercise.

Walk out your front door to get reacquainted with nature and your neighborhood. Walking provides benefits similar to jogging, but with less impact. *Tip:* Track your distance with a pedometer.

Step off the treadmill, go outside and hit the pavement. Fast-paced walking provides an all-over body workout. It tones your arm and leg muscles, burns calories and fat, and strengthens bones. *Tip:* Using your arms as you walk will burn more calories.

Take a leisurely roll on skates around your favorite park, or pick up the pace for a cardio workout. Skating strengthens your inner and outer thighs and buttocks, improves balance and is very fun. *Tip:* Don't forget the helmet.

Race the wind on a bike. Cycling conditions your heart and lungs and strengthens your leg muscles. *Tip:* Save on gas by biking to work a couple of times a week.

Whether you swim laps in a pool or play in a lake, aquatic activity refreshes you in the summer heat. The water's resistance can help tone your whole body. *Tip:* Never swim alone, no matter how experienced you are.

Need a change of scenery? Try visiting different parks in your area. You might be surprised at how many exist within a few miles of your home.

Note: Get your health care provider's okay before significantly changing your level of physical activity. Stay hydrated and wear sunscreen.

best bits

■ **Plump, juicy strawberries are a welcome addition to summer!** Pick the best of the crop – choose strawberries that are shiny, bright red, and firm with unwilted green caps. Store in the refrigerator for 1 to 3 days; wash just before eating. Strawberries are more than pretty – they're high in fiber, vitamin C and folate and lack fat, sodium and cholesterol.

■ **If you use extension cords, remember – they are meant for temporary use.** The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates about 4,000 injuries and 3,300 residential fires are associated with electric extension cords annually. For extension cord safety tips, visit the CPSC at www.cpsc.gov.

■ **Medication mistakes happen.** Be alert to a possible mix-up with your prescription if you notice differences in these:

- tablet size, color, markings
- the number of pills
- the dosage size
- the instructions
- the medication name
- the prescribing physician's name
- or the reason for using the medication.



SUBSCRIBERS: Find more tips on everyday wellness available at **Well Connections:** www.personalbest.com/Extras/wc0610.

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Man Trouble

Guys: Say goodbye to bad habits.

By middle-age, most guys are feeling the effects of neglecting their health.

Weight gain, high blood pressure, back pain ... The best way to feel stronger and get back in the game: Fix these troublemakers before they hurt you long-term.

Getting Fat – Carrying around a load of extra fat increases your risk for several health problems, including heart attack, stroke, diabetes and arthritis. It slows you down so you feel less than your best. Experts say the primary culprits are big food portions and sedentary living.

→ **THE FIX:** No need for a structured diet; simply downsize your portions – rather than buckets of movie popcorn and supersized burgers, order smaller sizes. Have a carrot or apple instead of fries. Also, fit in extra physical chores or exercise.

Sitting Still – Inactivity can age you. Sure it's hard to fit in exercise every day. It takes planning and commitment. Your rewards? You'll look better and feel stronger longer.

→ **THE FIX:** A daily half hour of cardio exercise (swimming, walking or exercise machines) is the best use of your time and the best way to lose weight. If time is short, accumulate the 30 minutes in 3 10-minute bouts.

Ignoring Stress – For men, ongoing stress can quickly lead to depression, which often goes undiagnosed; many men think it's

unmanly to complain about their emotions. Yet men are 4 times more likely than women to commit suicide. (CDC)

→ **THE FIX:** Take an inventory of your moods. Signs of serious stress or depression in men include feeling isolated or angry, alcohol or eating abuse and relationship conflicts. See your provider if you have any of these symptoms or unrelieved stress.

Using Tobacco – If you're still smoking or chewing, quitting is the most important thing you can do to protect your health and longevity.

→ **THE FIX:** You can beat this habit, starting with your health care provider's help. You'll find better ways than ever to succeed with greater ease.

June 14-20 is Men's Health Week, sponsored by Men's Health Network. Visit menshealthnetwork.org, where you can learn about and get involved in issues important to men.



