

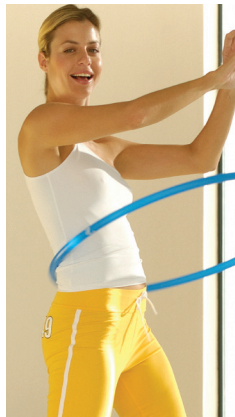
TOPHEALTH®

We Care About Your Health

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

MARCH 2010

MAKE EXERCISE FUN AGAIN!



When you were a child, exercise wasn't a chore. You ran, skipped and jumped because it was fun — not because fitness experts said you should. Do you need to recapture that magic?

- 1 **Have a ball.** If you once enjoyed sports, try more leisurely versions today: Toss a baseball or football with a friend, kick a soccer ball around, play doubles tennis or shoot baskets.
- 2 **Kid around.** Revisit favorite childhood activities such as roller skating, tossing a Frisbee or jumping rope. If you own a dog, go for a run in the park. Or try some tumbling with your children. It's great exercise and you may laugh a lot too —

which is good for your heart and lungs.

3 **Head back to class.** Look at local gyms, fitness centers and studios that offer classes in aerobic dance, water workouts, tai chi, yoga and other exercises. **Idea:** Check out exercise DVDs from the library.

4 **Daydream.** Whenever you work out, take your mind off your body with an absorbing mental task. **Thought starters:** Plan your next vacation ... memorize a favorite song ... try to recall the names of teachers, classmates and friends you had as a child.

5 **Win prizes.** Reward yourself for reaching fitness milestones, such as miles logged, calories burned or pounds lost. You'll motivate yourself to stick with it.

MS PRIMER

Did you know that multiple sclerosis (MS) can be tricky to diagnose because there is no single definitive test for it, and it's usually detected by a combination of MRIs and clinical syndrome.

MS can start as vague symptoms — fatigue, vision problems, tingling or dull pain and weakness or numbness in one or more limbs. In this chronic and unpredictable disease, the body starts to attack myelin (the nerves' protective covering), causing a communication breakdown between brain and body. Symptoms can vary from person to person (and over time), and other conditions, such as Lyme disease, can produce similar symptoms.

(continued on next page)

UPDATE: Medications & Medical Emergencies

Taking too much of a prescription or over-the-counter medication can create a medical emergency. Overdosing on some drugs can cause dangerous blood pressure changes, permanent organ damage or even death.

* Accidental overdose is the leading cause of death in **children** under age 5, so keep all medications, supplements and vitamins in a high cabinet secured with childproofing devices. Do the same for mentally disabled adults.



* Many multi-symptom products contain painkillers, and **adults** sometimes overdose by taking more than one medication at the same time. The FDA is considering warning labels and reducing recommended dosages to address this problem. **Best practice:** Take medications only as directed, never take medications in the dark and don't share prescription drugs. Also, inform your doctor of any supplements you're taking and your level of alcohol use, as both can mix poorly with certain drugs.

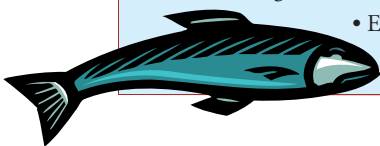
* The average **senior citizen** takes between two and seven prescription medications daily. Taking several drugs at a time can lead to confusion and accidental overdose. Pill boxes can help organize doses; some even have alarms as reminders. Stick to one pharmacy for all medication needs so they can track potentially dangerous interactions.

When in doubt: If you suspect an overdose, immediately call the poison control center at 1-800-222-1222 (keep the number handy). Depending on your circumstances, you may need to call 911 or go to an emergency room.

DR. ZORBA'S LONGEVITY CORNER

Eat, Drink and Be Merry? In a recent study, those who followed a Mediterranean diet had a 30% lower risk of depression. **Basic plan:**

- Eat lots of vegetables, fruits, nuts and whole grains
- Eat fish once or twice a week
- Eat meat in moderation



- Use olive oil to cook
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink with food per day for women or two for men

TopHealth takeaway? Eat right for your body and your mind.

