

# TOPHEALTH<sup>®</sup>

We Care About Your Health

The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

OCTOBER 2010



## SOUPS: The Dieter's Delight

Cutting calories? Try a bowl of soup. A low-calorie soup is a boon for dieters because it can be both nutritious and filling. Eating a bowl before a meal or as an entrée or snack often reduces the total daily calories that you consume. In addition, soups made from scratch are a fun way to add variety to your menu. *Here's how to get cooking:*

### Start with a flavorful broth or tomato puree.

Make meat broth with lean cuts and skim off fat whenever possible. For a delicious vegetable base, use browned onions or roasted vegetables; they can be pureed for a thicker consistency. Avoid cream bases or those made primarily from starchy vegetables such as potatoes. If you're short on time, buy a good-quality broth or bouillon.

**Toss in vegetables** such as peppers, celery, zucchini, spinach, green beans, onions, leeks, cabbage, tomatoes or garlic. Combine complementary vegetables such as snow peas, celery, mushrooms and water chestnuts for Asian-flavored soup, or try zucchini, tomato and cauliflower for Italian minestrone.

### Punch up flavor

with spices, herbs and other flavorings. Try fresh herbs (such as basil or dill), caraway seeds, salsa, hot sauce, citrus zest, green onion, soy sauce or tiny amounts of flavored oil. If you don't have time to mix spices, purchase spice blends such as Cajun or Italian, and look for ones that are low in salt.

*TopHealth takeaway:* Fill your bowl and your body with goodness.

## Need More Protein? Try Something New

When you think of high-protein foods, you may think of steak or chicken. But what about spinach or broccoli? Many vegetables contain plenty of protein, but unlike meat, they have zero cholesterol and typically very little fat.

This is great news for those who are trying to reduce dietary fat, lose weight or stay healthy. A high-fat diet has been linked to increased risk of breast, colon and prostate cancer, as well as heart disease. For diabetics, eating more vegetables can help stabilize blood sugar. Getting protein from plants instead of meat can also have a positive effect on your health.

**Good protein sources** include cauliflower, lettuce, celery, beans, peas, lentils, whole grains, soy milk and tofu. *Some more meatless options?* **Turn the page.**

## Avoiding Medical Tests You Don't Need

Medical tests supply valuable information for assessment and treatment. But more isn't always better. Unnecessary testing raises medical costs, can expose you to potentially hazardous radiation and adds unnecessary follow-up procedures. Take an active role when it comes to your health tests.

✓ **Find a doctor who communicates well.** Take time to find out why a test is advised, what the process involves, what will be learned and whether the results will make a difference in your treatment.

✓ **Manage your health records.** About 20 percent of tests and scans are repeated because previous results can't be found or haven't been transmitted promptly. Make sure your primary provider has all your information, including medical records from any other doctors you're seeing.

✓ **Discuss the pros and cons of a test with your doctor.** Evidence shows that informed patients are more satisfied with decisions concerning their medical care. They're also less apt to request costly, needless procedures.



## DRUG ABUSE: A New Red Flag

Hospitals are keeping watch on the frequency of emergency room visits related to prescription opiate abuse — oxycodone for example. A recent Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) report suggests that ER visits have increased rapidly since 2004, shining new light on the growing problem of prescription drug abuse. Are you or is a loved one of yours dependent on a prescription drug or some other drug? Help is out there. Learn more in this month's Well Connections Online

Supplement at [www.personalbest.com/extras/oct2010wc](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/oct2010wc).



## On Meds: Don't Sidestep Side Effects

Many people safely take nonprescription or over-the-counter (OTC) medications to relieve common complaints such as cold or headache.

However, these medications can sometimes cause adverse effects.

Though some groups are at higher risk — seniors, children, and those with certain health conditions or who take prescription drugs — even healthy adults can experience problems. The most common complications are allergic reactions and interactions of OTC medications with food, alcohol or other drugs.

### Safety suggestions:

- **Make** a yearly list of all the medications you take, including all herbs, supplements or vitamins. Be sure to share this information with your doctor.
- **Don't** take medication with alcohol. If you have questions or concerns, your doctor can help.
- **Follow** directions carefully. Do not take medication at higher doses, for long periods or more frequently than directed.
- **Don't** take vitamins at the same time as your medicine.
- **Don't** stir medicine into food or drinks, and don't open capsules or split pills without your doctor's approval.
- **Don't** double up on medications — for example, taking a pain killer and a cold remedy containing the same ingredient.
- **Stop** taking the medication and get medical help immediately if you experience itching, hives or trouble breathing.

**BE ALERT:** When taking OTC medications, it's a good idea to keep track of any side effects that you experience. Some may warrant a call to your health care provider.



**Get In the Game.** The American Heart Association (AHA) recently endorsed several video game-based exercise products. Seventy percent of Americans aren't getting enough regular physical activity, and the AHA hopes to change this by recommending new ways to get active. While these programs shouldn't replace traditional exercise, they could get sedentary people moving in a fun and interactive way.

## 4 FAST STRETCHES

No time to go to the gym? Stop right where you are and try these stretches to help build flexibility and strength. (Hold each stretch for 10 to 30 seconds.)

**1 The neck bender.** Tilt your head to the right, keeping shoulders down. Place your right hand on the left side of your head. Gently move your head toward your right shoulder, just until you feel a slight release of tension and hold. Switch sides and repeat. **Caution:** Don't stretch your neck muscles too far.

**2 The calf extender.** Stand two to three feet from a wall with your feet perpendicular to the wall. Lean with your palms against the wall, keeping one leg straight and bringing the other leg forward slightly, bending at the knee. Keeping your heels on the floor, feel the stretch in the straight leg. Hold, switch legs and repeat.

**3 The thigh suspender.** Standing, place your left hand against a wall for balance, raise your right ankle and grab it with the right hand; pull the heel gently toward the buttocks. Hold while keeping your back straight. Switch sides and repeat.

**4 The shoulder mender.** Stretch the back of your shoulder by reaching with an arm under your chin and across the opposite shoulder. Gently push the arm back with your other hand. Hold, repeat three times, switch sides and repeat.



## Meatless Options Worth Trying

**Meatless sauces:** For lasagna, chili, stuffed peppers, casseroles and pasta dishes, replace meat with beans, tofu or extra vegetables.

**Sensible substitutions:** Instead of beef burgers, try a grilled portabella mushroom or veggie burger and add your favorite toppings. Use low-fat refried beans in burritos and tacos.

**New food fare:** Tofu cutlets, tempeh and seitan can replace meat in many dishes and are often available ready-made at grocery stores.

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." ~ World Health Organization

## DR. ZORBA'S LONGEVITY CORNER

**Amazing Avocados.** Avocados have a mixed reputation because of their fat content. But these green gems contain only 5 grams of fat and 55 calories per 2 tablespoons (compared to 22 fat grams and 200 calories found in mayo). Furthermore, much of the fat in these "butter pears" is the heart-healthy monounsaturated kind, and they're rich in fiber, vitamins and potassium. The mild flavor goes well with anything; add to sandwiches or blend into sauces for a rich, creamy taste. **Know how to pick 'em:** Ripe avocados have a black/purple skin and are slightly soft when squeezed.



**NEXT MONTH: BALANCE YOUR LIFE**

**WELL CONNECTIONS:** Take a QuikRisk™ Self Assessment at [www.personalbest.com/extras/oct2010wc](http://www.personalbest.com/extras/oct2010wc).