Game Plan for Preventing Health Trouble

1 **Don't wait until you have symptoms** – select a health care provider now, one you can talk with and trust.

2 **Ask your provider what routine tests you need.** The most beneficial include those for blood pressure, cholesterol and colorectal cancer, depending on age and family factors. Also discuss immunizations.

3 **Keep a medical history.** Having past results can help with future decisions.



Hike on the Wild Side

Hiking in the wilderness is a great way to get fresh air and exercise. With some planning, you and your trail buddies can combine fun with fitness.

Find local hiking trails in a guidebook or online. You'll learn the terrain, scenery, trail length, level of difficulty (usually from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most difficult), and locations of trails and trailheads.

If you're a beginner, start gradually. Try hikes that are short and a lower level of difficulty before hiking to higher elevations. Talk to your health care provider first if you are unaccustomed to exercise.

Dress the part. Wear a hat and layers that you can peel off as you warm up. Wear moisture-wicking socks to keep your feet dry



FITNESS NOTE

Looking for a personal trainer?

Hiring a personal trainer, even for a few sessions, can be a sound investment. Look for a certified professional from the American Council on Exercise, the National Strength and Conditioning Association, or the American College of Sports Medicine. Ask about training; experience; certification; pricing; and attendance at continuing education workshops. Is the trainer insured and certified in first aid, CPR and other emergency aid? Do your homework first.



and blister-free. Slip on hiking shoes, which offer ankle support and a shield for splashing around in puddles or streams.

Rev up your hike. Carry a backpack. Need another challenge? Include inclines and switchbacks in your trek. Or: Hiking poles support the arms and legs and increase the energy you expend.

Carry essentials in your backpack, including: a flashlight; water bottle; a compass; a small first aid kit; and non-perishable, light-weight food.

Note: Give family or friends your route and schedule before you leave.



Summer WEIGHT BUSTERS

Nothing says summer like backyard barbecues and picnics. But watch those calories! Love the tastes of summer and keep your weight in check with these easy strategies:

✓ **Grilling is great for many kinds of light, healthy fare:** High-protein options include chicken, fish and lean (loin) cuts of pork and beef. Do kebabs – they're so easy and quick. Just skewer chunks of vegetables and shrimp for a "one-dish" meal. Use plenty of spices and go easy on the oil.

✓ **It's salad season:** Time to experiment with fresh garden produce from your backyard or local farmers' markets; add tuna, beans, boiled eggs, tofu or nuts. Use light vinaigrettes or nonfat sour cream dressing flavored with fresh herbs.

✓ **Beverage check:** The calories in soft drinks, beer and wine add up fast. A smart choice is sparkling water with a citrus wedge. Carry a water bottle to stay hydrated and satisfy your thirst.

✓ **For dessert:** Chill with low-fat frozen sorbet, fruit bars, or yogurt topped with fresh fruit. How about light angel-food cake with berries?



✓ **Can't resist a steak or peach pie?** It's okay to indulge occasionally – just keep servings small. And keep moving with outdoor chores, sports and fun activities to help manage your weight.



Shut Down Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying – using phones or computers to hurt or humiliate others – affects almost half of all American teens. For example, a cyberbully may forward personal text messages, upload embarrassing photos to a website or spread lies on social networking sites. A victim’s reactions may include social withdrawal, attempts at revenge and feelings of hurt, anger and shame.

Here’s how you can help as a parent:

Maintain good communication with your children so they’re more likely to tell you if problems arise. Pay attention to their online activities.

Protect your children’s privacy. Warn them not to share personal information – name, address,

phone number, passwords – with others online. Be clear: They are never to meet someone in person whom they met online.

Teach your children about posting appropriate content.

If it’s online, anyone – parents, police or college admissions officers – may see it.

Watch for signs that your child may be a victim: Suddenly using a computer or phone less; appearing upset about going to school, talking on the phone, or receiving messages; or acting withdrawn.

Provide guidance on how to handle upsetting online exchanges. Instruct children to always save

abusive messages and report them to an adult instead of sharing them with other teens.

