

# TOPHEALTH<sup>®</sup>

We Care About Your Health

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

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## Getting the Most Out of Your Medical Appointments

Have you ever left a doctor's appointment and then remembered an important question or concern? *Try these quick tips to make your next visit more productive.*

### Before the appointment:

- Identify your top three health issues. Be prepared for questions such as "When did your symptoms start?" or "What makes your symptoms better/worse?"
- Write down all the medications, vitamins and supplements (including dosages) you're taking.
- Make a list of the other health care providers you see, including contact numbers. *(continued on next page)*



*"So many people spend their health gaining wealth, and then have to spend their wealth to regain their health." — A.J. Reb Materi*

## Ways to Stay Well This Winter

When temperatures drop, it's time to "winterize" your health. *To get through the cold months with scarcely a sniffle, you need to:*

**Ban the bug.** During the winter season, viruses can flourish indoors. To prevent them from thriving in you, consider the influenza or "flu" shot, which offers 70 to 90 percent protection and can lessen symptoms if you do get sick. Book your flu shot in the fall before flu season hits. Cold and flu bugs pass easily from hand to hand; keep them at bay by washing your hands or using hand sanitizer frequently. **TIP:** Try to avoid eating unwrapped candy from bowls and handling public objects such as store pens — always carry your own.



**Strengthen your defenses.** Keep your immune system humming with a good diet and exercise program. Eat a variety of lean meats, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and drink plenty of water. **TIP:** Even gentle exercise such as yoga or tai chi can help your immune system, so get moving.

**Soothe the stress.** Stress lowers your resistance to illness, but you can counteract this effect by widening your social circle. Try to keep up with old friends and make new ones. Holding in feelings can also damage your immunity, so express yourself in positive, constructive ways. And don't skimp on sleep, as it repairs the effects of stress on your body. **TIP:** If treacherous weather keeps you homebound, try meeting new people with similar interests on the internet.

### DR. ZORBA'S LONGEVITY CORNER

**IRON AND YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE** A study of nearly 5,000 people found that eating lots of beef elevates blood pressure — a good reason to cut down on meat. The study also found that you can lower your blood pressure by getting iron from vegetables such as beans, lentils, asparagus and spinach, as well as from enriched breakfast cereals and pasta. **The bottom line:** If you have high blood pressure, cut the red meat and increase iron from grain and vegetable sources.

## 10 SURPRISING HEALTH FACTS

Think you're health savvy? *Test your knowledge:*

- 1 How many Americans get nearly 50 percent of their calories from junk food?  
A) one-tenth  
B) one-quarter  
C) one-third
- 2 You can get your daily limit of sodium in what amount of table salt?  
A) one teaspoon  
B) one tablespoon  
C) three tablespoons
- 3 Anxiety can be a symptom of:  
A) thyroid conditions  
B) asthma  
C) both of the above
- 4 The most common cause of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in men is:  
A) war  
B) car accidents  
C) assault
- 5 Which is the most common food allergy in very young children?  
A) milk  
B) eggs  
C) peanuts



### True or False?

- 6 For safety, one should always wait 30 minutes after eating before going for a swim. . . . . T F
- 7 Smokers don't sleep as well as non-smokers. . . . T F
- 8 Eating late at night will cause weight gain. . . . . T F
- 9 Having a large breakfast will help you lose more weight in the long term. . . . . T F
- 10 You're exercising hard enough if you're working up a sweat. . . . . T F

*(answers on next page)*

## Coping in a Crisis

When you're faced with a crisis, your first reaction may include shock, numbness and denial ("this can't really be happening"). As the initial shock wears off, other strong feelings may arise. **Here are some strategies that could help you cope in such situations:**



**Have patience** with yourself and others. Accept that normal reactions may include social isolation, irritability, guilt, fear and grief.

**Open up** to those with whom you're comfortable, or jot down your experiences in a diary.

**Take care** of yourself with adequate rest, exercise and nutrition. Avoid using alcohol or illicit drugs to cope, as they can create other problems.

**Reach out** and offer support to others, if you can. Even though you may be struggling, helping others can give you a sense of focus and purpose.

**Keep routines** in place when possible, and put off major decisions or changes. Take plenty of breaks and try to include some fun activities as well.

**Get help** as needed in the form of practical assistance (meals, babysitting), a support group or crisis counseling.

**Use skills** and resources that have worked in the past. Remind yourself that you've faced challenging situations before and you'll survive this one as well.

## Appointments ... *(continued)*

- Have a fact sheet ready documenting your family's and your own medical history.
- Note your questions as well as what's changed since your previous visit.
- Make sure your health care provider has all relevant medical records and test results.
- Find out how long your appointment will be so you can plan your time.

### During the visit:

- Speak candidly. If you don't understand something, ask.
- Remind your health care provider of your medical history if you haven't been in lately.
- Bring your spouse or someone else along to help you remember details.
- Develop a follow-up plan by the end of the visit.
- Be honest about drug or alcohol usage and about whether you're following the prescribed treatment.
- Take notes or ask if you can tape the session.
- If seeing a specialist, be sure that your primary care provider gets a copy of any reports or test results.
- Ask if your provider accepts questions by phone or e-mail.

**Remember:** Seventy percent of your diagnosis is based on what you tell your provider, so be specific and detailed.

**SUNFLOWER POWER** Sunflower seeds pack nutritional clout — they're a good source of vitamin E, protein and fiber. Research also shows that they may help lower high blood pressure. Be sure to choose low-salt products without added fat for optimal health benefits.



## HEALTH FACTS ... *(continued)*

### Answers:

**1 C.** One-third of Americans get 47% of their daily calories from junk food. Junk food is generally loaded with fat and salt, so get your calories from healthier choices.

**2 A.** A single teaspoon of salt contains 2,300 grams of sodium, the maximum daily amount recommended for healthy adults.

**3 C.** A number of health conditions and medications can cause anxiety.

**4 B.** Car accidents cause more PTSD because they're relatively common.

**5 A.** Milk is the most common cause of food allergy in infants and toddlers, followed by eggs and peanuts. Luckily, many children outgrow milk and egg allergies.



**6 False.** Swimming on a full stomach could be uncomfortable, but the American Red Cross does not list it as a safety risk.

**7 True.** Smokers spend less time in deep sleep, the period that makes you feel rested. Kick the habit for better ZZZs.

**8 False.** If you stay within your daily calorie limit, you will *not* gain weight, even if you consume some of those calories at night. Having a light snack before bed may even help you sleep better.

**9 True.** Eating a hearty breakfast (about 600 calories) containing proteins and carbohydrates will help you lose more weight in one year than skipping this important meal.

**10 False.** Sweating is how your body cools itself and is not always an indicator of exertion. You can burn a lot of calories by taking a walk or lifting some light weights even without breaking a sweat.

## NEXT MONTH: The Power of Meditation