WELL CONNECTIONS: What kind of eater are you? Take a self assessment at www.personalbest.com/extras/marchwc10.



“You don’t stop laughing because you get old. You grow old because you stop laughing.” ~ Michael Pritchard

MS Primer ... *(continued)*

- 1 Early detection** and treatment are important. MS can cause permanent neurological damage even in the early stages. Prompt treatment may alter the course of the disease.
- 2** Having a **parent or sibling with MS** increases your risk.
- 3 Symptoms** can vary from mild to severe. A multi-pronged approach (including medication and rehabilitation) can help most people live long, productive lives.
- 4** The majority of people with MS **do not become severely disabled**.
- 5** Though **viruses** are being studied for their possible role in the development of MS, this disease is not considered contagious.

For more information, go to www.nationalmssociety.org.

GENE SCREEN. One of the latest fads is *do-it-yourself genetic tests* to assess your risk for certain diseases. But according to the Office of Public Health Genomics, it’s unclear which, if any, of these tests actually provide any useful information — more research is needed to know for sure. **TopHealth takeaway?** Many of these tests are expensive, unregulated and unproven. Stick with well-established, doctor-recommended genetic tests.



Why Eat Seeds?

People have eaten this nutrition-packed food for centuries. Seeds contain fiber, protein, minerals and phytochemicals. While some people avoid seeds because of their fat content (and calories), the fats they contain are actually a healthy variety.

Which seeds are best? Popular choices include sesame, sunflower and pumpkin seeds. Sunflower seeds are rich in vitamin E, a nutrient

that may deter certain cancers yet is lacking in many Americans’ diets. **Good to know:** A handful of sunflower seeds contains nearly a full daily RDA of vitamin E.

How should I add seeds to my diet? Sunflower and pumpkin seeds are often sold as snack foods; choose varieties low in added fat and salt. Whole seeds can be added to salads or used as toppings for bread or other dishes. When ground, seeds can be added to soups, cereals, batter, smoothies, meatballs and burgers. **Good to know:** Ground flaxseed can substitute for a portion of fat or oil in baked goods recipes.

How should I prepare them? Roasting enhances flavor but depletes some of the oils. Avoid this by cooking seeds at low heat for only 15 to 20 minutes.

Bottom line: As with any food, check the nutrition label for calories per serving size and plan accordingly.



TERM TO KNOW: Cumulative Head Trauma

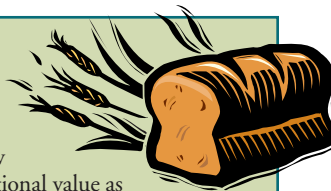
Concussions commonly result from falls, collisions or a hit to the head while playing sports. Ninety percent of these are “mild,” with a brief alteration in mental functioning and no loss of consciousness. The symptoms are often so fleeting that many victims don’t even realize they’ve had a concussion. But several mild concussions sustained over months or years can lead to more serious health concerns and neurological problems. Multiple concussions can also lead to problems such as learning disabilities, attention deficit, memory loss and depression that may not become evident until much later.

How to protect yourself from head trauma:

- During contact sports, wear a high-quality protective helmet that fits properly.
- Avoid “head-butting” moves in sports.
- Don’t return to play until a head injury has been assessed by a medical professional and you are symptom-free.
- Know the early symptoms of concussion: headache, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, disorientation, slurred speech, and imbalance or lack of coordination. Anyone who has lost consciousness or experiences symptoms for more than 15 minutes should be evaluated by a doctor. Worsening symptoms require that you seek immediate medical attention.

BETTER WHITE BREAD. *If you want the nutrition of whole-wheat bread without the heavy flavor, here’s some good news:*

White whole-wheat foods are now available and have the same nutritional value as whole wheat but taste more like traditional white-flour products. When buying bread, check for 100% whole wheat on the label — or at least whole wheat or white whole wheat as the first ingredient listed.



NEXT MONTH: INTERVAL TRAINING

WELL CONNECTIONS: Take a QuikRisk™ Self Assessment at www.personalbest.com/extras/marchwc10.