Involve the school if there is bullying by classmates.

Contact the police if you believe your child is in danger.

Remember: If you wouldn’t say it in person, it’s probably not appropriate to say online.



WORK/LIFE NOTE

Find your own quiet retreat.

Make relaxation a part of each day – equal in importance to chores, social obligations or on-the-job tasks. Work in your garden or pursue a craft. Curl up on the couch and read. When you’re short on time, take a brief walk and breathe in some fresh air. **THE KEY:** Do something special for the pure pleasure of it.

What’s Holding You Back?

How’s your productivity? If you’re feeling stymied, consider these barriers to finishing your to-do list:

Procrastination. When you feel your focus slipping away from a task or you think “I can come back to this later,” your best bet might be to push on. Concentrate on the accomplishment you’ll get from finishing instead of the momentary satisfaction of putting it off. When you’ve finished, reward yourself with a break.

Indecision. Reviewing your options is important, but you’re not accomplishing much until you make a decision and take action. Create a deadline for big decisions and set milestones along the way.

Finally, plan to move forward with your choice. You’ll never know if your decision was the right one until you act on it.

Negativity. A dark mood can make deadlines and problems seem insurmountable. Focus on

the day’s successes. When things do go wrong, find ways to move forward and salvage the rest of your day.

Watch for these “traps” and take back control of your work day.





Garden Well Without the Sneezes

Working in the garden can be a joy – unless it triggers allergies. The good news is you can reduce your allergic reactions by following some easy guidelines:

Avoid plants that release billions of pollen particles into the air. While you can't stop pollen from blowing into your space, you can plant flora that depend on insects for pollination. These plants tend to have heavier pollen grains that don't travel far.

Choose allergy-friendly plants — enter “gardening with allergies” at <http://www.aafa.org> for a list, or talk to your local horticulturist. Diversify your garden — don't plant too much of any one thing.

Wear gloves, a hat and a long-sleeved shirt (and breathing mask if



SELF CARE NOTE

Use over-the-counter (OTC) pain relievers wisely.

To lower the risk of side effects, avoid drinking alcohol and using multiple medicines at the same time. Consult your provider before using OTC pain relievers if you are pregnant or have high blood pressure, diabetes, liver or kidney problems or ulcers. Tell your provider if your pain persists or you frequently use drugs for pain.



necessary) while gardening.

Change your clothes and shower when you go indoors.

Limit gardening to cool or cloudy days and in the late afternoon or evening when pollen counts are lower.

Have someone else mow the grass and keep your windows closed at the time. Keep grass low (about 2 inches) to prevent pollen from becoming airborne.

Consider using gravel, oyster shell or ground cover such as vinca instead of wood chips or mulch, which can promote mold growth.

Remove dying trees or shrubs to reduce mold and other allergens.

Follow these tips and you won't have to “throw in the trowel.”

QUESTION — What condition:

- a. sometimes occurs with exercise?
- b. causes a lack of energy?
- c. is usually relieved by resting and drinking fluids?

It's dehydration — when your body loses more fluids than you consume. Fluids are essential for several bodily functions, including body temperature, blood pressure and elimination of bodily wastes.

Certain conditions or habits can dehydrate you, such as illness (vomiting, diarrhea, cold, flu), excess sweating, vigorous exercise or labor, fasting and excess alcohol or caffeine.

Dehydration symptoms include: weakness or decreased energy; dizziness or lightheadedness; dry mouth and nose; headache or body aches; and nervousness. Thirst is not always a reliable indicator of dehydration. Some people, such as older adults, have a decreased thirst sensation and may not feel thirsty.

To stay hydrated, the Institute of Medicine recommends you drink about 13 cups (for men) and about 9 cups (for women) of water daily. Hard to swallow? **Try these suggestions:**

- Sip a half-cup an hour throughout the day to help your bladder adjust to larger volumes.
- Keep a water bottle or glass handy.
- Drink a major portion of water in the morning since a night's sleep can leave you dry.
- For every alcoholic or caffeinated drink, drink twice that in water.



Think Before You Click

Stop. Think. Click. That's the motto of [OnGuard Online.gov](http://OnGuardOnline.gov), the federal government's campaign to make cyberspace safer. Test your knowledge during Internet Safety Month:



1. Phishing is a popular online game.

- True False

2. Which method is the one foolproof way to protect against hackers?

- a. Installing a firewall
 b. Periodically updating security and anti-virus software
 c. Disconnecting from the Web when you're done surfing
 d. None of the above

3. Credit and charge cards are the only forms of payment federal law protects.

- True False

ANSWERS

1. *False.* Phishing is used to get personal information such as account numbers and passwords. The pop-up or email may use logos and language from a legitimate bank, retailer or government agency and threaten dire consequences if you don't "update" or "validate" your account information.

2. *c.* While a firewall and security software are vital to computer security, they aren't perfect. Hackers can't access your computer when it's disconnected from the Internet.

3. *True.* For maximum protection, shop online with a credit or charge card. In certain situations the Fair Credit Billing Act lets you dispute charges and temporarily withhold payment while the creditor investigates. You generally are only liable for the first \$50 of unauthorized charges. *Tip:* Ask your credit card company about fraud protection.



Sun Protection Factors

How do you keep your cool in the summer heat? Check your daily defenses:

- I avoid outdoor work and exercise between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on hot days.
- I take frequent breaks from the sun if I must work or play in it.
- I cover up from the sun by wearing long sleeves and a hat to avoid burning or tanning.
- I watch for signs of heat illness (dizziness, headache, nausea or increased pulse).
- I drink fluids to avoid dehydration in the heat, especially during active periods.
- I never leave pets or people parked in a closed vehicle when it's hot.
- I liberally apply sunscreen during sun exposure year round, even on cloudy days.
- I use a water-resistant sunscreen, minimum SPF 30, to help block both UVA and UVB rays.
- I don't use tanning beds or sunbathe to get a tan.
- I know that any skin discoloration on my skin increases my risk for skin aging and cancer.

If you marked every box, congratulations! If you left a few unchecked, take steps to make sure you're doing everything you can to stay safe in the sun.



SAFETY NOTE

Your need for vitamin D is not a license to tan.

The American Academy of Dermatology does not recommend getting vitamin D from sun exposure or indoor tanning. Both methods deliver UV radiation that can lead to skin cancer. Best advice: Get vitamin D from a healthy diet, including enriched vitamin D foods and beverages, and/or vitamin supplements. Consult your health care provider.



Making Sense of Food Claims



Key words

Low calorie	Less than 40 calories/serving.
Fat free/sugar free	Less than ½ g of fat or sugar/serving.
Low sodium	Less than 140mg of sodium/serving.
High fiber	5 or more grams of fiber/serving.
High in...	Provides 20% or more of the DV (Daily Value) for a specified nutrient/serving.
Good source of...	Provides at least 10% of DV for a particular vitamin or nutrient per serving.
Lean	For meat, poultry, seafood, 10g or less of fat and 4.5g saturated fat per 3-ounce serving.
Healthy	Low fat, low saturated fat, less than 480mg sodium and at least 10% of DV of vitamins A and C, iron, protein, calcium and fiber.

Most of us like to know what's in the food we eat. Package labels tell us a lot – but when it comes to health, food advertisers often promise more than the product delivers.

For example, take the word “*natural*”. Many consumers assume the word indicates a more nutritious or superior food product. Yet the term has not been defined or clearly regulated by the FDA or USDA, and its use continues to grow. Be aware – products described as “*natural*” may contain unnatural ingredients.

Empty promises: Watch for frivolous health claims on labels, such as “*enhances*” heart, bone, prostate or digestive health. Many claims are not supported by scientific research.

Another example of an unregulated claim is “*improves immunity*”. It’s seen on foods or drinks that contain antioxidants (vitamins A, C and E). Research into antioxidants is at an early stage. The extent of their role in preventing illness requires further study.

Useful claims: Fortunately, we have terms widely used and approved for food labels to help us make healthy choices. Key words include:

Note: The FDA cited 17 food manufacturers earlier this year for misleading claims. It pays to read labels carefully.



RECIPE OF THE Month

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Avocado Wraps

- 2 semi-ripe avocados
- 3 tbsp salsa
- 2 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 2 tbsp red onion, minced
- 1 cup shredded red cabbage
- ½ cup grated carrot
- ¼ cup low-fat sour cream
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 4 10-inch whole-wheat wraps, or tortillas

- 1 Peel and chop avocado; gently combine with salsa, lime juice and red onion.
- 2 In a separate bowl, mix cabbage and carrot with sour cream.
- 3 Spread a quarter of the avocado mixture on each wrap; add a layer of cabbage mixture to each.
- 4 Top each with cilantro. Roll up snugly. Cut the wraps in half to serve.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS (wraps). Per Serving:

270 calories | 11.5g protein | 18.7g fat | 2g sat | 10g cholesterol | 29.5g carbs | 4.4g sugar | 17.4g fiber | 401mg sodium

“Functional foods”

are products fortified with extra ingredients that add health benefits. These food-health associations are approved for labeling:

- ✓ Added calcium to protect bones.
- ✓ Fiber and omega-3 fats to aid heart health.
- ✓ Foods fortified with folic acid to fight neural tube defects.



**STAY IN Touch**

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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quick studies

■ **You may say no to “supersized” restaurant meals to avoid weight gain** – but what about home-cooked chow? A study published last year in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* showed calories per serving in a popular cookbook have risen sharply in the past 70 years. This is a result of higher-calorie recipe ingredients (butter, sugar, more meat, etc.) and bigger portion sizes. The scoop: Select recipes that list nutritional and calorie information, or serve smaller serving sizes than indicated.

■ **It’s never too late to quit smoking**, even for early stage lung cancer patients. University of Birmingham (England) researchers found that people with early stage lung cancer who stopped smoking had a 5-year survival rate of 63% to 70%. Patients who kept smoking had a 5-year survival rate of 29% to 33%. The scientists examined 10 studies that measured how smoking cessation affected lung cancer. Lung cancer is the most common form of cancer worldwide.



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**EXPERT Advice****Pets good for health?**

Time spent with a friendly animal might benefit your health. Pets may help decrease depression and other emotional conditions by providing companionship, stimulation and an opportunity for nurturing.

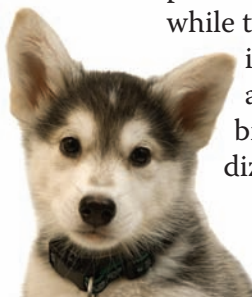
Pets can get you moving, too: Walking a dog gets people exercising outdoors and interacting with others.

Sharing your life with a pet may lead to lower levels of blood cholesterol and triglycerides, helping to prevent coronary artery disease or slowing its development. And stroking an animal has been shown to help lower blood pressure and reduce stress.

Even caring for small creatures such as fish can be calming.

Animal-assisted therapy is used in settings such as hospitals, long-term care facilities and schools.

Of course, caring for a pet involves responsibility, which could be difficult for some people. If you love animals, Fido or Fluffy might be just what the doctor ordered.

**What are hives?**

Hives are raised, red itchy welts that appear anywhere on your skin. Called *urticaria*, hives range in size from a pinhead to more than an inch in diameter. They may spread like a rash and last from minutes to several days. Common causes include allergies, bug bites, infection, medication, stress or exposure to heat, cold or sunlight. In some cases, the cause is unknown.

The rash usually resolves on its own and typically does not leave lasting marks. Common treatments include applying a cool compress or taking an antihistamine such as diphenhydramine to relieve the itching. It’s also essential to avoid any known cause.

When to seek medical care: Contact your health care provider if the hives persist more than a few days or occur while taking medication. Call 911

immediately if your hives are accompanied by trouble breathing, throat swelling or dizziness.

Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP